ICON Fall 1991

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FALL 1993

Volume XXXII

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ICON is the student-run and student-operated literary magazine of Kent State University Trumbull Campus. ICON is published twice yearly: at the end of Fall and Spring semesters.

The views expressed herein are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the editors or Kent State University Trumbull Campus.

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PROSE

Gary Baker

Opening Night 10
No Sweat

_I don’t want to complicate your life,_ you whispered, releasing the lip-lock you had on my ear lobe. _You pulled back to where I could see, in the glow of the moon behind you,_ your red hair burning at the edges.

_We were each from elsewhere. We had no business here, but came for the usual reasons. We couldn’t know each other back home, but here, we threw ourselves into knowing that we would spend a lifetime apart._

_We could see each other clearly and knew seven days together was a model of sorts, a condensed version of our other lives, an abstract that would encapsulate another’s essence, and exfoliate out, so that we’d learn something._

_Can it possibly be so? Wouldn’t it be righteous, given the way things turned out? But our week-long life—the blue water, the laving sun, the reek of fruit—will blur, cross your fingers, into a life we can only imagine._
No Sweat

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Fake Fellows

stingy salesmen sticky with satisfaction of selling transformers, trailers, tracking traders with transistors, soliciting with silly slogans slashing sales, bad bargain shoppers bordering boredom, traveling long lines in luxurious lavender lusters, paid pensions piled high with percentages of past sales, following facts and figures neither false nor fictitious, packing pocket posters, pondering present patrons, clinging to computers, confronting consumers continually, gangsters grumbling over gross and growth refusing to react and requote or revise, monsters monitoring merchandise for money, markets, working wildly with workers, and schedules, greedy ungracious gents groping over my desk.

Cupid

I strive daily attempting to conquer every single perished, but still smiling President; grinning and ridiculing me for being so weak as to tire, feeble enough to willingly surrender or keel over dead from exhaustion. The time shall arrive when my desires, wants, needs I will satisfy. I will be a consumer with no limit, gone mad, a psychotic alcoholic, shopper, Porsche-driving maniac, Billionaire, grasping every aspect of life within my monetary boundary, while the totality of the population thirsts for my wealth, power. Envy will devour those who have doubted my ability; those who will forever reside in this town of next to nothings; and yet they pity me because I lack one thing in life I cannot buy or purchase. I am minus what they claim is the one cherished element, the wholeness experienced by those accomplished individuals drowning in some blinding side affect from mysterious arrows fired from manipulating naked babies, the one thing that broke my heart and robbed me of security, love.
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JYOTI CHANDNANI

Unfulfilled By Philosophies

Gathered garrulously around
   in a grand circle,
A family of forty philosophers
   face each other.
Dogmatically discussing their
   individual destinies,
They unthinkingly create
   a cacophonous crew.
Six budding Buddhists get
   bullied and bamboozled by
Seven Zen zealots
   at the zenith of their education.
A couple of confused Confucians
   crave quiet as
Four doubting Taoists
   loudly deliberate the Way.
Three antagonistic agnostics
   attempt to affect
Nine high-handed Hindus
   in the nonexistence of Heaven.
Six Yahweh worshippers yell
   at two proponents of Yin & Yang.
One amused atheist
   ambles quietly away as
Thirty-nine thinkers
   thrive on debate.

JYOTI CHANDNANI

Mahabaleshwar

Five thousand feet above sea level,
   veiled amidst clouds as wispy as chiffon,
Sits a haven for city-dwellers who are Bombay traffic,
   a sanctuary as welcoming and tranquil as an oasis,
Where, etched into mountain rock,
   the path to it is a spiral staircase,
the air is pristine like the slanted eyes of a fawn,
   and the lake is as placid as the Buddha’s face,
Where fields of grain are playgrounds for fruitful seeds,
   branches of trees weave a canopy,
   entwined like lovers’ thighs,
horses’ neighs sound like yeas,
   birds hum songs like an ethereal chorus,
and bees perform in unison,
   producing nectar as sweet as a baby’s kiss,
Where the marketplace beckons like a long-awaited friend,
   people’s smiles are as warm as blushing cheeks,
and children laugh as gaily as a summer breeze,
Where five plateaus meet like five patriarchs,
   keeping vigil over two rivers who,
   like lovers kept apart in past lifetimes,
   embrace finally, merging into one fluent consciousness,
Where the mind of a visitor,
   refreshed like waters of a mountain spring,
   offers an orison to the universe for one last Shangri-La.
JYOTI CHANDNANI

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GARY BAKER

Opening Night

"Dim the house lights. Not too far, the waitresses still have to be able to see their way through the tables to the customers (God, I hope there are customers)."

"Check that spotlight; maybe a little to the right. No, no, that's too far. Yeah okay, that's it."

"Sound check, testing one two three, testing one two three (whoever said, "testing one two three" first, should have put a copyright on the phrase, he'd be a millionaire by now)."

"Is that bass a little too high?
"Get that reverb off the guitar!
"Am I going to be climbing the walls by 9:00?
"Am I going to choke?
"Come on Gary, don't even think about it."

It was Monday night in that entertainment mecca, Akron, Ohio, and I, Gary Baker, 23 years old, Regional Manager for Florsheim Shoes (my mother used to refer to me proudly as "my son, the Shoe Executive"), was about to sing in public (and more surprisingly be paid for it).

This was the same guy who in high school had only asked out one girl (I ended up marrying her), had been so painfully shy that he never even considered auditioning for the choir (let alone that ridiculous thing they called the Walnut Ridge High School Talent Show), and had stayed away from all the school dances (if I was going to be turned down, it was going to be in private, not in front of the entire school). This was the same guy who had just passed through the system, with two thousand other class mates, without being noticed.

By the time 9:00 finally arrived, I was as nervous as I had ever been in my entire life. Except maybe that time in the eighth grade when in history class I had to debate whether General William Tecumseh Sherman was a great man or just a pyromaniac. While using a pointer in my left hand to indicate a trail of devastation from Atlanta to Savannah, the notes in my right hand began to shake uncontrollably. The sound of those sheets rattling was so loud that even the teacher couldn't keep himself from laughing.

I walked onto the stage that night, at least secure in the fact that I was prepared. I had sat at home for weeks, rehearsing and re-rehearsing, for this four hour night of music. I had timed every song down to the second, timed how long I would need in between songs for introductions, even figuring in a couple of minutes for applause (wishful thinking?). The only thing I hadn't anticipated was nervous energy, an energy that pushed every song to about twice the speed it was intended to be played. There were no introductions to the songs, since my brain had gone blank as soon as I set foot on the stage, and I couldn't think of a word to say. Thankfully, there was a smattering of applause.

I had anticipated my first set of songs lasting about 45 minutes. At about 9:30, with panic rising, like the water at a flood gate, I had to start on my second set.

I was beginning to question everything: my music; my sanity; my Dallas Cowboys; but especially my friend Christy, who had pulled the strings to get me into this mess, and had pushed the right buttons to convince me into thinking that I could pull this off.

With relief, exhaustion, and a wonder of why anyone would think of this as fun, I finished the first set, and ran off the stage (showing quite a bit of self-restraint, by not just running out the door). When I hit the floor my friends were all there, and of course they said all the right things:

"Wow, that was great!"

"Gee, I didn't know you could sing like that!"

"You look so comfortable up there, so natural!"

But the comment that meant the most was from my friend Don, who with his wife Terri, had driven over one hundred miles up from Columbus, just to be there. Don, my best friend in high school; the guy I had swapped war stories with after dates; the guy I had run from the cops with after toilet papering his girl friend's house; the guy who had stolen my
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ninth grade girl friend (his wife Terri) and later lived to regret it; but mainly Don, the one who was there when I bought that first guitar, and was trying to make something resembling music come out of it.

He escorted me up to the bar for his favorite (and years later, his demise), a snakebite, and said to me, as the tears welled in both out eyes, "It's about time."

The rest of the night blurred by. There were toasts by friends; there were requests by strangers. There were songs played well; there were songs I retired after that night. But mainly I was able to if not enjoy, at least survive the night.

When the charade was over, the lights turned down, the equipment packed away, friends gone home, I cautiously walked down the long hall behind the kitchen, to the manager's office to see if I was going to get paid.

The manager's door was closed, and from behind the door I could hear conversation, mixed with laughter. Of course in my insecure mind they must have been laughing at me. With a slight hesitation, and a great deal of anticipation, I knocked on the door and was told to come on in.

Sitting at his desk with a check in his hand smiling, while talking on the phone, was the manager, Dave. "Great job tonight, Gary! The employees loved you, and that was quite a group you brought."

"Thanks," I eloquently stammered.

"Are you interested in singing full time?" Dave asked while laying down the phone. "The girl who sings here Tuesday through Saturday broke her hand and had to cancel out on the next two months. If you want it, the job's yours."

I mumbled something that I hoped was at least semi-intelligent, took the job, and floated out of the room.

Two weeks later I turned in my resignation to Florsheim (It took them two months to find my replacement. I like to tell myself it took that long because I was that hard to replace, but the truth is that it probably took them that long to find someone who would move to Cleveland). It was too hard to work all day, running from store to store, and then stay up all night singing. so I turned in the security of my nice 9 to 5 job (what would my mother call me now, "My son, the Rock and Roll star?") for the glitter of the night.

As with most major changes a person goes through in his life, it didn't take me long to realize that things are not always as easy as they appear. There were many things I had never dreamed: empty rooms and drunken fools, jealous bartenders and horny waitresses, auditions and rejections, and sometimes people just seeming to be looking for a bad time.

Eighteen years later though, I wouldn't change a thing. For every down side there is to this thing called the music business, there are too many ups. Where else can I go to work and hear applause? Where else can I "get lucky" more often than not? Just to stand in front of a packed house, fingering a guitar, with eyes closed (not only blues singers close their eyes), singing an original song, to complete silence, is a feeling too few people will ever experience.

As the years pass, quicker and quicker it seems as I get older, I have many times wondered what would have happened if I had turned down that first singing job. Would I have ever gotten over that incredible shyness? Would I be living in Chicago, working for Florsheim Shoes at their corporate headquarters (my mother could have called me, "My son, the Shoe Vice-President")? Would I still be married?

Who knows. What I do know, is at that time, for that night, who needed security? Who needed that steady pay check?

I was a star!
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As with most major changes a person goes through in his life, it didn't take me long to realize that things are not always as easy as they appear. There were many things I had never dreamed: empty rooms and drunken fools, jealous bartenders and horny waitresses, auditions and rejections, and sometimes people just seeming to be looking for a bad time.

Eighteen years later though, I wouldn't change a thing. For every down side there is to this thing called the music business, there are too many ups. Where else can I go to work and hear applause? Where else can I "get lucky" more often than not? Just to stand in front of a packed house, fingering a guitar, with eyes closed (not only blues singers close their eyes), singing an original song, to complete silence, is a feeling too few people will ever experience.

As the years pass, quicker and quicker it seems as I get older, I have many times wondered what would have happened if I had turned down that first singing job. Would I have ever gotten over that incredible shyness? Would I be living in Chicago, working for Florsheim Shoes at their corporate headquarters (my mother could have called me, "My son, the Shoe Vice-President")? Would I still be married?

Who knows. What I do know, is at that time, for that night, who needed security? Who needed that steady pay check?

I was a star!
GARY BAKER

Religion? Questions to Answers

If we built a cold prison
would it help slow the train?
Could it hide all the thoughts
and the ghosts that we fear?
If we took all the bad guys
and locked them in chains
Wouldn't there be more coming
to haunt us next year?

We could beat with barbed whips,
we could bind with coarse rope,
'Til we thought it was hidden safely
and securely in a cage.
But when the rays finally dawned
would there be a glimmer of hope
Or would the new day bring nothing
but more victims of the rage?

There's an answer I'm sure to these questions that we mull,
And more questions to the answers we've raised.
Your help starts in the House, with a fear of the rod,
Mine was formed in a home, by what's lived not what's said.
You can call him a God, I'll call him just a friend
And I hope we remember who we are, and who we've been.

Kendra Blake

Louie
GARY BAKER

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Kendra Blake

Louie
JENNIFER PATCHIN

Tired

I'm tired of feeling worthless,  
Insignificant and small,  
I'm tired of being cast aside  
As if I don't exist at all.  
I'm tired of being invisible,  
Almost like a piece of glass,  
I'm tired of being the first forgotten  
And the one remembered last.  
I'm tired of the apathetic smiles  
From those pretending to care,  
I'm tired of the casual disregard  
I see in their distant stares.  
I'm tired of feeling completely alone  
While in a crowded room,  
I'm tired of the distracted hellos  
And the goodbyes that come too soon.  
I'm tired of not mattering--  
Of simply being the quiet freak,  
I'm so tired of it all;  
I'm tired of being me.

JENNIFER PATCHIN

Too Late

I want to shut down my heart  
Before I start falling for you,  
Before I find myself captivated  
By every little thing you do,  
Before I begin to look forward  
To catching glimpses of your smile,  
Before minutes spent without you  
Fell like the longest while.  
I want to shut down my heart  
Before I dream of you at night,  
Before I suddenly notice  
How your hair shines in the light,  
Before the sound of your name  
Becomes familiar on my lips,  
Before being held in your arms  
Is my one and only wish.  
I want to shut down my heart  
Before you can make me cry,  
Before any love is revealed  
When I gaze into your eyes,  
Before I commit to memory  
Every word you have said,  
Before I can't stop your voice  
From echoing in my head.  
I want to shut down my heart  
Before you steal it away,  
Before I learn to miss you  
If I don't see you for a day,  
Before I no longer care  
About finding someone new,  
Before I spend my time  
Writing poetry for you...
Tired

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Writing poetry for you...
Gun to My Heart

Sometimes I'm struck
With the realization
Of all that you are
That I'll never know;
And it's times like these
When my heart's overwhelmed
That I long to surrender
And long to let go.

Let go of the passion
That eats me alive;
Let go of the longing
That's never exposed;
You won't ever know, dear
How much I love you.
You won't ever know
How I barely survive.
You won't ever ask me
And I'll never tell
I'll go on in anguish
While years slip away;
I'll bite at my lips
Till the silence is bloody;
Put a gun to my heart
At the loneliest day.
But the world is mine
When only I'm near you;
To be ever nearer,
My ceaseless endeavor;
I know it's a dream
So I fight on to manage
The most pain and bliss
That I have known, ever.

STEVE CARTER

Extra-Terrestrial Contact

What if they're already contacting us
every night in dreams, leaving
only a tiny puncture wound in the neck,
and in the day we act it out
in sudden changes of emotion?
What if they've been in charge
of the mind's weather that way
from the very beginning,
before the flood even,
when emotions drowned us?
What if we're planets ourselves
as inhospitable to other worlds
as Venus would be to us,
and that's what keeps us safe?
We think we are; therefore,
we're left alone, mostly,
where we're most vulnerable,
where one seed dropped in a dream
could send us on our way
to orbits foreign to us now
as Arcturus is to Earth.
Maybe the Holocaust started
that way, nothing but a fad
like pet rocks, but run amok,
the tiniest infection spreading
before it could be put out of mind,
only we started that one ourselves.
What if they're already here
among us now, dropping seeds
all over the place, day and night,
gradually winning the world
like an inexorable cancer,
only it's benign and secretly
what we really wanted all along?
ERIK EDLER

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With the realization
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MARK FITZPATRICK

Crucifix Floating

who is this jesus
and what's he doing in my bathtub
floating like a reed basket
or a bar of soap
white soap
to wash clean
to feel cleanliness like a squeaky Sunday shoe
polished and bright
a place to look down to
when a sermon snores through the sanctuary

and where does all this dirty
water go
but back down into
the iron earth
drain sucking like
jaws of hell

but there's not much damnation
in a soiled ring
nor much salvation
in wiping it off

THADDEUS WESTON

Pick Me Up

She leans across a stool and wants to buy me a shot.
Thank you, no--I say.
She is over-weight, middle-aged, under-sexed,
and persistent.
She asks if I am a man, a real man.
Oh yes--I say.

She asks my age, and seems pleased with my answer.
I'm gonna show you the ropes--she promises--
then turns to flag down two whiskeys.
I know the ropes--I say--
my back's been against them all my life
She smiles, burps a laugh,
and giggles a cloud of bourbon in my face.

It takes too long for the shots,
but when they come
I raise my glass and tell her the toast,
at least, is hers.
She pauses and weighs my sincerity.
She finally shrugs, lifts her glass, and declares:
HERE'S TO ME GETTING LAID.
She belts the whiskey like a cowboy in a movie,
without a blink.

I am slow on the draw,
so decide to make a toast of my own:
Here's to ALL OF US getting laid.
I wave my glass in a big, dripping circle,
that includes everyone in the room.
It goes down hard.
I thank her, and begin to escape.

Her toast comes true.
MARK FITZPATRICK

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who is this jesus
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Her toast comes true.
An hour later I exit the bar.
Outside, under the harsh privacy of a security light, I find her:
  hair tangled,
  skirt twisted,
  plump, passive white flesh.
She sleeps now,
  embracing her strong, cold, abrasive lover,
  the pavement.

THADDEUS WESTON

Twelve Stitches

I lay spread-eagle on the sterile table, a specimen being examined. My mother held my left hand—my good hand—and across from her, under the cold glare of a surgeon’s lamp, an Asian doctor and his assistant worked on my right hand—my bad hand. Even under the wash of pure white, I could see the deep red seeping from my palm.

"You feel little pinch." The doctor was kind in a business sort of way, and his oriental accent was somehow reassuring. I looked at the needle and thread being raised, and lost all interest in watching the flap of flesh on my hand being sewn shut. I searched the room for something to concentrate on, but found only posters about safe sex and saying no to drugs.

I closed my eyes, and started counting my breaths: a technique learned from reading books about Zen. Slowly, with each breath I separated myself from the pierce and throb at the end of my arm. The sounds of medical jargon and my mother’s words of comfort sank beneath the slow inhale and exhale of my concentration. It was turning into a long day, at the end of a very long month, and both were filled with pain. The loss of blood and the recent loss of love had left me drained.

Her name was Megan. She was a nurse. We were once engaged.

"You lose lotta blood, you stay awake!" I lifted my eyes to the doctor. He was authority embodied. He turned and said sternly to my mother: "He don’t drive either. Not for twenty-four hour."

"It’s O.K. doctor, I’m really not sleepy. I was just counting my breath. You know ‘zazen.’" I closed my eyes again, and gradually slipped back into my shell. Outside, beneath the mask of Novocaine, I could feel the distant tug of thread being pulled through my skin.

"Good, good. You breathe, I sew."

My mind began to wander, drifting back to the previous hour. I was at my mother’s house enjoying the sleepy time of year between the glutony of Christmas and the purge of New
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Year's Eve. Scents of pine, cinnamon, and left-over turkey filled the house, and crumpled wrapping paper and J.C. Penney's boxes littered the floor. I was there to be healed.

I remembered helping my mother try to restore some order to her house before the onslaught of December 31. We put new sweaters on hangers, and packed away the few surviving ribbons and bows; the whole time avoiding any mention of the empty seat at Christmas dinner. The seat Megan would have sat in.

In my meditation I recalled the feeling of liberation I gained from the flurry of activity. I shot packing-paper three-pointers into the trash, and slammed a stray candy cane into its stocking. It felt good to pick up and organize so many loose pieces. I dove into sorting and packing my bounty of gifts for the ride home. I stacked long-johns and flannel shirts up to my chin, then started dancing with my mother to "Jingle Bell Rock" on the radio. The gloom of returning to my empty house faded as we spun and twirled and laughed in a blur of blinking Christmas tree lights and votive candle flames.

"Now be careful, you might get hurt!" my mother warned.

Too late, I remember it all: the thud of my knee into the coffee table; the flight of underwear through the air; my hand grasping for balance only to find a nest of red and green peanut M & M's in a delicate, slicing, candy dish.

Perhaps it was the weight I carried that threw me off. The packages I hugged triggering some sudden, unconscious, unsettling realization. Christmas had come and gone, without Megan. Now, by some fierce irony, I found myself in the emergency room of the hospital where the woman who had hurt me more than anyone, or anything, worked.

"You gonna have good scar, twelve stitches! Look."

I braced myself against the abrupt leap back to the present, then rolled my head to examine the doctor's proud work. I saw my hand resting in a bed of blood-sodden towels.

It was an alien thing, swollen and stained red. My eyes followed a black trail of thread that started on the side of my wrist, curved up and around into my palm, then sliced back down into the center of my wrist.

"You very lucky, see here." The doctor pointed to a blue/green line that ran up my arm. "One quarter inch more you hit vein, you have very bad cut."

Megan would have known the name of that vein.

Time has passed. The stitches have long since been removed, and the dull ache of healing is gone. In fact, I don't feel anything in that part of my hand anymore. But sometimes, when the mood finds me, I fill my bath with water as hot as I can stand; I soak, absorbing the heat into my bones; I inhale the soapy steam, cleansing my thoughts; and I count my breaths. And if I soak and breathe long enough, I can feel a cold tingle in my hand from the part of my scar closest to the vein. I trace the pink scar with the fingers on my left hand--my good hand--and I remember the doctor's words: "One quarter inch more..."
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JENNIFER MORAN

The Car Doctor

Thermometer
reads zero.
Black veins,
barren
and crisp
collapse
on touch.
The dry,
depleted
carburetor
gasps for
air
as the
car doctor
chokes
its
neck.
Leave her alone!
I scream,
cranking him
upside his
head
with a can
of oil.
Idiot.

JOYCE KUHN

Dying

The overwhelming fecal odor,
Ragged, uneven breathing;
"Breathe! Damn you! Breathe!"
Mesmerizing, black, unseeing eyes,
"Look at me! Look at me!"
The taste of unresponsive lips.
Skin turning cold,
One last sigh,
One last heartbeat,
No more.
The Car Doctor

Thermometer reads zero.
Black veins, barren
and crisp collapse on touch.
The dry, depleted carburetor gasps for air as the car doctor chokes its neck.

Leave her alone!
I scream, cranking him upside his head with a can of oil.
Idiot.

Dying

The overwhelming fecal odor,
Ragged, uneven breathing;
"Breathe! Damn you! Breathe!"
Mesmerizing, black, unseeing eyes,
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The taste of unresponsive lips.
Skin turning cold,
One last sigh,
One last heartbeat,
No more.
GRETCHEH PHUILLIPS

Where the Day Takes You

Between daytime and darkness
when the light begins to lower,
Dusk creeps slowly through the trees
devouring the last drops of golden sunlight.
Thristing flowers fold their withered arms
in defeat,
welcoming the refreshing shade.
Soft, whispering winds penetrate
the stillness of nature’s bounty
with mesmerizing lullabies.
Darkness closes its arms
around the sleeping earth—
dotting the celestisl sphere
in a brilliant pattern of stars.
The moon’s illuminating presence
filters through mighty branches,
cascading patches of light
for weary travelers.
Nightfall blankets the earth—
Silence and serenity reign ’til Dawn.

GRETCHEH PHUILLIPS

Free Spirit

The
gentle
summer rain
exemplifies the
slight, cool breeze
in the air. The sky,
now periwinkle blue, is
dotted by small, billowy,
white clouds, which seems a
lot less threatening. The fox
glove sway gently in the winds,
and the sun’s once puscillanemous
rays, are now bursting forth with
oppressed heat. This redundant
drizzle comes to an end. The
crickets chirp the songs of
spring as the vibrant hue
of colored flowers show
signs of new lives. A
kite flies against,
the whipping wind
fluttering high
above a tree’s
limbs, then
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good

silently.
TRUMBULL COUNTY HAIKU

Two pink flowers kiss.
Then in nature’s purest form,
ashamed, shunned, they hide.
— Jennifer Camiletti

The muted sounds of
the marshmallow snow plopping
from barren branches.
— Joyce Kuhn

Grains of thought trickle.
An hourglass filled with pain—
Can no one stop time?
— Jyoti Chandnani

Bumper to bumper
traffic at a turtle’s pace
minds race against time
— Georgette Olenik

A cricket’s soft sounds
music of a violin
the grass is dancing
— Nora Scandreth

A ponderous mind,
yearning for knowledge and sense
finding no reply.
— George Humes

Lightning bugs flying:
Shooting stars gleam quickly through
A dark summer night.
— Jennifer Roche

Distant cries of wolves
Hauntingly in distant wind
Loneliness calls them
— Kim Lawson

Rain collecting, beads
separate, never touching.
Evaporation.
— Rhonda Cope

Death is not the end,
but a novel beginning
of perseverance.
— George Karnavas

The casket is closed.
Forget his rage, his hatred;
Remember his dreams.
— Gary Baker

Backyard burial.
Dirt, tears, planted dog and tree.
Dogwood in full bloom.
— Nancy Inman
TRUMBULL COUNTY HAIKU

Two pink flowers kiss.
Then in nature’s purest form,
ashamed, shunned, they hide.
— Jennifer Camiletto

The muted sounds of
the marshmallow snow plopping
from barren branches.
— Joyce Kuhn

Grains of thought trickle.
An hourglass filled with pain—
Can no one stop time?
— Jyoti Chandnani

Bumper to bumper
traffic at a turtle’s pace
minds race against time
— Georgette Olenik

A cricket’s soft sounds
music of a violin
the grass is dancing
— Nora Scandreth

A ponderous mind,
yearning for knowledge and sense
finding no reply.
— George Humes

Lightning bugs flying:
Shooting stars gleam quickly through
A dark summer night.
— Jennifer Roche

Distant cries of wolves
Hauntingly in distant wind
Loneliness calls them
— Kim Lawson

Rain collecting, beads
separate, never touching.
Evaporation.
— Rhonda Cope

Death is not the end,
but a novel beginning
of perseverance.
— George Karnavas

The casket is closed.
Forget his rage, his hatred;
Remember his dreams.
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Backyard burial.
Dirt, tears, planted dog and tree.
Dogwood in full bloom.
— Nancy Inman
St. Mark's Place

Smiling in a strange way.
With a bottle of African beer.
Walking down Third Avenue.
Crowded filthy city, smells
Of antique buildings, Tai food, vomit.

Objects for sale.
Shirts, shoes, shadows of rats.
I like it here, I'm thinking.
Yet, to relish in this moment would be impossible.
Victimized, determined to recover,
myself and Sweet Sue,
my South American sea horse.
Leaving no table, Korean watch salesman,
gay bartender unturned, resolute
on finding her among the used books,
incense, hand-carved little pipes.

A fraudulent friend!
She shops here on Friday’s.
Abducted my Sweet Sue. For What?
An hour with Deirdre a mutual friend
who grows pot.
We all get together on Thursdays.
We met at my place last time.
When Deirdre alluded one of her secrets.
Whispering that she found my Sweet Sue
Strangely erotic, exotic.
She put her red lips up to the aquarium.
Sweet Sue swam to them placing a
little pink tongue on the glass.
Perverse actions were then witnessed
by these eyes, as well as by their betrayers.
Wicked Deirdre and my Sweet Sue were,
well they were, nevermind...

On her knees beneath me, hands clasped
sweating with desperation,
she pleads.
"You can't have her."
She pleads.
"No, I won't be bribed, even with
marijuana cigarettes."
She pleads.
She offered me all she had,
entire collections of deviant secrets.
"No."
The friends I call Judas
begged me to reconsider
I would not.
"Would you both please leave."
St. Mark’s Place

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"Would you both please leave."
JENNIFER CAMILETTI

Eternally Yours, Louise E. Anna

She was sweating with fever.
Standing before me
at midnight.
Moons were her eyes;
white, glowing, oval shapes.

Her breath was musk incense.
Long whiffs fell from her mouth
as she spoke.
Inquisitive, yet intimately
she smiled, like a friendly bat.
Waiting for a moment,
to show her teeth.

Her presence was like New Orleans;
evil beauty, black magic.
Hair, a coil of sleek black snakes.
We danced, like a piano player's fingers
tapping on keys to a jazzy beat.

Sitting on a roof top,
teasing each other with tall tales.
Boasting that we had been such
bad girls for
burning bibles.

Holding out a hand,
to help me up.
"Thank you!"
Her touch was dry ice.
Showing me her lovely grin,
once again.
Then swiftly closing in,
for the kill.

MARK LEWIS

Passerby #612
(Jaywalker)

We watch from three floors up, from the window
of our boulevard flat. We see him balance
cautious, smug, defiant, from the curb--almost
like a drunk; automatic he rattles interval
seconds, his hand pushing off the trunk
of the parked volvo, his eyes scheme from left
and right at once. The cars tomahawk his nose;
it's as if an invisible sheet divides him
from the flow. He shuffles on, his rubberneck
careening in the sun. A breeze lifts a corner
of his sportcoat, tousles his hair. Waiting,
watching...perhaps the traffic light is broke.
Impatient with risk, he veers out to shock surprise
in a block of cars, white and orange and gray.
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Impatient with risk, he veers out to shock surprise
in a block of cars, white and orange and gray.
PHYLLIS LOMAX

The Project

This is the place where I began--
thin walled boxes of spent aged timber
echoing sounds of bickering marriages
like cats screeching over rotting garbage

alcoholic buckles scraped backs bare
oozing rivers of sweet liquid streams as
brine drops spilled quickly flowing
down pink cheeks

babes huddles in unlit door frames like hungry pups
as scavenger dogs raced past markets
Arab store keepers smiled through tobacco stained teeth
with turboned heads wrapped in yards of brown muslin
posting substandard items at east side rates
on dingy steel grated glass

trenches dug on spider hill for kid's war games
two by twos thrust forward into cardboard armor
covering torn shirts and bronzed skin
abandoned to shift through ashes
for recyclable aluminum treasure
water inked tattoo pads found in a Cheerio box
brandished deltoids chaffed clean on brown spotted mats

I know this place well, I've been here before
The memories! Oh God, the memories!

some were good
endless afternoons filled with a circle drawn in the dirt,
peeries and cat eyes, thumb snapping and winner take all,
ten jacks and a red rubber ball, scraped knuckles,
step-on-a-crack, break-your-mother's-back, hop-scotch,
and do the double-jack

friday night walks to Harding High School football games
stopping at the Hot Dog Shop for chili and a shake
sock hops and secret meetings at Quimby park
stolen kisses behind the big Elm tree

trips to Niagra Falls and Washington D.C. in busses
filled with happy voices singing the Beatles' "I wanna hold your......hand"

Crying in english class when President Kennedy died
Watching the procession on TV as his casket
made the journey on Pennsylvania Avenue

Wearing dresses we made to graduation from West Junior
doing the "twist" at slumber parties and making pyramids
calling boys and listening in on party-line phones

Picketing Reserve that first year
Fighting for student rights
nearly getting us all expelled
what radicals we were

The memories! Oh God, the memories!
What happened? Where have the good times gone?
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what radicals we were
The memories! Oh God, the memories!
What happened? Where have the good times gone?
There Were Other Willows

I moved into my new house, walked to the large backyard, rejoicing at its autumnal beauty. Then, I saw them—three old weeping willows, thick trunks of brown bark, growing on the neighbor's yard, close enough for them to lean over the fence, searching for the sun.

I looked up at their thin, limp boughs, leaves already turning yellow, gently dripping under the soft breeze. I felt their eyes lowering, averting my gaze, even when they knew I know it wasn't their fault.

There had been other young, weeping willows growing near a brook in another continent, willows whose stringy boughs were yanked out, stripped naked of emerald green leaves.

They were used to leave red lines on my childhood arms and legs—not on my face.

for I cowered, not on my back for I wore a dress. Afterwards they were thrown out, discarded at my feet, their sleek green bark shredded, showing white wounded wood, tears wetting the ground.
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discarded at my feet,
their sleek green bark shredded,
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tears wetting the ground.
Mono Lake

Every time I go past the table set up in front of Safeway, somebody jams a flyer into my hand and tries to talk to me about a lake near Yosemite that’s dying because everyone is greedy for its water. It’s being sucked dry from all directions, a woman always says as I strap the baby into the cart, and all the wildlife is disappearing in the process. Or something like that. I don’t know the whole story. I’ve never actually had time to read the flyer.

I don’t read anymore because I don’t sit still much, except when the baby nurses. I catch my breath for a minute as his little jaws pump ninety miles an hour on my breast. More often than not the cat comes around then, too, looking for a rub on the belly, which I really can’t deny her.

The baby cries whenever I try to fix myself a cup of coffee, and lunch is something I eat over the sink with him slung over my shoulder. In the afternoons I clean up a little and get phone calls. Friends wanting to chat, people soliciting contributions to this and that, market researchers needing information about the detergent I use. The mail is the same. Bills to pay and magazines to throw on the pile and contests that want me to stick stamps in just the right places on an entry form. I don’t have time for that anymore, but the envelopes still beg to be opened. "Twenty Million Dollars Could Be Yours"—that’s hard to ignore.

Hal gets home from work, and he wants supper and a kiss and someone to hear about his day. And then later, some loving—if I can stay awake for it. The truth is, by that time I’d give a lot just for a minute or two by myself. Saying so makes Hal irritable, though, so most of the time I just go along.

And then there are the grandparents, who pull at me from a thousand miles away. They all chipped in for a video camera, and I was supposed to send movies of the baby cooing and smiling. I kept meaning to make copies and mail them off. My mother started calling me about it every time I turned around, and finally I just decided to do it. I hooked the camera up to the VCR and ran off the duplicates during the baby’s nap this afternoon.

This wasn’t as easy as it sounds. The idea was to play the tape on the camera and record it onto another tape in the VCR to make a copy for the folks. I studied the directions and hooked up all the cables the way it said. Then I got to thinking. Maybe I’ll just unhook the audio cable and make it a silent movie. That’s how I remember home movies, and anyway, the soundtrack on this particular tape wasn’t very interesting. Mostly it was the baby crying or Hal snoring. "Have you got that in focus? What’s that red light for? Held that damn thing still." We never have quite got the hang of this camera.

So I unhooked the audio cable to spare our parents all that and just recorded the video part. I finished right around the time Hal walked through the door, and we sat down to watch the results. I slid the taped copy in and pressed PLAY, and popped my baby on the TV screen looking cuter than anything I’ve ever seen.

But the words coming out of his little mouth! "I need you, Tiffany, and I’ll do anything to get you." Things like that. "Don’t think you can get the best of me, Jason." All right there on the sound track. Well, I knew it wasn’t really my baby talking, but until Hal started screaming at me, I couldn’t figure out who it was.

"Oh, for Christ sake, Ceil, you recorded the goddam soap operas with it."

"What?"

Hal got up and poked around the equipment, finally holding up the two loose ends of the audio cable. "See here, you didn’t even have the good sense to hook the audio."

I didn’t get it. "I know, I wanted it silent."

"God, sometimes you can be so stupid and mindless." Hal shook his head in disbelief, and I looked away from him so I wouldn’t cry. "That’s not the way to get it silent," he said. "Look here." And he went on and on about how I should have
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done it, which I don’t even remember now.

I went off to the nursery to check on the baby, and Hal
found me in there. "I’m sorry," he said. "I didn’t mean that."

Mindless and stupid. Those words danced around my
head like the bunnies on the mobile above the baby’s crib. I
barely heard Hal’s explanation: "Listen, I had a rough day
today," he said. "It’s..."

I covered the baby and stroked his head. Hal followed
me to the bedroom where I sorted the laundry and then to the
kitchen to microwave dinner. He apologized and explained the
whole way. He even followed me to the bathroom. I made a
point of closing the door, but he stood on the other side, telling
me again why he’d been so mean to me.

He followed me back to the kitchen, where I started to
set the table. "Forgive me. Please forgive me," he begged.

Normally I would have just said okay, I suppose. But
suddenly I found myself wondering just how those people at
Safeway planned to save that lake. Just how are they going to
keep that last drop of water in it? Next time I shop for
groceries, I’m going to take the time to read that flyer.
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DAWN LAUTH

Above It All

You stood upon a pedestal
A self appointed God
Judged those beneath you
Ridiculed and scorned
Turned your back, raised your head
Bother me no more

You thought you were untouchable
No one to answer to
Preached of Commitment, Love, and Trust
but lied and took another
Now you’ve fallen, fallen hard
Your secret Brought to light
Should have practiced what you preached
Your Judgement Day has come

LYNETTE ASH

Lonely

SSH LISTEN, AND TELL ME WHAT YOU HEAR
THE BEATING OF A HEART IN TIME WITH FEAR.
MMMMM THINK, AND TELL ME WHAT YOU TASTE.
THE SWEET KISSES OF YOUR LIPS THAT HAVE ALL
GONE TO WASTE.

STOP. MEDITATE. AND TELL ME WHAT YOU FEEL.
AN EMPTINESS INSIDE THAT MY TEARS HAVE
SEALED.

BREATHE DEEPLY. AND TELL ME WHAT YOU
SMELL
REMNANTS OF HIS COLOGNE, OH YES I REMEMBER
WELL.

LOOK INTO THE MIRROR AND TELL ME WHAT YOU
SEE
PASSION LOCKED WITHIN AND LONELY STILL
MOCKING ME.
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New Pavement

Outside, life happens
to flow
like tears of red
bounce, bounce
off the new pavement
stops to sigh
tries to pick them up
hands that stick
can’t move.
The morning comes
darkness dies
hands that still cannot
move, move
away dear sun
out from my eyes.

Lights off and on
in my head
and yes, hands still
caught, caught.

Sun causing blisters
on my balding head
cought, caught.

Disco Inferno

for Jim Harrison

I don’t want to burn up.
I don’t want to burn up
decompose or disappear
Swaddled in silks, bound to the bier
Draped in petals, tossed on the fire
peeling flesh, melted hair and Desire

Musicians please feel the urge
To Jazz up this loathsome dirge!
Trombone and coronet lead the way
As saxophones wail and bray

I love a standing horn section.
The rattle of a bean-filled gourd.
Ragtime riptide in a major chord
Thighs stretched tight round a hollow drum
The call and response of palm and thumb

Fingertips squeaking on naked wire
Heart and lungs filled with fire
And through the harmonium’s tremulous drone
All roads lead to Rome.
MICHAEL BILLOCK

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   to flow
   like tears of red
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DIANE ROSENSTEIN

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   And through the harmonium’s tremulous drone
All roads lead to Rome.
Hesperides

All those labours for a sapling
potted in chinese blue and white.
The garden entrusted to no one, really.
A drying guilt found only pea gravel and marble
eggs and shining black stones for earth.
I have lit the divisive waters with rush-lights--
how little an oracle will change things!
Does not the river god falsely advise
to take what is stolen from whosoever
would steal what cannot be taken:
sheep, cattle, languid, inky-eyed daughters?

A nightly scattering of winds left these hills
thick with ships, during which
I have never slept, I have learned
of love’s slowness like molasses in January,
and heard shouts and goings-on from Atlas’ tower:
from the ramparts someone has seen
the darkest girl, who is not mine,
taking apples from my stolen tree,
which was never mine.

PHILIP CIOFFARI

The Blue of Evening

My father pitched the way he lived--slow, intense,
methodical. On the mound at Bronx Park he leaned forward and
stared at the batter as if he were the cause of everything that had
gone wrong in my father’s life. Top of the first, bases loaded,
obody out. My father shook his head. He seemed perplexed
that he had gotten himself into this situation so early in the
game. He brought his right arm back and then forward in a long
graceful bowler’s motion, releasing the ball with a snap of his
wrist. It came in fast and low, just within the strike zone; the
batter swung, fouled it off. My father struck him out the next
pitch, then induced the next two batters to pop up in the infield.
At the players’ bench, between innings, he wiped his face with
a towel. It was August, early evening, 1969. I hadn’t watched
my father pitch in twelve years.

He climbed the stands, looking tall and unfamiliar in his
pale blue uniform. “Everything okay?”

I looked away at the outfield, at the trees along the
park’s edge and beyond that to the gothic spires of Fordham
where my father had been an All-Star in his college years.
“Everything’s fine.”

“Maggie?”

“She’s fine.”

He nodded and sat beside me. “I’m just surprised to see
you, that’s all. It’d be like your mother showing up. First thing
I’d think was something’s wrong.” He wiped his sleeve across
his forehead and smiled. “So, Maggie didn’t want to see her
father-in-law make a fool of himself?”

“She was busy.”

He looked at me as if he didn’t like what he heard.
“Work,” I said.

One of his teammates hit a line drive past third base and
my father stood on the seat to cheer; but the batter tried to
stretch it into a double and was thrown out at second to end the
inning. My father groaned. “They never give me enough runs,”
he said. “These days I’ve damn near got to pitch a shut out to
BRAD WILCOX

Hesperides

All those labours for a sapling
potted in chinese blue and white.
The garden entrusted to no one, really.
A drying guilt found only pea gravel and marble
eggs and shining black stones for earth.
I have lit the divisive waters with rush-lights--
how little an oracle will change things!
Does not the river god falsely advise
to take what is stolen from whosoever
would steal what cannot be taken:
sheep, cattle, languid, inky-eyed daughters?

A nightly scattering of winds left these hills
thick with ships, during which
I have never slept, I have learned
of love’s slowness like molasses in January,
and heard shouts and goings-on from Atlas’ tower:
from the ramparts someone has seen
the darkest girl, who is not mine,
taking apples from my stolen tree,
which was never mine.

PHILIP CIOFFARI

The Blue of Evening

My father pitched the way he lived--slow, intense,
methodical. On the mound at Bronx Park he leaned forward and
starred at the batter as if he were the cause of everything that had
gone wrong in my father’s life. Top of the first, bases loaded,
no one out. My father shook his head. He seemed perplexed
that he had gotten himself into this situation so early in the
game. He brought his right arm back and then forward in a long
graceful bowler’s motion, releasing the ball with a snap of his
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stretch it into a double and was thrown out at second to end the
inning. My father groaned. ”They never give me enough runs,”
he said. ”These days I’ve damn near got to pitch a shut out to
win a game." He started down, his cleats clicking against the metal seats.

The last game I watched was on my twelfth birthday. My father held his shoulders straighter then, his hair beneath the cap was fuller, without any gray. In those days he played in a hardball league, so the game was quicker, his fastball coming across the plate at nearly 85 miles per hour. He pitched a three-hitter and his team won easily. That night, for my birthday, he waited until I opened my presents and blew out the candles, then he slipped out for a walk. He did that often on summer nights. My mother chose that night to explain why.

Before he married my mother he was married to someone else, she said, a Scandinavian girl named Erika. He met Erika in his senior year at Fordham, the year he pitched three no-hitters and set an intercollegiate record. He married Erika in June but she left him a year later to return to Norway or Sweden, my mother wasn’t sure. According to my mother, he never got over losing her. He would sometimes call her name in his sleep. She assured me he loved us, that he was only distracted by his memories, but when he came into my room later to kiss me goodnight, he wasn’t the same man I’d known. His eyes were gray and tired, the way they looked after a long motor trip, from staring too hard at the road. He looked as though he’d lost something he couldn’t get back. We both had.

He pitched more slowly now, his movements on the mound more studied than instinctual. His wind-up was underhand--no more sidearm, his trademark--and though this was softball, an easier game, he chastised himself just as rigorously for every bad pitch he threw, every hit he gave up. He would walk around the mound mumbling to himself, then stare the next batter down with more determination that ever. Despite his efforts, he gave up three runs in the seventh and Roy’s East Bronx Roto-Rooter came from behind to win it 4-3.

On the players’ bench he changed his cleats for sneakers. He sipped a can of Ballantine and joked with his catcher about missed opportunities. In twos and threes his teammates headed off across the field. They wanted him to stop at Hanrahan’s but he waved them on. He took his time wiping his face and neck, then running the towel up and down his arms.

We crossed the outfield where the trees pitched long shadows on the grass. At Pelham Parkway station he sat stiffly on a bench, his canvas bag wedged between his feet. The platform was empty. The rails curved toward the burnt-out buildings of the South Bronx where a smoky blue light softened the sky above the roofs.

"I wanted to win that one for you." He leaned forward with his arms resting on his knees, his hands clasped, the letters Harvey and Sons Electric partially visible across his chest.

"You pitched a great game. It wasn’t your fault." I stood near the platform edge with my hands in my pockets and remembered the time he told me he had an offer, back in his Fordham days, to try out for the Yankee farm team in Albany. He didn’t show up the day of the tryouts. "Was Erika the reason you didn’t go to Albany?"

He stared at me curiously across the platform. "What do you know about Erika?" He said her name lightly, delicately.

"Just what Mom told me."

He nodded as if he understood. "Your mother and her theories. God bless her. Did she tell you I’ve never gotten over her, that I’ve never been the same man since?" He didn’t wait for an answer. "I thought she’d given up those ideas a long time ago."

"This was a long time ago. I was twelve."

"And you waited this long to ask me?"

"I was afraid."

"That it might be true?"

"Is it?"

He shifted his weight on the bench. "Is it true I gave up my chance at the Yankees for her?"

"And the other. The never having gotten over her."
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"That it might be true?"

"Is it?"

He shifted his weight on the bench. "Is it true I gave up my chance at the Yankees for her?"

"And the other. The never having gotten over her."
He drew his shoulders back, inhaled deeply, and glanced toward the end of the platform as if he hoped the train might suddenly appear. "She was only one of the reasons I didn’t try out," he said slowly. "From the time I met her I couldn’t concentrate on baseball. She was the only thing I thought about. But the other reason was I feared I wouldn’t be good enough. I didn’t want to try for it and fail."

He glanced at me, then stared again at the tracks. "I can’t say that I still don’t think about her from time to time. But that in no way means I love your mother less." He chewed on his lip and forced himself to look at me. I figured he was going to qualify what he said to make it easier on me. "Each love is different, I guess. No two are the same, like fingerprints. The first one, well, maybe it hurts a little more."

"Why did she leave you?"

"I used to think I knew. I told myself it was because she was homesick, or because she had a childhood sweetheart she’d left behind, or because she wanted things I couldn’t give her."

"What things?"

"Whatever that is that makes a person feel loved. Maybe she didn’t even know herself." He sat looking forward with his hands clasped between his legs. "After a while, the reasons don’t matter anymore."

The sky had turned an iridescent blue. Maggie’s favorite time of day—the few moments before dark when, on clear nights, the sky above the city glimmered and washed the streets in blue shadow. We spent those moments outdoors together, as much a ritual as evening prayer at a monastery. But over the summer a distance had grown between us. Sometimes I thought she needed too much, too much of everything: attention, affection, reassurance. Other times I was sure I was to blame—I was too closed-up inside, I was angry without knowing why. Earlier that evening, before the game, she had called to say she was working late, she just couldn’t get away. A small thing, I told myself, to miss our evening walk. There would be other nights.

Two years later, soon after my father died and Maggie and I had separated, I sat with my mother at the edge of the field in Bronx Park. I asked her if he’d said anything to her in the few minutes before his death. I was beginning to understand how angry I was she had told me about Erika, how angry I had been with my father for having a life that did not include us. "Dreams confuse a man’s heart," she said. "That’s what he told me." And the picture that came into my mind at those words was not of a man in hospital clothes sustained by tubes and needles, not the mortician’s creation whose limp, folded hands looked as if they had never pitched an inning in his life. It was my father on the subway platform, his face in blue shadow, as he chewed his lip, watching me, perhaps deciding whether he’d told me too much, or too little.

Across the tracks, on the downtown side, a beggar had stumbled up the stairs. He was drunk and unsteady and he waved a tin cup, though there was no one nearby to solicit. At the platform’s edge he opened his fly and urinated on the tracks, one hand guiding his stream, the other waving the cup in the air as if to gather the last of the evening’s light.

Our train rumbled in and erased him from view. I turned back to my father. "Maggie—," I said, without finishing. "Love her the best you know how. That’s all you can do."

We stood together waiting for the doors to open. "What if that’s not enough?"

"Hope that it is."

I followed him into the car where he set his bag on the floor between his legs and wrapped his pitching hand around the metal pole to steady himself for the ride home.
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I followed him into the car where he set his bag on the floor between his legs and wrapped his pitching hand around the metal pole to steady himself for the ride home.
The toddler sits on his potty like a king on a throne. Squiggling and squirming, anxiously shifting from bun to bun. His little wrinkled face turns red, then blue. The General is commanding his smelly soldiers to charge! Foreward feces! Some are runners, while others are hard as stone. Peebles of poop drop like bombs from a B1 Bomber. The logs circle the sea like ships caught in a whirlpool. ENEMAS NO MORE! Tunnels are clear. The mighty soldiers have passed. The emptiness is cherished like a cleansing of the soul. "Mommy I’m done!"

Mama senses a presence. The rabbit is dead. Emotions and reality conduct a debate, the choice is made. Mama wonders... color of eyes unknown, personality, unknown, life expectancy, known.

Mama’s arms of steel reach, for the embryo sucking its skinless thumb. She is soon raped, from her sleep and her life.
The Triumph

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A Moment in Life

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The rabbit is dead.
Emotions and reality conduct a debate,
the choice is made.

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color of eyes unknown,
personality, unknown,
life expectance, known.

Mama's arms of steel reach,
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She is soon raped,
from her sleep and her life.
CHRIS BARZAK

Abducted

Teardrops falling down my side
emotions rolling with the tide
Heaven help me, my love has died
and now I lie here, trying to hide.

Sand and dirt are in my hair
Glowing eyes have caught my stare
Why do I hide, Why do I care?
Here come the claws, and the pain of the tears.

A circular pattern cut so clear
The flowing of blood is beginning to smear
along the beach is the figure of fear
But wait, what is that sound I hear?

Thump, thump, is the beat it starts
running down the beach the predator darts
Hoping to get away, trying to part
Keeping safe in its jaws is my dying heart.

But I’m lying here, alive it seems
Please tell me that it’s all a bad dream
Oh no, Oh no, I’m going to scream!
What’s happening here, What does this mean?

My heart is gone, the only one made
My love is dead and starting to fade
Eaten by the predator at last night’s raid
And now I lie here, shivering, afraid.

GEORGE KARNAVAS

Dreams

Hallucinogen clouds form heavily
above the unconscious, to ready
the incubus of thought,
grinding the gears of illusion,
to mass forth the restless fright
in unsuspecting slumber.

The rope is taut as I stand on edge,
and with cosmos illusory present
confused, frustrated, and hungry,
like vulturine cannibals, begin to
lacerate the flesh of my psyche
with their sharp talons.

The old and wise reject
the complexity of abstractions,
and are not intrigued by the reciprocal universe
or absent gravity of trifle matters.

Impelled into a dimension of erroneousness,
thrusting me forward, toward the black light,
to comprehend perplexities of abstruse rebus,
or fall prey to my tarnished ignorance
or flamboyance of inconsistency,
shredding the fibers of logic
and deemed to receive the blows of ogress.

And in the nightly still,
when the owl cries for mercy,
I dream of absolution,
wishing to assimilate
with an ocean of tranquility.
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**Gretchen Phillips**, a junior in English at KSUTC, is a frequent *ICON* contributor; she recently had a poem published in an anthology called *The Coming of Dawn*. **Pina Pipino**, of Long Valley, New Jersey, holds an MFA from Montclair State College and works full-time as a legal assistant in a large law firm. **Jennifer Roche** majors in Chemistry at Walsh College--she attended KSUTC the past two summers. **Diane Rosenstein** is a poet from Los Angeles, California. **Nora Scandreth** is a KSUTC student. **Thaddeus Weston** is a sophomore English major at KSUTC: his work has previously appeared in *ICON* and *Mahoning Valley Poetry*. **Brad Wilcox**, a student a Pepperdine University, lives in Grass Valley, California.
a poem in *Mahoning Valley Poetry*. **Dawn Lauth** is a freshman majoring in Accounting at KSUTC. **Kim Lawson** is a student at KSUTC. **Mark Lewis**, the winner of a 1993-94 Lily Peter Poetry Fellowship, is working on his MFA at the University of Arkansas.

**Phyllis Lomax**, a former KSUTC student, has frequently published her work in *ICON*. Recently, two of her poems were published in anthologies. **Linda McCalmont** is a freshman Art major at KSUTC. **Jennifer Moran** is a student at KSUTC whose work has appeared previously in *ICON*. **Georgette Olenik** is a former KSUTC student from Andover, Ohio—she now attends school at KSU-Ashtabula. **Jennifer Patchin**, a junior in English at KSUTC, is a frequent *ICON* contributor. **Marvyn Petrucci** lives and writes in East Boston, Massachusetts.

**Gretchen Phillips**, a junior in English at KSUTC, is a frequent *ICON* contributor: she recently had a poem published in an anthology called *The Coming of Dawn*. **Pina Pipino**, of Long Valley, New Jersey, holds an MFA from Montclair State College and works full-time as a legal assistant in a large law firm. **Jennifer Roche** majors in Chemistry at Walsh College—she attended KSUTC the past two summers. **Diane Rosenstein** is a poet from Los Angeles, California. **Nora Scandretth** is a KSUTC student. **Thaddeus Weston** is a sophomore English major at KSUTC: his work has previously appeared in *ICON* and *Mahoning Valley Poetry*. **Brad Wilcox**, a student at Pepperdine University, lives in Grass Valley, California.