WATERSHED

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Volume 26, Number 2

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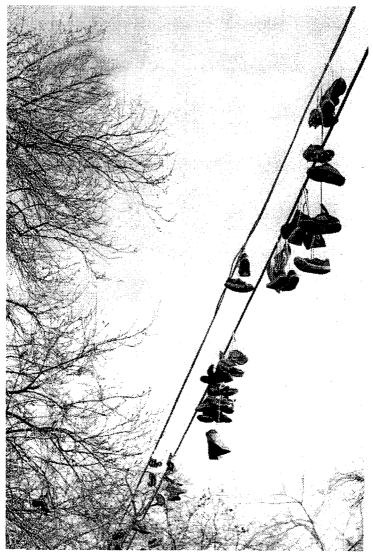
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Mattie Gleason untitled



Concrete Kid

See that sidewalk tap-dancing you home. Tell ya, some streets just don't let you down 'em. But all that jazz couldn't keep me from you, From your blue-checkered moods, Or your tight natty curl.

See those shoes hanging over our heads, Telephone chatter racing through them. Some say those are James Jones' shoes. Hung up there fifteen years. Last time anyone ever slowed him!

See that orange ball bouncing in the sun. Why don't you grab it, squeeze it, run.

Big Drum Beats

From the Red Sea Coast,
Deep pit drums beat their beat
Around the world:

A little pat, Then rumbas from the cradle, The Nubian coast, Birthplace of the world.

> Hey Mrs. C Said a bee bop ba dee My you look sweet

And many are jealous of this beat, Hateful of it, Stealin' it, sellin' it, slavin' it

> Big Mac Filet 'O Fish Quarter Pounder Fries Icy Cola Milk Shake Sundaes Apple Pies

But that pitter pat
Pats a path around the world,
Pats a path so big
Like a beautiful baby birthed upon the world
Shadow so big you see all of its stars. . .

Ice Cream Watermelon Cadillac car We not dumb as you think we is

Big as the carried away feeling I get watching those young girls dance, on a stage, Watching the two ropes swinging over hands, under feet,

Watching the two ropes swinging under quick black feet Breaking the confines of each chain

Take a peach, take a plum, take a pocket full of gum

No like it, no take it, take it up, take it down, take it all the way around...

She can wiggle, She can woggle, She can even do the splits But I bet ya five dollars she can't do this...

Said a one all the way around, Said a two all the way around. . .

Ballerina Ballerina gotta fight to win these streets to ever see the sun sweat sweet chocolate sweet

Jump Jovanna!

Jump! Jump high as your mind will take you

Jump from your sick bed to the possibilities of the stars. . .

JUMP HIGH HIGHER

JUMP and where was I—

Those quick black feet, the Nubian coast, two dexterous wrists over hide pulled tight over hollow holes

deep pat deep pat deep

and reach around the world

with rhythm and blues and so on and so on and

SO

The Unknown Woman Speaks of Smiles

I never smiled for the camera had buck teeth and couldn't afford to fix 'em Really, couldn't afford much of anything Not much to smile about anyways

Other girls would though some outright laugh even and they had the same as me even less
Take Tillie for instance
She could barely afford the Lucky Strikes she smoked but her deep-throated laugh was as familiar as the lines on my face

Truth is I can't afford to smile

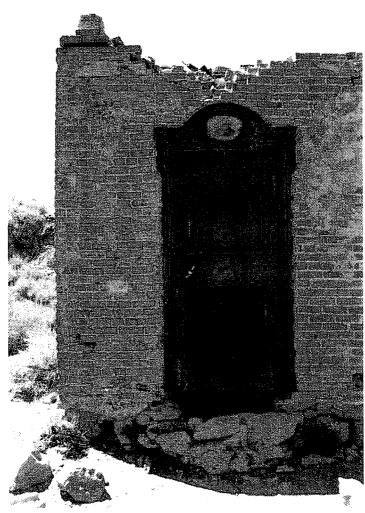
I did once

at a man

Don't cost nuthin' to smile

he said when we first met

but he was wrong
That smile cost more than I could ever afford to give
more than I could ever get back
in a lifetime.



Sophia Dufort

The Safe (Bodie, CA)

Socorro, Royal Palms Beach, 1932

As we pose for the photo I wonder about a town where you have to take a coat to the beach, where the sun shines but does not warm you. The wind pushes off the ocean like a big bully. How can you call a place like this home?

San Pedro, the place of St. Peter, the rock, of course; only a rock can handle this cold, this damp, fishy breath.

Saint Peter
Not a saint we think of much in Mexico.
We have the other saints to guide, protect, remind us that all sinners need redemption.

Today is the day of the Virgin,
Madre de Dios, la Virgen de Guadalupe.
Her candles sit on my night stand,
play shadows on the wall.
Their flickering always distracts
me from that business of
being a woman;
my husband above me
the biggest shadow of all.
Every night I light my candles
and pray to a virgin.

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impatiently wondering how a virgin could possibly understand.

I crossed myself hoping she doesn't hear these blasphemous thoughts.

But every night I pray for her help because at least seven sorrows pierce the heart of every woman.

The wind breathes hard down my dress and Santiago says he's ready to take the picture. I clutch my coat to my breast, clench my teeth and smile.

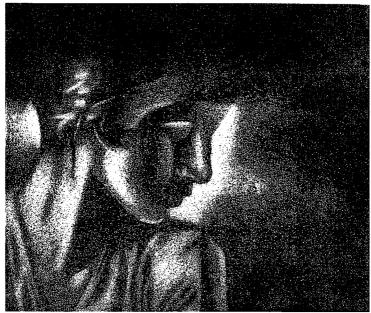
Relics

I had to go back Back where the soil Pulls you close, And heaven whispers your name Across star-thistle thorns.

I came to find Find the bamboo poles, Black caterpillars, Bluegill fish, And apple tree boughs.

I found them,
Those old relics
Of someone I should know,
Scattered in the fire pit,
A hole in her breast
Where her arms open up,
Yet I could not smell the soft ash
Or the choking fish.
All existing was a white scent
Of something I should remember...

When in a moment
I saw it all consumed—
A cry of apple blossoms—
All but my feet
Pressed against the gorge.
Flames among the soil,
A man's essence forged.



Lora Ceccato untitled

The Monster That Saved Me

Remember me,
I was the one who rescued you,
From the sleepless runaway streets,
From your parents,
From the cops.
I showed you the real world
Where darkness is something to fear,
Where pain is more than just
Having to stay home on a Friday night.
In my world I taught you to suffer.

I rescued you from your carefree youth. Like a thief. I stole your sense of security: I ripped it from your heart. Ensuring you would always doubt men, Hide in corners. Flinch at sudden movements. But I wasn't the first, was I? He made you afraid. I rescued you from him and From childhood. Into a year-long nightmare That will forever remain in your slumber. Hidden from the world in your dreams, lust as you remained hidden From the world, living On the edge of sanity, In my darkened domain.

It was so easy to draw you in.
You were a child,
Desperate to be a woman,
Determined to be free,
Wild and spirited,
Sweet sixteen with a tequila bottle,
Joint stashed in a pack of Camels,
Hiding from your parents
From the cops,

Seeking a savior to keep Your secret and liberate you From that child's life Of nagging parents, boring teachers, Rules and curfews And him

You loved so easily,
Trusted so completely.
I fell on you like a fierce storm
Sadistically piercing the dark,
Ripping the sky like a knife.
I made your blood rush
With terror, thunder pounding
In your ears.
And you wept like the child you were.
I reached inside of you,
Stripped you of your dignity,
And left you shivering.

But you did not leave, because You feared him more. He betrayed your innocent trust, Robbed you of your childhood, and Deceived your mother Every time he came to your room, With his big hands, Tracing lines of indelible ink On your mind even as he traced The delicate lines of your body In his unholy ritual.

They found you one day and Took you back to him And they punished you, As they should, because You were a naughty Little runaway girl.

But they don't know
About him
And they don't know about me.
I know
The rope burns
From when I bound you
And the welts from the whip
I beat you with
Will heal faster than his wounds.
And I know you will never tell
Anyone.

Zephyr

Just as I became resigned to the wounds of being your child, inspired through the ache, sleeping fitfully in memory, this wind may become the only transport of your words to me.

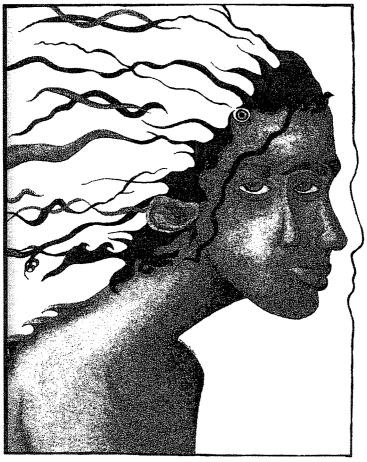
How long can you bear the weight of a suffering body?
Long enough for reparations—for me to relinquish a reoccurring dream with a wilted heart and sagging spirit in tow.

Across the rippling jeweled creek the tall grass is a waving, iridescent sea; When you are gone can I imagine you there, beneath that undefined shroud, swaying, shifting, alive—not yet gone?

Archetype

The doctor describes her patient's disease, how her mood swings from passive to passionate in the flick of a wrist. That's all it took to spill hot coffee on her mother's lap, to burn the thighs she once passed between. Each of us who hold court: doctor, lawyer, clerk, and judge, all of us women and daughters, look down and remember how it might have been us with the cup in our hands.

So it's no surprise she is granted her leave, released to the mother who will gather strands of her daughter's hair to analyze what rage is made of, how love turns to loathing. Later I listen for the indictment in my daughter's voice that tells me I'm the mother now—the source of all that is wrong, the reason she turns away.



Nicole Baker untitled

g/God/ess

Oval, I see her: smooth and unchurched. Quick to kiss, long hold on. Oval, smooth, color of trumpet vine.

Often she is craggy—
Sometimes, she is a fat and luscious wart,
Delicious, indiscreet. She yells
Like a retching wave, enough to doom.
Or is quiet and young as water
Grooming rocks. Ecstatic as silk, a moan
In gentle dark.

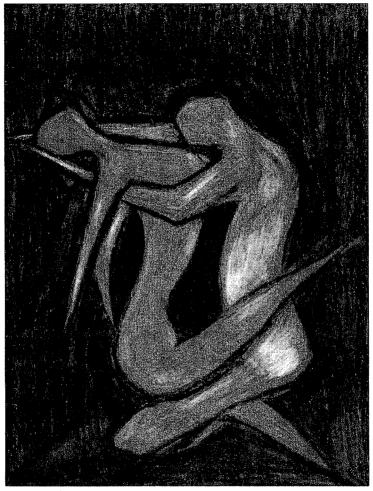
She is unafraid to cough, Big and phlegmy. Sneezes like shouts, Like clapping, a hurray.

To touch she is soft as fat, sleek as seal, Muffin warm and—like cucumber.

Drawn to moments

Of orgasm, like bee hums. Or small Death in crouched Corners of young mind.

Mine.
She waits,
Fearless midwife, pulling me—
Screams and bloodstuff—
Back to life.



Bruce Matthes untitled

Tatsu, Awaiting Her Daimyo

yesterday, blossoms fell from gingko—small pink stars float through blue heaven

kitsune greeted me at Kiso's bank, her black-tipped nose poking out from tall reeds

small white koi dash when my pail breaks water, fills so I may have tea—

swollen with your legacy.
during harusaki, you promised to return

before gingko blossoms fell

Kalfu Mounts The Sun: Confessions from the Man in the Moon

The sun—
Suspended
In mute gray sky,
Beguiled
In a false cradle
Of impenetrable, thick fog
Whose promise is hope
It cannot give,
Waits.

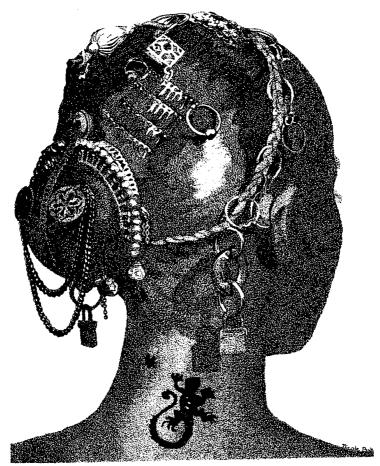
I press on,
Pushing my lunatic will.
Probing,
Seeking out vulnerable, vague sunlight.
Plunging
Into depths of shadows,
Taunting,
Eager to emerge victorious.

I surround her.
Yellow rays
Struggle to find ground.
Desperate, stretching, reaching.
Thin threads, weak,
Grasping,
Panicked,
Spreading.
I penetrate with no mercy.

The ocean hurtles forward, Glorifying My omnipotence, Energized by my virility In murky green waves, Churning Defenseless grains of sand. The liquid monster's ravenous appetite Urges me onward, Foaming uncontrollably at my command, For I—alone Control, Consume, Consummate.

Steadily I rise—temporarily Satisfied.

Quietly She hides Until I Sleep.



Nicole Baker untitled

Petrified Jewel

Pebbles and stones pop and crunch beneath my shoes.

I walk along alone down the dusty, dirt road toward the field:

a grid of glowing, yellow neon—of vibrant canola flowers.

An iridescent sapphire reflection arrests me.

I catch my breath and kneel for a closer look.

I rise cradling the petrified jewel.

Its remains are dried and ancient

Clear window-pane wings are separated with black-solder veins. Onyx stripes divide the long, curved, cobalt tail.

Grey-emerald compound eyes though translucent, reflect neither present nor past.

Stiff and brittle wire thin legs stand tilted

like pier piles anchored into ocean.

The wind lifts beneath fragile wings, releasing the dragonfly

from the whirls and prints of my open palm.

old forms

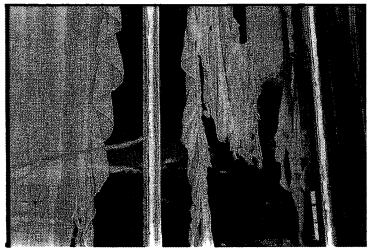
The old forms, ghosts and shadows, echoes of old music, impose themselves on the tenuous present, superimpose—

you reach for a face and your fingers shudder at subtle changes that give you a stranger—

you write down an old address, call an old number: the building is rubble, the person you're calling is dead—

A sharp discord nails you to the present. You struggle under the stone fact that you are and should be, and what's lost deserves to be so, since it is.

The witch of the past waits in the moonlight, smiling. What you were clanks and tugs behind you; there is a wall of mist you have already failed to pass, but you move toward it.



Sofia Dufort

Window (Bodie, CA)

1830

the redwhiteandblue spacious sky darkened with crimson

my leatherfaced whitehaired greatgreatgrandfather had a red oak box it held his six shooter he made in virginia with strong nails and with straight wood and with a grin and brought to california he stained it cherokee red when he crossed oklahoma onehundred&seventytwo years ago i painted it white but the red stain still bleeds through

it makes a good cd case i put my plastic bobble head jesus on it

FATHER

- (2:15) YOU PROBABLY WON'T SHOW THIS TIME
 I TOLD YOU I'D BE HERE, SITTING, LEGS CROSSED
 TEARING THE LABEL FROM A BOTTLE
- (2:18) I ASKED YOU TO SEE ME HERE, FOR MOM SHE SAID YOU KNOW THIS BAR, IT'S WHERE SHE MET YOU EATING AN APPLE
- (2:21) BUT YOU KNOW THAT
- (2:22) I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU AROUND AGE MUST HAVE LINED YOUR FACE BLACK INK AGAINST BROWN PAPER
- (2:25) I DON'T HAVE MUCH TO SHOW FOR YOU MY THOUGHTS LEAK LIKE CLENCHED MUD WHEN I THINK OF YOUR REASON
- (2:28) YOU ONLY GAVE ME A BIBLE CASED IN LEATHER STAMPED BY THE GIDEONS
 BUT YOU KNOW THAT
- (2:31) I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU BEFORE MOM SAID THAT'S FOR THE BEST YOU LEAVE TEARS FOR THOSE YOU LOVE
- (2:34) YOU GAVE MOM A BLINDFOLD ONCE SHE TOLD ME YOU LEFT HER LIFE AND SHE DIED BUT YOU KNOW THAT
- (2:38) WE USED TO THINK ABOUT YOU WHEN WE ATE SCRAMBLED EGGS OR STEAK WE'D LIGHT A CANDLE AND LET IT BURN OUT
- (2:42) I THINK HOW MOM WOULD'VE BEEN WITHOUT YOU AND I WONDER

NOT MUCH BUT SOMETIMES I WOULDN'T BE HERE WITHOUT YOU

- (2:46) MOM SAID THAT YOU DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH YOU MEAN TO US BUT I STILL PRAY FOR YOU
- (2:50) BUT YOU KNOW THAT

While the Boys Sleep

My son sleeps in the other room with a friend the sound of light passing through their sleep unnoticed the dog lies with this friend, hogging the couch making him hold a deformed S shape with his body lean muscular

When I enter the room
I can smell the odor of adolescence
even though they have showered and the window is open
I can smell youth
pungent potent

I was thinking of his father earlier when we first met, when we were young and how his body was lean, muscular I used to press my nose to the skin between his armpit and chest and breathe deeply

taking in his fragrance wanting to keep it with me

Now I sit alone in bed the strong wind from last night just a breeze now and as the boys continue to sleep it blows on them the way a child blows on a dandelion

The Factory

The line is long like waiting to see a museum exhibit I reach the top of the stairs just about to enter the loft.

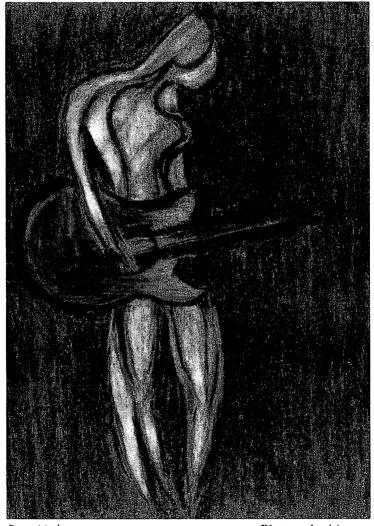
I am told I need a number I look down at my arms to see if it is branded there She clocks me in.

I am ordered to a workbench where I stand The girl next to me sits on a stool I am not allowed to sit.

I am ordered to write an essay I find water colors on a stool next to me I use green, then blue, then black.

Then a voice over my shoulder says It's time now
Time for what? I ask not looking up
If you don't know, then you can't do it.

I turn to the girl next to me she's gone.



Bruce Mathes

Playing the Muse

Discovered While Searching Under Bed for Yard Sale Stuff

It caught me unexpected—your gray hooded sweatshirt:

CalPoly San Luis Obispo printed on the chest, left cuff unraveling from the sleeve.

Despite months of distance, your scent lingers: dried sweat on the chest and lower back, papaya from the lotion your sister makes by hand and sent for our second Christmas.

The last time you wore it was the big Frisbee football showdown at your company picnic—big because winning meant showing your coworkers we weren't a couple of limp wristed faggots.

I sprained my ankle for the fifth time; to you, losing us the game. You seethed in silence the whole ride home—put a cold wall of bruised pride between us. Still, that night you bandaged my sprain tenderly after supporting and soaping me in the shower.

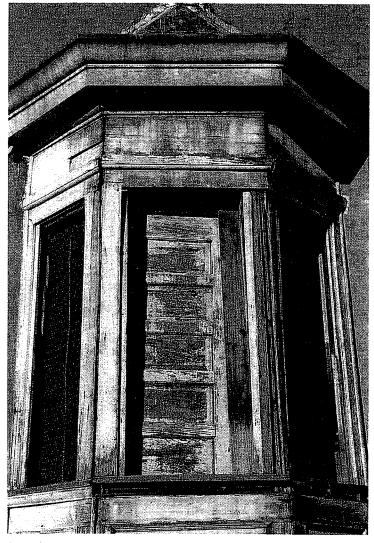
I could still bear standing, but I needed your arm around my waist, your hands massaging apricot scrub into my back.

I needed you pressed against me, your lips on my nape of neck as shampoo rinsed us down the drain.

Pulling the old sweatshirt on, with its shoulders broader than mine, I still do.

Bad Hair Day

Old cat losing teeth, coarse fur matting and smelling. I am aging too.



Renee Suzanne Muir

The Diamond Hotel

THE DIAMOND HOTEL, 1904

It was elegant. The windows were made of glass. The view was lovely.

Autumn

"I'm a dildo— I'm a dildo" she sings skipping down the leave-strewn street

her brother sits on the porch laughing.



Bruce Mathes Catharsis

BASQUIAT

form meets sidewalk a body in a cardboard box Phoenix rising.

mangled minds converge on auctions of the rendered self. Auguries of Art

unConvention hall slogans litter unCommercial billboards.

the fallen angel brandishes syringe injecting numbness deafness hollowness

A timeless paradox: The tempest, The illuminati

in the Pensacola County Jail

in the frozen face of Jesus in the City Square in the raw whine of the stormcoast in the salutary cascade of cross-dressers bitching and mewling is a mind

extrapolate its holdings for a fair estate at the end of the shadowed line

Cause and Effect

What if that blazing light on the outer edge of the big bang Were to bounce off some great back-splash
Turning time around to flow against all our fair reason.
If time flowed backwards, how differently we would think of cause

Fire hoses spraying water would seem to encourage a fire Licking flames would lift and restore burning timbers to their studs. Searing temperatures would smooth and bring color to bubbled blackened paint.

My overdressed apartment full of bric-a-brac would become spartan As cash found its way back to my hands I would trudge to work only to pay the company

Political mudslinging would demote candidates to law clerks Diminish them till they were back in their cribs

Chemotherapy would cure cancer

The setting sun would see the British empire Bombastically backing away from their conquests To their small island with ever diminishing power Subject to gout ridden kings

Cataclysmic bombs would result in thriving populations Healthy, lovely people Backing away from what they know could bring foolish trouble on the land.

Scores of internal combustion engines would seem to suck pollutants out of the air And finally the conservatives would be right: cars actually reduce the threat of global warming.

Europeans would sail away from an increasingly pristine land Indigenous humans would thrive and cherish the Earth.

The light at the end of the tunnel would diminish,
Our goals would disappear as would our need to strive for them.

People with doctorate degrees Would gradually unlearn all they know So would we all In the end: beginners mind.

Technicolor Yawn

"Technicolor Yawn" I've heard it called. That word, "Technicolor," makes me think of "Old Technicolor" which makes me think of movies like *The Wizard of OZ* where reds are ruby, greens are over the top "Emerald-City," blues are sky-topaz and the scariest characters in the whole picture are the flying monkeys.

In 1932 the initial three-color technicolor process was perfected; before that, all movies were in black and white. The new cameras were big and cumbersome with two "splitter" lenses and three large reels of film which ran simultaneously in parallel through filters: red, green and blue. When the film was processed, these three reels were perfectly laminated together for full color. The negatives were super dense and imparted dreamy, ultra vivid, oversaturated colors. It wasn't quite right.

The film was "slow" and blindingly bright movie lights had to be used during shooting. Brighter, hotter, projection bulbs had to be developed also, and if the film reel ever stopped during playback, the highly flammable cellulose nitrate films would ignite. Cellulose nitrate, also called nitrocellulose, is the principle ingredient of modern gunpowder. Upon decomposition these old films have been known to spontaneously explode. People sat in the dark, watching the screen, while the film ticked and cooked above and behind their enraptured heads.

Many people called color a gimmick. They didn't like it much at first. Sound had been a fairly recent innovation, and some people were still getting used to that. They called the early sound films "talkies" because these films featured actors chattering and blathering away constantly with approximately nothing to say. "Scriptwriters" had not been properly invented yet. "Stereo" would not be developed for decades.

The Wizard of OZ hit the screen in 1939. It was a color talkie. Black and white film would not survive this new gimmick. Buddy Ebsen was the original Tin Man, but he was poisoned by breathing in the aluminum powdered silver makeup while working under the brighter-than-the-sun movie lights. He was sick a long time, and

when he recovered he found that he had been replaced. The makeup was changed for the next actor.

Various actors had fought and squabbled over certain parts in the picture. Those who fought best, pulled strings and manipulation won out. Imagine what it would have been like if the Scarecrow had been the Tin Man or the Wicked Witch of the West had been slinky, sexy and seductive: they tried that, it didn't work. It would have been a completely different picture. No, the Wicked Witch of the West had to be old, vivid green with envy, and want those red shoes of adolescent Dorothy more than anything.

"Well my little pretty, I can cause accidents, too" is one of her lines which hasn't been quoted to death. The art of illusion is fragile, these things must be done delicately.

Another premier in 1939, September first, Hitler invaded Poland. Two days later WW II was declared. Hitler wanted Poland; he took it. Hitler was a master of the art of illusion. You never knew what he was really up to until it was too late. America was late entering the war. After all, everything we needed was in our own back yard.

Flying monkeys—they scared me pretty badly when I was six or so, the first time I saw that movie. In 1939 audiences screamed. Some ran from the theater. Children had nightmares. I'm not sure why the monkeys were so scary, but maybe it's something about the way that they could fly down from the sky without any warning and just carry you away. Big damn monkeys, too, in full, bright, abnormally vivid color, making sounds.

Flying monkeys are somewhere in size between a chimpanzee and an ape: about the size of a small man in a monkey suit. The first monkey on the ground looks unstoppable, absolutely bent on his task. He's moving fast and with only a dim glimmer of intelligence: he can't be reasoned with. The second one gets Toto. A whole gang of them rip Scarecrow apart, but it doesn't kill him. There are advantages to being a straw man. His head and upper torso are intact, and his friends put him back together.

* * * * *

"Technicolor yawn," a novel term for vomiting, is supposed to be a cute or funny name. Makes you think of a wide open mouth, like a yawn I guess, presenting a kaleidoscope of colors. "Yawn," something you do when you're tired, or bored and need entertainment. The technicolor part is about being sick. Can a person be all that at once? In any case, I'll be occupied with that particular activity for about six hours straight on this Monday evening. It's near midnight when the first symptom of food poisoning suddenly and unexpectedly appears, but it isn't the "yawn."

"The trots," is the first flying monkey to arrive, so to speak. The colloquialism "trots" doesn't make me think of anything, except maybe the fact that I didn't trot to the bathroom fast enough. We make up funny names for things we don't actually want to talk about. A foreign body has invaded mine. In six hours it has mobilized, multiplied and successfully liberated my digestive system from my control. What I have consumed is consuming me. Everything, absolutely everything, gets consumed by something else.

A man sits in the White House with a sixty percent approval rating. If he starts raining missiles on the people of Iraq in a few days, a week or a month, his approval will go higher still. All of France, Germany, Russia and China to name but a few countries, think he's a dangerous madman, a bloodthirsty cowboy. We know better, we are Americans, and our president couldn't be that way. He is defending our constitution. He is bringing peace to the Middle East. He is a sworn-in agent of democracy. Our top rated shows on television feature real people lying, cheating, stealing, beating each other up and generally screwing each other over. Some of these concept shows were borrowed from Great Britain. Great Britain likes our cowboy. The consumers have spoken.

Iraq has 142 years of oil reserves at current production ratios, the second largest oil reserve in the world after Saudi Arabia. Iran is in the top five, the second of three "Axis of Evil" countries named by

our president. The U.S. is pretty far down the list; we have only seven years left before we run out of our own oil. Great Britain has four years. The big red hourglass has been turned over and sand is pouring through.

The blood of the earth is black. Who put it there and why? Were they careful and methodical when they created it? It doesn't "go bad"; it just sits in the ground at a cool fifty-two degrees waiting to be sucked out and consumed. It does have an expiration date, seven years for us, 142 for Iraq. Our frig is almost empty. There is no way to burn petroleum without creating poisonous gases, no matter how refined. It is a good lubricant for machines and can be reused many many times. Otherwise, we don't know what to do with it. It's toxic, it's poisonous, but we love it.

So I'm sitting on my toilet staring at my own shit on the white tile floor and thinking "well, that never happened before." It makes me think of geriatrics, and the trick of always making it to the bathroom on time even when you are sick. I suddenly have a lot more sympathy for those whose physical selves have deteriorated to the point of causing them embarrassment, and beyond, well beyond that. I almost always feel like I am somewhere in my midtwenties, but right now I feel way past my chronological age. There is something about seeing my own body-fluid outside of my body and some place where it shouldn't be, some place I never expected it to be, that is unnerving.

My bathroom is incredibly tiny, just a toilet, stall-shower and sink. The door swings inward and therefore can't be opened if the shower door is open at the same time. It can't be opened if anyone is sitting on the toilet. The door almost can't be opened if you are in there at all: there's a bit of a dance involved, of grabbing the doorknob, pulling, and backing up nearly into the shower before you can finally escape. On the upside, however, you can, if so inclined, touch everything in the room from the one tiny square that you can stand in: shower nozzle, toilet-tank, faucets. No bending, no stretching, touch everything. It's a tiny universe.

Kate and I can't reasonably take a shower together, this somewhat complicated by the fact that I have gained about fifty pounds in the five years that I have lived as a born again college student in this generic little Northern California town of little distinction. Our town's claim to fame: The Adventures of Robin Hood was shot here, with Errol Flynn, in Old Technicolor, 1938. That year Joseph Goebbels declared the assassination of a single German official an "international Jewish conspiracy." Angry mobs immediately killed 96 Jews, burned 1000+ synagogues among many other acts, and 30,000 Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps. It was called kristallnacht, "the night of broken glass."

Sorry, Robin Hood is only one of Chico's claims to fame, the other being massive college-student riots. Not protesting anything, just rioting, for fun. Drunk and bored. A technicolor yawn.

A journalist once described Chico as the place where you will find Velveeta in the gournet foods section. That pretty much describes it. Ok, there's a river and some trees because there had to be a Sherwood Forest, but Chico is like my bathroom except without the Velveeta. I once swam where Little-John got knocked into the water by Robin Hood. They became fast friends as soon as they were done whacking each other with wooden sticks. I love the movies.

Another thing that you can do in my tiny bathroom is sit on the toilet and throw up in the sink at the same time. I am now finding this out for the first time. It seems that my body is making simultaneous efforts to purge itself of some unknown substance. At this moment I am not thinking of the ruby slippers, all covered in glitter, clicking together, "there's no place like home, there's no place like home." I am not hearing that song in my head 'Ho ho ho, ha ha ha, and a couple of tra-la la's, that's how we laugh the day away in the merry old land of OZ." There is probably a vague ringing in my ears that does not sound like the bells of Saint Peter nor can it be described as musical in any way. I say probably

because I am paying no attention to sound right now, but instead, trying to figure out what it was that I ate. This is not a talkie. The colors don't please me, they are for identification purposes only, they are decidedly not technicolor. My girlfriend, Kate, asks through the bathroom door, "Are you all right?" and I answer after some delay. I don't really hear in stereo anymore. Most of the hearing in my right ear got lost somewhere.

* * * * *

Minutes have passed, maybe longer, I am partially recovered and cleaning the bathroom. Spraying blue Windex on the white surfaces of the floor, sink, and toilet has a pleasing effect, like an instant solution to a very big problem. I imagine the ammonia burning, killing these pathogens that so recently poisoned me. Each time I squeeze the trigger on the spray bottle I'm thinking "die, die, die." If they are tiny flying monkeys, I am unaware of it. They may feel pain or have a desire to preserve their own lives, these small beings. I doubt that they can be described as evil, hungry maybe, maybe even ambitious, but not evil. They do what they do. I do what I do.

It's a blue chemical rain of ammonia that they receive, a bio-toxin guaranteed to kill, but from my great distance and relative size, the microscopic bacteria are expiring in complete silence, without any drama or suffering evident. They absolutely do not stand a chance. There is no hope, no god for them, unless he is me, and I hold the technicolor blue windex, a weapon of mass destruction.

When I am done I take a shower, assuming that the ordeal is all over. But in the shower I begin to feel lightheaded, weak, and dizzy. It is some effort to get the water turned off and myself out of the shower before fainting. Soon I am sitting on the bathroom floor, dripping from the shower, with my head between my knees to keep from passing out. The window is open and it's cold. I'm shivering but not inclined to reach for a towel. It's somewhere after midnight. Kate tries to open the bathroom door and can't, the door presses up against my right knee, "Do you want me to take you to the hospital?" she asks, "Maybe," I say, but I am

thinking how wrong that would be. This is a private thing, it's mine and I don't want to share it with anyone. Besides, I tell myself, there isn't anything that they can do for you unless you pass out, so don't pass out.

It's now after the second or third bathroom session. I have managed to dry off, get warm by the wall heater, and ask Kate to help me write down the things that I can remember having eaten that day. What do we have that needs to be thrown away? What do I need to warn others about? It seems like an orderly and reasonable thing to do within the few minutes afforded me between panicky runs to the bathroom.

Throwing up again: I notice that things are coming up in the wrong order. Last thing in should be first thing out, and it isn't. Wow, I didn't know that my stomach could do magic tricks I think to myself, and the fact that it can does not explain why it would want to. The presentation is out of sequence, non-chronological, and I don't understand it. It is confusing the facts like rewritten history.

Chocolate doesn't seem so appealing like this. It's just regurgitated brown batter now, as ugly and boring as crude oil. I can't remember at all why I like chocolate at this moment and yet I love chocolate, I always have. It's just another concoction that we humans make. We make stuff, we consume it, we excrete it, over and over and over again. And then one day we die, and the stuff that was our body gets buried and turns into other stuff. Stuff stuff stuff, I am so tired of stuff, nothing but stuff to deal with. Later Kate argues with me, it's not about the chocolate, she says, but I can't shake the idea that it is. It's somehow all about the chocolate.

Chocolate muffin, with chocolate chips, bought from the liquor store across the street and what I assume to be the culprit. God knows how long the thing was actually buried in their semi-refrigerated section at fifty-two degrees, give or take. There was

no date on it. Who made it? Who actually mixed up the batter and baked it and stored it there? Were they a careful methodical person? I'll know as much about that as I will ever know about how, or why my stomach did a magic trick. Was it to frighten and amaze me? Was it to keep me entertained while waiting for this sickness to pass? Was it trying to trick me, misdirect me, get me to agree to something or just observe my response. I no longer trust my stomach. God knows.

Nothing I swallowed on Monday tasted evil; it all went down just fine. Some people say that chocolate is a necessary evil. Chocolate is a funny thing—it has a little caffeine in it, and it has a lot of chemicals which mimic brain hormones. These hormones give you the same feeling as love. Then there's the fat and sugarit's like artificial love, it's addictive. Most chocolate contains lead, from its source; tetraethyl lead, an ingredient of refined petroleum not yet outlawed in Africa, the source of most of our cocoa. It's in the ground, the water, the chocolate.

* * * * *

It's hours earlier in the evening and I am laying my hand on Kate's blonde head, meditating and asking to remove whatever this plague is, this thing that keeps her from sleeping, causes pains in her knees, neck, back, circulation problems, extreme sensitivity to temperature, crying jags and more.

I'm a healer, or at least I was one at one time. I have healed quite a few people just by laying my hands on them, but I haven't healed Kate. For years I have been watching her fall further into despair and frailty. Maybe she has an autoimmune disorder, maybe rheumatoid arthritis, something similar to chronic fatigue or to fibro-myalgia but not the same. Another healer told her she was going to end up with Multiple Sclerosis. Never tell that to a hypochondriac. Kate doesn't believe in hypochondria. I can't say that I think the problem is all in her head, but I think that it may have originated there; now it's systemic and it's tearing her apart.

Kate calls it a curse and she doesn't know what it is. "Curses!" the

Wicked Witch said, "Somebody is always helping that girl." Somebody is always helping Kate, actually, everybody is. An amazing amount of aid gets dedicated to her by family and friends on an ongoing basis.

That same healer who diagnosed Kate also thought that the world was largely coming to an end last summer, and he told many many more stories crazier than that. Sometimes I worry what people will think of me if I voice a controversial opinion. Sometimes I talk about one thing when I am really talking about another thing entirely. Maybe I shouldn't worry. I don't think we listen all that hard anyway.

"No, you'd better not do that," she says, and I take my hand away, "Remember what happened last time" she continues, "I spent half the night clawing at my chest afterward." It's true, she hadn't told me about that response for a long time, for fear of what I would think of her. I had worked to separate her from this thing which plagues her . . . whatever it is. I pictured ripping, removing, separating them apart and throwing the offending entity away, even giving it a bit of a trouncing for good measure. My hands were laid on her for healing, but I was kicking ass in another realm. I knocked the stuffing out of it.

Fighting wasn't the thing to do, I think. I followed an instinct and I was wrong. Kate unfortunately had a bad night after that. I don't know if her clawing at her chest was to let something out, or to let it back in. One of my drawbacks as a healer—I'm impatient. Not everything can be changed overnight. Not everyone wants to be healed. There is a lot invested in habit and history. But I don't always know what's best, and it's condescending to act as if I do. Kate says I don't understand what's going on with her and I'm wrong. Flying monkeys, we move fast but we don't think a lot. Scary, even now.

Another session with the toilet, and I am shouting because I can hardly stop myself—it's more of a bellow. A sound comes out of me like my soul is leaving my body and won't be back anytime soon. At the time I can think of better places for it to be. Kate

comes in and touches my lower back and it feels like an electric shock. "No, don't touch me, please!" I say, and I am back to my task at hand, surprised that I am getting worse instead of better. I had believed that things improve over time, pretty much everything.

I don't know if I am protecting myself or protecting her from some sort of spiritual contagion. I find myself thinking of the movie *The Exorcist*, I can't help it, even though I have never actually seen the flick from beginning to end. Released in December 1973, when Kate turned two years old, *The Exorcist* was billed as the scariest movie of all time, based on the true story of a two month long exorcism of a 14-year-old boy in 1949, the year that NATO was formed and the USSR tested its first atom bomb.

The main character in this film, a young teenaged girl, is sick a lot and generally annoys people. She is possessed by the Devil, which is something I don't believe in. I only barely believe in evil at all. Usually when people say "evil" they mean something else. Linda Blair's head turns around completely backwards at some point in the film and she's looking the wrong way. Two Catholic priests show up to try to drive out the offending entity. Apparently the Devil is Catholic, too, because he really responds to what these priests say and do; that should make him pretty predictable. Had he been a Buddhist or Muslim demon it would have been a very different film. How they made the plot interesting I don't know. Like I say, I never saw the movie. There were sequels, each one worse than the previous.

In 1973 Saigon fell and we fled Vietnam, Watergate gathered steam, and audiences ran in horror and nausea from *The Exorcist*. September 2000 the original film was rereleased; audiences laughed and ate popcorn. The art of illusion is fragile

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I can't help wondering if some kind of curse on my house is being cleansed through me, through my body. It is a fact that in my eclectic belief system I sometimes ask the assistance of the

archangel Michael, the warrior angel, to clear dark energies away. He likes to fight, I like to fight. What can I say, I like the image of an angel with a flaming sword, it's cool. Even though I'm not a Christian it just works for me. I had asked for his help earlier that evening, before I knew that I was sick. It wasn't for me, it was for Kate, I felt fine. There was nothing wrong with me.

In between retching I thank the archangel for his assistance, I thank him for the opportunity to be an instrument of God. It's impossible right now not to think that some sort of cleansing is going on. My body feels like a battlefield, a little country wracked with explosions and soaked in toxic chemicals. I feel like I asked for this, but I don't know. I really don't know.

* * * *

Kate is in her room throwing a fit like a woman possessed. It's before midnight and I am not sick yet, feeling only mildly bloated. Kate can't sleep, even though she has done everything that the sleep expert told her to. She is tearing something up, I can hear it from my room. I lie in bed hoping that it isn't something important like her syllabus, her notebooks or textbooks.

I get up and check on her, ask her not to put another hole in the wall like last time. She is sort-of sick all the time and generally annoying to live with, and it's getting worse. She has new complaints, new symptoms every day. I think that there is nothing inherently wrong with her. In fact she is one of the sweetest and kindest people I have ever met; her smile positively lights up the room. But over the course of about five years, her behavior has become completely intolerable, and if I had a good witch who could wave her wand and grant me just one wish it would be for her to be carried far, far away from me.

Out in the living room we both start to talk. She is calmer. I try to lighten things up, "I ate this little muffin and it just got bigger and bigger and bigger, now it's this big!" I indicate a globe-sized orb with my hands, she laughs. "I'm sorry you can't sleep," I say, "that

must be terrible." And I do mean it, that's when I lay my hand on the top of her head, and then she asks me to stop.

Somewhere after this I am retracing my thoughts, which are beginning to get very confused. My reasoning abilities are impaired, and my memory is too short to be trusted either. I have lost not only the chronology but some of the events of the evening itself. It's a scary place to be. I am trying to sort it out in my mind so that I understand what is going on, what happened and in what order and exactly how I got here. I want to understand and I don't want to be wrong.

* * * * *

Around three a.m. my brain is repeating the word "Ricin" in my head, one of the world's deadliest poisons. It can be easily extracted from castor beans. "Terrorists caught in London manufacturing Ricin" the headline said. Oh God, I think, maybe the terrorists are poisoning the chocolate, the coffee, other stimulants that good Muslims don't indulge in. What a brilliant way to attack the US, poisoning only the forbidden fruit. I've got to e-mail the FBI. Or it could be Smallpox. It's an early outbreak of smallpox and I am one of the first victims. Too sick to go online. I haven't checked the news today; maybe there are outbreaks in the major cities.

The NBC nightly news has somehow become the most effective terrorist organization on the planet, and all they do is talk. Why do they want us so afraid, and why do we keep watching?

Dimly aware that Ricin and Smallpox probably have nothing to do with me, I am also still aware that I truly might be involved in some kind of spiritual cleanse and that I probably should be praying. It is just as likely that I ate a quantity of food containing tiny bar-shaped bacteria called "salmonella," which is a fairly random event having nothing to do with anything, just bad luck. Or it's both. Or it's neither. In any case I swear off the most heinous pornographic web site that I have a habit of visiting, the one that I don't want anyone to know that I look at. I make a

mental note to delete it from my bookmarks, and question just where it was that I went wrong to begin with, morally that is; the chocolate muffin that I are now seems irrelevant

This must be punishment for something. I need to apologize. I need to do better, be a better person. I am growing old. I am certainly decadent. Where I used to be strong, I am now merely fat. Where I used to think in long complex thought patterns, I now merely hold opinions, it's much easier. Worse yet, I would actually recommend this to others. The ignorant are more successful, achieve higher office; they live longer and when they die they die happy, rich, and without regret. They are winning, they are winning the war. It is taking me a long time to figure this out. There must be something that I can do about this. I don't know for sure whether I am becoming better or worse. I am almost thirty-nine.

* * * * *

It's six in the morning and I am taking my first drink of water in quite some time. I instantly know that this is the best tasting water I have ever had. There are repetitive thoughts in my head which have been looping back and forth, over and over. I can't describe the nature of these thoughts further, but I am unable to make them stop. I have been trying to sleep despite feeling very cold, shivering, and breathing very rapidly. I know that I won't be able to hold down the water, but I drink it anyway. I can't resist it, and it makes me feel better in that moment that I am drinking.

Kate is on the couch and has taken muscle relaxants. She is able to sleep between my bellowing and moaning, but I don't know this. I am vaguely sorry to be keeping her awake, but there is no point in telling her. I eventually drift off and dream of a large black rectangular object which is occupying the interior of my forehead. Eventually this dream, which turns out to be a headache, wakes me up. The headache lasts three days. My first solid food is Friday and that's my birthday.

* * * * *

I'm dizzy and tired for about another week from the sickness, then I am okay. Kate had complained to me after a few days of being sick that I had better get well because she couldn't "carry me" for much longer. Carry me? I wonder, I have been lying around, sipping water and asking for nothing at all, an inert object. I don't get it.

On Valentines day I buy myself an electric guitar that I can't really afford. Kate buys herself a drum, and me a small teddy bear wearing a white t-shirt and black leather jacket. He looks a whole lot like me. I think that's what I am to her in a certain way—a teddy bear that she cries and holds and tells all her secrets and troubles to. But I just can't take it anymore. It doesn't take much to blow Kate over as if she were made of straw and she falls apart, legs over here, stomach over there. She's at war with herself. She's Iran and Iraq, North and South Vietnam, Palestine and Israel. What a world, what a world. I don't know what the problem is, but a nagging feeling tells me that it's me. She'd be better off without me. I'm not what she truly wants or needs.

I take Kate out to the movie theater for Valentine's Day, and we watch an incredibly melodramatic, sad movie because our first choice, what we came to see, is pretty full up and only the front row is still available, it's a big splashy musical with lots of dancing and fun. But when you are that close to the action you can't really see what's going on; it's like you're in the movie, not watching it. You have no perspective at all.

So instead, Kate and I opt for the second choice. It's about spending the hours waiting to die, or deciding to truly live. Almost everyone in the film cries, and a couple of them die also. Most every relationship in the film is full of grief, longing, obligation. I find myself wishing that we hadn't watched the film on Valentine's Day, that this hadn't been my gift to her, but it was.

Four days later Kate reads an early draft of this essay and informs me that she is quitting school and returning to her family and friends in Eugene, Oregon, The Emerald Valley. Unlike the Scarecrow, she gets no college degree as yet, but she has an

excellent brain, and I'm sure she'll get by. She has to leave while there is still something left of her. Who cares what the square of the hypotenuse is anyway.

Her mother is coming down to pick her up. Her mother is a Witch, no joke—a good Witch, we think. Actually, Kate isn't entirely sure what kind of Witch her mother is, but she strikes me as a nice enough person. She owns a chapel and performs marriage ceremonies, has a lot of cats. Waves her wand and Kate is gone.

Within a day the house feels cold and empty, like I'm not even there, it's as if I melted away. But there is finally peace, and I'll adapt to that. Kate escaped, she got away. I hope she finds what she needs. Oregon is pretty far off, somewhere over the rainbow. It rains there a lot. There's no place like home.

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http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/Holocaust/kristallnacht.html http://www.ott.doe.gov/facts/archives/fotw125.shtml Warner Bros *The Wizard of OZ DVD* with special features Many thanks to "Kate" who helped me write this.

War and Hell

From the farthest echo are my subterranean conversations in which our dreams yield and redirect, revealing nature polymorphous.

In the folds of our seductive gaze erupts a detritus ballet weaving certain decay.

Symbiosis run amok.

Our shattered branches defy her goodness, resisting the way eternal.

Composted religions ferment along the twisted path. Corporeal will feeding the fetid bacterial.

Man's madness flows from the depths of his poisonous pools.



thank you, tina

i am sitting in a metal chair upholstered with rose colored vinyl

leaning my left forearm on the light gray table top

watching the face of my watch watch me

watching my watch watch me

i am contemplating the bottom half of my thirteenth cup of coffee

and the greasy yellow food check

signed

thank you, tina

Erik Armstrong is a CSU, Chico junior who enjoys those few moments of uninterrupted vegetating on a Saturday morning.

Nicole Baker says, "I have always been talented in the area of the arts for as long as I can remember. I dabble in many areas such as drawing, painting, photography, and ceramics as well as several instillation pieces. I am a soon-to-be graphic design major. I have enjoyed the technique of stippling because it is so intricate and amazes the eye. My submissions were created in ink, and have taken hours upon hours to finish."

Neal Bernard is a second-year junior at CSU, Chico, majoring in economics and business. Next semester he is planning on transferring to Stanford University, so sadly, this is his last semester at Chico State. But he doesn't want to leave the campus, or at least its publications, untarnished, so to speak. After taking English 20 with Steve Metzger he realized his interest in writing. He has always been well read, he has this one tendency, call it a vice, to completely immerse himself in everything from the likes of Chuck Palahniuk, Bret Easton Ellis, and Don DeLillo until he is forced back into the real world, soaked and dripping literary genius. Currently, he is collaborating on his first attempt as an author with a high school friend of his who is in the literature/creative writing Program at UC Santa Cruz.

Lora Ceccato is planning to graduate in art education, with a minor in women studies, and an emphasis in math. She says that she is always able to express herself through visual arts and has much confidence in her abilities. Now she wants to share them with others. She is planning to go into the teaching credential program after graduation, with intentions of teaching junior high school art and math. As she continues to learn about the techniques of printmaking, the more she wants to explore and experiment with this medium. Most of her ideas and thoughts are generated from the readings she does in women's studies.

Rebecca Clark says, "Although I am originally from California (and graduated from Chico!), I now live in Bow, Washington, with my husband and daughter. I work as an attorney coordinating a volunteer lawyer program and prosecuting involuntary treatment

matters. I have had work published in various journals, including Manzanita Quarterly, Snow Monkey, Sqajet, Midwest Poetry Review, 4th Street, and online at Melic Review, Gumball Poetry, and Switched-on Gutenberg.

Dawn Davis is a student, partner, lover, daughter, teacher, writer. She is a strong, bright, brave, sober, feminist—reaching, stretching, growing—optimistic, enthusiastic, and grateful to be free.

Joliene Dexter is a graduate from the University of Nevada, Reno, where she received her bachelor's degree in English writing and art studio in 1998. She is now working on her MFA in sculpture at CSU, Chico. She believes that poetry is an important form of expression which allows her to discuss contemporary issues in stimulating and thought provoking ways. One of her long-term goals is to have books of poetry published.

Sophia Dufort decided she was in a rut, so she took some pictures and wrote some poetry. The end. Enjoy!

Bob Garner says, "If you're not having fun, what's the point?"

Paul Hood is a 39-year-old re-entry student at CSU, Chico, currently majoring in religious studies (send money). Former editor of *The Porter Gulch Review* and *The Real World Press*, and a freelance writer published in small regional magazines. Former multimedia technician, business owner, consultant, sound system and speaker designer. Former bank teller and operations assistant. Former ice-cream scooper. Former professional musician and composer. His older stepdaughter may be in a sandstorm as you read this. The younger one just participated in an anti-war protest in San Francisco. A certified massage therapist and Reiki master, psychic and healer on occasion, he is looking to apply to only one graduate school in a nice place to live.

Scott Jason What he is about. It is the intrusive igneous rock formations that are vital to the sufficiency of the golden standard that we have established in California. His favorite painting is Rockwell's "Freedom of Speech." He has avidity for certain

geographic regions that relate to, or are in, California. He has the same avidity for stupid jokes. (What happens to Superman when he gets hungry?) California has 9 degrees of latitude separation. If he could relive any moment it would be when the Ferrallon Plate was subducted by the North American Plate. (a. He turns into Superman.)

Susan Jantz lives in the mountains northwest of Igo, California, and is majoring in English at CSU, Chico with a minor in creative writing.

Anita L. Joule says, "I, a forty-year-old, just beginning to realize myself, live and write in Chico, California, where I am continuing to raise the last two of my five children, and am helping to care for my two young grandsons. I have struggled to give birth to works that will give readers a glimpse into the horrors of domestic violence and its lasting impact on the lives of so many."

Yoko Kitajima is a CSU, Chico junior, majoring in graphic design and minoring in international relations. Right now, he is taking CDES 190, which is an appreciation for photo systems, and enjoying it very much.

Bruce Matthes is a graduate student pursuing a master's degree in literature at CSU, Chico. His drawings and paintings often represent metaphorical interpretations of literature and more specifically poetry. His art is a means to draw from silence.

Brittany Mullenary is a senior at CSU, Chico. She is an English major who has taken some of the creative writing classes at Chico State and has enjoyed them very much. She has had works published in various anthologies including the A Community of Voices—Childhood anthology from Santa Barbara, California.

Christopher Mulrooney has poems in The Pacific Review, Poetry Salzburg Review, Brooklyn Review, Litspeak, etc. He also is the author of notebook and sheaves.

Renee Suzanne Muir is an amateur photographer who enjoys taking pictures of anything and everything.

Timothy John Muir is a writer of fiction and non-fiction, a martial arts student, and an amateur historian.

Sarah Pape is a graduating senior at CSU, Chico. She spends her free time sleeping, writing, and answering her six-year-old daughter's philosophical questions, such as, "How did humans come to exist?" and "How did dinosaurs know what each other's name was?"

David Peterson is a graduate student at CSU, Chico, working toward his master's degree in English with focus on creative writing and translation, and his second bachelor's degree in Asian studies.

Bonnie Roy will graduate from CSU, Chico in May of 2003 with a bachelor's degree. After a relaxing summer of poetry, friends, and family in her hometown of Glen Ellen, she plans to return to Chico to work on a master's in political science.

Linda Serrato grew up in San Francisco and has lived in various places in California. She received her bachelor's degree from CSU, Chico in 1989, and her master's degree in English from San Francisco State University in 2000. She has a collection of poems titled "Translating Voices." She has taught elementary school for several years and is now teaching at Chapman Elementary School in Chico. She lives with her son, Paul.

Liza Tedesco: Dreamer. Mother. Breather of nature. Participant in Art. Pursuing Wholeness. Joyfully aware of the essential perfection of life.

Meredith Timpson is a writer and an artist currently living in Paradise, California.

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