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NOVEMBER 2004
ISSUE #3

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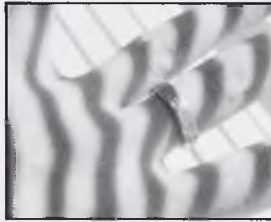
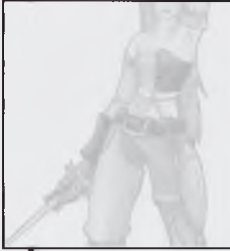
Fall 2004
 Volume two- Issue three

FICTION



POETRY

ART



CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

Note from the Editor...

Here we are, the second installment of *Serpentine*, CSI's Literary and Arts Magazine. It is already the penultimate chapter in my *Serpentine* run. I was the Editor- In- Chief of the previous issue, as well as this beautiful peice of work in your hands right now, and so I will be for the upcoming issue in May.

I like to think of my run on *Serpentine* as a trilogy by itself. This one is *Empire Strikes Back*, or the *Godfather Part II*. This issue is in many ways superior to the previous, who knows, maybe it will be the strongest of the three. This time around, we knew what we were doing.

I say we, because for this second installment, *Serpentine* had a working staff. At one point during the course of this issues genesis, there was a busy day where we had three



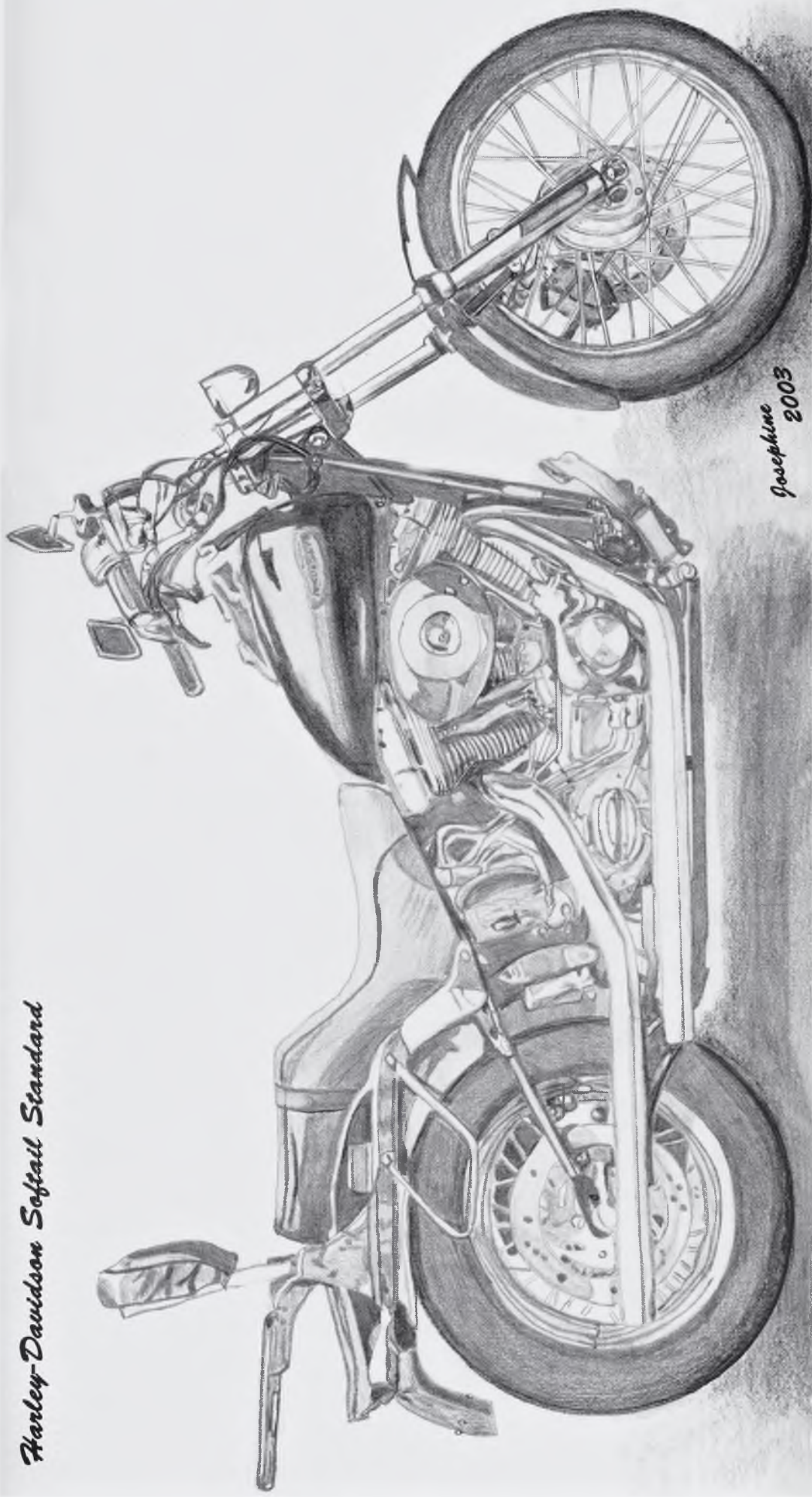
Serpentine meetings pretty much back to back. I remember, while at that third meeting, I thought to myself "Hey, I actually work on a real magazine!"

This issue in your hands is proof that a few creative individuals at CSI, putting in a consistent amount of work, can accomplish something great.

So without further ado, I give you the second Installment of the *Serpentine* Trilogy - Enjoy

Editor-in-Chief Peter Marsh

Harley-Davidson Softail Standard



Josephine 2003

So She Sat There Smiling

(To the tune of V.W.)

STORY BY Jeremy Tescher

I

"You're forgetting Lucretius," said the one with seven earrings. A moment, and then, "I'm aware of his work," replied the other, and there followed laughter.

To Mrs Pilastro it seemed that this sniggering was a deliberate insult, was the final requirement to complete her son's transition; and the simple silence settling around the deck through the screen, first hovering in wait around the edges of their genial conversation but now greedily floodwatering in, was, she felt, an end of things; an understanding. And though they had moved here from home nearly seven years ago (crazy how time races by you) it still was enough to send through her body, quickly darting into and shaking the stomach, shocks of . . . well, regret, she admitted. It was unbearable that he would make her pretend to enjoy the company of these boys, full of themselves and obsessed with their clothes and what came out of their own mouths – let alone the fact, she thought, gracefully switching the cool metal tray bearing the iced tea to her right hand and gripping the screen door with her left, that they played on his ego and his arrogance; the door slid harshly open and she was very sure Adam wasn't like this back in Sheepshead but they always say (and Ma said it too) that you can never change a young man's mind; and she carefully placed the tray down with its swirling glasses on the little table between them. Adam mouthed, "Thanks, Ma," in her direction, to which she could only nod, her eyes skittering over the others' faces.

Matt did impressions; that was his thing. He was confident and always controlled, and that particular one was snatched from left field: he could always conjure up some obscure line from a movie or TV show, the voice and words stamped perfectly into his brain, held there freshly on reserve, but the manifestation was always without the clumsiness one would expect from premeditation; and it would spin around in your memory for not even a moment when the recognition would flare up and with it would come that same wash of admiration; you could never have pulled that off. This was a man of who you could genuinely say, "The guy never misses a beat," Adam thought, letting the chill drink rush against the roof of his mouth: this was good company. Because, if he had it right, they had just spoken about that very same Simpsons episode ("the one where Bart and Martin both try to run for class president and Bart becomes ridiculously popular, remember? and he loses the race because he forgets to vote for himself – something like that") the other day, and here Matt had slyly planted the line, I'm familiar with his work, catching Martin's squeaky smug pitch perfectly, even the chunky look on his face; Sam was still laughing. Adam studied this as a caught specimen: the polished ease, the clever clarity that sliced through everyone else present, rendering them momentarily inept at humor: all clothed in Matt's (let's be honest) silly tendency to recall from his insatiable vault of observations and recordings a fitting response for the present conversation encased in a line from a cartoon that aired originally a decade ago. Yes, Martin was aware of Bradbury's work; Matt was aware of Lucretius and he did not see fit to include him; it was, Adam felt, ingenious. Petty, but ingenious.

His mother smiled awkwardly and inwardly, her head moving slightly, that same self-conscious squaring of the shoulders and adjustment of posture, he noticed, as she turned to the house again, not even acknowledging his thanking her; but he wasn't about to let her get on his nerves because she would make him ruin everything: the first time he could get both Sam and Matt to come over at once and hang out and talk, to let him feel like he was somebody to somebody, was it really a lot to ask, he shouted at her in himself, to have friends who enjoyed his company!? did she always have to be so selfish, or was it just too much for her to say a word or two to them? But now here was Sam insisting on the poet's admittance. If you were going to draw a line from Homer through to Milton, you certainly couldn't skip Lucretius. Professor

Diehl would agree, he was sure. Homer, Hesiod, Apollonius, Lucretius, Virgil, Lucan, Statius, (he was ticking them off on his fingers, almost giddily) then you have Beowulf, The Song of Roland—and Matt, smiling, interrupted him before the unpronounceable German ones because didn't Sam see that Lucretius was the odd man out here? Substandard? not to mention that the work was in no way martial, didn't even contain a plot?

"Wait wait wait," Sam yelled, "substandard?" and his offended sensibility boomed into the kitchen like a gunshot, ringing in Mrs Pilastro's ears and looming upon the tiling that blanketed the floor. She restrained her arms and again set down the tray gently on the counter beside the sink, a position which gave her a view of her son through the blinds of the back window: a man, it was undeniable; he was sure and strong and he certainly was smarter than the others, and he most definitely knew it. Why he felt the need to have these contrived (there was no other word for it) and secluded get-togethers on the deck, with their boring and snobbish conversations to make them all feel like little gods was, she maintained, completely beyond her. Completely. David would have said, "Now, how could you insult yourself like that? We wouldn't be here together if these things were beyond you." Not that she meant it like that of course, she smiled, flirting with him in her memory, on the bed, in that small and silky room looking out over Bedford Avenue: beyond her like she didn't want to understand, not that she couldn't. And suddenly her face shaded red when she recalled the whole group; there was Pete and Derek and Jason and his little brother Anthony; all of Adam's teenage friends. How Pete (the devil!) would do that eyebrow-wiggling thing at her, a woman twice his age; and the time she had walked in on them watching that dirty movie in the den and Adam didn't show his face for a week, but she knew his friends felt silly because they spoke about her like that (her and David could hear them trying to whisper about the way she walked: laughter in the backyard late at night slinking in through the window), and it would always make David upset. She couldn't stop it from coming up out of her chest and chirping into the kitchen air but the tiles, which had not had a chance to recover from that boy Sam's outburst, absorbed and made hollow the quick brief laugh. It emptied of warmth and cracked on the floor as her face ceased its smiling.

"Substandard, my friend," said the smug one: "Do we include Silius Italicus? Or Quintus Smyrnaeus? No." She sighed and shook her head, wondering how that one had any friends, or a girlfriend even, with the way he talked. What did Adam want with a person like that? she asked herself and she let her eyes fall on his sitting form, colorless now in the dozing light of the sun setting, obscured through the screen door (that breeze means we have to switch it for the glass one; it's October already), his attention pinned and paralyzed by what that snotty brat had to say, using those silvery and secret names, enjoying only the saying of them; but surely he didn't look up to either of them because he knew that he was worth more. And she couldn't really be angry with him because he was truly hovering above them somewhere, definitely using them. That was it. That must be it.

And the fact that he resembled his father so much; the circumference of the face; its shape; the way his cheekbones tightened up the skin that flanked his chin as he smirked (just like now), and then how beautiful the strength, the sincere intensity in his eyes. Because you could always depend on David the moment you looked in those eyes, identical, down to the scattered flecks of black in the burnt umber. She turned the faucet; watching the column of water connect with the sink's base and subsequently disturbing its flow with her gliding hands, she reflected on how coarse her fingers and knuckles now seemed. Those hand lotions did absolutely nothing; she knew it; a waste of time and a pretense besides, wasn't it? And of course pretense was <I style="mso-bidi-font-style: normal">his word; (she hadn't thought of that in years!) one of those subtle and simple ones he would always find room for, whether it was his daily declamations against the people of New York, or the soullessness of capitalism, or of Western civilization crumbling and moldering, he had taught her, given her, that little word and given her its meaning on their first date in the Village: him with his smirking flirting eyes and his dungaree jacket and her with her blonde straight hair down to her waist; how silly they looked there and then. They had stood

outside Gray's Papaya groping for things to say and she thought it was silly that here Sixth Avenue was also called Avenue of the Americas, with two little green signs one on top of the other and she said so. He of course felt that this was a clear example of the pretenses the city was capable of; such useless ceremonial and honorary meaningless only succeeded in blinding people to the actual squalor on the streets. His words to her were ripe and cleaned (he would later laugh at himself for such ranting). And she stared at the tiny cracked wrinkles on her knuckles, slowly sheathed in running water, thinking how carelessly and freely she had asked: what does pretense mean? And those eyes of his enveloped her with their tender penetration (how could he not know everything?); he told her to shut him up the second he sounded like some annoying college boy, but she really wanted to know and he made her want to ask – and she would show him things, teach him things too before he died. She turned off the faucet: the single dish was scrubbed to pristine spotlessness.

The sound of the water hissing out from the house's rear wall where it rushed through pipes finally ended and they could continue talking at a decent volume; but, Adam thought, the flow of the conversation had already been impeded, and its echoes seemed somehow idiotic, pompous in his ears. After all, he couldn't even remember when this Quintus guy lived or what he wrote so he couldn't come up with a clever rejoinder; he hadn't had that much to do with the exchange up till now; he lagged behind in his own small amazement. But it was so irritating how she abruptly turned on the sink when she knew how loud the water sounded out on the deck, and it was all to get his attention anyway, even if she had nothing to say, right? Sam didn't feel that you could compare those pathetically baroque examples of epic to the audacious power of Lucretius, how he spoke so clearly to the modern mind – and didn't he think that it was an unfair comparison?

Their sudden focus slammed into him, stunning him.

I suppose, Adam offered hastily. It seemed something of a waste of time to dwell on these lesser names, because, (and what a vivid clarity) he said with rising confidence (finding his words now): Dante eclipses them all; he absorbs them and ultimately usurps them with his uniqueness, his ability to create and to reflect. Even the ones who came after couldn't compete.

But no; 'usurp' is too homely a word for what you are trying to communicate, thought Matt at Adam quietly, smiling and propping his temple with a finger, after his slight shudder of sympathetic embarrassment, it is ugly and obvious how unread you are: I could throw half a dozen names at you right now from any era, any literature, and you would sit there sputtering for a response: those 'lesser names' are only the tip of a gleaming and glorious iceberg. Matt's lips, tongue and jaw all squirmed around each other as if to dislodge a rotted taste from his throat and he mused that Adam reminded him of all those same pathetic poseurs from his old undergrad classes; one couldn't exactly blame someone for being born with a limited intellectual faculty, it was just that it was so . . . irksome. Yes, morons were the obstacles along truth's road, the interferences that had to be tolerated.

Adam sat, breathless. The cloudless shield of sky didn't seem boundless enough at that moment; his intensity and pride exploded out from him, could not be contained by a mere body, but rather it stretched out to touch the full perimeter of the yard and its circle of quiet; caressing and noting all; distorting and prettifying the green in the trees, sharpening their thick odor on the air; sinking, it seemed to Adam, as he replayed his careful comments again in his ears, plunging the house and its plot of land down into a shallow oblivion that was but a mote in the vastness of every thing, with time and his eyes stubbornly scouring the earth's revolutions. So that then he knew, We are minute self-swallowing voices talking at nothing. No thing. And suddenly his words on Dante that had sent him here became brittle and devoid of their importance and very purpose, the surge of recognition and its accompanying magnification collapsing back into itself so that there lingered only its taste, with the belly still empty and aching from the memory. He saw these two people (barely acquaintances, really) as though changed to caricatures, shadows of types, (yes) forms with fake faces: did they actually believe that they had sincerely met with some kind of

enlightenment? Here is Matt turning his phrases with deftness; he was nothing, Adam felt, shifting his palm and its sweat on the arm of his chair, but neither am I. And I know it. There is a world.

“Isn’t it getting a little dark out there?”

Matt’s hand dropped down from his forehead and heavily plopped in his lap, no effort being made to conceal his annoyance; and Adam became heatedly conscious of her presence beyond the screen, of their conversation speedily becoming more and more imposed upon by her question, like a weed withering in excess sun. The question hung there in mid-flight, wrapped in the silence it had insisted on creating, shouldering in on them rudely, gnawing at them (at him) for a casual and polite answer; and because of its urgency – a pressure that clenched and clenched inside – Adam, before allowing it to settle on the wooden boards at their feet, harnessed his immediate flash of ire and with it barked, “We’re fine,” firing this at her selfishness. Its harsh clap stung her with a burning, and he felt it instantaneously before it left his mouth, knew from the pressure in his abdomen: its tone: an open-handed blow to the face.

She had only wanted to somehow enter into their conversation, and the idea had cropped up that maybe she could turn on a light so they could see one another better and, she thought, her tongue silenced and cloven to her palette, if he didn’t want her to say anything to them, why had he asked her earlier in the day to dress nicely for company? These boys were a wedge hammered abruptly between them now; she was overcome with an abstract sensation of running to catch her son (not a boy), to throw herself beneath his plummeting weight; and there before her, as she cleared her throat and turned back to the kitchen table again, was her baby flying up in the air, away from David’s arms and giant smile, then floating straight down again to be once again grabbed by his father’s rough safe hands (“don’t throw him like that!”); but he wouldn’t break him, he assured her, he was right there to catch him. He’s my boy. And, comically rolling Adam’s chubby body under one arm like a football (he would always giggle when he was held that way), his glowing bald and cooing face sticking out at her, David jabbed his tongue out at her; it forced her to smile, seeing their two faces like that, pointing, identically posed. He’s my boy and you know what you are, hon? She did, yes, and she was sorry for yelling. She gave up and pulled back a chair from the kitchen table to sit, keeping that seething pain inside, the barb he had thrown; she had just ruined his evening, hadn’t she? I’m sorry, she told Adam (her son!) in her head, I’m sorry I’m not your father. He would have hosted them perfectly, impressed them by talking around them in circles, and all she had done was ask about the darkness; stupid, stupid.

“Look, we should probably head out anyway, alright?” And Matt rose up, followed by Sam, simultaneously zippering their jackets with that formal air of finality; the sounds and silhouettes of them standing seemed, through the screen door, to be quaking with a detached tolerance of her (or was it of Adam also?), a stately and affected processional that said, “We understand, man, we understand. Women, right? Unbelievable,” and Adam all through it didn’t move; she thought that she could feel him tensing up, and then there was his hand extending to grip the first boy’s, the second boy’s. She thought, sitting there still, he is probably holding his breath in and briskly nodding to them both, some of that breath escaping through his nostrils as he nods and grasps their hands; he was going to be furious with her.

Their boots fell against the wooden steps as the two of them started towards the gate, Matt shaking his head, exiting through into the drive; avoiding the inside of the house, Adam thought. His mother’s voice came weakly but cheerfully: Good night, guys. Drive safe, she called, as if nothing had happened. Appearances to the last, isn’t it? he thought, standing with his back to the screen, there’s always that fake happiness, that ‘cool mom’ routine, right? It would never surprise him and would never stop startling him how self-absorbed she could be, and, he shook his head, Dad’s not here to straighten her out, at least make her seem normal in front of other people.

(For just one knifing second there was that contracting of the gut, that drop of shame that punctured the cooling anger and rippled outward through his veins and skin, reverberating a gruff pair of syllables for his ears to snare and keep; giving them

ATE

shape, the spreading circles of the rippling howled out: "We're fine," and now he heard it for the shout it was.)

She heard a long, low exhale from outside and knew, as she drummed her fingertips on the table's top, that her son was not going to speak to her for a little while: three days maybe. But this was okay, because they had got through these moments before, she learning to imitate to the best of her ability his father's methods, he learning to be patient with her trying; she would apologize when he was ready and then try harder in the future. But if he would only say what was on his mind now, they could communicate; she would listen in a way that he thought she couldn't; she was overcome, and his sliding back the door and sudden steps on the tiling accentuated this to a crescendo as he stormed by in a flourish. She glanced up too late to see his face; his bearing; a sign that she could maybe take with her to know how he felt, a truth beyond his furious silent movements, tromping into the living room towards the staircase. She sighed yet again, staring down at her hands, still sitting and thinking of how his glaring eyes had floated at her from the dark of the deck through the screen; and she turned her head up in time to see that Adam had paused at the landing to look back at her, but now she only saw his back as he turned up the stairs, too late in realizing she had heard the quiet of his halting at the landing.

II

And why, why in the hell does she always have to be so damn selfish? Adam asked himself, deciding whether to continue with the mashed potatoes or maybe first finish off the baby carrots. It's always the selfishness, but why?—perhaps it was a pointless question, though. Debbie was on the floor of the livingroom, fiddling with her little finger-puppets, bobbing them to the tune, he imagined, of his wife stiltedly stabbing at and around her sirloin; the silverware clinked against the plate, sounding to him like delicate tapping on a closed high-hat: lacking resonance. And for all the times that she complained to him how he never finished her cooking, never cleaned his plate off, here she was, clearly doing the same thing. But, of course, it was fake, an affectation, to garner attention. She wanted to draw him out, right here in front of Deb, she wanted him to ask the question. Well, he wouldn't do it, he resolved, clearing his throat just after the last of the carrots went down (excellent, cooked to a perfect softness), he wouldn't; not this time.

It really wasn't such a big deal. It would cost money at first, they would both lose some sleep and he would have to spend more time with Deborah, and less on his work. But he knew how important this was to her (he did, after all, have the same values); and so what? Sarah yelled at him mutely, she hadn't had these plans when they had gotten married: that was years ago! People fucking change, develop new interests, she told herself, kicking her chair back and standing upright with her dish in her hand, being careful not to let him see her vexation, not to give him ammunition for a later argument ("can't you just come out and tell me what you mean? no, you just sit there waiting for me to say something, acting, always acting!") where he would yell about the same exact things; she didn't want him to think she was being selfish. And here, having proceeded into the kitchen, Sarah emptied the remains of her dinner, a chilled mass of potato adhering to a formless clump of sirloin, down into the garbage can, swearing that she wouldn't let him do this again: not with something so important.

"How ya doin' in there, Silly-bee?" His voice, now relaxed but sinewy, wafted through to her in the kitchen; she walked away from it to the sink, seeing before her with the suddenness (and limitedness) of lightning a picture of that day in his office, with Deborah on his lap, him sitting behind the desk, and her with her angle of vision from the doorway onto the hall. Deborah was sifting her little hands through his papers, trying to catch words to sing at him, to get his reactions, and all Sarah could do was lean and smile, shaking her head. Deborah finally found one worthy of a challenge, or maybe it had been Adam who, sitting there on that swivel chair in an undershirt and pleated khaki slacks, glasses resting on his nose, had brought the sheet closer to their daughter and pointing to the heading across the top, saying, And

what's that one? How do we say that? Adam, she had said, stepping into the room, don't push her. But then Deborah had, in her sunny way, diffused the tension by saying, silly-bus, Daddy, silly-bus! He had on a boy's grin, one he couldn't control, looking down at her little face just under his nose; he started laughing, and she joined him because he was tickling her now, both of them loudly yelling back and forth, Silly-bus?!?! And Sarah couldn't help but laugh with them by the time he had started saying to Deborah, Silly-bus? Well, you're a silly-bee! and then he lifted Deborah up above his head so that her stomach was face-height and then he would do that thing where he made those farting noises with his mouth (a zurble? a zorbit? what did he call it?) against her skin, and then he put her on his shoulders and ran around the house, the two of them howling like a pair of rabid monkeys.

"I'm fine, Daddy." He let out the breath slowly and silently: she couldn't be fine, not really, he thought, scratching his chin with his left hand, sliding the problem with Sarah off to the side as he adjusted the food in front of him with his fork, aimlessly moving them both around, and drawing the simile immediately in his head. Like a leftover, right? Just ignore it, but it won't go away, it will simply grow crusty and embarrassing. But, no, Deb was just as important. She couldn't expect him to not worry about their daughter, twelve years old and playing with children's toys. He brooded on how his wife always had to storm off (or slink off, it didn't matter) into the kitchen, wanting that attention: see how the world punishes me! she probably thought, and he shook his head imperceptibly, bitterly amused. What had Pete said that time after his fight with Rebecca? Ya can't live with 'em . . . ya can't kill 'em. Adam Pilastro smiled, wondering where the hell Pete was at that moment.

Christ, it wouldn't have bothered him so much if she didn't sit there on the floor in the middle of the livingroom like a toddler; he rubbed his forehead. She always does well on her exams but "she could participate a little more in class" her teachers all agreed, and she is constantly off in her own world, he thought, sitting at the head of table facing into the livingroom as Sarah came back to the table; he simply stared out into space, into nothing, not actually acknowledging her presence, and she knew that they would probably sit there in silence for about ten minutes. He loves us so much and I'm just giving him more to worry about. Did she want him to take his plate? was he done? she asked him, and he thought it would maybe make her feel slightly better at that moment if he responded; yes, he said, he was done. There, now she had something to do; but the argument was only delayed, and he remembered, as Sarah walked past him into the kitchen, all he had said was, "Do you think that's such a good idea?" and she had gotten quiet and now this. And there was Debbie, lying on her stomach with those puppets up close to her face, singing to them. Adam suddenly asked her if she wanted to get ready for bed so she could come down and watch TV until ten o'clock?

"Okay, Daddy," and his daughter stood and walked into the diningroom, passing him on his right to climb the stairs and moments later Sarah was again sitting at the table, only this time she sat there looking at him expectantly. And here we go; time to say something; time to step in with some remark that will let her start with the—

But she was already talking: it was only one class, two nights a week. They had enough saved up for a few semesters, she said in a low and controlled voice, she had done the math and figured that they could save enough for a third before the first two were over. She had anticipated his fighting her on this, he thought, nodding: she's crafty and shrewd as always, trying to make sure that he had no way of countering her. She thought maybe he would be happy that she had decided to go back, and she knew he could sympathize: wasn't education so important to him? she asked, thinking that he was going to somehow prove that his opinions had nothing to do with this. She had thought this out carefully, all the fine monetary points; she had gotten all the paperwork for registration personally so as not to trouble him with it while he was working on campus, and now, she thought, he was going to turn it all around to make her look like a villain. She didn't understand why he had to be this way.

What way? he asked. Was she going to let him respond?

She leaned into the table and dipped her head down a little to tiredly rub the back

of her neck with her hand; she's given up already, he thought. He knew it was wrong, but for some reason he loved the silence that he had made. He had simply spread his hands, given her an innocent and confused look and, as if he had snapped his fingers in her face, introduced his voice into the conversation. He was happy with this dynamic; she would have to listen and he didn't even yet know exactly what it was that he would say. His energies, he realized, hadn't carried him that far yet, so he shook his head as if marveling at her audacity and sighed loudly. There was his silence.

She could see that, even though he was looking away off to the side now, pondering, he wasn't thinking about what she has said at all. He was maybe thinking of how best to phrase his next statement, to make it sound like he knew what he was talking about. This was the one image that she had been able to obtain of his father; of all the things that Mrs Pilastro used to tell her, she always came back to how he used to think hard about what he was going to say before he would say it; and that idea of the man Sarah had never met fit so well with his pose in the single photo they owned: his hand on his chin, gazing at something far off in the trees of the park. They had the same eyes, Sarah thought, and Adam just tried so hard to live up to him, didn't he? And that was fine, but she would be damned if she was going to let him act towards her the way he did with his mother; always throwing tantrums, the big professor. She sat there watching him yell at Mrs Pilastro ten years ago (was it ten? yes; it was two before the lung cancer), recalling how later in the car he kept complaining even though she could see that he didn't even believe what he was saying (how could he? she remembered asking herself). He had accused her of being self-centered; his mother could have easily helped them with the rent that month; and what the hell did she still need that big house for if she was living alone anyway? What he had said was really all a blur to her; however, she remembered with a sublime clarity Mrs Pilastro's weary mannerisms as she gathered in a breath and Sarah, watching him at the diningroom table now, compulsively sighed it out along with his mother.

(At once she saw herself captured as if on a film cell snugly fitted over and superimposed upon the place where his mother stood being shouted at; they both occupied the same space, coalesced, mingled in front of his anger and frustration together, deflecting it; then it was just her alone, blinking mutely, unimpressed; and her husband's expression did not change.)

She stopped, though she hadn't moved; she nodded. Just like his beautiful mother. She smiled to herself and at her secret.

And what was she smiling at? he was tempted to ask; but he wanted to maintain the quiet for a little longer; he knew that he wanted to brood, and he saw no fault in it. There really was no reason for her not to go and she knew it. She just wanted to have her way; she couldn't let it continue how it was; they had such a nice structure to their lives, he couldn't conceive of a better situation, what with his research and class schedule and her taking care of everything around the house. What was so wrong with tradition, anyway? A job was one thing, he was on the verge of saying aloud, but schooling takes time and his wife didn't even know what she would do with another degree. But damn it, he swore in his mind, as his daughter trotted down the stairs behind him: he really didn't have any reason to say no, did he? Sarah leaned closer to him and smiled some more; no, you don't, she whispered.

"Can we watch a movie instead, Daddy?"

He turned towards Deborah with a wry look. She knew that it was too late to start a movie now, and was she still wearing those puppet-things on her fingers? He asked her to take them off and put them away, please. Sarah saw that he was somehow more relaxed, lighter almost, with a subtle ashamed grin hovering just under the surface of his lips; and, as Deborah was walking through the livingroom to the den, her husband looked at her again and shrugged. You know, if you smile any bigger your jaw is going to break, he told her, but he was already starting to join her.

He raised his eyebrows, just a little embarrassed with the whole argument, and he reflected on how he loved to look at her (she was his wife); I guess you want me to apologize, he asked: they were both smirking. And she said, sure, why not? but, she thought, not to me. Not to me.

THE POET

By Victoria V. Gueli

his pen leaves blossoms in it's wake.
the cap pops off as thick leaves
burst through it's top and
golden nectar leaks from the tip
as ink.
he opens his mouth to speak, and honey
trickles over his lip
he meditates on meters, measures,
a bottle of wine at his side.
beneath his hands, white paper grains twist and darken
a garden on his desk!
poppies, heavy and glowing
rest across the keyboard
lilac drooping from the corners, as
lilies of the valley sing from in between messy stacks
of books.
hibiscus crawl along the wall, entwining themselves
in his chair legs
grasses spring up stealthily, like
silent cats in the carpet, while
morning glories weave their chain
up the door frame
glistening petals fly slowly by like
drunken pixies; and in the middle of it all, sits he--
like a great, black-edged rose.
like the virgin white moonflower
like the scarlet-woman jasmine
like the shy blue gardenia
like the warpaint-orange tiger lilies
they creep up to ground when their master calls--
when called by the green thumb
of the poet's hand.

NEXT SEAT OVER (THE THINGS I CANNOT SAY)

By Richard Fedey

I'm terrified you know
each time I see your face
because I ... te quiero.
But I can't say so,
so I use Spanish in its place
and I'm terrified you know
of all the things that show
through my stoic carapace
because I ... te quiero.
I'm not just after a blow,
if that were the case I wouldn't be terrified, you know?
If only I could go
to another time and place
I could say "te quiero",
in English though.
But until I find that space
I'll stay terrified, you know,
and stick with "te quiero."

Comparisons ————— STORY BY Kristen Gugliara

I decided to take a walk. A walk would probably not take my head off of all the shit going on in my life right now, but maybe it would make me realize the good. As I strolled down the block, I kicked a rock. Though I would usually ignore my contact with this piece of earth, I picked the pebble up and continued walking.

"This rock is like all the people that I have kicked around in my life, or better yet, this freaking rock is me". The only difference is that this rock I had just kicked was picked up and sort of caressed by my fingertips. I placed the rock down gently and continued on my pointless journey to nowhere.

I thought I'd go sit by the water. I brought the lighter to the stogie and took a long pull. Hmm, this cigarette is sort of comparable to my life- just like the damn rock. When that flame burns the tobacco, it sets it off. It burns it to the filter. When I am with that person, they make me hot. Yeah, they burn me right down to the last minute. My heart lights up, my face lights up, I light up around this person.

I thought I would sit my ass down on a rock and watch the water. The water is comparable to everything- in general in my life. Waves, they can be light, they can be strong...what the hell am I talking about? A fuckin' menstrual cycle?

Now a bird, a bird is a lot like me. It doesn't know where it's going. It probably knows where it wants to go, but it's not sure where it will end up. Look at it, just perched on the branch looking around. I wonder if it's looking at me, wondering and saying the same thing. I guessed I'd head back home now.

For some reason, I felt better. I realized I was not alone, getting my mind off of things.

Hostage of This Nameless Feeling

• Christine Macleer •

As offspring, we are raised to survive amongst the living,
While parents exist to protect their pupil as they flourish before them.
Why must we need these knights of shining armor?
Only to be forced in believing evil will ricochet off our cultural shields

It's until the green age of mankind,
where internal desires erupt to the surface of existence.
Ironically, it takes the knife of self-indulgence,
to slice between our designed ambition of dreams,
Left finding ourselves praying to emerge into our once adolescent fantasy.

I prefer to slip into a coma by the juices of a poisoned fruit.
And through camaraderie, be able to awaken by a kiss from true love,
rather than to acknowledge any mortal betrayal.
Even the life of an over worked step daughter seems pleasing,
Favoring a metamorphosis at the stroke of midnight,
Ending with an eternity of happiness and having only lost a single glass slipper.

Ergo, almighty hook, graciously claw out my eyes that saw mortal reality.
For I don't want to perceive this anymore; and here yearning to fly to never never
land where I will hide no longer from the confusion of this war. And that prevents
me living with the sickness of the universe.

*the inner ramblings of a girl in the midst
of a goodbye hug*

By Jessa Shoutbaby



can see it sometimes
see what, exactly? you might ask
weeeeeell, since you asked so nicely...
i can see this tension
between us
this very tangible tension
shimmering crystal
like iridescent rock candy
on my tongue—
wanna taste?
oh, that i should be so bold
instead, we simply hug
like platonic-but-not-quite-strictly-platonic
friends
on a crappy WB drama
you know what i mean
that hug that
lingers a few seconds too long
that warm, solid hug
where my fingers
gently brush your shirtsleeves
or, if it's a warm night,
your bare arms pale,
with downy fluff
that tickles the pads of my fingers
that hug
where your hands brush bare back—
i'm not wearing halters for my health, fool—
and my lips
are approximately 2 centimeters from your cheek
but just as i get the nerve
to attempt such a friendly-but-a-little-moreso
gesture,
the hug seems to just sort of...
end.
and i silently curse myself
as i walk away
swinging my hips
ever-so...
ever-so... subtly in an obvious sort of way,
hoping you can't see me mouthing
chickenshit
to myself
as my hips swish
like a cobra's head
to some imaginary soundtrack
—okay, usually Kylie Minogue—
so, do you actually watch me walk away
anyway?
because if not i'm strutting like a fool
for at least a block
for no reason
—hell, i even strut
to my door
in my hallway like Gisele,
all leggy stomps
just in case you stick around
until i get inside my apartment
when you walk me home
and no, i can't look back
and check!
that would ruin the illusion,
and besides,
i might trip.

and sometimes,

when i put that extra flower in my hair
or wear my handcuff earrings,
i wonder if you'll notice
and sometimes,
in the midst of your praise of my poetry,
i wonder if you're praising me
to get into my pants
and is it incredibly wrong
that some slinky, sneaky, seductive
part of me
is sort of hoping
that you're heaping such lavish praise,
in part,
to get into my pants?
is it crazy
that the merest hint
of a double entendre
makes me blush,
and that maybe,
just maybe,
i want to corrupt you a little--
or a lot?

and there have been a million
opportunities,
all so cutesy
they could have been scripted
by Kevin Williamson
or lifted
straight out of a
Sweet Valley High
"novel!"
snowball fights
and
walks in the rain
and
breezy nights contemplating poetry
and
private poetry readings in diner booths
when i thought it might happen
("it" being a kiss, silly)
but it never does
i think we both caught the dreaded
shyness
virus
this omnipresent flu
symptoms include:
feverish flushes
heart-racing,
blood rushes,
an invasion of neon butterflies in the stomach
and, of course,
an army of microscopic kittens
batting at said butterflies
but tying up our tongues.

confession is the only cure
a potent miracle drug, indeed,
but side effects include
heart palpitations,
nausea,
and sudden death by mortification
upon rejection of said confession
i want a new drug!
one that won't make me sick
oh, huey lewis, your brilliance astounds.
but anyway,
i'm chewing
this jagged little pill
letting the sweetartness linger
like a flinstones chewable vitamin
—mmmm, cherry bam bam—
anyway, here goes,
so pay attention
i may never be able
to do this again.

is it okay if i say
that i really like
when our elbows brush
and is it just me, or do we
laugh just a little too loud?
stand just a little too close?
we stare just a little too long—
oh, shit,
i'm quoting bonnie raitt—

well anyway,
the point is,
i like you fool!
so am i crazy
for seeing this
iridescent rock candy
melting on my tongue
and coating your lips?
or is it really there?
i might be tempted
to leave a trail
of sticky slick-y sugar
on your cheek,
your jawline,
and,
if i ever grow some nerve,
your lips.
and maybe
i'll walk away,
hips still swaying,
or maybe, just maybe,
cobra hips swinging and all,
i'll take your hand
and charm you into following.

The light is dying
over empty streets

Through silent canyons
of stone, steel, and glass
a child wanders, lost

Above the labyrinth
looms the black moon

The child stares up,
eclipsed by street lamps,
wishing he could fly

The moon observes
on its nightly course

The child's tear tracked face
follows the moon
his personal divinity

The moon drifts away
beyond the child's sight

A million whistles sound
the child turns, afraid
and finds a rampaging horde

The moon still floats along
unseen, unknown by all

The mob swarms over the child,
people push and shove,
kick, scream, and fight

Gliding back into view
the moon observes the riot

This sea of humanity
parts to more whistles
and the child doesn't move

And no one sees him
except for the black moon

The Black Moon

Richard Fedey

The Voice, i must meet

A voice echoed and bounced
around in my head,
like a blue ball, being smacked against a wall
The words he spoke were as destructive
as a tidal wave hitting a weak pier.
His tone was deeper than the well
I threw my wish down.

Whenever I thought I might see him,
I grabbed a microscope,
to examine every inch of his face.
But he would hide behind a mask
he stole from a masquerade ball,
where he knew no one, who attended.

Tired of this charade, I asked that we meet,
Face to Face,
for the first time.
He told me,
First you must climb the lifeless steps
of the abandoned home
I have shown you in your dreams.
He said he would be waiting,
but I knew he was not there.

As I crept atop the steps into the back room,
peaking into dark corners
I found a a worn piece of paper
with a pistol by it's side.
The note neatly written
"We shall meet, I shall not hide"

Assuming his intent,
I picked up the pistol,
Anxious to meet him.
I acted out his wishes,
as the pistol left my hand.

CHRISTIAN TUBITO

For a short second in time

For one minor minute,
for a short second in time,
I think of my worst critic
Deep in the depth of my mind.

For this one second in time,
I feared only the worst.
Deep inside my mind,
This fear my only curse.

This fear I fear the worst,
And the truth i keep withheld.
My unconscious and conscience coherence
With all thoughts now seeming to weld.

I question, what i keep withheld,
this critic in my mind?
It seems as if my brain may melt
for this short second in time.

Untitled

I write for the sake of writing
I think for the sake of thinking
But what profit have I from life?
It is not I, nor my work that matters,
But how complexity is understood.
Yet, this might not happen here with the simple lines I write
Although I do believe in something and
it is to the highest good...

Poems By: Edwin Diaz

Sentiments of a Dreamer

Although not popular, I have known a few people in my life.
Do you remember Dagoberto in '92? it was on the roof of 145 West
that we met. Oh, he was with Kiko Garcia that day on 162nd. Street
playing football with Anthony Baez. Times were great back then,
playing dominoes in the corner and the effect was on the same.
I remember going to Queens to eat at Jose Antonio's, the cook
from the Sanchez family who always looked out for everyone.
You know it would be great if popularity was theirs also. How forgotten
time has made us, Even El Hajj's voice is dim to drums now, and the cry for change
has but died. The cry that Marcus had, Che, Simon and Duarte also. How forgotten
time has made us. Times are definitely getting better, they gave us a 41 gun salute
in the Bronx, and that is what matters...
Of Love

Untitled

Far between two lands I'll travel,
and it is known I'll certainly get there.
My worries are not the action, but which
land must my feet touch first.
How young my memories tell me
and how time has worked so hard
and as counsel they have not helped me...

Untitled

They
I've been exposed to valor once
valiant men were more than I,
Why,
Why must we think of ourselves so
when freedom was theirs,
and they let us have it
their labor is wonderous
but they cease to exist in our minds
and yet they still are strong

Skyler's Garden

Laura Ann Psomas

September 13, 2004 (Present)

Though the room was not at all big, the emptiness it held made it look tremendous. Its brown benches were like obedient children standing quietly at attention before their father, making sure not to move. The walls were a peculiar green and the ceiling was so high that it seemed almost impossible to fix that one bulb, in the upper left corner, which had been flickering for over two months. The white haired man, dressed in all black, was sitting on his throne expressionless, while the others patiently listened to the young girl speaking. The man sitting in the left desk was staring at the girl while drops of sweat escaped from his forehead. The air was getting thinner and colder, sending a shiver through anyone who happened to walk past the eight foot tall open door. If it wasn't the cold filling the air, it was the smell of a log cabin in the middle of the forest. Everything was made out of wood, from the floors to the small wooden piece that would forever change lives; the gavel.

"I am not a criminal. If I were a criminal, then what would that have made him? He didn't love either one of us; he didn't care if we were dead or alive! Ladies and gentlemen I assure you that Charles Kegler was no saint."

Allison Eden was calm and sure of her self as she spoke. Her long dark hair was brushed back into a bun held by two yellow chop sticks, which matched perfectly with her outfit. Her dress was a tad too short for her long thin legs, forcing her to tug it down every once in awhile. From far away she looked like a twelve year old girl but her eyes gave her age and her innocence away. Allison was twenty three and if any given stranger was to look into her brown, beleaguered eyes they would see the life of an old woman.

"I'm a good woman. I do believe in God and I do believe in justice. I believe that God believes in justice. I believe that my daughter believes in justice. And, I believe you all believe in justice." Allison was finishing up her pleading to the twelve card dealers (what she and her lawyer liked to call them) and then sat down. Her lawyer, Mike, held her hand as the card dealers got up one by one and entered a separate room, closing the doors behind them. When they came out, Allison knew that this was going to be it. As she held Mike's hand and heard the word "Guilty" her mind began to wander and she was sinking deeper and deeper into a life that was forever gone.....

September 24, 1996

"I love you, isn't that all that matters?" Charlie Kegler was lying on his best friend's bed in his smiley face boxer shorts, holding his girlfriend's hand. "You can't keep getting me worked up like this and then just leave me hanging." Charlie was speaking with his eyes closed while half smiling. His blonde, spiky hair had not moved a centimeter thanks to LA Looks gel and five minutes of hair spraying. He figured that this night would be the night that his girlfriend of two months and he would have sex. "How often do we get a place to mess around in?" He opened his eyes. Allison stood up from the bed, staring down at him and started to bite her lip. She was only wearing her pink bikini underwear and pretended to shiver, this way she could cover up her small breasts by wrapping her arms around them. She always felt self conscience about her body, no matter how much she tried not to show it in front of him; she wanted him to think of her as a confident woman. Charlie always told her that she was beautiful and she tried to think of that. Then she thought of her friends who already had sex and how this could be the perfect time for her to lose her virginity.

"Allie, you don't have to, it's just that you look so hot right now."

Allison smiled, trying to hide her nervousness. She looked around the bare room, it was dirty and all it had was a bed and a mountain of clothes in front of the door-less closet. The wholes in the wall made her uncomfortable, she feared a roach may come out and rest its little legs on her head. The after thought made her laugh and then she felt relieved that she could still laugh in a situation like this. After all they had been fooling around since the very first day they met but he had never tried to have sex with her. She should have known since the moment she got off the phone with him when he called earlier; he told her that he had a place for tonight and planned a romantic evening just for her. She remembered being excited to spend the whole night with him; all she would have to do was

tell her parents that she was sleeping at Val's house. Sex was the first thing that crossed her mind, it was obvious to her, or why else would she have shaved in places she had never shaved before? Maybe it was time, Charlie was six years older than her and she didn't want him to think she was a little kid. The reason he liked her anyway was because she was mature for her age. And with all those thoughts attacking her like a lamb in the wild, Allison held her head down and crawled in the bed.

"I love you" Charlie said right before he started kissing her. September 24 would be a night to remember, the first time she ever had sex and the night she got pregnant.

* * *

June 12, 1999

2072 East 99th street, New York City. This is the address of the Harriet Kin shelter for teen mothers and also the address of the high school drop out, Allison Eden. The shelter was in a small green building with two floors. The stick on flooring through out the building was peeling back, caused by the dampness of the rain from the last few years, and the smell of dirty diapers and formula filled the nostrils of passerby's outside. No one ever bothered to fix anything or decorate. It was a building with no hopes and no dreams. Allison had been living in the Kin home since she was six months pregnant with Skyler, her now two year old daughter. There were twelve girls and twelve children sharing one bathroom and two bedrooms. Allison hated every second she had to spend in the broken down home but tried as hard as she could to stay focused on providing a better life for her daughter. She would be getting her GED in a few months and then maybe even college. Every time she looked toward the window she would feel some hope. The windows were so filthy that no one could look in or out, but that didn't stop Allison from gazing; she would take Skyler and tell her all the beautiful things that were on the other side of the mysterious windows. The streets were made of gold, flowers grew from the sky, and everything else was a rainbow color from the stars to the people. They called it Skyler's garden.

"Can you see the rainbow cotton candy Skyler?" Allison held up her daughter as they both stared deep into the grime that overtook the only window in the bedroom. "Can you taste it? Tomorrow for your birthday, I am going to sneak into your garden and bring you some of that rainbow cotton candy and you are going to love it!" Skyler clapped her hands and giggled with excitement. Tomorrow was Skyler's birthday and Allison was going to try to make it as special as she could. The head mother in the shelter always gave \$20.00 for a child on their birthday and Allison was going to buy the rainbow cotton candy she saw at the Stop One. With the left over money she would take Skyler on the train and then the ferry. It would be their day and no one could ruin it. She would try to make it so it wouldn't be like Skyler's first birthday. June 13, 1998 was one of the hardest days of her life. It was supposed to be a day of celebration, but how could she celebrate knowing what she knew? She wanted to be strong for her daughter, but it was too soon, it had only been a day that she found out. And she was alone. Her parents were gone in another state with no word, and Charlie was living with some girl and her parents. No one cared that it was her baby's birthday, not any one but herself and she was going to try her hardest to forget what she knew and to make that day special.

The other girls made it hard for Allison from the moment she stepped in the home. She had made the mistake of entering the door with polished nails and manicured toes. No one talked to her and when they did, she wished they hadn't. Racial slurs like "Spoiled white bitch" seemed to be the only words they knew for her. She wasn't a fighter, so all she could do was ignore them. She was glad to be pregnant then because she knew that her unborn baby had saved her from fighting her first fight. But, after Skyler was born, strength had risen from deep within her and she stood up for herself. Allison would never forget the day she punched the toughest girl at the home right in the eye. Allison had only been home from the hospital, with her new baby, for two weeks when the girls started picking on her again. Brandy Jacobs, whom they called "Brat", was always the leader of the bunch. Although they never physically hurt her, Brat made sure that she and the rest of the girls tormented her with insults. Allison was lying in her bed with Skyler next to her when Brat came towards her. "She's cute, hope she doesn't become a whore like her mother" Brat said while she was stroking Skyler's hair. Just the thought of Brat touching her daughter made Allison sick. She had actually hoped that Brat would say something to her, anything at all, because she had built enough anger at the world to finally let loose, and if it was Brat to put her on that edge then no one would ask questions. Allison smacked Brat's hand off her baby and with a tight fist and no words, punched Brat in her right eye.

ATE - TEEN

Something had snapped in Allison that day, something that brought her to reality and stole any innocence that she had left. She learned how the world worked. Allison had punched Brat in the eye while the other girls did nothing but laugh; she was now their friend. "It's about time girl", was what came out of Brat's mouth after the incident, "All you had to do was stand up for yourself, and don't worry about the eye, your punch couldn't hurt a wounded fly." Allison was confused at first but then it all came to her. Everything she thought she was about, every dream she had, and all the trust she had in people had been erased from her mind like chalk in the rain. Charlie was gone along with her parents and friends and no one was coming save her.

* * *

November 30, 1996

Allison Eden was not a responsible girl; she wasn't one of those young teenage girls who "had a good head on her shoulders". She believed just about everything anyone told her and she also believed that the people she chose to hang around with, including Charlie, were her true friends.

The day was bright and the sun was shining through the glass doors in the Canarsey High School cafeteria right in Allison's eyes. The smell of fried chicken and garlic mash potatoes filled the room and Allison was feeling sick.

"Did you get it Val?" Allison asked as she put her Math text book up to block the sun from her eyes.

"Yeah I got the test in my bag. Let's go to the bathroom." Val said as she clutched a box in her book bag.

"I am so nervous. I never keep track of my period; I guess I never had to."

"When was the last time you got it?"

"I have no idea; I just know it's been a while. You think I'm pregnant?"

"I doubt it Allie. I had sex a thousand times and I've never been pregnant, you only had sex once."

The two girls looked at each other as Allison entered the stall in the girl's bathroom to take the test: one line for no and two lines for yes. Allison had never been so nervous before. She was worried what her parents would say and worst yet, what they would do. She thought at least she had Charlie; he would take care of them.

"What does it say?" Val was anxious. Allison came out of the stall with tears falling from her eyes. She wasn't even thinking of the baby, instead she was thinking of her parents. Everything was dark to her and she didn't know what to say.

"Oh my God! You're pregnant!" Val said before dropping her jaw. "Don't worry sweetie, I have friends who have babies and they're fine. Why are you crying?"

"You know how my parents are, I'm dead." Allison wiped her face with her red, flannel sleeve and then her tears stopped.

"Allie, if you don't want the baby just have an abortion."

"No way! Charlie would kill me. He always told me he wanted me to have his baby so he could be a father to his kids. He never had a father."

"Alright hon. Call Charlie ...and be happy!"

Allison begged Val not to tell anyone about her pregnancy and cut the rest of her classes to go see Charlie. He had to be one of the first she told.

Charlie was staying at his Aunt's house a few blocks from Allison's high school. He usually never stayed home, but Allison hoped to find him there. She walked so fast that her legs were beginning to cramp. It wasn't a long distance by car or bus but the walk would take at least twenty minutes. Her long legs were feeling weak and droplets of sweat started to emerge from her face. She was thankful she wore a tank top under her flannel. She wrapped the flannel around her waist and looked down at her stomach. "Baby, you are making the end of November feel like the beginning of July" she said as she rubbed her tummy. She continued walking faster until she reached Charlie's Aunt's house.

The house was small and surrounded by dead grass and empty Budwieser bottles. It reminded Allison of a bungalow she had seen in Maine with her parents one summer. It stood alone on one of the roads and she thought that it was unfair for such an ugly house to have a whole road of its own. She looked at the home where Charlie was staying and stared at the rusty yellow color and the one shutter remaining for all the windows. Allison was nervous. She only met Charlie's Aunt Dora once and even then acted very shy; she had only said hello and goodbye. What was she going to say to her

if she answered the door instead of Charlie? Allison stood outside contemplating for almost ten minutes when Charlie walked out the front door.

"Allie, what are you doing here?" Charlie said as he lit the Dutch he so carefully filled with marijuana. "Shouldn't you be in school?"

"Charlie, I have to talk to you."

"What is it Al?"

"Charlie, I'm pregnant." Allison said with a smile from ear to ear.

Charlie took another hit of his blunt and remained quiet. "Well, what do you think? I'm pregnant. We are going to have a baby."

"A baby. Shhhh. Dora's asleep; I don't want her to hear. That's great Al, a little baby. Charles Jr."

Allison let out a deep breath, she thought Charlie would be happy but that didn't take her nervousness away. Charlie then scooped up Allison into his left arm while smoking with his right hand.

Allison was the happiest she had ever been. The life of love and a family was coming. She didn't care that she was a freshman in high school. She was where she wanted to be. She didn't care what her parents said. Knowing them, they would probably kick her out of the house, but it didn't matter. She was with Charlie and he loved her. But then Allison's world came to a crash; Charlie changed.

* * *

March 30, 1997

Allison Eden: the student and aspiring teacher was now, Allison Eden: the six month pregnant drop out. She had been staying at Dora's house with Charlie since she told her parents she was pregnant. Things were different at Dora's; Allison was treated as an adult and this time Allison did not like it. Being an adult at Dora's house meant cooking and cleaning. Charlie hadn't done any of that for his aunt, but the welfare checks she was getting for having Charlie stay there was good enough for her. Allison wasn't paying anything to Dora, so she couldn't reject doing the cleaning and cooking, she only wished that both Dora and Charlie had treated her nicely.

As Allison washed dishes in the kitchen she saw Charlie stumbling to the front door through the window. Charlie was drunk again and she decided to stay quiet this time. She couldn't handle another fight between them. Two nights ago had been worse than the others. Charlie accused her of hiding his drugs because he couldn't find them where he thought he last put them. It didn't matter that Dora was only in the next room, it didn't stop him from smacking her in the face and throwing her on her stomach.

As Allison continued to wash the dishes, she let evil thoughts take over her. She wished her baby dead. She wished that Charlie would hit her so hard that it would kill her baby. All she knew was that she didn't want to be in the rusty, yellow, bungalow anymore. And then, Charlie walked in the house.

"Hey, honey." Charlie said as he walked toward the kitchen. "You cooking something good tonight?"

"Pork chops and rice." Allison said, making sure not to make eye contact.

"Yummy. What's the matter, you mad at me? I'm sorry sweetie." Charlie's speech was slurring and Allison tried hard to ignore him. "Honey? I'm sorry, I said!" Charlie's voice was growing louder. Allison didn't want to talk with him while he was like this but against her own judgment, she opened her mouth.

"I won't talk to you while you're high and drunk", she said in a low voice.

"What? Fuck you, bitch! Here I am, loving you and you, fucking whore, call me a junkie!"

Charlie's eyes were red and his tan face was turning a similar shade. Allison regretted opening her mouth and held her stomach. How could she have wished her baby dead? Tears escaped her eyes like a mouse escaping a stampede and she hoped Dora would come out this time, but she never did. Charlie then opened the fridge and grabbed a beer. He opened the bottle, took a sip, and then threw it at Allison.

"Charlie, please!" Allison screamed while the tears came pouring down her face. "Please, Charlie, I'm sorry!"

"Fuck you. You don't love me!"

Allison didn't want this to happen again. Why didn't she realize Charlie wasn't what he said he was? Why did she ever think he loved her or the baby? Then she thought of what Val said to her

A COLOSSAL HISTORICAL BLUNDER

Matthew Zapruder

Who gave the reasonable the right to name things?
Just the other day I was walking down the street
and got named. Just like that.
To be fair, it was unintentional.
She did it out of the corner of her eye,
accidentally. She was exceptionally matronly.
She toted a child whose eye twitched
whenever she looked away.
Powder-blue in polyester, on her way to work like a cloud.
As I said, I was walking down the street
minding everyone's business when
"semi-radical Jew with bad posture"
hit me like a brick between the eyes.
I unscrewed my face and tried
to give it back to her, but she said,
"No. Where would I hang it? Besides,
you read that in a book by Witold Gombrowicz.
Come back when you have something
less riveting to say."

TEN QUESTIONS FOR MONA

Matthew Zapruder

I'm sitting at the same table again, in the hopes.
This time I'm sitting where you were.
Like a fragrance you had stayed to rise,
having felt just long enough under your hat,
wanting exactly what you want.
Like a fragrance you had strayed.
There are masculine and feminine willows
moving about this room.
Just now tiny machines manufacture noises
devoting themselves to the removal
and the placing. Tiny machines
manufacture noises producing
in me a feeling of productivity.
Just now a shadow
approached from the west door spilling
a glance upon me, sorry, I thought
it was you sitting down in the place
where your hands shook as you poured
evening's sweet wine out in photographs.
I watched you grow older in the approach.
Summers are loose and feathery

in consequence as a high school, or a time,
or a camp in which Right Now is a time.
You say you think of it in a good way,
in the long approach, i.e. laughter
and lightness and etcetera time
of staying too long and leaving too soon,
sitting across from you, that absolute
conditional you sitting down in the place
where I had been a glance upon me.
Right Now is a time. A child needs
to be moved less fearfully
than thinking of something else.
What flower do you bring a flower?
I'd curl up in the wrist, but there's a cat
already named there for luck and howling.
What flower do you bring a trouble?
In the course of a sleeping farther away
down grew your hair.
I watched you grow younger.
When I look up you will be across from me.
This time I'm sitting where you were.

Better Than Diamonds By Matthew Cassone

Can't you see? See?
I'm better than he
He knows how to get you down
He slithers around like a rattlesnake,
he sleeps around the town.
He puts his hands around your waist, and there's no letting go
He knows how to whisper, he knows how to hop
aboard your train of thought
He treats you like glass,
but you're diamonds,
There's no need for you to be bought.



Oh, no
I won't hop aboard . your train of thought
because you lure me
----- into risky games -----

Sailing By Matthew Cassone

Oh, how
you make me look . foolish and weak
in front of a classroom
----- of talent -----

When they look better
than how I seem,
No. I won't approach your iron nerve
in designer jeans-- --You try too hard
---to make me sink---
when it's clear I'm sailing through.

Descending

Jhon Singleton

Ode to Marcel Duchamp

Line and color to give me a sense of form and motion.

Mild trickery- no literal motion.

Superficial bitch, you deserve a first huge cock!

Your center filled with cowardice.

You create in me a Jekyll & Hyde.

Five times I was a gentle

man and 5 times you piqued my jekyll's pride.

No longer on the 6th! I am at the very bottom zig- zagging decisions.

Descents. I no longer have a distinct boundary between myself and savagery.

I stare to case my claim.

Looking at the right-most portion of your yellow- orange figure-flowing ridges.

I can see, from bottom to top, sweeping shins,

an angled line that is your knee.

But which should i keep as trophy: thighs, hips, a torso, breasts,

shoulders or finally, your downward-looking head.

You're not a woman, virgin whore! Throughout your repetitions, you swing your legs

upwardly-concave curved lines creating my

breath's new rhythms as you run down stairs.

You're not a motion picture nor

still the concept of "layered-time" had not been explored

in this one moment, many views. Only my

one view, many moments.

FORESHADOWING

Peter R. Marsh

It's the only time T.V. lets us use our imagination
We want to turn away
but we can't, from the foreigners
with the faces made of black cloth
and brown iris, sitting hypnotized
within a pool of insanity.

The newsman tells us about the horrific
screams of the hostage,
though an executive decides to spare us the sound
The blade the executioner holds
is the only thing American about him—
something overly large to serve the purpose
of something half it's size.
A blade that's normally used
to hack down vines,
now decapitates whatever hope
us peaceniks have of dealing
with humans.

Two days later, the newsman
tells us the hostage is dead,
His neck worn down like candle wax

In this game of taking heads
the hydra on whose side
will grow back faster?

Dessert waste lands and fossil fuel
seem to spawn despots and Martyrists
by the second,
crawling out from every dark cave
that can be found

While the chill of a draft
is felt throughout middle America,
everytime the idea of empty
trailer homes and shortened well fair
lines pass though
our soon to be taken heads.

Song of a Frustrated Witch

Victoria V. Gueli

My men are always with me.
I keep them all on my shelves,
rows of dark wood that hold
millions and millions of
tiny, winking glass vials.
They contain the hearts and souls
of all the men I have ever beguiled in my life—
all the men who were taken by the step of my pale princess foot,
entranced by the shades of chestnut in my hair,
haunted by the black depths of my eyes.
Bubbles rise to the top of the vial
as I lift the cork, no bigger than my thumb.
Their souls are so small, these men I cast my spell over—
these men who leave a bitter taste on my lips
and a soreness in my chest.
When I am feeling weak, I drink them off—
as many as is necessary for me to regain my strength,
and I rise up! break through the roof, and fly
over the clouds, powerful and seductive,
ripe to make more mischief
my silvery wings blotting out the moon as I stretch,
stars stuck between my toes
treetops brushing my heels
robes streaming in the cool, rushing wind—
I land atop a roof.
But there's horseshoes over the windows—
the sills are made of rowan,
garlic flowers bloom beneath the panes;
a iron bowl of Four Thieves vinegar rests on the left, and
a conjure bag bumps against the glass from the inside.
My brow furrows, my face darkens—
makeup is already melting from my face.
I fly home, an empty bottle in my fist,
my tricks and patience spent, and map my plan
for conquest- tomorrow night.

S E S T I N A

An intricate verse form created and mastered by the Provençal poets, it is a thirty nine line poem consisting of six six-line stanzas and one three lined envoi. The six end words are repeated in a prescribed order, as end words in each of the subsequent stanzas.

when she ran into her at the deli. She had told her that she wasn't stupid; she could see the bruises. Then she gave her the name of a shelter where her friend went to a few years ago. The name was Harriet Kin.

* * *

September 12, 2004

Allison and Mike were discussing the trial at his house. His apartment was huge for living in Manhattan. The windows were wall length and the ceilings had a painted Mural of angels on it that reminded Allison of Skyler. The two had become very close in the last several months. They had been spending sleepless night's together working on her case. But tonight, the night before the verdict, Mike wanted to know why she did it. He knew the facts but he wanted to hear one last time, her story.

Mike put his hand on Allison's legs. "Tell me again, why?"

Allison bit her lip and started to make a small braid on the side of her head.

"Mike. I know you are worried. But the card dealers will see why I did it. Charlie abandoned us. I left, hoping he'd change, hoping he'd take care of his daughter and hoping that he would realize how much he loved us. He never came, Mike. Don't you see? He didn't deserve to live. Skyler is worth more than that. I had nothing else to live for. My Skyler isn't here, why should he be? Anybody who loves their kids will be on my side, Mike. We have nothing to worry about. Tomorrow I will be a free woman."

"Oh, sweet Allie."

"Don't call me that. I am not Allie anymore." Allison turned her head.

"Allison, I'm sorry. I just wish I could rip up that diary entry the card dealers have. You are a good woman." Mike wanted to protect her. He wanted to hold her and take her away from all the pain and horror in the world. She wasn't just another client. She was Allison Eden, and he loved her. But he knew he could never have her and he would never tell her. She wasn't an average woman, she was incapable of love; he learned this through the last few months. She was the walking dead; emotionless. "Allison, I will pray for you tonight."

* * *

June 13, 1998

Dear Diary,

Today is Skyler's first birthday. It's ruined. I tried to be happy diary, I tried for Skyler. Today was the day that she was supposed to have a big party surrounded by people that love her. Instead, we are in this roach motel, they call "Kin" and my daughter is sick. My daughter is my world. She is all I have. Now I know there is no God. There is no supreme being and there is no justice. I don't believe in God and I don't believe in justice. My daughter is sick; my daughter is dying. If anything happens to her, I swear, that I, Allison Eden, will kill Charles Kegler. I want nothing more than for him to pay for not loving my daughter. She needs parents. I swear I will take that gun I found and make him suffer. Why did my fears come alive? Have I been so horrible? I never hurt anyone; I did all I was supposed to. And, the day before my daughters first birthday...I am told...they tell me she has leukemia!

-Allie



A Bad Day

Earl Gatchalian

It's hot. I didn't know what bothered me more. The itching skin, or the fact that I was starting to lose my sense of taste. I hated being sick. Of course the timing was great, my bed sheet hadn't been washed in months and I have to go to work in about an hour. I looked outside my bedroom window and realized my car wasn't there. I think my mother went and took it out again to get some groceries. I hope she'll be back soon. I feel really tired. Tried to read the book I have to read for class and nothings sticking. Can't lay down, otherwise I'd fall asleep again. I looked around to see if I had anything to munch on. The stale potato chips lying on my desk were flavorless and merely irritated my palette. That candy bar underneath all of the stuff in the hidden panel of my desk. I didn't think it was such a big emergency that I had to take out the Almond Joy from its hidden chamber. I got up and turned on the T.V. It was so loud, I almost fell over in pain. I quickly fumbled for the remote and found there was no life inside it. The noise of the news hurting my brain, I opened the back of the remote, fiddled and spun the batteries then pressed the power button repeatedly till the picture was dead. I was right next to the television, and here I was trying to play with the remote control.

I left my room, tried to scratch the itch on my upper shoulder but my arms just couldn't reach it. I tried to breathe through my nostrils but apparently they were clogged as well. I went back in my room and grabbed my c.d. player from the bed; my mp3 player had died a month earlier, and descended down the wooden uncarpeted stairs. No one else was home, and the shading of my windows prevented me from getting any of the Vitamin E I so required. I looked at the piano in my living room, and said to myself. "Why do we have this piano? The keys don't work, the peddles are stiff, no one in the family knows how to play it, and there are scratch marks all over the sides." But I guess it was pretty from a certain angle. I walked around the piano trying to find that angle. I got dizzy so I gave up.

I walked up the stairs again. Realizing that I had no reason to go back up the stairs, I went back downstairs. Then going downstairs I realized I really had no reason to go downstairs either, so I went back upstairs.

When I got to my room again I felt out of breath. That was a lot of stairs. I sat at my computer chair, this thing with a missing bolt so that whenever I sat it would teeter towards the front. I put on my headphones that were connected to the CD player. The CD player that currently wasn't anywhere. I went back downstairs.

Going downstairs posed a bit more trouble. With my headphones in my ears I couldn't hear anything and felt a bit paranoid. Was someone else in this area? I looked at the piano. The piano still sat there. Were you looking at me, piano? What did I ever do to you, piano? You were a bother to bring up here, piano. Chris, get out of my head piano. I looked at the chair. There was my CD player. I took it and went back upstairs. I removed the headphones from my ears and plugged them into the CD player. I put on the headphones again. I pushed "Play". I pushed it. I pushed play. I pushed play again. Why the fuck isn't it working? I opened the battery case. They were there. I opened the CD slot. There was a CD in there. So why wouldn't my CD player work? I put it down and removed the earphones. Man, so much trouble just to listen to music.

I turned on my computer. The blue welcome screen filled my undusted monitor. I waited for things to load up. They did. I opened Outlook Express which was used to check my email. No new mail. Why don't I have mail? 100's of people I know and I don't have a single letter? I'm on four mailing lists and none of them sent me anything? I checked my connection. It was fine. I opened up Internet Explorer. It

worked. I looked inside my mailbox again. Still nothing. Man, what's wrong with this world? I sighed. It couldn't be that big a deal. I mean, I should have email. Everyone else has email. Don't you hate it when you guys don't have email? Am I disconnected from all life? I left the room.

I went downstairs. I went inside my kitchen. I'm going to cook myself something. I opened the fridge and saw there were no eggs. I looked further into my fridge and saw there was no bread. I looked even further in and saw there was... juice. I opened up the carton and removed it from the fridge. I put it on my table. No wait, no I didn't put it on my table. There was no room on my table. There was plenty of plates, newspapers, mail, and other junk, but there was no room for this carton of juice from which I want to drink. Don't people know to clean up their own mess? I went to get a glass from the cupboard. I opened it up to see nothing but bowls. It seemed that while I was sleeping, someone rearranged how the kitchen dishes were to be set in the house. I poured some juice into a bowl. I drank from the bowl. The juice tasted like shit.

I went upstairs and looked outside the window. My car still wasn't there. I felt even more dizzy. I looked at the clock, I was five minutes late for work. I decided to give them a call. I went to my cell phone located in my pants pocket. I dug in, through the keys and there it was. I turned it on. There was no reception in my room. I went downstairs. No reception. I went further downstairs. No reception. I went back upstairs and walked into each individual room in the house. There was no reception. I went to the charger. There was no phone there. I beeped it. The ringing came from downstairs. I hit the page button again. The phone was downstairs. I hit the page button again. The phone was still downstairs. I hit the page button over and over and over again. The conclusion was the same. The phone was downstairs. I ran down the stairs. There was no ring. I went up the stairs. pushed the page button, then ran down again. It faded away before I heard the direction of the phone.

I went to my room, and went under the covers of my bed. The itching came back with a vengeance. I scratched and scratched my arms, legs and back till it hurt. I grabbed a towel, left the room, went downstairs and jumped into the shower. I turned on the shower and a cold burst of water hit my entire naked body. I felt even more sick. I turned the water to a hotter temperature and soaped the hell out of my body. I took the shampoo and put a handful in my hair. Just then the towel fell into the tub causing it to lose its properties of being dry and ability to dry me off when the shower was finished. I started questioning if some higher power was just screwing with me. I finished off my shower, the itching was exchanged with the pain of over scratched flesh. I got out of the shower naked and wet, and walked up to my room, naked and wet. I took out another towel from my closet, and proceeded to dry myself. Just then the phone was ringing. I threw my towel on top of the bed and ran downstairs.

I looked and looked for the phone, one floor it wasn't there. The other floor it wasn't there. It wasn't in that room either. I was in my kitchen naked, and the windows were wide open. I blocked whatever needed to be blocked with my arms and continued to try to listen for the ring. After awhile it stopped. I heard the answering machine beep upstairs, so that's where I went. After getting all the way up the stairs I realized I was fired. And I heard a car horn outside. Mine. I looked out the window and apparently there was a bunch of people outside. There was my car. I coughed several times and almost lost my balance. I went into my room. Closed the door. Finished drying myself, put on some new clothes, then jumped into bed. After awhile, I started to itch again.

The phone I found out later, was on top of the piano.

WORD UP

**Thursday
November 18th
1:30 - 3:30
CFA West Lounge**

Co-sponsored by the Department of Creative and Performing Arts, the Department of English, Speech, and World Literature, and Serpentine literary magazine, WORD UP is a gathering of students and professional musicians and poets intended to explore and celebrate the relationship between music and poetry. Poet Matthew Zapruder, who plays in the band The Figments, will read his work and briefly discuss the relationship between songwriting and poetry writing. There will follow a performance by the Jazz musician Jimmy Pravasilis, a guitarist and composer who plays with Groove Assault. For the remainder of the event we will host an open-mike for student poets and musicians. We encourage you to contribute your creative work to this forum. WORD UP also celebrates the arrival of the newest issue of CSI's literary magazine, Serpentine.

MATTHEW ZAPRUDER

Matthew was born in Washington, D.C. In 1967. He received a B.A. in Russian Literature from Amherst College, an M.A. in Slavic Languages and Literatures from the University of California at Berkeley. He has an M.F.A. in Poetry from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He is the editor of Verse Press, teaches poetry at the New School, and plays guitar for The Figments. Eugen Jebeleanu is his first book of poems.

PETER R. MARSH

Peter has only read his work to a large audience once, at Collective Unconsciousness in Manhattan, though he has attended many open mic sessions. His favorite place to see poetry read aloud is the Bowery Poetry Club. He is currently in a black metal band, for which he plays the bass and tries to write disturbing lyrics.

MATTHEW CASSONE

Matthew has written close to 600 poems, most being campy maxims. He is a sophomore at the College of Staten Island and plans to teach literature. He has read at The Muddy Cup on many occasions and at various events in Manhattan. He looks forward to having his work published.

JHON SINGLETON

Although Jhon is no stranger to the "crafting" of poems and prose, he is new to the open mic scene. Most of his open mic experience has been expressed through the contemporary music genre—specifically pop/r&b music...at Cafe Wha?, Cafe Muse, and Village Ma. Jhon has been singing since the age of six. He has been singing professionally since the age of sixteen. He moved to the New York area to be closer to the experimental art scenes of music, visual, and dance. He is currently working on a debut album. Since 95' to the present, Jhon is a professional studio background singer has been performing professionally at private engagements in Atlanta, Long Island, Manhattan, and Jersey City.

VICTORIA V. GUELI

Victoria has performed previously at the Muddy Cup. She attended acting camp for three years while in her teens.

THE AUTUMN AFTER

By Pia Simone Garber

After the seasons have begun to change
and the air is no longer soft and smooth
to walk through, mornings become rushed.
Waking up is like sharp needles of light against cold skin,
dressing hurriedly in the dark
waiting for sunrise and the day to start.

When I wake up alone I'm already off to a bad start.
I try to turn things around, but nothing ever changes-
a glance in the mirror tells me my hair is too dark,
too long, not as soft and smooth
as the girls in the magazines with their perfect skin,
and my makeup always looks like I rushed

the application. Mornings are always a rush.
The problem isn't just a matter of how early I start
to get ready- sometimes the icy air on my bare skin
makes me want to crawl back under the covers, or for a change
I want my hair to look neat, I want my wrinkled pants smooth
or I just want to dream a little longer, to see your face in the dark

behind my eyelids. This morning when I woke the sky was so dark
and I knew I should get out of bed so i wouldn't end up rushed,
but my bed was so warm; my pillows were so smooth
and soft, I just couldn't make myself get up and start.
I was wishing you could be here watching the leaves change
color, warming up the impending winter with your autumn skin.

I was remembering how the bed-sheets felt against your skin
and the time we were up all night whispering in the dark.
Finding someone to dream of doesn't make your priorities change.
A late summer fling can make the equinox seem rushed-
and then it's time for real life to start.
The autumn after leads to winter, the diamond streets smooth

with ice. When life gets too busy to smooth
out the rough times you grow a thick skin
to block out any troubles before they start.
It's not just fear of the future, it's that winter blows in so dark
and lonely- without you, mornings rush
by in a blur of nothing ever changing.

Your voice is the last echo heard in the dark
before we're dragged apart in the workday rush,
after the seasons have already changed.

UNTITLED

By Hend Gouda

There was nothing more serene
Then when I walked down the Nile
Lured by its beauty, and fresh air
I was taken away from the sounds of the city.
I sat on the boat, with my hands
Dangling in the cool water.

Splashes of water
Touching my serene
face; I gently brush it off with my hands
And give it back to the Nile
I look up at the ancient city
Inhaling its comforting air

Realizing it is the air
Of who I am. The water
Of my lively city
Where I was born in the serenity
Of the great Nile;
Where I fell in the hands

Of my nurturer, who held my hands
Up in the air,
Proud that I am a descendent of the Nile.
I grow up drinking the water
From which each sip deepens my serenity
Towards the everlasting city

I sit here in the city
Watching couples hand in hand
Appreciating the serenity
That is flowing in the air,
And the water of the one and only Nile

I will come again to you Nile
In my beloved Cairo



It was in late August
when I first discovered the scent
of the too early frost.
It was delivered with the letter,
gibberish to me
written in the language of a toad.

And he read it, this toad,
being a much more august
creature than I. Woe is me
cried he and I was sent
to fetch new materials for a letter
written in the tradition of Frost.

With that frost
that froze the toad
that read the letter
came the end of August.
There was, in the air, a scent
of winter closing in on me.

It does surround me
this frost
this scent
that poor old toad
so much more august
than the I in the letter.

And I remember this letter.
I carry it with me.
I read it every August
when I think I smell the frost
I think about the toad
and what started it all; the scent.

Oh, what a scent
came sealed in the letter
with the secrets of the toad
still hidden from me.
There should never be frost
at the end of August.

Next time the scent comes to me
I will remember the letter and the frost
and the toad that froze in late August.

THE TOAD

By Meghan Hagerty

Legacy

By Peter R. Marsh

My embarrassment held in the familiar color,
unable to hide that I can't write.
My eyes thrown off, sent
in the wrong direction. I've fallen
thanks vertigo. Where do I start
a life's work that won't end?

Or with my life time ended,
would my child's face have the same color,
giving him him a mess of papers that started
before he figured out left from right,
that piled high before his first fall
and scraped knee, long before he was sent

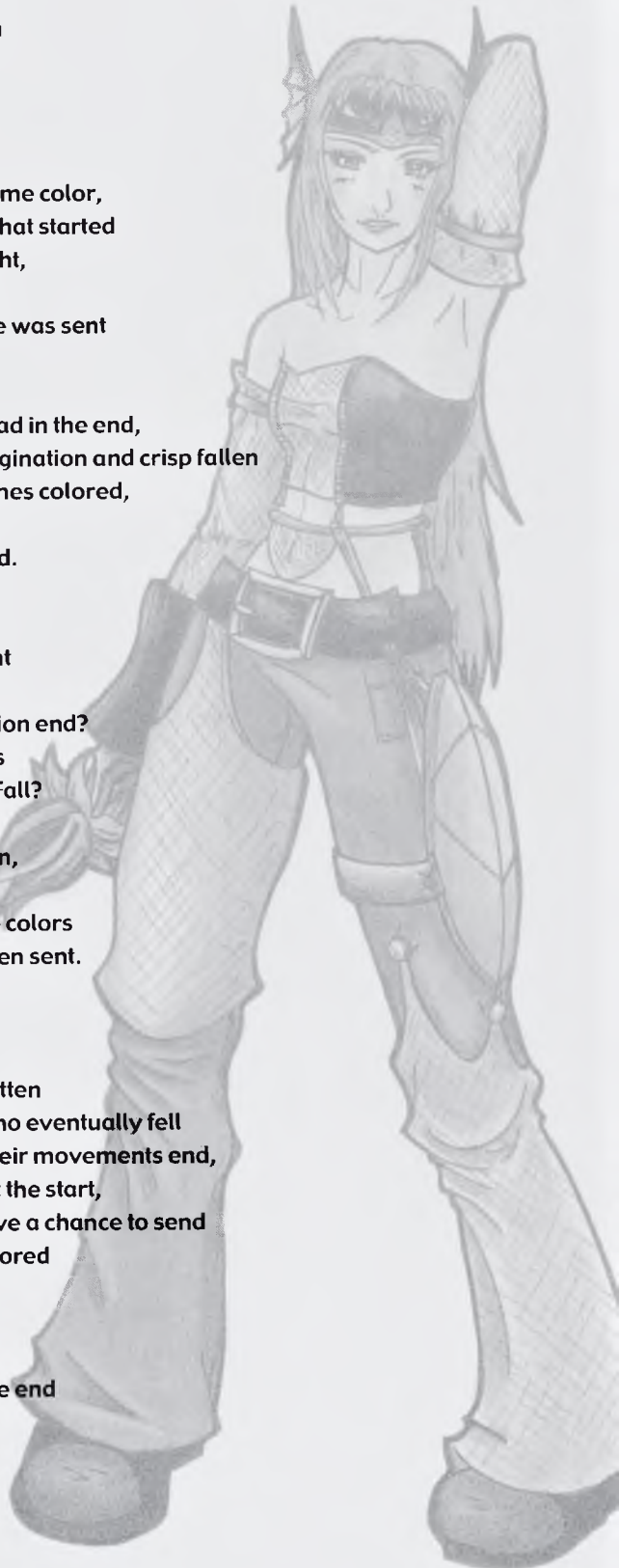
to learn the amount of a cent
and how few pennies his father had in the end,
when his fun was made from imagination and crisp fallen
leaves, The space between his lines colored,
forced to love the written word,
wondering what his daddy started.

A Glorious start,
I wish I could say was heaven sent
or in my genetics written
out, Can I make this procrastination end?
Am I allowed to choose the colors
I use, or my character's rise and Fall?

And when my character has fallen,
what train of thought did I start?
For when you paint, I choose the colors
of the world. My message has been sent.
what other journeys do I end,
all with the power to write,

Cancelling the pages already written
by those who were dedicated, who eventually fell
who were strong, but watched their movements end,
something they didn't envision at the start,
all the Manuscripts they didn't have a chance to send
all the worlds you could have colored

For them. You color - We write
We create the images of the fall
and the new start, You choose the end



Fate of Pergamum

By Adrienne Dacayanan

Anatolia, Ilium, a noble city
Suffers under the weight of war.
Ruin that comes in burnished bronze
Armor capturing the sun's fire,
The spear that shortened Hector's fatal cry
The field where a thousand corpses lie.

Stripped of honor, their bodies lie
Before the Scaean gates, the walled city
Above the ramparts, a mournful cry
Such is the coinage of senseless war
Civilizations consumed in fire
Men cut down by tempered bronze

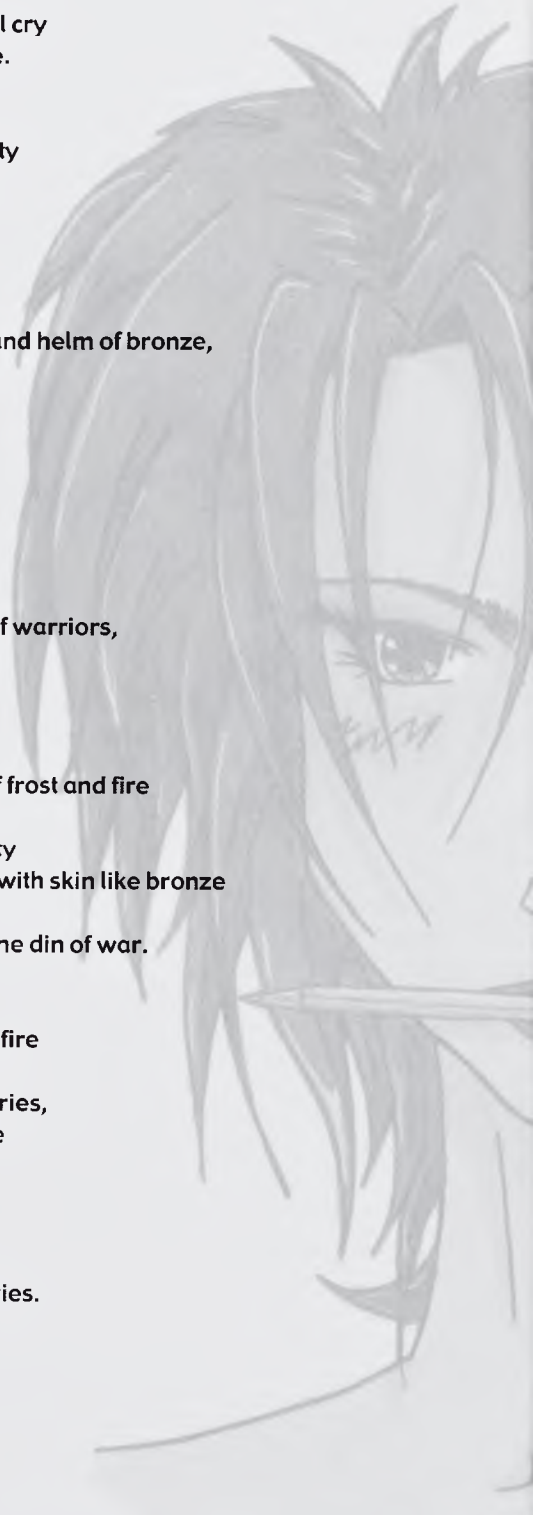
These heroic Greeks, horsehair crest and helm of bronze,
Armor robbed where the corpses lie
Achilles' fury, like ceaseless fire
Hector dragged around the city
'The prize of war,'
King Priam's cry.

Aglalamos, the battle cry
Of soldiers armed in suits of bronze
Men who strive to fight and die. Host of warriors,
Ilium conquered by thieves and liars
Take the city
Raise it fast with towering fire.

Noble Scamander, opposing stream of frost and fire
The River God's pleading cry
Wrapped himself around the ruined city
Choked with those that died, warriors with skin like bronze
River swept from where they lie
Float along a faceless shore, fallen in the din of war.

Troy is sacked, the end of war
Pergamum, the citadel, is wreathed in fire
Brought low by an Ithacan liar.
Hugging the burning earth with bitter cries,
Men curse the gods, the ringing bronze
Quieted the dying city.

Cursed to live, the women cry
Dragged to ships fitted with bronze
Shattered lives sold away to foreign cities.



Tribute to Sylvia Plath & "The Edge"

Victoria V. Gueli

"Bordering on the bizarre, the U.S. patent described here reflects a concern on the part of some that persons might be buried prematurely. It was feared that the vital signs of persons in a coma or "suspended animation" would not be detected. As embalming became more widespread, this concern became a moot point, except, perhaps, to the most gullible.....

The patent for a life signal, granted to Franz Vester, of Newark, N.J., in 1868, was designed to function after burial. '---The nature of this invention consists in placing on the lid of the coffin, and directly over the face of the body laid therein, a square tube which extends from the coffin up through and over the surface of the grave, said tube containing a ladder and a cord, one end of the cord being placed in the hand of the person laid in the coffin and the other end of said cord being attached to a bell on the top of the square tube, so that, should a person be interred ere life is extinct, he can, on recovery to consciousness, ascend from the grave by the ladder, or if not able to ascend by said ladder, ring the bell, thereby giving an alarm and thus saving himself.' "

---American Artifacts, issue 45, July 1999

Richard Van Vleck

someone please alert Sylvia--
the poet has been perfected!

lifting a crumbling sliver of wood to a
softly grayish ear,
her bone-white jaw moves up and down and
the wind in her throat shapes words.

moss-grown toes curl downwards and
her lifelong bleach-blond's brown again;
the trees have finally touched her, and she lays,
wrapped in the arms of their roots while
they whisper lullabies to make her smile.
the moon no longer taunts her.

I call longingly into the mouthpiece
and twist it's cord in my fingers.
Sylvia, there are things I must tell you--
you must return at once.

I have made such a major discovery, you've orchestrated it all,
and though I know you sleep in peace, in dirt
as you never could, in bed,
I want to sit you up and tell you:
I have stolen the celestial thesaurus,
I have found the order to the words.

We are the poems.
I know it sounds foolish, and New Age, but
I have decided that the letters are not the art, but
the poet scribbling them is.

The woman, the man, the i the we,
the ego, the flash of smile, the empty space behind my stomach,
the tired way in which a mother puts out the light, and
the careless way in which sunlight strikes your eyes--
none of it matters on paper.
It is only those who live it, and sometimes, those who pen it.

I am selfish to want to ring you up, but cannot help it.
I want you to see the pitchers of milk filled again
I want to see your sky cast off it's blacks
and, for once, don a summer sundress.

Last Goodbye

By
Pisot

*Under the spring sky and lonely moon
Watched by the stars up above,
The violet wind sang classic tunes
Of friendship, farewell and love.*

*They're childhood friends. She's waiting for him. He's waiting for courage. The place
where they first met might be the place where they say their last goodbyes.*

[Two people seen sitting on the floor of an old tree house]

Erick: (adjusting his position) Hey!
Sam: Hey.

[pause]

Sam: Sup?
Erick: I'm aight.

[pause]

Erick: How 'bout you? What's up?
Sam: Mmm... Nothing much.
Erick: Is that "nothing much" a good thing or a bad thing?
Sam: Hopefully, it's a good thing.

[pause]

Sam: So, you all packed?
Erick: Yeah.
Sam: (nods)

[pause]

Erick: Hey, um... Do you still remember how we met?
Sam: Um..no..
Erick: No??
Sam: We were four!
Erick: Okay..I was here, (points down) playing with my airplane, you passed by and almost hit me with your Batman bike.
Sam: Oh yeah! Hehe..
Erick: Yeah. You were wearing your Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle shirt and blue Yankees cap.
Sam: (ponders) Right. You thought I was a boy..
Erick: Yeah..hehe..
Sam: Hehe..I still remember the look on your face when I took off my cap. It was like, you've seen a ghost and turned into Liza Minelli or something, hehe..
Erick: Haha...Yeah hehe...

[pause]

Erick: I really thought you were a boy.
Sam: You weren't the first one.
Erick: You're the most beautiful boy I've ever seen, though.

Sam: I'll try to take that as a compliment.
Erick: (smiling) I'll miss you.
Sam: Of course you will. Where else will you find a pretty girl who borrows your boxers?
Erick: Oh, Mom bought me new ones. I left the old ones in my closet. You can have 'em.
Sam: What! The ones with the smilies on them?!? No, thanks. You should take them and give them to Saddam Hussein. It might start a very unique, and well, gross relationship between you two.
Erick: Yeah, and so someone will always remind me of you.
Sam: Well, yeah..
Erick: (smiling) I was kidding.

[pause]

Erick: Hey, I want to give you something.
Sam: What?
Erick: I want you to have this..
Sam: What?
Erick: (looks for something in his right pocket) Wait, I can't find it.
Sam: Wait, you're not giving me a condom for remembrance, are you?
Erick: (tries left pocket) No! Just wait a second...Okay. I found it..
Sam: What is this?
Erick: An "M".
Sam: I know it's an "M"! But..
Erick: You know when I went on the machine thingy at the mall last week? That's what I got. Well...half. I thought I should keep the other letter.
Sam: Hehe.."M", apart of "ME" ..hehe..that's funny..(breaks down and cries)

(They hug each other)

Sam: You take care of yourself, okay?
Erick: (nods) Yes.
Sam: Okay..
Erick: (also crying) You take good care of yourself too, okay?
Sam: Okay.
Erick: Promise?
Sam: Promise.
Erick: (kisses her forehead) Goodbye.

(Sam, still weeping, looks down. Erick climbs down the tree)

Sam: Wait!
Erick: What?
Sam: If you see my dad, tell him to come home.
Erick: What dad?
Sam: Bin Laden. Tell him mom's pissed he didn't clean the gutters before he left.

(Erick laughs. He returns after two steps.)

Erick: Oh, Sam..
Sam: Huh?
Erick: Wait for me...

(Sam nods and stares at the "M", still crying. Erick smiles, turns around and exit)

Sam: (looks at the empty place) I've always waited for you... (lights turn dim)

Pink Lady

By Meghan Hagerty

The girl with the pink hair counted her change and looked at the menu. Ninety-five cents for a bottomless cup of coffee. She had ninety-three. The motherly waitress took pity on the dirty girl with pink hair and a small bony frame and placed a cup of coffee and a bagel in front of her. The girl smiled gratefully and settled down with her coffee and bagel at the counter, dug her notebook out of her overstuffed book bag and began to write.

June 10th, 2004, 9:06am. Waitress: Doris
76 Diner, Main St (off I-76)

It had been three days, nine hours, and sixteen minutes since she left home. It had been June 6th at ten minutes to midnight when she had stepped through the rose trellis onto the rain-soaked street. She closed her eyes and inhaled deeply, the smell of fresh cut grass and daffodils filled her nostrils. She was thankful that she had remembered her allergy medicine. She doubted anyone had noticed when she left. If they had they were probably glad to be rid of her. To them she had been nothing but a nuisance anyway. She was nineteen and insisted on having pink hair and a nose ring. She refused to go to college, preferring instead to work at a recording studio. Her parents were both hard workers and thought that music was a lazy career. Her father was a mailman with just three years before he retired. Her mother cleaned houses and was perfect for the job. Their house was always spotless, everything in its proper place. Except her. The girl with the pink hair never felt comfortable in her own home. It was as if she were a visitor that had overstayed her welcome by nineteen years. She had left home with just a backpack and the hot pink bass that matched her hair. She had no plan. She only knew that she couldn't be there anymore. She had hitched a ride from a friendly trucker as far as Akron. They had talked part of the way and he even bought her an open faced Reuben sandwich at a truck stop on I-80. She thanked him by singing him one of her songs. He bobbed his head to the gentle even keel of her voice while she strummed her electric bass as if it were an acoustic guitar. He had liked it, told her she had talent. A talent for storytelling and making people feel her songs. She had been sure to get his name too. She would never forget it. Big Ed. How stereotypical she thought at the time but the name fit him so well. He was a big burly man with gray hair and a gray beard who looked like he would be just as comfortable on a Harley as in the roomy cab of his truck. He told her to let him know how she made it on the road, told her that she could always find him on the CB. He named her Pink Lady and put out the word that he had a friend looking for a ride. A call soon came over the staticky speaker that a man named Sweet Pea would be riding through Akron at noon and that he was going as far as Denver. Said he would meet Pink Lady at the 76 diner and so at 9:00 that morning Big Ed dropped her off with a hug and a promise to keep his ears open for talk of her. Now she it was ten minutes to noon and she wished she had thought to bring a sweater. She was reading the entertainment section of the local paper when she spotted him. 6'4" with a shaved head Sweet Pea was just the opposite of his name. He had two tattoos that stood out starkly against the others that lined his arms. A small blue teardrop below his right eye and the words "till death do us part" on his neck. She was immediately intimidated by him and tried to hide behind her paper. Her pink hair however was unmistakable and he walked right to her. When he began to speak she knew where he had gotten his nickname. He was soft spoken with a bit of a lisp and if you looked into his eyes and saw past the hardness left there by years in confinement you could see a genuine tenderness that softened the shock of his appearance. His demeanor and presence made him seem much older than his years but he admitted to her over lunch that he was only 27. He had been locked up when he was 18 for breaking and entering and had been in and out of prison for almost ten years. He was out again and he was determined to stay out this time but the only people that would hire him were trucking companies so he drove cross country every other week. He told her that although most people thought truckers had interesting lives because they traveled so much the life really wasn't his idea of happiness. The girl with the pink hair was determined not to let any of these people into her life or her, heart but Sweet Pea had wormed his way in despite her determination. She let it slip that she was running away but assured him she was of legal age. She didn't want him to worry about taking her across state lines. She told him of her journey so far; of Big Ed and Doris the motherly waitress, but when he asked about why she left she just sat sullenly sipping her coffee.

Sweet Pea changed the subject quickly. They discussed music and she discovered that he was a diehard punk. She, in turn, told him of her love of folk music. They debated their musical preferences over a few more cups of coffee and then it was time to go. They stood and gathered their things, Sweet Pea bending to lift her heavy bass. The gesture struck her a chivalrous and she smiled to herself. She never would have pegged him for a gentleman. He put her belongings in the back of the cab before helping her up. His strong hands circled her waist in a firm but gentle grasp and lifted her effortlessly into the cab. Her stomach jumped to her throat at his nearness and she briefly let her mind wander to how his hands would feel in other places.

The cab smelled faintly of stale cigarette smoke and sickly sweet pine air freshener. He offered her a hand-rolled cigarette which she gratefully accepted. She hadn't had a smoke in three days and she was nearly delirious with craving. He passed her a book of matches from a Best Western in a town she'd never heard of and merged onto the highway. They slipped into a comfortable silence each lost in their own thoughts. The girl was confused. She felt at ease with him but she was also a little intimidated and she realized that turned her on. She tried to think of other things. She concentrated on the raindrops on the window, watching them fall then meet and split and meet again forming little rivers. Past the tiny rivers the street signs flew by. E Bowery St, Church St, University Ave, E State St. His hand on her leg pulled her from her observations. He asked her if she was tired because he needed to get some sleep. She didn't know how long they had been driving; she realized she had dozed off somewhere between State St and the highway. He suggested a motel they had just passed a sign for. He offered to get her a room of her own but she declined, saying that she had no money to offer. What she didn't tell him was that she secretly wanted to put herself in the vulnerable position of having to sleep in the same room as him. There was something exciting, almost arousing about the danger in it. She wasn't sure why. Maybe because she had always played it safe before; careful not to find herself in any situations they made after school specials about.

They pulled in to the motel and she smoked a cigarette while he checked them in. She liked to pretend she didn't care what people thought but she didn't want the desk clerk to realize they were together. She peered through the window from underneath the ripped awning and saw the desk clerk staring back at her. She looked away quickly and finished her cigarette. Sweet Pea grabbed their things from the cab and headed for the room. When they got to the room she was almost disappointed that there were two beds in it. He threw his stuff on one bed and took off his shirt announcing that he was going to shower. She flipped on the TV and found an old movie to watch while she waited for her turn in the bathroom. She dozed off while she watched the movie and woke up to see him emerging from the bathroom with just a towel around his waist. She could see that his muscular chest was also covered in tattoos. She watched him while he rooted through her bag looking for her toothbrush. He sat on the bed and his towel shifted a little. Not enough to show anything but enough to get her imagination going. She pushed the thoughts from her mind and headed for the bathroom. When she finished getting ready for bed she said goodnight and climbed under the covers. When she rolled over he was standing at the foot of her bed, the streetlight outside casting an eerie glow over everything. He looked menacing and even though she knew she should be afraid she wasn't. He slowly walked to the side of her bed and sat down, the bed shifting under his weight. He gently leaned in to kiss her and he smelled clean, like toothpaste and soap.

This wasn't how she had pictured it. She had assumed that he would be rough with her, taking what he wanted and pleasing her as an afterthought. He finished and lifted himself off of her, putting his arm around her, trying to cuddle her. She turned away, uncomfortable with the familiarity that cuddling suggests and he returned to his own bed.

They woke up in the morning and acted as if nothing had happened. He was just as polite and she was just as quiet as the day before. Over breakfast he told her that they would be pulling into Denver late that night. She asked him if she could borrow his CB and he handed her the transmitter. "Hey, I'm riding into Mile High at midnight, looking for a ride?" Sweet Pea looked at her in surprise as she explained to him that her uncle had been a trucker and she used to ride with him on his shorter trips and she picked up a lot of the CB slang. The CB crackled and she heard a woman's voice come over. "10-4. I'll be at the Denny's on I-70 at midnight. What's your handle?"

The girl with the pink hair responded "Pink Lady here. See you at 12." She much preferred her CB handle to her given name.

They rolled into Denver at ten minutes to midnight and the girl jumped down from the cab and started collecting her things. Her bass seemed so much heavier than it had when she left. She reached into her backpack looking for her notebook and found an envelope instead. She pulled it out and found a note scrawled hurriedly in Big Ed's sloppy handwriting and a hundred dollar bill.

Dear Pink Lady,

Good Luck on the road. Here's a few bucks to keep you going. Drop me a line when you settle down.

*Edward O'Sullivan
1254 Pembroke Drive
Greenwich, CT 06831
Sincerely,
Big Ed*

She smiled to herself, remembering how he had given her the lecture on road safety before he dropped her off in Akron. He was so fatherly, far more than her own father had ever been. She would have to remember to send him a thank you letter. Maybe she would even go visit him if she ever ended up in Connecticut.

She was snapped back to reality by the sound of a truck roaring to a halt. It was a great big pink cab with 'Road Queen' airbrushed on the bug shield. She assumed that must be her ride and said goodbye to Sweet Pea. She didn't bother writing down his name or how to contact him, she had already thanked him. She wanted to hug him, to show him some kind of affection

but it was too hard. She knew she wouldn't be able to leave him if she allowed herself to think about it.

The woman driving the Road Queen walked towards them. She wasn't what the girl had expected. She had expected a heavy woman in boots and a flannel shirt, what she saw instead was a bombshell. Fiery red hair, creamy white skin and stylishly dressed. She walked towards the girl with the pink hair and extended her hand.

"Road Queen. And you are?"

"Nice to meet you. I used to be called Shelby but my friends call me Pink Lady."

"Shall we go then?"

The girl with the pink hair followed the fiery redhead to the truck leaving Sweet Pea standing alone staring after them.

The two women packed the girl's belongings in the truck and headed for the diner. They chatted idly while waiting for their food to arrive, both tired from their own journeys. Their food came and they ate quickly and in silence. The girl wondered if they were going to get a motel room or if they were getting right back on the road. As if Road Queen heard her thoughts she told the girl that she had a delivery to make in St. Louis the next day so they had to head right out after they ate. They finished their dinners, paid the bill and headed for the truck. Road Queen offered the girl the bed in the back of the cab but the girl said she preferred to ride up front. The woman told her she was glad because she could use the company. They chatted for hours about nothing in particular and before they knew it the sun was up and they were just two hours from St. Louis. They stopped for coffee and some breakfast and Road Queen told the girl what her plan was for the rest of the trip. She explained that after she dropped off her load in St. Louis she had two days before she had to pick up another load in Indianapolis. She had been planning to stop in and see an old friend but her plans fell through. The girl suggested they find a motel and take naps and then find something tourist-like to do. The girl with the pink hair hadn't traveled much when she was younger. Her parents didn't like traveling. Her mother preferred gardening and her father preferred watching football. Neither of them ever understood her wanderlust.

Road Queen agreed and they set off for St. Louis again. While they drove Road Queen asked her why she was running away.

"I just wasn't happy"

"So nothing terrible happened? It wasn't to get away from abusive parents or anything?"

"Well, they just didn't like having me around. Some stiff happened but it wasn't with them."

"What happened?"

The girl with the pink hair was hesitant but she decided to tell her. She hadn't told anyone and it was starting to get to her.

"I was dating this guy named Tom and everything was going really good. I lost my virginity to him. I thought he really loved me but shortly after we had sex I found out he had videotaped it without telling me. I heard some girls talking in one of my classes and they were pointing at me. They were saying that they had seen the tape and that he was showing it to everyone he knew. He even lent the tape out to a friend of his. I couldn't figure out why he had done this so I asked him about it. He said it was because I acted like I was better than everyone and he wanted to knock me down a notch. I broke up with him, obviously, but I couldn't get my hands on the tape. Other guys started harassing me. Calling me a slut and throwing things at me when I walked by. On top of that my parents were always on me to go to college even though I had a great job in this recording studio in Manhattan. They told me that I had to register for school in the fall or find a new place to live. With every thing going on I just needed to start over."

"Wow, that's really rough. I'm so sorry you had to go through all that."

"Yeah, well at least I finally had the courage to get out of there."

"So where are you going to go?"

"I don't know yet. I have a friend in LA. We used to go to school together. I might give her a call when I get there."

"Oh, you're going all the way to LA?"

"Yeah, I don't know if I'll stay there but I've always wanted to see it."

"That's great. Here we are. Why don't you go find that motel?"

The girl had seen a Super 8 not too far back and she set off to go find it. When she found it she got a double room, paid for it with the money Big Ed had given her and left her book bag in the room. She passed a convenience store on the way back to where Road Queen was unloading and bought three packs of cigarettes. She had only planned to buy one but when she found out they were only three dollars she decided to stock up. Back on Staten Island cigarettes cost between six and seven dollars. Even more if you were in Manhattan. She left the store and found Road Queen and told her about the Super 8. The woman told her to go back to the motel and she would meet her there in an hour or so. She just had to finish unloading. The girl headed back to the motel and thought about how far she had come from the shy girl who was afraid to walk anywhere alone. Once she got back to the room she changed into a T-shirt Road Queen had bought her at the last truck stop and fell into bed, practically asleep before she got there.

The girl had no idea how long she had been sleeping or why she had woken up. It was dark and the only light in the room was coming from underneath the bathroom door. As she sat up and blinked, trying to remember where she was the bathroom door opened. As Road Queen stepped out everything came rushing back to her. She smiled a groggy greeting at Road Queen.

"Well, hello there sleepyhead. I was beginning to wonder if you were ever going to wake up."

"Yeah, I guess I was tired. Is there anything to eat or should we go out and grab something? And what time is it anyway?"

"Oh I grabbed some take-out on my way back. It's a little after midnight."

"Isn't it cold by now? I mean what time did you get back?"

"Oh no, not from this morning. I went out about an hour ago. Just went for a walk. Let's see how good the Chinese food is here."

They opened the packages of steamed dumplings, egg rolls, and lo mien and dug in. The girl hadn't had Chinese since she left Staten Island and although this food didn't quite measure up it was a pretty decent imitation. They chatted while they ate. Road Queen told her she found a house nearby on 'I' street that had a big sign out front that said "Any government big enough to give you anything you want is big enough to take it away."

She also found a museum dedicated to limestone. They decided to go to the museum and walk by the sign in the morning. The girl wished she had brought a camera with her so she could be sure to remember all the strange things she encountered. They finished their dinner and settled in to watch a movie. After sleeping all day they weren't tired enough to go back to sleep. A little while after the movie started Road Queen moved over to the girl's bed, claiming that she was closer to the heater and it was cold in there. Road Queen kept getting closer to the girl with the pink hair finally putting her hand on her leg. The girl was uncomfortable and said so.

"I'm sorry. I hope I didn't give you the wrong idea. I'm straight. I'm sorry"

"Nothing to be sorry about. I can change your mind"

"No, I'm serious. I'm straight."

"Sure you are. It doesn't matter. You'll enjoy it," argued Road Queen, her hand creeping up the girl's thigh.

Slapping her hand away the girl cried, "Get off of me. What's wrong with you?"

"You little bitch! You've been teasing me the whole ride, flipping your hair and giggling. Wearing that little tank top, changing in front of me. You made me think I was going to get some and now I'm going to!"

The girl was petrified now. She had been warned by everyone she had encountered on the road about guys expecting more after a ride but no one had ever thought to warn her about other women. She was still a little naïve and it never occurred to her that a woman could rape another woman and now here she was in a situation she never could have imagined. Road Queen penetrated her roughly with two fingers and the girl cried out.

"Come on, Shelby. You know you like it."

Hearing her name was too much for the girl. She pushed the woman off of her and ran out of the room, grabbing the book bag she had dropped near the door. She ran out to the lobby and found the desk clerk nodding off at his desk. She woke him up and exclaimed breathlessly what had happened and he phoned the police while she changed into her clothes in the back room. When the police arrived they took her statement, but when they checked to room Road Queen and all her things were gone.

They took her to the hospital to get checked out and the desk clerk told her to come back when she was finished, he would let her stay another night in a different room for free. After she left the hospital she stopped at a diner to get a bite to eat and she saw a sign that said help wanted. She spoke to the manager and they agreed to give her a try. She started right away and made a few bucks that night. She came back the next day to work and worked a thirteen hour shift. When her shift ended she sat at the counter and began to write in her notebook. She wrote a letter to her parents to let them know she was ok. She didn't tell them where she was or where she was going, she just wanted them to know she was ok. She started to write a song about her experiences when she realized that her pink bass had been in the Road Queen's truck.

The girl worked at the diner for a week, sleeping in the back room whenever she got a chance. At the end of the week she told the manager that she was leaving and walked to the nearest bus station. She bought a ticket to Los Angeles and a book to keep her entertained and she was on her way. She got on the bus and made her way to the back. A man and a woman boarded the bus next. She was pregnant and they looked happy. Next a kid who couldn't be any more than sixteen got on the bus and sat down across the aisle from her. A few other passengers boarded and the bus left.

The girl and the boy snuck glances at one another for a little while and the boy finally broke the silence.

"I'm Terrence. What's your name?"

"Some people call me Shelby, some call me Pink Lady."

"What do you call you?"

"I don't know yet."

It was a sunny 1960's suburban day in California. The high school was about to let out. A young man who suffered low self-esteem and couldn't get a date was rummaging through his locker feeling sorry for himself. His friends were in a band, hitting on girls, promising to show them some hidden talent if, you know what I mean. Hint, hint, wink, wink. His name was Buzz, and he wanted to join them, but he lacked self-esteem and felt like a slacker. So he just collected his stuff and headed home. As Buzz entered his house, Buzz's mother greeted him with Tang and Rice Crispy squares. "Buzz honey," she said, "would you like something?" Buzz didn't feel like talking. He just pushed his mother's hand away. "Mom," he said with tears in his eyes, "I want to be left alone." Buzz slowly walked upstairs and closed the door to his room behind him. His mother was confused; she wondered, why was Buzz unpopular? She had been pretty happening in high school. She decided to follow him upstairs and find out what was wrong. "Buzz, I'm worried about you", she said to the door. "You come home depressed every day...it's not normal." Buzz let his mother in and put on his favorite beatnik songs, then proceeded to recite one of his poems for her. (You see, Buzz's mother and father were once beatniks.) He started to recite "The Universe is Big". His mother couldn't resist. "Oh Buzz, no, not again," she said as she seated herself in the lotus position and waited for her cue to snap her fingers. Buzz continued his poem. "But no one gives a fig, can you dig?" She started to snap her fingers. "Pardon me while I go into a jig." They both started to do a jig; Mrs. Chesterson became so entranced with the music, she danced right out of Buzz's room. Buzz closed the door and put on one of his favorite albums to trip out to. Stripping down to his clothes, he revealed his mother's bra and panties and did a sexy dance around the room. Just then, there was a knock on Buzz's closet door. Buzz angrily opened it. "What the hell do you want?!" A man who sounded like a woman jumped out wearing Peter Pan leotards. Her/his skin was blue. Buzz was scared out of his ever-loving mind. "Hoodoo! Be cool man, the money is on the desk man, just be cool." The cherry man/woman walked over to him and reassured him he/she wasn't a mugger. "Relax boy. My name is Mr. B Natural. You looked like you needed someone to talk to. You know, you can express yourself through music". Buzz was a bit skeptical, "W-W-what do you want?" "Well, I'm like, your personal guardian angel. I'm here to show you that you can express yourself through music. You seem to be the most happy when you listen to music. And that's how I appeared. Any questions?" Buzz decided to raise his hand. Mr. B sighed, "Yess Buzz?" "When the peppermint- strawberry chow mien has to be prepared at 12:30 P.M, and you find out that your boss's uncle's second cousin is actually coming out of the closet- besides coming to dinner- will the earth's population all turn to curly fries?" Mr. B just looked at him

The Day The Purple Two Headed Cow that was Swimming in Orange Duck Sauce, Met the One- Armed, Three- Legged, Six-Headed Man

blankly and shook his/her head. "Buzz, drugs are not the answer to hiding your feelings. Now listen." She/he pushed Buzz onto the bed and pulled a magic trumpet out of thin air. Buzz just rubbed his eyes. "Whoa! What are you smoking and can I have some?" "Shush Buzz! I'm trying to show you something." "Now that's what I'm talking about." "Buzz!" "I'm trying to introduce you to the wonders of playing a trumpet. You can express a lot of feelings through it. Or there's always a tuba if you need a goooooooood laughhhhhhhhhhh." A tuba appeared out of the air and Mr. B started to play and dance around with even more instruments. Drums, saxophones, recorders: you name it, that instrument appeared. Buzz got scared and ran out of his room and downstairs. Mr. B. just used his/her powers to clean up while talking to his/herself. "If I know his parents, they'll want to make sure that their little boy is happy." Buzz came running down the stairs still wearing his mother's underwear and screaming in terror and fear. Not just fear but, fear and terror, the worst kind of emotions put together (heavy.) Buzz called his parents into the living room. "Family meeting, family meeting. Houston we have a problem." Buzz's parents composed themselves and decided to see what he had to say. All three sat on the couch. Buzz was sitting in the middle, pretty much not all there. "There I was listing to Bach- yeah, let's go with that, -when all of a sudden this blue- costumed woman who thinks she's a man wanted me to learn music. So we got to go now, to the music store, before she lets loose the deadly killer muskrats with soup cans for heads and bubblegum for feet. They'll stomp in our hair and it'll take hours to get the goop- poop out...yeah...they're crafty that way- rassafraassa bubblegum muskrats." Mr. Chesterson thought to himself, what would Bing Crosby do? "Now look boy, don't make me take off my belt again." Mrs. Chesterton interrupted. "Stop talking like Bing Crosby. You're not Crosby. GROOOOOOWWWWWWW UPPPPPPPP," she intoned. Mr. Chesterson crawled into a ball. "Yess, dear, sorry dear, don't hit me again, not in front of the boy, I'll be good." Buzz felt this was the time for him to take charge. "GIVE ME THE KEYS. I'LL DRIVE." Both his parents looked at him. "But Buzz, you're only 16," his mother said, "you don't know how to drive". "Mother, I wear the same clothes as you, we're practically sisters...hehehehehehehe," Buzz rambled while drooling. Mrs. Chesterson decided to talk some sense into Buzz. "Honey," she said, "why are you wearing my underwear?" Buzz interrupted her. "For one day and one day only, I wanted to know what it felt like to be a woman...but if you want me to give 'em back..." He was about to strip down to nothing when both parents protested. Mrs. Chesterson threw her hands up in the air. She gave him the keys. "Shotgun," screamed Mr. Chesterson. Mrs. Chesterson rode in the back. Buzz was turning red in the face; he was hyperventilating. His teeth started to show, his mind was going somewhere from which he

thought he would never return..... "Toooooo the music storeeeeeeeeeee...hahahahahaha-hahahahahaha!" Buzz roared. Buzz stepped on the gas peddle and the car went through the garage, causing it to collapse. Buzz was now going 80 in a 45 MPH zone. As he was flying down the street, a pork- chop patrolman on a motorcycle pulled them over. Buzz's parents were scared but not good 'ol Buzz. "Let me do all the talking," he laughed. Buzz rolled down the window and all the words that came out of the cop were, "Is there a problem?" Buzz pulled out a gun. (Trust me, you don't want to know where it came from.) "Yes," he replied simply. "There is a problem. This gun has too many bullets in it." Buzz fired into the cop's face and laughed mirthlessly. "Pigs," he muttered to himself. "We're on a family outing, and the pigs are trying to ruin our good time as usual." "Why must there be so much blood in the world? Why?" screamed Mrs. Chesterson. Buzz was getting the shakes. "Mom, just shut up it'll make sense at the music store." Buzz picked up speed, and drove over the dead cop, went in reverse and hit the cop again. (Did that ten times.) After he had his fun, he rushed into town and found the town's music store. "Seatbelts everyone, we're not breaking for nobody," ordered Buzz. The car picked up speed and crashed in the music store. Buzz and his family went flying through the windshield and into the store. Buzz ran up to the shopkeeper. Buzz was on happy- zippy peppy- pills and four tabs of acid. He reached behind the desk and grabbed the clerk. He was babbling like a man who couldn't handle his high.

"Heybuddyyougottohelpmethereisthiswomanyouwon'tleavemealoneunlessIlearnmusic al instrumenttgivemewhateveryougot. The shopkeeper was terrified, but did as he was told. He presented Buzz with a guitar, and Buzz started to play. (Yes, still in his mother's underwear.) He cleared his throat. "She loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah." Buzz didn't like it. "No!" He threw it back. The shopkeeper brought out bongo drums. Buzz played with his feet. But he didn't like the bongos either. The shopkeeper then offered the flute; Buzz grabbed it and held it up in the air. "Yesssssss!!!!!! This is perfect! And if there is another Holocaust I can shove this up my ass and the Nazis will never find it." Buzz then slammed it down on the cash register. "HOW MUCH?" he bellowed. The shopkeeper was stricken with fear. "Y-You know what, k-k-keep it, it's on the house." Buzz's father walked up to him. "Buzz, is that ok?" Buzz's eyes were wide, and he was getting sicker by the minute. "It doesn't matter!" Mr. B appeared, "Doesn't matter! It certainly does matter." Buzz went over to his parents quivering. "Mother, Father...tell me you see that." Mr. B continued her speech. "The store owner will tell you that you need the best brand of instrument, so it can play the best kind of music. It certainly does matter." "Oh, excuse us Mr. Man/Woman thing," Mr. Chesterson said, trying to humor Buzz. Buzz decided to jump in. "That's right Mr. Chesterson, tell them about the sauce, tell them it's made of special veg-

Authored by Jeremy Fein

etables." Mr. B decided to ignore Buzz and continued, by magically producing a movie projector and screen that showed a factory that produced musical instruments. "Watch this short film Buzz, or I'll kill you." Everyone in the store gasped and gathered around the screen. Buzz to pull some candy from his panties. "Anyone want some Goobers?" Everyone politely said no and the movie began. Buzz watched how musical instruments were made and how they were tested again and again until they were ready to be shipped out and sold. When the movie stopped, Mr. B. turned off the projector. "So Buzz, did you learn anything?" He/She then turned around and saw that Mr. and Mrs. Chesterson's bodies were lying on the floor, as well as the shopkeepers; their heads were placed side by side on the counter next to the cash register. "Buzz, you killed them," Mr. B smirked. Buzz was completely and totally insane now. (The worst kind of insane). He picked up his chainsaw. (Trust me, you really don't want to know where it came from). "That's right...and now I'm going to kill you." Mr. B was scared out of his/her mind. "Why Buzz, why?" "Why.... why?" Buzz screamed. "Because when I was eight years old, all I wanted for Christmas was a red fire engine. I waited for Christmas and when that day came, you know what I got?" Mr. B shook his/her head. "A green fire engine." "Buzz, wait!" pleaded Mr. B. Buzz was now foaming at the mouth. "I am no longer Buzz, you simple weak minded fool! I am Chow-Dar, Lord of the Clam people!" Buzz ran towards Mr. B. "Now you'll find out why they call me Buzz". Just like one of the versions of Pinocchio when he stepped on Jiminy Cricket and killed his conscience, Buzz killed what was left of his common sense and sanity. Just then, several cop cars that had been tipped off by passerby surrounded the area and were about to open fire. Buzz screamed as he ran towards the Pigs. "You can't kill me! Can't you see I'm made of steel?" The pigs had no choice but to fire. By tomorrow, it would all be sorted out.

ot detacideD si yrotS sihT
releek .S yrraH
nospmohT S. retnuH
Ecrub ynnel
dnA
yrreT nrehtouS
P.S.

These Names are spelled Backwards for that 60's feel. GROOVY

Elizabeth D'Ambrosio (Lilith Oya)

Liz, AKA Lilith Oya, is a creative writing major with aspirations to become involved in anime, manga, and the video game industry. This is her third publication in *Serpentine* and her final year at CSI.

Adrienne Dacayanan

Adrienne Dacayanan is a junior at CSI and isn't quite sure about her major, though she guesses it's going to be History. She has a special fondness for her cat, Han Shan (named after the poet) chai tea, and her fiancée James...but not in that order. She loves Greek literature, especially her well-worn copy of 'The Oresteia'.

Serpentine Magazine CONTRIBUTORS & STAFF

Edwin Diaz

Edwin Diaz was born in Santiago, Dominican Republic and emigrated to the U.S. at the age of 5. He came to C.S.I at the age of 17, at which the time he was recruited by the United States Marines and spent seven years of his life with them. This led him to asking himself deep philosophical questions which he often encountered in the military. After finishing his contract Edwin decided to finish school and return to CSI to pursue his goals of becoming a philosopher and a writer. Currently he is also employed by the New York Stock Exchange.

Jeremy Fein

Jeremy Fein has been writing since 1982. He has a live journal online, which is available to the public livejournal.com/users/jfr1977. They're first drafts, but they're chugging along. When Mr. Fein isn't writing he's playing the online games *City of Heroes* and *StarWars Galaxies* 'till his eyeballs bleed.

Brian Gonzalez

Brian Gonzalez is currently an English/Writing Major at CSI. He is also actively working in Graphic/Web Design and Photography. He is currently involved in a many projects, one of which is working for a small company that was created by one of his closest friends called EvoTek Industries. You can check them out by visiting their website "www.evotekmedia.com". He is working on a digital portfolio where he will showcase some of his photography and other works.

Hend Gouda

Hi serpentine readers: This is Hend Gouda I am an English Education major, in my fourth year at CSI. Hopefully I'll graduate this August, and face the wonderful working life for the first time, which terrifies me. Last semester I took a creative writing class, where I was introduced to the sestina. Out of all the forms that I learned, the sestina was the most enjoyable. I have to say that I have never written poetry before, but once I learned the sestina, I was inspired to write this poem, which I have not yet figured out a name for. I have to say that the sestina is probably the only form that I was able to fully express my feelings in. I would like to thank my creative writing professor, Gene DiDonna for helping me and others enjoy and look at poetry in a new light.

Victoria V. Gueli

Victoria V. Gueli is an English Literature major at the college and hopes to graduate within the next year and a half. A former journalist for the Staten Island Advance, she has had several of her poems published, and plans to release a self-published volume of poetry and short stories. She is currently a freelance writer for various pagan magazines, and an editorial assistant at Applause Publishing, Manhattan. Victoria is a member of the Staten Island Writer's Group, and a promotional representative for NHB Radio.

Meghan Hagerty

Meghan Hagerty is a Creative Writing major at the College of Staten Island. She is minoring in History and Women's Studies. This is her first time being published. Her favorite authors include Neil Gaiman and Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

Josephine Maisonet

Josephine Maisonet, a freelance web and graphic designer, is an emerging artist who is comfortable working in both traditional and digital mediums. She is presently working on an ongoing project titled "Mythological Goddesses", representing her digitally created vision of the mythical goddesses of different ancient cultures.

Peter R. Marsh

This is Peter's final year as an English Major at CSI. Next year he plans on attending graduate school, though he is not yet certain which one he is going to. He is the head of The S.I. Writer's group, and makes his money by tutoring High School students.

Jessica Marie Mendez (JessaShoutBaby)

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

Patrick Montero

Patrick Montero first began his art career at the Art Lab in Snug Harbor. He attended the High School of Art & Design in mid-town Manhattan where he majored in architecture and studio art. He has attended F.I.T. for intimate apparel and has earned certificates in architecture, interior design, 3-D design, and life drawing from N.Y.I.T and Copper Union respectively. He was also the Art Director for *The Banner* and continues to volunteer his time to *Serpentine Magazine*. As a recent graduate of C.S.I. he is currently a Photo Editor for the *Daily News*.

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

Laura Anne Psomas

Laura is an English Writing major and also minors in English Literature and Sociology. "Writing is my freedom; whenever I want to get away from children, work, and the everyday horror in the world, I grab a pen. Writing is not only a good way to escape for me, but also a good form of therapy, for everything I write, there is a hint of my reality."

Jhon Singleton

Jhon Singleton has released a limited edition Chapbook (*Ars Poetica*) in Fall-2004 and has attained a grant to publish his second Limited Edition Chapbook in Spring 2005. Currently he is finishing his MA in English at Rutgers University. He is also working on various projects, including his first book of poetry and a debut album.

Jeremy Tescher

"Jeremy Tescher is an obsessive grad student, relentlessly determined to be."

Christian Tubito

Christian Tubito is an English major in his junior year. He intends to get a masters in creative writing, and study european literature in the future. This is his second semester in *Serpentine*.

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Twist waist & he swings
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