

Thirō Rail

Volume 3 Issue 1 Spring 1998





SABINA LEE

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MICHAEL XIANG

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MARISSA CIANELLA

TRACKS

DIANE MOLLER

So life's coming up with patterns,
 Sometimes free.
 sometimes restrained
 and the freight train whistles in the rain.

Taking chances...
 the fancy dancers in the all night bar
 under city lights
 where the power of persuasion's mesmerized
 and the whole scene's a surprise,
 yet, familiar ground
 with the heart caught up in the sound
 of what went under in the storm.

Tracks...
 marks across the surface of sand,
 the steps of a human.

We circumvent, create.
 take on what takes us home
 with the comedy surfacing
 in the loss, the gain,
 the pain strengthening the soul
 and the steel tracks that are ice cold.



Simple Pleasures

*It is only just an image
no weight, no depth, no sound.
It is only just to be looked at,
not held, not delved, not bound.
It seems to not exist
When one views it from the side.
And if you try to explain what it means,
you'll leave them unsatisfied.
It is personal
and pleasurable,
and that is it's only worth.
and something of such essence is, to me,
dearer than clouds and earth.*

POEM BY STEVE GREELEY
ARTWORK BY ANTHONY GARGISO

AN AMERICAN IN Colombia



TED GOGOLL

I amble down Avenida Sexta stopping in front of a club that's generating some inspiring salsa at four in the afternoon. I'm both drunk and wired from alternating the local hooch, Aguardiente, with syrupy espresso that has the potency of a liquefied amphetamine.

A youngling policeman whose uniform can easily be mistaken for a soldier's, hovers nearby as a dog barks at deafening levels at passing traffic.

"Is it against the law to shoot dogs in this country," I inquire innocently.

"I don't think so," he muses, feigning to take aim at the tethered hound.



This is Cali. Colombia, one of the most notorious drug sprawls in the world, and where dogs are not necessarily man's best friend. But, behind the depiction presented by the world press as a bloody albatross hanging around the Western Hemisphere's neck, the reality of visiting Cali is far different. The cocaine and South American-styled ubiquitous, but the threat of violence, although very much alive, rarely spills over onto these palm-tree flanked streets.

Beyond the media spin, I see that Cali's an appealing, energetic city. It has affluent neighborhoods with three-story glass-front apartments, sprawling parks split by the

Rio Cali, expansive shopping malls, and a worldly glow of sophistication sparked nightly down the wide avenues peppered by cafes and salsa clubs.

I was fully expecting the worst: machine-gun toting soldiers on every corner, explosions, robberies in broad daylight, and the constant anguish of being kidnapped. But, it was just the opposite: Streets clean, minimal panhandling, people ebullient, and never any sign of violence during my two week stay. The only thread of disturbing anti-socialism I witness is during a drive over dirt roads to the suburb of Juanchito, Cali's salsa district. There, I watch a kid wearing flip-flops, cut-offs and no shirt, lumbering along with a large black gun jutting out of his shorts.

Probably why the cocaine trade has thrived like it has is because the accompanying violence is sight-unseen. Everything, apparently, happens behind closed doors. One day I pick up the newspaper and read of the brutal execution of eight people the night before, just a block from where I was staying. I thought back, never remembering hearing as much as a siren.

But, despite the absence of physical violence on the streets, Cali and its denizens come alive in many other manners.



"Que culo!" a German expatriate screams at a 16-year-old girl sauntering past his cafe. The Cali women, las Calenas, notably the hottest of Colombia, if not the world, stroll the avenues donning diaphanous summer dresses, with that long black silky hair, and an overall air of seething sensuality. At the risk of sounding deeply sexist, women watching, therefore, is arguably the city's number one pastime.

The German boasted about his mansion in the hills, two classic cars and a stable of multipurpose young maids. Abandoning his homeland some thirty years ago, he first served as a merchant marine before stepping into his current lifestyle as an alcoholic cafe owner. His nose is whiskey burned, and despite his tropical surroundings, his skin has a deathly pallor. He deftly dodges any questions about his citizenship and ability to acquire such holdings in a foreign country.

His waiter, with a proclivity towards synthetic highs, spends his day pounding four-beer capacity German mugs and sniffing grams of coke at \$2US a gram. Then as if you're watching him on fast forward, he darts between tables frantically serving coffee to unsuspecting patrons. His other waiter is a teacher on Christmas break trying to meet ends. We discuss Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the Colombian-born Nobel-prize winning novelist specializing in "magical realism." Then Peter walks by saying "aqui se trabaja!" or "here one works!"

That night, by six o'clock, euphoria takes over. Painless drinking accompanied by a hazy blathering of German, Spanish and English take us into the night. After all, it is New Year's Eve. Deeply inebriated, Peter closes up shop. The frenetic waiter Lucho, Peter and I flag down a cab. Peter hollers at the cabbie: "To Rome, Paris, Berlin and back." I sink down in my seat. Peter suggests we go to a club that epitomizes the Cali night life. "We'll show the gringo this and that," he explains cryptically.

A clique of distinguished gentlemen loiter outside the dimly-lit club in Cali's underbelly. They pass around a bottle of Aguardiente and speak in hushed tones. Peter confronts them, rapturously speaking German, which sounds like English spoken backwards. They look intimidated and slowly walk away.

Inside, harmonized music pulsates the walls and tables which seat hot and cold running hookers with crossed arms and legs giving us those come hither "there's a cot-in-the-backroom," eyes. A perfect den of unadulterated seediness. Not really what I have in mind, but I go with it. In most Latin clubs, it's traditional to order liquor by the bottle. Pete's one to keep with tradition and gets a fifth of Aguardiente. Lucho already smitten with one of the ladies, walks to the backroom, while Peter and I sit around drinking, calling each other SCHWEINHUND!

Two ladies sit down. "You have money to eat me?," one asks in a startling usage of the English language. Peter takes command, eyeing them intently. They are disgusted, although, by his portly body and try an approach on me. Both women drop their halter tops, jiggling their stuff in a desperate sales pitch. They look hard, sullen-eyed, heavily scarred, bruised. Fidgeting and gripping the table, they both look as though they're about to jump from their skin. one of them, if in fact she had a full set of teeth, would have a devastating smile.

Lucho, grinning from ear to ear, poignantly exits the backroom on cue, pulling up his zipper, and we leave. I go back to the hotel and pass out.

I am awoken by heavy rain pattering against the tinny roof at eleven thirty. Rubbing my eyes like a five-year old stumbling into his parents' room during a thunder storm, I lumber outside onto a communal balcony. Six Colombians are huddled around coolers bursting with assorted bottles of booze, numbly singing along to merengue, doing blow.

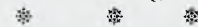
Naively thinking they won't notice me, I work my way into their circle. They're so smashed, it works. Totally oblivious to the rain, they're tooting on small spoons of coke. one beefy Colombian, slurring his words, thrusts a heaping spoonful into my face. It's not "pure like the driven snow,"

or even white for that matter. It looks more like piss-stained confectionery sugar. I hold up a beer bottle, explaining that I'll stick with the booze.

Satisfied with my answer, he sloshes over towards the balcony, dancing with himself. Putting one hand on his forehead, and the other on his solar plexus, he sways dangerously close to the three-foot-high balcony. He slips backwards, hitting his lower back on the ledge.

I feel both woozy and dumb struck like I'm watching a busload of children drive off the side of a bridge. I first

see his bulging eyes, then the soles of his black boots as the momentum of his body carries them over the balcony. His friends gasp for air, laughing uncontrollably. I hear a thud, and look over the balcony finding the 40-year-old Colombian sprawled out on top of a bush, almost catatonic, but very much alive, vomit trailing down his chin.



It must be morning, because I have a headache and my mouth is so dry it feels like it's stuffed with cotton balls. I am told about a youth hostel run by Australians blocks away. I go, largely because my curiosity is piqued over the romantic image of huddled gringos holed-up somewhere in downtown Cali. Also adding to the mystique is a young woman from California, who is also partial owner.

I enter with a look that says "so THIS is where you've been hiding." Buxom-blonde Europeans are strewn out on throw pillows watching CNN. I am transported to a distant land, within a distant land. The Australians are the genuine article in surf mongers with long stringy blond hair, saying: "No

*Despite its notorious name,
I am able to emerge from
Colombia unscathed proving
this country of great beauty
of land and people
can exhibit much more to
outsiders than
horror and violence.*

worries, mate,” as their toilets overflow simultaneously.

Weighted down by a black duffel bag on my shoulder, I scan the lounge: French guys chain smoking and cooking pasta; Germans playing hearts; and Canadians drinking beer and emotionally recalling being robbed of sleep and valuables during a nighttime raid by pirates on a six-day boat ride up the Amazon.

Cali has its share of \$200-a-night hotel rooms, but I pay four bucks a night to bunk dormitory-style with two Germans and an Israeli. I wouldn't have it any other way. A sign posted prominently above the German woman's bunk prohibiting ANY drug activity obviously doesn't get the message across; she's deftly rolling joints filling up a pack of Marlboro.



Meanwhile, back on the streets, the most animated of the Colombians I meet is a guy I'll call Harold. He speaks perfect English, and exhibits the industriousness of a modern-day Machiavelli. He's an entrepreneur, hustler and Casanova rolled into one. He's about five-foot-three, but has the gait of a man much taller.

He's bespectacled in his false press-pass photo, but normally wears contacts. His hair is black, thinning. His black eyes are strong enough to burn through a brick wall. He wears a crisp white, button-down shirt with tan pants. He has that chameleon power of becoming whomever necessary, whenever necessary.

Problem was, he went from not knowing where his next cup of coffee was coming from, to cavorting with drug couriers between Mexico and Cali, to not knowing where his next cup of coffee was coming from.

Some days, he says, he energizes himself with eight or nine cups of coffee in lieu of food. But sometimes "I eat like the servant of a Spanish king," he quips.

His expansive personality takes over as he describes his many illegal exploits. He's surprisingly articulate, and has the powerful storytelling skills of an aged fisherman that drifts along timelessly.

Many of his stories center around the Hotel Inter-Continental, where years ago, he would get himself invited to parties thrown by drug cartel members. He would sip French champagne and engulf the finest Russian caviar while conversing with Cali's freshest offering of debutantes. His eyes squint and blur and glaze over while telling me the party tab would run a half-million dollars a night.

He pines for success to arrive in the form of women, money, influential friends and respect (think of Al Pacino in "Donnie Brasco"). Apparently, there's a lot of that going on around Cali. So close, yet so far. But for many, being a part of the retinue is good enough.

The woman from California who runs the hostel actually introduced me to Harold. She validates many of the wild stories he's been telling me by explaining that they have several mutual acquaintances. She's also had gone out with him in a group several times to attend art shows or society events at the Hotel Inter-Continental.

"I try to stay away from him, but he has a good line," she blithely tells me. "He knows everybody."

Harold talks about a Mexican kid, 22, well-dressed, who comes looking for a drug connection in Cali. Harold has every intention of taking him on a "meal ride," squeezing him for free everything.

The Mexican, obviously just a junior representative for the growing cartels back home, shows Harold how to press 50 grams of cocaine onto a credit card for safe passage through U.S. Customs. They meet at the Hotel Inter-Continental to discuss plans while the Mexican pays for champagne and lobster. Harold strings him along getting everything possible—even a substantial loan, before severing ties. He never sees the Mexican again.

Like a tiger, he only needs to be fed once a week, but when feeding time comes around he'll shamelessly eat your young.



This afternoon I go to the Bullfights, a sport in which local newspapers devote an entire sports section. I scalp a ticket for \$15 and pass through the gates and into a breathing advertisement for Eatin Cosmopolitan: Everyone dripping with jewels, sharp, revealing clothing, cell phones and white hats; a real social affair, with all the trappings of a British cocktail party before a polo match.

Sitting in the blazing sun, sweating like an animal, my neighbor passes me a wineskin. The technique is to hold it six inches from the mouth and squeeze until a stream of red wine douses your tongue.

Two days earlier the "picador" was killed during a bullfight, giving credence to Hemingway's opus on the sport, "Death in The Afternoon." The picador's job is to antagonize the bull by prodding it with a javelin while atop a horse. That night, doing his job to perfection, the bull rammed the horse, crashing it down on top of him, crushing him to death. The result is an almost palpable emotional tension in the stands; picadors and matadors in Cali are some of the most venerated people in the country.

I sit the entire afternoon on the edge of my seat, riveted. The crowd is standing, clapping, generating electricity: Still trying to follow the intricacies of the sport, I lose my concentration with the wineskin, spraying my cheeks and neck with red wine.



Last day in Cali. We sit at an open-air cafe. Harold scans the street, nursing water, too proud to ask me to pay for a coffee. A wide endearing smile crosses his face and his black eyes glimmer as he hisses like a snake at a voluptuous teenager passing by. "I may do that to 100 girls a day. It's worth it if just one stops...that one has a lot of tasty meat on her."

I buy him coffee and a sandwich. We sit for hours as I listen to his past exploits while I'm thinking about ordering a liquid lunch of Aguardiente.

As I sit in a haze staring out at the tall green mountains and swaying palm trees, I am able to put my thoughts into perspective. Despite its notorious name, I am able to emerge from Colombia unscathed proving this country of great beauty of land and people can exhibit much more to outsiders than horror and violence.

The result is an almost palpable emotional tension in the stands; picadors and matadors in Cali are some of the most venerated people in the country.

bad erotica

DENA PANTELEAKIS

*anais nin is
piercing me again, with her nightstick fantasy
I'm bleeding
in her diary.
on my word, I would
love to love you but
that would be unheard of,
here in the fiction you
must understand it's
no crime to awaken with
blood on your hands,
a smile on your cheek,
foreign words in your mouth and
no idea of what the
last page was about.
here in the fiction I'd
love to secede to
a life with my
own responsibilities, but
desire has come with
no let up in sight, my
body's betraying my
conscience tonight, and
I will never be a real woman.
'cause I was torn from the texts of bad erotica, what
you read is what you get.*





MICHAEL XIANG

"the soul of a snare" by brian profilio

the essence of the ghetto and the soul of a snare
were sitting on a park bench in washington square,
when butterfly walked by with beads in her hair
and Kerouac read a poem that he wanted to share.
on a rooftop in harlem was an old wooden chair
for the horn of charlie parker to blow notes in the air:
from the brownstone steps and the project stairs
came the children of tomorrow and the hands of repair.
the colors of graffiti gave the buff cars a scare,
and basquiat painted a canvas 'till the back of it teared.
around the corner from the planet was a huge record
fair
and every beat junkie in the universe was there.
hip-hop was robbed blind 'till it was naked and
bare,
and all that was left was the soul of a snare.

by brian profilio. 12/2/97





ROBERT L. HARRISON

The Narcissistic Poet

CHRISTINE LAFIURA-AJSPERTI

*A pure white sheet of
rag-wool paper
marked with scribbles
of one's poor thoughts:
empty and curse,
the poet pushes on
as if to love his every verse*

*Sadly, in his ignorance
he drapes his words as profound and true
thinking all the while
it was an illusion.*

THE IDENTITY OF A GENERATION

DIANE MOLLER

On the train heading to the South to visit my daughter at the University she attended, I felt myself slipping away almost as fast as the countryside changed. I noticed the patterns of human existence were related to how close human beings lived to one another. I began photographing from the train window when I came close to Philadelphia. It was not the skyline I was looking at though. I concentrated on the graffiti on factory walls and empty city lots laden with garbage. I focused in on the 2 story attached houses on long streets without trees. I must have calmed down by the time we came to Delaware. There I photographed waterways, bridges, marinas and fishermen in small boats. I stretched my legs on the platform in Washington DC, staring at the Washington Monument in the background, standing subtle and gray. I thought of how often I am concerned about what goes on here. My traveling changed after that point. I felt overwhelmed by the speed of the train and the darkening sky. I was totally aware I was moving through places I never had seen. I heard the mixture of the sounds of strangers surrounding me against the backdrop of rumbling on the tracks. I felt somehow connected to the strangers traveling with me, yet at the same time, alone.

Traveling to the South from New York City always throws me off, I had told my daughter when she asked why I wasn't flying down. I needed some time to react to the change from the North to the South. I also needed some time to reflect. Changes before my 40's came faster and easier. Physically, I was much stronger. Mentally, I was not as stuck in my ways. Yet this seems to serve the purpose of slowing me down enough to see what I've been missing all along. In the midst of the gathering of experiences, I lost track of the comfort of standing still. I've fallen in and out of the trap of feeling, in too short of a time, I've lived too long.

We become defensive at times with our children when we defend our ground and private space. We are determined to remain committed to our love for them, yet maintain our distance for the sake of individual growth and survival. It is this familiar space however, that serves both sides with all its' power and might. Sometimes it is a matter of fact type of thing and sometimes it is the very core of why we are who we have become. We invite our children into our secrets from time to time. Children invite us into some of theirs. Then both sides may ask too many questions simply to gain back some of the personal space lost. Children learn early on that this communication is a 2 way street. Their rights and privacy can only be violated for so long. It is written into the laws of this land that they are free to leave us at a certain age. I believe this is the first clear experience they have of what being American means.

In a traditional sense, we bring our children up, not down. We instill in them a sense of hope in the future and encourage them to believe in themselves. We tell them to draw from our love, the strength that is needed to withstand the hardships, turbulence and disappointments in life. We

look to them to re-establish in our hearts and souls, a hope that has been challenged. Without them realizing it, we influence them about our let-downs, broken dreams and compromises. We teach them our tactics on survival. At the core of what we've taught them about peace and war is the fact that in extreme situations of conflict, the lines are clearly drawn. Everything is set up to take a side. An established ideology is easier to dissect and understand. Yet when circumstances are not in the extreme, the tide turns to diplomacy. We've asked our children to accept the diversity of cultures. We told them to act with the faith that these differences do not necessarily constitute a reason for war.

We wrap some of this up, placing them center stage in our lives, taking endless photographs of them at different ages. We give them fine, expensive designer clothes and offer them numerous opportunities to enhance their growth. In essence, we fill them up with who we know we are. Within their early years, they emerge individuals with a sense of their own identity. We look to see where they resemble us and judge the parts of them that do not. Sometimes we conflict with them when they stand too far away from us in their opinions. They help us to excuse and pardon ourselves for our weaknesses with their unconditional love. This is only right, since as they grow, we expand our empathy to still include them and not reject them for their weaknesses.

As time moves on, we band together, sometimes us against them. We are driven to strengthen the lines of what we have contributed as a generation to society when we had their youth, energy and freedom. We feel this will teach them since the emerging generation eventually identifies itself by how close it comes to understanding the previous one. This search for identity as a generation can be labeled as "rebellion" or the drive toward a "generation gap." Yet it is a simple reflection of individuals within a group sharing the feeling of the passing of time. The fact remains that aging is the boldest line drawn through the spectrum of every life, confirming individual mortality. Thus it drives us to search within our very souls for answers.

Trading places with our children is out of the question although I must admit there was a time when I thought that is how it would go. My generation would raise a generation and completely inform them of our ideology. This new generation would then take it on to revitalize and transform it. In some sense, it wouldn't matter what they did just as long as they acknowledged the fact that we gave them something good. Living for a week on the college campus with my daughter and her friends helped clarify for me what happens to an ideology now that it has been passed on. It is beyond human capacity for our children to assume all of our hopes and dreams. Their reaction to our ideology as a generation does not contain the same type of energy and passion we might have had. When we accept without bitterness the limitations surrounding our ideas, we set our children free to form their own unique connection to the world.

Liquid Dreams (Part II)

MICHAEL CHIARA

Listen to the sounds of love breaking
all sound barriers
Right there beneath my heel: cool
history comes off my foot.
I stand in the field so quiet it's
shadow almost remembers it's
old reflection. Then I look up.

WIKKOR GIRLS

CHRIS DEANGELIS

Life's summer nights smile with you but winter is where you lie
rejoice in revelry while mystery secrets kept alive
hide your heart an empty soul the carnival stays in town
no masquerade his reflections burn no truth is ever found

Squandered feelings new arrivals the moment passes by
shallow existence time and time again life passes by
you're lost and not found never to be redeemed
no hurt—no pain—no guilt—love only to be dreamed



Oyé Moreno

NATINA BERRIOS

*dame un beso aqui (point to mouth)
let me feel your pain
I have been told I can't
Gringa, get out of the Black Movement
Yo estoy aqui to help
Yo soy una latina, a women with a label I didn't ask for
A double edged sword I live, man*

*Oyé moreno, my pretty man.
No me diga that I can't understand the struggle
Cause I am a well-educated, fair skinned, latina Hoodrat
If anything I can.*

*Ayuda me to keep me from having to cry out
when I am called a flamboyant latina,
instead of a strong women
I have been exposed to the diablo
Mi corazon is looking for love acceptance and appreciation*

*Oyé moreno, my pretty man
Don't tell me I can't give a damn
Lie me down for I can feel your world spin*

*Yo sé la problema con America!!!!
I have been stabbed in the back by patriarchy
I have been marginlized by expectations that I was never aware of.*

*I am supposed to be your super women
My roles are supposed to be:
*advocate for non-spanish speaking latinos.
*translator for a language I was not taught
like everything my man likes so he can love me

*"I have seen rape"
"I have seen murder"
"I have seen abuse"
that no one really can*

*Why, my pretty man, you ask looking so fine in your dark vest?
My soul has felt struggle
My heart has healed my cries
and like my girl Maya, I will rise.
Don't tell me Moreno my pretty man I can't understand.*

JUST A THOUGHT

DEE SMITH A.K.A BLACK BIRD

*Can you handle all that I am?
Can you handle my sense of self and the respect I demand?*

*Can you handle the quickness of my ghetto tongue?
Can you handle the rising of the sun?
Beaming on my mocha tone,
the sound of the thunder when I'm alone.*

*Can you handle that my hair is short?
Can you handle that I love to talk?
Can you see your skin wrapped in mine
or are these things we just fantasize?
Two people of different tones trapped within their own color zones*

*I stop up
smoking
when I
found out*

VIRUSES

MARK ERLLENWEIN

Date: 9-14-97(Saturday)
From: denise123@juno.com
To: O'Hotnik@aol.com
Subject: Thank You!!

Hi Nick,

I'm sorry I did not e-mail you sooner, but I have been working really late during the week and I just got in from my trip. I just wanted to tell you that I had an incredible time on our date last weekend. No one has ever taken me out on a date to the Bahamas for a day! It was so beautiful and exciting, especially when we went scuba diving with the sharks. Watching the sun set on the beach with you was so romantic. I really enjoyed our conversation during dinner - well, I enjoyed it before I had that third glass of wine. Again, I have to apologize for my actions at the dinner table in the restaurant. It was the wine that made me jump on your lap and smother your lips and neck with kisses - I am so sorry for embarrassing you. That whole day seems like a dream to me. Thank you for everything. I am so fascinated with your career as a skydiver instructor. I would love to try it sometime. Skydiving with you must be a climactic experience. Talk to you soon.

Love,
Denise

Date: 9-15-97(Sunday)
From: O'Hotnik
To: denise123
Subject: Free-fall!!

Dear Denise,

I'm glad you had such a great time! As I said that night, I've never done this before. I never thought the internet would ever lead me to love. It was one thing to get to know you over the computer for the past four months, but finally to get to see and touch you was a dream come true. When we first met in the chat room, I fell in love with your words and the way you wrote. Talking to you on the phone a month later gave me a voice to put to those words. Hearing your voice that night made me tremble. I think I trembled more that night than the first time I made a 15,000 foot jump out of an airplane so long ago. And finally when we met face to face at the airport I.....well I think you know the rest, you were there, you saw my face and the smile on it. And I think we both know how the rest of the day went. And please don't be sorry about the "dinner table", I thought that was actually pretty spontaneous and exciting. And by the way, wine does come out of silk-hee-hee. I hope there are many more times together like that one last week. I'll talk to you later.

Love,
Nick

Date: 9-23-97(Monday)
From: denise123
To: O'Hotnik
Subject: How ya feeling!

Dear Nick,

How are you feeling? I hope you liked the care package I sent you. You sounded horrible on the phone last night. I guess this sudden change in weather is not being so kind to you. I feel real bad that we had to cancel our plans last night. We'll make it up to each other another night I promise. By the way- Great News. I got that position in the employee relations department that I was telling you about. J.P. Morgan loved the ideas that I came up with and I guess they were convinced and sold on me since they gave me the promotion. We'll celebrate this weekend or when you get better. Feel better hun.

Love,
Denise

Date: 9-23-97(Monday)
From: O'Hotnik
To: denise123
Subject: Ahhh-choooooo!!

Dear Denise,

If you can imagine a nasally voice right now, read this e-mail with that in mind. Thanks for the care package and congratulations on the promotion, I knew you would get it. I still feel really crappy and I don't know if this cold will be forgiving enough to spare me as the weekend approaches, but who knows it's only Monday. We might have to put the celebration on hold for now, but I promise I will make it up to you soon- perhaps "Disney" for one weekend next month- Huh!!!! Keep it in mind, I'm serious. Well I must go now and tend to my sinuses. Have a great business trip and I'll talk to you when you get back on Friday. I love ya Dee.

Sickly Yours,
Nick

Date: 9-23-97(Monday)
From: Litelove
To: O'Hotnik
Subject: Where are you!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Dear Nick,
Call Me! It's important!
Urgently,
Your Ex

Date: 9-23-97(Monday)
From: Wendy
To: O'Hotnik
Subject: XOXOXOXOXOXOXOXO to infinity.....

Dear Nick,

Last night was incredible babe, you're the best. What planet did you come from, Myyyyyyyyy Godddddd.

I never date on a Sunday, but I think you've opened up a whole new world for me. By the way, I must say that you were as impressive looking in person than how you described yourself on the computer. It must be tough living the life you live, always on the road all year long as a professional wrestler. I didn't think guys your size could compete in that sport. But your personality sure does match that of somebody who performs as you do. I still don't believe that wrestling is real, even if you say so. But you did prove what they say about "lonely athletes on the road." And I do believe we'll have to take advantage of YOU being in town for the week. I'll show you how to wrestle around New York and my apartment Nicky. Sorry I can't make it for your match on Thursday, but Thursday nights are my big nights at the bar, you know what I mean. Let the good times begin.

Talk to you later,
Wendy

Date: 9-24-97(Tuesday)
From: Litelove
To: O'Hotnik
Subject: CALL ME!!

Dear Nick,

Ignoring my e-mails and phone calls is going to make this worse. You must call me, we need to talk.

Distressed,
Your Ex

Date: 9-24-97(Tuesday)
From: O'Hotnik
To: Wendy
Subject: Tonight, 7:30, Your Place- We dance!

Dear Wendy,

I hope your walking much better then you did on Monday morning, I warned you about us lonely wrestlers. But anyway I had a great night. I hope you don't think I'm scum or some one night stand gigolo, but life on the road is lonely and leaves little time for relationships and a meaningful social life. I kind of figured that you wouldn't be able to take off from the bar this Thursday night, since it is a big party night and the "big tip" night for bartenders. But I was hoping we could get together maybe tonight and perhaps after work Thursday. Leave me an e-mail with your answer, I have to make an appearance at some sports-store in Queens for the promotion. If you e-mail me yes, I'll see you at your place.

Hopefully Yours Tonight,
Nicky-The Macho Man

Date: 9-24-97(Tuesday)
From: denise123
To: O'Hotnik
Subject: I miss you.

Dear Nick,

I hope you're feeling better. I've been running around like a lunatic here in Atlanta, the expo is going well, but I'm eager to get home. I really hope we can see each other this weekend. Sorry, I can't write too much, I'm on the run here, I'll talk to you Friday night. Love you!

Missing You,
Denise

Date: 9-24-97(Tuesday)
From: Wendy
To: O'Hotnik
Subject: Tonight, Yes, Definitely- Wear Nothing.!

Dear Nicky,

YES! 'nuff said.

See You Tonight,
Wendy

Date: 9-25-97(Wednesday)
From: O'Hotnik
To: denise123
Subject: I submit!!!

Dear Wendy,

I couldn't wait to write to you today. Sorry I had to split before you woke up, but I had to meet the boss at the hotel and go over tonight's wrestling matches- by the way I'm going to win the championship tomorrow night, I wish you could be there, but I guess we'll celebrate afterwards. If you don't mind me saying I feel I must tell you that you are incredible. I never thought I would ever find love over the internet. I know I've only known you for a couple of weeks but I feel something here. We must talk about this tomorrow. I'll meet you at the bar at 3 A.M. See you then.

I think it's love,
Nicky

Date: 9-25-97(Wednesday)
From: O'Hotnik
To: Wendy
Subject: I miss you too!

Dear Denise,

How you doing Hun, I really miss you. I can't wait to see you this Saturday. Yes, I do feel better and this weekend is a go. So what do you think about Disney next month. Just say the word and I'll book the tickets. I hope everything is going all right at the expo. Well I got to go now. I got a class to teach and the plane has to be refueled by this afternoon. Love ya.

Dearly Missing You,
Nick

Date: 9-25-97(Wednesday)
From: LiteLove
To: O'Hotnik
Subject: My patience is running low!

Dear Nick A.K.A.-Asshole,

I really need to talk to you Nick, you must call me. Do you hear me, you must call me you bastard!

Your Ex

Date: 9-26-97(Thursday)
From: denise123
To: O'Hotnik
Subject: DIE YOU BASTARD!!!!!!!

Dear Fuck,

Who the Hell is Wendy. You piece of shit. "I never thought I'd find love on the internet," I've heard that somewhere before. And a wrestler—you told her you were a wrestler. You're probably not even a skydiving instructor you FUCK. I don't ever want to here from you again you lying piece of shit fraud. And when you go to Disney next month with WHOMEVER, tell Mickey I said "Fuck You Rodent."

Eat Shit Nick and Die from it you bastard. Die Soon,
Denise

Date: 9-26-97(Thursday)

From: Wendy
To: O'Hotnik
Subject: You Lying Prick!!!

Dear Macho Man,

It seems that you sent me the wrong e-mail pencil dick. So who is Denise, and what about this trip to Disney. And what about this bullshit that you think you love me. And I asked around about you being a wrestler, and the only "Macho Man" that anyone ever heard of is named Randy, and your certainly not him. Well if you want a wrestling match my friend, show up at the bar tonight and I'll show you a match. And speaking of wrestling, and it being fake, I faked every orgasm you scumbag. Have fun in Disney and please give my best to Denise.

GOODBYE PRICK,
Wendy-E.U.

Date: 9-26-97(Thursday)

From: Dave@aol.com
To: O'Hotnik
Subject: How are you buddy!!

Dear Nick,

How the hell are you old friend. You know for a Best Friend you sure don't keep in touch that often. Everything is doing fine up here in Maine, we really miss you. So tell me how is the big city, and how is acting school coming along down there in New York. I hope you make it big one day buddy, I'm rooting for you. Well please call soon, I'm dying to here from ya.

Your Best Friend,
Dave

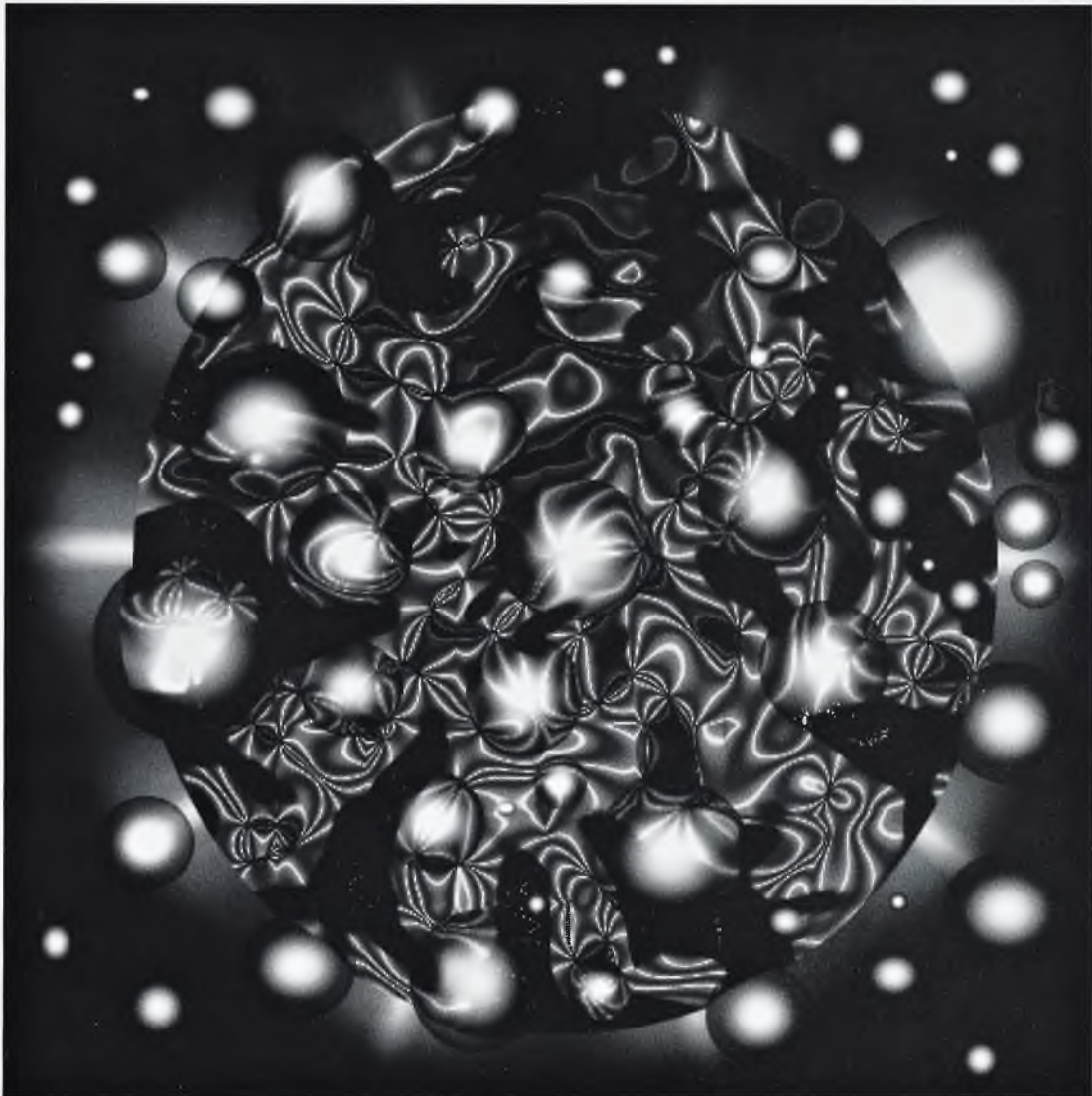
Date: 9-26-97(Thursday)
From: O'Hotnik
To: Dave@aol.com
Subject: "Just a gigolo, and everywhere I go, people know the part I'm playing."

Dear Dave,
Well what can I say but things could definitely be better. Acting school is going great, I seem to be pretty good at it from what everyone tells me. I manage to survive as a waiter down here at some local restaurant The money is good at times and allows me to enjoy myself now and then. I can't say so much for my love life though. I really screwed up this thing I had going with these two chicks. Somehow I sent them the wrong e-mail and they wound up getting the wrong letters. Both of them wish I were dead. And on top of that, Christine, my ex keeps on calling and e-mailing me. I've been avoiding her telephone calls and just yesterday I had my internet provider block any future e-mails from her so her messages don't show up in my mail-box anymore. And that's the state of my life at this very moment. I'll try and talk to you soon.

Your Buddy,
Nick

Date: 9-27-97(Friday)
From: Litelove
To: O'Hotnik
Subject: Here it is...

Dear Nick,
I've been patient, but it seems that I'm going to have to inform you in this manner. I really wanted to be able to talk to you in person about this, but you never responded and I guess you refuse to do so. Well here it is....This is what I've been trying to tell you for the past week..... I tested positive for Aids Nick. I must have caught it from you....I had my last boyfriend checked out and he's clean. It had to be you. I haven't dated anyone since we broke up Nick, so it had to be you..... Call Me....Call Me.....Nick..... You got to call
.....me.....
.....Nick.





RAYMOND S. DIMARIA

Pterodactyl Wings

by Sinan Hepcakar

I've been watching silently since the day I was created.
Sharpening my edges while my soul was masticated,
By a population of selfish uncaring individuals,
Fascinated by material goods that lie within their visuals.
Now I'm testing out my features, from creatures to residuals.
Illuminating darkness and the weakness of mere mortals.
Cutting their existence with two horrifying blades,
Ending their glorified unrealistic escapades
Consummating the conclusion of inanimate enchantment,
Introduction to reduction of the million dollar mansion.
Glamorizations produce patients for the benefactors,
Pampering indulgent athletes and money hungry actors.
Somehow establishing foundation,
Be ready for a new era it's called annihilation.

No more autograph seekers past the age of eighteen.
The pen marks from a person like yourself,
Is that your dream?
Ending conceit and jealousy, for professors who are famous
The highly decorated educated ignoramus.
Instructors to enlighten is my definition of education,
Ebonics is the meaning of demeaning degradation.
A patronizing inhabitation of community and nation,
Selecting a demise for their jaded aspirations.
Consequential ends with the need to make decisions,
Historical figmentations and illiterate precisions.
Striving for a legacy of drastic transformation,
So influential characters can claim participation,
In an effort to humiliate the mass of calculations.
This has been an observation.
And a message to advocates holding these intentions,
The first to be the product of my hideous invention.
While I rid myself of tensions on the whole affiliation,
The experiment results in a laconic detonation.

Obnoxious children of adulthood with a revolting disposition,
Following each other but receiving no commission.
In an exchanger a reputation of mechanical alignment,
Actual persona is diminished to confinement,
Replaced with egocentrics and a self absorbed assignment of refinement.
For eclectics who accumulate behaviors from theatrics,
Popularity fantastics,
Rejecting the abnormal and the idiosyncratics.
Who hand in applications for friendships with erratics,
The socially repugnant generation of creation.
Presenting the elite of established emulations,
To a level of conformity for rampant inflammation.
A graphic illustration from my centered habitation,
Voluntary consultation is a comic's presentation.
Contaminating regulators,
A lawful violation of present jurisdiction on vacation.
Said the lucid liquidation.

DOWNSLIDED

*I lied for you
corporate America,
and told tales about
how safe your products are.*

*I lashed out at your critics
and hid the facts from the press,
as I placed money onto greasy palms
and embraced your mission.*

*Use me, use me I pleaded,
at night in my dreams,
at board meetings
and at every conversation.*

*And now,
I am out looking in,
seeing other fresh faces
lying better for you.*

*I now wander this land
part of a washed up
generation who was
slapped down because
you needed a quick fix.*



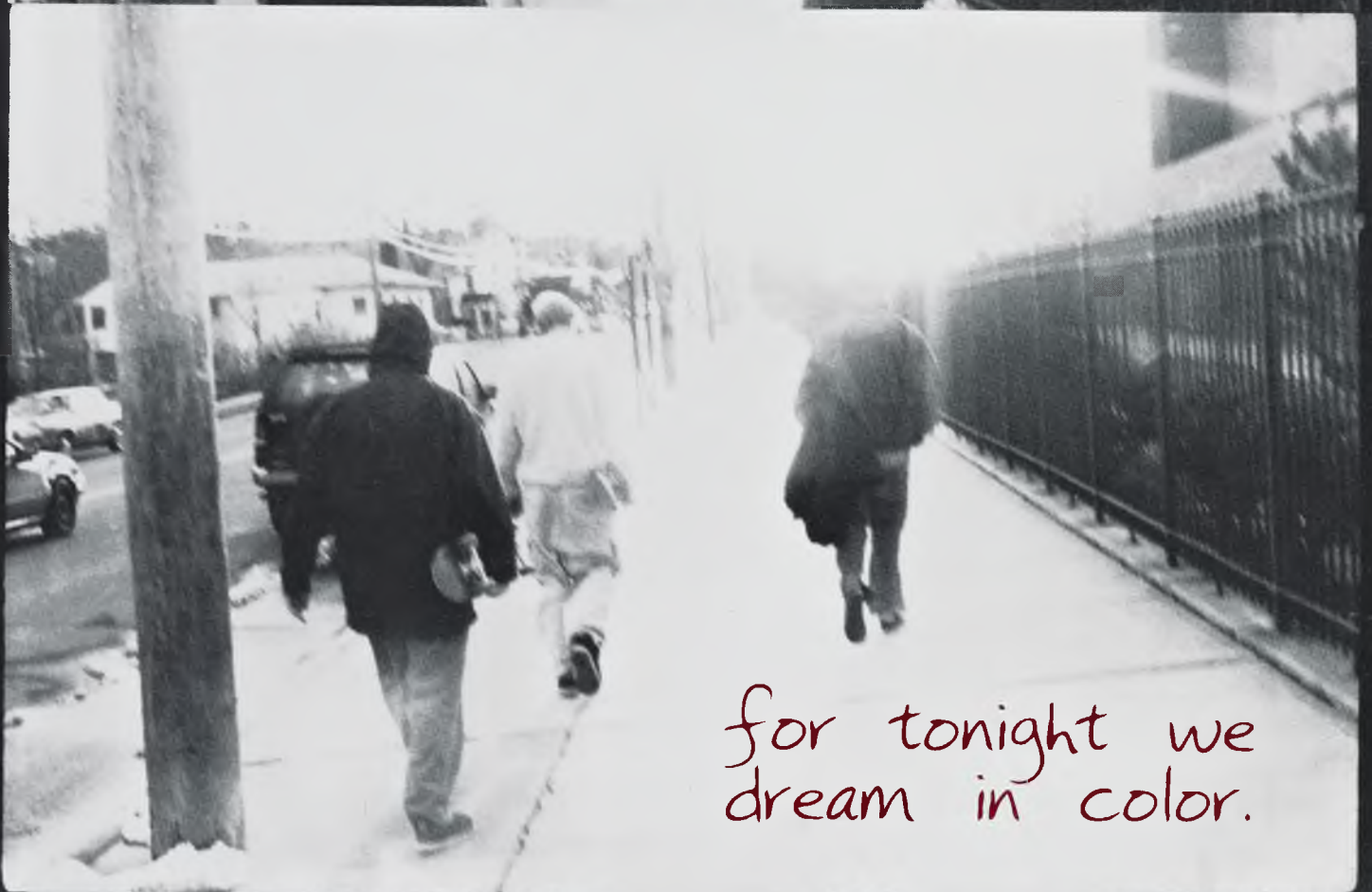


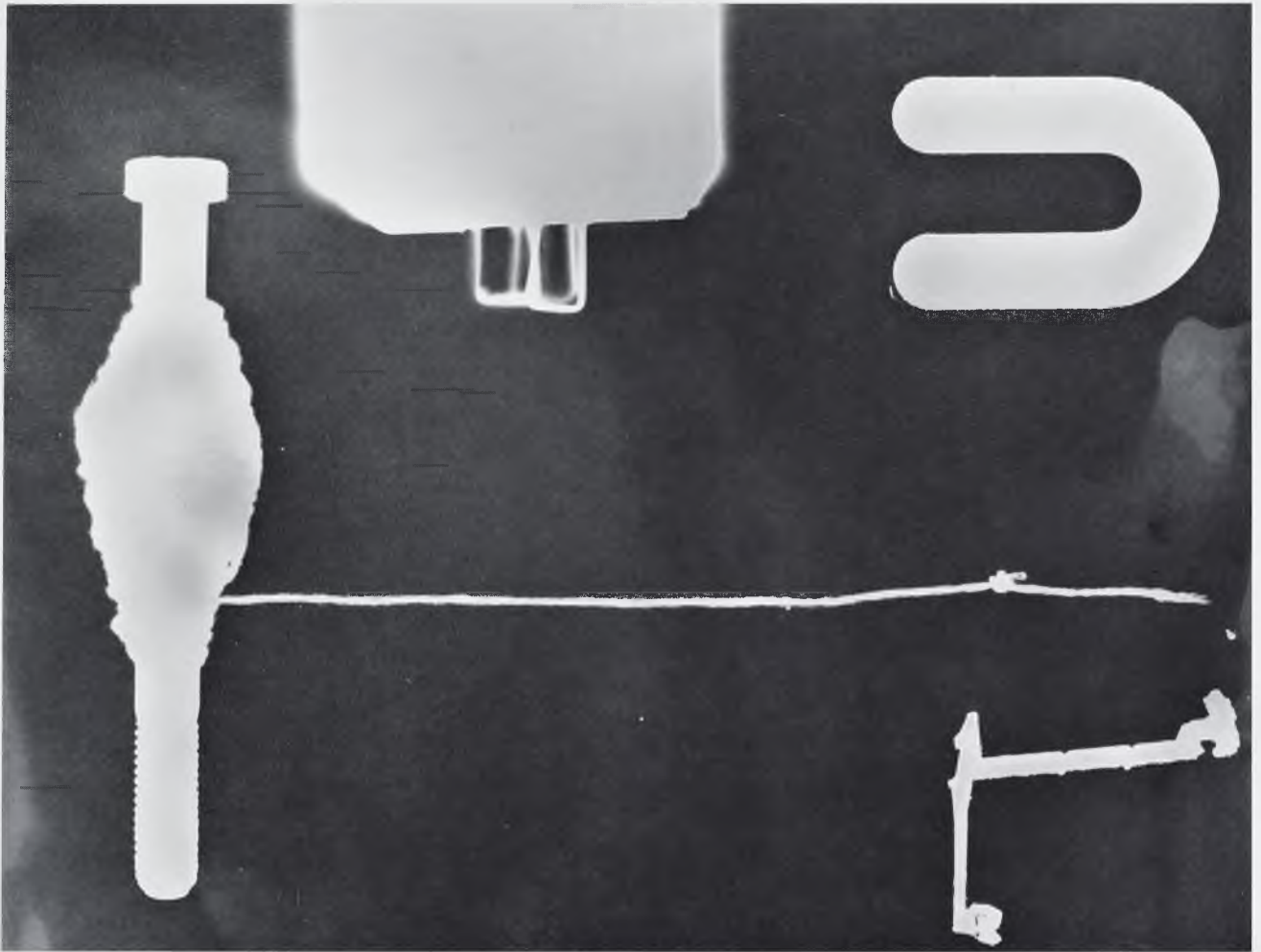
We mapped
our bodies as
continents. . . .



and for a split
second we were
youth again







CAMERA-LESS PHOTOGRAPH

ANTHONY GARGISO



Pictures

VINCENT VOK

The pictures on the walls are old and cracking- smiling faces cast in black and white, covered with dust and yellow age. Frozen in time from a different era when success came to the very young, they hang small and silent in two rows on all four walls of the room. He walks in quietly, joining the scattered handful of other hopefuls who fill the shadows of the unlit corners. The cold vacuum of inactivity will still hang in the room until the stage lights are coaxed on, and the sound board crackles awake. Until the noises of just opening from the bar are replaced with the sound of drinks being order, delivered and paid for. Until the waitress comes in, ready to be eager to take orders from and bring them to the shadows.

Like night sounds, guitar cases are snapped open, and the conversation of six-string tuning begins. Discordant and uncertain, the unclaimed melodies seize their way around the room and disperse into the darkness. Puffs of smoke race out of lips bent in the breath of mute concentration. Campfires are lit as the stage is set.

He sits with a cigarette balancing the weight of his left hand, his right hand curled around the smooth comfort of the rough whisky which is sitting in a shot glass on the table. His foot is up on his unopened guitar case, his eyes slightly glaze at the brightness of the lights cast off the back wall of the stage. His thoughts are scattered rehearsals of lyrics and chord progressions, of conflicts of escape and real life; arguments in tribute to an existence balanced between a past life and an uncertain destination. To the waitress he just looks pissed off.

The voice cracks on, bringing full attention to the rules of the night: If you picked a number you get to play. Don't be stupid, and don't outgrow your welcome. Three songs or 15 minutes, whichever comes first. If they like you, you'll know it. If you have to ask, they didn't. Have a nice night. Or not. Drink a lot, tip your waitress and leave me alone, I'm just the announcer.

He picked the Queen of Hearts with the black C on her bosom. He will be player number 36, give or take a few casualties of nerves, booze or misgivings. Everyone gets 15 minutes and takes 25. He tries to do the math but can't care. He looks pissed off.

Bob Dylan did this. Rolled in off the street, played his hand, left everybody with their pants down bent over, wishing they were him. His black and white photo from that

time had the place of honor in the plastic next to the stage. A chubby kid with the harmonica and guitar. Food for the Punks if he came like that now.

He goes over the songs in his head like they were prayers. The rhymes were almost always perfect. The melodies mostly delicate, and sometimes hard to define. Except for the Blues one, which was almost spoken. All dark and serious. All ready to reveal a secret, or describe a despair.

Number one approaches the stage. Tall. Crazy. Denim clad. Lives in a shelter on the Bowery. Writes angry poetry that requires he grip the mike tightly and bruise his lips. Face dark and twisted. Tries to make fuck rhyme with shit. Doesn't succeed, but manages to entertain.

On the bus that was speeding through the night he sat like a statue sinking in the blackness. Kathleen was next to him silent with eyes big enough for tears. They grabbed a force and it pulled them out through the roots. Leaving a life of musician/short order cook and dance major/waitress, for someplace, not necessarily something, better. She only looked at him once, and he saw the shine of the night reflected in her eyes. They landed on a February sidewalk in a maze of wind in New York City.

That jealous wind eventually pushed and pulled them too far apart. He shaved his beard and cut his hair. She saved herself and cut him off. They untangled in a graceful dance, she leading. She gave him his best songs, to clutter his small distant sky.

He seized the New York nights hungry, with cold fingers that danced heavily on the strings of his hollow guitar. He couldn't see his dream, just felt it tugging and pulling.

The ninth performer, number 3C, comes up and looks nervous. She hits a chord and is out of tune. She fiddles with it for a long while, mumbling apologetic tones into the mike. She begins to play, and it sounds worse than before. That early in the night the only audience is the other performers waiting for their turn. The girl sounds like a weeping Joan Baez. She finishes her set to sparse applause and leaves the stage behind her. She goes back to her table, three away from his. She has long blonde hair, and is also in denim. She puts her guitar back in its case. Her back is turned. She puts her coat on, turns to leave and she glances at him. She isn't pretty, but tragic enough to compensate. She's shattered by her own performance, but holds tight to her dignity.

"Is Melody Snow your real name?" He asks her this quiet-

ly as she moves past. She responds by sitting down next to him too quickly and saying "Yes it is," in dishonest tones. "I liked your set," he lies with honest inflection. "Would you like a drink?" She nods and to the waitress orders a double gin on ice. He pays for it as the waitress takes his empty glass. He lights a cigarette as she takes the first of the two gulps it will take her to kill it.

They remain silent throughout the next three performers. Each as terrible as the first. She pulls one of his cigarettes out and puts it between her lips and he lights it with the end of the one he has. "So, what's your number?"

"12C."

She shrugs and nods in sympathy blowing smoke towards the stage. She chews the end of her little finger with her chin resting in her palm and looks annoyed. A smile can mean anything, but that annoyed look is reliably clear.

"Wanna go smoke a joint?"

They make their way through the people and out the door into the cold. They make their way up Third Street towards the park. They make their way to a bench, shivering. The bench is cold, which is good. The warmth they feel as their bodies touch holds them over until the joint gets lit. He puts his arm around her shoulders and they smile like old friends. In the lonely land of strangers intimacy takes the path of least resistance. He slides the half-pint of brandy out of the inner pocket of his black leather jacket, and they are soon in no need for words. They walk hand in hand, the wind ripping the surface of the skin of their faces. The park has turned dark, and the wind has

left it empty. Between a cluster of skinny bare trees, where light was thinnest they stop; he holds her and pulls out a kiss, placing it on her lips. Her sweet smoke and alcohol breath linger in a small cloud between their faces. They kiss again, and in all that eternity they are safe and warm. Beneath the barriers of denim and leather they could feel the touch of gravity between their bodies.

She sinks to her knees, he leans against a tree. He feels cold, then warm and wet. Then strong. Then resurrected. Then he slides his back down the tree, and she falls into his arms, and they huddle on the ground, joining the rest of the statues.

After a very long time of drifting through the stream of darkness they begin to come back to life. He wakes up first, cold and hurting. His back is stiff, and the half of his body that isn't touching hers feels frozen solid. He looks down at her sleeping face, at the rough edges almost worn smooth by sleep and the lack of light. A short burst of siren to his left shakes them both. The spotlight hits their faces like a slap, and the voice that says they have to move scrapes into their ears, causing a reluctant stir of motion in their heart beats. It's too cold for those cops to want to get out of their car, so they stay inside content to hassle from there. The car pulls up close, slowly, pushing the guitar cases over, making them crawl out of the way faster than they were ready to move. They manage to pull their guitars out from under the car before it could demolish them. The short rapid burst of sirens joins the mocking laughter from within the vehicle. He stands up, swaying, leaning against his guitar. "Fuckin' pigs!" She hollers, walking after the car; slim, white middle finger thrust high up into the frozen air. He walks after her, grabbing her upper arms, pulling her back to where they

were. "Are you all right?" He looks into her eyes, but can't find them at the moment. "Those fuckin' bastards," she says, yelling on the word "bastards". She pulls her arms away sharply, grabs her guitar and sits down on a bench, arms folded, pissed off. He stands looking at her, digging the sleep out of the corners of his eyes with the knuckles of his left hand, right hand still on the guitar. He feels tired and unconfident, feeling like there's only room for one pissed off person in this park. He feels cold to the core. "Lets get some coffee." She doesn't answer, doesn't look up. He wonders if she is back asleep. He sits down next to her and folds his arms, putting his feet up on his guitar case. He stares at her silently. The noise of their breath drowns out the oblivion which now has surrounded them. They sit alone, then he notices that she is shivering. He slides closer to her and puts his arm over her shoulders. She leans her head against the cold leather of his jacket, but remains silent. There is to be nothing left to say. The momentum of their encounter is rolling backwards. He starts wondering how much time had been given up. He starts wondering what her thoughts are, and how she feels. If she's pissed at him. He start to mention coffee again, but halfway through she interrupts suddenly: "Can you loan me a couple bucks to get home?" His frozen hand crawls into his pocket and comes out with two crumpled dollar bills. "is 'is enough?" "OK." She answers, distantly.

He watches her sink away into the darkness of the park, and sees her small silhouette cross the street and disappear.

The club is almost empty, and is regaining the empty air.

The bartender is cleaning glasses. The waitress talks to the announcer, who has emerged from the sound board and has strayed to the end of the bar. "Excuse me. What number are you on?"

"11C. But everyone else is gone. What number are you?"

"12C."

"You're next"

He steps on the stage, and past the blinding lights he sees the ghosts of three tired people, all sitting at one

table. The waitress has already handed in her apron. The sound of the cash register closing out, and the rustle of coins is the only breathing he can hear. He closes his eyes and plucks the first chord. It doesn't sound right. The strings are tired and can't hear each other. His fingers are made of stone. He hits the octaves, but the wrong one eludes him. He guesses, guesses wrong, and starts the song.

"We can sit here and sing until our lives start to matter,

Through my smoke I can watch you trade love with each other..."

His voice is willing but untrained. The mikes are old, and the system is lousy. He can hear the guitar in the monitors, but not his vocals. The threesome get up and leave.

"There's no room for sleep in this life we are choosing,

So I wish I could give you the dreams I'm not using"

He gets through the song. The sound man. The waitress. The bartender. The owners.

They watch tiredly, and remain silent.

"Thanks a lot." He speaks to the empty tables. "Don't forget to tip your waitress."

He packs up his guitar. Pulls on his leather armor. He leave the club, the cold bites and bites at his knuckles, his face, his mood, his life. He walks up Third Street, turns right on MacDougal, left on Bleecker, on into the world.

In the lonely land of
strangers intimacy
takes the path of
least resistance.



Ray S. DiMaria

Lumpen-Proletariat Blues

Cephus O'Brien

her life was a black and white photograph
his was a flower he called hope

every time one of the petals fell
he glued it together with a phrase

love/compassion/broken hearts

run deep lost heart
to cold dreams and lost beliefs
the sound of her heart
pit-pat-pit-pat
old memories
and the hope for that 3am i love you call
overdubbed love tunes and blues in four-fourths
dark cascaded mountains of praise

he named one petal love but it died

love lived short on hope
and fell lonely
her kiss was its sun

there were intimate secrets and certain chills she gave off
he didn't dream the night he knew she took over his life
and woke up with a hangover

denial was what he felt

denial was a petal that never died.

like an old story or memory that the old man tells in his
last breath's
denial grew so strong he once again dreamt

"...dream of me tonight lost petal so when i awake
tomorrow i will once again feel your touch..."

this was his love

but he woke up again in denial
leaving his kiss on her pillow
laughing at warped constellations
and stories of old housewives tired of reality, and shopped

for the next best thing.

he was branded poet on his heart and yelled:

"...I saw the best of my generation lost in alleyways
and dying in train cars.."
fare ye well lovely Allen
let those sweet words brand minds of the next genera-
tions
lost in libraries cobwebbed in lies
below manhattan's sweet streets to the jazz clubs of the
mind.

this was the petal he called suffering.

she was given a name and number
lived that mid-life/slow dance/virgin type of life
and never aspired to be more
except for the pta meetings and the occasional banquets
with her husband.
there were newsflashes
and dead presidents
new children
and another year

there were revolutions
scandals
and love affairs

the almighty church led her life and she learnt to call those
single men fags
you see her father taught her to hate as a child

this was the flower's root's
and the poet named them society

these words these words
I see before my eyes every of these glorious days
the thoughts he felt
lessons of: life /humanity/class/racism/the way he felt
about her
poetry

and the flower died

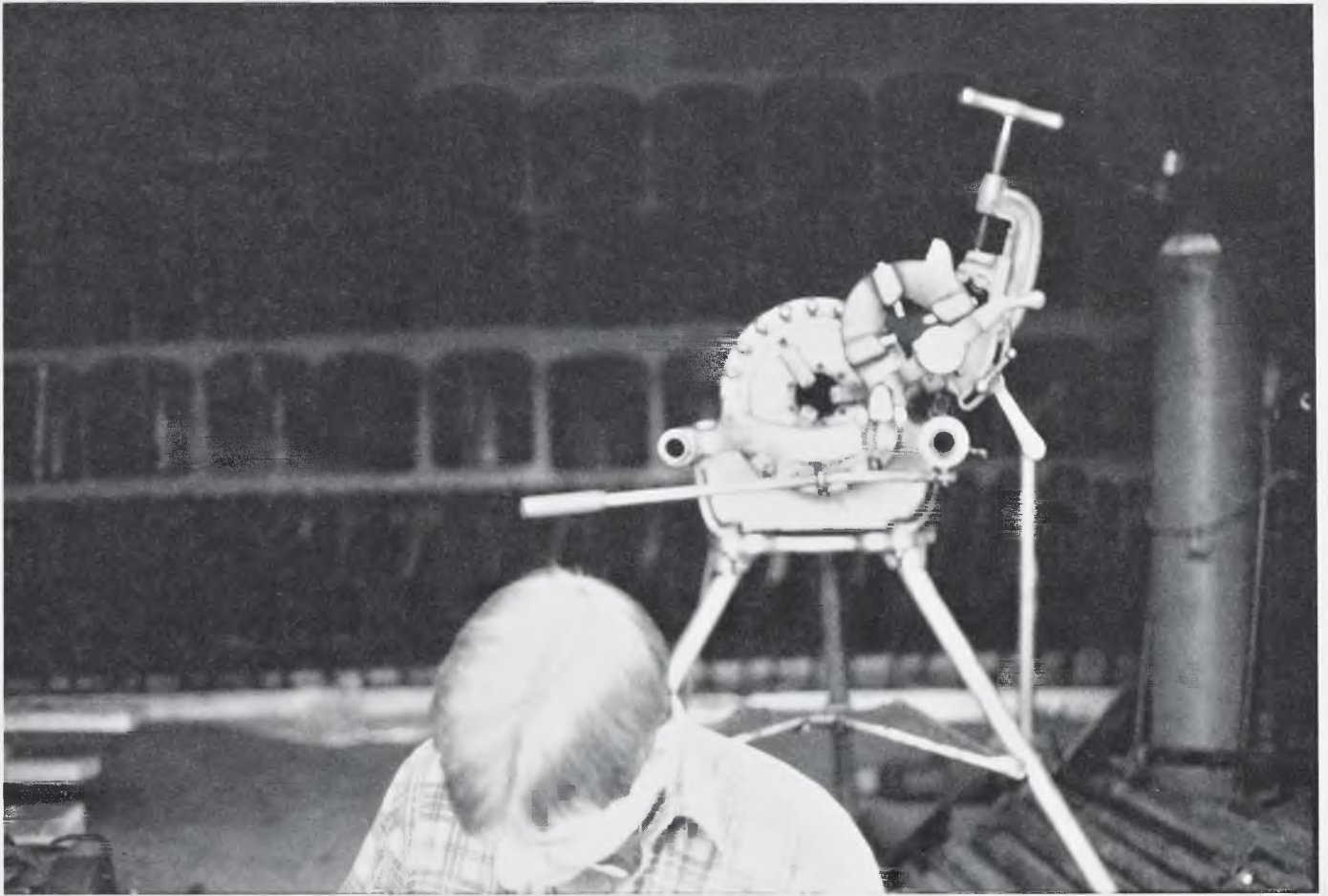


GILL FLORES

tufts

DANIELLE TAVANI

these moments
savored
pondered
poised and poised
like glistened dewdrops
before they drip
and fall
are mine
to stroke
like satin sheets
on softened skin
and the sinewy moon
yawns itself
open full
beams outstretched
with slick petulance
and nuzzles in the crook
of an unspoken embrace
to wrap and seal
captive and captivated
those fractured tangents
then shed
with a gentle dawn
its ensnaring snakeskin
sly translucent molt
as a sloughed off moment
frozen and shelled
its memory
shied and kept
with temperate angst
that heeds
no warmth no cold
each feeling untold
and sheathed
in its intrinsic
cast away
fleshed casket
mummified in its fold
these moments
savored
pondered
poised and paused
reticent in antiquated
shafts of solace
slippery to hold



ANTHONY GARGISO

On your Fifteenth...

MARK GRAY



Dear Alexander.

Happy Fifteenth Birthday, son. I'm sorry I had you wait this long but some of the things I wanted to say were rather frank and I needed you to be somewhat mature to be able to handle it. The hopelessness I feel right now can only be matched by the profound sadness of knowing that you'll grow without me. I'll never see your first steps, hear your first words, see you run, play, learn... I'll never enjoy the thrill of seeing you in your prom suit or watch you in your cap and gown as you graduate. I never had the benefit of a father being around and now through no fault of my own I have done the same to you. I guess I'm just trying to explain my absence in some way which will make sense, to me more than anyone else, but how do I say goodbye to a part of me... to someone who gives my life purpose?

I'll start by saying flat out that I've loved you more than anyone else I've know in my life. For all of my thirty-three years I've never experienced such emotion. I can still remember when you were born. It was the warmest February day on the record books. It was as if you were an errant ray of sunshine warming that winter afternoon. As of right now I'm a young turk and a rising star in the firm of Scali/Winthrop - it would be Scali/Winthrop/Rosen if I could stay around and continue building the legend. We are hands down the best architecture and design outfit here in Portland and we've beaten out lots of New York and Milan design firms for high profile projects. Just so you can brag, your old man is the one who designed the Philharmonic Center in Salt Lake City, the Trade Bureau Building in Athens and the new Nike complex. Of course by now it's the old Nike complex. In the briefcase which your Uncle Ernie gave you with this letter, you'll find copies, designs, lithographs and other stuff to give you an idea of what I did. Just so you don't think your old man was some yuppie wage-slave I've included pictures of me from my school days. Hey, Michael Rosen agitated with the best of them in college as you'll see. Pictures number 1-4 are old Polaroids of me at a student protest. No, that finger doesn't mean "You're Number One!" Speaking of Earnest, I trust he has been there for you as much as possible. No one can explain the bond my brother and I have and I won't even try. I got him to give a solemn promise regarding you and I'll rest easier knowing he's keeping it.

I don't know if you've noticed but the cute med student in most of these photos is the lady you call Mom. I love that woman more than words can tell. She doesn't know I'm doing this and as I'm writing this she's putting a certain four-month-old to bed. If she's as beautiful when you're reading this as she is when I'm writing it I

guess she has remarried. That's okay. I know I'm just a fond memory for everyone. It wouldn't be fair to expect her to live with just a memory when there's so much living left to do. I guess the only women who did that were Coretta Scott King and Betty Shabazz, but they were the widows of slain martyrs of the sixties and they had a nation rallying around them. Your mother has only you and your grandparents.

She should be pushing you to go into medicine right about now. I wouldn't mind that myself although my dream was for us to open our own design firm together, but don't worry. We spoke about this at length. Simply let her know calmly if you're not interested in either of these careers. Our only desire was that you find what you love doing and do it well. My only hope is that you never let blind ambition be a substitute for genuine love of your chosen profession. In the briefcase I've included a copy of a great book titled *What Color Is Your Parachute* which helps people find what their strengths are. It may surprise you. If it's still published, pick up a current copy because in fifteen years careers may exist which don't exist today. Remember: This life is a test. It is only a test. If this had been an actual life you would have been told what to do and where to go.

If you've grown as handsome as your mother and I expected, you're probably overwhelmed by young ladies. Be careful. Don't ever let anyone use sex as a weapon against you. I'm not going to preach to you because I know about raging hormones – hey, it hasn't been that long since I was your age, but your life is precious and your decisions should be your own. Never let preventable circumstances make your decisions for you. A momentary passion should not define your future. On that note I'll stop embarrassing you – but hey, what are fathers for?

If Grandma Rosen, Grandma Wright and your Mom don't always seem to get along it's because they've always seen things a little differently. One thing they do have in common is their unyielding love for you. There may be some friction between them at times but that's just because each is an incredible woman with strong views. I only wish that they lived a little closer. Deep down there's much love there and a great deal of respect. The love and support of both our mothers helped your mom and me through the difficult periods of our marriage. In our society my being Jewish and her being African-African didn't help us any. Just so you know, I'm not conservative. I could be considered a bad boy but your mom and I go to temple on major Jewish holidays, and church on major Christian holidays. In between, we see how we feel from week to week. I can only trust that by the time you're reading this things have progressed beyond the trivialities of race and your dual heritage is not affecting you negatively.

If there is any friction going on at the moment between your various mothers I have a quick solution.

In the trusty briefcase is a set of photos of us together. Yes, the cute little devil in the green snowsuit is you and the guy giving you the windmill ride c'est moi (you better be taking French in high school or your mom will kill you). I removed these photos from the family album this afternoon and I'll bet they're referred to as "long-lost photos". Call the grandparents over and show everyone the photos; things will be fine in no time.

I guess I'm rambling but I've been overwhelmed ever since that bittersweet day a little over a year ago. Your mother and I had both had news from our doctors: she was pregnant and I had lymphatic cancer. Knowing you were growing inside kept your mother from falling apart on the outside. At this point, having held you in my arms and seen glimpses of the young man you'll become, I don't want to go. I have you to live for. It isn't fair! God must really be into this infinite one-act comedy with no intermission. I guess it could be worse, if he were into tragedies we'd all really be screwed. I'm not being sacrilegious; I've been through the stages of grief and humor helps me find my acceptance. I hope this doesn't disturb you too much but this letter helps my acceptance. It helps me come to terms with being forced to leave you.

Dip in the briefcase one more time, son. There's lots there but find a slim leather portfolio with a zipper around it. Inside you'll find a set of life insurance policies with different beneficiaries and Ernie as power of attorney. Upon receipt of my death certificate, each pays half a million dollars. Since I don't know how things will turn out for you, I bought policies on myself the day I knew I would die. Call it fraud, call it desperation, but I refuse to leave you without knowing if your education is secured or if your mother's new husband (if any) is taking care of you in the way I would like. There is a policy there for her also, it's the least I could do for this woman whom I love so much and has given me you. By now your Uncle Ernie has put half the benefits into my friend Billy's company up in Redmond, Washington. He's a pretty smart guy but if his Microsoft idea doesn't take off the other half of the benefits are in blue chip stuff so you should both be fine in fifteen years.

There's so much I want to tell you but I guess I have to be considerate – I mean, how long can this letter go on, right? Son, I honestly don't know if I'm doing this more for you, or for me. The fact that you're reading this means that I've defied fate. On this your fifteenth birthday know that I haven't gone "gently into that good night" and I've imparted at least a final goodbye to you when you can use it most.

Kiss your mother for me. As I look at you in your crib now it hits me that I love you more than life itself, Alex, and I hope you realize it fifteen years from now.

Forever,

Dad

The Spring Maiden

CHRISTINE RUSSO

Cool grass
damp
with the morning dew,
white virgin feet
caressed
by the freshness
of a new day.
The grass
its soft wetness
cooling the feet
as well as the mind,
mystical feet
sweet and bare
Celestial body and limbs
move gracefully
in the sun's
first light.
Her golden hair
is lifted by the wind
making it one
with the rays of sun.
The wind is sweet
and fresh

like her alluring
smile.
With her angelic feet
she glides
hardly touching
the ground
stepping
on the clouds
of life's sorrows
compacting them into
nothingness.
The air
is fragrant.
Purple and orange blossoms
dance
in the crisp breeze
to the music of nature.
She hears it too,
Twirling
in her white gown
churning
milk into
cream.



TINA VALENTIN

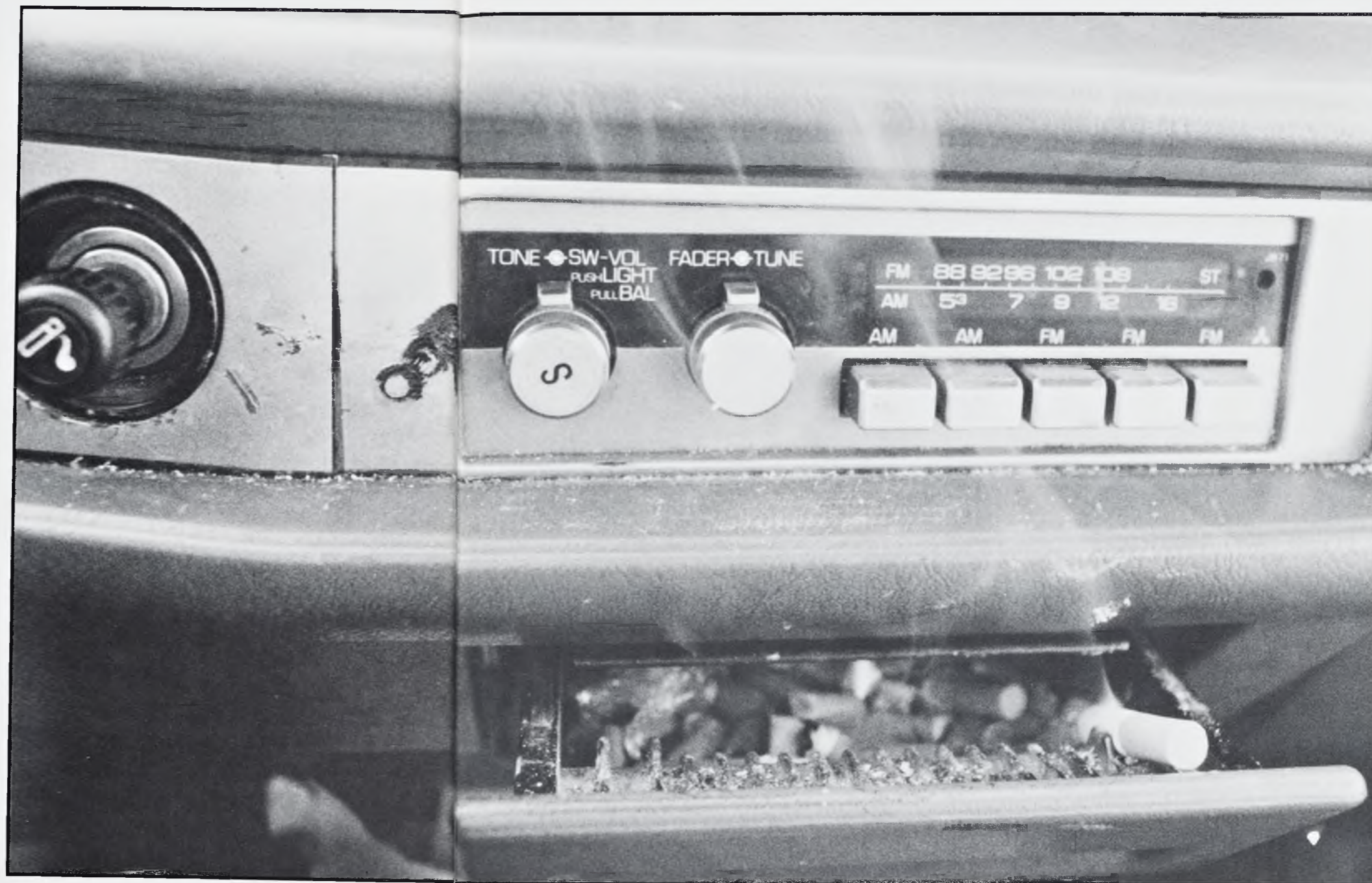


TINA VALENTIN

STEEL

STEVE GREELEY

CARESS IT,
SMOOTHLY POWDERED.
RESPECT ITS STRENGTH, ITS POWER,
ITS PAIN.
CURVE ROUND WITH DELICATE FINGER,
LET EDGE SLIP INTO FLESH.
RED DROP, RED DROP,
SUCH A LOVELY COLOR.
WHAT A CREATION
THIS WEAPON,
THAT INSPIRES SUCH DEVOTION,
SUCH LOVE,
SUCH HATRED,
SUCH PAIN.
A MAGNIFICENT THING WE MAKE IT,
THAT CAUSES SO MUCH PAIN.



TINA VALENTIN

TATYANA BAR

I TOOK UP SMOKING
WHEN I FOUND OUT I WAS PREGNANT
SO THAT
I COULD KILL THE YOU
INSIDE OF ME
BUT I ONLY ENDED UP WITH MOUTH CANCER
AND YOU
REMAINED FESTERING
LIKE A TUMOR
IN MY WOMB.



TINA VALENTIN

Murmurs

JASON TURETSKY

*Notions of form and substance bleared and smeared beneath the skeletal peel
Beneath flimsy coats of flesh the dazzling skeletons shimmer and protrude
Tongues of slab, stretching the fabric, internal sockets glare and flare
Differentiation dissolves.. Androgyny.. Reciprocity.. the sublime
The black, the bleak and the sheik*

*Standing on the blue pub horizon amidst the steam-smoke and laser light
Potential lovers prancing and lashing with arms in gothic ethereal dance
Electric haze swirls the periphery, wiping arrogance from my jaw
as you've just walked in to encroach and berate me and wind my entrails to
knots.. Force to stretch and reveal from the folded fabric of your flittering tongue
the ravaged loin feel of your bitterest befallings
ballpoint shovel trenched in charblackened heart*

1961-75

The Food War

ROBERT L. HARRISON

*Cambodia goes well with spaghetti,
on Indo-China it's served.
For Salad,
have some My Lai
tossed with Viet Cong.
It will take some
Special Forces
to serve a Green Beret.
The waiters wear
black pajamas,
the guests
wear khaki green.
Eat your Laos with a fork
your Thailand with a spoon
and cut your Viet Nam
in half for no gets dessert.*

THE BORDERLINE DINER

MARK ERLLENWEIN

“I’ll have two eggs, sunny-side-up with homefries and a side order of bacon.”

“Do you want coffee or tea?”

“Coffee and a glass of O.J. please.”

“Coming up!” I always replied.

I’ve heard and said these same words to customers it seems forever. It’s waitress lingo I suppose, and probably is as deep of a conversation will get here at the “Borderline Diner” between the customer and myself. “I’ll be right with you, Hun.” I work for this guy named Pete. He’s as miserable as this place looks on its best day. This place is not much to look at by the way. It has your 50’s-esque diner stools at the counter and plenty of booths that can accommodate those who prefer a more comfortable sitting. “Pete, where is table ten’s order, I’m dying out here.” At each booth there is a small jukebox that hasn’t been updated in years. Pete refuses to spend the lint in his pocket to upgrade anything in this hellhole. He says that if he renovated the place, it would lose the character that made a “real” diner what it is, not like those glitzy fakes. He’s talking about those diners that have neon lighting tracing every panel of molding on its walls, and a huge display of monster-sized cakes behind the glass cabinet as you walk in. What can I say other than the Borderline is your typical grease-pit diner. Plain cream walls with scattered pictures and dimly lit lights that hang above each table is what you get. You sit on torn scrappy seats and eat oil-drenched food and sometimes come back for more. The only reason why I think we get so packed is that we’re the last place you can grab something to eat on your way out of Pennsylvania going towards Jersey. Technically, the diner is situated right smack on the middle of the border. As a joke sometimes I’ll ask the customer’s which state they’d prefer to eat in. They get a kick out of that.

“John, you want the usual, right Hun.”

“Shit yeah Darla. Make it a quickie, my mistress is waiting.”

There are so many characters that walk through this place every day. More regulars than not. There’s Vito, the mechanic who fixes my car. He comes every morning. And every morning I make sure he gets a generous serving of hash browns. You got to treat your mechanic like a family member if you don’t want them to rob you too blind. I swear that

when he fixes my car he must charge me whatever his electric bill comes out to that month rather than what the actual job costs. As long as he doesn’t charge me the amount that I hear he runs up at the local bar, my tips just wont cover that.

Then there’s Alex, he’s a straggler. He comes in once a month for his Egg’s Benedict. Sometimes he’ll skip a month and make up for it by having breakfast one morning and vegge out till noon to wait for the lunch special of the day. Those days I hate the most cause he just stares into space and says nothing for hours, robbing me of possible measly tips. On those days I move lunch up one hour earlier to get him the hell out of here. I’ve got a living to make, you know.

Then there are these two gentlemen that come in once a year. For some reason they stick in my mind even though they only dine here seldom. When they arrive they act as if they haven’t seen each other in quite a while. I remember one of their names as being Luce. He’s a dark kind of guy, and I’m sure that his name is abbreviated or something. The other fella I don’t really remember too much other than he’s got long white curly hair and a glow to his personality. They have been coming here to dine as long as I’ve been working here myself. That would be 16 years if I’m not mistaken. Pete tells me that they’ve come here since he opened this place 25 years ago. They are due to be here today as a matter of fact. Every September 21st at 10:59, they arrive and the reunion begins. It’s 10:58 now and I do believe I see their cars pulling up as I speak. Yep, it’s them for sure! I guess it’s time for me to do my job.

“Well how the Heck are ya Luce, your right on time as usual. How’s life been treating you?”

“It’s been a hell of a year Darla, Hah, Hah, Hah!” He always laughs at his own jokes. I seem to never get them.

“You always choose the right choice of words, Darla.” This he mumbles as he continues to bellow out loud.

“And how’s our other friend doing over here?”

“O.K., I suppose. I guess you could say, divine.” The white-haired gentleman looks over to Luce and Luce is now laughing harder then before as his old friend answers me. A private joke I guess.

“Well, shall I seat you or are we gonna stand here and laugh all afternoon. Is it correct to say you want the middle

booth as usual." The middle booth is kind of an attraction here cause the seat on the left is considered to be in New Jersey and the one on the right is in Pennsylvania.

Luce answers snottily, "You know which one we want, Darla. We go through this every year. The middle booth of course!"

"Now why are you being so rude to the lady, Luce. You still are a grumpy miserable man with fire always shooting out your ass." Luce's friend angrily snaps back at him in my defense, but once again they both go into a roar of laughter as their senseless joking continued. And this laughing and joking continued as they sat.

"Now can I get you guys something to drink while you check out the menu. How about it Luce?"

"Yeah, I suppose I'll start with a coffee. Black, please! Hold the white stuff."

"O.K., and what about you, sir?"

"You can just bring me a milk."

"Chocolate milk sir?"

"No! No! Just a regular milk."

"I'll be right back." I always ask the customer if they want chocolate milk, even if they don't order it. Hey it's fifty cents extra here and that means more of a tip for me. Little things add up to a lot. And speaking of a lot I'm sure Luce and his friend have a lot to catch up on.

Luce begins the conversation. "God, damn your age is definitely catching up to you old friend."

"Aw, frig you Luce! Are you gonna start this age shit again? Besides, I'm mad at you."

"Why is that?" Luce questions curiously.

"You took Theresa away from me a couple of weeks ago."

Luce shakes his head and replies, "You're mad at that! Aw give me a break. She was an old woman for YOUR sake. She did all these great and wonderful things all her life, running around covered in her little sheets. And I had enough of it. Too much good for one person."

"Also you took away someone just as important a week earlier." The old man leaned closer across the table.

"Huh?"

"You know who I mean. Don't play stupid with me, I know everything."

Luce responded forgetfully, "Oh yeah, her... Well, I had a pretty busy month, you gotta admit. But come on! Give credit where it's due. I got rid of Blondie to divert your attention and then WHAMO, took Theresa when you weren't looking." The old man shook his head as if impressed by Luce's wit and method but was still angry at the same time.

"That's not the point entirely, Luce. Blondie, as you say, got all the publicity while Theresa should've had the spotlight. I know eventually she had to die, but I wanted her death to leave behind an example all should follow. Instead, the media ate up the whole other fiasco. The reason I put her here was to send a message and set a deep example, and her death was supposed to immortalize that. Instead I got the whole world mourning for the wrong person and this little fag running around, rewriting songs and making money off of it."

"I do impress myself sometimes old friend, I must admit I'm no angel, hah-hah-hah-hah."

"Keep it up, Luce. You think you're really funny. We'll see how much you laugh when I get rid of October 31st."

"You touch that day old man, I'll ruin the 25th."

"I'm just warning you—"

"O.K. fella's here you go, one coffee black and one milk. Now... What can I get y'all to eat." They both looked a bit

angry when I returned to the table. "Luce, what will it be?"

"Uhh... I'll have a breakfast-steak please, very rare in the middle."

"And what kind of toast do you want."

"Rye, but make sure you burn it a bit."

"Anything cold to drink with that?"

"Yeah, a V-8 with pepper."

"Alrighty, and you sir."

"I'll have an egg-white omelet and toast."

"Would you like whole wheat, rye, pumpernickel, or white?"

"White, please."

"Anything cold for you as well?"

"No, I haven't even touched my milk yet, and if my friend here continues to be a pain in the ass, he'll be wearing it."

Luce screams, "Ahhhhh I'm melting, I'm melting!" I believe he was quoting the Wizard of Oz or something like that. They sure are acting really strange this year. It's probably best I just mind my own business. "I'll be back boys, behave."

The two men continued their conversation. The old man resumed, "Back to what I was saying before Luce, I'm warning you! You better slow down and let the rest of this year glide. Besides, the holiday season isn't that far off—"

"Yeah, Yeah, Ho-Ho-Ho!" Luce said. "Don't tell me how to do my job. You know damn well we must coexist, and that means that shit is going to happen. It's been happening for a long time my friend. And as long as you're around, I'm around. And that means lot's more shit is on the way! Excuse me, I got to make a call."

Now I never butt in to people's business but these two sure are acting bizarre. It seems that Luce has left for a moment to make a call or something and his friend is just sitting there with his face buried in his hands, shaking his head in disgust. I better get their food quick before they start fighting or something. But hey, whatever it is they're fighting about, I'm sure it can't even compare to what's going on in China right now. I just heard before on the radio that an enormous earthquake hit there no more than five minutes ago. Life sure is quirky sometimes. You never know when you're going to go. Uh-Oh, here comes, Luce.

"Did you just do that?" The Old man questions Luce as he returns.

"What!" Luce replied with questioning eyes and a wrinkled forehead.

"That phone call you just made, damn-it! I heard what just happened in China on the radio!" The old man yelled.

"Oh yeah... Well, you know..., they've got a population problem over there that just had to be taken care of. Too many people over there in my opinion. Nothing like a good quaker to make some room."

"I don't believe you. I just finished telling you to slow down, and look what you did. You are really pushing my patience this year." The old man trembled in anger.

"Oh, go create a miracle or make an appearance in some lady's underwear or something and stop bothering me about this crap. Let's talk about something else, you're boring me here."

"Oh really! Sorry for being such bad company, LUCE!" The old man stretched for a moment to relax and calm down.

"So, how's you son doing?" Luce asks with a smirk.

"Oh, Jesus Christ! He's been a pain in the ass lately. He keeps on telling me he wants to go back home. Every day he keeps on annoying me with, 'I want to go back, I want to go back!' The moron won't get through his head that he can't

and will never ever step foot on Earth again."

"What a Schmuck!" Luce intervened.

"Aw, be quiet Luce, you know what I mean. If the second coming of my son ever came about, then what in the world are these mortals here going to have to believe in after that. All hope would be gone and lost. They'd have nothing to look forward to. Besides, who would believe him. There's about 600 bums in New York alone that claim to be Jesus Christ. He doesn't get this through his skull. I have a racket to run. And part of that racket is keeping these people believing that THE LORD is coming soon to save them all. It keeps them in order down here while you're out there trying to screw it up."

"I'll admit, I'm a pain in the ass now and then!" Luce polishes his nails as he comments while checking out his reflection in his fingernails.

"Yeah, whatever. Besides,

I'm sure that the military and the government would just receive him with open arms if he came floating down from the sky and just saved the world. Oh, yeah they'd accept that alright. His luck they'd fire a missile at him!" The old man said sarcastically. "And while I'm speaking of things that float in the air, would you mind cutting this flying saucer crap down a bit. Some people are saying that they believe in aliens more than religion, Christ and God, and you know I can't have that."

"Nope!" Luce answered. "No way, are you kidding me. You got your chance to create mankind in your own likeness, and by the way, may I mention you have no imagination. I wanted my own creation, hence, little green men and their flying saucers."

"You're forgetting the other one, Luce."

"Oh Bigfoot, yeah my Monkey-man! He was a clever one, I thought. Sasquatch is right up there with my green-men, not as clever, but commendable though. But yeah you're right, your son can be a

moron sometimes."

"That's not what I'm saying Luce, you know that, I'm saying that he doesn't need the aggravation of coming back here. He needs that like he needs a hole in his head."

"Or in his hands and feet!" Luce quickly replied with a smirk. "Let me guess old friend, don't CROSS you, huh!"

"Oh, you just don't stop ever, do you, Luce!" The old man snapped back. "So tell me, how have things been down there besides all the havoc that you cause up here."

"I can't complain old friend, It's still as much fun as when you originally kicked me out from your palace above you little bastard, you. You know technically it's your fault that evil exists." Luce states boldly.

"Don't you think I knew what I was doing when I got rid of you, Luce. Of



course I had to kick you out of there. There has to be a balance between the two. There has to be an "ANTI-" to everything that exists otherwise, I'd be board out of my mind. Why do you think I knocked-up Mary and had a son. Immaculate Conception my ass, she was dead asleep one night and my north star was shining bright and high in the sky if you know what I mean. Isn't that what the rest of the world does now a days. They get their girlfriend or somebody knocked-up and have a kid, then get married and then

they're miserable the rest of their life. I just skipped the marriage part. I do! I do! Well I don't! It's become the American way, I think." Luce stared in disbelief as the old man finished his speech.

"Excuse me, did you just say, that or is it time for my millennial hearing-test?" Luce surprisingly asks.

"You heard me Luce. Very clearly too. And I mean what I said!"

"Whoh..., it looks like we need to talk a little more in depth here. Aw shit, here comes our food, it'll have to wait till after old friend."

"Here you go boys, a breakfast steak mooing with a side order of burnt Rye bread for you, Luce. And here for you sir is your egg white omelet with white toast. Can I get you anything else boy's?"

"Yeah, Darla." Replied Luce.

"What can I get ya, Hun?"

"Can you bring me an apple?" Luce asked as the old man sighed and smirked at him.

"Sure, give me a couple of minutes, I just got to get another order out and I'll get you one."

"An apple, Luce. What are you on a diet all of a sudden. Don't get me wrong, it makes sense. A rare breakfast steak with a side order of burnt rye-bread and an apple please! Ha ha! Yeah, can ya bring me a diet soda with that as well, my doctor said I gotta watch my calorie intake. Luce, you're kidding me, right!"

"You'll see. Just shut up and eat your egg-white omelet, hold the taste please!" Luce barked back. Both of them began to eat their breakfast. The old man joyfully kicked back

and very slowly and calmly ate. Luce was more curious as to the whereabouts of Darla. Soon enough she returned back to the table. "Well Luce, sorry to say, but we don't have any fresh fruit today, especially apples, but I did manage to scrounge up an old jar of apple-sauce. Will this do ya?"

Luce made an awkward face. "It's not exactly what I had in mind. And it's not going to have the same effect, but I guess it'll do. I can't even temp...frig...god...real app..." Luce answered as his voice shrunk to a mumble as he continued to eat.

"Alrighty then, enjoy ya meal!" Darla walks away.

"Are you happy now Luce, you got all your friggin food groups right in front of you. You're the damn poster child for the Board of Health you miserable bastard." The old man laughs and Luce places the jar of apple-sauce on the old man's side of the table.

"What the hell are you giving me the apple-sauce for, Luce?"

"Think about it old man, think back!" Luce stares back at his plate and then into the old man's eyes as he continues to eat.

"Holy crap," the old man whispers while scratching his head, "are you doing what I think you're doing. Are you trying to tempt me with a jar of apple sauce. HA..." The old man belts out a godly laugh that echoes throughout the diner. "I wish I had a camera Luce, this is too much! Adam gets a friggin Macintosh and I get a Del Monte. I love it, bravo Luce, bravo."

"What do you want old man, that's all they had. You heard the woman, and stop laughing, it ain't funny!" The old man continues to laugh, now even harder. "I said stop it, Grandpa! Don't make me give that old man over there a coronary. Even better, I'll do in Darla. You know I'll do it."

"Go ahead Luce, that man is 87 years old. He better die soon, otherwise that means I screwed up somewhere down the line. And as far as Darla is concerned, she's been waiting on us for 16 friggin years and you'd think she'd know or even ask of my name by now. You can have her!"

"Well, well, I guess I'm correct in sensing this sudden change of heart, Mr. Do-gooder. You've had a strange tone in your voice since we got here. I sense a tune of a different chime. And they certainly aren't bells of joy. Hell's bells, maybe?" Luce asks.

"What are you trying to say Luce."

"What I'm trying to say is that I think your tired. After all these years, your tired and board. And I know this time around your not going to go screw some chick while she's asleep. Your luck, you'd have twins or something. Oh, no! And me, huh! You need me now probably more than ever. Without me you'd have nothing to do old man. You don't know how long I've been waiting for this. You know exactly what that apple sauce is all about. It may not be a Macintosh, but you know exactly what I'm asking of you. What do you say old man, why don't you come on over here to Jersey. There's just enough room for two. What do you say.

Come on over here to Jersey, join me!"

The old man continued to eat his breakfast and ever so often he would look up to Luce and stare at him and then go back to eating. Luce waited patiently and awaited an answer. Fate and humanity rested on the tip of the old man's tongue and his fork as he leaned over to grab the ketchup. He continued to stare into Luce's eyes as he began to smother his omelet in ketchup and top that off with a healthy shaking of some pepper. Luce still waited as did the steak on his plate. And soon after the old man finished his breakfast, he wiped his mouth with a napkin and proceeded to answer Luce's offer.

"Let me begin with this Luce. For once, yes..., I agree with you. I'm God-damn tired if I don't say so myself. I've had it with all of this... and for some time now too. The last time I felt this way was about a couple million years ago. And what's left of that is only to be found on display in thousands of museums all over the world. It's not fun anymore, all people do is want, want, want. There isn't a pure soul down here, anywhere! Not one! They're ruining everything that I made much quicker than I thought they would. Last time around they were just killing each other. That wasn't fine by me, so I wiped them out, every one of those damn reptiles. I left only a few small ones to evolve a bit to leave as a reminder for these beings, but they haven't seemed to have gotten it yet. This time around they're screwing around with the whole damn planet. Screw that, screw them, they're going to have to suffer dearly this time. I'm ready to make Nostradamus look like a fucking prophet. All the cynics fear 2000. They better! As a matter of fact, they better figure out a way to travel back in time, cause 2000 is going to come quick. The next two years are going to be Hell my friend, and I'm going to need your help. I've had it!"

"YES! YES! FINALLY!" Luce screamed and started to dance in his seat. "Reunited and it feels so good!" Luce started to sing as he swayed back and forth. "So does this mean we're partners again, chum?"

"Yep, for one last time Luce. I think I've had it with this creation crap. I'm retiring and extending the offer to you if you'd like to join me. Fuck the world, fuck the Bible and fuck humanity. Shake my hand to seal the deal and we'll start with today." Luce extends his hand and the clap sounded as both

men's palms meet echoes so loud that the music from the juke boxes skipped at every single booth.

"That seals it old man, it's a done deal."

"I hope you can keep up with me Luce, I'm pretty pissed-off despite the smile on my face."

"That's not a smile old man. That's a grimace turned upside down on that mug of yours. I'll show you how to smile. My cheeks are swollen at the end of the day from all the smiling I do. You'll see. Evil is FUN!"

"What do you say we skip the check and get started? We have two years to do this, and I really want to be completed by New Years of '99. The only ball that will be dropping that year will be the moon as it suddenly spins out of orbit towards Earth, hab!" The old man said with vigor.

"We're still going to do a bunch of stuff in between that, right!"

"Don't worry Luce, that's just the finale. You'll be able to do whatever you want."

"Can I make the aliens attack Earth and the sasquatch' invade New York?"

"Yes, Luce, you can even use your aliens and bigfoot!" The old man replied as if he were talking to a child. Both men proceeded to the door as they skipped the check. They continued to talk as they casually left unnoticed as if they were never there to begin with.

"But you got to let me have the first move Luce, I have an old friend I want to visit in Washington. At right about now he ought to be finishing his jog and getting ready to slug down a burger or three at McDonald's. What do you think Luce, should I give him a Big Mac attack or have him choke to death?"

"Let him choke! The press will love that. Better chance for a witty headline. But get this...after that, let's stop off in California, I think it's time that state become an Island..."

"Yeah..."

"Would you look at that Pete! Luce and his friend skipped off without paying the check. Son's of a bitches. And look, they're both getting into the same car. That's alright, I'll just call in that plate number and we'll see how far they get. Little bastards, after sixteen years that's the thanks that people give you. May God strike down both of them. They're pure evil, isn't that right Pete. Hey, Pete. You mind if I take a break. I'm getting this shooting pain down my right arm. And is it hot in here or is it me?"

Student Government

A.C.C.E.S.S. Speaker Series

CUNY In Crisis: Open Admissions

RONALD MCGUIRE ESQ. AND PROFESSOR LEONARD JEFFREIES

MARCH 5TH 1:30PM-3:30PM WILLIAMSON THEATER 1-P

As a student in 1969 Ronald McGuire helped to fight for open admissions. This forum will discuss the History of CUNY and students involvement in beginning open admissions.

"FOLLOW ME HOME" w/DIRECTOR PETER BRATT

MARCH 12TH 6:00PM RECITAL HALL 1-P

Weaving traditions of Native, African and Latin cultures, the film tells the story of four artists and their journey across the U.S. landscape.

POLITICAL PRISONERS

MONIFA AKINWOLE

MALCOLM X GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT

HERMAN FERGUSEN

JERECHO MARCH

MARCH 19TH 1:30PM - 3:30PM WILLIAMSON THEATER 1-P

A forum to educate students about political prisoners being held in the American prison system. Building to the national march on Washington on March 27th for Jericho '98.

MICHAEL PARENTI

MARCH 25TH 2:30PM-4:30PM WILLIAMSON THEATER 1-P

Author of "Democracy for the Few", Parent is considered a leading voice among political progressives. He discusses the problems of imperialism, corporate economic power and the invented reality of news and entertainment media.

POLICE BRUTALITY

CARL DIX-OCTOBER 22ND COALITION

PARENTS AGAINST POLICE BRUTALITY

APRIL 2ND 1:30PM-3:30PM GREEN DOLPHIN LOUNGE/CAMPUS CENTER

A panel discussion on the problem of police brutality.

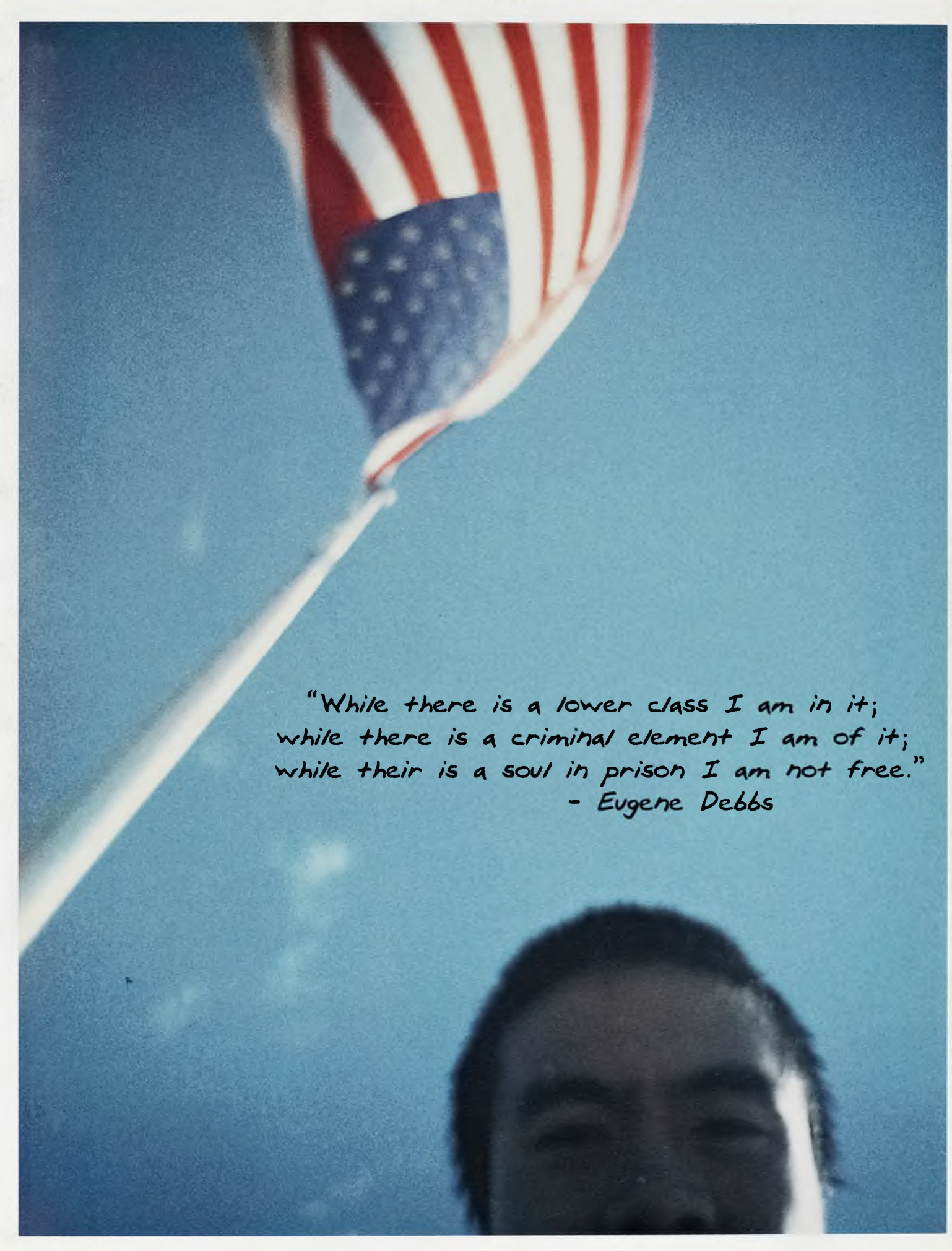
PROFESSOR LOUISE TILLY

Professor of History at New School for Social Research

WOMEN AND SOCIALISM BETWEEN THE WARS

APRIL 9TH 1:30PM-3:30PM RECITAL HALL 1-P





*"While there is a lower class I am in it;
while there is a criminal element I am of it;
while there is a soul in prison I am not free."
- Eugene Debbs*