

SERPENTINE

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Literary Arts
Magazine

Issue # 2

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SERPENTINE

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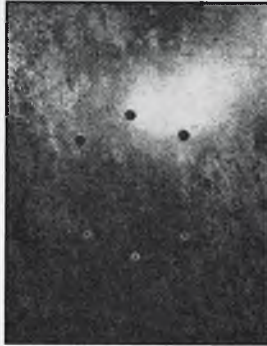
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FICTION

POETRY

ART

CONTRIBUTOR BIOS



Note from the Editor...

What is Serpentine?

Well for the definition of the word itself, go to pages 50 and 51, but for the definition of the magazine you can look right here. Serpentine is the College of Staten Island's Literary and Art Magazine. We accept artwork, short stories, poems, photography and anything else created by the hidden artists of CSI. Our magazine has no political agenda, nor does it appeal to specific groups of people--it exists only to be the showcase for the creative population of our college. That's Serpentine in a nutshell, and thanks to the talented people that make up the magazine's staff and to the many contributors, this issue should be a tasty nut indeed!

You will find within this issue short stories and poetry that seem to originate within everyday life, but then travel out into the realms of fantasy, or travel deep into the heart of human nature. Sound like an exaggeration? Well you will just have to read through and see. Each piece of writing contains the writer's critique of the world we live in, and each writer has their own

unique style. The artwork in the magazine is just as strong as the writing contributions. In either case, holding on to a copy of this magazine will prove quite useful when years from now you say, "Oh I knew of this person way before they made an impact on society."

So without raving about the issue anymore, I will end this little introduction and let you begin your journey through the creative consciousness of the CSI student population. You might be offended by what you see, you might fall in love with an image or a thought you come across, but no matter what happens I'm sure you will enjoy ingesting this piece of mental candy.

Editor-in-Chief Peter Marsh





Love Letter

Written by Jhon Singleton

July 4, 1970

Dear Janet,

I'm writing you for the last time to let you know that I've received your letter. I guess the first thing to say is congratulations on your engagement to Michael Prosper. I'm sure he'll make a good husband. ~~Second~~, thank you for looking after my mom. You don't know how much that means to me. I wrote to her last week for the last time before I leave. I'm making it okay in this hut they call a clinic. The doctor says that I'm healing nicely and will be able to leave in a few days, ~~at least physically~~. Need not to worry about me. I'm fine.. I hope I have been able to give you what you needed when you were my girl. I know I can say it was the most wonderful five years of my life. Our long talks and walks before the war will remain priceless to my dying breath. Mom always told me that if you're a righteous man, God will bring you happiness in time, every time. Well, I spoke to Father Jeffrey, the priest at the hospital. He says the same thing. I guess they're both right, 'cause I've never been happier and closer to God than at this moment. I hope that Mike doesn't think I'm getting fresh with his fiancée. If he does, please tell him he doesn't have to worry. I guess the best man always gets the best girl. ~~So long to useless competition~~. I promise you that I won't dream about you anymore. ~~I won't even fantasize about you when I jack off~~. That's a promise....~~The doctor says he can fit me with a left arm and a right leg. I think they'll look pretty odd. But keeping a limb oozing thick gray puss rotting would look even odder.~~ You can't imagine how strange it is to have a missing limb, let alone two. You won't believe this but the very first night that my arm and leg was axed off, I woke up in the middle of the night feeling that I was ~~scratching my ass~~ with the left arm. I swear I could feel fingers! But the doctor said it was completely natural to have sensations in my ghost limb. I guess this is one of my challenges in life. But strangely enough, this challenge has no luster like all my other goals. I'm still trying to figure out where's the luster in fighting the Viet Cons. ~~Not~~ the less, I tried to get out of bed this morning and fell flat on my face. But I got back into it without a nurse. Don't ask me how.

But I did! The doctor said that I'll be able to move completely on my own in a few months. I still wonder how my father will feel when he sees me. He'll probably think I'm a failure since he fought at Normandy and is a strong man. Janet, you know I try hard to be strong. I stayed strong for almost a year and shot down twenty. I think that's good. Mom'll cry, but I know she'll be proud of me. While I'm waiting for release, I'll have time to think of the reactions my family'll have. You know, it's so ironic that this is the letter I was going to propose to you in. Of course, that was before I received yours; that was my goal. But now I have a new goal. It's a simple one and requires little energy of the body; the biggest challenge of my life. ~~It's the only one of my mind since your letter~~. It's a beautiful goal. It's hard to explain so I won't tire you by trying. God comforts by speaking to me in dreams. I know he'll forgive me of all my sins for what I have done and will do. ~~My love~~, Janet, I guess it's time to say goodbye. Happy memories. This will be the last letter from me so Mike need not worry. Oh, by the way, the beef jerky you gave me for my nineteenth birthday was tasty. It made me so happy to know that someone remembered besides my mom.

Love, Dale

Without A Trace

STORY BY Enrique Inocente

Her name was Rainelle Brujaun, a bulky pink backpack slung loosely over her petite shoulders as she hummed a happy tune. She skipped merrily down Nibelheim Avenue with her white dress swaying delicately in the wind. Her wide eyes marveled at the beautiful colonial style houses that decorated the street she pranced along.

The neighborhood was quiet and void of people, and as if sensing its chance to strike, an old blue station wagon crept silently next to the girl. Its bumpers were severely dented and scarred. Carroty rust gathered in the cracks of the paint job, and black, tinted windows masked the interior from the outside world.

"Excuse me, little girl," a gentle voice called out. "I'm lost. Could you be a dear and help me out?"

Her attention was brought to the man in the decaying station wagon. The passenger side door opened with the steady, shrieking sound of rusted hinges. Her little eyes focused on a man inside, but an ominous shadow shrouded the lone figure in darkness. About all she saw was the twisted silhouette of a man flash a tepid smile.

"I've been lost for I don't know how long. Is there any way you can help me?" he asked cordially.

Rainelle did not answer immediately. She had been taught never to talk to strangers because her teachers and parents made it clear that they were murderous kidnappers.

Neither the child or man made motion to speak. She clasped her hands, hung her head slightly low, and nervously rocked her body back and forth. Her restless gestures made it apparent to the man she was not going to reply.

"Don't worry," he said as meek as possible. "I'm not a bad man. I'm just looking for the nearest toy store. It's my baby son's birthday and I want to get him a nice present."

Rainelle felt a bit at ease hearing the man had a son. She figured someone with a baby couldn't be all that bad. She still didn't respond, though. She knew of a toy store but was unsure of how to get there, exactly.

"So you don't know if there are any around here, huh?" he asked.

Rainelle nodded her head softly.

"Does that mean you know or you don't know?"

"I know," Rainelle finally answered.

The man smiled with his nicotine stained teeth, pleased that the mute girl finally spoke.

"Good," he said delighted. "Do you know how to get there?"

"Sort of," she replied with uncertainty.

"Come on. Why don't you show me how to get there?"

His pale, spidery hands emerged from the shadows beckoning the timid little girl to enter the car. She was startled by the man's abrupt action, and hastily walked away from his vehicle with her new dress shoes clanking faster with every hurried step. Her heart began racing as she saw the car drag along side her with the passenger door still open.

"No, wait, wait, wait!" the man hollered as he advanced on her. "I'm sorry if I scared you but I'm just in a hurry. I'm running late. Hold on!"

Rainelle stopped sensing that she may have over reacted to his gesture. He hadn't said anything threatening, nor given her the impression he meant her any harm. He simply wanted to know where the toy store was so he could get a present for his baby son.

"I'm sorry," the man said in a gentle voice. "You did the right thing by not getting in the car. You're very smart for your age. How old are you?"

"Six and a half years old," Rainelle answered timidly.

"Well, you're very smart. And pretty, too."

The compliment made her smile.

"Those are pretty shoes," he said, noticing her polished pair of white dress shoes.

"Are they new?"

"Yes," she said happily. "My mommy got them for me."

"I'm sure your mommy is a very nice person,"

"Oh, she really is," Rainelle proudly declared. "Even though she can't afford me a lot of stuff she still buys them anyway."

The man was aloof to what the little girl had to say, and simply nodded his head derisively.

"I'm sure she's wonderful," he said, "and I'm sure she wouldn't want to see you get harmed."

"Oh, mommy would be sad."

"Okay," he said with a hint of frustration. "Instead of getting in with me, how 'bout showing me on a map where the nearest toy store is?"

He pulled a tattered map out of the glove compartment and placed it diligently on the passenger side seat as if to lure in prey. She peered at the folded paper settled on the leather seat, enticing her to get closer. What harm would come from just pointing out a position on a map, she thought. He seemed like a nice enough man, and his tone was never intimidating.

The stranger grinned carnivorously as the child approached his vehicle, and extended her small hands for the map. A morbid grin secreted from his wrinkled lips as she ran her little fingers through the maze of pages in an attempt to unfold the map. Just as she unfurled it completely, Rainelle ascended her gaze and noticed the stranger's eyes. She was unable to see them before, but now his cold, piercing eyes revealed themselves. They were black like coal and drained empty of warmth. His smirk was now menacing and malicious in appearance, and just as sudden as their eyes met, the figure pounced like a rabid wolf.

A loud persistent barking echoed through the still neighborhood followed by a stabbing shriek abruptly cut short. A chilling wind swept all the dead leaves spread across the pavement, and hurled them into the dull gray sky. As the breeze tapered off, the lively foliage dispersed into a vibrant hue of orange, brown, red and yellow. An intense silence eclipsed the area, and not a token was left of little Rainelle.



i am not jesus? Homeboy

Written by Jessa Shoutbaby

i am not jesus' homeboy
for his boys
keep young boys
as boy toys
and i weep,
for these boys sleep
in an eternal nightmare
of religious guilt
sexual struggle
and seething, vivid oppression.

i am not jesus' homeboy
for i am in church
in a pew,
staring at my favorite saint
unable to touch his porcelain feet
because i did not donate a dollar
to click the button on the lightbulbs
disguised cleverly under red glass
as candles
blood flickering,
but the mob boss
in his crisp, pinstriped suit
can dance with st. anthony
for all the clergy cares;
after all, he puts 20 dollar bills
in the box
and does a few rosaries
after he sins.

i am not jesus' homeboy
for it seems
that every stand i take for freedom
is a stand i take against him,
or at least that's what they had led
me to believe.
the innocence of a child
used to breed the ignorance of an
institution.
i was taught of a whore named
mary magdalene,
or at least that's what they say,
but this whore
might also have been jesus' wife,
but that would have meant that jesus
got laid.
jesus was hanging with the lepers
man, society treated those mother-
fuckers
like they had
AIDS
or something.
i think that jesus sort of likes me
i may not be pure,
perfect,
forgiving without anger,
but i fight for what i believe in,
and i pray when the spirit strikes me
and i shun tradition
with every mission

i choose to accept,
so no,
i am not jesus' homeboy
i am NOT jesus' homeboy
I AM NOT JESUS' HOMEBOY.
i am his ancestor,
bred in catholic school
where i was taught the rules and
regulations
but where that mischievous jesus
whispered in my ear,
"read between the lines, baby,"
and i did.

i am jesus' ancestor
and i let his tears fall on my head
every time
a priest molests a child
and i promise him
that i do not believe
in sweeping pedophilia under mar-
ble tile
and crimson carpets.

i am jesus' ancestor,
and boy, did Mrs. Miele
ever fuck up
when she let us listen to the sound-
track
of jesus christ superstar
in second grade
as we colored pictures
of jesus on a cross, dying,
for easter.
all i could think was,
"jesus would love to dance
merengue
at the next family party."

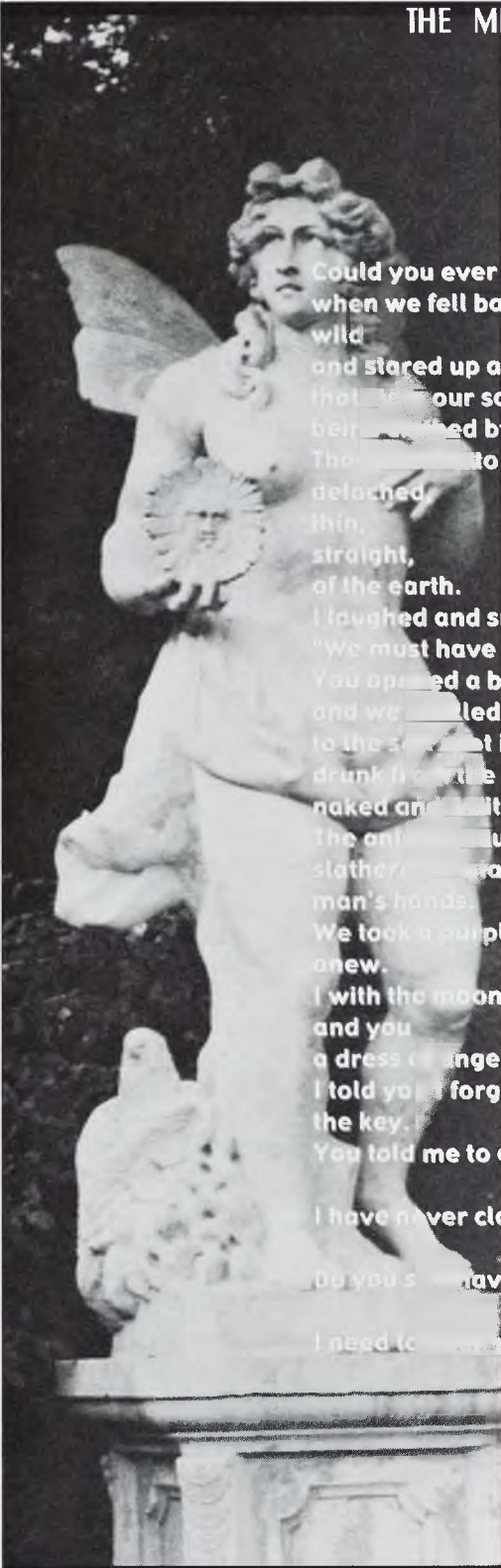
i am jesus' ancestor,
praying for understanding,
begging for help,
asking to be saved from the
hypocrisy
of a church
that demands money
in the middle of an homily
(that church being
Sacred Hearts & St. Stephens
On Summit Street
In Brooklyn).

and i am jesus' ancestor
an outcast,
a pariah,
scared,
for we all have crosses to bear,
and at least i bare mine
with my dignity intact.

THE MEMORIES WE HAVE NOT LIVED

FOR KARIN

Jennifer Hermus



Could you ever forget the time
when we fell backward onto summer grass grown
wild
and stared up at the whispering stars
that ~~_____~~ our souls and made us paper dolls
being ~~_____~~ by little girls in handmade dresses?
The ~~_____~~ to be like us,
detached
thin,
straight,
of the earth.
I laughed and snorted,
"We must have smoked poetry."
You opened a book
and we ~~_____~~led back in
to the ~~_____~~ in our hearts,
drunk from the Shakespearean air,
naked and waiting for love.
The ~~_____~~ laughed at our glowing skin
slathered in wardust and the grease of
man's hands.
We took a purple crayon and drew ourselves
anew.
I with the moon as a gown
and you
a dress of angel feathers.
I told you I forgot
the key.
You told me to open my eyes.

I have never closed them.

Do you still have that crayon?

I need to ~~_____~~ my window.

Zombie Argument

Peter Marsh

TRAPPED INSIDE A BUNKER
BELOW A CONTAINED SURFACE,
THE AIR HAS A THICKNESS
AND A LACK OF LIVING SCENT.
I AM A GROOMED CORPSE
WITH A PULSE,
AND SOMETHING MORE THAN A BRAIN
DECIDING JUST WHICH
CHEMICALS I WISH
TO BREATHE IN.

I DINE NIGHTLY ON
THE FOOD OF ASTRONAUTS .
EATING HAS BECOME
A MECHANICAL PROCESS--
INTO THE GRINDERS
GOES HARDENED ICE CREAM
TO BE BROKEN IN A SEDIMENTARY FASHION.
I MISS THE FLAVOR,
BECAUSE I HAVE GROWN SO USED TO IT.
I NO LONGER GRIMACE
AT THE TIMES
THE ROOF OF MY MOUTH IS CUT.

THE MAN WHOSE NAME
I NO LONGER USE,
READS ALOUD FROM HIS COLLECTION OF
O'CONNOR SHORT STORIES.
TOMORROW NIGHT, A DIFFERENT AUTHOR--
HE WILL READ LOLITA.
I LOOK TO CONSUMING THE WORDS--
A LITERAL FEAST,
SAUCE, SMOOTH AND SWEET
TRAVELING THROUGH MY EARS,
WHETTING THE APPETITE OF
SOMETHING WITHIN ME THAT
IS NOT JUST BRAIN CELLS,
GIVING MY MIND'S EYE
A CARNAL HUNGER,
FAR STRONGER THAN THE LUST
A LOVER FEELS
WHEN EXPERIENCING FOREPLAY--
THAT COULD BE BEST DESCRIBED
USING HEAVY METAL
POWER CHORDS,
YET
I FEAR TOMORROW NIGHT'S READING,
ATE

IT WILL AWAKEN IN ME
A DESIRE TO BE CONSUMED
WITHIN WARM FLESH,
TO ONLY WANT TO TOUCH
SOMETHING NON-MALE,
THOUGH I WILL FIND NOTHING LIKE
THAT
DOWN HERE.
I COULD RISE UP ABOVE GROUND,
AND DRAW THE LIFELESS BODIES
UPON ME
BUT HOW WOULD I GET AROUSED THEN?
PRESSED UP AGAINST
THE COLD AND GLAMMY,
STICKING MY FINGERS
INTO OPEN WOUNDS,
AS THE LEGIONS
WOULD DEVOUR ME,
JUST AS THEY DEVoured
EVERYONE ELSE.

WHAT HAVE THEY DONE
TO THE WORLD
I LEFT ABOVE?
HOW WOULD IT LOOK
FROM A SPOT
BEYOND THE CLOUDS?
A WORLD WHERE ART MUSEUMS BURN
FROM FIRES SPREAD FROM
THE BURNING OF CHURCH SAFE HOUSES,
WHERE TECHNOLOGICAL MARVELS
ARE MADE USELESS
BY THOSE WHO OPERATE
ONLY BY THE BRAIN'S
BASIC FUNCTIONS.
I WILL NEVER SEE THIS WORLD
WITH MY OWN EYES AGAIN,
BUT I WONDER WHAT WILL THE
EXPERIENCE BE LIKE
WITHIN THE SKULL
AND BEHIND THE EYE SOCKETS
OF THOSE LIKE ME,
WHEN THE WALKING DEAD
HAVE FULLY AND FINALLY
DECOMPOSED
AND THE SANE CLIMB BACK
TO THE SURFACE.

TB

• Untitled •

Victoria C. Gueli

there were nights that you
forgot me--
slept on in the semi-dark of your Dark House
unconscious,
without dreams,
as I sat by my window filled with night
and dreamed of you
watching the tree-lined mouth of the street
for your car
and knowing you were not coming.
if this were a story to be told
around a fire,
you would ride a sleek, black stallion,
and carry a silver sword at your waist.
you could only be a highwayman.
i would trail scarlet ribbons out of a
lattice-paned window--
thick glass glittering by candlelight
singing a haunting song,
and leaving roses by my sill.

(by day my father would shout and
shake a wrinkled fist.)

if only my lover could sweep me up
in his arms
and command his horse away.

my fingers would find their way
beneath your black eye-mask--
sky-blue pupils winking.
your hands would find their way under
my foamy ivory skirt,
and the grasses, the deep curves of the hills
would be our bed.
a golden ring would glimmer on my hand--
a simple token,
as we slept afterwards.

but I am awake, here
i scribble the story, not live it
like all my tales--
while you rest
your children sleep too, and
your wife slumbers fitfully.
i am jealous of you all
as you sail the silk, onyx waters of sleep
and i hunch, and write,
and wait for repose.

i left the candle burning in my cottage--
i need to get back into the story.
i forgot to latch my bedroom door--
i must get back into my story.
the dawn comes, i must hurry back--
out of this dream
away from this window
back into the story.

this may sound strange, but an abortion has
occurred in my brain.

today I tried to write a poem
and could not.

i placed a hand to my forehead and felt
for my poem's pulse,
it's heartbeat,
it's kick,
anything!

all was silent and still--

no flutter of bats in my belfry.

i stared at the paper
white, grainy, crisp

felt the cool shaft of the pen between my
Three Wise Men- thumb, index, middle
and began to sweat--

one bead plopping down onto my pad--
a single, frail offering to
the holy ground of my notebook

(it's pages reek of old chants and my devo-
tion)

i could squeeze out no more.

the words stuck in my temples,

choked on my lips,

died in my hands,

bled into my womb,

and I finally gave up,

opened up,

and let the carcass slide out--

a few more days and I'll be pregnant enough,
i'm sure

to try again,

to birth myself--

damn you, you've infected my poetry once
more.

there's evidence of your infestation

everywhere,

your legs and mandibles

tunneling sickly, crumbling yellow trenches

through my poetic phrases,

busily nibbling through

my careful meters and measures

(i try so hard to be a real poet, i think i may
never succeed)

flakes of letters fall

from your tiny, gnarled lips.

suddenly spotted

by the searchlight of my pen

your beady eyes regard me warily as

you quickly scan around for

more nourishment,

with a buzz,

a high-pitched humming,

you scurry away

in search of

more tasty, virgin volumes--

no, you did not fly away.

(i wouldn't deign to give you wings even in a
poem)



TOUCHED BY WEAKNESS

Christian Tubito

A careless grin sits upon his face,
showing no real emotion
As his mind wonders like a lost girl
in the woods
Pondering thoughts which will drive
him mad
Though his emotionless movements
motivate others to act
The carelessness which he expresses,
which is experienced
Lost in his thoughts, grinning
Just Grinning.

Showers inside dampening his spirit
Stress of his thoughts causes the
weight of the wetness to overcome
his emotional strength

A roar thunders in his mind
Lightning explodes internally as rage
is repressed

Questioning, "Can serenity be
reached by self mutilation?"

"Will they notice my weakness?"

"Will they notice my strengths?"

Though those who matter most,
make like he matters, their actions,
their inconsiderate thoughts, and
their constant causes of disappoint-
ment
weaken his soul.

weakening his once weakened heart.
All fears have grown stronger.

Fear causes fears, as his grin lowers
his head

Bowing as if he is in prayer,
A teardrop touches
the floor of his lair

Beware,
he believes, belongs to only him
No longer emotionless
No longer a grim grin

Weeping violently as weakness
begins
to set in.

The strength of a loved one,
can no longer help him

He believes his thoughts, thinking:
"What I thought was being taught
by these thoughts, is now being
fought
by the thought that I'm lost."

Feeling like a race horse,
with a broken shoe

Slower than the rest,
though there only few

For the one strength he can give
Took away his will to live
As I shiver and he weeps

Together we rest
for eternal sleep.

Midnight

Elizabeth A. O'Rourke

*she sprang without consent
into the underworld of disgrace
no soul cared with whom she went
no one checked upon her place
and this little girl with azure hair
and eyes as dark as night
was found so far beyond repair
a helpless, hopeless fight...*

• • • • •

They sat amongst themselves in a vacant sea of sameness, each figure mirroring the next. Disproportioned heads filled with frayed tresses and deep set eyes watched in fear, as each girl was called to the metal fiend. 'Click, Click, Click,' echoed through the naked room, as the nurse's fingers moved the dial. The weight was recorded in discretion, but wandering eyes tried to catch a glimpse of the horrific digits, nonetheless. 'Click, Click, Click, Click,' and pause. Wow, right in the middle of the bar.

"That must mean that she's close to seventy," a feeble girl uttered aloud. Snickers filled the room and others whispered remarks of reconciliation.

"This is not recess", waled the nurse from the opposing end of the room. Upon the nurses bantering, each girl prompted up in complete silence. The cackle of her 'smoker's voice' was one which they came to abide by. Their remarks and insults would merely have to wait until after lunch -- if they ate any.

I watched them closely, memorized their distinct features, which differentiated each from the next. They were all so similar and yet so different. I wondered what went on inside of their rooms when no one was observing. I could never except that I had conformed to their sorority of hysteria. I wouldn't except it. I wouldn't allow myself to be entirely consumed by such a minor part of life. I wished that I could crawl beneath my mere crate of a bed and revert back to my childhood. I wanted to be encompassed by the aftermath of a summers storm. The air so sweet with the scent of pollen, and the picturesque rainbows gliding over the Earth. I still remember those summer days. Summer days in which I could devour a soft serve vanilla cone, without the mere thought of a caloric figure.



HAPPY MAN TRILOGY

PART I:

Wakes every morning and looks at the mirror
His reflection still intact, he casts a little smile
And he pats himself on the back
Extraordinary how he keeps himself satisfied
And level headed when everything around him
Is falling apart
He is a happy man to everybody that knows him
An asshole to some
A mystery to others
A sufferer to the gun that pulls him
It's as if his illusions reflect on the eyes that see him
A perfect harmony of bottling things up and swallowing
The thing that would normally enrage someone normal
A piece of art, a piece of dead skin
A portrayal of a gentleman
A study in denial
He is a happy man
Walks amongst the clouds
Turns the other cheek
Sits down in his comfy couch
Closes the curtains in his glass house
Dedicates his time to pin another nail on his palm
This is Utopia, this is what he does
Prepares his masochistic routine
Until he goes to bed
By the morning he wakes up smiling again

PART 2:

He walks perfect in a line of temptation
Passes on by through people that will cause him turbulence
He knows that they want to break him
But he just smiles and passes them
Wears his grin proudly and greets everyone politely
He is the happy man that never has been broken
Never been sad or never bad spoken
His behavior is unique
His presence is so pristine
Many see him as flawless
A perfection amongst the wreckage
He is at peace within the walls he put himself in
He struts down the street without skipping a beat
He is what some try to be
Inspiration and envy at the same time to some
Because it is hard to be like him
So nonchalantly and with a right frame of mind
He is the happy man that never has settled in a bar to drink himself away
Some wonder about him
Some speculate the gossip
Has he ever been bitter
Because in this town there is nothing bitter than to be in the company of misery

PART 3:

If failure was a contribution
How much would the scale tip
What type of order would there be
If there was a façade by every person
Walking down the street
If it was quite the contradiction
To be accepted and outcast
How much would it take to be adored
If by memories of every hardship
Would fix each one
Maybe the smiles wouldn't be hard
But as he lays down and thinks it through in his head
Circulates through the words and transcends
To each thought, thinking it hard
Masturbating to the sight of
And the voice of hatred's angels
This is a lullaby to a man in suburbia
City howls at the peek of the cliff
Lighting up his window
Filling in the mystique
Where shadows play
And insanity runs around
There is a danger inside the glass house
Nobody around so there's not a threat
But his head is occupied
And yet he is still satisfied
With the thought that tomorrow he will be the happy man
Because he can't retreat
He can't dose off
He is emotionless
When people have turned on him
He just walks
He has been hurt
And he is more zen-like than Jesus Christ
He is satisfied because he won't let the fucker win.

TOILET PAPER WARS

JENNIFER BURTNER

He refused to buy toilet paper. He stole it from wherever he could, even though this made his wife unhappy. She tried to explain how the econo-class paper left her soft underside irritated. He did not care: paper was paper. That was when she started seeking alternate sources.

The affair began because she liked his paper. He only bought 'Charmin.' When she was over his place studying, she frequently used the bathroom. He just shrugged it off as a small bladder. She confided to friends that she loved going to his house, that she loved sitting on his bowl, and most of all she loved his toilet paper.

At this point her husband had become suspicious. He had noticed that she never used the bathroom in their apartment anymore. But he did not know that her tutor had already leaned over and kissed her. At first she panicked when their lips touched, but then she thought of the rolls and rolls of toilet paper she saw stacked in his bathroom.

It was then that she decided her marriage was over. She knew what she wanted and she knew how to get it. She quickly divorced her husband and took him for everything he had. She left him stranded, alone on the bowl, with nothing to wipe his ass with.



Minus E = mc²

A Diminished Star: Joe Major's Restaurant

By Frank (fitzimp) Imperato

Joe Major's demise came slowly. The final moment of a dying star is an exploding, expansive red giant that envelops everything in its inflated track. The "black hole" sucks everything into its cavernous tube, including light-- it is a monstrous vessel of energy. Joe Major's Restaurant died with very little energy. Its last gasp was a silent exhaust expelling memories of exciting, sparkling bygone years.

Where do departed restaurants go? Perhaps to an area called, "Restaurant and Diner Heaven." Perhaps to an out of the way place called, "Rest au rant In Peace," where former owners and patrons can come together to mingle and remember. In this imaginary place the coffee, donuts and dinners are free, with no out of pocket expenses to the owner. The neon lights flash, "Eat & Drink Free," forever free buffet, free beer, free parking and pleasant waiters, waitress and barmen, an endless menu and party suggestions, also, live entertainment on the weekends.

My dad and his friends frequented Joe Major's especially on Friday night: "Fright night." Joe Louis, Billy Conn, Tony Zale, Rocky Graziano, Sandy Sadler, Willie Pep. All the great fighters and not so great fighters. When there was a championship fight the place was crowded, loud and smokey. The largest and most attended party at Joe Major's was St. Patrick's Day. This was a day that was spectacular in attendance and festivities. Adjacent to Joe Major's was Curren's Bar (another old timers bar, now Scuffy Murphy's). That section of Fourth Avenue near 69th Street could sometimes be quite noisy.

During the Second World War trucks and cars going to Staten Island had to take the Staten Island Ferry at the 69th Street Pier. Trucks and cars would line up from Shore Road past Narrows Ave., past Colonial Road, Ridge Boulevard, Third Ave. and up to Fourth Ave. Due to the flux of people, trucks and cars it was a prosperous time not only for Joe Major's but all the surrounding business; the Royal Restaurant now the New Royal, the Ridge Diner now Yiannis, the Drew's Brothers Deli, bakery and liquor stores and the Dodge dealership that was located on the Southwest side of 69th Street now Rite Aid. Subtitle: "My, My, How Things Have Changed." After the war the former patrons came back and Joe Major's continued to do a thriving business.

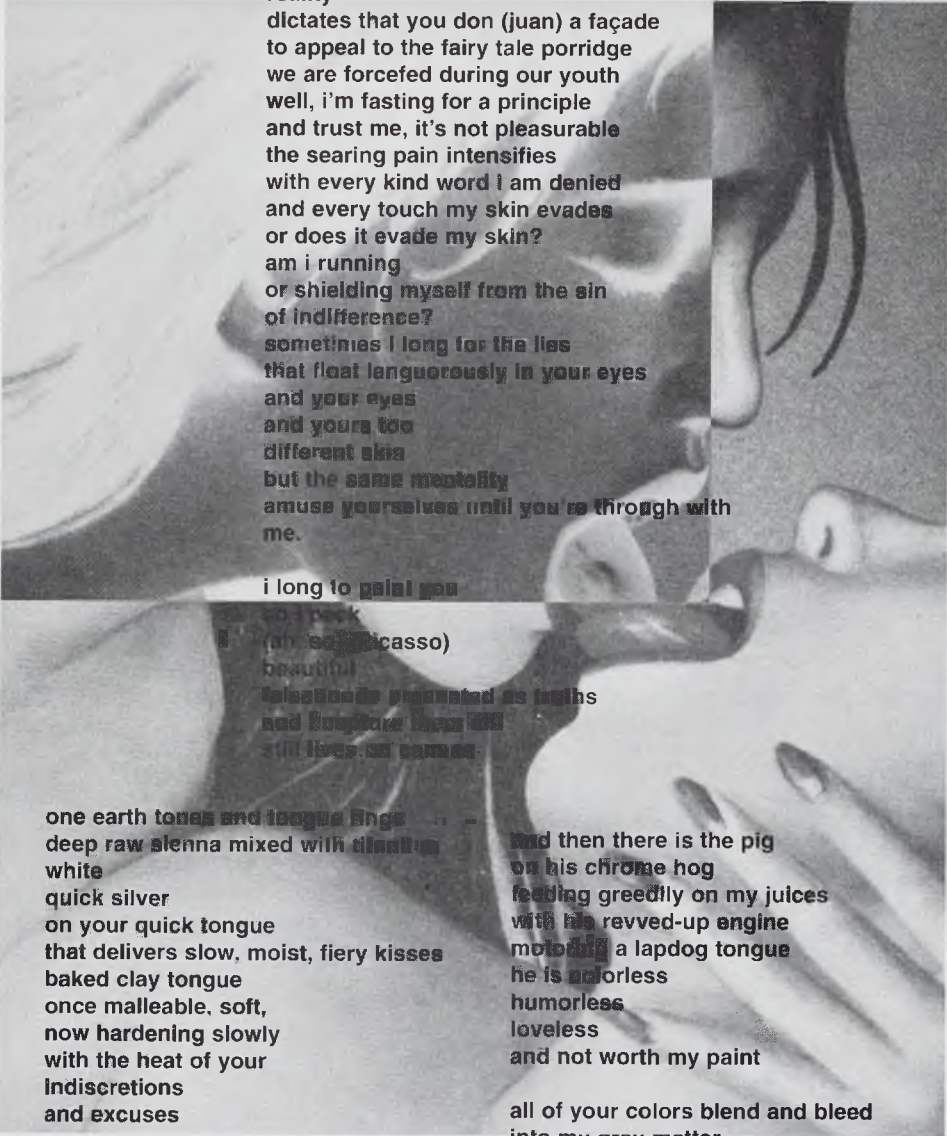
Across from "the long bar" were leather covered booths which extended to the back of the restaurant with a few lone tables for couples. Joe Major's was one of a few bars that had a free buffet and snack table for its patrons. One of the patrons, an older gentleman, would sing some of the old tunes from the forties. When my wife (Terry) and I had dinner there I would always see friends of my father and parents of my friends that grew up in the neighborhood. It was a memorable, heartfelt experience.

When Joe Major sold the bar and restaurant the new owners retained the name and made some minor and major adjustments. The first booths to go were the booths adjacent to the "long bar." New pictures on the walls were provided for the back half of the restaurant. The change was slow, unrelenting and insidious. Finally, the booths in the back half of the restaurant were replaced with tables. This produced an antiseptic condition, which excluded, or at least discouraged, the "old timers" from patronizing the highly polished Joe Major's.

My wife and I, along with hundreds of patrons, will miss the "ole watering hole." I'm going to miss the "long bar," the booths that were small havens for dinner and active discussions "of shoes and ships and sealing was, of cabbages and kings." I'm going to miss the food that was served in a "home style" atmosphere and the people, the patrons. The believers. The demise of Joe Major's must be that portion of life that is called "progress." I experienced a tragedy of lost precious moments. Thanks you, Joe Major, for making this little part of the world a brighter place to live; affording people the chance to get together, a chance to communicate, a chance to appreciate happy times and wonderful memories.

Cinderella Gets Fed Up in the Fairy Tale Forest and Takes Up Painting Passive Aggressiveness

POEM BY JESSA SHOUTBABY



you are not real
you merely phallic fantasy
some half cocked fallacy
of a real man
reality
dictates that you don (juan) a façade
to appeal to the fairy tale porridge
we are forced during our youth
well, i'm fasting for a principle
and trust me, it's not pleasurable
the searing pain intensifies
with every kind word I am denied
and every touch my skin evades
or does it evade my skin?
am i running
or shielding myself from the sin
of indifference?
sometimes I long for the lies
that float languorously in your eyes
and your eyes
and yours too
different skin
but the same mentality
amuse yourselves until you're through with
me.

i long to paint you
so i peek
(at the Picasso)
beautiful
misshapen presented as truths
and shadows from
still lives on canvas.

one earth tones and tongue rings
deep raw alenna mixed with dandelion
white
quick silver
on your quick tongue
that delivers slow, moist, fiery kisses
baked clay tongue
once malleable, soft,
now hardening slowly
with the heat of your
Indiscretions
and excuses

the other chiaroscuro
all planes and angles
black and white
blended
and divorced
at times themselves
at times gray
with a stroke of winter sky blue
to distract
from the harsh angles
your words create

and then there is the pig
on his chrome hog
feeding greedily on my juices
with his revved-up engine
more like a lapdog tongue
he is colorless
humorless
levelless
and not worth my paint

all of your colors blend and bleed
into my gray matter
making a permanent home
in my cranium
the toxic oils
eroding my sanity
but my serotonin
is paint thinner
and i'm phasing you out
until i finally have
a blank canvas
on which to paint my dreams.

Independence Day always seems to have the perfect breeze. Tall oak trees refusing to move... the wind did it's best to bully them during this time of year but it strong enough to dance with Granddaddy's nose hairs. But it wasn't too calm to allow the humidity to contemplate treason against us. Yeah, it blew just enough to smell the fried chicken, mash potatoes, collards, and unfortunately, the stinky chitlins.

If you're standing on Aunt Helen's five-step wooden porch, you can always tell if someone was coming because the car wheels always start a Greek battle with the gravel that paved the dirt road.

The house is mostly brick now painted pea green with white trimming. You can tell where the house was modernized. The house has the smell of damp earthy, mossy, rotting wood exposing her secret age. And some secrets are not meant to be exposed, especially when it would only cause trivial upset. One such secret was the ice cream on the Fourth of July in 1980.

You see Ronnie, my cousin, begged his mother, Aunt Helen, to make the ice cream for this year's family picnic. To my surprise she said yes. She should've known better...

Every year our family gets together on the fourth of July and has a big celebration. That included everyone who could make it and some of our ancestors, too. As usual, the meal was delicious—except in my opinion, those nasty chitlins. Black people in my family refuse to eat it. Mama is always saying, "Look it, I can afford real pork to kill myself with...slavery is over." But papa, who's a Black Catawba, devours the stuff like it was his last meal. Probably because mamma refuse to make it and this is the only time he gets a chance to eat it. Matter of fact, all the Catawba side of my family relished the dish and Aunt Helen was more than happy to oblige since food is the only thing she thinks she has in common with Catawbas.

It was Papa's favorite side dish. Go figure. Then again, he can't begin to remember any of his ancestors having shackles on their feet as they were dragged off a slave ship. Then once you get to the "promise land," having chitlin scraps thrown at ya by your master... but I have to admit, it tastes good, if I'm eating it off Papa's plate...

Anyway, back to the ice cream....

It was homemade. And it was a ritual with my family on the fourth of July for one of the children to make it. This is the only moment during the entire feast that seemed like a family gathering because the rest of the time the black women was busy talking about the Catawbas, about how snobby and badly dressed they were. The Catawba women are just as bad. They were busy being picky about the blacks' hair texture and obnoxious laughs. I heard Cousin Sweeny tell his wife, Batta, "if only their hair wasn't so nappy, the world would never say anything bad about Negroes." I could tell he honestly believed it. He always says this when he looks at Ronnie.

But today everyone was so proud of Ronnie for making the family desert, especially since he was only ten. I was six.

Everyone was thrilled—except for me. You see I knew Ronnie...mmmhmmmm. And was not about to eat anything that nasty boy touched.

Here he comes toting the big aluminum bucket to the big wooden picnic table. Everyone's clapping—except for me. Like I said, I knew Ronnie...mmmhmmmm.

Everyone took giant scoops of that stuff. That year's flava was chocolate raison pecan ice cream—all natural...mmmhmmmm.

My Papa noticed that I was upset. He asked me why I wasn't eating any. I told him I was getting sick—and sicker by each minute that passed. Papa kissed me on the lips, picked me up and placed me gently on his lap and said, "Don't be that way, Qattalla, I'll make sure you make it next year..."

But Papa didn't understand. I wasn't jealous. Far from it...why would I be? I was in heaven sitting on his lap and under one of his arms. Ronnie didn't have that. And there was something else that Ronnie didn't have anymore...

All I could see when I saw that ice cream was Ronnie's snot collection that he kept under his bed... And it was missing!

ICE
CREAM
By Jhon
Singleton AM

"Freedom"

By: Kevin S. Mamakas

[it's]

Abandoned by the mountains of Harz.

[it's]

Blamed for the atrocious crime of perjury.

[the]

Crimes stay constant like the fire of a phoenix.

does

Democracy still-remain shallow?

[it's]

Enriched with silt like the Sea of Azov.

[yet]

Freedom in our lifetime must be deja vu.

[all]

Generations must never live in regret.

nor

Hide behind what is our Achilles.

some

Ignore the few signs of "big brother."

some

Joke about the structure of the "old" Iraq.

[hence]

Kindness must come upon us before our sleep

so

Liars can be like an embryo.

[the]

Myths will fly away like a dragon.

[while]

Neglecting to overshadow our freedom.

[the]

Oceans will begin to open and reveal

[some]

Proposals that need another look.

* * *

don't

Question a person wearing a taj.

[for]

Revolutions will arise like a ghibli;

which

Saturates some skies in Africa with rough

and

Threatening winds that can last very long.

[the]

Universal justice can't be off

[for]

Victory can't exist with so much abuse.

[now]

We must be able to become open-minded

and

X-ray the epics of a critic.

* * *

Our

Youth can't end up in a dirty pub

Zonked because of a hard agenda.

give you a reason

Written by: **Christian Nicalou**

Strobe lights
fog machine
covered room with sweating bodies
sensuality breezes like an aroma
penetrating the senses becoming someone else
music captivating your body
raising your impulses
I got caught up in the moment
floating with it
giving you a reason
to see me in a different light
feel me with your tongue
while I wrap my arms around your waist
I want you in my imagination
so you can direct it and make it real
make me feel something I haven't felt before
make me weak at the knees
this is the new me
giving you a reason
to see me in a different light
I want you to connect with my eyes
and get into me
I want you walking inside the illusion of what
I made myself be

Lil Lil had no more strength left in his eyelids. Like window shades pulled down too tight they shot straight up, letting the darkness of his bedroom flood his sight. He turned over on his left side out of desperation, to see if the blue light was still lining the bottom of his closed door.

He was in luck. The light was there, indicating that his mother had not yet finished watching T.V. in the living room. He slowly counted to ten, while images of *Dawn of the Dead* zombie and his least favorite of all monstrosities, the possessed girl from the *Exorcist* took time circling through his mind. Each time the two different images passed over each other they became more realistic. Lil Lil saw that the caked blood around the zombies' mouths was a dark purple. His eight year old brain made note that both the undead creatures and the overtaken girl had eyes that were wrung with charcoal. The girl's gaze was upon him, the zombies' eyes were pressing up against him. He heard a possible crack coming from his closet and sprung up out of bed.

Lil Lil threw his bedroom door open with a fury fueled by a self-loathing for his cowardice. He knew the way other eight year olds thought. None of them would go through this "bullshit" [what Daddy always called Lil Lil's nightly episodes.] At night, the fear of the possessed and undead filled his thoughts. During the day the fear that his fellow schoolmates would find out that he still spent most night's getting tucked in and watched over by his mother would flicker every so often.

The doorknob bounced against the hallway wall, creating a noise that added a spring to his step, and hopefully didn't wake up Daddy. Within seconds he was in the living

NIGHTMARES TO COME

room hovering above Mommy, who was snoring away as usual.

"Mom," he hissed through his lips. He rocked back and forth, keeping one foot grounded in place. He reached down, fumbling his pajama shirt, and occasionally sticking his hand inside of his pants. He groped himself from nervousness.

Perhaps Mommy would snore so loudly that she wouldn't notice the zombies had taken him. He knew how cruel horror movies were. Though irony was not yet a concept he understood, he knew-- better than most people his age or older, the sad comedy that occurs when a horror movie victim is killed just moments before possible rescue. Lil Lil had yet to learn what adrenaline was, but every night when he played out this particular scene, he was pumped full of it.

"Mommy, wake up." He hissed again.

He saw Regan, the little girl from the *Exorcist*, which gave confirmation to his fears, that yes, even children can fall victim to horror movie monsters. He pictured the audience watching him. They could see what he didn't want to turn around and see: the gore covered zombie behind him.

"Mommy!" He cried out in reserved agony.

Mommy's snoring ended.

"Lil," she said in that half frantic-half disappointed tone she always woke up with.

He began pleading before she was completely conscious. "Mommy, I need you to come into my room."

"Not this time," was mommy's expected response.

"Please." Lil Lil begged. "I saw a commercial for the zombie movie a few hours ago and I can't get it out of my head."

“Andrew, there are always going to be horror movies coming out. I can’t tuck you in every time this happens.”

The use of Lil Lil’s real name. The finality of her tone. She would pretend like she wasn’t giving in, but that would only last for two minutes. Lil Lil didn’t have any tears to shed, but in a dire situation like the one he was in he wished he did. Mommy could not get up quick enough, and they were still in that short period where she would pretend like she wasn’t going to do anything. Dammit.

All of a sudden, there was a thud by the front door. Lil Lil dug his face into his mother’s shoulder. “Lil,” she tried to say, but the pressure from his head was causing her to lose her breath. Lil Lil’s whimpering spread throughout the entire house.

“What the hell is going on?” Daddy shouted, half from the waking world and half from his perverted dreams. Lil Lil feared the shame he would see in Daddy’s eyes tomorrow morning, but he feared his possible killer at the front door even more.

“Lil, relax,” Mommy said as she slowly turned him by his shoulders to face the ‘zombie/possessed girl/serial killer.’ “It’s only Colette.”

And it was only Colette, Lil Lil’s seventeen-year old sister. Her eyes were red. Would Mommy yell at her for smoking pot again?

“It’s not what you think.” Colette replied, dragging her denim jacket sleeve across her face. She was wiping away tears.

“It better not be.” Mommy said angrily.

“Just don’t worry about it. I’m not on drugs tonight. I haven’t done anything since that first time, when you caught me.” Colette’s voice began to break down. With each word her composure was worn away, until Lil Lil felt happy that he might actually not be the

Authored by Peter Marsh

biggest embarrassment of the night.

“I didn’t do anything tonight except be who I am, and it looks like that is just not good enough for anyone.” With those sob covered words, Colette left the living room and went down into the basement where her bedroom was.

“Lil, go to bed!” Mommy shouted into Lil’s ear. He jumped, completely startled, not yet knowing exactly what had transpired.

“You’re so mean to me!” Lil Lil shouted back. As if trying to copy his sister, he ran off to his own room, turned on the light and slammed the door shut. He would wait here, until Mommy came to apologize. When the time came, he would force himself into sleep as she held him in her arms. He would make himself tired as she tried to make conversation. He would find his way safely into the world of dreams again.

There was a shout from Daddy again, but not as powerful as the first burst. It was followed by the tapping of Mommy’s feet, as she made her way down into the basement.

Through his floor, the eight year old heard his Mommy talking with Colette. What was said was muffled, but Lil Lil could tell that Mommy was questioning his sister. Colette gave her answers, and took time doing so. Lil Lil could hear her talking and talking, filling in for every possible detail, just like Daddy said she did every time she would start telling a story. When was she going to be finished? When would she let Mommy leave? Though it was a Friday night, and there was no school tomorrow, Lil Lil needed sleep too. He had to wake up early for Saturday morning cartoons.

Finally, muffled noises that sounded like one word answers were coming from the floor. Colette had finished her rant. A few moments later, Mommy was at Lil Lil’s door.

“Lil, you can go stay downstairs with your sister if you want.”

“But I don’t like sleeping in the basement.”

“She needs a little company tonight, you can bring your pillow and sleep on the couch

down there.”

“I don’t want to.”

“Fine, but I’m not staying in here tonight.”

Mommy closed the door. Lil Lil heard her close the door to her bedroom as well. The lights were off in the hallway. He was trapped alone in his bedroom with the light on. For a moment Lil thought about his sister and wondered what her problem was tonight. He began to worry about her, but then became far more concerned with himself as the image of zombies entered his mind again. At first they were only quick snippets, flashing at him like a strobe light.

Lil didn’t wait for the monsters to solidify in his mind. He flung himself to the wooden floor of his bedroom and tapped three times gently. With every tap he looked over to his wall, as if he could see through to his sleeping father—to see if he would wake again.

He waited for what seemed like an eternity. There was Regan again smiling, knowing that no one was coming. Then he heard Colette’s steps rising up from the basement. The reassuring sound was what kept Lil from jumping out of his skin as his bedroom door opened.

“What do you want?” Colette asked, her eyes little red pools.

“Mom said you needed some company tonight.”

Colette rubbed her eyes. “Did she now?”

“You can stay up here with me,” Lil said, ever-hopeful.

“Fine.” Colette huffed and left Lil Lil’s room. A few moments later she was back with a curled up sleeping bag tucked under one arm, and a pink pillow in the other. “Couldn’t sleep?” Colette asked her little brother.

“I never can,” Lil Lil responded self-loathingly. As Colette rolled out her sleeping bag, and lowered herself onto the hardwood floor, Lil Lil became comfortable in his bed. If any of the zombies came tonight they would go for his bigger and tastier older sister. They always went for the teenage girls first, especially blondes like Colette. He turned over on his side and closed his eyes.

“Will you turn off the light?” he asked Colette.

“Fine,” she sighed.

Lil Lil heard his sister’s hand pound the light switch. The darkness swept over his room once again, yet Colette’s aura now protected them both—it kept the images away. Further and further the zombies began to shrink away, as if they were traveling in a car to the land of dreams leaving everything disturbing behind. Lil Lil’s suffering was finally at an end for the night.

“You have it so easy, Lil.” Colette’s voice pulled her little brother back.

“What?” he asked her.

“Nothing.”

Colette was always a source to feed the extremely demanding, curious side of his personality. The reason behind her current state of being would be answered, as long as he could keep her talking.

“What?” Lil Lil asked again.

Colette sighed and then she offered her answer, “When you get to be my age, everything becomes so much more complicated. You have it so easy Lil.”

“No, I don’t!” Lil said, but he knew his sister wouldn’t understand. One point that both Mommy and Daddy always tried to get across to him, was that Colette did not experience the late night episodes that he was constantly going through. His sister was not a flawed coward—not like he was.

“Yeah, you do.” Colette said with anger in her voice.

“You always seem to be more happier than me. Tonight is the first time I saw you cry since last Christmas.”

Lil Lil had a point. Colette kept her emotions bottled inside. Sarcasm seemed to dominate every bit of conversation she had with any of her family members, especially Lil Lil.

“Guess I fooled you.” Colette said back.

“Well, why are you crying tonight?” Lil Lil would soon have his answers. Perhaps

Colette had messed up. Perhaps she would be the child that shamed the family for the next few weeks. He could pass the crown on to her.

"Jimmy and I broke up."

"You did?" Lil Lil asked with a new sense of fear in his voice. Jimmy was the third boyfriend Colette ever had, and Lil Lil liked him the most. Jimmy was so cool. He knew everything about *Pokemon* and *Transformers*.

"What happened?" Lil Lil asked, hoping that perhaps he would be able to find a solution to whatever problem Colette and Jimmy had, something they might have overlooked.

Colette laughed. "You are way too young for me to tell you why."

"I'm not young. I know a lot of things that most kids my age don't."

Lil Lil opened his eyes. The darkness filtered in, but he could care less. He had no fear of the undead now. Now he was a lot more interested in ways that he could prove his sister wrong.

"I don't care how much you think you know," Colette responded. "You're not supposed to know this."

"Are you two sexing?"

The room went silent. The darkness started to take shape again. In an instant the fear returned. Lil Lil remembered moments just like the one he was experiencing, he remembered seeing scenes just like this in a half dozen horror movies.

Colette started laughing hysterically. The fear passed through like an electrical current. Was Colette being possessed?

"No. And that is none of your damn business Lil."

Another laugh popped out of Colette.

"Sexing. That is a good one, I'm going to have to tell that to the girls on Monday."

What was so important about this whole sexing thing? Why did his parents always tell him not to pay attention when his Uncle Mike would make jokes about it? Why did his mother cover his eyes when people in the horror movie they were watching started doing it? What was this thing that everyone had to keep secret all the time, and laugh about when he would ask about it? It was just like the month before his birthday party last year. His parents and Colette acted the exact same way during the month that they planned his surprise birthday.

"Don't go thinking your sister is a slut, Lil." Colette said in the most serious tone he had ever heard come from her. For a moment he tried to remember when he had heard that mean sounding word. It was in the movie *Scream*. The killer Billy told Sydney that her mother was a slut, and that was why she was killed. Lil Lil hoped she wasn't a slut. According to *Scream*, that was the number one reason why teenage girls died.

"I don't Colette. I don't even know what that means."

Colette laughed again. Knowing that she would never come out and answer his question, Lil Lil decided to go to sleep. He was sure his mother would tell him the whole story about Colette and Jimmy the next day during breakfast.

Suddenly something wet pressed up hard against his cheek. Was it a vampire? Was he about to be eaten? Was this what it felt like when you started becoming possessed?

Lil Lil relaxed when he heard Colette's voice. "Thanks Lil. You managed to make me feel good tonight." He closed his eyes tight as he heard her slide back into her sleeping bag.

"Just remember Lil brother, you still have it easy at your age. Enjoy it while you can. It gets tough when you get to my age."

Those were Colette's last words in the darkness. Lil Lil kept his eyes open. He was too mad to let the fear creep in. *How could it be any worse than this?* Lil Lil asked himself over and over again as he lay awake in bed for another half hour.

Long Night, Silent Morning

By Christian Tubito

Silent morning, brisk breeze in
the air
Untamed melody chimes when
dry leaves crunch
A fierce fire burns throughout the
night
Uncontrollable flames, desirable heat
Passion passes slowly, passing time
Never ending moment, ~~Never ending~~
pleasure
Enchantment of electricity, sparking
extreme excitement
Evolving from question to answer
Moon mourns, Morning waits
Silence breeze, Silent breaks
with morning silence comes
Night Ends....

Milk and Butter

By Jennifer Damaskinos

She stands in the corner watching as he takes off his khaki pants and his stained wife beater shirt. He looks at her almost as if saying "Your turn". She hesitates for a moment then begins to undress. First she unbuttons her jeans and slides them down her pale white legs. Then she takes off her shirt and unsnaps her bra. He smiles in anticipation. She remains serious.

He doesn't care.

She gets into the bed first and he follows after her. He slowly but aggressively takes off her underwear. He goes to kiss her lips but she turns her head. She believes to kiss him would be a sin and she already takes up twenty minutes in the confessional every Saturday. Her husband wonders why.

Her husband wonders about a lot of things.

He doesn't care.

She feels him inside. He calls out a name that isn't hers but he doesn't know that. She begins to go over her grocery list. Carrots, apples, bread, hot dogs for the kids, and maybe a chocolate treat for herself. She thinks to herself: *I'm not a bad person*. We need the money. He tries to kiss her again and again she turns away. He moans and he is done. She didn't finish.

He doesn't care.

He places the money on the nightstand and leaves as fast as he came. She puts her clothes back on and walks out of the hotel into her car. Before starting the ignition, she says a prayer for her husband to find another job and for herself, to forget the face of the man who just had his hands on her. She pulls out of the parking lot and drives to Pathmark. She reminds herself not to forget about the milk and butter that she promised her husband she would get before returning home.

She does care.

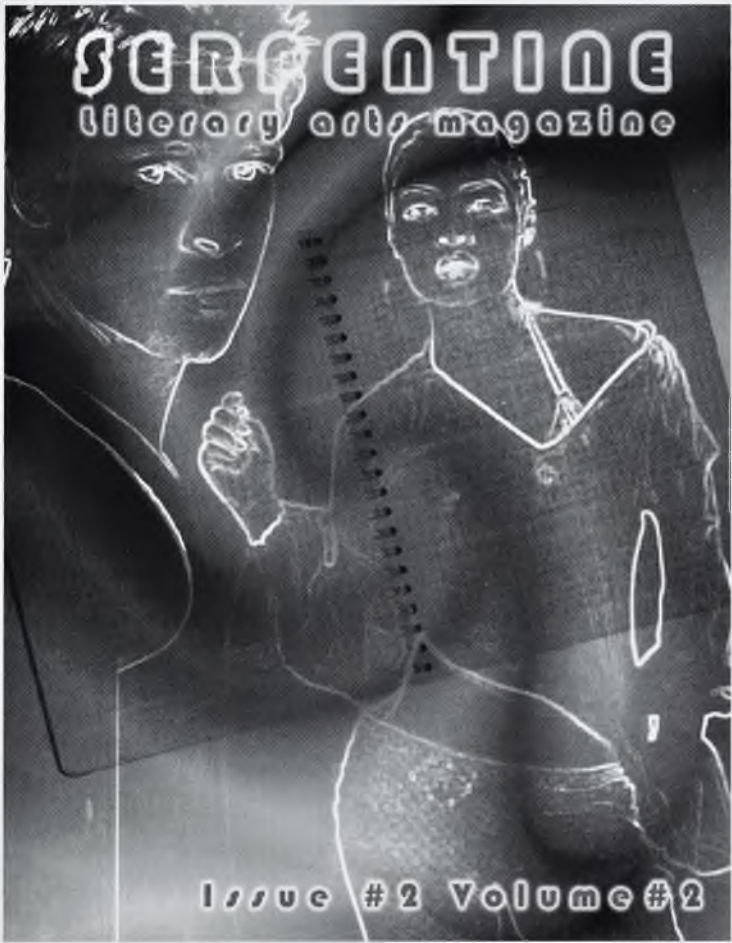




ALTERNATE COVERS

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Broken Time

Burn my bridges down to cinders
Clocks are passing like broken time
The clouds spell something I can't read
Squinting from disappointment's shine

And the earth is still
and I'm still on it
The sun is shining
and I shy from it

There is hope under a rock
in the bottom of the ocean
and there is love under a lock
in the depths of my emotions

And all that's missing
clings to my chest
like a bomb that's ticking
and all that's missing
won't allow me breath

So there you are
prying fingers from death

I can burn my bridges down to cinders
Clocks may pass like broken time
Clouds can spell their cryptic words
And if I squint from saddened shine
I know I'll smile soon, for you are mine.

-Dena Ventrudo

Les Printemps

I longed for you--
painstakingly prayed
from my frost covered window

The days passed--
bleak, unexciting, cold

And alas you appeared--
creeping and then encompassing

I ran outside to greet you--
and was met
with a runny nose

- Jennifer Hermus

REGRESSION'S PROGRESSION

By: Kristy Gonzalez

she was a hobo, a drifter. she had once promised herself that she would go many places, see things that some could only dream about once she'd started. she'd spent many months in many places, but nothing more than that one day. with her torn knapsack and well worn shoes, she stumbled onto a strange, little familiar place. she became imbedded in its soil. she had boarded a large water vessel of some kind. it made loud bellowing noises that reminded her of days as a young girl spent in the dense forests of lands very far away from here--days spent as a young girl riding this large boat many times. she divulges these often sad tales with a wistful smile on her face, puzzling those giving her their apt attention. there was a blanket of fog, impenetrable, stretching out in every direction and when she left the main cabin of the boat, wandering onto the deck, the air collided with her face, forcing it into a cold, damp grasp. suddenly, dark figures loomed into view. large, misshapen sentinels were awaiting the arrival of this large roaring vessel, their arms protruding into the blackened water, arms that grabbed at and held onto the bottom of the boat, shaking it somewhat violently. at last, the boat was safely docked, as a dog resting warmly in its master's lap after a day of anticipation. few joined her in this early morning exodus--some scampering, others laboriously departing from the ship into the large hulking interior of a massive room. she had seen many horrors and wonders in her life, and this large, unknown void (which seemed like a gaping mouth threatening to erase her entirely), was nothing to fear. strange scribes littered the walls; little did she know that these would soon be embedded into her mind. as she emerged from the darkened corridor that had somehow attached itself to the vacant boat, many smaller corridors with more strange scriptures on their dirty, stained walls, came into view. they branched out this way and that, all bending skyward, and through large windows she could see the beginnings of a grey morning. she climbed the upward passage, the murky streaks of sunshine that streamed through the glass panes on the doors waiting at the end of the hall. the light bathed her feet, her legs, her hips, then her face, the clouds were too heavy to allow the sun to traverse through, but the slight hint of a ray excited her. as she opened the door leading from the dark and dirty corridor into the outside world, she looked back past the gritty walls and remembered the dark portal from which she had derived from, and for a moment found herself considering running back towards it, back onto the boat, and leaving this strange place. but then the air, thick with some sort of a stale musk--something that irritated her sense of smell but intrigued it as well, invaded her, seeped into her mind until she found herself turning the other way and stepping through the doorway.

large mechanical beasts stood idly by as she watched her fellow shipmates climb willingly into the mouths of these creatures. they reminded her of the many obelisks that she had seen in Europe, toppled and rumbling softly. as she approached the large object, she saw that it's teeth were large and flat. they seemed more like a tongue, and she watched as a woman in very sharp heels stepped onto the tongue, somehow feeling the pain that this poor beast had to endure. she stepped gingerly onto the blackened organ and saw that a man was strapped to what she assumed was one of many large blue teeth of the monster. the woman in the severely spiked heels had dropped several silver coins into the throat of the creature, but she knew that the monster preferred what she liked to call wafers. she slid one into the creature's throat and smiled when she heard the satisfied beeping sound of a thank you. as the large metallic beast lumbered through the winding, narrow streets of the strange little place, she marveled at her surroundings. endless rows of houses lined the streets--streets speckled with dying tress, even though it was the middle of spring. each house was a duplicate of the other, their only distinctions being colors and a few scattered lawn ornaments. however it was the inhabitants that struck her as the most peculiar. they all wandered around, somewhat aimlessly, but smiling nonetheless. settled in a blue, felt covered tooth of the beast, she turned to look around at the others, noticing the same placid, blank stare on their faces as well. their eyes were glazed over, with an indifference that struck something inside of her. she seemed to notice something beneath that. beneath the vacant stares, a silent plea for something she couldn't understand. she felt lightheaded now, and realized that one of the gills of the creature had been opened and the warm, stagnant air from the outside slowly seeped in. she felt sort of languid--not an unwelcome feeling, but it still put her on edge. she felt as if her thoughts were leaking out of her head, she couldn't gather them fast enough. she couldn't help but imagine walking onto the rusted green lawn of one of these picture perfect houses, the driveway filled with gravel or maybe lined with perfectly smooth stones. the porch light


clicking to life with her movement, the jangle of keys, opening the perfectly sized red or blue door, inhaling the fresh, recycled scent of her humble abode, day after day. she shook her head to rid herself of these thoughts, but they gripped onto her, seizing her mind in a dangerous dance of impassivity. her struggle, furious now, went unnoticed by those around her. her head was searing, as if the thoughts had materialized and were sawing into her skull, shoving these happy, redundant scenarios into the twists and crevices of her brain. the dim sunlight managed to break free long enough to glisten along the edge of a billboard, pulling her eyes towards the message, shining in bright red. an unnatural red that held her and she stared, transfixed, remembering seeing this sign before, passing this on her way to the piers--but now it was behind her, and she was back, fighting for her mind, struggling against an unseen undertow.

at some point she fell asleep. no one knows for how long, but she slept and when she woke, she was standing in front of a large house, cut from a very familiar mold, and she was turning the key, and the hall light bathed her in a buttery glaze, and the house welcomed her, her heels clicking on the parquet floor, just exactly the way she'd always pictured it. she was finally at home, and as she prepared dinner, an empty smile lay upon her face. empty, watery eyes sat in their sockets as she watched her jeweled and manicured hand stir some sort of bubbling red sauce, the sound of her children playing somewhere in the house (or maybe outside.) she tried to remember the last time she had a new thought. no, she couldn't think of things like this, not when there were bills to pay and dinners to cook and clothes to wash. staring deeper into the pot of sauce, something inside her brain began to happen. pulses were now working their way around her mind, massaging memory out of their atrophy, bringing hidden secrets out of the shadows in her brain. what was so strangely familiar about this sauce? the smell? the texture? no, the color. it was such a bright red, a stinging red that reminded her of letters (*no mustn't look back*), of a grey morning (*the check to the PTA has to be mailed*), of a large (*your son's play is next week, you have to decide on what to wear, and the children are hungry*), large sign, large letters, sun shining, looking, staring, gazing, words. her hand neared the stove, lightly burning the tips of her fingers, and the spell was broken. she commenced making dinner and setting the table.

there's a phenomenon that the inhabitants of this strange little place suffer from. once they reach a certain age, promises are made. they'll leave this place, and never return. but they always do. the farthest most of them will go is only past a few bridges or across a river. they almost always return. some say it's in the air. others say it's the water. no one knows for sure, only that there is something in this strange little place, this odd little hamlet, surrounded by water, something that sinks into the bones of its kin. no matter how far they try to run, the all return to this perfect little place, and feed its insatiable hunger with new minds and broken dreams.

Torn from limb to limb, feeling savagely raped, Challenged by faith, Challenged by hope, Lost in all, Lost in none, Answer lying in the barrel of a gun. Those who challenge faith, Those who feel my hate, Will not feel a pinch of pain, Nor my life to gain, Guilt, present in their mind, Conscience battered for all time, Challenge me, or Challenge none I Challenge you, O Barrel of my gun. But my own fault caused my downfall, Bloodshed of red, O who I call, I challenge faith in

**my own
m i n d
O ' B a r r e l
s p a r e m e j u s t
o n e m o r e
t i m e.**



'Barrel

Christian Tubito

Can You See?

By
Jennifer Hermus

SETTING:

Small bedroom. Clothes on floor and bed, music and drug paraphernalia strewn about.

TIME:

Evening. Present Day.

CHARACTERS:

BOY - Sterotypical stoner teen experiencing an acid trip for the first time.

TUPAC SHAKUR - This character is never seen by the audience. This can be done either having an off-stage voice or by representing this character blacked out or in shadow.

BEDROOM

BOY enters stage left into bedroom

BOY

(shouting to off-stage) Alright mom! I'll clean it up. Why do you gotta always get on my case? (silly laughter) I bet Timothy Leary never cared about the order of his room when the world is so filled with chaos and munchkins and rainbows. I hate powdered munchkins...(more laughter)

BOY fiddles with mess and finds phone

BOY (CON'T)

Ooh, gotta call Bones. I think it's starting to kick in! (Spurts of laughter while dialing) Yo man! What's up? ... yea, I took it about an hour ago. I think it's starting to kick in...well, I'm starting to see trails and I'm all giddy and jittery. Is that normal? What's normal anyway? (laughter)... no she has no clue. She just keeps bitching about my room. An artist is supposed to be surrounded by chaos. When I move to the city I'm going to have a gritty studio...I'll find a way to make money. What's money anyway? It's so trivial. Lennon didn't make his music for money. Ginsberg didn't write and chant for money. Dali didn't paint for money (pause)...anyway, I'm more like Huxley. I'm doing this for preparing to meet with the psychedelic gods...you know, like 'ride the snake to the lake'. He means that acid is the guide through the universe. Didn't you see his movie?

While BOY is unaware, some sort of audio disturbance should occur to signify TUPAC'S entrance into the scene.

BOY (CON'T)

Man, that's how it works. Acid is like a conductor, and I'm on the train. It's like how everything is connected and you know, we're all stardust and crap...oh my god...there's a black man in my room. (drops phone and jumps back) Who the hell are you?

TUPAC

Expectin' someone else?

BOY

Aren't you some dead rapper? I thought I was supposed to meet Bob Dylan or something. Oh my god this is heavy.

TUPAC

Rapper. Prophet cum psychedelic messenga', yea. Tupac Shakur. You neva heard a me? Damn. And son, Bob Dylan is still alive. Where's ya head at? You definitely trippin'.

BOY

Is that why you're here?

TUPAC

Listen you little suburb mama's boy, I'm here cuz I'm a prophet.

What about John Lennon?

BOY

He's cool. He's fucked up, but cool.

TUPAC

Wait...uh, you know him? Where is he?

BOY

(laughs) With the rest of us fools. In the psychedelic god-head realm. Shit, why you messin' with this shit for anyway?

TUPAC

Wait...you can't be. I'm supposed to receive the answers to all of life's questions!

BOY

What and a black man can't help you? Is that what this's about? That's exactly why the God-Head did this.

TUPAC

Did What?

BOY

Affirmative action.

TUPAC

I know what affirmative action is, but what does that have to do with my acid trip? Dude, this is heavy.

BOY

It has everything to do with this trip. Man, rappers get no credit. We's prophets too. You heard a' Machiavelli right? I am the prince, the prophet, but man you hear a' kids lookin' for me when they's trippin'? Nah! So, the God-Head started affirmative action in the psychedelic realm and now dead rappers can visit you druggie yuppies. Got it?

TUPAC

Uh...sure.

BOY

So, what do you wanna know?

TUPAC

What time is it?

BOY

Time? There is no time. There is no now, no then and no when.

TUPAC

Wait...dude, shouldn't you have some colorful auras and like angels dancing around you? This is a beat ass trip.

BOY

Wake up kid. This is your reality. And that is no reality. Am I even here right now? Do you know your name? Do you know where you come from?

TUPAC

(hesitates) I...I don't know. What's happening to my mind?

BOY

The question is, what has already happened? What hasn't happened? You can't see the void. You can't understand the universe. You're in a cell. You don't know prison until you break out. Can you break out without dying?

TUPAC

Lights black out

END

THE SOUND OF THE SEA

Iryna Fontana

About ten years ago, I had cause to visit the coast of the Black Sea on the Crimean Peninsula. Alushta, a cute, tiny and quiet town, was in the busiest season of the year-- the health-resort season. As every year, six months of dead season had been exchanged for the next six months filled with noisy crowds of colorfully dressed tourists. They were relaxed and pleased with themselves. They came for recreation and to spend money. They would spread their pale bodies over the sand. With persistence and patience, they would lay in the sun for many hours a day, frying their sweaty mass, desiring to obtain the "Hollywood" tan. The town was saturated with the spirit of felicity. It was a real kingdom of sun, plants, and sea.

The next morning, a storm arose, not allowing the people to enjoy their long-wished-for-idleness. The wearisome inactivity in the hotel rooms was not in the plans of the newcomers -- the sea attracted them. Because there was nothing to do, the people scrambled to the beach. I opened the door of the hotel "Seagull" and went outside. The door behind me swung and creaked. The morning looked like twilight. A merciless wind beat the foliage of the trees with rage. The leaves trembled powerlessly on twigs; some of them were taken up by the wind and flown far away from the tree. Pieces of old newspapers, white shopping bags from the local grocery, and leaves ripped from the trees were spun around by the wind. A few women clutched their skirts to their legs, to keep them from fluttering up. Everything was swirled in an untamed dance. The heavy, laden sky threateningly loomed above our heads; moreover, a loud, strange sound filled the air. I took the hand of my four-year-old son and squeezed it hard as we headed for the beach.

The closer to the sea we came, the louder the noise became. A never before seen picture appeared in front of our eyes. The mind refused to accept what the eyes were seeing. The waters of the Black Sea were truly black and the sea looked like a giant boiling cauldron. The huge waves looked like watery skyscrapers moving swiftly toward us, accompanied by a horrible thundering sound. The waves did not reach the people who were standing and watching the riot of nature, but collapsed and crawled back to the cold, churning element. New waves replaced the old as soon as they retreated. Some of the waves took the shapes of ugly monsters. They opened their toothless traps and vomited cold splashes of water and small sea stones down on us. After their attacks, when the dreadful monsters broke up into small particles, the white foam on the top of the waves made them look like lowly sheep going back to the field.

The sound of the riotous sea, the frantic wind, and the rolling rocks, joined together and produced so loud a noise that people could not hear each other even from a very close, distance. Tiny drops of water were suspended in the air. It seemed as if a foggy layer of gauze was spread over the town, from the sky to the land. I had a strong desire to reach out and try to touch those gauzes. The smell of the sea was abnormally sharp. It was a mix of fresh air, free wind, wild water, dead fish, and seaweed. One could perceive the bitter and salty taste of the seawater in the mouth and noise. I took a deep breath and could feel that fresh cool air going down my lungs.

Both my son and I were getting soaked from head to toe. Our hair was mixed with sand and water and stood out in different directions. The sand crunched in our teeth. We stood motionless and charmed by the coming of the marvelous and horrible force of nature. I realized then that man is a little bug dwarfed before the grandeur and strength of nature, especially furious nature.

A group of adventurers were playing in the wild waves. It was fun until they realized that it was a dangerous game. Then, they tried to get away from the violence of the mad sea. They struggled, but the hungry paws of the water trapped one girl. A few men tried to rescue her, but nature is much stronger than man. Their efforts were useless. The riotous sea wringed her helpless body in its carousel, swallowed it up, and threw it on top of the waves. At one moment, her body peered out and went under water again. The next moment, a piece of the swimming suit glanced out and then sank into the deep. Then there was nothing, only the insensible jumble of a natural disaster, continuing to perform its useless, monotonous task. It seemed that the God of the sea was mad with the people on dry land. He sent his punishment, frightening them and destroying all around.

It is a tradition that on the morning after a storm, everyone goes to the shore. Usually the sea throws a lot of coins out on the beach and jewelry that people had lost over many years. This time, it threw out a lot of shiny things and sixteen unlucky bodies. The sea was once again full of peace and nobility. A single ripple on the surface sparkled merrily in the sunlight. The gold sphere of the sun shone majestically in the azure sky as flocks of snowy white clouds slowly sailed by. Over the surface of the sea, seagulls soared, looking for small fish, while frolicsome dolphins overturned playfully in the water. A single yacht sailed on the mirrored surface of the water. The sea attracted, the sea enticed. The first tourists appeared on the beach. This day they occupied places closer to the water. They opened up beach umbrellas and unfolded beach chairs. Children screamed loudly and joyfully. They built sand castles and ran along the water's edge. The small, smooth waves softly caressed the sand. Little by little, the beach was coming alive after the storm and after the night. Different songs sounded from different resorts. Yet, from each came the same smell of BBQ. The day was clear and sunny. The sea was welcoming once again.

Quiver

by Jessa ShoutBaby

i want a man
who makes my thighs
quiver,
you know what i'm talking about
a man
whose mere presence
gets my skin burning like a fever,
whose voice
causes me to leak lust
from between my legs
whose words
cause pulsations
from my heart
to my clitoris.

i want a man who
makes my legs spread
every time his lips part,
a poetic soul
with poetic words
and poetic fingers
that write volumes
of sonnets
with each stroke of his elegant finger
on my flesh.

this is a real man,
a man who only turns his back to me
to let me
kiss down his spine,
that binds the leaves of thought
that would otherwise flutter throughout his
body,
a man who lets my words flow
through his body like
blood
streaming through veins,
a man who dominates my G-spot
but can submit to my wishes occasionally,
a man who knows that compromise
and sacrifice

are two separate entitites,
a man whose eyes
show truths
and lust
in equal measure,
and can lock eyes
when we lock limbs
and speaking of,
i want him to accept my body
and ravish it thusly
in his frenzied praise.

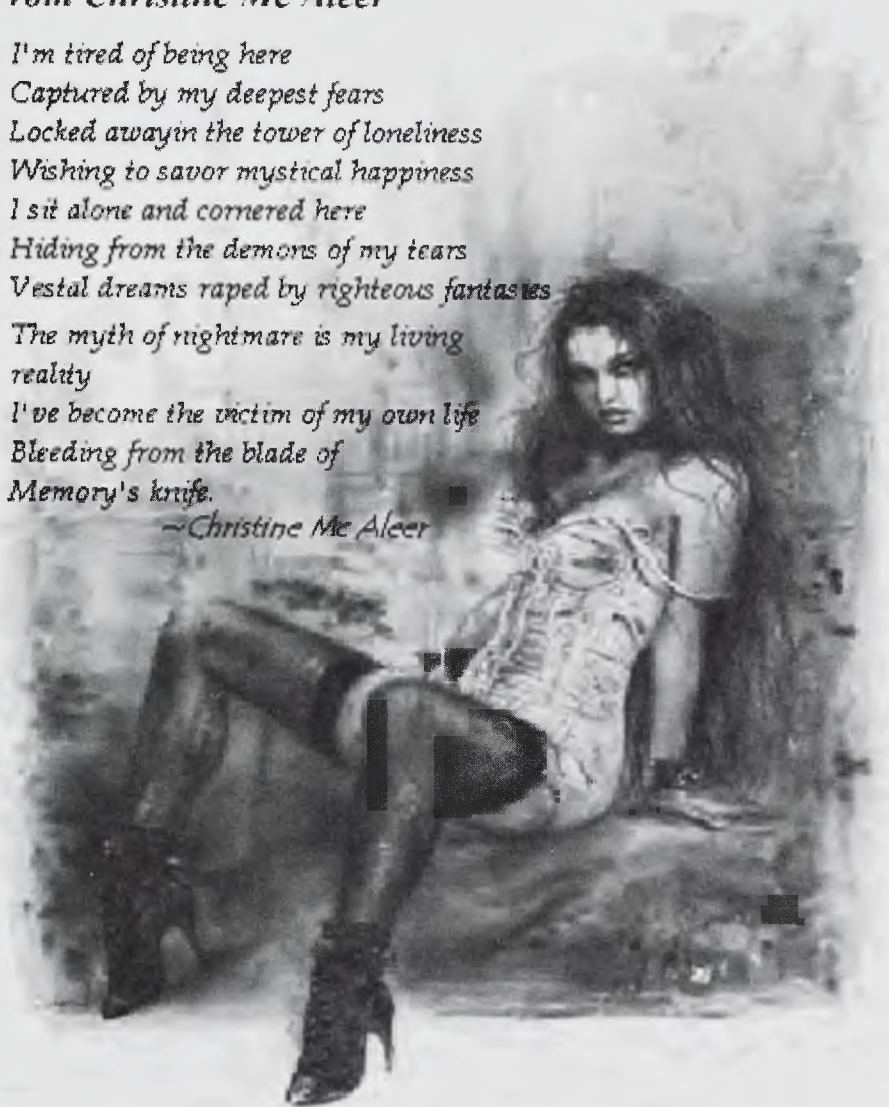
i want a man who understands
my words are imperfect
even my poetry violates the rules
of propriety and conformity
if he makes my lips
quiver,
it must be from pleasure,
for they are tired of
shaking
like flimsy tree branches,
stripped,
raw,
defenseless,
on a windy night
shaking from the cold, unyielding breezes
of harsh words.
i want to bite back
screams of pleasure
not
agonized sobs,
and he may bite them as well
if i may feast on his.

if he so exists,
i will shed my fortress,
unfold
a faerie in flux
and grant him
wishes.

From Christine Mc Aleer

*I'm tired of being here
Captured by my deepest fears
Locked away in the tower of loneliness
Wishing to savor mystical happiness
I sit alone and cornered here
Hiding from the demons of my tears
Vestal dreams raped by righteous fantasies
The myth of nightmare is my living
reality
I've become the victim of my own life
Bleeding from the blade of
Memory's knife.*

-Christine Mc Aleer





Annamarie Dooling

I had just come down the steps when I saw her, but pretended I didn't. She was hunched over the table, in our dimly lit kitchen, the cream of the wallpaper sending a glare across the shiny floor. Her short frame was perched over the table, and she adjusted herself to better reach over the edge of the thick glass. Again and again she leaned in and the fork she clutched in her small hand disappeared inside the large ceramic bowl. Ten minutes earlier I had eaten from that same bowl, possibly from that same fork, and as I walked past her now, only our shadows made contact. That would have been my moment to reach over to her, and tell her about the pain I had inside, but I didn't. I walked down the stairs, and studied the moment a lot longer than someone who didn't care would have. She was sad and small for those few minutes, and inside, I felt tears building up behind my eyes. Evening while hearing the echoes of the large bowl hitting the edge of the sink, I felt the overwhelming sadness--but I still didn't go tell her how I felt. Throwing away that chance, I threw away one of the last chances I would ever have to share my feelings with her. It felt like nothing new, and I didn't know any better, neither of us did.

* * * * *

It was described, by the paramedics, as a massive heart attack that ended at 10:49am on December 12th-- which is funny because the pains in my heart began at that exact moment. And while they had that in common, I can assure you mine will last longer than hers did. Ironically, that thought wraps me in comfort like a soft down blanket, and lulls me to sleep along with promises of the Resurrection and the Sacred Heart that now marks the spot on my body that died along with her.

what a way to go

Kristy Gonzalez

when I wake up will you be gone?
will your scent still linger in my mind?
will I still feel your touch clinging to my skin?
will the mere thought of you still ignite my nerves?
I want you gone, but there's a recollection of you
that's left an imprint on my soul
oh god, I can't set you free
but oh, what a way to go, with you haunting my every breath, my every step
but what I would give for just one more taste, just one more trace of the sin of your lips
I want to drown, just one more time
I want to be lost in your embrace, destroy myself just once more.
touch me and listen to my insides come alive and die all in the same instant,
run your fingers along my skin and feel its warmth while you're freezing me inside.
you might have brought such joy in another life, but now you've made me numb.
I try to come alive in the ecstasy of pain, but I am too far gone
I only want the things that hurt me, because I can fool myself into thinking I'm alive.
I want you to find me one day, perhaps in a motel in Memphis, or Reno
we'll happen to run into each other
we'll make insanely passionate and empty love
just once more, let me be submerged
one last memory before the slate's wiped clean

Seething

by Dena Ventrudo

Seething
Angry
Want to start swingin at 'em
Breathing
Heavy
Exhausted from thinking bout it

I want to feel my fist
against the flesh that started this
I want to bash it in
and take no rest from sin...
I want to, I want to
I want to screeeeeeaaaam!

Seething
Irate
Can't carry this anymore
Bleeding
Insane
I feel defeated, not so sure...
gonna - snap, gonna - snap...
gonna - snaaaaaaaaaap!

I want to destroy
I want to cry
Bloodlust, bloodlust
sometimes
I want to die!

Seething
Angry
Want to start swingin' at 'em
Breathing
Heavy
Exhausted from thinking 'bout it...
My face is wet,
my skin is hot,
my fist is clenched
my eyes are shot
I cannot sleep
I cannot sleep
I cannot sleep!

and I'll do it all again tomorrow.

running farther away
from the one thing you've been searching for
feeling less and less
like the person you're going to be
knowing more and more
that the days hold more crimson memories
but still you sit
still you ponder
my psuedo-intellectualism
is bubbling over again
and i feel greater than before
but i know i'm less
and knowing that the slithering time is
nearing, i can taste it
but fighting, gripping
wanting sweet voids
like candy cane kisses
and bubble gum teardrops
blind elations fill the gaps
of the silence that i really fear
but can't wait to gain
and feel the air around my mind
and hear my voice in the third person
and detach from my big bright dream
of a superimposed reality
that's nothing like the rock bottom i sought
and i want a legacy
and i want an epiphany
and i want a breakthrough
and all i really want is to find a place to call my own
to find a home
but solitude is your humble abode girl
so don't tell me what he's done to you
don't tell me all those lies were true

don't let me be the messenger again
cause another bullet, i'm all out of luck
but i'm still running farther away
from a death that's never been punctual
and there's no slowing regression's progressions
only taking your swan dive
and turning it into a cannonball
in shark infested waters
but it's creeping up again
there's a big bright orange raft again
i might just jump feet first

running farther away

By
Kristy
Gonzalez

cause i've got my manolo blahniks on this time
'cause i want to be submerged
i need my time to come
i want to feel the quiet
i need my little fortress
i want to be a super man
i need to be alone.....

The blanket came up over my head,
I can't hear anything.
Pitching: Roger Clemens, Batting: Mookie Wilson.
The first pitch came with a crash downstairs.

The pillow came up over my head,
I can't hear anything.
Wilson singles; at first, steals.
Thrown out like the darkness in my room as the hall
light creeps in.

Your hands came up over my head.
Chin music, chin music, chin music.

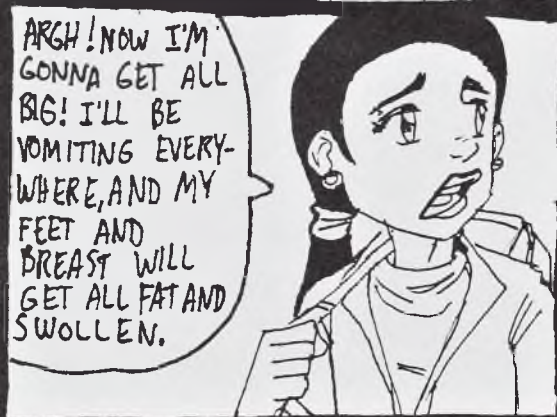
The pillow came down over my head,
I can hear everything—
even the tears diving off your bruised face,
splashing my bed.

Caught Stealing

by Calvin Simpson

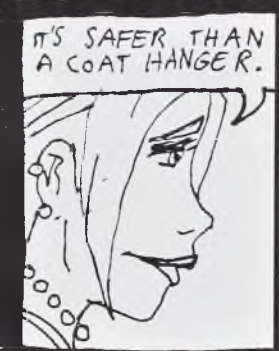
ABORTSIDRIN

Illustrated and written by Enrique Inocente



THIS IS PERFECT! HOW AM I GONNA CONTINUE COLLEGE WITH A KID! I'LL BE UP ALL NIGHT FEEDING IT, AND WASTING MONEY RAISING IT. I DON'T WANT TO BE LIKE THOSE SINGLE MOTHERS THAT BRING THEIR BASTARD CHILDREN TO CLASSES, AND DISRUPT THE WHOLE LECTURE! MY LIFE IS OVER!

CHILL, STACY. FORGET ABOUT THAT SUICIDASIL, AND GRAB YOURSELF SOME..



TAKE BACK YOUR FREEDOM WITH **ABORTSIDRIN**. SO EASY AND SAFE THAT 9 OUT OF 10 SOCIAL WORKERS RECOMMEND IT.

WE ARE FORCED BY FEDERAL LAW TO ADVISE YOU THAT THOSE WHO ARE HEALTHY MAY EXPERIENCE DIARRHEA, HEAD ACHES, TEMPORARY BLINDNESS AND SUDDEN DEATH SYNDROME IF YOU TAKE **ABORTSIDRIN** IN EXCESS.

IF YOU CONSIDER TERMINATING A LIFE, IT'S BEST TO TAKE **ABORTSIDRIN** WITHIN 30 WEEKS OF PREGNANCY. ABORTING ANY TIME AFTER THAT IS CONSIDERED MURDER IN SOME STATES.

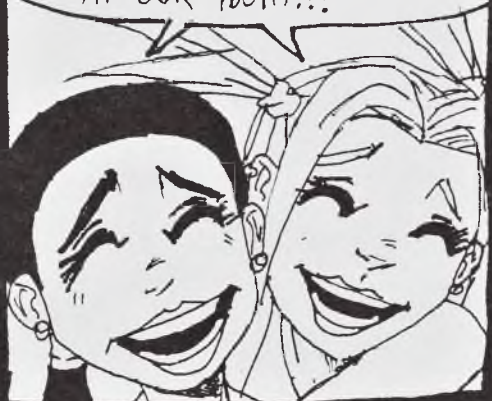


ABORTSIDRIN



BECAUSE ITS YOUR RIGHT TO CHOOSE.

THANK YOU **ABORTSIDRIN**! YOU'VE GIVEN US A SECOND CHANCE AT OUR YOUTH!!!



“... the world will always welcome lovers...”

THE BIG DANCE SOUND
DANCE... DANCE... DANCE...
...KEEP ON DANCIN'...

Shuffling through difficult math and science classes and exams, a week of school finally coming to an end. Off to the Friday night dance at OLA or Saint Anselm. Sunday night it was OLA or the twenty-five and over club at OLPH. Saturday night it was either a “house party,” a trip to one of the small cabarets in Bay Ridge, Flatbush or Sheepshead Bay; Dixieland in Manhattan at Central Plaza or Stuyvesant Hall.

The best was the Sunday night dance at OLA. The four piece band would belt out the tunes of Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, Benny Goodman and Harry James. The dance of choice was either the “Fox Trot” or the “Lindy Hop.” String of Pearls, Sentimental Journey, Moonlight Serenade, Moonlight in Vermont, In the Mood, The Jersey Bounce, Sunset Serenade, Route 66, Pennsylvania - 6 - 5 - Oh - Oh - Oh, Mood Indigo, You Made Me Love You (Judy Garland), Anytime and as Time Goes By. All the great tunes of Frank Sinatra, Mel Torme (The Velvet Frog) and the Meltones, Von Monroe, Bing Crosby, Helen O’Connell, The Andrew Sisters, Peggy Lee, Billie Holiday, Perry Como, The King Cole Trio, Count Basie, The Pied Pipers and The Modernaries.

Those few hours with much of the neighborhood kids and most of your close circle of friends became a wondrous time, with unpretentious people. OH YES! OH YES! OH YES! Grab that beautiful damsel and let’s Lindy. As the noise level rose and excitement filled the room, the dazzling multi-colored lights played on the ceiling, walls and floor. The vibration of everyone dancing, the sound vibrating from every corner, the din of laughter and talking. The vortex of the whirlwind inhaled your very being; drawing you up, up, up, higher and higher. Move over Jackson I’m dancin’; in and out, out and in, under and over; over and under, jumping, skipping, stomping, sliding and “jivin’.” Fox Trot till you flop; Lindy hop till you drop; “cut a rug,” I’m out of breath, I have to rest.

That girl looks like Gene Tierney. I’ll ask her to dance. Some “ribbing” you would have to endure when she said, “No, thanks.” That NO loomed large and usually produced a beef red face; however, on to the next challenge. In the maze of jeering and laughter you tried again. In the midst of this upheaval there was that quiet time inside your mind, body and heart that welcomed the wonderful feeling of closeness and camaraderie that may escape you in the future.

The red hot swing tunes went out as a blue vapor. The “Big Bands” disbanded and their music evaporated. The old time crooners and sultry female singers followed in the steps of the “Big Bands.” The “elevator music” and Doo-Wap entered in a milky white foam, sort of obscured, not easily distinguishable or defined. Slowly the so called “new age” of dancing dominated the old. I say “so called” because as any old codger can tell you there is no feeling like the feeling of holding a girl in your arms, whirling around a dance floor saying, “Hi, my name is Frank... what high school do you go to?”... and off you go with a girl in your arms on a magical adventure to a distant star.

AS TIME GOES BY

By Frank
(fitzimp)
Imperato



The subway cars were usually swamped with commuters during morning rush hour. I was lucky enough that day to find a car practically empty. I took it as a blessing and snatched a comfortable seat by the window. The tunnels were dark and depressing. The only things of any interest were some steaming sewer pipes, and the occasional rat -- if your eyes were quick enough to detect it. But how could anybody miss those vermin? They were the size of ordinary house cats.

I hadn't noticed her at first, but I did take notice as she drew closer in my direction. The woman was sickly thin,

with shredded rags, or maybe it was her clothing. It was obvious she was pregnant because of her perfectly round, protruding abdomen. A sign with some writing scrawled across it dangled limply on the side of the stroller. She must've made it herself from a piece of cardboard. It read concisely in bold marker: 'I'm hungry, pregnant, and homeless. Please help.'

"I'm sorry to interrupt your peaceful ride," her hoarse voice was trembling, "but if I could have a moment of your time. I don't mean to be rude, but I'm very hungry. I know you are all very busy people and the sight of me is prob-

She had an odd European accent. I tried to place her nationality, but couldn't quite figure it out. Whatever country she hailed from certainly didn't have a sun. Her skin was pale white, like milk, and her wilted and dead jet-black hair draped over her shoulders.

"A penny, nickel, dime," the woman begged, "anything you can spare."

She looked to the passengers for an offering, but was shunned at every turn. I couldn't help but feel sorry for her. I had thirty dollars on me. I thought five dollars would have been a decent amount of cash to contribute, but then I realized I had all my money in ten dollar bills. I wanted to lend a hand, but ten dollars was a bit much to just give away. Besides, my allowance was only forty dollars a week. I had already wasted ten dollars, and needed to stretch what was left for the next couple of days.

Then I thought, "*Maybe I could give her the ten dollar bill, and then ask if she had five dollars in change. She'd be five dollars richer either way, right?*"

"Anything you can spare," she belted again as she wandered down the aisle.

I don't know what possessed me to think of such a scheme. I'd have to be some tactless son of a bitch to actually go about asking a homeless woman change for a ten. I wanted to help, I really did, but I didn't want to give away a third of my allowance.

We locked eyes for an instant as she plodded down the aisle. Her face was pasty and malnourished. Dark circles enclosed her traumatic blue eyes. My very core was besieged by an intense pity. I was left hoping that the other passengers would be generous enough to contribute since I was so reluctant. Nobody donated a damned thing.

She eventually found her place in the corner of the train and sat there alone. She began to tenderly caress her unborn child. Without a word or hint, she kicked the baby stroller to its side in a fury, sobbing thereafter. Out of curiosity, I turned to spy on her. She rolled up one of her sleeves revealing her upper limb. Red marks resembling mosquito bites ran along the veins of her forearm, and she hovered her hand over the miniscule punctures. She then began to scratch her arm sadistically, and stopped, irritated to see the marks still remained. With her thorn like nails, she clawed deeper into her arm desperately trying to tear the soiled flesh from her bones.

The other passengers gawked at the homeless woman, disturbed by her erratic behavior. All I did was turn away from the pitiful sight.

"*Maybe I should've given her the ten dollars.*"

Instead of stressing over the matter, I closed my eyes to rest. The woman's weeping continued to echo in my skull. Her despondent cries had phased my mind-set and the thought of her thoroughly depressed me. I made an effort to forget her. I tried not to care.

"*But why should I care, anyway? Would she care if she was me, and I was in her position? The dumb bitch probably brought it all on herself. Maybe she made way too many stupid mistakes and is rightly suffering for them now. Besides, I don't know her. Why should I even care?*"

As hard as I tried to convince myself, I just couldn't shake the sympathy I bore for the woman. Her shattered appearance, and her haunting cry were permanently entombed in my mind. She lingered in my brain like a horrible infection.

ANYTHING YOU CAN SPARE

Enrique Inocente

She must've been in her late twenties, but her worn, decrepit face made her look twice as old. She wore a raggedy orange winter coat, and underneath a sky blue dress with pink frills around the collar. The white tennis shoes on her feet were dirty and torn at the soles. Her ebony, straw-like hair hung strait and motionless as she sluggishly pushed a tattered baby stroller. In place of a baby, she had a large black garbage bag filled

ably depressing, but, please, I need your help. I've just been evicted from my home and've been sleeping on the dirty streets for weeks. The homeless shelters here in the city are dangerous places and there's never a guarantee I won't be robbed, beaten or even worse. There's really no place...," the decaying woman began choking back tears. "Please, if you have any extra food, or spare change I would really appreciate it."



Jeremy Fein

Jeremy Fein has been writing since 1982. He has a live journal online, which is available to the public livejournal.com/users/jfi1977. They're first drafts but they're chugging along. When Mr. Fein isn't writing he's playing the online games *City of Heroes* and *Star Wars Galaxies* 'till his eyeballs bleed.

Kristy Gonzalez

Better known as "Miss Cherry Blossoms", Kristy is our resident chain smoking cinephile and devoted writer extraordinaire. She's currently having an epiphany and loves creativity in any way, shape, or form she can get it. Girl. 19. Fell in love with the world.

Victoria V. Gueli

Victoria V. Gueli is an English Literature major and hopes to graduate within the next two years. A former journalist for the Staten Island Advance, she has had several of her poems published, and plans to release a self-published volume of poetry and short stories in the coming year. She is currently a freelance writer for various pagan magazines.

Serpentine Magazine CONTRIBUTORS & STAFF

Jennifer Hermus

I have come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. I possess tremendous power to make life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration, I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis is escalated or de-escalated, and a person is humanized or de-humanized. If we treat people as they are, we make them worse. If we treat people as they ought to be, we help them become what they are capable of becoming." - Goethe

Jenn Hermus, 22. Biggest artistic accomplishments: artwork in *Shadow Archives Council: Book of Materia Magica*, *Serpentine* 2002-2003, and being chosen to speak for the English Department at the 2004 Commencement (ta-ta Undergraduate life, it has been an arduous road but I enjoyed the adventure!)

Albert Herrera

Albert Herrera is a full time student at CSI and intends to receive his associates by the end of this year. He has no intended major at this point in time. Albert has also had poems published in other small publications.

Enrique Inocente

Enrique Inocente studied animation at the High School of Art and Design and is currently majoring in Journalism at the College of Staten Island. He is a publication whore and has been published in all CSI publications, *except Always A Woman* because they never publish. He's the Comics Editor for *The Banner* and is the only reason that section still exists today. Enrique also likes rainy days, Coldplay, and long walks (but only because he can't afford to take the bus).

Peter R. Marsh

Peter R. Marsh is the current editor in Chief of *Serpentine Magazine*. He is an English Major at the College, and is also the Founder and President of the S.I. Writers group. He has had a ten minute play produced by the Sundog theater group, and has had a half a dozen of his poems published.

Kevin S. Mamakas

Kevin S. Mamakas is about to start his junior year at CSI. He is currently an English Writing Major and just starting to publish some of his poems. He hopes that he can publish some non-fiction articles, a book of poems, and an historical-fantasy-fiction type book in the future.

Christine McAleer

Christine McAleer has readmitted herself into the college as a Psychology major. She hopes to be working in a school, guiding and helping children in the future. Several of her earlier poems were published. For now she just likes to live life one day at a time.

Jessica Marie Mendez (JessaShoutBaby)

JessaShoutBaby (Jessica Marie Mendez): Some say there's a fine line between genius and madness. Writing keeps me from erring on the side of insanity too often. As Erica Jong says, "Only by going insane on the page can you find sanity and serenity in life." And for all of those who like calling me a Bitch: "I like to look good, that makes me a tease. I like to eat, that makes me a pig. I like to get off, that makes me a slut. I like to be treated with respect, that makes me a man-hating dyke. Trust me, I have no problem being labeled a bitch."--Anonymous

Patrick Montero

Patrick Montero first began his art career at the Art Lab in Snug Harbor. He attended the High School of Art & Design in mid-town Manhattan where he majored in architecture and studio art. He has attended F.I.T. for intimate apparel and has earned certificates in architecture, interior design, 3-D design, and life drawing from N.Y.I.T and Copper Union respectively. He has also completed a two-year apprenticeship with Louis Ruiz as a stained-glass artist. Patrick is currently the Art Director for *The Banner* and *Serpentine Magazine*.

"I ask myself does anyone ever talk to himself the way I do? I ask myself if there isn't something wrong with me. The only conclusion I can come to is *that I am different*. And that's a very grave matter, view it how you will." -Henry Miller

Jennifer Mosscrop

My photographs capture my perception of the world in a particular moment of time. Looking back at them allows me to relive the experience, feel the emotion and go to the state of mind I was in. When others can go there too, then the picture was successful.

Christian Nicolau

Christian Nicolau is a poet, a writer and a designer. He likes to think that his style of writing is inspired by beams of radiation bouncing off satellites in outerspace.

Elizabeth A. O'Rourke

Elizabeth O'Rourke is a freshman at the College of Staten Island. She enjoys reading and writing and hopes to pursue a career in editing or journalism

Jhon Singleton

Jhon Singleton is a poet, vocalist/songwriter, and prose writer who has earned a BA in Art History, MA in Liberal Studies, and is completing a MA in English. He is currently the founder of the New Jersey based gay/bisexual writing group called Write On! He has published poems and short stories in a couple of magazines and is releasing a free pamphlet of his tour de force manifesto (*Situationism*) on the creative process coming to a campus center (CSI, JCSU, & Rutgers) this 2004 Summer/Fall. He is currently working on his first book of poetry.

Christian Tubito

Christian Tubito is a Journalism major at the college. He will be receiving his associates degree at the end of the semester. He has published poems, and intends to create an anthology of poems written by college students across the country.

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

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Page 2 • Patrick Montero

Page 5 • Hans Belmer

Page 7 • Jennifer Hermus

Page 8 • Christian Nicolau

Page 10 • Jennifer Hermus

Page 11 • John Bolton

Page 12 + 13 • Andy Warhol

Page 14 • Toadstool se photography equipment

Page 15 • www.npl.lib.va.us and www.palmtavern.bizland.com

Page 16 • John Bolton

Page 18 • Jasper Johns

Page 24 • www.nasa.gov

Page 36 • Luis Royo

Page 37 • Time Out New York, Issue No. 362

Page 44 + 45 • www.forgotten-ny.com

Page 50 + 51 • Dee Breger

Page 52 • Patrick Montero

Inside Back Cover • Patrick Montero

¹serpentine \s ə-ˈp ɛɪ-,ten, -tiŋ\ adj
 [ME, fr. MF. L *serpentin*, fr. LL *serpentinus*, fr. L *serpent-*, *serpens*]
 (15c) 1: of or resembling a serpent (as in form or movement) 2: subtly wily or tempting 3 a: winding or turning one way and another b: having a compound curve whose central curve is convex
 ser•pen•tine•ly adv

²serpentine *n* (1519): something that winds sinuously

WITNESS THE EVOLUTION OF SERPENTINE



FALL 2003



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this issue was constructed to the sounds of:

sublime *greatest hits* deee-lite *dewdrops in the garden* guns n' roses *use your illusion II*
 coldplay *a rush of blood to the head* smashing punpkins *siamese dreams*
 queen *greatest hits* regina spektor *songs* dave matthews band *listener supported (disc two)*
 paul oakenfold *bunkka* joan osbourne *relish* prince *the hits 2*

³serpentine \-,ˈten\
n [ME, fr. ML *serpentina*, *serpentinum*, fr. LL, fem. & neut. of *serpentinus* resembling a serpent] (15c): a min-

eral or rock consisting essentially of hydrous magnesium silicate usu. having a dull green color and often a mottled appearance.



**THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO ENSURE
ABSTINENCE...**



TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT SEX

