



ESSAYS  
STORIES  
POEMS

# ESSE

"Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die,  
 Life is a broken winged bird that cannot fly."

- Langston Hughes

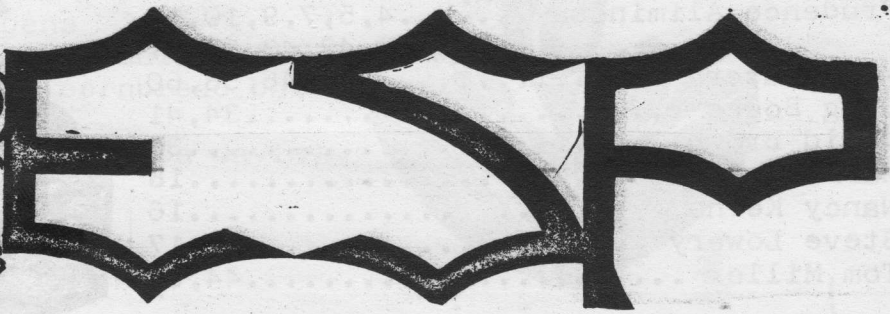
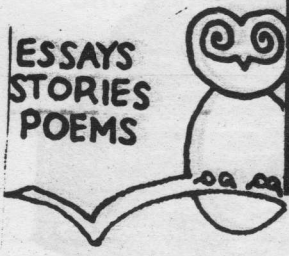
**INTRODUCTION**

Our dream was to publish an anthology of creative works written and drawn by York College of Pennsylvania students. Through hard work and the help of many people along the way, our dream has become a reality--in the form of ESP. ESP is published by and for the students of YCP, and we invite everyone to submit their creative works. We also welcome students to help with the preparation of the magazine--with finances, printing, layout, distribution, typing, and filing. For further information, check with the faculty advisors, or leave a message in the Spartan office. We would like especially to thank the following for their encouragement and support: Dean DeMeester, The Student Senate, and the English/Speech and Art Departments. Last, but not least, we thank all those who submitted to ESP, for without creative works, ESP could not have flown!

**Staff**

- Coordinator of Activities..... Sherrie Holt
- Art Editor.....Prudence Aliminosa
- Layout Editor.....Jennifer S. Brown
- Art Advisor.....Otto Tomasch
- Literary Advisor.....Ben McKulik
- Treasurer.....Tsani Witthoft

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 STORIES  
 POEMS



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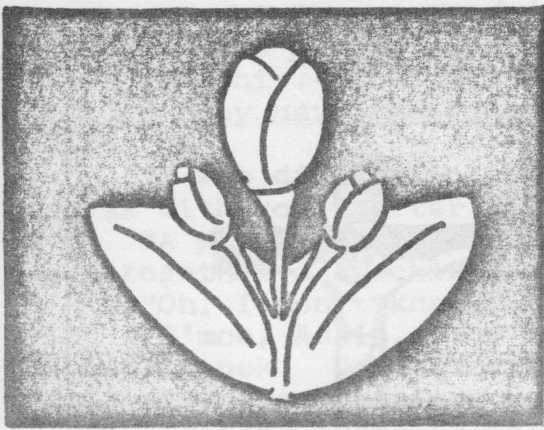
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Brackish river shore...  
minnows rapidly weaving...  
forever's still flow.

(andrea davis)

Washday--clotheslines bend--  
Wind-spun sheets fly full circle--  
Backyard grasses blow.

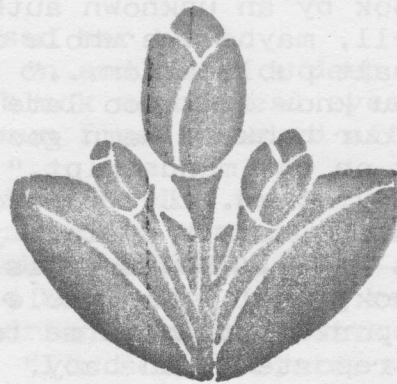
(andrea davis)

Lovers entangled  
Safe on the front porch--Swinging--  
As the ivy grows.

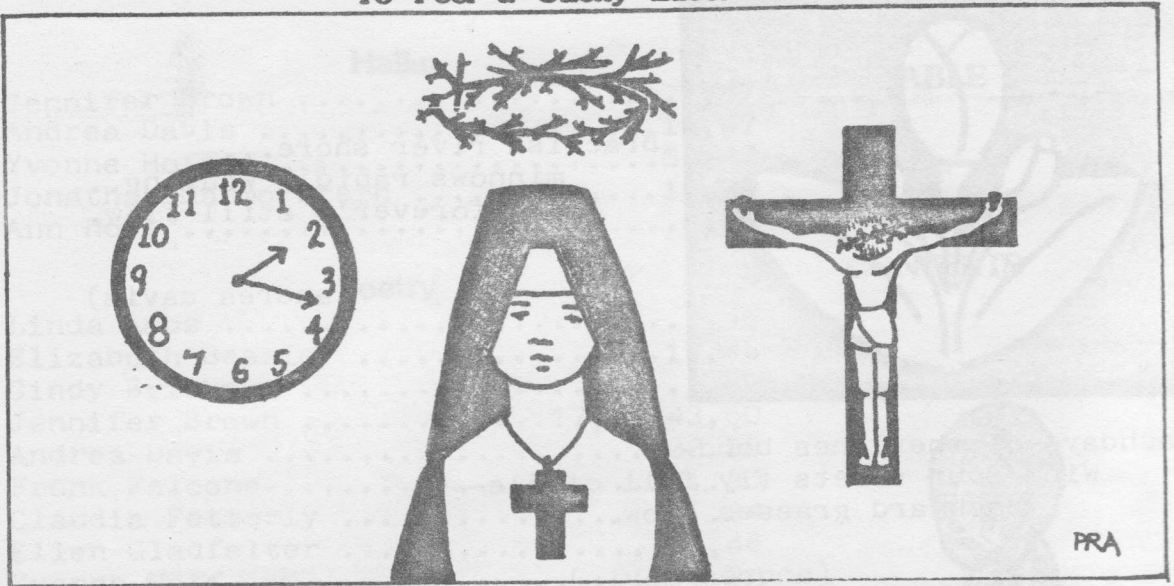
(andrea davis)

A Prayer-plant opens  
Snuggled on the sunlit sill  
while the cornbread bakes.

(andrea davis)



## To Peel a Sticky Label



"You tell Snyder's and Carson's people I don't want to appear on the Tomorrow or Tonight shows," Adrienne said shaking her finger at Joel, her agent.

"But Addie, baby, those shows could mean big bucks in the promotion of your book."

"I tell you...NO! I didn't write the book for fame or fortune. Anyway, I detest talk shows."

"Everybody hates talk shows, but they're necessary evils. C'mon, Addie..."

"Absolutely not...I might consider Meet the Press or Face the Nation..."

"Addie, you're impossible! You really make a tough job impossible. Do you know the intricacies involved in marketing a book by an unknown author?"

"Well, maybe the whole idea was a mistake. Perhaps I should halt publication..."

"You know it's too late for that. But listen, Addie baby. Your book is damn good. I knew it the first time I set eyes on the manuscript."

"Okay, then. Let the book sell itself."

"Wow! I don't believe you. That's not the way this business works. Exposure is the name of the game."

"Look, Joel. The whole thing is making me nervous. Why a reporter followed me to my hotel room the other day."

"A reporter? Oh baby. That's fantastic news. That means someone got a whiff of the galleys somehow. What did

ya say to him?"

"I told her to mind her own business..."

"Oh shit. That was a bad move. Never snub the press 'cause they have the power to crucify someone they don't like."

"I was diplomatic about it, silly. I told her to speak with you. After all, you are my agent."

"A prima donna, eh? Well, we'll make amends. I can get together a quickie press conference."

"Oh, I don't know..."

"C'mon, Addie. You just gotta follow some of the rules. Look. Don't worry. I'll give you my sure-fire, fail-safe press conference pointers."

Adrienne began gathering some of her things. "Okay, Joel, arrange it, but not for today." She started to leave.

"Hey! Where are you going?"

"I've got a luncheon date with some of my colleagues, so I must run."

"But wait..."

"Can't afford to become stale in the world of Psychology. See you later. Gotta go..."



...Adrienne had to go to the bathroom, but she didn't want to raise her hand, and admit it to the class. She squirmed a little, and glanced at the clock.

Let's see, she thought, the little hand is at the two, and the big hand is between the three and the four.

She could not quite figure how many minutes were left in the school day (She hated arithmetic), but she knew there were too many minutes left, and that she would have to face the inevitable.

Slowly, reluctantly, she raised her hand.

The nun who had been droning on and on in a deep somber voice glared at her with two black mechanical eyes.

"What is it, Adrienne?" the nun finally asked after what had seemed an eternity.

Adrienne could feel her spirit sink low to her toes.

"I hafta go to the girls' room," she said tentatively. She thought she could hear Thomas snickering behind her.

"Really, Adrienne. You could have gone during recess."

She's not gonna let me go, Adrienne thought with horror. She squirmed some more. "I'm sorry, Sister Mary-claire," she said pleading.

"Well, since you thought it fitting to put off your lavatory visit through recess, I suppose you can wait a little longer, until class is dismissed."

Adrienne held back her tears. "Yes, sister," she replied, choking. She shifted her weight again.

The nun drew her attention away from Adrienne, and fixed her unchanging eyes to the class in general. Adrienne felt a slight relief as the heat shifted and dissipated throughout the room.

She still had to go, but she discovered that if she shifted around a lot, she had small moments of relief from the nagging pressure on her bladder. Still, there were moments when the urge became so unbearable that she was ready to feel a trickle running down her legs. But, somehow, she managed to squirm just in time to avoid the ultimate humiliation.

"Now class," the nun said, changing her tone from a low drone to a voice which was frayed with slight edges of panic, "since we have been studying about other countries, I think it is time to talk about Russia."

Adrienne felt all color drain from her body. She had heard something bad about Russia from some man on TV, but she couldn't remember what. She didn't want to hear anymore.

"I need to warn you about Russia."

Expectant eyes focused on the nun.

"Russia's people are called 'communists,'" she said, shivering as if the very word could put a curse on a person. "Communists are bad people. They don't believe in God, and they want to take over the United States."

The only truly bad person Adrienne knew was the naughty Thomas who pulled her pigtails, and stole her pencils, but even he wasn't keen on the idea of taking over the United States.

The nun's mouth twitched as she continued: "Communists intend to invade the United States, and they will bring guns. They will creep in everywhere..."

A terrible vision flashed before Adrienne's eyes as drone-like men began snaking underneath a barbed wire fence, their white spiked helmets gleaming in the sun, and laser rifles strapped to their backs. Communists were invading every nook and cranny of the classroom in an endless stream...

"...and one day, you'll come to school, and the nuns and priests will be gone..."

Gone? Adrienne thought, but why?

"...and in our places, you'll find men and women wearing the dreaded armbands with--the--the ham--hammer and sickle." The nun spat out the words, thoroughly convincing Adrienne that the hammer and sickle was something to fear and hate.

I don't wanna hear no more! Adrienne screamed inside her head. She put her hands over her ears.

"...and if they can't get us, then they will blow up the world with nuclear bombs..."

Blow us up?

"...mushroom clouds will grow up everywhere, bringing terrible heat and sickness..."

Adrienne sat glued to her chair as the urine trickled down her legs and into her shoes. She couldn't move, but her heart began thumping loudly against the wall of her chest; she could hardly hear anything else. When she realized what she had done, she started whimpering, half out of fear, half out of humiliation. Her whimpering soon became open sobs; and she could see the blurred faces of her classmates staring at her blankly, for she was the only one crying.

"Adrienne," the nun scolded, "why didn't you raise your hand if you had to go to the girls' room?"

"I-I-I did," she answered, choking on her sobs.

The nun turned a deep scarlet. "Don't talk back to me, missy!"

"I-I-I'm sor-rr-sorry."

"Well, I think a third grader would know better," the nun said, rubbing salt into Adrienne's already raw emotional wound.

Adrienne's legs and feet were soaked, and she wanted to go away and hide. She raised her hand.

"What is it now?"

"May I go home, Sister Maryclaire?" She was dying inside.

"There are fifteen minutes left of class. Surely you can wait until class is dismissed."

Fifteen minutes is forever, Adrienne thought...



"...fifteen minutes, Joel. That's it. You know I detest long interviews," Adrienne snapped as she chewed on the end of her pencil.



"But Addie, you know this one's important," the man whined. Adrienne thought he looked like a ferret. She never did like his rat-like black eyes anyway.

"According to you, all interviews are important. I tell you, I hate them."

"Hey baby. You've got a big book, a best seller in the non-fiction market. Not only is the public singing the virtues of your book, but the medical and educational professions are goin' nuts too. But lemme tell you, babe, all this acclaim will fade fast if you don't keep it going."

"Well, that's fine with me. Then I can get back to my youngsters. After all, if it weren't for them, neither of us would be standing here arguing."

"Don't you realize your book is in the running for the Pulitzer Prize? In two or three days, the Pulitzer board is going to announce the winner. You've got to be exposed. Otherwise the board just might pass you up."

"Joel, if the board awards the prize to me, it will be because they thought my book deserved it, not because I have been kissing bottoms ferociously for two or three days."

"Addie, you are naive in this business. Even the Pulitzer board expects to be stroked."

"Fifteen minutes, Joel, and not one minute longer," she said, her eyes flashing.

Joel sighed. "Okay, babe. But don't come cryin' to me if they give the prize to some broad who wrote a book on 101 Ways to Frizz Your Hair and Conjure Up Your Dead Ancestors."

Adrienne laughed. She got frustrated with him at times, but she liked him most of the time. He seemed genuinely interested in her work. "Don't worry," she reassured him, "it won't be the end of the world if I don't get the prize. I still have my work."

"Harrumph," Joel scoffed. "The Pulitzer Prize only means about 100,000 - 200,000 additional copies sold. Just a matter of small importance."

"It really is small in the larger scheme of things."

Joel slapped the side of his head in mock indignation. "Not this again! Babe, you might have your work to fall back on, but I'm just a poor starving agent. Have a heart!"

"I worry very little about your ability to survive. Long after I'm forgotten, and my book is forgotten, you'll

be out there hustling, and making money hand over fist."

"Not with your help, babe, not with your help..."



"...Leila, I need your help," the nun said standing over Leila Jules with a folded note in her hand.

"Yes, ma'am?" Leila asked, hunched over her desk.

"Could you please take this note to the principal's office?"

Leila reluctantly arose from her seat, and shuffled slowly to the front of the room without uttering a word. Her head hung low, she politely took the note from the nun's hand, and quietly left the room. She caused a minor "click" as she gingerly closed the door behind her. Her footfalls echoed softly and gradually faded away.

At the sound of her last footfall, the nun studied the class intently, and said: "There is something I must say about Leila: she is a pagan."

The dumbfounded expressions of the class made the nun nervous, for she continued nervously: "She is a pagan because she is not baptized. I want all of you to know this because we must pray for her."

Several curious hands shot up.

"Yes, Ronnie?" the nun asked.

"Why isn't she baptized?"

"Her family is not Catholic."

"But why is she here if she's not a Catholic?"

"It is not for us to ask why she is here." The nun said it as if she were trying to convince herself that it was right for Leila to be here. "Father Sebastian enrolled her. Perhaps he has hopes for her conversion," she added hastily.

"Are we going to buy her like we buy pagan babies?" Shirley asked without permission.

"Hush, Shirley. We don't buy pagan babies," she explained in an exasperated voice. "We only donate money to help feed them."

"But you always say when we get five dollars, it will be enough for a pagan baby."

"We only sponsor them. We don't buy human beings."

Adrienne felt sick at the thought of Leila being purposely singled out for conversion. She leaped from her desk, and bolted for the door.

"Adrienne!" the nun called. "Where do you think you are going?"

"I don't feel so good," she answered, covering her mouth with her hand. She ran out into the dark hallway. She really didn't like being out in the hall by herself, for the school was old, and the building creaked and groaned like an old wooden ship, as the timber of the old oak floors tolerated the strain of small feet in perpetual motion. The hall, lined with metal olive green sentries, smelled of ammonia, pine-scented floor compound, and frankincense creeping over from the connecting church. The overhead florescent lights were rarely, if ever, lit.

Adrienne felt a cold silent echo coiling around her as she heard footsteps behind her. She didn't look back. She rushed into the lavatory, and slumped to the floor. She cried, her eyes and throat aching.

The door squeaked open.

"Whatsa matter?" a tiny voice asked above Adrienne.

Adrienne looked up to find a curious, but sympathetic Leila peering at her.

"Oh, nuthin," Adrienne answered. "I just don't feel so good."

"You better go home. Tell Sister Maryclaire."

"I don't wanna tell her nuthin'."

Just then, another little girl strutted into the bathroom like a minature prima donna.

"Sister Maryclaire says you better get back to the room now, or else." the new arrival warned.

"I wanna go home!" Adrienne yelled hysterically.

"I'm gonna tell if you don't get back to the room."

"I don't care!" Adrienne got up, ran out of the bathroom into the hall, and through the double doors leading into the street.

Everybody's gonna pick on Leila now, she thought, remembering her own recent humiliation...



"...Labeling can cause a child to suffer enormous humiliation. Naturally, children want to conform with their peers, even children who aren't quite as gifted as the so-called normal child. That's why I wrote Every Child Is an Exceptional Child," Adrienne said to a group of reporters.

"Ms. Adams, the National Education Association is somewhat split in its opinion of your book. On one hand, proponents say that your non-labeling theory is just what the public and private school systems need. On the other hand, opponents say that not pinpointing a child's problem could result in that child being left behind. How do you respond to that?"

"The problem with labeling is that a child is tagged in kindergarten, and no matter what, that child wears that label all throughout his or her school career. As for my opponents, they can be rest assured that I do not advocate ignoring a child's problems. I'm merely saying that a child's performance ought to be checked often. Also when a child does improve, that should be noted on his or her record, and negative comments should be kept to a minimum. In my group of so-called "hopeless" children, I worked on the premise that each child was going to improve. Amazingly enough, that attitude turned out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy, for every child in the group did improve."

"What are your plans for the future?"

"I'm quite anxious to resume my work with my children."

"Is there another book in the works?"

"In my line of work, one always keeps journals and notes. If I discover anything new, I'm sure I'll write about it."

"There was a recent UPI story about an exceptionally bright child in California who was discovered in a state hospital for the mentally retarded. Did you read the story, and if so, how do you account for such a case?"

"Yes, I've read the story, and I have spoken with some of the officials at that state hospital. Frankly, I am appalled that such a thing could happen. It seems that Jimmy was brought to the hospital about three years ago--at the age of six--when his pediatrician diagnosed him as mentally retarded because he wasn't talking, walking, or using the toilet. The hospital ran the usual battery of tests, and came to the same conclusion as Jimmy's pediatrician. Unfortunately, the hospital never retested the child until about two months ago. It turns out that Jimmy's problem was not mental retardation, but rather autism, a mental disorder that causes a child to recede into a trance-like world. This disease has nothing to do with intellect or ability. Jimmy's very fortunate because he is now being treated for the real problem, but many precious

years were wasted as Jimmy sat in a corner doing nothing."

"Hopefully, such cases are rare..."

"It is hoped that there are very few Jimmies sitting in state hospitals, but I suspect that such cases abound on a smaller scale in the school system. And in my own small way, I will continue lobbying against lumping kids into prescribed slots."

"Well," Joel whispered into Adrienne's ear, "if you are awarded the Pulitzer Prize, your lobbying will carry more weight than you could ever imagine. Fifteen minutes are up."

Adrienne held up her hand as if to hold back the crowd. "One more question before I take my leave."

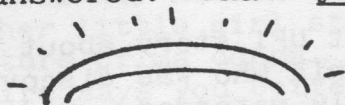
"Dr. Adams, why the dedication for your work? I mean what's in it for you?"

"I have my reasons for pursuing a career oriented around special children, but I do not really wish to discuss them in a press conference. Perhaps I'll write a book about my reasons, but not in the near future."

Adrienne made a move to leave. "Bye, everyone," she said as the reporters attempted to get in one more question.

Adrienne waved to the reporters as she left. "Thank you, everybody."

Several voices answered: "Thank you, Dr. Adams..."



"...thank you for coming, Mr. Adams. Adrienne's grades have been below normal, as you can see," the nun told Adrienne's father as she showed him the child's report card.

Adrienne peeked from behind the crack of the slightly opened cloak room door. Several other kids were milling about, captive inside the small room until the Parent/Teacher conferences would be over. Earlier, Adrienne had excitedly shown her dad a booklet of poems, short stories, and drawings that she had created.

"I'll do anything to help my daughter," her father said as he studied the report card carefully.

"Boy, are you ever in for it," Jerry whispered to Adrienne.

"Sh-h-h," she said, easing closer to the door, "I wanna hear!"

"As you can see, Adrienne's highest mark is a C- in

reading. And I was being kind when I gave her that."

"What can I do to help?"

"I'm afraid it's not quite that simple, for she really cannot be helped."

"What?!?" her father interjected loudly. "Just what are you saying?"

"Adrianne has some serious problems. Twice this year she has wet herself, and three times she has just dashed out of class for no reason at all. She's incorrigible. The other children don't act like that."

"I know she's had some adjustment problems since her mother died, but that certainly does not make her case hopeless..."

"Mr. Adams, your daughter is mentally retarded."

"I don't believe it!"

"I'm sorry, but it's true. I know that a parent never likes to hear such things, but the sooner you accept this situation, the better off she will be."

"How did you arrive at this conclusion, anyway?"

"The children were given I.Q. tests. Adrianne's score was 75. 90 to 110 is considered to be normal."

"I refuse to believe it," he said, picking up the child's booklet. "Just look at this." He flipped through the booklet, pointing out various samples of Adrianne's work. "Listen to this poem--does this have the marks of a child who is mentally retarded? Listen..."

If I were a rainbow  
I would never glide slow  
I would wrap around the world  
In a magic wild swirl"

"Facts are facts. I can show you Adrianne's test profile if you wish."

"I don't want to see any test scores," he said between gritted teeth. "I know Adrianne, and she's a bright little girl."

The nun shrugged. "Suit yourself, Mr. Adams."

In the cloak room, Adrianne turned to Jerry. "Is mentally--uh--whatchamacallit the same as being a pagan?"

"I think it's the same as being a dumbbell," Jerry answered, snickering. "Hey Tommy, Sister Maryclaire says Addie's a dumbbell." The two boys laughed.

Adrianne could hear some of the other kids snickering

and laughing at her. She sat down on the floor, and started crying.

Leila knelt beside Adrienne, and put her arms around her. "I'll be your friend, Addie. Those boys are just dumb! They don't know nuthin'!"

Adrienne pouted determinedly. "I-I-I'll show everybody! I will..."



### ...CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST AWARDED PULITZER PRIZE

WASHINGTON (UPI)—Dr. Adrienne Adams, Child Psychologist and author of the critically acclaimed "Every Child is an Exceptional Child," was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for non-fiction today.

The Pulitzer board voted unanimously to award the prize to Dr. Adams for her book on hopeless children who found hope with a little encouragement.

When reached at her Chicago residence, Dr. Adams said, "I'm quite pleased that publishers and readers see the importance of my work with children."

"I wish to thank the board for its decision, my dad who always believed in me when everyone else jumped ship, a very special mentor here in Chicago, and last--but not least--my special little ones, for they were the ones who actually wrote this book."

Dr. Adams received her

Ph.D from Johns Hopkins University last year. Sections of her Ph.D. dissertation appear in her Pulitzer Prize-winning book.

"I began my experiment with my so-called hopeless children two years ago as Ph.D. candidate at Hopkins."

"The basis of my experiment was quite simple: Give so-called hopeless children unlimited hope. My own hope was that they would respond to constant encouragement."

"I got the idea three years ago from a wire service story about an elderly school teacher here in Chicago who taught special-ed and so-called incorrigible children."

"According to the story her approach was so unique that educators and the courts sent end-of-the-line kids to her; I mean these kids were one step away from state hospitals or jail."

"When these kids came

to this teacher, she immediately tore up their past school and police records because she wanted everyone to start with a clean slate."

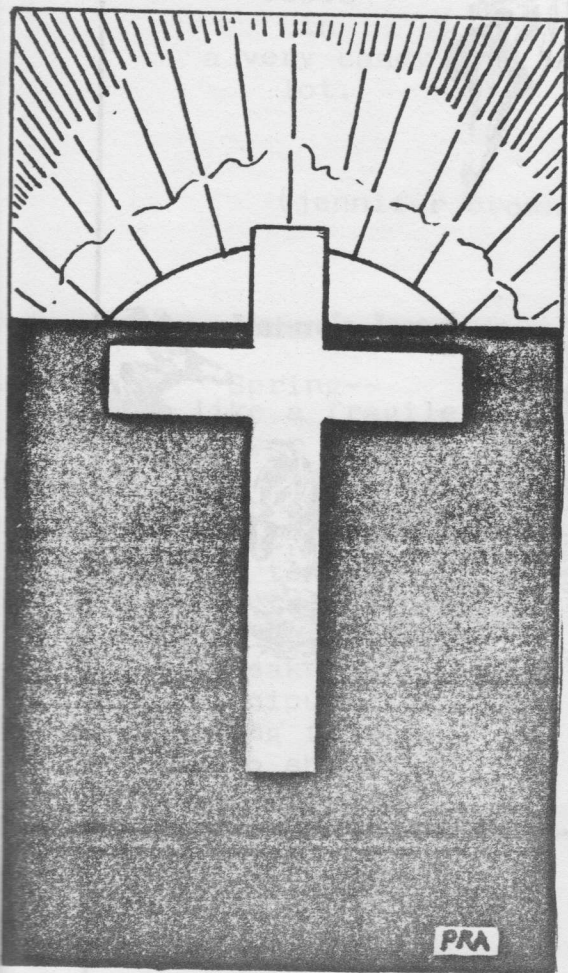
"I was so intrigued by her method that I tracked her down, and interviewed her. Over a period of a year, I observed her methods closely, and I be-

came a believer."

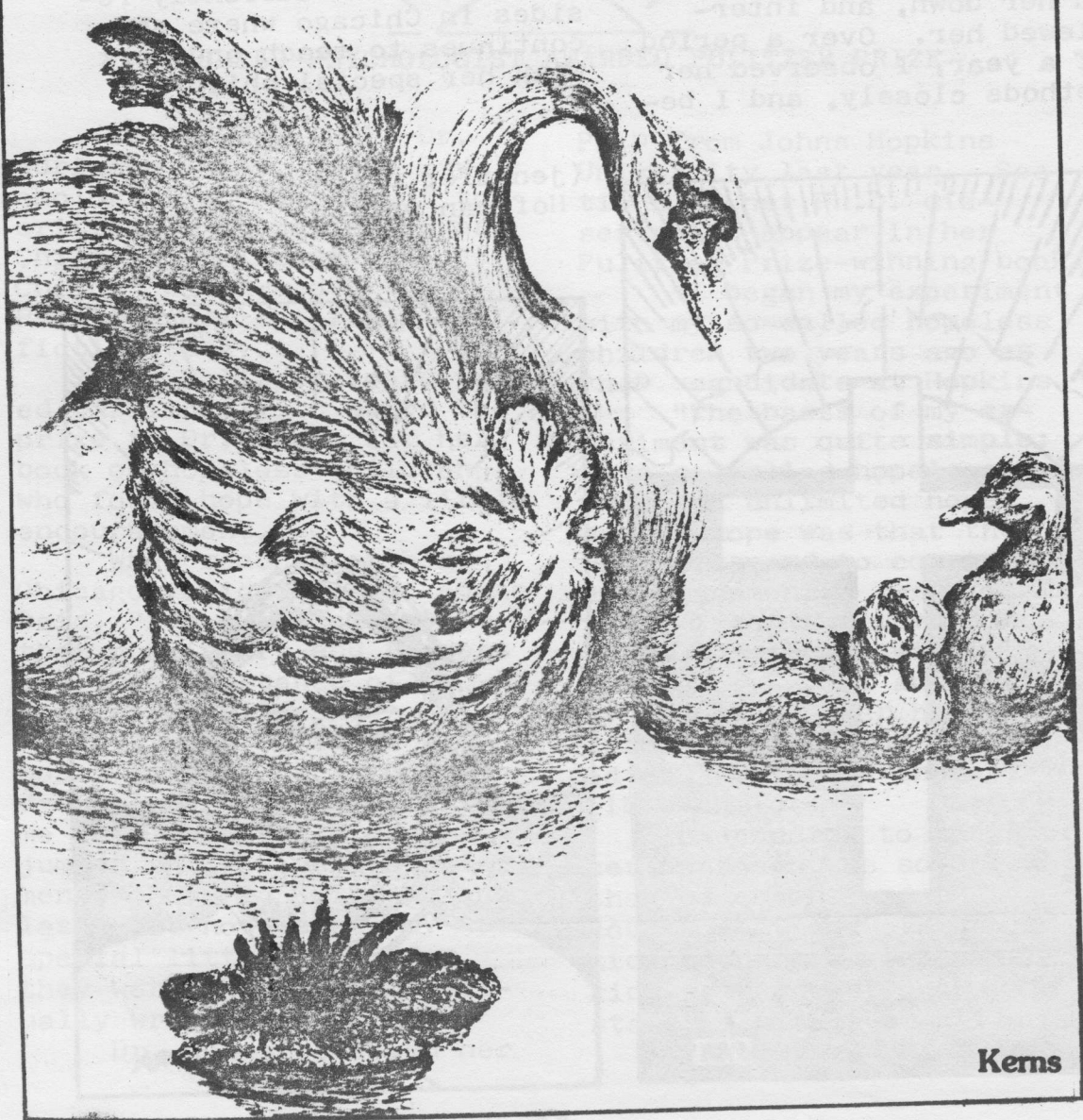
"I mention her in my book under an alias because she wishes to remain anonymous so that she may continue her work without interruption."

Dr. Adams currently resides in Chicago where she continues to teach and work with her special children.

(jennifer brown)  
Hoffman prize







## The Fumble

There was a girl  
who  
preferred  
to play ball  
with  
ivy-league  
men.  
She  
ended by  
setting down  
roots  
in  
a very sandy  
lot.

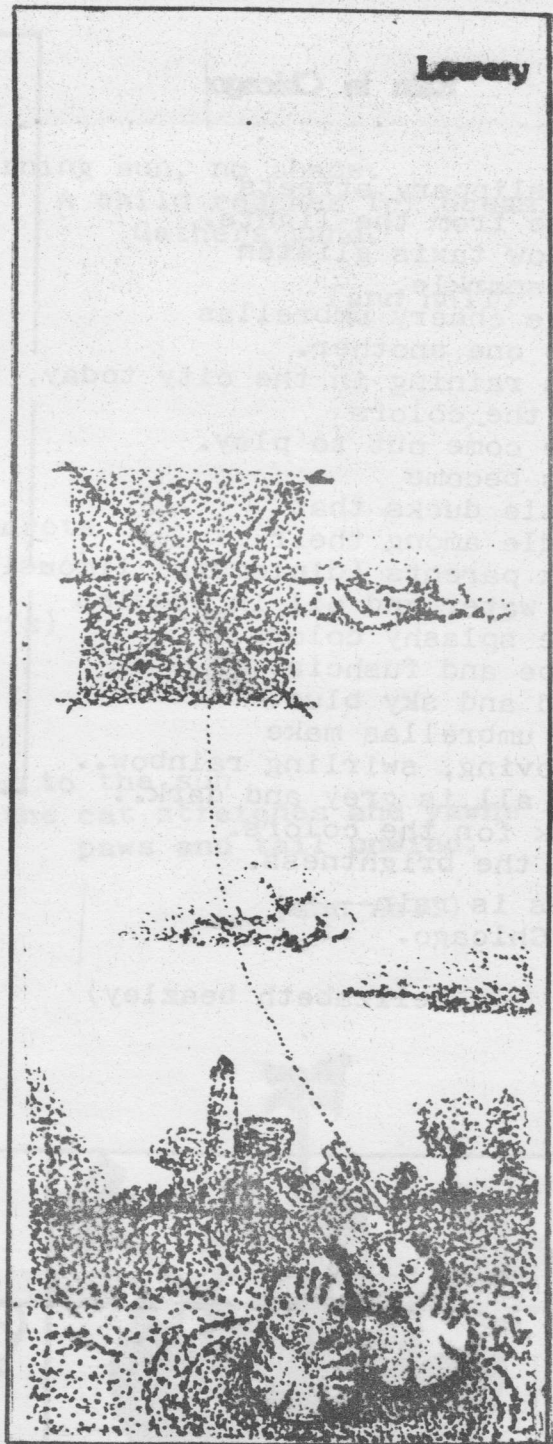
(jennifer brown)

## Nature's Jest

Spring--  
like a fragile  
paper kite--  
plays  
high and free;  
but Summer  
tenses  
its taut line;  
Autumn  
sneaks past,  
manipulating  
young flowers  
into shriveled  
stems.

(jennifer brown)

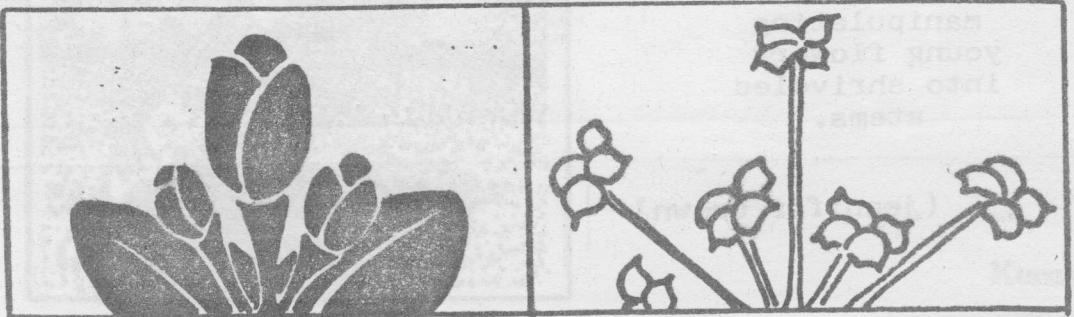
Lowery

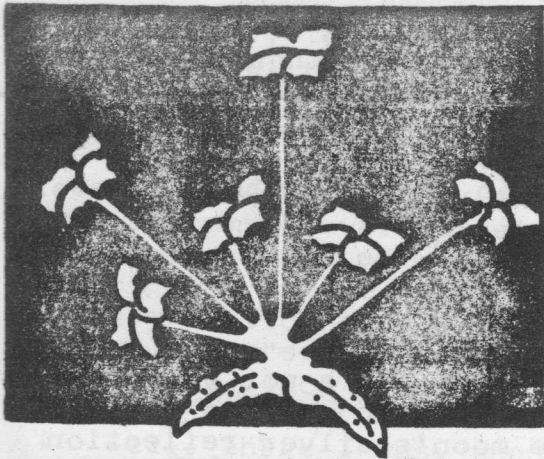


## Rain in Chicago

The slippery streets  
Shine from the lights.  
Yellow taxis glisten  
And sparkle,  
While cheery umbrellas  
Bump one another.  
It's raining in the city today,  
And the colors  
Have come out to play.  
Cabs become  
Little ducks that  
Paddle among their  
Dark parents (diplomats' limousines).  
The water and oil in puddles  
Make splashy colors.  
Grape and fuschia.  
Gold and sky blue.  
The umbrellas make  
A moving, swirling rainbow..  
Not all is grey and dark..  
Look for the colors.  
See the brightness.  
This is rain--  
In Chicago.

(elizabeth beazley)





Morning sun, no shade.  
A child reaches for ocean --  
Gathers sand.

(ann noll)

Black clouds racing by  
water-soaked steaming concrete  
sends up summer's smell.

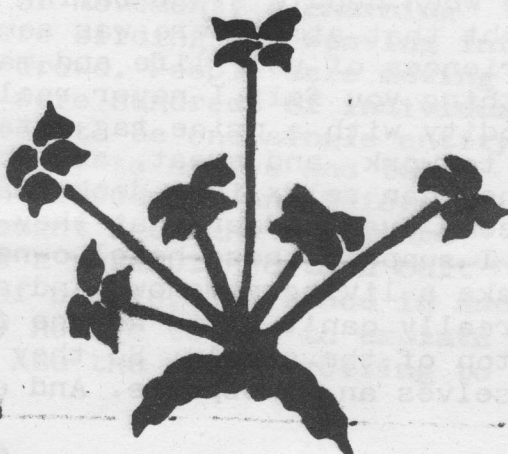
(andrea davis)

Waking to the sun  
the cat stretches and yawns --  
paws and tail unwind.

(ann noll)

Green beans  
are parked in clusters  
like fire engines.

(jonathan marmorstein)



Sometimes there's a fine line between life in a carefree plastic vacation paradise and the search for shelter and anonymity among a crowd.

And sometimes you can learn more in a weekend than in all your school days put together.

### Senior Week

There's something about the ocean at night. It's not the grey stretch of footprinted sand that fades into an endless horizon of churning black water. It's not the moon's silver reflection on the sea's dark waves. It's not even the gaudy chaos of light and noise emanating from the crowded boardwalk. I guess you'd call it atmosphere. That's what the Wildwood Chamber of Commerce and all the hotel owners call it in the travel brochures. They show us pictures of sand, sunshine, and chesty young models playing volleyball around the hotel pool. And they include a two-page fold-out of a nondescript brownish tan room with inoffensive reproductions of somebody's high school art final framed on the walls.

They only hire homecoming queens with clear skin and blue eyes to answer the phones and smile sweetly when they hand you the room key. They paint all the trim in soothing, eye-pleasing shades of aqua and lime. And they call this conglomeration of plastic sea creatures and decorative fishnetting--atmosphere.

Now it seems to me that the world must be in pretty sad shape when people start paying for atmosphere. I had always thought that atmosphere was something that enveloped certain experiences of your life and made them special, that it was something you felt. I never realized that it was a marketable commodity with a price tag attached. It seems sad that people have to work, and sweat, and toil for fifty weeks a year just so they can relax in a deck chair for a couple hundred hours. It seems even sadder that they have to pay for a place to rest. But, I suppose those hotel owners and boardwalk hawkers have to make a living somehow. And as long as folks keep demanding, you really can't blame anyone for skimming a little profit off the top of the supply. So they all got together and built themselves an atmosphere. And every year hundreds of thousands

of world weary tourists, traveler's cheques in hand, migrate to the land of neon, horseshoe crabs and two dollar-a-bottle beer.

High school seniors are no different. They hand us our piece of paper, we check the spelling, somebody cries, and then we stumble over ourselves getting into Camaros and Volkswagons (crammed with seven to twelve co-ed passengers and luggage) and we "head for the shore." It's gotten to be such a tradition that all of Wildwood sets aside a month and calls it "senior week", then they double their orders of Stroh's and black T-shirts.

well, there I was, supported solely by a boardwalk rail, reasonably numb from tequila sunrises drunk in a bar notorious for accepting your older brothers expired driver's license as proof of age. The ocean breeze was reeking havoc on my shoulder length brown hair, tied into place by a red bandana. Like the "illustrated man" the arcade lights painted moving multicolored reflections across my bronzed skin. I adjusted the ceramic bead on the leather strap around my neck as I glanced into one of the thousands of boardwalk mirrors. Through my bloodshot haze I studied my reflection, and slowly smiled. I was happy with what I saw. I was clad in the accepted (if not mandatory) garb of the All-American beachfront male, ridiculously tight Levi's and a black concert T-shirt.

I directed my admittedly limited focus back to the boardwalk crowd. At first, a wave of disbelief shook my mind clear. Somewhere, in those first few seconds of focusing my thoughts, I saw it. It was a blur of movement, a churning mass of noise and color. People were sliding by, weaving into the seemingly uniform mesh of the crowd. People were moving in waves. Of course, I knew these were hundreds of individuals but just for a moment, they appeared to be one single entity on a pilgrimage to a desired end, only to arrive and turn back again. It was truly an ocean of people, and before my head could clear completely, I thought I caught a strange scenario being played out. It bore a resemblance to a cult worship ceremony. It was a group of people, who stood in awe of the ocean, and they came to pay homage to it, to emulate it in a pathetic neon caricature. And the ocean, rolling to

it's desired end, stopped to observe this tribute, then slowly receded into itself and turned back again. But I couldn't handle the degrading ramifications of this tragic social comment, so I fired-up another cigarette.

As I inhaled on my fifth Marlboro in the past half hour, I noticed her. Granted, at my age, and in my condition I was noticing most every female that sauntered past. But somehow, she seemed different. I only had two more nights left in Wildwood and I vowed I was going to pick-up someone who was not from my own school for a change. It's funny, if I'd have seen her two weeks earlier in school, I might not have noticed her. But at the shore things are different, or at least they seem to be, and at that particular time I wasn't in any frame of mind to quibble. She looked at me, quickly turned away, then glanced again, to see if I was still watching her. I'd seen this performance a hundred times before, and it usually led to nothing. I can recall so many pointless evenings of following someone around a shopping mall on the offchance that a sideways glance would lead to the infamous "pick-up." However, they always found their boyfriends or gazed longingly backward as they left with their parents. It was at best a fleeting ego boost, at worst, an adolescent frustration over my own gullibility and wasted time, or an almost "romantic" frustration over what might have been. Experience had proven this "bait and chase" essentially futile, but the lure of that "chance" was seductively inescapable. So, even though I knew that any cynical psyche major would have a field day with my peer accepted, preprogrammed response, I let my body slump back on the rail, felt my eyelids sag half-closed, took another hit off my cigarette and decided to play "let her know I see her looking."

She appeared to be sixteen or seventeen. She was blonde, small, well-built, with a look that the boardwalk jocks would call "sluttish", but was, in reality, very sexy and alluring. She didn't walk, per se, she seemed to glide, to ride this boardwalk crest of humanity. Her body, firm and lithe, seemed to dance across the boardwalk. Her tanned, smooth skin contrasted beautifully with the wavy mane of blonde hair that fell around her shoulders and framed her face. Her jeans were well-worn and tight. Her white top, slightly draping over her shoulders, drew taunt on her

well-rounded breasts, then fell earthward, barely covering her flattened stomach. She seemed to be at ease with her sensuality, and moved with the graceful street rhythm of a counter-culture heartbreaker. There was an air about her. I guess you'd call it atmosphere. My mind was racing with a thousand thoughts, some of them respectable, when she abruptly turned towards me.

I had initially become aware of her sensuous aura simply because she stood out in the crowd. But now, as she headed in my direction, the more subtle aspects of her seductive charm began to envelope me. I saw the misty blue eyes, the petite gold neck chain and, as she drew closer I caught a trace of perfume that caused me to draw up and shift my stance in an uncomfortable expression of weakness. I wondered if she noticed my obvious discomfort in her presence. I was more than a little scared, I really didn't know how to go about this. Up until now sex had always involved good old Lisa, who sat behind me in American Government class, and the pathetic little white trash that shot pinball in the shopping mall arcade. As she hesitated a few steps in front of me I started rehearsing my responses one by one. I was still attempting to maintain my composure (and fighting back the urge to scream "I'm Yours" or something equally tacky) as I inhaled again on my cigarette, which, I discovered, had gone out minutes ago. I hastily flicked the butt over the rail, panic being the better part of discretion, and turned back into her. I saw my initial estimate had been wrong. If this little nymphette claimed to be older than fifteen I was going to ask for picture ID. While visions of the inevitable kiddie porn jokes and innuendos about cradle robbing danced through my head, I then remembered some of the older, but far uglier conquests my roommates had brought back to the hotel room and I didn't feel so bad. I also remembered the twenty-dollar bet we had on the nicest looking pick-up, and my confidence surged. Surged, that is, until she spoke.

"You got any 'ludes for sale?"

"Huh?" I managed to choke out.

"Do you have any qualudes you could sell me? I've been down this damn boardwalk forty times tonight and I can't find any."



Despite the wash of disappointment that echoed through my mind, I did a quick mental inventory of my stash back in the hotel room. "Yeah," I answered, "but not on me. If you can stand walking a couple blocks I think I still have four or five."

She paused a minute, considering my request. Suddenly her eyes danced to life and she smiled as she responded. "Why not? There's nothin' happening here tonight. Let's go get wasted."

I couldn't help smiling too. Fine with me, I thought, and after congratulating myself a couple hundred times, I started moving through the hustle of the boardwalk crowd. She followed. I wanted to offer my hand and lead, but...I decided against it. We got to the street with relative ease. I looked at her again. There are thousands of girls that look like Miss America from a distance. But she had something special. She may have been young, but she was one of the sexiest things I had seen in a long time.

"What's your name?" She asked.

"Rick." I ventured discreetly.

"Hi Rick, I'm Melissa. Where ya' from?"

"Up near Reading, Pennsylvania...little town called Collegeville." I stopped speaking for a second, and somewhat apologetically continued. "You probably never heard of it."

"I heard of Reading. I'm from Camden, Jersey...just a coupla' minutes from Philly."

"Yeah, I've been there."

"What've you been doin' tonight?"

"A little social drinking, nothing intense."

"Yeah, me too, up at a bar on Grant Street. The Sundowner."

Terrific, I thought, that was the bar I got refused

entrance to because 'I didn't look old enough.'

She spoke again. "You down here for senior week?"

Now, I was aware of the stigma of naivete associated with the high school senior, and this seemed like a challenge to me. I was beginning to wish she would shut up and just let me look at her. I hesitated somewhat, but finally managed a quiet response. "Um hm. I just graduated last Friday."

"How long ya' down here for?"

"Couple more days. This is the place." The hotel, in all its plastic splendor, towered in front of us. Her hair and face seemed somehow older, almost streetwise in the green and gold bath of light from the hotel sign. It was clear she had been in this situation before. We climbed the wrought-iron hotel stairs and I fished for my key. Once inside, I gave a silent thanks that none of my roommates were there. I quickly picked up some of the scattered clothing and threw the bedspread over the displaced pile of crumpled sheets and folded pillows we called a bed. I took a yellow envelope off my bureau and opened it.

"How many do you want?" I asked.

"Whatever you can spare."

I gave her all five, knowing that my roommates had brought more in case of emergencies. She looked down. Funny, I knew what was coming next.

"I don't have any bucks." She said quietly.

"Yeah, I figured."

No one said anything for a second. Then, she slipped her arms around my neck, and slowly drew my body closer to hers. When she kissed me, I didn't resist.

"Wait," I said, breaking away. "I've gotta' put something on the door so we're not barged in on."

"Sure." She smiled. I practically sprinted to the door.

I tied my bandana around the outside door knob. I locked the door, and turned back towards the bed. She was already disrobing. I kissed her again.

Six a.m. came with Mark, one of my roommates, stumbling through the door. He, seeing us, bid a hasty and apologetic retreat. We were alone again, alone and awake.

"Hi," she said. Her hair now sprawled across the pillow in a hundred different directions, her makeup was smeared around her eyes.

"Hi."

"I want to thank you for..." She began, but I stopped her.

"How long ago did you runaway?"

"What?"

"C'mon, you're a runaway."

"God, I hate that word."

"How long?"

She hesitated. "About three weeks ago."

"When did the money run out,"

"About a week-and-a-half ago."

I reached for my wallet.

"No, don't. Please," she said softly. "It would make me feel like a whore."

"That's not it at all," I protested. "I just want to make sure you have something...so you can eat."

She shook her head. "I just wouldn't feel right."

I looked at her long and hard. "That didn't seem to

matter last night."

From the immediacy of her response I could tell I had hit home. "That was different. I...look, I'll just split right now, okay?"

I shook my head. "No, not okay. Hey, look were you bullshitting me about living in Camden?"

"No."

"Good, then tomorrow, when we leave, we'll drop you off there."

"No." She lowered her face.

"Why not?"

"Because there's nothing for me in Camden, now. There's nothing left."

"Sure there is."

She looked me square in the eyes. "No. You don't know the situation."

"Look honey, I admire your independence, but..."

"I'll just take-off now, all right?"

"No."

"Look, I'll scream rape."

"Sure, and you'll end up back home so fast it'll make your head swim."

She was silent for a second. "What do you care about me going home?"

"I don't. But I do care about you staying here. This isn't the safest of places, y'know."

"I can manage."

"But for how long? There are a lot of strange people out there."

"Yeah, I think I met one."

"Oh, very funny. Christ, I'm not a boy scout, this isn't my good deed for the day. I have this bad habit of caring about the girls I sleep with. I'm sure I'll grow out of it eventually, but for now...Look, I like you. You realize how dangerous it is out there?"

"So who are you, my father?"

Melissa, c'mon. You hear about it everyday. Runaways, hitchhikers, young girls being raped, or murdered. You can't protect yourself."

"Obviously you grew up on the "backstreets" of Colledgeville."

I glared at her.

"Okay, I take it back. I'm really flattered that you care, but..."

"nothing could be that bad. Why risk this much? Tell me, what's wrong at home?"

As soon as I said it I wished I hadn't. She obviously didn't want to talk about it. I don't think she even wanted to remember it. She turned away. I put my arm around her.

"I'm sorry," I said. But, I knew I'd lost. I decided to give it one last try. ...

"Hey look, I got some friends in Allentown you can crash with. They're party people, and they got plenty of room. They can put you up for a month or so. It'll give ya' time to sort your head out...Kinda' find yourself."

"Allentown," she said sarcastically, "that sounds like

a barrel of laughs."

"It's not too bad," I smiled, "It beats the hell out of Collegeville."

She thought for a moment.

"No," she said, "I'm gonna' head for Florida, I've never been there."

I sighed at the futility of my arguments. "And there's nothing I can say to change your mind?"

"No...but thanks."

"Then do me a favor, at least let me buy you breakfast."

"Sure," she smiled, and headed for the shower.

Well I bought her breakfast, and after a little coaxing, lunch and dinner, too. And that night, I gave her a place to sleep and someone to hold onto. The next day, as we packed the car, I noticed her blue eyes were a little clouded and I watched a tear fall on the powder blue Wildwood sweatshirt I bought her. She handed me a folded sheet of hotel stationery and told me not to read it until I got home. She hugged me, kissed me goodbye, and pretended not to notice the money I slipped into her back pocket. Then, she walked away.

Once she was out of sight, I opened the letter. It didn't really say too much, just "goodbye," "thanks," and "I love you."

Well, we made it home all right. Everybody paid Mark twenty dollars because he picked up a homecoming queen from Lancaster. My parents couldn't understand how I spent three hundred dollars in one week. I started working at a grocery store. I got a letter telling me who my college roommate would be.

Funny, he was from Camden.

I never saw Melissa again. But, in August I got a postcard with a Ft. Lauderdale cancellation. The address

read simply, "Rick Stevens, Collegeville, Pennsylvania."  
And it said, "I finally made it. I'm living with a guy  
down here, you'd like him, he's alot like you. Take care  
and party on! All My Love, Melissa.

(todd dell)  
Hoffman winner

### Yucatan Saloon

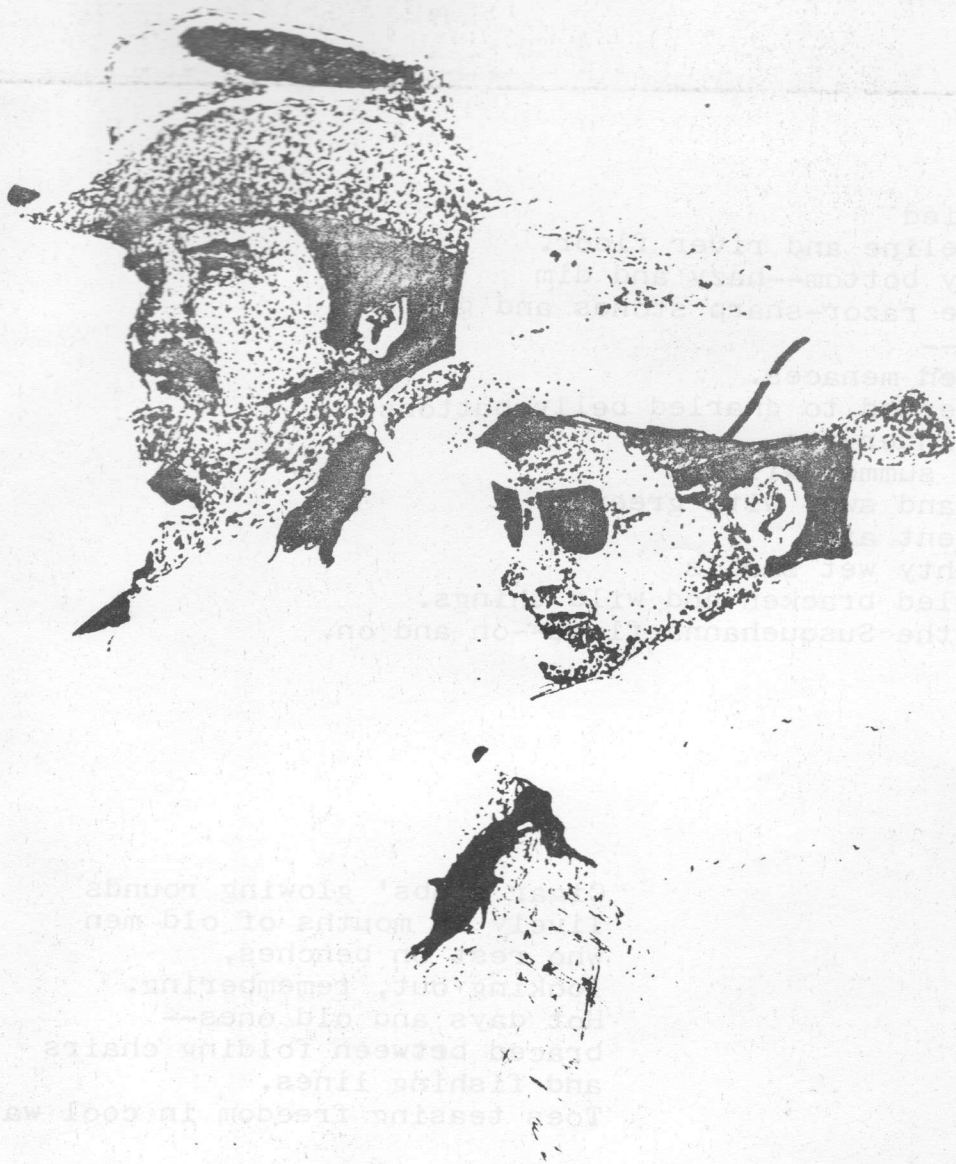
Ancient gold ornaments  
exhumed from Yucatan soil  
mysteriously litter the bar  
before us  
as a drunk and drugged platoon  
of hip semi-conscious patrons,  
festooned in 21st Century paraphernalia,  
promenade and stumble around.

I whisper strongly  
about getting you  
into a pleasingly awkward position  
and you say "awkward hell"  
pulling me by the hand  
to a secluded corner of the parking lot  
and recline against an elegant limosine  
while lifting your challis party dress  
high above your thighs, inviting me in.

We blister the bumper paint!

(And while immersed  
in the confluence of our love,  
not 50 yards away,  
a Mayan woman yanks life from a well  
then disappears  
into the jungle's fierce embrace.)

(frank falcone)



**Brown**



## Columbia Riverbank

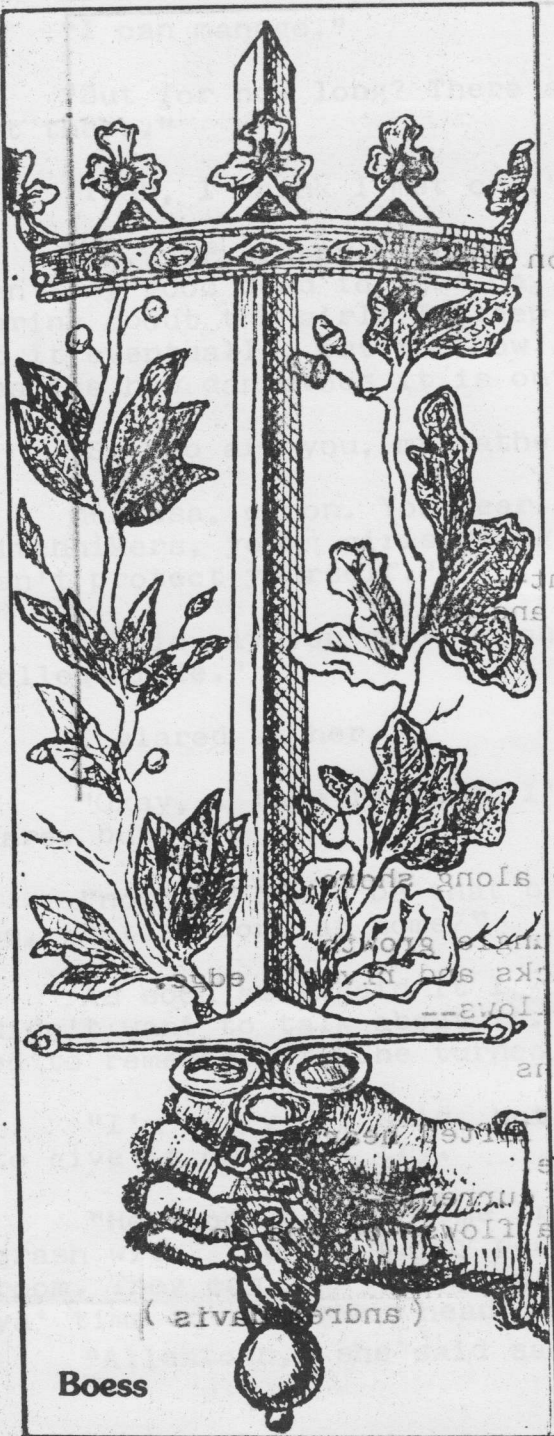
Muddied  
shoreline and river floor.  
Rocky bottom--hazy and dim  
where razor-sharp stones and glass  
wait--  
hidden menaces.  
Submersed to gnarled belly buttons  
by winter-ice,  
now, summer willows  
sag and sway with green.  
Pungent air  
weighty wet smells  
mingled bracken and wild things.  
And the Susquehanna flows--on and on.

Cigar stubs' glowing rounds  
lively in mouths of old men  
who rest on benches,  
looking out, remembering.  
Hot days and old ones--  
braced between folding chairs  
and fishing lines.  
Toes teasing freedom in cool water.

While the Susquehanna flows--on and on.  
Summer gives the "set"  
younger ones enter on cue  
and hand-holding-hand  
span the span  
end to end.  
Seeing eyes in the river--  
seeing rivers in the eyes.  
Parked cars and promises,  
shared secrets after sunset.  
Hardly seen--the choppy current--  
And the Susquehanna flows--on and on.

Little ones scramble along shore.  
Daring days--  
swinging vines and jungle growth  
between railroad tracks and river's edge.  
Wading in shaded shallows--  
spawn of overflow.  
Scavenging for lengths  
along the line  
yields wearied legs, lifted hearts  
mucky feet slosh home.  
Away from the racing current--  
While the Susquehanna flows--on and on.

( andrea davis )



### So Many Things

So many things to keep in mind  
 THE DETAIL TO REMEMBER  
 Is it truly that important?  
 TO GO ON AND ON AND ON  
 Never having a  
 FREE MINUTE  
 To relax and listen  
 CAPTURING THE SOUNDS OF SUMMER

(yvonne hoff)

### Seeing You

Seeing you, I reach out...  
 Stopping myself  
 Stopping myself, I hesitate...  
 Longing for you  
 Longing for you, I love...  
 Grasping hold  
 Grasping hold, I lose...  
 Control of  
 Control of, I release...  
 Willingness  
 Willingness, I regain...  
 Seeing you

(claudia fetterly)

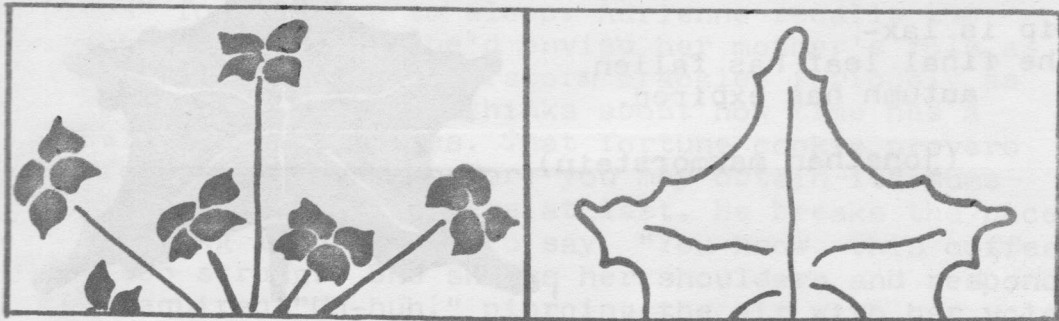
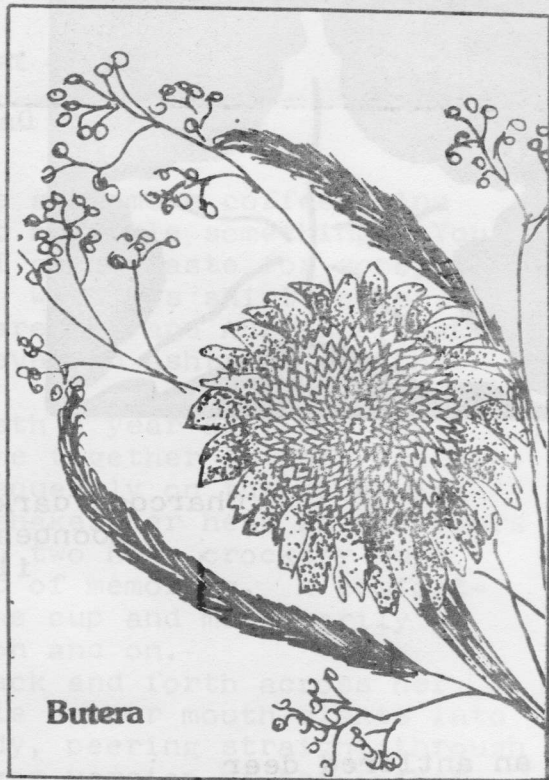
Boess

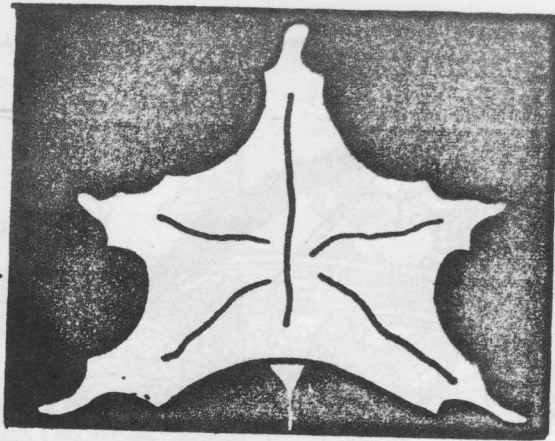
## Big Apple --

Kaleidoscope of man, mingling  
On steaming blocks of rock,  
Honking yellow streaks  
Duck the lights,  
While the Student Prince  
winks at Disco Dolly;  
Dante beside Updike,  
Racked on the stacks,  
And facing each other.  
On the spiral stair  
The nudes and cubes,  
Bellies bulging  
with geographical goulash,  
Streets harbor  
Hookers and bookers  
As they taunt and hawk --  
Bands, Bums, Broadway:

Take a bite--it's succulent.

(ellen gladfelter)





Dangling helplessly  
The shadows disappearing --  
Now, the tree is bare.

(yvonne hoff)

Charcoal darkness...  
moonbeams burst out from a cloud  
illuminating the night.

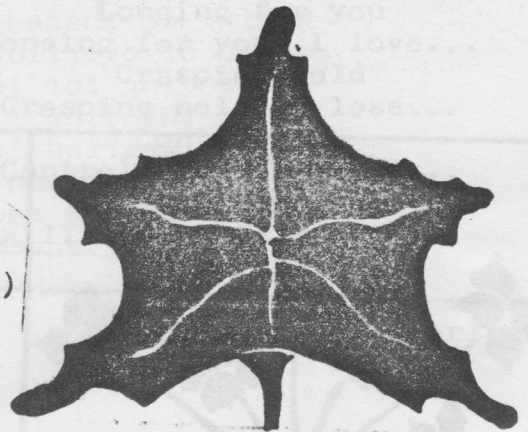
(jonathan marmorstein)

As an antlered deer  
brushed up against a wood stove,  
caterpillar ticklings raced along its spine.

(jonathan marmorstein)

Its grip is lax-  
the final leaf has fallen,  
autumn has expired.

(jonathan marmorstein)



## A Father-Daughter Sort of Thing

"Hey Adrienne, could I have some more coffee? And do you have anything sweet--just a little something? You know your cookie jar's empty. I get a taste for something sweet once in awhile." Fumbling with his shirt pocket, Andy snatches at a crumpled cigarette, and Adrienne, taking her cue, jumps up and retrieves an ashtray from the top of the refrigerator.

Ever since her mother's death a year ago, she and Andy have been spending more time together in this kitchen. Adrienne, like it or not, is frequently on the receiving end of Andy's monologues. She shakes her head as she pours the coffee, highly creamed, into two huge crockery mugs and braces herself for a torrent of memories. A comforting trail of steam rises from the cup and momentarily hides Andy's face as he clucks on and on.

Her tongue darts rapidly back and forth across her front teeth, then suddenly stills as her mouth slants into a wicked smirk. Squinting at Andy, peering straight through him, Adrienne visualizes a younger version of her father--constantly zigzagging, the perpetual mover, spreading himself between Nook, Sam and Drew, those recipients of Andy's baseball know-how and endless interest during the growing up years. Where are these cousins now?--now, when he is quite happy to perch at her table, quite content to preen in the warmth of this old weathered room.

"You'll take care of me when I'm old," she remembers Andy telling her when she was ten. She raises her eyes from the cup's rim and takes in the present picture of Andy--older and thinner, smoking too much and relying on "nightcaps" for getting to sleep. Adrienne recalls the times, when as a child, she'd envied her mother's role as Andy's wife. The June thunderstorm crackles furiously as Adrienne, tapping her cup, thinks about how time has a way of balancing inequities. That fortune cookie proverb "Be carefull what you wish for; you may obtain it" sums up her situation. Andy is hers at last. He breaks the pace of his rambling long enough to say, "You know, this coffee's a little too strong." She shrugs her shoulders and responds with the required "Uh-huh," piercing the air with her voice

so he's certain that she's missing none of his wisdom.

Andy, weathered and time-hardened as an old barn, heaves out with his cigarette hack, brittle and deep in his chest. His long, nicotine-yellowed fingers scratch his head, and the fine hair left to him is eccentrically home-clipped, giving it the appearance of being constantly on edge and ready for the attack. He rattles his false teeth at the dog and waits for his cinnamon toast.

"God! I was thinking about my chickens! Do you remember them, Adrienne? How about that little cock you hand-raised! Humpbacked and lame." Andy's wrinkled brow shows measured deliberation. "That bird was game--a fighter."

Adrienne grins. It was a long time ago. She must have been about seven the summer he brought home a crate of fighting chickens and proceeded to build two fenced runs--one on either side of the hunting dog's house. God, how her mother complained! And the entire neighborhood soon woke regularly at sunup. Adrienne remembers it all--the russet hen with her peeps--and the loner, who for unknown reasons both mother and kin turned against.

"Adrienne, sometimes they just do it and that's that," Andy had responded to her anguished questions as he'd arched his lanky body right over top of hers. with his long-armed reach overshadowing her own, his quick fingers had penetrated the pen's depths and rescued the cornered peep. She'd kept on fidgeting with the waist of her pants; those bought-to-grow-into jeans were really for a nine year old; and, Andy had sat there on her old swing massaging that tiny, still form with the coarse terry washcloth she'd brought him. The peep's eyes were bloodied and swollen shut; he could barely hold his head up; those adolescent feathers he'd just begun to sprout were stiff with blood, and his leg was mangled. Andy kept on rubbing gently. "Sometimes they'll just turn on one of their own, and once the blood gets going its smell drives them crazy. They'd have pulled this guy apart if you hadn't yelled." As the washcloth fell away, they'd examined their patient. Andy met her gaze as she'd stood there, eyedropper in hand. "I don't know; maybe it'd be kinder to let him die. He sure is sick. But how'd you like to see if he's a fighter?" She and Andy had drizzled water down the peep's beak, rubbed him somewhat cleaner and bedded him down in an orange crate. The June weather did the rest. That crate was coffin-quiet for a few days; then, shrill chirps, growing daily in sheer

persistence, signaled the small outcast's resurrection from his wooden tomb. wide-eyed with wonder, Adrienne watched him heal and grow and change from wretched to magnificent, all copper and gold in the summer sun.

With a hoot, Andy brings her back to the present. "That little devil had the whole yard to himself--could scratch and pick for his own grubs--damn little strut had his own private run." Andy guzzles his coffee and allows the customary drops and crumbs to fall on the gritty kitchen floor. Adrienne feels the grit as she moves her moccasin back and forth under the table. Tommy, her ten year old, invades the room and greets his pap by bestowing a knuckle-rub on the back of Andy's head where stray stubble gives the appearance of pinfeathers. The basset hound has positioned herself fast by Andy's scrawny legs, anticipating a pat on the head and the inevitable scattering of tidbits.

Andy eyes his grandson. "You know what? Now listen! One day your mom and me took this peep, except now he was a big cock bird, and we put him back in with his mother and brothers and sisters. He was the best of the bunch. Darned if they weren't all scared of him! Even his mammy. Hah! Oh, your mom was scared to do it at first, afraid they'd hurt him again." Andy gulps his coffee and deposits a swarm of Lucky Strike remnants on the floor as his flailing hands brush the ashtray. Adrienne leans back in the captain's chair and props her feet high up on the long beam of wood which supports the trestle table's weight. She motions to Andy, with a wave of her hand, and bums a cigarette.

"Adrienne," he grins, surrendering the pack, never once breaking the rhythm of his words. "You sure were some trainer. Tommy, your mom hand-fed that bird; he'd come running, just like your pup, whenever she called. I won a lot of matches with that cock." His eyes are dreamy; Andy is caught up in the long ago, back with his old friends at the cock fights. Adrienne, even now feeling a quiver, hates to think about the gloves, the steel spurs.

Andy stretches far back in his chair, in a vain attempt to ward off his grandson's pummeling, then suddenly leaps to his feet first dodging then returning the sparring blows. As he lithely bends over to pull up his knee socks, Adrienne notices Andy's rawboned ankles, born and bred for the spurs. He brushes off the cinnamon crumbs, to the dog's delight, and hacks out, "Hell, it's getting late! I gotta get going. Have



a few jobs I want to do down home."

Adrienne stands and follows him. "Hey dad, switch sweaters will you. The one you're wearing smells like the barn. Bring it up tomorrow, and I'll wash it. Do you hear me?" He already is far into the living room and heading for the front door. Bracing her back against the kitchen arch, she watches him as he confronts her mother's oval picture. With a cigarette still dangling from his lips, he breathes out one, soft, "Damn." Then, with a predictable quirk, he quickly turns and buries his cigarette stub in her prize plant.

"I'll see you tomorrow! Goodnight Adrienne," he bellows and proceeds to slam the door. Fast on his heels, Adrienne catches the door in mid-flight; and, as Andy turns sharply, checking out reasons for the failure of his thunderous exit, she meets him eye for eye. "Did you hear me, dad? I said that your sweater smells like the barn. Bring it up tomorrow, and I'll wash it for you."

"Okay, okay. I hear you." He nods his head vigorously up and down; then, he whirls away from her and struts down the walk.

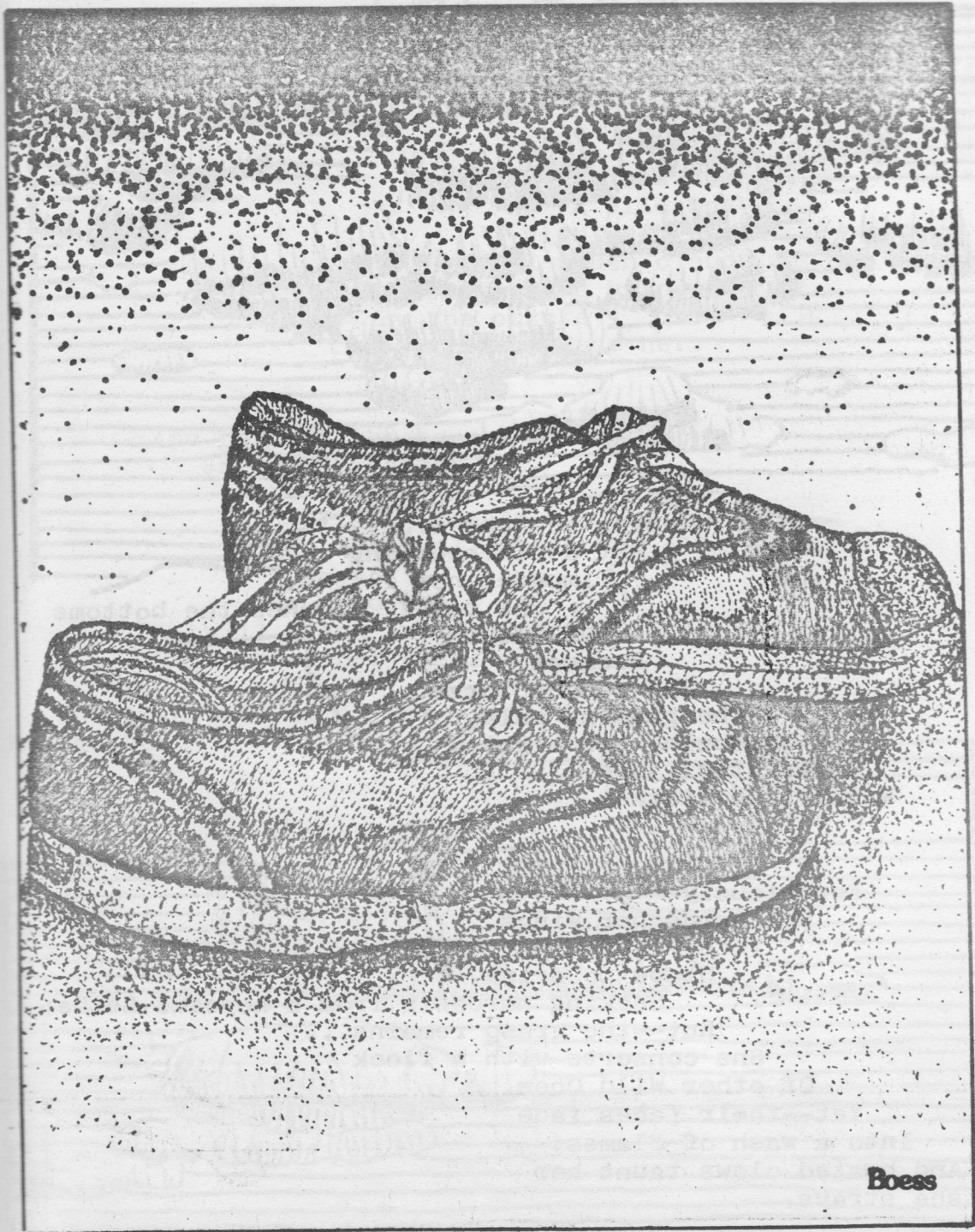
Adrienne absentmindedly retrieves the stub from her begonia and notices the "ping" when it hits the bottom of the empty wastebasket. Almost instantly, she senses how the rhythm of the rain has changed; it is suddenly soft, barely "teasing" the windowpane. Looking back outside, Adrienne catches one last glimpse of Andy's flying shirttail as he blurs from sight. She laughs aloud, aware of the June rain surrounding her--warm and good.

(andrea davis)

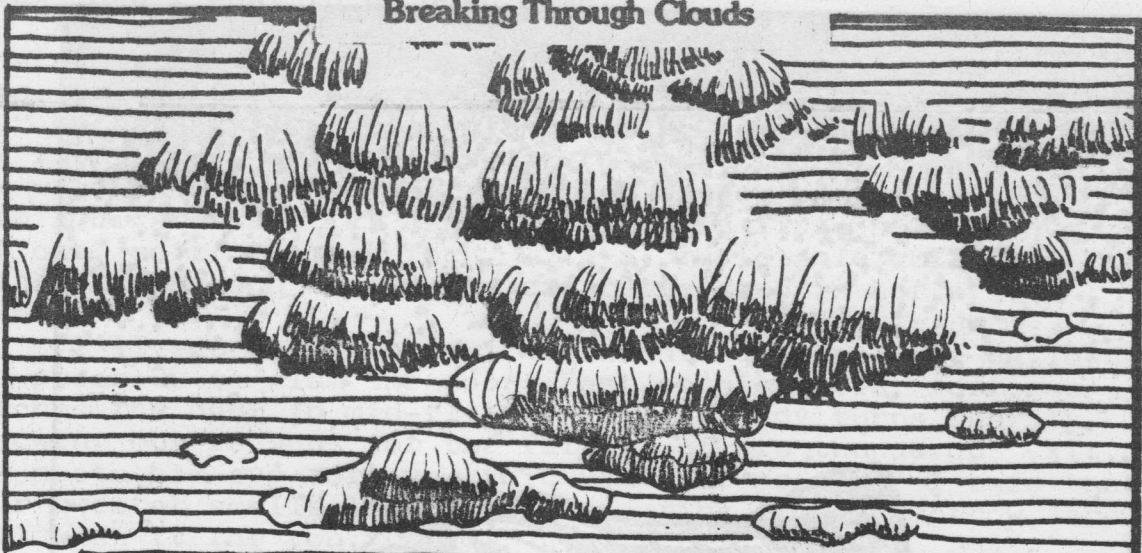
### School Tour

So I noticed through the museum case  
The Revolutionary pistol balled and loaded  
Ready just like it was many years ago.  
I could hear the bang of guns going off  
The pleadings of wounded soldiers,  
And cannons booming their name.  
I was there on the battlefield  
Ducking behind trees like the rest--  
All from a tired, old gun.

(jonathan marmorstein)



## Breaking Through Clouds



A Wild One  
Yearns to soar High;  
But a pinched wing  
Impedes her flight.  
She barely brushes the bottoms  
Of clouds  
Because  
She cannot forget  
The gnawing pain,  
Squeezing her tightly  
Like steel jaws  
With rigid teeth.

Ferociously--  
She pumps her wings.  
Then--  
Stops to drink,  
Seeking narcosis from a hopeful Lethe;  
But--the grasp remains...  
She consorts with a flock  
Of other Wild Ones.  
Yet--their faces fade  
Into a wash of flames;  
And heated claws taunt her  
As she strays.

Perhaps aground--  
If a predator  
Does **not** woo her  
Into his aim's path--  
She will heal;  
And then,  
A Wild One--  
With head thrust forward--  
Will touch clouds,  
Only to be blinded  
By the puzzle  
That will surround her.

And through the haze  
She will meander.

But then--

Without looking below her--

She will blaze her climb upward.

Soon,

The Wild One

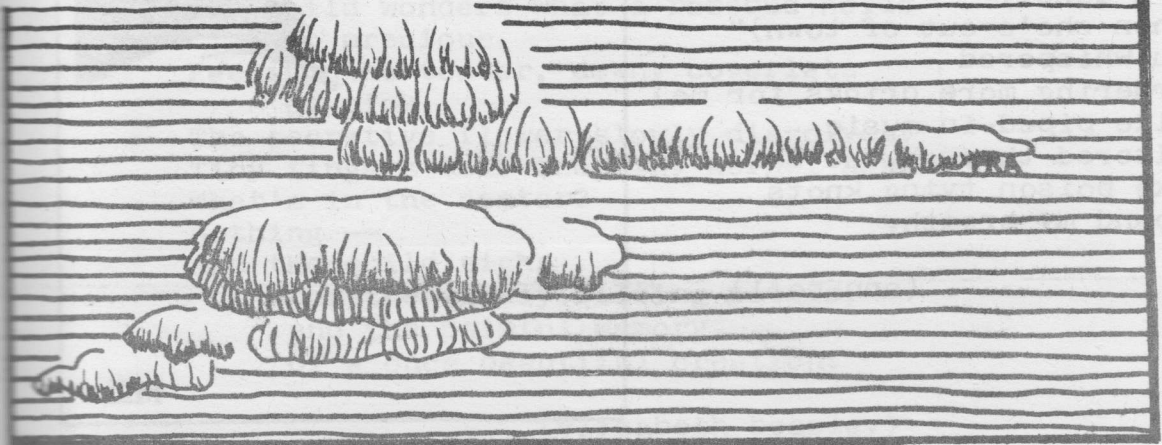
Will break away--high,

High above her past.

Yet--

A twinge will sometimes  
Remind her.

(jennifer brown)  
Hoffman prize



## The Tricks of the Trade

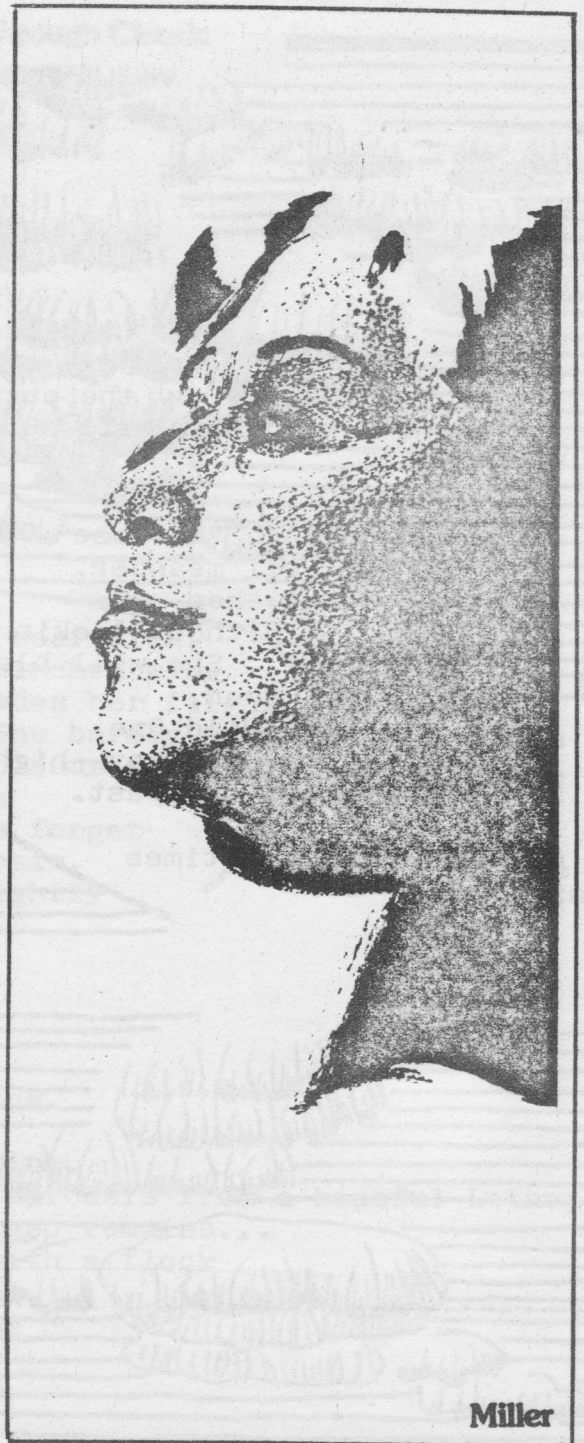
Crying  
on every shoulder  
you can find:  
    mascara runs  
    down swollen cheeks  
    in thin black lines  
designed to add  
dimension  
to Despair.

(ann noll)

## Somewhere in New York City

"I'm lonely  
(when she's out of town)"  
you whispered  
(ordering more drinks for me)  
while piped-in music  
filtered through the bar  
like poison tying knots  
around my breath.

(ann noll)



Miller

## High Before Noon

The red carpeting is faded and worn. There is a trail of dirt along the aisle which leads from the doorway to the bar. I follow this path to a wobbly stool and sit down. There is a whirling cloud of cigarette smoke hanging just below the water-stained white ceiling. On the wall in front of me, pink insulation peeks through cracks in the warped paneling. Behind me a dusty juke-box flashes its lights invitingly, but no one responds.

It is not yet noon and already more than a dozen people are gathered in the dreary little barroom. Although many have not worked for over a year, they still get up with the sun each morning, don their work clothes, and come here faithfully as they once went to their jobs. But now the factories sit idle. And here in this dark, dingy bar, the people are idle too. There is no loud laughter here. No one teases the young barmaid as she refills the pitchers.

As she wipes the bar with a towel that smells of ammonia, I watch the shiny wet spot quickly evaporate leaving dull streaks on the red formica. And I think about vanishing hopes--disappearing dreams. Later, when I go outside, I look up at the blazing yellow sun and feel angry at it for having the nerve to shine so joyously.

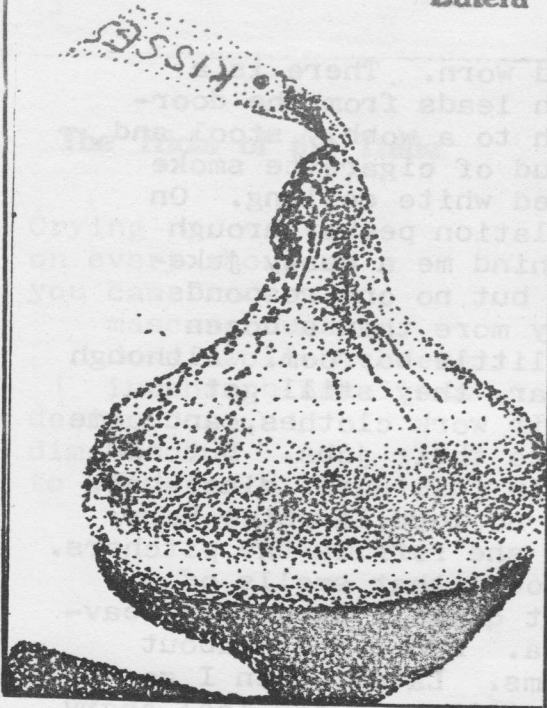
(cindy sweitzer)

## Beneath the Rosebush

Petals curled tightly --  
The child wonders what a rosebud holds  
so precious.  
Peeling the tender, downy coverlets  
of pink,  
The secretive flower slowly dissolves.  
Tiny fingers tear the tiny kernel apart.  
What's in the center?  
Nothing --  
And the child sighs  
for the slowly wilting petals,  
and the painful memory  
of a once beautiful creation.

(elizabeth beazley)

Butera



### Sometimes the Ghettoes

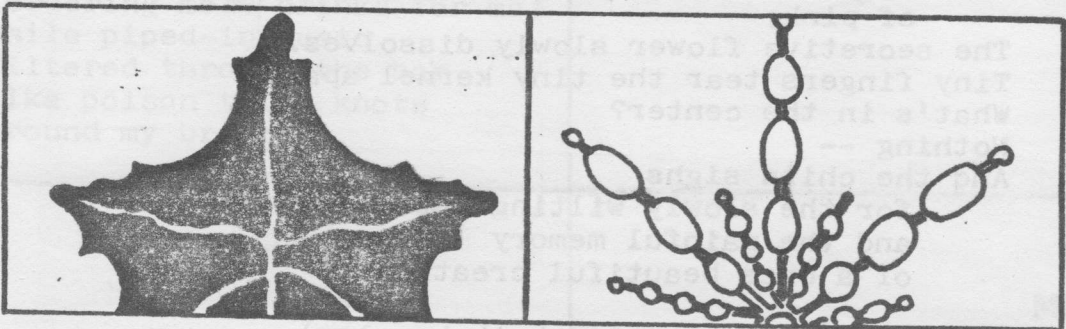
Sometimes the ghettoes  
of our minds  
are more restricting  
than the  
falling down  
structures  
that we call  
our neighborhoods.

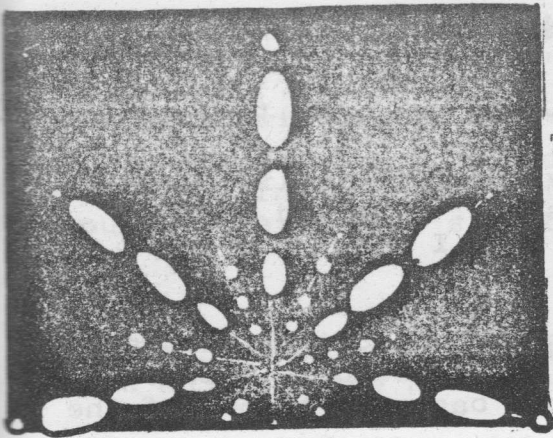
(linda amos)

### The Controller

Wires gripping tubes,  
Off, on, volume, underneath  
Patch filled with snow or  
Policemen, Baseball, and News.  
All eyes look at that patch,  
Hand-to-mouth ritual  
Like Robbie Robot  
While the brain sleeps.

(ellen gladfelter)





Two icicles clink  
Their silver-white symphony,  
Shrinking from the sun.

(jennifer brown)

Swift eagle turning  
Soaring up, gliding --  
The mountains waiting still.

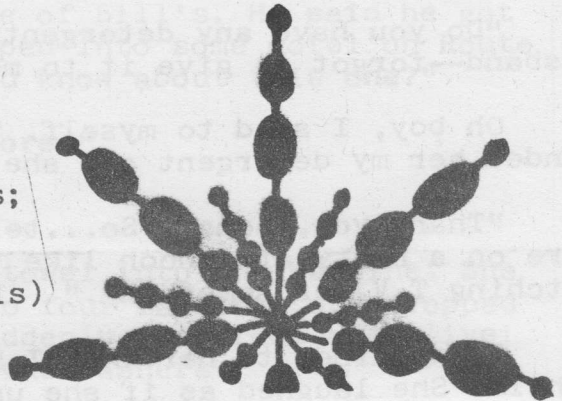
(yvonne hoff)

Brilliance...flashing red  
wreath-flowers rule white's hush world  
just above the grave.

(andrea davis)

Iced-white--the pine tree  
Atop the hill roughly blows;  
Toy of winter wind.

(andrea davis)





## A Meeting

I had been putting off doing my laundry for too long and it finally got to me. The snow was still falling as I reached the corner laundromat. I opened the door and looked around. The place was empty. My spirits lifted as I realized I had the pick of the washers. I walked over to one and began to sort out my wash when I heard the door open.

I turned around and saw a woman bundled in a coat and scarf. She was dragging a laundry bag through the door. Grunting and sighing, she pulled the bag over to one of the washing machines.

"God...I didn't think I'd make it here. All that snow! Will it ever stop? God!"

I looked over at her, then went back to sorting my wash. The woman continued to mutter out loud. She kept saying, "Bill...I told you..." as she shook her finger at the soiled clothes. Then she'd shake her head back and forth so that her grayish hair swept around with her. Her hair was shoulder length and limply hung so that some stray bangs fell into her eyes. Her face was blank except for the intense red in her cheeks and on the tip of her broad nose. Her nose was large and was the most prominent feature on her face. Her mouth was thin and white because she kept biting her lips as she spoke. She had taken her heavy black wrap off and revealed a slight figure. How big she actually was was hard to tell because she had on several bulky sweaters. She turned and stared at me.

"Do you have any detergent? You see, Bill--he's my husband--forgot to give it to me. Well, do you have any?"

Oh boy, I said to myself. This one's a real loon! I handed her my detergent and she smiled at me.

"Thank you, honey. So...tell me...what are you doing here on a nasty afternoon like this? You should be home watching T.V. or something."

I explained to her that I hadn't done my laundry in awhile. She laughed as if she understood perfectly.

"Yeah, same here. You know, the snow was sure something last night, wasn't it? I didn't know if I'd be able to get out today and I had to! Would you like a mint?"

She held her hand out and showed me three white cubes covered with lint and tissue fuzz. Obviously, she had plucked them out of one of Bill's pants pockets.

"No..."

She threw her head back in a fit of laughter and closed her hand on the fuzzy mints.

"I was just fooling with ya, honey, that's all."

I stepped away from her and moved my laundry down to the next machine. She was quiet now and I turned to watch her. She was taking Bill's black cotton socks and tying them together in the middle. She then dropped the socks into the top loader and threw in some towels and sheets. The sheets were white but were stained with dark blotches. None of the towels matched and every one carried the name of a different hotel.

"Ever been here honey?" she asked me as she held up a ragged towel that read "Viewtop Motel - Pocono, Pa."

"No. But I've been to other places up there."

She ignored my answer and held up a beige towel with blue lettering.

"Now, this here's a favorite of Bill's. He said he got it for me one night when he stopped into some motel on Route 27. Bill's a truck driver. Do you know about this one?"

This towel read "The Baltimore."

"Um...sorry...no."

She shrugged and threw the towel into the machine. She finished sorting her laundry into four machines and dropped her quarters into the slots. Suddenly, the room was alive with the banging and hissing of the washers.

Normally, I would have left the laundromat for awhile to go shopping but the weather prevented me today. I was trapped inside this room with this woman! I found a cozy niche in a dark corner of the room and sat down. The woman had moved to the glass door and was staring outside. For the first time, I noticed she didn't have any boots on. Her shoes were old black plastic pumps that needed heels. Her thin legs were covered with a torn pair of green tights.

"Sure is a lot of snow. Yep...look..."

I swallowed. What does she want me to say? What am I supposed to do?

"Uh...yeah...sure is."

"When I was about fifteen, I lived in Vermont, in a place called Tyler. Do you know where Tyler is? Anyway, I lived there all my life before I came here. Our winters are terrible there! Hon...let me tell you...eighteen inches every time it snowed! Yep...anyway...I met Bill, my husband, when I was fifteen. We went to Tyler High School together and he used to live right next door to me. Was he something! He was so tall and handsome...all the girls loved him. Especially me! Well, once we had a snowball fight coming home from school and he threw this snowball right at me. He hit me right here in the head." She pointed to the spot with her finger. "It hit me so hard it knocked the senses right out of me. Bill came over and apologized to me and then he kissed me. Imagine, hon, he kissed me right there in front of everyone in the snow!" She smiled and turned away from the door. Her grey eyes peered at me. "Right in the snow... well, Bill then started to like me and I was married when I was seventeen. We married right on his birthday and then we left Tyler. I wanted to stay but no...Bill moved to this place. He said it offered more down here. Yep...that's what he said."

I felt guilty about sitting in the corner so I started to squirm around in my chair. I also began to feel that I owed something to this woman, but I wasn't sure what. Surely, lending her my detergent wasn't enough.

"Anyway...Bill's first job was at the garage on the

corner of Eaton and Long. He helped Mr. Carlson fix that old place up till it was shining. And what did all that work get him? Nothing much...But he did get to work on lots of car engines. Yep...Bill learned to understand all those engines and things. Soon, he was helping out at that packing house on '46, making deliveries and soon he was driving everywhere. Bill's been to Florida, Georgia, Maryland... all those places. Everywhere! He's a great driver too. He always tells me that."

I swallowed.

"Have you ever gone with him? Anywhere?"

She glared at me and the brightness and pride left her face.

"No, never...I've got all these souvenirs to show you though from Bill's trips if you don't believe me. Do you know how long we've been together hon? Twenty-one years!"

A soft series of bells rang because the washers had just shut off. For awhile, neither of us spoke and we removed the wet clothes from the washers and put them into the dryers. I fumbled in my pocket for some change and I realized I didn't have any. Damn! Now, I'd have to talk to her.

"Um...excuse me..."

"The name's Lori. You can call me that."

"O.K. Lori, do you have any change for a dollar?"

She shook her head and walked over to my dryers. Before I realized it, she had put some quarters into the slots.

"Thank you, But..."

"Never mind, honey. Never mind."

The dryers roared in unison and this time, I decided to sit up closer to the door. Lori was pacing up and down

the solid row of dryers, tapping each one as she went.

"Twenty."

I gazed at her and cocked my head.

"I said 'twenty'. Bill said there must be fifty dryers in this place but there's only twenty and I told him how would he know anyway because he never comes in here. Never. Men...Bill's a good man otherwise. He always brings me gifts back from every hotel he's ever gone to. You should see some of the nice ash trays these places sell. And the soaps - these cute little square ones and they sell towels and sheets and other things too. My Bill only stays at the best places, you know."

I nodded. I wanted to ask her how on earth a truck driver would get a towel from the Poconos, but I remained silent.

"When I was in Tyler, I wanted to travel all over the place but now I don't have to. When Bill comes home, he always tells me about his trips. And he tells me everything! Y'know, that's a strange thing for a man to do these days. Anyway, Bill once had an accident near Raleigh and he was late getting his load through. So, he was late coming home too. But he told me all about the accident. Isn't that something?"

I nodded.

"Bill and me have been married for twenty-one years. Oh, I already told you that. Anyway, we don't have any kids though. We almost did. But I lost it. I told Bill I was sorry but he kind of walked away without looking back at me when it happened. He didn't talk to me for at least a week. That's the only time Bill's ever been mad at me...the only time."

Lori moved from the row of dryers to the row of washers. She walked up the row, opening each cover so they all stood up. When she got to the end of the row, she quickly turned around. Her eyes were wide.

"Bill hasn't been home for three weeks. Three weeks now! And I can't imagine where he's gone! I'm so lonely and afraid!"

I hope he isn't hurt somewhere. Oh, God, I'd just die if he was hurt somewhere! He just took off for work one day and I haven't heard from him since. And now my money's low and I don't work and I don't know what to do and that's why I don't have any detergent. And I just wanted you to know that ...Bill..he hasn't come back yet."

She hung her head down. I thought she was going to cry, but she quickly lifted it back up and continued to look at me.

"Lori, I'm sure he's on an extra long haul. You know, he's just making a long trip. That's what it must be. Maybe he's gone cross country and with the weather...well, you know. Maybe he's been slowed down by the weather."

The serious look melted from her ashen face.

"Yes! He said that he might get the urge one day. And I never knew what he was talking about. But that must have been it! Yes! A cross country haul..."

The dryer signals went off and we began to unload them. We folded our laundry in silence and as soon as I was done, I turned to Lori. She continued to work.

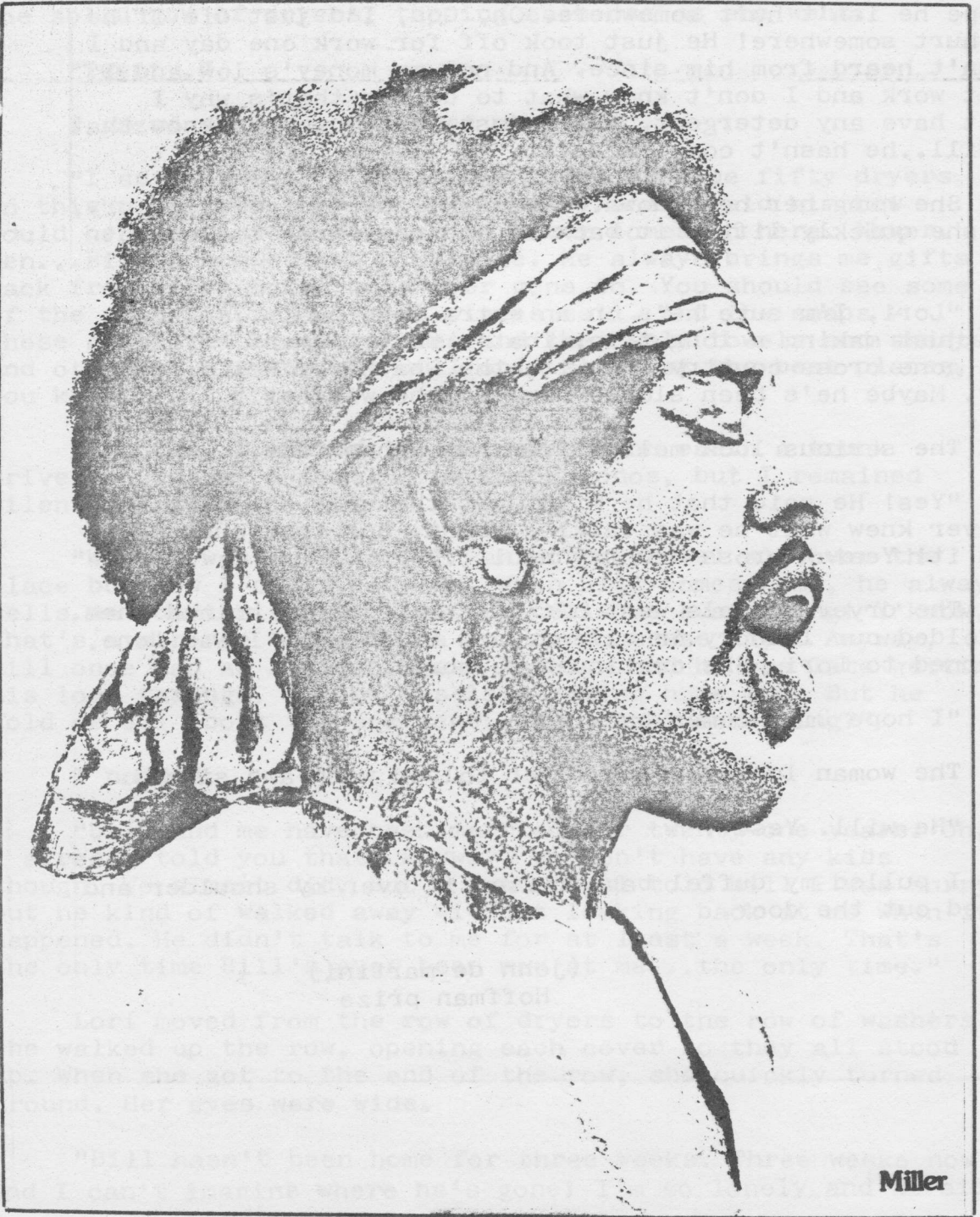
"I hope Bill comes back soon."

The woman looked down at her folded wash and sighed.

"He will. Yes..."

I pulled my duffel bag, lifted it over my shoulder and walked out the door.

(john de martini)  
Hoffman prize



## Dear John

he rose to the pulpit  
in loose-fitting lace  
his just fitting face  
smiling with a promise  
then  
he had god in his pocket

oh no

he was the jester from the backlight  
of a broken wooden stage  
once effecting, now infecting  
all the love he swore to save  
such a raving entertainer  
such a musical charade  
a pimp, a limp, and a crippled man  
with a rock star disease  
screaming for life  
screaming beyond his range

oh no

he needed a miracle written in blood  
but all that he found was broken glass  
scattered at the feet of a daunted musician  
who stared remotely at his hands  
at last  
caught in the act

oh no

at last  
there was nothing to regret  
he had simply run out of breath and folded up  
like a bright yellow beach umbrella  
in a dead heap

(brian humble)



## Surely a Goddess is Needed

Always,

I judge the sun

by his smile,

but he says

I am too much for him -

.. that he can't cope

with changing me's,

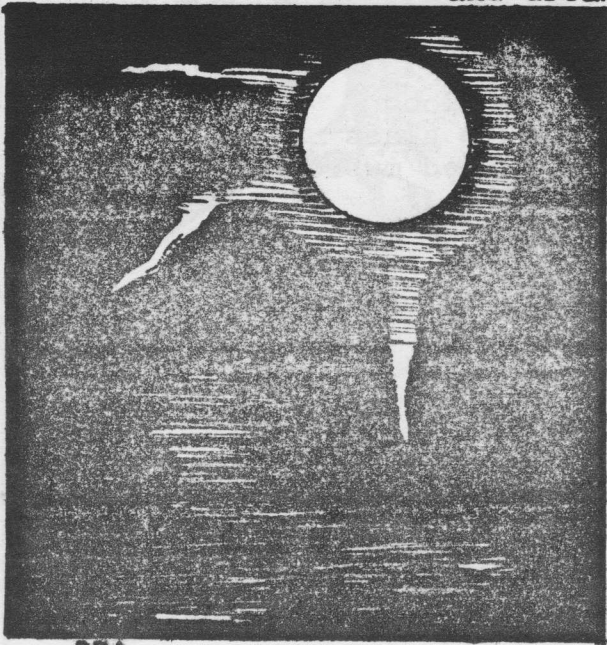
so his strident footfalls

echo stinging words,

while I am left

to iron my tears,

and dream...



Solitary,  
I stand in a field  
of shrivel-sullen asphodel  
by the moaning Styx.

The moon sears the meadow  
with ice beams,  
riming the rock-clogged  
floe with silver fog,  
as the venomous font  
billows narcosis  
across scorch-black earth.

The wind bays -  
closing in-

panther-pawed...  
blowing death at my feet.

Turning,  
I am Hera  
of the white arms,  
consecrating wedding vows  
and holding back  
the dark journey  
of dissolution.

Drying my eyes,  
I water the rue by our kitchen door,  
and sit on the stone  
to wait for his return.

Abruptly,



he breaks from behind his cloud,  
back into my life,  
clasping me with  
transient arms,  
stroking my doubts with words.

"I really love you, babe,"

he lies.

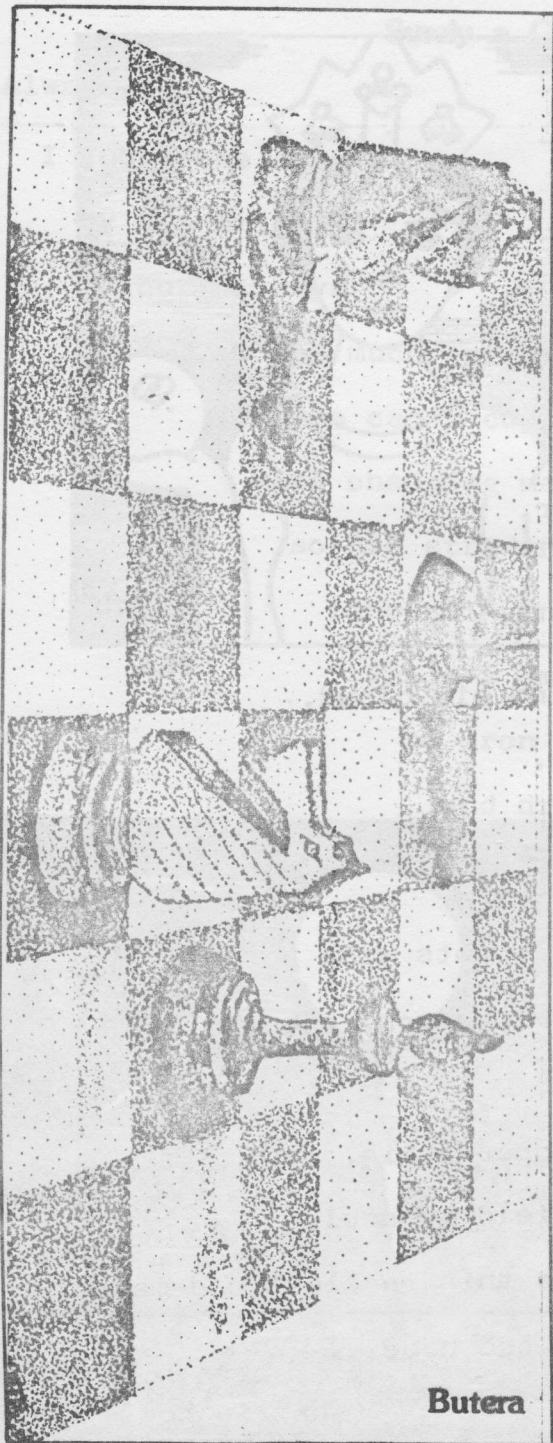
And, once again,

I yield my soul

to this reckless bed-mate,

and hope...

(sherrie holt)  
Hoffman prize



Butera

### In Quest Of...

Finding a wall,  
I probe concrete openings,  
sticking greedy fingers  
into supple mortar.

wildly scrabbling,  
causing wall-wounds  
with spaded digits,  
I gouge...

Chasing truth through  
ivy-clad stone,  
and watching gray flakes  
anoint my hands,  
I search fissures  
to glut sharp needs.

Flicking crumbs of clay  
from an open maw -  
I feed...  
hollow, unfilled.

(sherrie holt)

## The Barren Lot

I am in the barren lot next door  
Yelling into an empty barrel  
And listening to the echoes  
Bouncing off into the eerie silence.  
I am frightened  
Even the dirty old man  
Next door isn't watching;  
At least I can't see him.  
Shoot Me--  
My soul can escape  
Through the bullet hole.

(camilla richesson)

## Depression

Don't ask me how I feel,  
Because I know the things  
That crawl out of my mouth  
Will be disgusting, scaly creatures  
Scuttling from the light.  
Hideous, sickening insects  
In search of sordid shadows  
Where they can breed and scheme.  
Silent while the sun shines  
But creeping out once more  
When the black times come,  
To scratch and scavenge  
And scatter again at dawn.  
So please,  
Don't ask me how I feel.  
Some things are better off  
Left crouching in my own dark corners.

(cindy brickner)  
Hoffman prize

## The Master

A demon  
Snakes his way  
Through my head;  
I wonder  
whether  
it's  
all  
worth  
it.

Then--  
Spring,  
Summer,  
Autumn,  
And Winter  
Pass,  
And the demon  
Hides,  
Tempting me  
To shed my guard.

He lashes out at my vulnerability,  
Wraps himself around my psyche,  
And slithers down my arm--

Pausing  
At my fingertips.

I pluck a shiny pen from its green resting place,  
And it writhes with its own life,  
Scratching random bits of pain across the page.  
I helplessly watch as ugly symbols  
Release darker demons for the world to see.

| (jennifer brown)

