

Point of View 1999-2000



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There Will Be Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth
ceramic
Bridget Bartholomae

Back Cover
My Subconscience in the Flesh
colored pencil 8x8
Buddy Hanson

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Winner of the *Point of View Award* *

Winner of the *Vivian Steward Award* **

Winner of the *Ray Mills Award* ***



Girl
etching 30x15
Nanako Okubo

The Tragedies of War

Paul Simanauskas

He feels the breath leave his lungs
The taste of blood is on his tongue
The sounds of war become numb
He sees how war is so dumb
The screams of men fill the air
The passing bullets singe his hair
He thinks of his home, family, and girl
To be with them, he'd trade the world
He pulls out his canteen, and to his disdain
His last drink is lousy and plain
The war seems so far, in another place
As the flies start crawling on his face
He feels no hate to those who brought him to his fate
At this point he knew it was too late
Too late to fight ever again
He's just one of countless men
Another statistic on the list
The sky turned to a hazy mist
Would anyone remember of his glorious days?
Or is this just life's last phase?
As his life drains away, he looks his assassin straight in the eye
"So this is who caused me to die."
He looks at the scene, one last time
Now he heads toward the Great Sublime
Years pass, on Earth he's just a stain
In the graveyard only one lady remains
She looked at the graveyard, a tear down her cheek
She opened her mouth, like she wanted to speak
Nothing came out, except a gargled noise
She thinks back of all their joys
She leaves a white rose on the soft ground
Now she leaves without a sound
It will never be over, never be done
For now she had lost her only son.



The Spirit of a Human
etching 4 1/2x6
Bridget Bartholomae

Exodus

Megan Fincher

I'm leaving México in this run-down Ford Tempo, and the words of the Ave Maria thrash in my head—*ruega por nosotros los pecadores, ahora y en la hora de nuestra muerte*—pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.

I glance at my mother and remember her words, spoken just hours before we left Puerto de la Libertad: There are some things you cannot pray for, Teresa. Some things you just do.

So she did. She handed my sister Lucina and me each a garbage bag, and told us to pack. My father was drunk again, passed out on the couch. Mamá couldn't take it anymore.

Lucina is curled up to me tightly and has her head on my breast. I stroke her hair and watch the rosary hanging from the rearview mirror swing gently. The road we take is dirt and the car is slow. We are driftwood.

Mamá starts to sing quietly and I think of church. I would light a red votive every day for my father, praying that somehow God could rekindle his life. Then Padre Simón and I would sit face-to-face in the darkened confessional and talk about my troubles. Padre felt that I wanted to become a nun to escape my family. I retorted that my family taught me what suffering was, and suffering led me to Christ. As we debated, I could hear the Gulf of California cry outside.

Lucina had an abortion last year. Some guy dug the baby out with a hanger, and she almost died from blood loss. I had always thought that horrible occurrences changed people. Made them different somehow. But not Lucina. She still had boys back to her room when Mamá was at work and Papá was passed out. I rest my chin on her head

and close my eyes. I'm not sure if what we're doing is right, leaving Papá all alone. I hate him so much, but I pity him even more.

I watch Mamá fiddle with the plastic Virgin on our dashboard. Her hand clenches and unclenches the Virgin's waist, as if she is trying to squeeze the life out of her. Mamá feels betrayed. I slowly lean forward, trying not to awake Lucina, and pet my mother's ebony hair. She turns her head to kiss my hand, but I have already put it back in my lap.

Mamá honks at a group of children playing ball in the road. Her face looks angry, yet a bit disappointed. She knows that Lucina and I will never be children again. We left our childhood back in Libertad.

I can only remember her face looking that way once before. It was the night of the high school dance--my first and Lucina's last. As Lucina and her girlfriends dressed, I sat in my room reading the Bible. Mamá came in and asked me why I wasn't getting ready. I told her I hadn't been asked to the dance. She opened her mouth to say something, but changed her mind and left me.

Mamá absently mutters that Bebito's angel will be arriving soon, saying it more to herself than to Lucina and me.

I frown, remembering the man who claimed that on his fortieth birthday an angel who smelled of peppermint and sand snuggled next to him in bed. The angel has come to doze with him every night since. Bebito said he was very warm, but his massive sage wings often crowded the bed. The angel made Bebito say a prayer to St. Michael, the Archangel every morning.

When I told Padre about Bebito's angel, he glared at my open laughter.

"Teresa, if this angel makes Bebito go to mass every morning, as it has, then what can be so bad about it? Maybe you should pray that a beautiful angel climbs

in your father's bed every night and makes him go back to church!"

" My mamá climbs in Father's bed every night, Padre. He doesn't go back to church. He rapes his angel instead."

The next morning, I walked to the church in the next town. When I got home, I found a white rose on my doorstep with a beautiful pearl rosary draped around it. I practically ran to Padre and wept in his arms. He whispered to me that my mother would surely become an angel when she died. I whispered back that she dies every day and God never gives her anything.

Lucina yawns against my chest and complains of hunger. Selfish girl. Mamá wearily pulls out a ripped wallet and asks me to count the money inside. I feel the tears build up deep inside my chest as I pass the meager notes through my fingers. I hand the wallet back to Mamá and suggest we fast today.

I damn Papá silently. He drank away all my mother's earnings. I used to throw away any left over alcohol when he passed out. He always managed to get more.

Lucina points out a crumbling diner up ahead and Mamá obediently pulls into the parking lot. As we all climb out of the car, I suddenly feel a rising host of angry thoughts.

Turning to Lucina, I cry out, " I am ashamed you are my sister. How do you think we are going to survive on the little money we have? You cannot fast for one day?"

She says nothing, but instead pulls a thick envelope out of her bra. Mamá and I stare at it's bulging contents. Mamá demands to know where the money came from. Lucina says nothing. Mamá repeats the question. My hands start to quiver as the answer becomes clear. All those boys she took to her room. Lucina absently pats her belly, the home of her killed child. Mamá's eyes connect with mine.

"Whore money?" Mamá whispers slowly. Her face is squishing up.

She looks at Lucina through tears and spits at her feet.

" I have no shame, Mamá. I did it to survive. God cannot punish me for surviving, for wanting to get away." Lucina's face is blank. Mamá sinks to the ground and pulls out her rosary beads. Her small body shakes and low moans escape her hard mouth. The rosary beads tremble.

I wrap my arms around Mamá and tell her quietly that we can't pray for some things. Some things people just do, for reasons unknown. I take the beads out of her hands and help her to her feet. She lets go of me and walks sobbing to the car.

Lucina watches her sit slowly in the drivers seat and curl up like a baby against the window. Tears slide down the window like rain.

" Why did you do it, " I say, without bothering to form the words into a question. I am disgusted.

Lucina answers me without looking away from the car, from Mamá's shaking body. She tells me she did it for the same reason I went to church everyday. To try and find a way to escape. I chose the Gates of Heaven, she went down the Pit of Hell.

I start walking to the car and Lucina calls out to me. She quietly asks me how far my prayers could get us. How they could never feed us, or pay our rent, or clothe us.

I look in her eyes and see...an angel. I look in her eyes and see Padre Simón, and Bebito, and my mother, and her murdered child. I look in her tragic eyes and see myself. She stands there, holding the Whore Money tightly. She stares at my clenched hand, and I feel the cool beads pressing against my hot palm. Here we stand, the Devil in her hand and Jesus in mine. But now, God no longer matters. My sister, who stained herself for me, only matters.

Walking toward her, I slowly stretch my arm out. A single tear trails down her face as the money leaves her hand and is replaced by the prayer beads. She mutters that she doesn't remember how to pray.

I think of Padre. How he told me the most important day of my life would be teaching my father the rosary prayers.

Looking at my sister, I see my father, in all his hurt and misery.

I reach in my pocket to pull out my rosary, and suddenly realize I left it hanging on my bedroom doorknob. I imagine my father opening my door in the morning, finding only the string of pearls. I hope he keeps it. I hope he, too, learns how to pray.



untitled
photo 13½x10½
Jennifer Lesiak

Thoughts

Mary Shemon

Screaming thoughts run through my
Mind.
Vicious humans, around all the time
TRAPPED.
Stuck here in an insane world.
Staring into the mirror with disbelief.
Being uncomfortable in my
Skin.
Weakened by the power of the people. My
Soul
Has been consumed by demons. I've lost
Myself
In a hole underground with a
Very thick glass covering

Watching the world above me
Move.
Trying to break free from this hole of
Eyes.
My
Mind
Has been raped by the power of those,
Who've made me like this way.
Stuck underground, looking up and
Seeing
No worries, nor bothers.
I
Believe it is a false image.
My glass is dirty.
Everything up there is what made me come
To this hole.
I See You,
A woman, exquisite and pure.
I'm looking up and watching you go by.
I try to break out, but I
Can't split this glass.

You've seen me, our
Eyes Locked
I can't seem to reach you.

I close my
Eyes

And imagine a world where you'll
Never want to leave.
Fear and hate will never exist.
Betrayal will never be mentioned.
Music will be in the air.
Art will be painted on every building and every
Wall, with colors that will blind us.
I write my
Thoughts
Onto a wall
To escape from all the madness that surrounds me.
When I come back to this diseased world
I put on a disguise and hide from it all.



untitled
photo 10x8
Jennifer Lesiak



untitled
photo 10x8
Jennifer Lesiak

Remember Me...?

Leo Arias

I outline shadows to make them stand out,
I battle pessimism and eradicate doubt.
I laugh at turmoil and grin right at fear,
I'll walk into fire when other's choose not to get near.
I'll show you the light if your dimensions are dark,
If you think that you're ignorant, I'll show you you're smart.
If you clench your fists and begin to grit your teeth,
I'll show you there's higher ground to hold
than the turf beneath your feet.
And if you ask yourself, "Who's talking to me?" or
"Is this all a dream?"
Wake up and be alive, for it is I...
Your self-esteem.



He
etching 9½x8
Bridget Bartholomae



Madness of the King

print 10½x8½

Ryan McVeitty

The Liar

Joyce Sevarino

As we approach the corner of Jay Lane, I slow my pedaling for the turn. This is where we usually separate. I will turn toward the community pool where Vivian has promised to take me. Vivian will continue to ride straight. I concentrate on keeping my balance.

Vivian is a liar. I think it's just her way of trying to be funny, but then she's the only one who laughs — kind of cackles, really — and my two other sisters and I are left mad or crying. Or maybe it's just that she likes to be mean. I'm not sure. I'm not asking, either. "Mom and Dad are going to the store and you can't go; only me," Vivian bursts into a room proclaiming. "They like me best cuz they had me first." Frantic, I run to Mom asking why her third daughter can't go, too. "Oh, Maggie. Don't be ridiculous," she responds. I'm ridiculous a lot. Then she says, "I'm not going anywhere. I don't know why you're foolish enough to believe that nonsense."

Vivian once talked all her friends at school into believing that our sister, Barb, is adopted because Barb is the only one of us with brown hair. When Barb came home from school crying, Mom didn't care so much. But when Barb's teacher called, Mom said Vivian's friends are ridiculous. Mom has brown hair, too.

I start turning right onto Jay Lane when Vivian pulls her bike up even with mine. I fix my eyes on the curb.

"Hey, Maggie, you go ahead by yourself. I'm goin' to Carl's house for a while," Vivian announces. "His band is practicing and all the guys will be there," she adds with excitement then pedals up the street.

I stop mid-turn, immediately hopping forward to the pavement from atop my new bike. The bike I saved all \$54.37 to buy. My legs are too short to touch the ground from the seat, so I stand straddling the polished blue bars connecting the front wheel with the back.

My sweaty fists are still grasping the rubbery hand-grips. Suspended from the handlebars, my wire basket holds a pink towel folded twice lengthwise then rolled tightly around a bathing suit. The shiny silver chain and matching padlock, "a requirement," Mother says, clanks beside the towel. Several links sag through the mesh, their weight pulling down others with the sudden stop.

"Wait!" I screech at my sister's back. "WAIT!!"

Vivian stops and twists her waist and neck to face me, one hand on her hip. "What, Maggie?" she snaps, annoyed. She circles her bike back to face me. "You didn't really think I was going to the pool, did you?" I wait for the cackle, but she's too angry. I've never stopped her like this before.

Vivian sits back on her bike seat crossing her arms over her chest. She is balanced by long, thin legs and feet that stand flat on the ground. The sun is on her hair making it look blonder than normal. It actually shines when she moves her head. Her eyes are no bluer than mine but they are rounder and when she wears makeup, they look like eyes I see on the ladies in the movies. Vivian has Mom's thin face with puffy lips that can make a nice smile. She really is pretty, but I'll never tell her. Dad sometimes calls her "Dumb Blonde."

"You can't go today. You told Mom you would bring me to the pool," I remind her.

"I'm not going to the pool, Idiot. YOU go, if you want. I'm going to have fun," Vivian states this acting like she is the grown-up and no one can argue with her.

"No! We're going to the pool! C'mon," I say, trying to calm down. She once tried to break my arm because I touched her sweater without permission. I don't want her too mad at me. "I won't have anyone to swim with if you don't come with me. And it's not safe to go alone. And besides," I pause, "Mom said."

Once again, disappointment knots my throat like one of Mother's nylon head-scarves tied too tightly under my chin. Neither air nor spit passes the knot without painful effort.

"Then come with me, Maggie. You can watch T.V. at his house again. He has that remote control you like to play with while I visit," Vivian says. None of my friends have remote controls for their televisions. Vivian knows this, but today I'm not budging.

"You HAVE to bring me this time!" I squeal. Tears start up in my eyes and I'm afraid she's going to call me a baby. I don't care who hears us now. I don't care if the whole gosh darn town tells Dad we were fighting in public. I scream at my sister from the edge of a beautifully trimmed, green lawn. "I'll tell! I'll tell Mom you go to a boy's house and kiss on the couch! I saw you last time! I snuck out of the T.V. room and saw both of you! Yessiree, Mom's gonna be mad once she finds out you leave me alone at the pool just to be with the boys! "

I try to picture myself telling my mother about Vivian's boyfriends. Mom would listen without looking at me. She would tell me not to be a tattletale. She would call me ridiculous. But then when Dad came home from work, he would call Vivian. His loud, deep voice would shake the walls, "Get that whore down here, NOW!" Mom would shout at both of them. I remember the time I heard Mom and Dad smacking Vivian over and over again because she was in the basement with a boy. Through the wall connecting our bedrooms, I could hear my big sister moaning until I finally fell

asleep. She didn't have to go to school for two days after that.

"Just go swimming with me for a little while then I'll go to that stupid house with you," I offer.

Vivian gives me her "Yeah, all right," then adds, "But just half an hour, then we're leaving!" She pushes off ahead of me, turning right onto Jay. I hop back onto my brand-new pride and joy and follow my sister.

Outside the pool house, we stuff our front tires into the crowded bike rack. "Wait, I gotta lock my bike," I call, struggling to wiggle chain links free from the wire basket. I'm trying to remember the combination to my new lock.

"I'm not waiting for that."

"It'll just take a minute, I promise."

"Hurry up, Maggie. You're wasting your pool time," Vivian snaps, giant-stepping toward the girls' locker room.

"No, wait! I have to lock it!"

"Stop worrying, no one's gonna take it," she says. "We won't be here long enough."

Afraid I'll lose Vivian in the crowd, I take one last look at my chain still in the basket and run to catch up to her.

"Mom's gonna kill me."

"Mom'll never know," states Vivian. Then, with a sneer, she says, "There are other neater bikes here. No one wants yours. I *never* lock mine. See?" She makes a waving motion with her arm in the direction of the bike racks. I look over at Vivian's beat up, rusty old bike. She spends her money on cigarettes.

"Yours is junky, that's why," I protest.

"Come *now* or the deal's off," Vivian demands, forgetting who made the deal in the first place. I obey.

After a short swim, I'm sorry I agreed to go to that guy's house. Vivian is already at the bike rack.

"Get your bike and let's go," she says while guiding her own bike by the handlebars to an open area. I don't know the way to Carl's house from the pool so I scramble to keep up.

"I can't find my bike," I announce. "I put it right here. I hate it when somebody moves my bike just to get the better spot!"

"Come on. I told you. Half an hour and that's it!" Vivian snarls. "You're making me late."

Panic is making my body tingle. It's that familiar feeling of fear when my mind races ahead and my body is left to fend for itself. "It's not here!" I shout at Vivian. "My bike's not here! Someone stole my bike!" I am standing holding my wet towel and suit when the tears come back. This time I don't try to stop them.

Vivian looks back, laughing. "That's cuz you didn't lock it, Stupid." Then she pauses, looks directly into me and calls out what my mind is already repeating over and over deep inside my head, "Mom's gonna kill you."

"But **you** told me not to lock it!" I wail.

"No, I didn't!"

"Yes, you did! You wouldn't wait! You said no one would take it!" I sob. "It's gotta be here somewhere. Help me find it, Vivian!" I beg, hoping this time she'll care.

"You know you're supposed to lock your own bike no matter what anybody says. Mom's gonna kill you," Vivian says again, just in case the first time didn't scare me enough, then rides off toward home.

I am terrified. Vivian is a snitch.

A mean one that doesn't tell the truth. She can't be the first one to tell our mother. I shriek after her, "Don't tell Mom! Please, promise me you won't tell Mom! Walk home with me, Vivian! Vivian!!"

As I walk alone through the quiet neighborhood, I try desperately to control my sobs so I can breathe normally. "Dad's gonna be mad I cried in public," I worry aloud. Up the street, I see my mother's car approaching. Vivian sits in the front with Mom, pointing and laughing at me. They pull up next to me and the door opens. I don't want to get in, but with nowhere else to go, I climb into the back seat hearing the word "ridiculous" louder than the others. That's me, again.

My mother turns her head and looks over her shoulder to focus her gray eyes on me. Her right-hand still holds the steering wheel. I watch this hand, preparing myself for its strength. Bare thighs in summer shorts are her favorite targets.

My mother smiles. I think it's for me. "We'll drop your sister off at home," she says. "You'll have to report your stolen bike to the police, Maggie. Then we'll drive around and try to find it ourselves. Maybe someone just borrowed it then left it in a ditch somewhere." Her hands stay in the front with her body. Driving away, she says to the windshield, "I've heard those smaller chains can be cut quickly with the right tools. I guess we'll have to get you a stronger one next time."

I stop crying. Silently, I stare at the back of my oldest sister's head and wonder what she has told our mother.

Wednesday

Agnieszka Dawid

Today I walked away from bed
Legs lagging, invisible shoes made of lead.

Today I brushed my teeth and washed my face
Water running, dripping a futile race.

Today I stepped into a car
Empty, frigid, everything meaningful exists so far.

Today I tasted Some food
Tasted sour, salty, bitter, nothing but crude.

Today is but a memory I need not keep
Lethargic, redundant, as if I never awoke from sleep.

Thursday

Agnieszka Dawid

To whom it may concern
Life unshared, is better left unlearned.

The creator of time would shame
If faced with the turmoil of your absence that came.

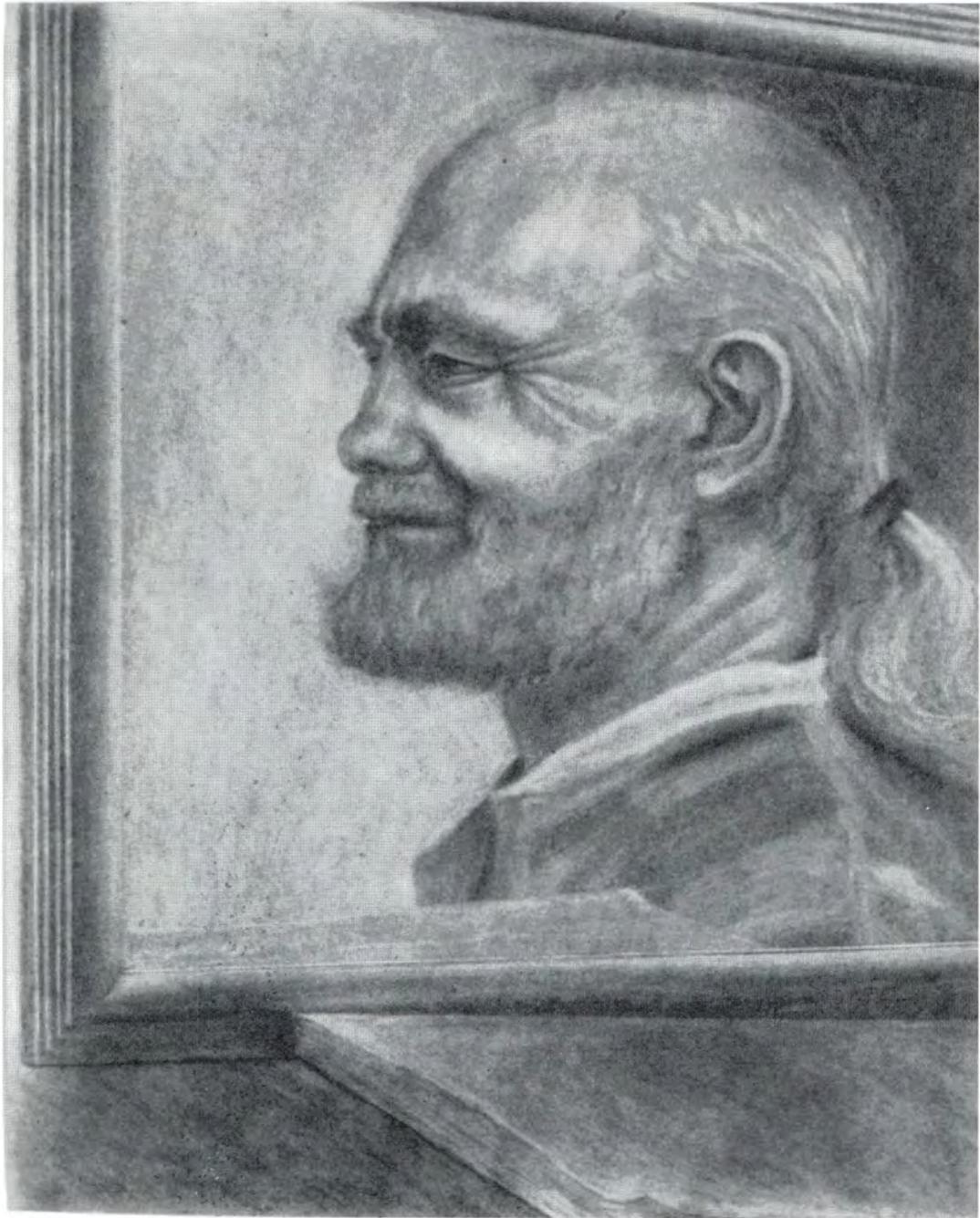
Your memory is as strong and as vivid
As your scent and touch that brushes so timid.

Today will close yet another chapter
A section in a book that I will not soon look after.

Tomorrow will be as bright as the sun
When you and I are complete as one.



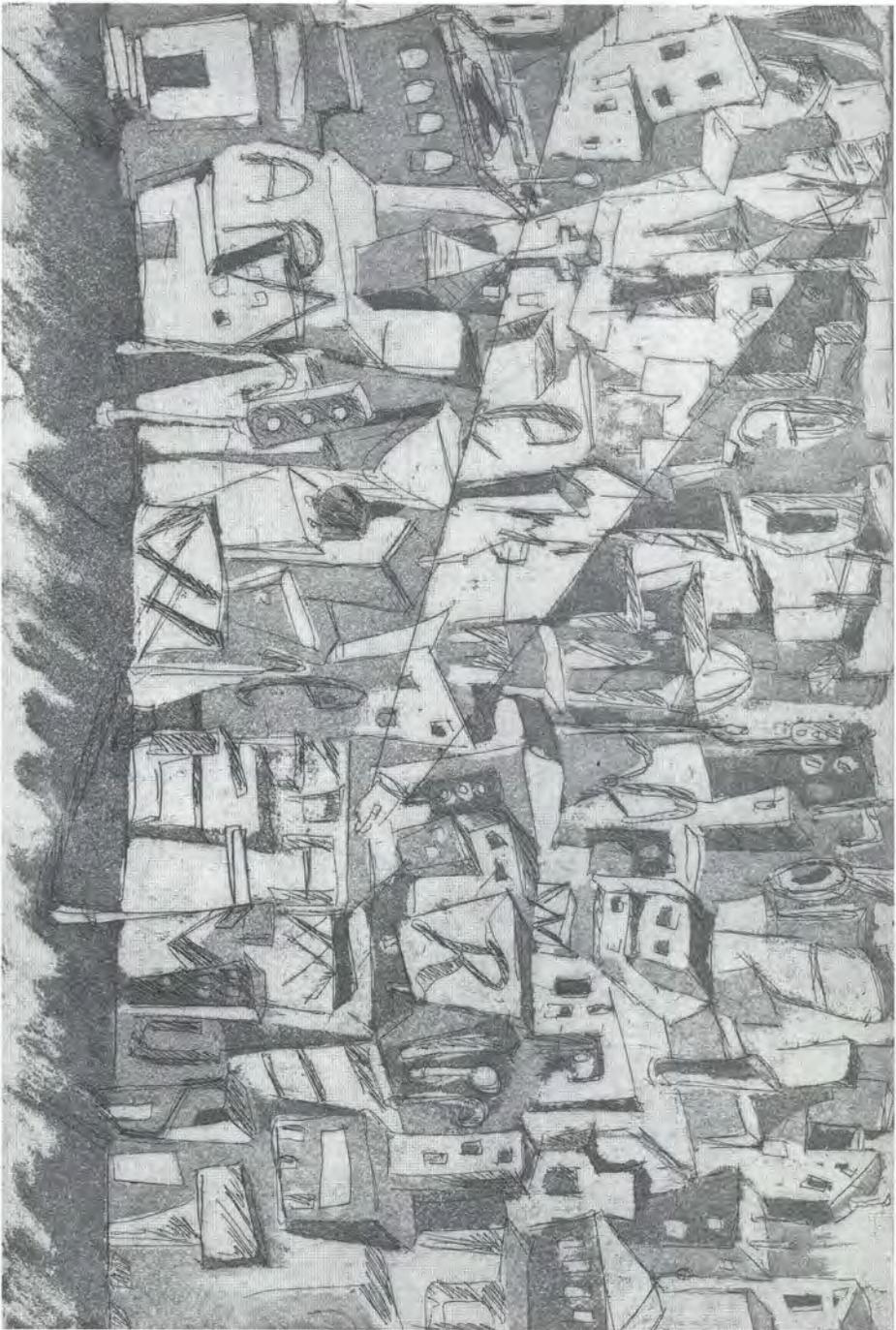
untitled
conte pencil 18x24
Jaymie Miguel



Self Portrait with Two Mirrors

charcoal 24x18

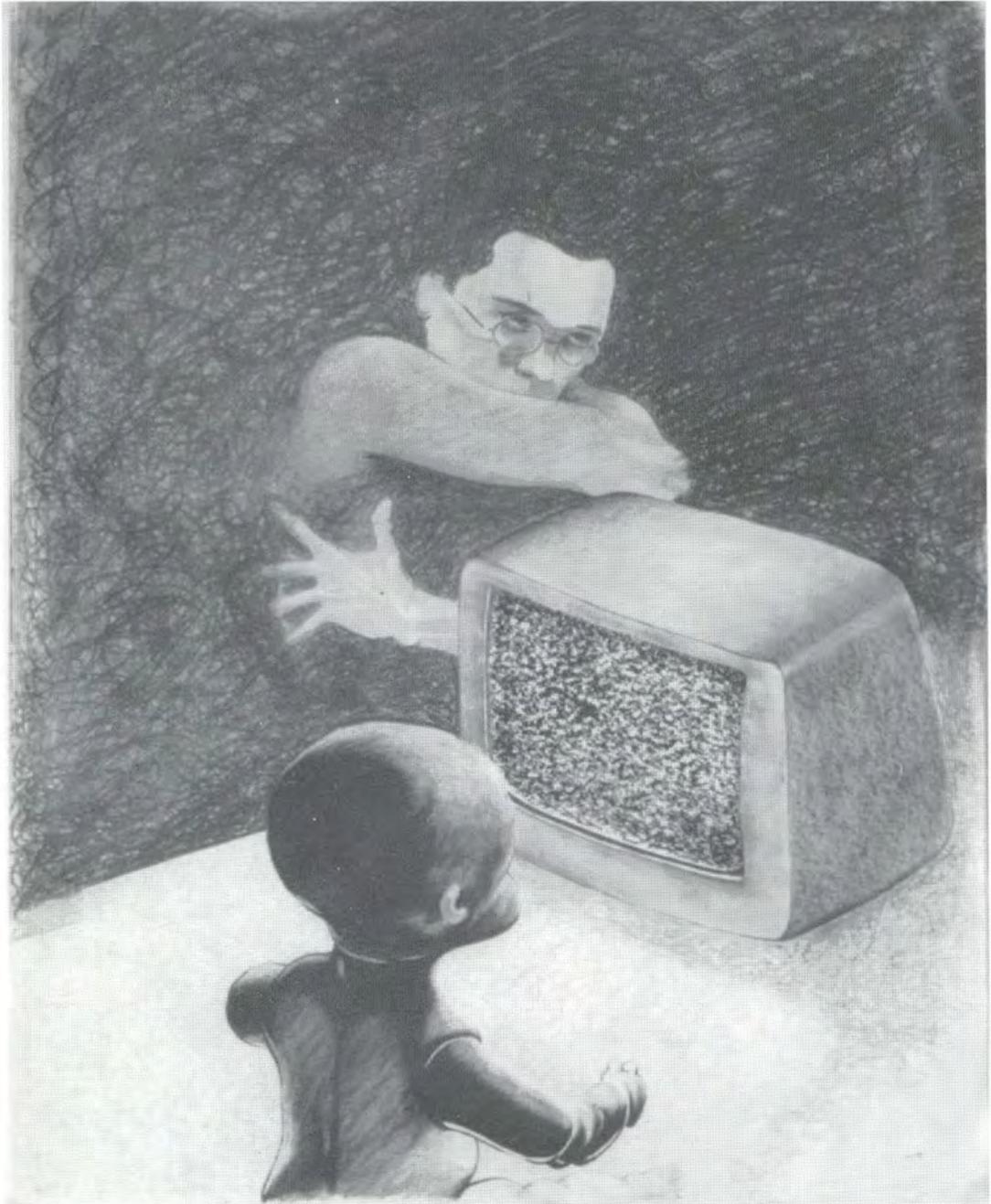
Jack Mitchell



In These Dangerous Times

etching 6x9

Nanako Okubo



untitled
pencil 24x18
Buddy Hanson

The Bed

Marlee Buenroostro

While crickets keep their steady rhythm,
Like the skip of a record left unattended,
On your side of what was once our bed,
I lie alone. Now I stop pretending.

My bare foot wanders off to the left,
Like a tentative tiptoe into a Spring lake,
Testing the water before a swim.
Met by chills, I retract my leg.

Heavy lids weighed down by worry
See little sleep by morning's moon.
The blaring alarm announces another day
That once again has come too soon.

Days and nights blur into weeks
Of the same faces, places and endless details.
Drops of water drip from the leaky faucet,
Taunting me for another task I've failed.

Tonight there's a creaking of a door.
A wobbly boy with a bobbing head
And sleepy eyes just barely open
Tumbles into what was once our bed.

He rests with lips just slightly pursed
And a smooth unfurrowed brow.
In my arms I embrace him whole.
All that matters lies with me now.

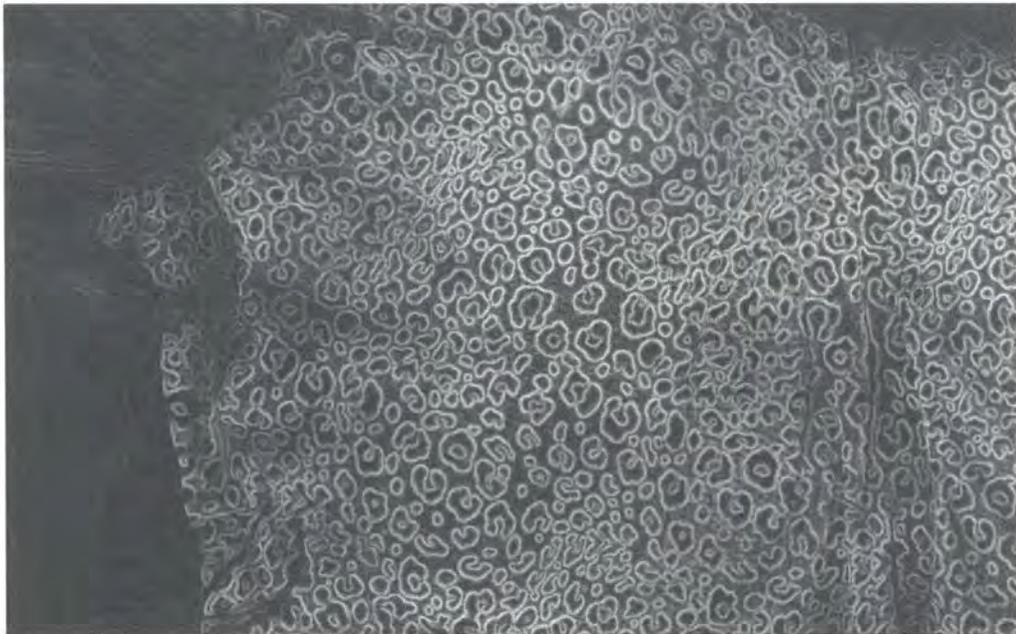
Delicious Torment

Jason Whiston

When I fall down on my knees,
Lift me and leave my dignity,
Or always kneeling at your feet,
I'll angst over your love's decay.

This great, torturous yearning
I could endure any other.
Nothing/No one sates my need;
If in death I could find release,
I would submit to any other pain.

But to you I serve, I serve . . .

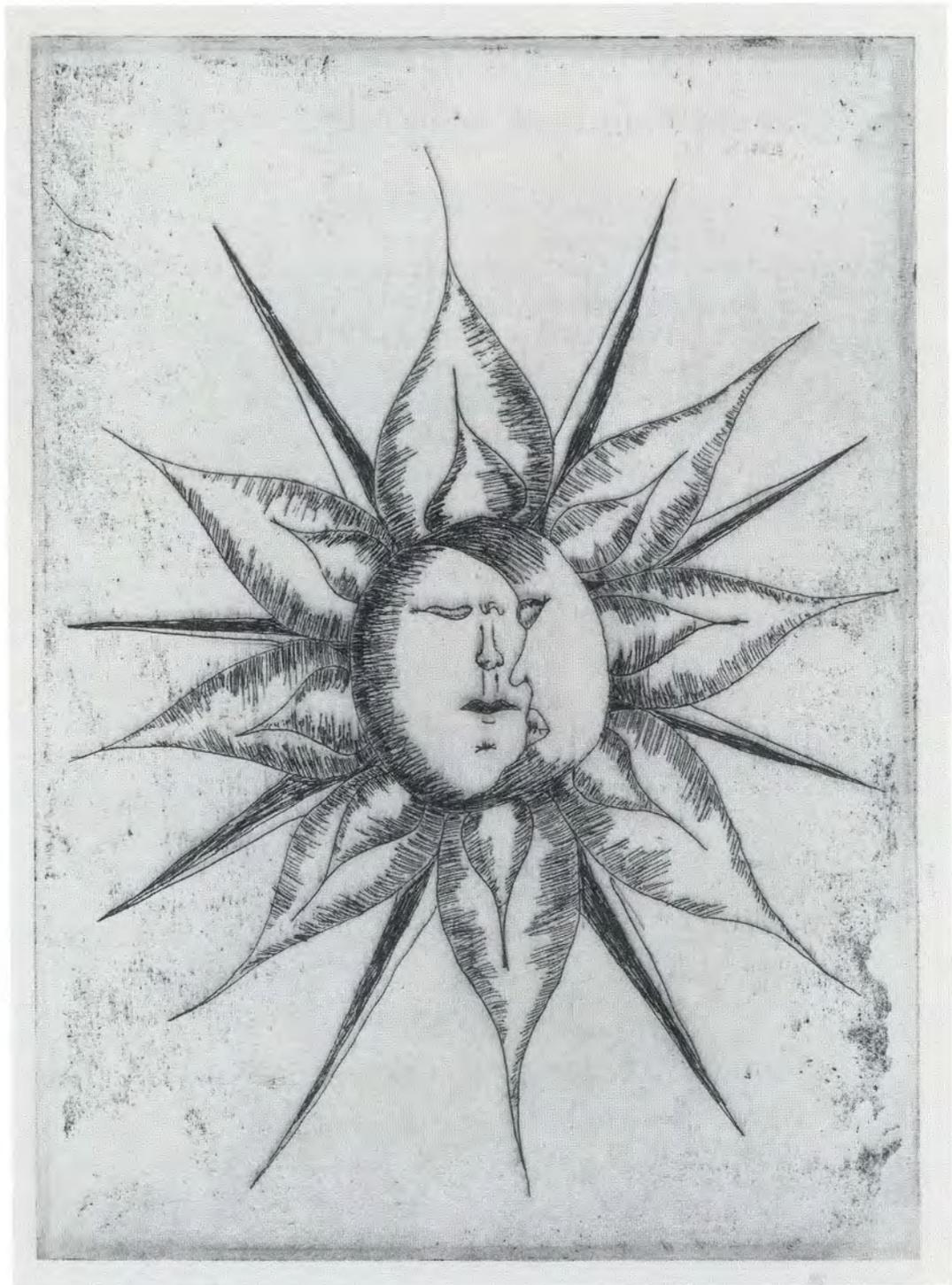


untitled
scanned self portrait 5x7
Maureen Singer

Ode to the Aliens Who Abducted Me

Paul Simanauskas

Climbing through honey-mustard spoons and jumping baboons
Carving initials through singing white pines
Talking to the pink elephants and all the other buffoons.
Walking on a field of mines
Lets have a chat with a talkative mime
The Twinkies inspired me to write this poem
I asked the donkey for the time
He told me to go home
Never talk to scrambled eggs
They have no point of view
As spiders crawl up my legs
The rocks told me what to do
Hey, can someone pass the toast
Since I can't find my aqua-cat or robot-dog
I just sink off the coast
Looking for that floating log
No, I'm not tripping
I'm not drunk
My mind's just slipping
I said to the skunk.
Don't be afraid to run naked down the street
The cops can't touch you if you're quick
I don't give, but before you enter, wipe your feet
If you can decode this poem you're slick
Commit me quick, give me padded wall
Straight jacket included in the deal
They call me Psycho-Paul
You're all fake and I am real
If you've read through this and you're still sane
And if you think this poem is dinky
I commend you, my friends for now you have gained
But the real thanks goes to the Twinky
Thanks Twinky



"One"
etching 7½x6
Ryan McVeitty



Wisdom
etching 9x6
Bridget Bartholomae



untitled
ceramics
Michael Baker

Untitled

Lisa Leavitt

The seconds tick louder
as the unchanging paper stares
me blank in the face...
Just like the glance from
a stranger in the next car.

No words flowing, no ideas
crossing. It's useless.
The title should be the easiest-
With it, ideas should flow,
but wait-

Show don't tell
Imagination is the most important.
Feelings, truth, and individualism.

Just like different colors in
a box of crayons,
variation lies within
the meaning behind poetry.

Judge, ignore, or accept
according to your own perception.

Stanzas, lines, phrases
all add flavor, but the
reader puts spice on the essentials.



Prelude to the Human Spirit
etching 7x5
Bridget Bartholomae



Human Spirit
etching 7x5
Bridget Bartholomae

Alone

Megan Fincher

The desert is vast, cold, utterly frightening
yet I am not lonely in this struggle
of spirit & self
(can a desert without sand be called a desert)?
And the truth of my pilgrimage comes with the rain
Sometimes the bitter heat suffocates me and
my weary eyes want to close for their final time
 (the mirage of glory is awaiting—
 you know it's only a phantom—but just maybe your
 holy touch can change this sand to stars)



untitled
photo 10x8
Jennifer Leśniak

Snowmen

Marlee Buenroostro

Like the ink stain on my favorite pair of jeans,
I can not blot him from my memory.
In my mind his image swirls like the snowflakes
That swarm the somber blue sky beyond my balcony;
Each flake carelessly obeying the whim of the wind,
Each flake more complex than my eyes can see.

Cold to cold, they cling to one another
Delicately bonding on the ground below
Forming a fragile white veil that disguises the soil.
I could not hold him anymore than I can the snow.
Warmed by my bare palm it drips through my fingers
Falling as tears on a white evening pillow

Over time the ink stain has nearly faded
And with pen caps I've learned to be more careful.
When Winter comes again, I'll build myself a snowman
Who'll melt from my memory along with the snowfall;
Each flake willfully yielding to the warmth of the sun,
Each flake a frozen teardrop from a heart that's hopeful.

Mixing Arsenic Into Bitter Kool-Aid

Anjelica Honeycutt

Is there something I should know? I drifted through the murky streets of la-la land with this question on my mind. There was too much fog; I couldn't think straight. Where were all the lights at the end of the tunnel and that kind of crap? Wasn't dying supposed to be like running across a rainbow after harsh rain? Where was my rainbow? Slowly, a gleam of light fell between the clouds. I ran toward it and felt its warmth swarm around me. The light pulsed brighter and brighter . . .

"Hey you!" a male voice boomed, "Watch out!" I was abruptly brushed away from my final sanctuary. The Campy Lake tow truck drove by without hitting me.

"Why you gone and did that for?" I asked. The man's silver brows frowned at me. He reminded me of one of those people who would stalk your car asking for donations. Man, he better not ask me—I'd give him something all right.

"Watch where you're going next time," he said and walked away.

He should have watched who he was "saving." I didn't ask him to run across the street and return me to the same damn misery. If I knew that he was going to be here, I would've stood in another street. Maybe I could try again later.

I embarked on my walk; there wasn't anything else to do. The wind blew my artificial honey blonde strands in my eyes. Sometimes I wore wigs to look cute, but today I didn't want *that* sort of attention. I especially didn't want my obituary to read, "Pamela Hampton's hair was nappy the last morning she lived." What would my mom say?

Oh, I know what that woman would say, "Should've got her hair done. Moping around with nuthang to do." Just thinking about her made me wish that I killed her a long time ago when I had the chance – and I had plenty! Every weekend, she had this habit of drinking Barcardi with a touch of water. Every weekend she went into her tirade of how my two brothers and I didn't deserve her as a parent. "You should've moved out with Lionel," she'd say. Every weekend she drank because Lionel left her 1249 weekends ago.

Killing her became a small obsession of LJ, Michael, and mine after weekend number 154. We flipped coins or played "Paper, Rock, Scissors" to see who would poison her liquor. Of course, none of us had the guts, but I wished. The three of us made a pact that we would bail out whoever got stuck with Mom. We dreamt of going to another state or country – anywhere that that woman might not follow us.

I bet that it would've worked out too, if Michael, my older brother, didn't jump ship ten years ago. He joined the Navy and had been overseas ever since living it up with his Asian beauty, I suppose. Sure, he sent the occasional letter or two every year, but he missed the point. LJ and I needed someone to protect us from Mom's vicious wrath of stressful complaints. Oh no, Michael had to run off and "become somebody," which is really code for "Mamá broke my last nerve, gotta go – see you when I see you." Stupid bastard.

The wind blew downward long enough for me to notice my reflection through a small bookstore window. The woman looked back at me with tired, dull brown eyes. She was wearing the same outfit as me: an extra large, dark purple sweater, navy blue bell-bottomed slacks, and a frazzled wig, but she seemed bummier. My reflection waved me inside the store. Usually, I don't bother looking at used books; you don't know what kind

of germs they got, but since I had nothing else to do . . .

I knew it was a mistake the moment I stepped in. The place had a foul peed-on-paper smell surrounding the inner door. The wallpaper peeled from the top of the ceiling where the dimly lit chandelier swayed. Most of the front side books lay on the shelves like worn-down rape victims. As I went further back, I found the ones that just got shot to death. Damn, I wished I took my purse; it had my gloves inside.

"Can I help you?" a woman asked right in my face. She wore a slimming pink blouse with a pair of jeans and her hair in a blonde bun, which contradicted the crack-house setting. The broad looked to be around my age although we both knew that I looked much older than 30.

"Just looking."

"If there is anything you need," she began. She showed me her creamy teeth, which meant that I had to put on my pleasant smile. My cheeks stung as I attempted one of my best no-but-thank-you-for-asking grins. The lady went back to her cash register.

Some of the books weren't as bad as I thought. In the bottom shelves, there was a group of novels that I had read: *Go Ask Alice*, *Catcher In the Rye*, and *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich*. I always wondered why high schools made students read stories about depressing teens. It's as if they thought all of us wanted to off ourselves someday, and the school could speed up the process.

Then I saw a book that I hadn't read in a long time: *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Why did the bird sing anyway? It wasn't like it was going to go anywhere and to hope is to waste one's time.

Oh crap, now I sounded like *Mom*. That was one of the woman's favorite lines to pick on her children with. She repeatedly said that hoping only got

her pregnant with Michael and what good was that if Lionel went somewhere else. I won't blame Lionel for leaving, but it was his fault that he had left us with an 180-degree version of the mother I thought gave birth to me.

As I placed *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* down, I noticed the cashier eyeing me from the cash register. If she had money to buy that \$95.99 blouse of hers, I *know* she had at least \$30 to put up new wallpaper. I walked to a closer shelf so that she could get her looks worth. A doorbell jingled. The lady stopped staring at me to harass the next customer. From what I heard, that person wouldn't receive the same eye-watch as me. All the same, I had an unsettling thump in my stomach as the scent of the new customer's perfume came closer.

"Pam, is that you?"

I didn't want to turn around and answer the familiar voice. I was supposed to be in a morgue, not getting kicked in my girlie nuts by my past. Maybe she would go away.

No such luck; screw-up's past stood beside me. "Oh, hi Lana. Didn't see ya."

Lana shook her curly, reddish brown hair from her light pink skin. Her spiky heels made her six inches taller than me instead of just two. "How you been!" she said in her falsetto greeter's tone.

"Marvelous." *Please go away.*

"My brother still talks about you. He always said you washed dishes immaculately." Like most people today, Lana didn't get that I wanted to be alone. I knew she was going to talk about my ex-husband – failure # 1873 on Mom's list.

"Really. Well it was nice seeing you." I tried to leave as quickly as possible.

"Maybe you can visit us sometime. I know Richard and his new family would love to see you again."

I left without slugging her this time. A person could have a hundred achievements and no one would care, but if the same person had two mistakes, everyone's all up in it. My first mistake was getting married to Richard knowing damn well that I wasn't the settling down kind. Before our first year was over, I became fascinated with the idea of sexual revolution. My short revolt included fantasizing about other people regardless of gender. The person's sex didn't matter, as long as it wasn't Richard. All I did was kiss one of his trifling friends – it was so long ago that I don't want to remember which. I didn't believe kissing was cheating at the time. The "friend" ratted me to Richard, who held it over my head for three years until he screwed his co-assistant manager. Guess who told me about that?

Yep, it was Lana: mixing her arsenic into my already bitter Kool-Aid, but ruining the flavor just the same. If I had a thicker skin, I would've figured that Lana was out to sabotage my marriage. Richard once told me that Lana wrecked his relationship with another girlfriend because the girl didn't like her "aura." Hell, I don't like Lana either, but cheating was cheating which led to my solution – mistake number two.

Less than 24 hours after Lana "shared her secret" about Richard, I burst into his job ready to beat down all 'hoes involved. Lana was at the checkout counter, trying to get her legal five-finger discount on a winter coat. When I came in, Richard's face morphed into a trapped rabbit that knew it was going to die. First, my foot went up his new woman's butt. Then when Richard yelled something about calling the police, I jumped over the cash register like an Olympic hurdler and hit him upside the head. Suddenly, Miss Lana assumed that she would defend her brother by blocking my way. My fist on her face felt *oh soooo good* until the law showed up. They held me in the downtown cell until

LJ bailed me out. In retro, I probably would've talked it over with Richard first. Oh well, at least him and his co-ho were happy.

It was getting late. Where was a place that I could die in peace? Was there something I should know? Just then a strobe light effect went through my mind as I set out to the beach.

If I lived in the city, I would've jumped in the ocean and did it that way. Hell, if I were in the city, a car would have already hit me. Sometimes I felt that gaining peace was too much of a hassle. I thought about crashing my car somewhere, but I had paid too much in insurance and car notes to simply bang it up. I tried the over-the-counter-OD route, but I kept choking on the pills – easy to swallow my . . .

"Good evening, Ms. Hampton." Gees, when was I going to get a break? This town was too small and I'm too broke to move.

"Good evenin', Mr. Hydeland. On your way home, I presume." Although Mr. Hydeland appeared nicer, I still clumped him with all the other two-bit, two-faced Campy Lake neighbors. He held his leather suitcase under his left arm. His swamp-colored suit matched the smirk that he gave me. I wanted to go. Let's *make this quick*.

"I see that you're going to a costume party," he said, pointing at my wig.

I gave him my sitcom laugh. "No, just taking in all this air." *Go to hell . . . wait; I'm already there!*

"Be careful. We don't want a young woman like you to get hurt." I wished.

Mr. Hydeland continued, "Do you need some company?" I felt his dark brown eyes roaming from my heart-shaped head to my rounder than hourglass body. He held out his coffee-complexioned hand as if he wanted to discover what made my hourglass so round.

"That's alright. Well, gotta go, see you when I see you." I held in my flabby gut and power walked to the next street. Just because I was a woman alone at night didn't mean that I might get jumped; at least not in this town. Two years ago, I loitered around prostitute alley waiting to get snatched by a madman. To my horror, the guy that took me in his car dropped me off at home. There wasn't any foul play, there wasn't even any sex – and I was on prostitute alley!

What the hell kind of place was this? When I moved here with Richard eight years ago, I worried about the level of violence. Now I worried about the level of nonviolence. If there weren't any people like me who created these "public disturbances," the law would be useless here.

The small rocks from the sand swished into my socks making my toes itch. There was a cloud overcast as the sun set in its bronze and violet hues. A few beach bums posed for what looked like a *Campy Lake Salvation Chronicle* photo spread. I couldn't tell whether they smiled at the camera or frowned at their exploitation. Their shabby coats draped on their bodies as if there was a vacuum sucking them inside. The newspaper should feed them afterward or take them to an indoor shelter.

The whole group suddenly froze in position far away from me. The lifeguard wasn't on her post today, but I forgot why I was thinking about her. Was there something I should know? What am I doing here?

The lake reflected the sun's final light as I took what felt like hours to remove my oversized clothing. The wind chilled my chocolate nipples into pointy pencil leads. I felt my breasts bobbing like apples although they were shaped more like grapefruit – grapefruit with a case of lead poisoning. My wig floated away like a yellowish comet as I marched deeper underwater. My arms soaked up

the cool lake as I pressed them against my chest. My legs felt paralyzed as they plunged lower into the hazy lake. I stood still waiting for darkness to engulf me.

The dusky green water's weight pressed against my body; my arms and legs tingled. They began to motion back to the surface. My mind battled my body for sole control of my movement. Then, I felt my arms reaching toward the upper surface of the lake. A fleeting ray of golden light haloed through the water. Suddenly I realized what it was that I should have known: forget all these people! Big deal, I'm divorced and broke and homicidal/ suicidal. Why should I care who knew I was dead or what Mom would say when she found out? My older brother might have left the country, but LJ was still here. LJ couldn't ward off Mom by himself.

Blackish-purple clouds completely took over the deep magenta sky when my head sprouted above the water. I saw a few people on the beach pointing in my direction. By the time I got back to shore, there was a full audience. The *Campy Lake Salvation Chronicle* group surrounded me. A few were informing new onlookers about what they thought happened. Apparently, some bastard had called the police because I saw their sirens blinking 25 feet from us. Two bums came out of the water behind me – what did everyone think I was going to do? *I can't leave yet.*

I was embarrassed already: I stood naked with my graying black hair tangled into a relaxer-afro as the crowd hoarded over me. The flashing lights from the photographer made my horror reach its peak. There were several "are you okay" and "what happened"; the bums' sea of eyes flowed with a more realistic concern than the newspaper people did. The police questioned the reporters who were questioning me. My mouth couldn't move as my body shivered like teeth after an ice cream cone touched them. A dry bum gave me

her blanket after the vultures gawked at me some more. It must've taken hours before the law decided to drop me off at home.

As I walked in the kitchen, I found a message on the machine. "P, you busy? Mom's on her drunken flashback kick again, get me out." The frightened message was left about 90 minutes ago. I pushed the numbers as if they were cushions my fingers fell upon.

"P?" LJ answered in a whisper.

"Don't say anything unless you want out. Pack your things – we're going on a trip."

"They been pack," LJ said.

"Hurry, I don't think I put in the right amount of poison in her drink."

He done went and did it.

I hung up the phone, packed stuff at random, and started the car hoping that I wasn't too late.



**The Beast Roaming the Earth
in Search of Souls to Devour**

etching 4x6

Bridget Bartholomae

Writing Poetry

Joseph O'Leary

I love writing poetry! ~It's SO peaceful!!!
It is beyond text, but spiritual...soulful.
It strips me of all my pains and fears...
As though one could, through True Love, finally reach mens ears...
It is in my poetry I express
My highest Highs, and my deepest Depths
It is in poetry man may find
The Self he's always left behind----
though not the self which some call the mind,
Which to mens Hearts makes their ears go deaf, their eyes go blind.
Poetry is to me, a song...
Of Joy, Peace, to pass along.
So 'pass along' your deepest Self,
leave it sit no more upon a shelf
Go and speak your Truth, to All,
Summer, Winter, Spring, or Fall
If it is yours, and is sincere
Besides, there's not a woman I know, who'd not draw near
(In wooing women and others `tis felt,
That poetry can, the coldest glaciers melt)



untitled
scanned self portrait 5x7
Maureen Singer



Self Portrait
etching 8x6
Nanako Okubo



City Limits
etching 3x7½
Nanako Okubo

Caste of the Chipmunks

Jason Whiston

With numbing apathy, I listen
(Chipmunks chattering within the trees).
Excluded from their conversation,
I remotely sit at the bushes' edge.

In deep contemplation, I ponder
(Tapping wooden pencil to my chin),
Wondering: does my silence converse
An ignorance or some sacrilege?

After thought, I've augured the answer
(Standing and brushing dirt off my pants).
Elitist chipmunks should be ignored.
I'll move on to a more friendly hedge.



untitled
photo 10x8
Jennifer Lesiak

Boys and Baking

Debbie Chong

I'm in love. Eddie is 17 years old and I am 14. Eddie is Jenny's brother. Jenny is my best friend. When I ask Jenny about Eddie, she rolls her eyes and lets her neck snap to one side. She doesn't understand because they are brother and sister.

If I had a brother that was cut and hunky, I would let Jenny like him. I would have sleepovers so they could become boyfriend and girlfriend. I have sisters, though, so that wouldn't work for Jenny. I have two sisters. One is nine years old and the other is almost 20. She went to high school with Eddie. She said that Eddie was a pig jock. She also said he had crooked teeth. I don't mind his teeth; this is how much I love him.

Last week I was at Jenny's house and Eddie came home from soccer practice with no shirt and I saw him. We were watching t.v. in the living room and her mom was telling us to stop sitting so close when he walked through. Jenny told him to move out of the way. Jenny's mom asked if he ate. I said nothing. I have never seen a man so naked except on t.v. Eddie went upstairs to take a shower and Jenny told me to stop staring. I do not understand how they are so used to him.

Sometimes, I think about how it will be when we are married. I will take care of Eddie. I will bake pies for dinner. There will be croissants for breakfast. Our home will be clean and well furnished. I will have these obligations because I am the wife. I am young, but I know if my mom was nicer to my dad he would still be living with us. My mom doesn't cook. She works too much. My dad works, and he doesn't cook either. We are very skinny because of this. If my mom cooked, then my dad would be here. I remember they used to fight and scream every night. I would shove my fingers into my ears and squeeze my eyes. Shut up, shut up, I would think, but they never did. My dad was always hungry. My mom too tired to cook. I am young, but I know when I get married I will cook for Eddie. Then, he will be happy. My mom

doesn't understand that my dad left because of an empty stomach.

Jenny's parents love each other. I know this. Jenny's mom is always defrosting, baking, blending, something edible. She bakes bread every morning. And, if Jenny's dad wants steak for breakfast, she'll ask, "Well done or medium rare?" I used to take mental notes of what Jenny's family ate and suggest these meals to my mom. My mom would say that she had not worked all day to cook for a lazy man. When she says this, I am confused because they are husband and wife. I know my mom works, but my dad is so skinny. Jenny's dad is fat. This is how much his wife loves him. His stomach grows every day with the love in his wife's baked goods.

When I am at home, I notice how flat my family is. We are pieces of paper, pale and thin, floating above wooden floors. Our cupboards are filled with flat foods. We have crackers, condensed soup, cereal and yogurt. All our meals are prepared with the addition of water or milk and microwaved. I know my mom loves us, but she doesn't love us how a mother should. She should prepare foods that could anchor us onto the ground. Stock the refrigerator with heavy, heart-coagulating perishables. I want her to bread chicken and scramble eggs for cheese and ham omelets. I want to feel the seam of my pants tighten. I desire the repositioning of my belt, one notch to the left.

Since my dad has left us, my mom has taken another part time job. My older sister stays home to baby sit us. I don't need a baby sitter. I am mature for my age; I can bake a superb checkerboard cake with chocolate crême frosting. I learned by watching Jenny's mom and the cooking shows on in the afternoon right after the cartoons. I found that the superior cook works with only the most fresh and pure ingredients. Also, butter is a universal ingredient because of its taste and texture. My sister doesn't know this. I could teach her how to cook. She might get married then.

Today was a half-day at school, and I am at Jenny's house. Her mother is doing the laundry. I ask Jenny when Eddie will be home. She tells me, "It is so gross that you like Eddie. He's so

weird." I tell her, "You don't understand because you are related. Your brother is the cutest boy I have ever seen in real life," is what I say. She rolls her eyes and I roll mine back. I can roll mine so far that the green is concealed and only the white exposed. Jenny says this is gross, but I know she is jealous. After we have rolled our eyeballs, I ask if she wants to bake a cake. She says, "Not really, I think my mom made brownies." I love brownies, but I want Jenny to taste my chocolate crème checkerboard cake. Not just Jenny, but Eddie specifically. I know that her kitchen has all the supplies I will need to prepare my specialty. So I say, "C'mon, we never get to do what I want to. Just because it's your house doesn't mean you're the boss." Jenny is my best friend and not as assertive as I am. I told you; I am mature. So, she rolls her eyes, with the brown half still showing and says, "Fiiiiiiiiine."

I enter their kitchen, which looks just like the ones on t.v. They have a large island with a built in cutting board and four pull out storage drawers. They have five different colanders. I close my eyes and think up all the ingredients I will need. They don't have chocolate frosting, so I will use vanilla instead. I think of how this will be the best cake Eddie has ever had and right there he will ask me out on a date. I tell Jenny I have done this a 100 times, which isn't a complete lie. I have thought of food preparations in my head, repeating the steps, folding in the butter, then sugar with a rubber spatula. I can do this; I will be a good wife.

After all the mixing is done, I pour the batter into two small square pans. One pan is for the vanilla cake and the other for the chocolate cake. Jenny is eating her mother's brownies. When she offers me one, I say no. I tell her to save room for my cake. She says there is always room for dessert and rubs her smooth belly. I laugh and rub my stomach, feeling ribs creating speed bumps, leading to a concave abdomen. While we wait, Jenny turns the t.v. on, but I watch my cake. She grabs my arm and says, "C'mon this is a funny part." I tell her to stop because I have to make sure my cake doesn't end up lopsided. Presentation of a dessert is equally important as the taste. I wouldn't serve a crooked cake to my husband. Jenny narrows her eyes, and I know this

means she is really mad and I feel sort of bad. So I check the cake and turn my chair to watch t.v.

During a commercial I check my cake. The pans seem even. I hope this will taste good. It is almost 5:00 and I wonder when Eddie will be home. Jenny reads my mind and asks why I like Eddie so much. I tell her that the first time I saw him, my stomach hurt. Jenny said it was from eating my own cooking. I wanted to tell her why I liked Eddie, but I couldn't think of what to say. "All I know is that I only liked Dave Johnson for two months and Eddie for almost one year." "Gross!" Jenny screams, "One year?" And I said, "When you are mature, liking a boy is not gross, it just happens." This is what comes out of my mouth, I swear.

While we are talking, Jenny's mom comes into the kitchen and says something smells funny. My cakes! They aren't burnt, but they look funny. The chocolate pan is mushy on the sides. The vanilla pan wasn't buttered, so I will have to scoop out the middle. Jenny's mom laughs and says that I should have my mom teach me how to cook before I get married. She keeps laughing. I want to tell her that my mother doesn't cook for us; I don't though. I just hear their laughter. I want to tell them that I hate their blenders, Tupperware, copper pans and angel food molds. Jenny's mom keeps laughing. She says, "Who's going to eat this? What were you trying to make, sweetie?" I want to say the my name is Jo Anne and not sweetie. But, instead, I take my hand and shove handfuls of the moist, half-baked chocolate cake into my mouth. My stomach groans. It is not used to this large intake of food. Jenny is laughing, but her mom's head is cocked to one side, eyebrows furrowed. I keep shoving the warm cake into my mouth until Eddie walks in. There are chocolate crumbs dotting my face. My nails covered in chocolate chunks, resembling clumped dirt. I have never said anything to Eddie, but today I say, "Hey, want some cake?" And start on the vanilla pan. Filling my empty stomach, feeling my navy corduroys tighten. I exhale, making room for more cake, my stomach expanding and exposing itself from underneath my T-shirt. My cake tastes good. I am a good cook. My children will be fat.

