

WATERSHED

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Watershed

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Editors' Note

"There are more differences within the sexes than between them." (Ivy Compton-Burnett) The theme "Women and Men" inspired a rich variety of contributions; so many we wish we could have expanded this volume. We want to thank everyone who sent in their work. The insightful poetry, fiction and artwork made this a gratifying experience for all of us. This collection of work reflects Pablo Picasso's intent when he proposed, "We all know that art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize the truth."

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Casting Spells

Carlos Joseph McCall

Marriage Untitled
—*Jay Russell*

Till death do us part

or until the love drains
from your heart
I never thought we'd break
apart
I thought this love was
never-ending
I love you
now more than ever
I'll love you forever
please don't leave me
I need you to be
I can't go on by myself
my heart bursts
when I think of before
I don't know
what I'll do if you go
if you do, you can take
everything I have
if you ever need anything
just say
I'll never find a replacement
for you
I'll always love you
I want you to be
happy
I'll have to let you go
you're breaking my
heart
I don't know what happened
was it something I did?
am I to blame?
we were so happy
in our youth
what do these
broken vows
mean
now?

or until the love drains
from my heart
I think we need some time
apart
I can't go on
pretending
I don't think I love you
anymore
I don't know if I ever did
I want to leave you
I want to be free
I want to find myself
my soul thirsts
for something more
I've got to go
I need to grow
I don't want to take
anything of yours
I want to pave
my own way
I want something
new
I still care for you
but you're not the person
I fell in love with
I don't want to hurt you
I don't want to break your
heart
I don't know what happened
but something did
it's just not the same
now it's so hard
to face the truth
what do these
broken vows
mean
now?

In the Morning
—*Robert A. Howard*

I did not hear her arise.
Yes, it was her dewed scent,
So sweet, that teased me awake,
Induced me from lush sleep.
Thus my day breaks on her.

She's negligent in my gaze.
As she wrestles into her silk,
Twin albescent moons shudder,
Then still in dawn's moody grey,
Two such daubs of paler light.

I am still enamored of her.
She is near, so accessible,
And yet, I feel so lonely for
Her sleepy comfort next to me.
"Come back," I simply whisper.

My quiet plea she doesn't hear.
The floor reflects her intent;
As shade lengthens past noon,
Her shadow elongates away from me.
Her movements lose their form.

Her morning sounds intrigue me.
Water swabs away eye sleep;
A brush scratches her hair;
A long silence has me puzzled;
I'm aroused by her mystery.

Indolent, I've not thanked her
For damp treasures at night, or
Rich thought that spades me,
A soft heart that first heals,
Then inspires me on to bravery.

She secretly borrows from me
Strengths and integrities,
Then returns them all, refined.
I see in her attending ways
How love is to be elucidated.

My rain dampens her warm ghost.
The sheet's wrinkled crater
Holds her odor, wet and fresh.
I embrace that empty place
Where her hips abrade our bed.

Nightmusic
—George Keithley

"Sorry I'm late," she says crisply. "My appointment lasted longer than I expected." The young man and woman stand beneath the brilliant chandelier as if they're marooned on an island while the crowd surges around them. Many late-comers trot up to the bar; the others file into the concert hall. "Plenty of time," he assures her. "I thought this consultation would take a while." With an effort he maintains his measured tone. "What did you learn?" She shakes her head, her hair sweeping down her back. "Not now." He reaches for her hand: "Nancy—" But she insists, "later." One entire wall is a mirror reflecting delicate shards of light overhead, the thinning crowd, his own sober face. But not hers; her head is turned away, her brown hair lustrous under the chandelier. Promptly at eight, as the light begins to dim, they slip into the hall to find their seats. Settled, he leans his head toward hers.

"Your appointment—" It's a question he doesn't want to ask and she doesn't answer. His hands twist his program into a cylinder while her fingers are splayed over her purple skirt. Everyone's waiting for the concert to begin; his glance roams the hall without finding another familiar face. "You promised to tell me tonight," he reminds her.

"I'm so afraid," she whispers. Now he knows and his head tilts back, watchful. "I need surgery," she adds.

"I see." He glances at the program in his fist.

The audience quiets as the houselights dim. Lifting his gaze from the program, he finds a single spotlight brightening the stage—a cone of light where Andrés Segovia slumps over his guitar. Muttering the name "Tárrega," he begins to play *Recuedos de la Alhambra*. People stir in their seats then grow still. Segovia, a balding old man in a black suit, bows his head, listening to the music in his hands: Bach, Schumann, Albéniz, six studies by Sor. Slowly the hall fills with chords as pure as water, like a lake fed by a spring. He plays on into the night without comment, only a profound pause between each piece. At every silence the darkness deepens. He draws this silence into his music, too, and fills it with that dark light. Reaching the end of his performance, he brings it shimmering to the brim with Giuliani's grand sonata. He rises, takes one bow, and the

ovation shakes the hall like thunder over deep water. It rolls through the hall, bounds back, rolls on.

In the foyer the scattered illumination from the chandelier dances over them, thin, distant, like starlight on the surface of the sea. Waiting while she sips a drink of water, the young man gazes into the night beyond the glassy entrance, at the traffic soundless in the glinting dark. They walk down the street. "If that's final," he urges her, "do it soon." He's still whispering as if they're back in the hall. He can't remember their leaving, hurrying down the broad steps. "Please," he says. "Tell him to schedule you this week."

"I hate this!" She shakes her head. "do you understand? I hate to think about it." Her hair spills like a shawl across her shoulder. "And it's all I think about."

"I see," he says.

"I've always known it was in my family."

"Yes," he says.

"It's in my breast," she says. "What if it's already in my lungs?"

He barely hears her words. Her skirt rustles with her agitated walk. But the city is suddenly without sound; a cable car climbs by and he hears no humming rails, no bells. A bus, dimly lighted, glides through the intersection remote and indifferent as a submarine. All around him is a silence as deep as the bottom of the sea. Walking down the street, he holds her hand because he thinks they're in this together.

In Memory
—Amy Runge Gaffney

My brother,

I remember your slow

as ice moves
over the earth

death

implacably gaining ground

burying you
alive,

the cornered animal
in your eyes

and all the fallen leaves of winter
in your hands.

for my brother

After Your Shower
—*R.E. Brock*

After your shower your hair shines down your back.
I draw the curtains, lock the door and reel
at last across the child-stained carpet, kneel
among the toys before the fire, the stacked
and tumbled pillows, bend with my unslackened
lust to curve of shoulder, hip and heel.
You smile. Like a child's face lifting to the feel
of rain, you turn to my touch. Outside the black
streets glisten. I shuck off my clothes. (Yet only
this morning, slab-cheeked with breakfast sorrow, we
could barely speak. I steered into the tin
bright streets, wooden with winter and alone
behind my streaming windshield.) Now, though, see;
blossoms spill out of the branch. We flower in our skin.

Viewpoint —Zu Vincent

Rebecca, John says, picture for me a fantasy in which we'll always be together. While he's out on the balcony, this is the fantasy I picture.

In Paris, my apartment, which I prefer to call a studio, is at the top of four flights of rickety stairs. It's small and sunny with grates on the windows facing the street, where red geraniums bloom. The back windows open onto the roof and John is outside talking to the old man who keeps pigeons. Through the streaked glass I see them fiddling with the birds, the window shut because of the wind so no words come back to me, only their lips moving occasionally. The old man is telling John a story.

My easel stands in front of me. The half-finished building I'm transferring from my notebook to the canvas an old bank I found near the Avenue Montaigne. The purplish brick are rare and laid in such a way as to look haphazard, even while every piece of the puzzle fits. My first husband, Mac, an architect, would have called this skindling.

John and I are both thirty-six and haven't seen each other in almost seventeen years. We bumped into one another at a cafe six days ago. I looked up from my notebook spread on the blue checkered cloth and there he was, stopped on the street and staring at me. The first man I'd ever made love to. My mind balked at this notion and I set my pencil down briefly and averted my eyes. When I looked back his face had broken into a grin.

The air was faintly yellow and smelled of dust and the daffodils sold on street corners. An irritated Frenchman with his unwrapped baguette footballed under one arm, narrowly missed running into John from behind.

"Becca?" he called, shouldering past the Frenchman and coming to stand with his hands spread wide. "Rebecca Moore?"

"John Dillon, I can't believe it."

"What are you doing in Paris?"

"This—" I offered the notebook.

John shook his head. "It's been years."

I scraped back my chair and stood and met him in an awkward hug. When I pulled away again I was looking at the whole

of him and at the dimple in his chin, which was the only thing I'd completely forgotten.

"Hello, John," I said.

He was in the import/export business, wore an expensive Brooks Brothers suit, and ordered coffee with a credit card. I was still in cotton skirt and Indian blouses and had the studio with its windows opening onto the roof, where I could work.

"Drawing buildings?" he said, sitting with me at the cafe, his grey eyes planted on my face.

"The brickwork," I laughed, trying to explain I was living out a dream, at last drawing what had nothing to do with commercial art. John scratched his head over my vague outline of a book on old building designs, and then launched into his own tales of wealth and travel that left me dizzy trying to catch up.

"I remember you always wanted to draw." He finished by coming back to it, which pleased me. "I remember a lot of things." He hadn't stopped grinning. He raised his hand and ordered more coffee. "How could I forget the first woman I ever made love to. Are you with your family?"

So I explained there had only been my son and me for years. "He's fifteen, John, staying with friends in the States. I couldn't convince him to leave his girl friend for a year."

"Fifteen." John whistled. The coffee came and he spoke to the waiter in French.

"And your family?"

"Two girls, ten and twelve. I'm divorced, too." He looked into his cup but didn't drink.

I felt it necessary to say I hadn't lost Mac to divorce. That it was a truck driver who'd fallen asleep at the wheel of a loaded semi. How I hated the ludicrous fact that in in his two, air-vented trailers, there'd been over five hundred chickens. What I always pictured was the chickens' idiotic flight when they'd been set free.

"My God, that's rough." John's hand grazed mine. I watched it, not knowing how to respond, now that we'd brought ourselves abruptly to the present.

Paris is beautiful this time of year. People have stored their overcoats and eased into sweaters, stepping more lively down the Champs-Elysees with their preened dogs tugging feistily at the ends of leashes. The circulation, which the French call traffic, is loud and vibrant.

The first evening we walked along the river. The sun descended down a pink silk sky, and it grew dark. Boat lights hung enchanted over the water, caught the ride of a passing barge's waves and spread in dazzling fretwork. We talked easily, following the cobbled path where other couples strode arm in arm.

"They look happy," John said at last, and gingerly lifted his hand to the back of my neck. I was surprised I had been wanting him to do that very thing. It was as if he'd introduced me to an inhabitant in my body whom I thought had moved away. When I leaned into him it was not like the earlier, awkward hug. This time I fell toward him like a magnet.

In Paris, we haven't come apart since.

The old man who keeps pigeons on the roof is named Nathaniel. The story he's telling John is about World War II. I know this even without being able to hear what's said. It's Nathaniel's favorite tale, and involves his being parachuted behind enemy lines in Luxembourg, during the last months of fighting. He went in alone with twenty-five pigeons strapped to his chest, having been sent to gather information on troop movement on the last big German offensive. Each time he heard some new bit of gossip come along the underground, Nathaniel would fly another pigeon aloft with the news. Twenty-five flights and twenty-five chances for him to be killed. When he tells this part, the old man slowly thumbs the brim of his ancient racing cap.

Then he bends towards the coop and straightens with a pigeon in one brown fist, the bird's neck appearing in a soft grey question mark. He's winding out his story. Listening, John squints his eyes a little in the wind, and leans one elbow on the chicken wire enclosure while Nathaniel slips something into the leg band. A message.

"I'm not going to lose you again," John said on the second day. He was stretched out in my tub, in ten inches of water, shoulders sunk down and long brown legs stuck up on the cast iron edge. "I'll fly you to the States with me."

There wasn't enough room for both of us in the tub, so I sat on the floor and held his hand. I traced him with my artist's eye, which searched for imperfections lovingly. The slender waist, broad shoulders, athlete's thighs. I couldn't believe this boyishness in a thirty-six year old man, and was chagrined that his body was more beautiful than mine.

"This is my home," I said.

Johns threaded his fingers more tightly through mine, and turned his head on the tub edge to look at me. "I can't believe how much I still love you," he began, his look calculated to drain my resolve. "Where was I putting all that?"

By then we'd admitted, appropriately enough, that he was my first lover since my husband's death, as I was his since his divorce. "Like old times," he said tenderly, more than once. It seemed to allow us some claim.

John said, "Tell me where you'd like to live. I didn't get the house, but I've been thinking of buying a condominium, some place where the kids can stay. How about the beach. Malibu?"

"They always fall into the ocean there." I watched the water recede across his skin like a small tide, said it seemed odd for him to offer to fly me anywhere.

"Why? I've got the money."

"But I don't."

My eyes halted on the crook of his elbow. "How long will you be in Paris?"

"Uh-uh, no deal. Haven't you been listening?"

I had, but I felt that the timing, my own loneliness, and the very air of the city had all conspired against me. Besides, even in Paris, there had to be some problems.

John unlatched our hands and poured shampoo on his head. It was a nice head, still covered with dark wavy hair. I recalled that in high school he played tennis and ran track, was so good in baseball that he made the All-stars. One of my favorite memories of him was the way he clomped toward me across the emptying diamond after a game, grass tossing up behind his

cleats, striped jersey with the bruised-looking knees flinging sun. It was as if solar energy radiated from beneath his skin. I still felt this exuberance in the forward thrust of his shoulders.

"I seem to remember you were always independent," John said into the silence. His hair was white with soap.

"I still am."

"Is that why you left me? A clash of wills?" He dunked his head under water.

I knelt and held him submerged for a moment before letting him up. "You left me," I said. "Don't you remember?"

Already I saw how the studio was too small for him. On the third day he drug me out for a tour of several brasseries for cheese and wine. Soon there were yellow daffodils on every window ledge. He talked about renting bicycles, and watching soccer matches. He turned on the radio and sang English words to French rock-and-roll, jitterbugging around the cramped space.

On the fourth morning he read adds to me from the *Wall Street Journal*. "Gentleman's ranch. Six hundred acres in Montana, possible splits," his cheery voice boomed. "Own your own shopping center in Honolulu, Hawaii.

What will it be, Becca?" His legs were slung backward over my kitchen chair, the *Journal* thrust toward me, with circles around his favorite choices. "What do you want to do with the rest of your life?" I looked down and noted with dismay that he'd used my good charcoal pencil to make the circles.

"I thought I was doing what I wanted with the rest of my life."

John got up from the chair and took my hands, stopping their movement across the canvas. "You can draw anywhere. You can draw with me. Why won't you let it be easy?"

I shook my head. There was a smudge on his face from the charcoal, which I rubbed with one finger and erased.

When we were in high school, we used to come together in the back of his Pontiac, on the couch in his living room when his parents were gone, and on the playing field at the grade school after dark. California nights were long and sultry, and rang with crickets. I made scissors from the sword grass on the field by joining two of the needle-like weeds at their fattest

points. Gently he drew them together and pulled them apart across my fingertips. Then we lifted our shirts and lay chest to chest. When I put my head back on the revolving earth the stars trembled like glimpses of a brightly turning wheel.

"I love you," we must have told one another a thousand times.

"I love you," John repeated on the fifth night, from the damp pocket of the sheets in my studio apartment in Paris. "I think I'll stay in France for awhile. Just until you've finished your project. What would be the point of going home without you?"

This time I didn't argue. I thought perhaps I knew what had scared me all along. That we could work out the little things, and it really would be easy.

On our sixth day, outside the window in Paris, Nathaniel moves his opening palm skyward and the pigeon darts up. It hovers for a moment on the wind, then battles sideways toward the glass with a sound like the snapping down of wet clothes being readied for the line. It swoops in front of John's face. I watch its fluttering underbelly, its brief shadow lancing the interior of the room.

There's something noble about the way Nathaniel launches this bird, with the same care as the twenty-five pigeons from Luxembourg. He wants the message to get through at all costs.

Now the pigeon veers upward and vanishes. With his small flight Nathaniel, too, disappears, and Paris is once again on the other side of the world, the fantasy ended.

Still there is John, marking a solitary pigeon's flight before coming in the sliding door of this L.A. apartment, seventeen years too late. "It's nice," he says hopefully, indicating the empty room with a sweep of his hand. "We'll have our own private balcony. You could use it for a studio and we'd have a place to meet in the afternoons." He adds this since in real life my husband isn't dead and he isn't divorced.

"It's small," I say, "and I still can't afford it."

"I can, remember? We'll put your easel here." He smiles and walks briskly over to the imaginary canvas, peering down to see what I've done. There is exuberance in the forward thrust of his shoulders. I follow and when he turns I reach up to smooth his wind-blown hair, trying to navigate the gap.

Hot Eyes
—*Pamela Spoto*

Hot eyes
Indian nose
Teeth I'd like to lick.

You paint
tomatoes
bell peppers
summer squash
over white rice
like you paint
the sun red
and moon yellow.

It's Saturday
and
I'm still
stunned
by you.

Heart
—Pamela Spoto

Layer
 on Layer
 on
Layer on Layer

Lifetimes of Stone.
I can't get through.

Hammering away
I'm loving
the dead.



Carlos Joseph McCall

Beatrice

The Pain of Boys ... And Men
—*Mark Gowers*

I have seen in men's eyes, a pain that goes back for generations.
There is the pain of the father's words, criticizing and unyielding.
And the pain of the grandfather's harsh face, well traveled in
 lines,
but with leathered old hands that will not hold his own young
 hands,
cannot.

(And the aproned smiles of women are never enough,
 being smiles of consolation only.)

There is the pain of the lonely that cannot call itself **lonely**.
There is the pain of the weakness that cannot call itself **weakness**.
There is the pain of the love that cannot call itself "**love**," and so
it settles for "**Admiration**" instead.

And it looks on at a distance,
 waiting,
 saying nothing, though it wants to
hold and be held, feel strong flanneled shoulders on strong
flanneled shoulders, and the blades of the muscled back between
palms and fingers. Or a cold ear and sandpaper face against its
cheek, and the soft bristled hair on the back of the head in its
 hands:

A forever holding; a safety of warmth.

Yes, there wants to be a crying out, but there will only be silence
until the grave.

And There,
yet another silence
where the pain of men is buried coldly;
deeply,
never confessed.

(And the veiled tears of women are never enough,
 being tears of consolation only.)

Morning Glory
—*Ande Gabrych*

Beyond reality there is insanity; beyond insanity there is freedom.

If I hadn't been forced here, I probably would think it was pretty. All white and soft. But it's the White Hell. It's chock full of nuts! And I'm just as macadamian as the rest.

Sometimes I can't tell where the ceiling meets the walls and where the walls meet each other and the floor. I kind of liked that at first, it makes me feel like I'm floating—sort of suspended, like fruit in Jell-O. And I like to float. But after meals and meals it gets a little annoying; the floating, not the Jell-O.

That's how I tell time, by meals. Not a very efficient means, I know, but the light never stops. It just keeps going, no break, so I can't tell how long I've been here in real time. But then real time doesn't matter here. I think the purpose of this place is to drive people so far over the edge that they no longer care. How could someone care after so long of the White, the light, and the itch?

I have this itching in my leg. I don't remember when it started, but eight or nine meals ago they wrapped me in whiteness; it makes me look lovely, but I can't move my arms. They say I was ripping my leg apart and everything was all higgledy-piggledy for a while. But I don't know what the hullabaloo was about. I was only trying to get down to the itch—it was deep down. I almost got it before they came. One great thing about the itch is the red spotted the White and I felt grounded for once—I knew where the floor was, and where the walls were in relation to it. But now the red is gone, I don't know if it was taken away from here, or if I was taken from it. It really doesn't matter.

So I sit staring at the eternity waiting for the Satans in white. I feel the familiar pain that tells me another meal is going to pass. I don't necessarily eat them, the meals, because I know about the poison. They know I know about it. Sometimes, I can keep from putting it into my body, but most of the time the pain is too much and the poison looks so good.

The gateway opens, they appear smiling awful smiles and place the poison on the floor. "Lawn furniture! I know about it—Ping-pong! Giraffe! Giraffe!" I scream as they keep smiling, pretending not to know. But those smiles are lies, they know I know. But it doesn't matter.

I can smell the poison; I look at it, my insides churn. It's too much to resist. I put my face in it and gorge myself until it hits me. I do. I know I shouldn't, but I do enjoy being swept off as the darkness overtakes me. The White fades away, it's almost refreshing. In the dark, I remember so well.

"The world is not what it seems, Vance," Jesus was propped up against a wall, "it's full of unknown treasures."

I turn to him, "I know that." I hate it when he tries to be profound. His cigar looked so nice. The smoke just dribbled off and swirled around until it was eaten up by the White. My mouth started to water. "Could I have a drag?"

"I guess so." He sighed and leaned over and put the moist end of the cigar in my mouth. I pulled in some smoke, and he pulled the cigar away. Sometimes he can be a real stingy fucker. "You know, this place is really fucked up, you know that?" I nodded, sometimes Jesus reminds me of my ex-wife, except she's white. She did enjoy a good cigar, though. Lorna. That was her name, although imagine naming a human being Lorna, let alone marrying one. Well, anyway, Lorna thought she was pretty high and mighty too. But I showed her. Jesus doesn't piss me off as much as she did, which is good. He flipped his long, kinky hair over his shoulder. "Don't you just feel like you're going to just lose it?"

"I don't know, the light gets a little maddening." Our conversation that day was a good one, a little dull, but why I remember it is that when Jesus got up he looked at the light, and it exploded. All the White left with him. And I was in the dark, without being forced into it, and it's not the same as that one time. But it's a nice break sometimes. I love being able to get away; that time is really important to me, and they're giving it to me! They can't take that away. God, it feels so good. It matters, it really matters to me.

The itch has stopped, it's gone. You know, I think things are going to be a lot different around here.

The time I spent in the dark was so wonderful, but it ended when the gateway opened and the room was flooded with the White. A Satan stood silhouetted by the flood, "How the hell did you do that?" She pointed to the decimated light fixture.

"Jesus." I felt bad for snitching, but I didn't want to get in trouble—trouble here is not fun.

"Hey! Paul! Vance here's gone to God on us!" She yelled to the Satan who soon appeared in the gateway. He held me down as the other fixed the light.

When I'm in the dark I can think. I mean, really think. I can think about Lorna. Sometimes I cry for her, I cry about dealing with her. I can remember it all. It's like I'm blinded by the light; I'm unable to see anything the way it was.

That's why I'm not that reluctant to eat the poison. I embrace my time in the dark. I hate being forced there, and it's not the same as that one time. But it's a nice break sometimes. I love being able to get away; that time is really important to me, and they're giving it to me! They can't take that away. God, it feels so good. It matters, it really matters to me.

The itch has stopped, it's gone. You know, I think things are going to be a lot different around here.

Heavy Doors
—Michael Waltz

The air thick
with pollen and dust,
giving it ghostly forms.
Warm sunlight made staircases
through my window.
That's how it is on a farm.
Everything larger as I sat cross-legged
on the yellow shag floor
of my first room,
pulling chalk across my chalkboard.
The first thing I remember ever writing was
my name,
and the number five.
My aproned mother
open-armed and glowing
said, "Good,
that is good."
This is where I started from.
Persimmon winds drifting
in from the orchards.
The awkwardness of heavy doors
to my small soft hands.
The tall lengthy hallways with
shadows hugging the
up and out of reach
corners and turns.
I spoke to animals about anything
because I was starting.
Starting to lose day by month,
by year,
the calm babbling creek water
hidden by blackberry groves
too big to imagine.
Losing the sunlight staircases
and every so often,
the heaviness of doors.
A lifetime fading,
with the magic that can only
be felt
in small soft hands.

To Drink of Another's Lips
—*Vanessa Tompkins*

I DREAMT BENEATH THE LAKE
AND WHILE IN MY SLUMBER
I FOUND THE MANY PEBBLES
LEFT BY YOUR FEET
AND I WEPT
BECAUSE I HAD DWELT THERE MANY TIMES BEFORE
AND NEVER ONCE HAD I SEEN THE SCARS
ON YOUR ANKLES

I THOUGHT ONLY WEAKLINGS
WEPT AT THE SIGHT OF BLOOD
BUT I WHO WAS STRONG

I LOOKED AT YOUR SCARS AND WEPT
BECAUSE I WAS THERE
I WANTED TO CRAWL INSIDE
AND BE YOUR TEARS
BECAUSE YOU HAD BEEN MINE

YOU HAD BEEN MINE
AND I BECAME YOURS
AND SOMEWHERE INSIDE WE SLEPT

To Nathan, with love from Ness
Février 1992

**To Brother Crane,
From Sister Tree...
—Barbara Thomas**

You landed, gave earth to the wheel,
Your gift to the People, I root in you.
Wings lift, branches lift, stretch for sun,
For the name of the high-up light.
Sun waves down, wind rises.
We are the feathers and leaves in the wind,
We are wind in feathers and leaves.

I plant my roots in the center of this dust,
Reach for light, dance for breeze.
Yet you, White Bird, have flown so far
To watch a sunset become an ocean.
Alight, rest, nest in my branches
For this night, it does not matter
That we are merely feathers and leaves.



And The Sun Came Out

Paul M. Russell

Alda

—*Rose Calvano*

She looked like a child as she sat in a high-backed rocker that seemed to wrap its arms around her frail body protectively. Fingers of early morning sunlight pointed through the kitchen window and tenderly caressed her pale face. Outwardly she seemed passive, even peaceful, but this was a façade manufactured to hide her tortured soul. Little attention was paid to the quiet old woman who rocked to and fro, foot tapping rhythmically, as her forward weight met the worn linoleum floor.

She closed transparent lids over piercing black eyes and a tear trickled down her face, disappeared into a crease in her skin, then reappeared at the tip of her chin where it dropped onto her clean blue dress.

At seventy-four she preferred to sit, cane poised in hand, able at a moment's notice to steady the contrary movements of her body. To breathe deeply was an exercise that necessitated the use of additional balance.

But this morning, face glowing with light from the early morning sun, and no sound to disturb her thoughts, she slipped into a room in her mind where she stored memories and chose to live the best one over.

She raised scantily lashed eyelids once more to touch base with the world around her. Seeing that all was well, she closed her eyes and came face to face with her curly-haired carpenter of years ago. Holding her face in the rough palms of his hands he looked into her eyes, bent his head, and kissed her gently on the lips. Once again she felt the excitement of her first kiss. Again, her mind raced and her body cried out for more. Again, she was a laughing black-eyed beauty with hair the color of a raven's breast.

He took her smooth hand with its tapered fingers in his own and coaxed her deeper into the garden. His eyes danced with delight, and when he asked her to marry him, her "yes" had the ring of a war whoop. She no longer tried to contain her emotions. She had met the love of her life.

The chaotic noise of traffic outside shattered her solitude and she jerked her nodding head into an upright position. She opened her eyes, determined to end her memory at its happiest moment. If she could only stop here, the warm feeling which lingered after

his kiss would wrap itself around her and bring her peace. If she could stop here, she would still be in the garden with his hand touching her breast and his eyes riveted to her face. If she could only stop here.... But she couldn't, so she closed her eyes and deferred to the part of the dream that, for her, had become a nightmare.

The sun rose that Sunday morning, splashed through her window, and painted the whole of her bedroom a magnificent shade of dawn. Her body felt as if it were plugged directly into an electrical socket, and her mind was as tangled as her matted, waist-length hair.

She made herself move, first to the flowered washbasin to splash icy water on her face, then to the chair by the bed where she had laid out her church clothes the night before. Taking a dull pink brush from the dresser top, she dropped the crown of her head towards the floor and, starting at the nape of her long slender neck, dragged its bristles to the ends of her hair.

She put water on the stove to boil, then made her way down the hall to Papa's room to wake him for Mass. Closing the door behind her, she thought of her carpenter. Today he would ask for her hand. Today her new life would begin.

Steam shot up, curled around the resisting mass that was her hand, then burned her knuckles as she poured freshly brewed coffee into Papa's cup. The pain would go away, but the panic which originated in her gut had a mind of its own. It gripped her insides and shook her to the core.

She was the talk of the little Italian town where she was born. Many men had asked for her hand in marriage, but Papa turned each of them down and, at the age of twenty-four, she was still an unclaimed woman. Her ten sisters and brothers had long since left the house. All had married and produced an array of offspring. She wondered if she would ever know the feel of a baby growing inside of her, or the groan of a man she'd sated.

Scooping a teaspoon of sugar from the tarnished silver sugar bowl, she hesitatingly dumped its contents into Papa's cup.

Why did he turn men away so easily? Didn't he know she was getting older? Soon, no one would ask!

Papa's shoes scraped the checkered tile floor as he came into the kitchen. He nodded to her, then drank his coffee. Wiping his thin moist lips, he motioned to her that they should be on their way. Not a word was spoken about their expected visitor. The silence between them was as heavy as the humid summer heat when, arm in arm, they trudged up the hill to church.

With a sideways glance through the bushy curtain of his eyebrows, Papa squinted as he looked at her. He noticed the smile on her full lips, the tilt of her head as she took in all that surrounded her, and the tiny waist that gave way to Botticelli hips.

That morning, on the bumpy dirt road that led to the church, he mentally took his hat off to her beauty. She never knew, for Papa hardly ever smiled or shared his feelings. She had learned to recognize his approval by a nod of his head.

The sermon was long, the priest obviously happy to have a pulpit to stand on and an audience willing, through the pain of sin, to listen to him.

After Mass they strolled home, conversing carefully so as not to broach the sizzling topic. Reaching the house, Papa sat in the dark, sea-green living room, hands on chair arms disintegrating from human sweat, staring out the crystal clear window.

She was crazy with anticipation and, as she walked about the small kitchen preparing supper for her and Papa, she felt as if she was ricocheting off the walls. Her eye caught sight of him moving up the walk and, flooded with a sweet-sick feeling, she ran to greet him, then stopped short at the kitchen door. That wouldn't be proper! Papa would not approve. She knew her place, that of an unmarried woman, and so, quietly left through the back door, careful not to disturb the men's conversation.

Tucking her legs under her firm torso, she leaned her back against the cool, needle-like stucco of the house to steady herself. In her mind she saw the cedar chest on the floor in her bedroom and mentally took inventory of its contents...curtains, tablecloths, wedding gown...all iridescent white and embroidered by her own hand in anticipation of a day such as this.

Mama had shown each of the girls how to embroider: first simple, then more intricate patterns on a mountain of white linens that each girl knew would be part of her trousseau.

Hearing the front door close softly, almost apologetically, she snapped back to reality and ran to the front of the fifty year-old house breathless with excitement. Instantly, she knew! She could tell by the determination of his step, the way he averted her questioning gaze, that he had been rejected. She stood by the house completely drained of all meaningful life and watched with tear-blurred vision as her carpenter grew smaller, until finally he became a tiny speck, one of Seurat's dots on the horizon.

Livid, seething, she ran into the house to find Papa. He was seated in a high-backed chair at the head of a long, once-crowded, dining room table, patiently waiting for his supper to be served. From where she stood she could see the back of his bald bony head with its familiar rim of silky white hair around the edges. He was bent over his plate, hands trembling conspicuously as he picked up his silver to release the cloth napkin underneath. Hostile words sprang to her mind. Lips uncontrollably quivering, she suddenly realized that Papa was the only human being she would ever serve supper to or share life with on a daily basis. Silently she kissed him on the cheek, helped him with his napkin, and served his supper. Her face, wet with tears, glistened as she gave Papa a large portion of pasta. He twirled his fork in a mound of spaghetti and, without looking up, told her to bring the cheese.

Tears ran down her crinkled olive skin as she gripped her cane so tightly her fingertips grew white from lack of circulation. She rocked faster now, trying to somehow to put her rage to sleep. Why did the nightmare always have to follow the dream?

Exhausted, she drew in a long deep breath and continued on her journey serenaded by the daytime sounds surrounding her sister's brownstone house. She remembered the long wait to come to America after Papa died. There were quotas on

immigrants and when her number was called after a five year delay, she seized the opportunity to leave her sad past behind. Abandoning the house, as immigrants sometimes did, she packed only her clothes and left hastily for Napoli. Passport in order, inoculations confirmed, she walked up the ramp of the passenger ship "Venicia" conscious of each plank under her shoes. She turned to Italy one last time and felt glad to be rid of memories that, for her, had become an ulcer, an open wound. With a toss of her greying head she stepped onto the ship looking forward to life in a country where gold lay in the streets.

But once in America, she sat, day in and day out, in her sister's house trying to make sense of her life. She hadn't enough enthusiasm to run a comb through her now thin hair. She missed her carpenter, the love of her life, and longed for what could have been. But even she was shrewd enough to know that the reality of him had long ago been surpassed by the dream.

Perplexed by memories, she crossed her ankles using the cane to steady herself. She had been a guest in her sister's home for twenty years. She felt like an extra left shoe. Each morning she relived her memory and each afternoon found her more melancholy than the last. She felt that life had passed her by, never, never showing her the reason for her being. And so, it was with one consuming regret and a heavy heart that she determined this day, to rock until she died.

She Went
—*Allison Worden*

she went to see her friend
who then became her lover
and he returned to his girlfriend
lying about whom he'd been with

she went to see her confidant
who then became her lover
and he returned to his wife
lying about where he'd been

she went to see her girlfriend
who then became her lover
and she returned to her boyfriend
and told him
the truth

this winter
—Mark Sirard

i'm eight years old
 stepping shyly on your shadow
 hoping to pin you to the cemetery stillness
 of your absent arms and quiet shaking

night clothes, your silver ring,
 I slip into my snow shoes
 two sizes too big, and follow
bleached paper, sidewalk steps,
 I stumble in my breath of words
 reaching with my hollow limbs
sour poem, blackened stare,
 I fall down in the gospel of your polished eyes
 a frozen scarecrow in gasoline and skin

i'm eight years old
 growing up in a moment's stone breeze
 trampled to blindness, in your shadow
 breaking the ice in my glass veins



Beloved

Carlos Joseph McCall

fascinated
—Jay Russell

I stared at her
as if she were a four car
pile up
on the side of the road
dead bodies
sprawled out
pools of lip red
drool blood
smells of wreckage
melted
twisted
steel
& shards of glass
a glittering mosaic
diamonds
in the coal
on her face
so smooth
my hands
convulsed
my eyes
contorted
spasms of
longing
& trances of
mangled
fascination

**A Conversation by the Riverside
Upon the Occasion of Bobby's Death
—Allen Roger Shaw**

"I always liked this part of the river..."

"Yeah, me too."

"...the way this little creek cuts through the meadow and joins the river just at the bend." Arnie watches the current of the creek as it laps up on the sedgy bank and spills over three moss covered boulders and into the river, creating little foamy eddies and ripples and crosscurrents. "Bobby and I used to come fishing here sometimes."

"Y'know Arnie, there's somethin' I always felt guilty about. Y'know, I slept with Suzanne one time."

"We never caught anything worth keeping, but in the early summer...I don't know, there's just something about it, the wild rhododendrons, the smell of cedar,...it always seems so warm here too, maybe 'cause there aren't many tall trees. Sometimes we would give up the fishing and just go for a swim."

"God! They were still married too."

"The water was frigid. We'd take off our clothes and jump in. It was too cold though. It felt good, but you couldn't stay in for long. So we'd get out and sit by the side of the water, in the sun...you shouldn't feel guilty you know."

"One thing that made me feel so bad is that it seemed to come between us, Bobby and Suzanne and Nancy and me...and you and Annie too. In fact, it wasn't long after that that Nancy and I moved to Long Beach, you and Annie moved up here, and Bobby and Suzanne got a divorce. And then Nancy and I got a divorce, and even you and Annie eventually. Funny, I hadn't thought before about how complete the separation has been."

"And it was all your fault, wasn't it? You personally were responsible for the annihilation of at least two marriages and several friendships. That's quite a load, pal."

"Y'know, it was weird, but Bobby sort of threw us together, Suzanne and me I mean. One time he showed me a nude picture he'd taken of her."

"Nice tits, huh."

David looks over at Arnie, who is throwing a rock into the water and is wearing a devilish grin. "Yeah, nice tits, beautiful tits as a matter of fact," David says, looking extremely puzzled. "Did he show you the picture?"

"Nope. I fucked her too."

"Jesus! I didn't know that."

Arnie's eyes snap onto David's. "You're surprised eh?"

"Yeah, I'm surprised."

"Hey, she was like that, man...I don't know, maybe it was because she was from Europe, but she had kind 'a that European attitude, y'know. She wasn't all hung up about sex. Hell man, don't worry about it. That's life."

Arnie continues throwing rocks into the green, fast moving waters of the Illinois River. Each one bounces over the surface five or six times and then sinks out of sight. The ripples that are created by this move on down the river and soon disappear as the waters cascade over a small cataract and tumble down a rocky gorge.

"Did you ever tell Bobby?"

"Shit no man. What the hell good would that have done?"

"I don't know. It just seems wrong somehow that Bobby is dead and there is this...this secret thing that made a hole like...like..."

"Hey listen man! Bobby was my friend, and I loved him, and how he's dead. But he was a man, just like you and me. He was human, and he fucked up just like any other human. I'll tell you something about Bobby, he was sleeping with Annie. Well, maybe I shouldn't say he was sleeping with her like it was a long running thing. But they did get it on. At least once, maybe two or three times."

"Did he tell you that?"

"No, he didn't. Annie told me. It was during one of the bloody, gut-splitting nights of truth we had just before we split up. I don't think that much truth is good between people, you know what I mean? I'm glad Bobby and I never talked about our mutual indiscretions. We both knew, and we both knew that we knew, and that was enough. It didn't get in the way."

"Yeah, maybe. But the thing is, it wasn't just Bobby that I feel I betrayed. I'd cheated on Nancy once before, and I'd vowed, to myself, not to do it again. That vow was good for about six months."

"There is something else that came out during that night of

truth that I should tell you about, Davey my friend. Do you remember Tim Steele?"

"Pat Steele's brother? Great big guy? Ex-Green Beret, right?"

"Yeah. Well do you remember the summer that you and Nancy came to visit us, and Tim was living in that cabin down the road? He was getting it on with sweet Nancy."

David looks over at his friend. He sees the devilish grin again and the twinkle in his eye. It crosses his mind that maybe Arnie is kidding.

Arnie keeps grinning. "You don't believe me, do you?"

"Well, I won't say that I don't believe you, but I do wonder how you happen to know about it."

"I told you. Annie told me."

"And how did she know?"

"He was gettin' it on with her too, and I guess she and Nancy told one another about it."

Arnie and David look at each other for quite a while. Then they both grin, and Arnie says, "Aint they devious?"

"Who?" inquires David.

"Women, man. They're fuckin' devious creatures."

David looks into Arnie's mocking eyes and wonders for the umpteenth time that day if his friend is kidding. He can't tell for sure. David smiles, and Arnie begins to laugh. Then David laughs too, and their laughter bounces over the water and down the canyon and back through the years. They spend the rest of the afternoon throwing rocks into the river, taking turns cracking each other up by saying, "Fuckin' devious, man."

"Yeah, them goddamned women."

The Good Wife
—*Sheri Brakebush*

for everyone's sake

Your morning dawns onto the plains of Oprah Winfrey and Tom and Jerry. Your filigree dreams vanish as you rise from the bed to squash yourself back into the mold. The needs of others rise above you like smoke, and your day begins.

You fill endless days with endless brown paper lunches. You spend so much time in front of the television you can't separate the days of their lives from the days of yours.

You daily circumcise yourself for your husband and his friends who circle around you, sniffing and panting like dogs at doors of fresh air.

As you iron mountains of clothes buried under shopping lists, do you smile? Do you want to smash your hand under the iron and steam it? Flat and crisp as a starched collar, lovingly pressed, carelessly thrown aside by manicured hands in the dim linen beige room at the Holiday Inn.

The fumes from the dishes rise like a litany for the dead as you lie cold and still in the marriage bed. Your sheets cleaned and re-cleaned by your capable hands as your capable feet wear trails through the floorboards—like a mouse in a maze. You move sluggishly from one warm corridor to another, replacing endless toys, endless socks, endless pieces of cheese like prizes at the end of a long day.

You lie on your bed, staring at the white stucco you hired a Norwegian man who smelled of vinyl and old cigarettes to install. You wish somehow that your sheets weren't beige, that they didn't match the wallpaper, or the tiny carpets strewn like a car crash all over the bathroom.

The clock blinks wide-eyed and red as the sun slides off the mountains and the darkness creeps past your windows like fog.

Three Faces of Love—Lost —*Jaxson Riedel*

She barely rose above the demarcation of sea and sky. The mast and rigging were expressed as splintered ghost against the ornate brilliance of a falling sun. Her anemic shadow fell exaggerated to the east, the only consolation the sea could offer at this latitude. Though the waters rose nearly to her bowline, she continued to expose her sun-bleached figurehead, an Asian beauty of some oriental port. Under the sluggish bobbing of the vessel she would rise to reveal her weathered breast, only to fall back, a shroud of sea rushing in to complement her modesty.

With empty eyes she maintained a blank gaze into the infinite horizon, yet, there was an expression on her face. Whether shaped by artist or fashioned by wind and sun, it was a face which spoke of despair. It was the visage of a lover abandoned, rejected. The face of resolve in the knowledge of impending aloneness.

She had drifted for ages, or so it appeared, yet her movements had taken on more than just an aimless course of currents and wind. It was as though she were alive—or at least aware of her direction, desperately searching for the love which had reduced her to this pathetic end.

A whisper of a breeze caressed the rigging of her foremast, and she returned a muffled moan at its gentle tugging. She spoke in tones which oscillated between pleading and resolution, but the sea, having become indifferent to her wailings, responded with a simple slap, slap against her rotting planks. There had always been a sort of alliance between the Asian Beauty and the waters in which she sailed, a basic understanding of endurance and a price paid in increments of time. She had endured the most hostile of terms any sea had chosen to place before her, but now she knew time had come to claim its payment in full.

Still she lingered, holding with a reserved tenacity to the brief surface which rested between the search for her lost love and a last embrace with the sea. A full moon, grand and majestic, began its climb into the southern sky, while seabirds, bloated and weary from the day's catch, struggled under their burden of fish to reach a shore of guano and perhaps a mate. The Asian Beauty took no notice of their flight and again pointed her bow towards the open sea. One last search she appeared to whisper,

another turn through the turbulence of the South Pacific. One last effort to find her love and thereby die in peace.

* * *

Rachel returned to an empty apartment and mindlessly began the routine of dinner for one. A slice of fresh fruit, one frozen dinner of noodles with beef tips, and a glass of water were placed before a nine-inch Sony which monotonously blared out the six o'clock news. She ate in silence, listening, but not hearing, the events of local, state and national news. There was nothing reported which pertained to her, nothing exposed that could affect her. There were no tragedies that could compete with the agony she had endured for the last two weeks.

Her lover had gone. The man she had chosen out of the countless suitors who had plagued her father's door had, without drama or ceremony, simply packed up and left. She was not aware there had ever been a problem in their relationship. The affection he had lavished on her had always assured her of a true and sincere love, but sometime during her absence, he had removed half of her life. The material items he had taken with him were not important. They were his anyway, but the love they had shared—a love promised forever—had been theirs together.

Rachel pushed her half-eaten meal towards the Sony and snapped it off midway through a commercial dealing with fresh breath and how lovers were complemented by this attribute. She had come to despise the media blitz, always pushing its products with happy couples in mind—always reminding her that she was now alone.

It was not that she was without support. There were people who cared and sympathized with her plight, but they seemed so removed, almost remote in their understanding of her pain.

Her father assured her that she would survive and that she would learn from this experience, while moderately sincere friends tried to "fix her up" with someone's ex. Yet, there was no desire to survive, and certainly no desire to spend an awkward evening with anyone's ex. In fact, it appeared that desire had left her completely. Her lover had gone, and in the wake of his departure desire had followed. In the void that remained she

tasted the bitterness of love and wondered if it was worth the effort.

Rachel wandered about the barren apartment struggling to keep her mind on anything but memories. She righted a print by Tolson in the living room, then watered her ferns in the bath. Eventually, she found herself standing before the full-length mirror of their...her bedroom. Here the memories were too powerful to ignore, and she found herself wishing she could step beyond the surface of the mirror into another world: a world where memories did not exist, where the smell of his cologne did not linger, where the taste of him could be forgotten.

Instead, she could only address the broken figure of the reflection before her. Her eyes had grown dark in his absence, while her posture had taken on a lethargic slouch; yet, she was still young and in time, she knew, this demise of her body would reverse itself. She allowed her hands to caress the firm curves of her figure and felt a thrill of excitement reach her center at the thought of their lovemaking. The thrill passed into hollowness as she caught sight of her empty bed.

Tears pressed to her eyes again, and she allowed them to fall away unhampered. After a moment she began to laugh to herself, amused at the parallel between her bed and her heart, both empty. At that second she released something of the love she still held for the man who had devastated her life, and suddenly, she realized she would indeed survive.

* * *

It was often difficult to remember their names. In his postdivorce smorgasbord Dale had allowed the alcohol to speak for him, to animate him, to lure the beauties into his parlor. It was, however, the same substance which often impaired his memory and often his performance. Tonight he was glad he had skipped his last double of iced vodka, for now he lay with an exceptional woman.

They had been introduced earlier in the evening, and after a brief meal, laced with many doubles, she finally agreed to follow him home. With a little concentration and a great deal of coaxing she had managed to arouse him. Now they lay together moving while she moaned in soft whispers.

"Yes, Dale. Oh please, oh yes."

He wanted desperately to call back to her, but the name, like so many others, had vanished in a labyrinth of countless names and faces. He tried to remember if hers had been one syllable or two. He started to recite the alphabet, hoping that if he stumbled on the right letter it might jog her name from the sluggish folds of his mind; but suddenly, he realized that he remembered most of them as... "Baby! Oh baby!"

He as well have had his last vodka double as it appeared it would have made no difference in his performance this night. He buried his head in the pillow beyond her shoulder while she continued to gyrate into his flaccid embarrassment.

Dale rose up on one elbow to look at this nameless woman. Her eyes were still closed, and he realized it was the first honest look he had taken of her. This was a real person lying beneath him, warm, hungry and alone.

Something close to sympathy washed through him, and he began to apologize.

"Jeez, I'm sorry," he slurred. "I sort of lost it." He smiled feebly and tried again, "I mean you're so sexy," with a bolstered smile, "I swear!" He tried to sound genuine but he knew he had failed.

Her eyes broke open and she stared past him with a hollow understanding, a glassy resolve to mask the boredom of similar encounters.

"Oh, darling," she whispered, "you were fantastic." And the mask held.

After an awkward exchange of telephone numbers he was left to himself, and his small apartment seemed to swell at her departure. He rummaged through a cluster of ashtrays until he found a suitable butt, then feeling his way through the black kitchen, he stoked it at the stove.

For a moment he stood in the false, blue light of the burner watching the smoke snake and curl in some mystic dance known only to gaseous tobacco. It rose up beyond the overhead oven door, slowly dissipating into the tenuous dark. In the black glass mirror of the oven door a grimaced image glared in return. It struck him as soiled and foul. It was an image of pain, a ghost of betrayal.

The surrealistic hues cast by the burner enhanced the rainbow crescents under his eyes. He was older now, but not as old as this reflection; yet, he knew intrinsically that this eerie image was indeed his. It was closer to his true person than anyone outside of himself would come to know.

"More than even I care to know," he whispered to the oven door.

Dale stumbled back to his makeshift bar and poured a stiff vodka. He drank half of his glass in two gulps then shivered with its passing. He saw the telephone beside his bottle, and for a brief instant he thought of calling his ex-wife. He had never stopped loving her, and he might have called, but for the moment he couldn't remember her name.

* * *

A blush of crimson rippled beyond the eastern horizon, while the Asian Beauty floundered recklessly to turn and greet the dawn. It would be another flawless day. She showed a sparkle of her former self, swaying as in a gentle dance, delighted in the prospect of sharing a beautiful morning with her love....

It is a cruel trick of the dawn to slip into the dreams of those abandoned and persuade them that their love has returned, her love had not returned, and she knew now that this would be her last morning.

She had spent the night saying goodbye. The moon had stayed with her, revealing in its full mournful face that love should never end this way. A shower of stars had been thrown across her bow, a salute to her struggle, while the Southern Cross wept openly in the realization of her passing. Only the sea remained unmoved, waiting impatiently to receive its due.

She carried no regrets, but held only a great forgiveness which comes with a true love. She possessed an untiring belief that she had been loved as much as she still did. Only circumstance had sent her love to the longboats and not the how and why of what she had or had not done. She acted in the only fashion a true mate could: to work with her love, so that they might be made whole; and in return, she had been given a life which had tasted love. Beyond this, she knew there was no other life worth living.

With this understanding she allowed her stern to slip beneath the anxious fingers of the sea, lifting her bow to face the somber

sky. The bleached white figurehead fixed her hollow eyes towards the heavens and appeared to honor whatever gods she had come to know. While she praised these gods for granting her love and life, the sea moved in and carried her gently beyond the reach of gods or love.

Daddy's Game
—*Zan Meyer*

Vividness is not a thing one can conjure
or dismiss at will
face to face, we make love, I request your light
deliberate touch, mouth open, eyes open
the games come back tonight
I am again a small child, "bird-legs"
my brother a foot shorter and fifteen months younger
both of us wanting to please this man
who holds us down, one at a time
squeezing small wrists in one hand
pinning stick legs with one thigh
Daddy played and tickled us, one at a time
tickled us until we gasped like landed fish
Made us stand, backs to him, forbidden to move
or speak, arms up, shivering even in August
Daddy made circles and growled, grabbing, tickling
laughing at our electric jumping hearts
It was his game
I remember the disconnected hands in dreams
white-gloved magician's hands waiting in the hedges
the fear, forbidding me to move, legs like lead
pinned without breath between white, tickling
hands, his hands
I cannot imagine how my brother and I never
told each other the dreams
holding them alone until into our twenties he told
about the long wooden woman in his dreams
unfolding, bending towards his helpless body
her grip the terror of drowning in air
unable even to beg her to stop
It will never stop
I cannot imagine it stopping
But, tonight I watch your hands, my hands
I do not want to be taken from behind
I do not want to be told to hold still
this game is not his.

Here is the picture you drew of me:
—*B.A. Ludlow*

My head is rather small
(for you must tell me things over and over
if I am to remember)
You gave me two breasts
(but they'll never be as big
as ooh-la-la miss september's)
I have no mouth in my head
(nothing I have to say
could be very important)
I have no colors
(the only thing handy
was a black magic marker)

And between my legs
You proudly bestowed
A perfect circle.
An entire hole.



Chris Baldassari

bacon, eggs and toast or love

—*Adrienne Nora Dailey*

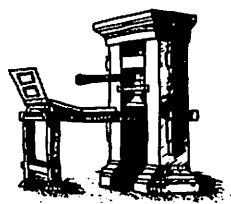
i bumped into love at denny's one night
we drank coffee with too much cream
much too much sugar
crumpled napkins and salt all over
we discussed philosophy
and i smoked love's last marlboro

love and i picnicked in the park one night
love lay behind me
arm around my tummy
whispered in my ear, fed me grapes
later we picked foxtails out of each other's
socks

love and i sneaked over the fence at holiday
inn
sitting in the hot tub drinking red wine
complaining about america and carl jaspers
finally kicked out at seven a.m.

love came to visit me in san francisco
we took a perfumed bubble bath
water hot as the passion
we shampooed each other's hair
made santa claus beards

i said goodbye to love
corner of haight and fillmore
arms wrapped around each other
promises of weekend visits
nuzzled close to love's ear softly and
whispered, "i love you"



Contributors' Notes

Chris Baldassari is an art student who likes to draw and paint and occasionally dabbles in Play-doh....**Sheri Brakebush** loves to "read and write and color with purple and blue crayons." Her cat's name is Puppethed, and she has a black velvet Elvis in her living room....**R.E. Brock** lives in Chico and has previously published poems in the *South Dakota Review*, *Between Two Cities*, *America*, *Bottomfish*, *Inside English*, and *Opus*....**Rose Calvano** is an artist and a writer. This is her fifth appearance in *Watershed*....**Adrienne Nora Dailey** was born in San Francisco and now lives in Chico....**Ande Gabrych** is a theatre major who loves "singing, writing, and body modification. He hates oppression and bad perms."...**Amy Runge Gaffney** is in the process of submitting her first manuscript, "The Rose Window," to various small presses for publication. She recently has had poems published in *The Lyric* and *Plainsongs*....**Mark Gowers** is a graduate student in the Department of Human Communications Studies, and has taught speech classes at CSUC. His interests include civil rights activism, writing, and theatre....**Robert A. Howard** lives in Chico, and is a graduate student in Psychology....**George Keithley** lives in Chico, and has had his fiction appear in *The Tri Quarterly*, *The North American Review*, and *The Colorado Review*, and he recently won a Raymond Carver Short Story Contest award. His sixth book of poems, *Earth's Eye*, will be published in the Fall of 1992....**B.A. Ludlow** was born and raised in Long Island, N.Y. In addition to writing, other interests include sketching and photography....**Carlos Joseph McCall** has been taking pictures for over three years. In his photography, he prefers to use natural light and white cards, as opposed to lights and flashes. His pictures have appeared in *Metro* and *Bam* magazines....**Zan Meyer** says of her poetry she is inclined, like Dylan Thomas, to "let the little cripples stand on their own two feet." She is a lesbian who feels that "visibility" and "gratitude" are important....**Jaxson Riedel** was born in 1952 to a military family in Ogden, Utah. He claims: "Writing and singing the Blues is the best form of stress management I know."...**Jay Russell** is a sophomore Art (studio) major from Orland, Ca. Writing is his "creative passion" at the moment....**Paul M. Russell** graduated from CSUC in 1987 with

a B.F.A. degree in Fine Art. His interest in Native American art, clothing, and decoration extends into his own art work. His work appeared in the 1987 issue of *Watershed*....**Allen Roger Shaw** is a recent graduate from CSUC with a degree in English. "The tension between women and men" is a one of his favorite subjects for writing, although he remains happily married. His work has been published in a previous issue of *Watershed*....**Mark Sirard** is a sophomore at CSUC in the Humanities program. He says: "Poetry is integral to my life. It is as fundamental as oxygen and as sobering as the recognition of my humanistic existence."...**Pamela Spoto** is a poet and a teacher. Describing her poems, she says that they are short, and "move from lightness (illusion) to darkness (unmasking illusion)."...**Barbara Thomas** is a 45-year old single mother of two sons, and has lived in Paradise for over 15 years. She is an Anthropology major at CSUC who sees herself as "a poet, songwriter, and musician."...**Vanessa Tompkins** is an art student who likes to sing. Anne McCaffrey is her favorite author because she believes in "dragons and telepathy."...**Zu Vincent** has had her non-fiction appear in several national publications, such as *Redbook*, *Harper's*, and *Flyfishing*, as well as an earlier edition of *Watershed*. Also, each Christmas her fiction appears in the *Chico News and Review*. ...**Mike Waltz** was born on a farm in Martinez, Ca. He is currently attending CSUC, and is majoring in English....**Allison Worden** is a graduating senior who will be receiving a Communications degree with an emphasis in journalism, and a minor in English.

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