I left my father in the barroom,
I left my mother in the street,
I left my home in the slums,
I went looking for something to eat.

Small cafe, corner stores,
Stool unused, but there's
Never room for me!

I got some books and went to school.
To try to learn the golden rule.
But laws are made for white, you see,
Not for blacks — like you and me!

Joe Long

A MEMORY

An easy chair sits alone in the front room.
A touch of dust, collects on the arm.
The shiny waxed floors are scuffed from years of use.
But it still glimmers with the remembrance of laughter
And fun — where I once lived.

Joe Long

Joe Long is 16 years old and attends special education
courses at McComb High School. Some people might classify
him as "retarded;" we on the Inkstone staff would not. To
Joe and the other truly "exceptional" youngsters of this
country, we dedicate our magazine.
THE LIE

Last week I found myself in an Oriental rug shop. There are thousands of these shops here in the city, sprinkled along the streets and avenues like manna about the desert. I visit them often, though I never go to the same shop twice. I never really set out to look for them, either, but find them just the same by accident.

Last week I left Times Square, and was rather lazily walking across 43rd Street. It was warm and I was looking for a book that had not yet been written along the walls of the shops here in the city. I was tired of walking and looking for a place to rest. And there it was, Hassan's Persian Rug Hall. We fell in love. There, under the sign in the window, hung the usual three Persian rugs, underpriced by the usual thousands of dollars. There, behind the rugs in the window, stood the owner of the shop, Hassan, I presumed, smiling. Calm. I went in.

Hassan had hair down to his waist. Hassan had eyes that were not in his head and sparkled like two star-sapphires. The two pink slippers on his feet were pointed curving up and bending over so the two golden bells at the tips touched the tops of them. Hassan wore a Persian carpet round him, "the one not for sale", which he didn't need to say, it all being so very obvious.

Hassan looked at me. Smiling. Calm. We sat down in the center of the room. I looked at Hassan. Sober. Thinking over unwritten books. Thinking, finally. Everything is everything. We sat there for three hours. Said no words. All was quiet. No one came into the Hall. This was usual. It had all happened before. It was not uncommon.

After three or four hours, my friend Hassan spoke.

— Oh, he said, you wish to buy a carpet?

— No, I explained, though I love your shop, and I think Persian carpets are the friendliest carpets on earth, I really have no money. I fear I will have to go without one for a while.

— I see, he answered, and said no more for a very long time. We sat there for a very long time, indeed, after that. Perhaps, but I'm not sure exactly, we sat for many centuries. Of course this sort of thing is common in Oriental Rug Shops, and I wasn't surprised to have it reoccur in the presence of Hassan.

But then he spoke again.

— Would you take a small tapestry, if I were to give it to you, as a present? I believe I have been saving this for you for a long, long time.

When he finished saying this, he reached behind him and brought out the most beautiful Persian tapestry that I have ever seen in all my twenty-four years of visiting Oriental Rug Shops. It was perfectly white, in it were beautiful leafy trees and flowers and there in the center was a wonderfully warm sun. The trees, and flowers and sun were also perfectly white. And, best of all there was a woman in the tapestry perfect, white, perfect, warm, perfect, calm. We fell in love.

I didn't need to answer Hassan. He smiled as he knew that it was mine. I went into it. I went into it.

Hassan brought me back.

— There is something I must tell you about the tapestry, he said. I listened. If you take the tapestry, he went on, three things will happen to you.

— First, you will find yourself in a field, where the sun will have become only pink and blue. Where
all the flowers have turned into heavens filled with twinkling stars. Where life is neither cold nor warm, where teardrop crystals fill the air like magic. You will want to stay there through eternity. But you should not.

— Then, he said, you will find yourself in a circus. There will be lions painted red, and tigers painted gold and silver. Purple snakes will dance in the air, and giant fish will bite at your feet. You will lose your arms, and become very heavy. You will be the freak in the sideshow, and the fat lady in the next cage will be wearing an orange bikini, and you will become very cold. You will become very lonely and cry. And the people around you will melt like plastic while you become brittle and crack and shatter like glass. You will not mind leaving the circus when the time comes.

— Last, Hassan went on, you will come to a large room in the tower of a castle. It will take you a long time to get there from the circus. You will be tired, and will lie down on the bed in the room. Everything in the room will be pale green, and you will not need to smell a thing. It will be dark, but it will be pale green. It will be warm. There is a large window in the room, beside your bed. Outside the window is a harbour, but you will not see it. In the window will be the tapestry. It will fill the window. It will not be green. It will be as white as it is now. You will not need to go to the tapestry. It will come to you as you lie on the bed. It will come to you and you will be in it. Then the trees will be as they should be, soft and lush blowing in the sun. The sun will be warm and more yellow, more pink and blue than any sun you have yet imagined. The flowers will dance and you will smell the flowers all at once and each alone at the same time. And you will be warm in the trees and the flowers and the sun. And you will be calm. And there will be the woman. You will know her, and will take her hand and you will take her body into yours

and you will know her. There you will be happy, and there in the warmth and the calm of the tapestry you will live forever. These things will happen. They are as they should be.

Having heard these things, I took the tapestry and began to leave. As I neared the door, however, Hassan said one last thing.

— These things that I have told you, he whispered, are lies.

I turned toward him and smiled, and he smiled back, for we both knew what he meant.

For, as is usually the case with the things that happen in Persian Rug Shops, even lies become truth.

Wes Evans

Observe how sweetly each little bug-like Letter sits properly in his place,
So strong and defiant,
Yet so cooperative his brothers.
Huddled together to make fine noise.

Michael Saba
SYMBOLS OF MEMORY

When I came out from you,
I was made to cry,
Without want or knowledge.
I saw the fantasy
(Without remembering)
For the last time
And fell sick.

The milk that nurtured me
I
Spit out new,
The brackish waste still lying
Boiling between brown teeth.

As I once was born out of you,
I
Have found new ways
To be born into women.
I have drank new milk,
Much sweeter,
Much more fulfilling.

When you die,
Do not leave your dust on my shoes.
I want my memory clean of you,
Of what you were to me.
I can only walk on your grave,
Only your symbol of dying.
You,
I cannot reach,
Could never reach.

Greg Morris
MEMORIES OF SUMMER

stooping down from its sleep
the wind
cascades the dry rasp of granite
soothing down the flow of pines
wet on
the tongue of a summer extrusion
as hair
lightly falling
brightly dawning
easy
on the shoulders
of a sunrise

she speaks with nutcracker force
breaking the dew in her grip
like ghosts with a thousand empty faces
frozen in their morning mirrors
who never really mattered
since their fingers never sought me out:

she speaks from another world than i
but i decipher her cleanly
in my cool greenness
of menthol thoughts
the logic of her heat
trembles translatingly in my cells

she as the first light i knew
the sunrise that made me alive

moved me in the soil
warmed me in my prism
was my desire to be born

Dallas Hull

Judy Wenig
THREE HUNDRED AND SIXTY DEGREES

With the breeze came the inevitable tinkling. The prism inside herself grew warm and began to glow. Elaine laid the letter on the table beside her coffee cup. So he loved her. The thought blew softly through her chest and the windchime danced. She threw back her head and laughed. The prism was more blue than green, or wine. O John, she thought. Dear, blue John.

She pushed open the doors and stepped out onto the sidewalk. A hand touched her elbow. She turned around. Hi, girl, said Paul. Tinkling. His hand still on her elbow, they began walking. She felt the blue rising in her, the bitter green and sad wine receding. At her door, he leaned against the wall and stared at her. She looked at his eyes, blue recesses over which a green fog seemed to pass. He kissed her quickly and the prism gave its warm hum.

She lay on the floor, hands folded across her stomach, a cigarette between her teeth. She had found that she didn't need to inhale. She smoked to have something to do. She was lonely. She thought of Paul. Tinkling. Paul belonged to Judy, beautiful Judy whom Elaine often glimpsed on the other side of the street or in a department store. Dark Judy with the smooth hair and chocolate eyes. Judy knew about Elaine and Paul. She could tell by the way Judy looked at her out the corner of her eye. She had noticed one day that Judy walked under a mantle of green glow. Beneath her hands a wine colored spot grew in her stomach and spread like an inkblot to blur with green at the edges.

The light was fuzzy, hard to look at through the smoke in the room. It sent rays of pain into her head and eyes. The clatter of glasses and of laughter went crashing through the pain. The smoke became a fog, augmented by regenerative waves gently washing the face of a clock on the wall. In the mirror on the wall, she could see the counter behind her, and on it a double row of odd-shaped soldiers cut in glass and crystal, full of the old spirit, liquid and fire, used in so many one-sided battles. She thought of John. Tinkling. Someone's hand stroked the back of her neck. She knew without looking that it was Paul. Come away with me, he whispered. Come run with me; we'll run three hundred and sixty degrees.

She sat and surveyed the living room while he poured wine into two glasses. It was the kind of room she might have expected—very small yet dramatic. A poster blow-up of himself hung on one wall, opposite a mirror. Conceited ass, she thought.

She didn't feel the impact of his push, only the slow tearing of the air as she fell onto the bed, and the ominous sight of his mile-wide shoulders falling after. His hands explored her. I've never run three hundred and sixty degrees, she whispered. Blue melted from his belly and sank hotly into hers.

Never, he asked. Never.

Can you?

I don't know. But I want it to be you. In spite of everything, I want it to be you.

It's going to hurt.

Yes.

John, she thought. John. Judy. The blue froze. Judy. Green glowed, spreading. Green ice stillied the windchime. Green, green. His eyes. Shooting green hot liquid into her, filling the prism, growing hotter, pushing the sides, forcing them as he forced her thighs. Then the shattering of glass and the green was hot and the pain excruciating.

Edie Scalf
ALONE

Silent dreams of a child
Reflect off the moon the stars
Are collecting dew

In this hour I am one blade of grass

My hair is mussed I bite
Down hard on the air

Rain drops scrape pieces
From my bones looking for someone
I do not feel the fingers of memory
It is too dark too cold
I can see no echoes

Even the crickets have migrated
Home to their loved ones
I've been left behind

My grip is hardening
My face is becoming a callous
On the hands pushing the wind
Into the corners of the sky

Ron Levy

Photo by Larry Rasmussen
I'LL RIDE THE RAILS

I'll ride the rails
and every time I cross a tie
I'll look 'round
and try to find you
Growing
Smaller
In the distance

T. E. Davis

I WAS UPSTAIRS TAP DANCING WITH THE BASKETBALL PLAYERS

I really love you murmured Cowboy
Bob with a secret smirk on his ego
while Enamel Ellen pulsed under
his knowing touch, gasping at every
fumbling contact, mumbling soft words of love,
knowing what a bore it was to pretend.

T. Noel Fowler

RELIGIONS APART

It was a Sunday.
The day I couldn't
make you on a bunk
bed in Dayton, Ohio.
Your altar was on main street
and in no mood to burn with
me and pagans in fields of
sky blue sheets and electric guitars.
Taut harps hanged between
but angels don't like I'm plucked
on bunk beds in Dayton, Ohio.

This morning in L.A.
I miss you little; always less
than before because she is a
Sunday crossword puzzle —
climax to reading "Peanuts"
between humid sheets.
We build to burn together at
our stake of hymnals where
angel strings burst to wail electrically.
Preciously.

And you in Dayton.
You are the church of
your choice on Sunday
morning's main street.
Paved.
Sidewalks too.
Paved.

R. T. Thomson
CLOSING NIGHT

The old man walked onto the bare stage of the burnt out theatre. Above him rose a hole, blossoming flower-like, where the ceiling had been and snow fell upon him through the hole. A miracle was the stage, hardly charred, so he sat upon a log—some forgotten prop. His knees came to the level of his shoulders and he peered between them toward the audience. The chairs were black, upholstered in soft, white snow. It was undisturbed.

He removed his gloves and breathed vacuously on the leather just to see it lose its shine. Then he dropped them upon the floor. Snow covered the toes of his shoes. They became too heavy for him to move. But he didn't want to move them anyway. "So cold," he thought without realizing how cold. "So cold..." out loud, though not very, but then said only to himself, "...that I almost wish I wasn't circumcised." What an absurd thought to be had by someone his age. But then how could he admit to being his age. No one could. If he did he'd probably have to act, to do something rash, a remedy like sitting on a log in the cold and under the snow falling through a hole in the roof of a demolished theatre. We must back away.

Upstage left a boy backed onto the platform, paying no attention to his journey but relishing the memories of where he'd been. He was looking off after someone, a playmate. He'd managed to escape, but not unscathed as could be seen by the splatters of snow upon his coat and trousers. He achieved some kind of awareness, turned a red grin toward the audience, and bowed quickly. He saw the old man's back and grinned even redder, gathered a wheelbarrowful of snow which he compacted into a small snowball.

"Umph!" Umphed with a slobber by the old man who was not yet numb enough to ignore the sting of a snowball on the neck. Picking the frozen slobber from his chin, "Why, I was just remembering... huh?"
The boy had dashed into the wings but soon returned, a strange admixture of snow and soot picked up offstage. "I... I'm sorry mister. My mother always taught me to apologize when I knew I was in the wrong. I figure I'm pretty much in the wrong now. Do you figure that?"

"I suppose maybe. Don't make no difference though... You're a good boy. And you've got a good mother."

"Not really."

"Which do you mean?"

"Neither one to tell you the truth. Oh, sometimes I'm a good boy, when there's a chance of getting something. But when there ain't no chance it's another thing."

"And your mother?"

"Aw, she's alright. But Fred Henski's ma's better. She don't yell so much."

"Does Fred Henski apologize when he knows he's in the wrong?"

"Nah. He just does what he please. I gotta 'pleadize but I don't really mean it... Say, what are you doing in here anyway?"

"I'm performing."

"You're an actor?"

"Sort of."

"Are you a star?"

"No, not a star."

"I want to be an actor."

"Do you now?"

"Yeah, that's why I always get Fred to come over here and play. It's more fun since it burnt down. I always wanted to be an actor, 'cept when I wanted to be a senator. Mister, when I get old I wanna be just like you, with white hair and a beard—mister."

"I always wanted that when I was a boy too."

"Listen, I gotta go. I ain't really supposed to be talking to strangers. Ma says you'll never know if they'll try and kidnap you. But I did hit you with the snowball... I'm going to find Fred... I want you to know that, if you're sitting here because you're sad that the theatre burnt down, well I'm sad too. Oh, it's more fun this way—burnt down I mean—but you shouldn't be out of a job. I'd give it up for that."

The old man listened to the boys' fanaticism offstage then tried to move his hands. "Umph!" Another snowball hit him on the neck. He picked at the slobber but his fingers weren't responding. What difference did it make. He left it glisten on his whiskers. The boys could no longer be heard; he could almost hear the snow falling. Looking up, he imagined it was like traveling through space at a fantastic speed, maybe even the speed of light, and seeing all the stars and planets flicker past him only to be replaced by new stars. At the speed of light they say that time stands still. That was too much to ask for.

The young couple could be heard before they could be seen. Standing in the shadows it was obvious that there were two of them though only the young woman's white coat could be plainly discerned. She disappeared when they moved out onto the snow covered stage and the young man in the black overcoat seemed to be holding his arm out to lend support to nothing at all. Such brightness with no moon in the least but the clouds falling piecemeal in a kind of melancholy.
"Just look at it now. How many times have we sat on those cinders and watched them sweat out their lines?"

"It was fun. Do you know the part I liked best?"

"What was that?"

"Sitting so close to the stage you could always tell when someone had muffed a line and another actor was whispering it to him out the side of his mouth like this."

"Now dear, you're too cruel."

"Critics!" The old man shrouded in the fog of his own voice.

"Huh. What's this?"

"Young people should never comprise an audience. You should astound an audience, young man. Show them no mercy."

"Harry, let's go."

"One moment dear. Are you alright? Can I do something to help? You must be cold."

"Let's go, Harry. This is spooky."

"Soon... soon."

"To your questions, young man, I assume you want assurance rather than answers. So it's yours. Take it."

"Harry?"

"By all means, Harry, she wants you to go with her so you must. That's the one thing all young men must do. But answer one thing for me. When you're my age, what do you hope for?"

"Why... I don't really know. I haven't had a chance to think about it. That's such a long way off."

"Go with her, Harry. That's what you have to do. You don't even have to get old, do you. You'll beget her and she'll beget children. No family, not even a clan, but a fine audience you'll raise, Harry. If you begin it tonight, tomorrow you'll be here."

"Harry, he's crazy."

"That's an interesting thought. I must be."

"Harry, I'm going."

The strangest feeling is having no feeling in some parts. It was pleasant, no longer painful but sleepy. He tried to find the tracks he had made in the snow when he had come there a few hours earlier. Even that trace was gone, it was an important one. Now that he was there he had no real proof of a decision at all, no evidence. The loss of that was more than the loss of pain in his fingers.

The middle-aged man tramped across the stage, looking straight at the old man for several seconds before the image truly registered. He had on a white shirt and a black dress tie. He eyed his watch, then looked at it with his ear, clicked his lips out one side, then out the other. "Do you have the time?"

"It must be about eight."

"What do you mean must be?"

"I say eight because that's the number of snowflakes resting on the back of my hand."

"Alright, I'm in a hurry. What's your address? Suppose I have to take you home. You could freeze to death out here."
"It's amusing to watch snowflakes light on your hand but not have enough heat to melt them. Instead they just accumulate. It must be three in the morning by now."

"Where do you live?"
"Don't bother about me."
"What's your name?"
"I live here."
"What do you do?"
"Old man."
"Huh?"
"I grow older then I die."
"You're crazy!"
"Ah, you went with her like I told you to didn't you Harry? And look what she's done to you. It was to be expected but you couldn't have helped it."

"Come on. You old people should be taken care of somehow."
"Will you be taken care of?"
"Why, I certainly hope so. I've a fine family for security. I'll keep things together when I'm old."
"Will you die?"
"Of course, we all die."
"That's correct. Some too soon and some too late. I was too late, don't you see. It's passed me by."

"Your hands are frozen. You can't use your fingers."
"I've used them all these years though."

Another man entered upstage left and grabbed the middle-aged man by the arm. "I'll take care of him. He's a friend of mine."
"You took me by surprise."
"That's usually the case."

As the one ran off to meet his appointment the newcomer stood staring down at the old man. The two were dressed similarly, had the same countenance. The newcomer, "Your hands are frozen."
"I can't tell. They're too numb. But you have gloves on."
"Yep. Lamb's wool lining. Pretty warm."
"I'll bet. Well, are you ready?" The old man rose and took a few skidding steps to downstage right. The other adjusted his gloves, making sure the tops were well tucked within his coat sleeves.

"Ready? This is why I came."
"One moment. You realize that you have me at a disadvantage."
"Won't be the first time."
"I can't really use my fingers well."
"Is that supposed to be an excuse?"

"Nope." He scurched his foot in front of him so as to draw a line. "That's the boundary."
"And..... there's mine."

The newcomer laughed, stooped over and compacted a snowball. Missed. "I didn't think you'd be that agile."

"Luck, maybe." The old man bent at the waist, wedged snow between his frozen hands and shoveled it at the other.

"Hey, that was close... So much for practice shots. Now let's get to it."

Snow flew.

"Bah!"

Overhand pitches barely missing,

"Tch! Tch!"

maybe even scraping.

"Don't count."

Underhand shoveling, like buckshot,

"Why'd you move? Uh-oh!"

not as quick but profuse.

"Look out.....huh!"

But a clever eye,

"Touché."

The old man rubbed the snow from his eyes with his coat sleeve, removing only part. "Gave you a go."

"Uh-huh."

"Guess you have to leave now."

"Yep it's time.""What time is it?"

"Don't know."

"Don't know?"

"Don't know."

He turned to leave as the old man resumed his pose upon the log. The latter turning quickly, "Wait."

"Yes?"

Looking up, "What's the speed of light?"

"One hundred eighty-six thousand miles per second."

"That's fast."

"That's fast."

Thomas H. Tressler
JUST AN OLD MAN

I don't think he ever shaved—
At least not since the last crocus—
And his beard was wild and white.
If you had the time
You could have counted each thread
Of his mouth's-tread suit.
There was a hole in his pocket;
I know because he kept pulling coins
From his shoe.
He only had seven teeth — they were
brown and silver —
But his meals came in bottles
So he didn't care,
Until he trimmed his nails.
I met him in October
During a November night.
He was playing a harmonica
And singing,
Through brown and silver teeth,
A love song.

Fred Mahaffey

AZTEC MARIGOLD FROM SHARON, PA.

Marigold is a rather tall herb,
More or less hairy,
With oblong leaves,
More or less clasping.

A stout stalk holds her solitary head,
Large, with flat spreading rays.
At noon, the color varies
From white-yellow to deep orange,
Snowy,
Yet closing at night.

The Calendula is the easiest to culture
In any warm, loose bed.
While they are usually sown
Where the plant is to stand,
They may be sown in/doors
Or in a frame and then transplanted.

This is the Marygold of Shakespeare's time?

Glabrous incurved achenes, not visible
Plane naked receptacle
Pappus, none
Involucre, broad.
VI

... And flowers tend to group themselves
According to their physical agents
Of cross pollination.

Moths get the tobacco,
Beetles the California poppy;
And the Marigold from Sharon got the worm.

VII

Original sin is non-jewish,
Except in Freud
Who had the equivalent.

VIII

She loves me
She loves me not
She loves me
She loves me not
She loves me — the fat bitch.

IX

Florets are used as an anti-emetic,
Formerly for removing warts,
Also good for the crabs.

John M. Gallo

midamerica on a dry day

against the flagpole the flag
is stuck.
a needle, full mast

against the dawn the cables scratch.
a stop light, flashing red, goes solid.

topping it, there, they say
pointing... a crescent moon...
behind the sky — holds water.

in the clear air every station wants to be God.
easy listening.
"Moon River" is played, a wet-dry promise
fluffed like the broken clouds
or daughter's pillow, clenched for the better life.

the reverend crosses
at mid-block, avoiding a sober believer.

John Hickam
MAKING IT

Moving alone along 125th, on the corner, smiles on mailbox, says hey man where ya been.

Turning.

Fin.

No, seven-fifty now.

Owe you.

Seven-fifty or nothing.

Make another connection.

Go down to 100th.

Go fuck yourself, I got Carm.

Man you're going cold, no choice.

No, I got Carm.

Fecchio won't like it.

The dark hallway of blue shadows smells of musk, it is damp, the air hangs, draped on shoulders heavily. Stooping over, out of breath from many steps narrow and steep rising from the golden square at the bottom, somewhere deep. The floor seems to give under weight of foot. Plaster settling between the walls, rattling and further down past the dark blue blurs, a man and woman are yelling, voices distorted byymed walls, pushing in pulling out.

No reason to be nervous.

Carm always makes the connection. Always.

Darkened water stained walls waving, faced ripped stripes of wallpaper, stripes of blue, gold, writhing like snakes.

The connection. :

The eye of a naked lightbulb stares from in front of Carm's door. Bouncer. Paid by Fecchio. Everybody's paid by Fecchio. Twisting gold snake surges out to bite — No!

It's alright. Alright. Carm knows, he knows me, don't get up tight, just ask Carm, he'll say it's o.k., just ask him.

Stumbling to avoid the snakes and the slime green sticking sounds like a cat licking chops glued to my hands.

Nausea.

On the wall out of reach. Striped snakes red brown green over there Fecchio's man. Voices stopped.

"Hey C-c-carm!"

One-two-three-four-five-too long.

"C-c-carm! C'mon out here, q-quick!"

Quiet except for the sound of skin scratching on the walls, under-bellies white puffed out ready to strike. Vague movements in the blue shadows liquefying around Carm's door, shutting out. Won't let anyone through to the connection.

"Motherfucker!"

Carm's door floats open and his head moves out like jack-in-the-box only his head moving out from the door springing gently. Bouncer's eye blinks behind his head. Paid by Fecchio.
"H-h-hey Carmine, C-c-carm, I g-g-gotta make it, you know?"

"Mike, man, what are you doing?"
Words swallowed, bass, slowed like dragging record, feeling the vibrations of words saturating skin.

"Get in here! So slow... nice, nice. Feeling good."

"F-f-f-five Carm, I got f-five."

Carmine's out, the door puking out his body past Fecchio's man, gliding to me past the snakes, can't move to him, putting his arms around... around like pythons around squeezing red bulging popping eyes can't breathe.

"C-c-carmine, n-no!"

Pay attention, Carm, the snakes, Fecchio's man, no!

"Hey, baby, you're really shot full."

"N-no, Carm, n-no, I'm clean, s-swear it, l-look at me, man, STRAIGHT!"

"Hey... ."

"Straight, no, straight."

"Get inside."

So nice, Carm looking from side to side up and down the hall, maybe they're watching him, but can't see through the shadows.

"Get inside, Mike, quick."

Can't move past the man. Not now.

"F-fecchio's man, g-g-get rid of him, it's me, Mike, your buddy."

"What are you talking about?"

"Him, get r-r-rid of him."

"Mike, no one's there, now get in before... ."

"C-c-carm, for me, call him off, p-p-please?"

In the shadows someone's standing down the hall. No one's there. No one's there. No one.

Sweating.

"Ok, ok, man, now cool off."

Prancing in and out of snakes squirming in slime, Carm slips by floating and bouncer's are closed.

"Mike, . . . c'mon in."

"The c-c-connection, C-c-carm."

Flew past them. Inside, chairs sit straight and red, fading, worn, lay fat asses.

"Sit down there."

Carm he knows, he works for Fecchio, Fecchio pays.

"Do you know what Fecchio would do if he knew you were coming here for junk?"

"C'mon Carm."

"Lissen, Mike, no more, I quit, you dig? I quit! I ain't carryin' any more."

Fecchio owns mother turned to his house on third floor
working nights holding fathers in arms, letting go in minutes, sitting up, collecting. Hustling for Fecchio, never saying no. But he pays.

"Sssshhhh, one of h-his men out th-th-there."
"Listen, man, you're really high."
"I-i-I got f-f-five."
"I don't push it, man, I QUIT!"
"Ssshhhh."
quit quit quit quit quit quit quit quit quit quit quit

Black slated windows holding light back, keeping it away. Lamp's ray gleaming on the barrel of Carm's pistol laying on table. Outside something moving faster, scratching louder, from the other side of the blurs, moving. Orange parakeet sitting on table chirping, fluttering making too much noise, scattering seeds falling gritty on sandpaper floor.

"N-n-no, C-carm, F-fecchio will g-get you, don't say th-that, don't say it."
"Fuck Fecchio."

Voices down the hall have started again, man and woman. Squeezing down in on around pressing down.

Wet chair.

"Hey listen, Mike, you alright?"


"Ok, ok, all I n-need is a f-f-fix, Carm, p-please."

"Nothing, Mike, nothing, I don't have any, not even any of my own. I gave it all back to Fecchio — all of it, even my own."

"You're l-lying to m-me, C-c-carm."
"No."
"S-some crystals, anything, anything, C-carm."
"Nothing, man, NOTHING."
"Ooohhh, noooo, Carm, c'mon, I g-gotta make it n-now."
"Quit buggin' me, I DON'T HAVE NOTHIN', NOTHING."


Cold.

Shivering hot split open, white mass.

Scratching getting louder, outside, in, can hear rustling of a brown tweed coat on the door, brass buttons scratching wood. No knock. Tell me so they hear, tell me it's alright, it's alright.

Give me a fix, Carmine.

Give me a fix.

Give me.

Give.

Blue black sugaring mind with needles, stinging, covering over, up, steeling up, readying to lunge with fish eye accuracy. Settled, but tense. No way. No. Black and whites, no change, unless Fecchio says change. No way.
Impatient rustling, heart beating wild tearing at chords, squeezing ribs lungs.

Can't breathe.

No minds changed. Fecchio says so, Carm, so you push like he says.

"C-c-carm, you g-gotta, you g-g-gotta."

"Lissen, Mike, lissen hard, I'm off, I threw it back in his goddamn face."

Off?

"Off, n-no, not you."

"I got Methadone, man, some cat from Philly supplied it, says I can let myself down."

Thud of invisible weight on door outside, pushing in. Time fluid dripping consciously, running out. Bird gliding in cage. Carmine hears them too. Light in the air moving to the door. Listening. Strained. At the door. Eat out. Listening, Carm, listening. Push it! SELL. SELL.

"C-carm. . ."

"Sssshhh."

"CARM!!"

Turning, facing, gliding to meet, speaking through his teeth, spitting words, floating through air, glancing.

"Shut Up!!"

"No, Carm, don't speak like that. They know. They hear they see, now give, make Fecchio smile, make New York smile. Kiss me. Some horse."

Air coming hard. Wet, hot, holding tight, tensed. Now. Make it now. Pay attention Carm, NOW. Hear them coming closer. Bird scattering seeds on table, squealing. NOW, don't say no. DON'T SAY NO!

"C-C-CARMINE"

Explosions, one and then another two coming through the door, splintering, seeds breaking coming to kiss Carm, standing there to meet them. One. Then two, slipping to the floor, holding them close to him.

Still.

Hot.

Carmine on floor, spilling red. Fecchio didn't let him.
Orange Peal Parakeet sitting quiet, swinging, smoke rising up in swirls in front of it.

Got to make another connection. Get past the snakes out there, scratching. . . and Fecchio's man.

Ronald Bean
UNELEGY

The ice melted this morning
after hanging, all winter, near my window.
I don't like the thought of spring.
You need six strong men
and six sturdy handles when it's warm.

I didn't dream last night
of women crossing their legs with nylons
or of that cliff over the Hudson,
but of him saying, without breath,
"Even when cards are at your house
you're the last one to come."

I knew I was awake when you told me
because the ice was melting.
You wouldn't have seen me melt.
He was dying while I lay with a woman,
almost as if it were my fault.
For once, I want to do what's expected of me.

Thomas Tressler

Photo by James E. Terman
a time remembered

dust covers
bright marbles
and doorsteps
your friends once
shared with you —
the bicycles
rusts in
mists that cloud
a time when
bright marbles
were.

Fred Mahaffey
slippering, in sorry orange knitted caps and mittens, angelic eyes—bearers
with on—backwards underwear climb the Unclimbable Slope
and slip
down
past
my
window
on their bodies and bundlings
clear to the hill—bottoming street—corner, giggling.

anita de luna

SUNRISE
yellow vibrant cringe
terrified ivy
danced through translucent lid—skin
made hideous calligraphy on the next door wall disturbed night dust melted skin

Polly Cook

Photo by Larry Rasmussen
LETTER TO A FOOL

being a silent form of nature while running through rooms of claustraphobia and His lined paper relieves making Pan walk with written words turning her mind forever and ever and ever and even though I've only come across 12, routes do scare me only to find Him still sitting on the gofer's hole

yes, He must be dead now but in between somewhere

will I be sold up the river mama?

someday soon or down?

I swim and swim with five fishes forever sucking and sucking how are you? ask 3 times with, well truth and beauty and damn

I'm tired of playing the object screaming to silence w/ perpetual prayer: Davie is a bastard no one ever loves. Hell is what he prayed for and found damnation somewhere toward heaven again and again and Owellwell who can tell we may beat you all to Hell . . . Obaby where'd you get that high there? . . . and bless ma and my pa and my sex bobomba bless my sinning too lalalalalalala

yes, 3 levels of meaning, feeling ambiguous and old and un-needed (not to mention the undercurrent tuned to unwanted) until becoming the girl Pan running from His intellect in slacks

blushing when "Lost of Identity" is read reaching a streak of creaming ocean spray thru guilet and down to theirs and where gulping up digested love . I do not want nothing to escape my thoughts. being nothing turn real in round of cranberry blush.

I dream of carousels turning to ferriswheel going round round a round round near

the pier perpetuating faceless body peering and holding on seatless poles

pinkgreen w/ yellow striping

her a woman now rushing around to motion and screeching soundlessly

and life caught in her throat mixing Purgatory and Hell w/ Heaven and Limbo

praying in clouds of Genesis crushing her Bible around MatheMarkLukeJohn

In the beginning God made the Heavens and the Earth turning around all

And God said: Let there be life peering and holding and saw: All was good

with firmaments of Heaven clouding around round world with evening and morning contemplating between the ringing

He maketh: grass and herb with seed

cycling life feeding and eating onto stars dusting His lighting.

And He saw: All was good with water under stars with land reflected moon creating great whales and every living creature that moveth

And then He blessed: reaching to touch His grasp around the

finding only leaking loneliness
And hating this aloneliness God cried: I must share

"So God created man in his own image . . .
male and female created He them" mounting
the wheel rotating lifedeath and more life to cycling this
flowing Heaven to Earth-
created whales and herbs with seeds
and great bodies of water to connect the lands
and made man submaster over all who
kindled the pier to friend and share this
greatness
called life,
and she gulped dry tears feeding the pier near the ferriswheel
and holding cycling a roundround
screaming soundless lies
living her share and sharing nothing of goodness and all
rotating her spread legs
and cursing this pier burning her mary seed never fertilized
and God saw that all was good
and sat back with wine and food watching His right toe
spin her ferriswheel round a roundround.

Rosine Crow

John McNaughton
kids used to
give oil' pete
empty pop bottles
for superman comic books
he'd found at Gypsum
plant and
broken toys
he'd brought from the
dump
they'd read the
comics to
him and
he'd roar
scab legged limpy
collie dog skip
took care of him
took care of the kids
when pete died

Polly Cook

OIL PORTRAIT

in the late afternoon
the dark porch air
in movement gathered
women gently
forward so
back and then imperceptibly
their bodies lay
that the rocking
each woman
chairs tilted
looked to her own
she had lound
hands as if quite suddenly
her heart beating there

Karen Hurnburg
STAFF 1970

Editor-in-chief
John M. Gallo

Art Direction & Cover Design
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