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*Cardinal Sins*  
Art and Literary Magazine

Winter 1999

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Produced by Students and Staff of  
Saginaw Valley State University

Editor-in-Chief: Leslie Duperon

Assistant Editors: Denise Kennedy  
Kathy Lange

Editorial Staff: Alex Duncan  
Ann Garcia  
Andria Hahn-Kela  
Will Whiteley

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Judith Kerman

### Acknowledgements:

Renaye Fewless  
Ryan Finkelberg  
James Geistman  
Michael Howe  
Alexandra Jenkins  
Gabriel Sauvie

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*Editor's Note*

## Dead Flowers on a Living Grave

I was late to work the day Lewis died.

I awoke to the sounds of my radio blaring and the telephone ringing steadily. Without rising, I reached for the cordless on the nightstand. “Doctor Barron?” said the disembodied voice. I replied with an affirmative grunt and rolled over to check the clock.

“Are you OK, Doctor?” I recognized the voice; it belonged to a young intern, new to Havenlock Mental Health Institute. Her eternally youthful looks and bright smile had endeared her to many of the patients and nearly all of the staff. She annoyed the hell out of me.

“I’m fine, Emily. Is there a problem?” At last my aging eyes focused on the blood red display of the digital clock. “Hell! I’ll be there in half an hour, Emily.” I hung up and pushed the bedspread aside; standing slowly, I did my best to ignore the screams of pain from my arthritic joints.

My rising was answered with a feral “Ywrool!” from the foot of the king-sized bed. An aging tomcat, my only companion for the past eleven years, extracted himself delicately from the sheets. “If you slept in your box, you wouldn’t have that problem,” I said. The cat dropped to the naked wood floor and padded out of the bedroom.

I washed and dressed quickly, stopping only to grab the package I had left on the kitchen counter the evening before. My ulcer demands breakfast, but I could not afford the luxury. I promised myself a meal from the Institute’s cafeteria and made my way out of the house.

The drive through suburbia was as uneventful as always, and I arrived at the Institute a few minutes earlier than expected. Without first stopping at my office, I made

my way through a magnetically locked door, to the children's ward.

When I stepped through the security door, I turned to check the lock and verified that the door had indeed latched behind me. I made my way to the day room. My precaution was not standard Institute procedure. To date, one young man by the name of Luther had escaped three times; and each time, the results were the same. Luther made it no further than the parking lot before sinking into a fit of screaming and thrashing. In the few months he had been with us, he had proven himself a most intelligent person. His grasp of the sciences, even medicine, rivaled my own. If left to his own devices, he would fill page after page with sloppily written mathematical formulas.

"Hello, Doc!" squeaked a young voice beside me. Looking down, I located the source. "Hello, Alice," I said, giving her my best grandfatherly smile.

Alice adopted a seductive pose. "I played with myself this morning," she said. I sighed, feeling suddenly very old.

I frowned and replied, "Alice, what have we talked about?"

Now it was Alice's turn to sigh. "You don't love me any more?" The last word of her question had a playful upturn to it. She focused on my groin and licked her lips. Before I could say anything she bounced off toward the day room.

Alice's life had been one great tragedy after another. Her parents had divorced before she was born and her mother had remarried three times since then. Alice had medical records at the local emergency room dating back to her second birthday. The evidence of physical and sexual

were obvious, but following each visit to the ER, she had been discharged into her mother's custody. She first came to the attention of the CPS workers when a concerned schoolteacher had heard screams coming from the girls' washroom. The teacher had entered and had been in time to witness Alice suffering a miscarriage on the floor of a toilet stall. She had been in the fifth grade at the time. Over the next two years, Alice was in and out of group and foster homes. She had been on her way to a state mental hospital until a well-meaning but ill-equipped foster family had taken pity on her and agreed to cover the cost of her hospitalization.

I arrived at the day room and was greeted by a relatively quiet scene. Jim, an overweight teenager who referred to himself as "Gummy Bear," was seated near the TV. Alice had taken a chair near Luther and was listening to his dull monologue. Greg, who had made three suicide attempts before finding his way here, had again been allowed reading privileges and sat in a corner, intently focused on a motorcycle magazine. Julie, a lovely young woman with a story similar to Alice's save for its severity, sat in a sunbeam, gazing out the window onto the baseball diamond behind the Institute. Steven, a large, imposing young man, was standing near the door, chatting animatedly with Emily.

With a nod toward Emily, I made my way over to Luther's position in the back corner of the room. Alice smiled and bounced away as I approached.

"Hello, Luther," I smiled and held out my hand.

"Hello doctor barron." Each word was delivered in a monotone, completely without inflection of any kind. Luther's face was a placid mask. He did not move to shake my hand.

I waited a moment before I lowered my hand. “I have something for you, Luther.” I sat down as I spoke. I took the package I’d brought from home and set it on my lap. “Would you like to see?”

Luther’s eyes remained fixed, his position unchanged. “yes,” came his answer. When he saw that I was expecting more, he continued. “What do you have in the package doctor barren?” He flexed his hands, showing some emotion for the first time today.

I opened the paper bag slowly and was suddenly aware that Alice and Steven had wandered over to witness the excitement. From the bag I removed a drawing pad and a set of pencils. “I was hoping you would draw for me, Luther.”

“This attempt at therapy will be unsuccessful doctor.” Luther made no move to take the gifts, and continued to flex his hands.

“Awww, I thought it would be cool,” Alice said. “Why don’t ya bring me something, Doc? I could use a new dildo.” Alice moved to grab the pad and pencils, but Emily intercepted her and led her gently away.

Luther had not moved, and it became apparent that he was unwilling to accept the drawing supplies. I placed the pad gently back into the paper bag and stood. “Luther, I’m going to hold onto these, and you can use them any time you want.”

I made my way to my office. I was upset at my failure with Luther. I truly thought he was ready for it. Once I secured the pencils and paper in my desk, I tuned the radio to my favorite classical station and listened to a few moments of Bach before my first appointment.

Steven sauntered into the room, smiling. Steven was

a good-looking young man. Tall and well built with a shock of red hair, and a splash of freckles across his nose, he fit the stereotype of the high school football player. Steven, and those like him, would not normally be found in an institute. His size and history of violence would normally see him inducted into the prison system, despite his young age.

Steven, like the rest of the children and young adults here, had a tragic story. His drunkard father had driven him to the breaking point, questioning his every action, good or bad, subjecting him to verbal, physical, and sexual abuse. Steven had begun to lash out at those around him, rather than face his parent. Steven’s father had brought him to the Institute, hoping we could “fix him” as if he were a misbehaving pet.

Steven’s body was covered in scars. His buttocks and thighs bore dozens of horizontal scars, where he had been whipped with a leather belt until he bled. His genitals and nipples bore multiple cigarette burns. For all the punishment he had endured, he still claimed that the injuries were self-inflicted.

Steven finished his appointment. We made no advancement. Steven was still locked into the cycle of self-blame and denial. A pain from my abdomen reminded me of my promise to eat; but rather than honor it, I fished a half-finished bag of potato chips from my desk drawer and ate as I reviewed my notes from Steven’s appointment. I hoped, even prayed, that I would find some clue, some key, to unlock his vicious circle of fear and self-hate.

The rest of the day passed with only the usual routine. I saw my patients, reviewed their paperwork, and checked their medications. Not until dinnertime, when Julie attacked a male nurse, did I have to take direct action.

After signing the authorization to have Julie tranquilized, I again sat down at my desk to brood on the events of the day. So many lost children, hurt, confused, and alone. We blame them for their sicknesses and lock them away. They are invisible to us, just as they are invisible to themselves. Which is the greater sickness? Theirs or ours?

Later, as I wandered the halls of the children's ward, I peeked in on their sleeping forms. I prayed I would not find blood stained sheets or a dangling body.

I was halfway down the girls' hall when I heard a desperate sobbing. I knocked softly on the door of the room Alice and Julie shared, and pushed the unlocked door open. Julie was sleeping in another room tonight, but Alice was sitting on her bed, crying.

"I'm sorry," she sobbed. I hesitated only a second before I moved to her side. She pulled herself against me and let out a long, loud wail of grief and pain. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry," she said, over and over, until the words blurred into meaningless sounds.

At last she fell asleep; I pulled her covers to her neck and turned to leave. At the door of the room, I turned to look at her. With a pang of sadness, the face of my own daughter came unbidden to me.

It was well after midnight when I arrived home. I fixed myself a meager dinner and prepared a dish of cat food. It wasn't until I entered my bedroom that I found Lewis, my eighteen-year-old tomcat, dead. He had curled up at the head of the bed, warm and cozy, and died in his sleep, no doubt dreaming of sunbeams and long, quiet afternoons.

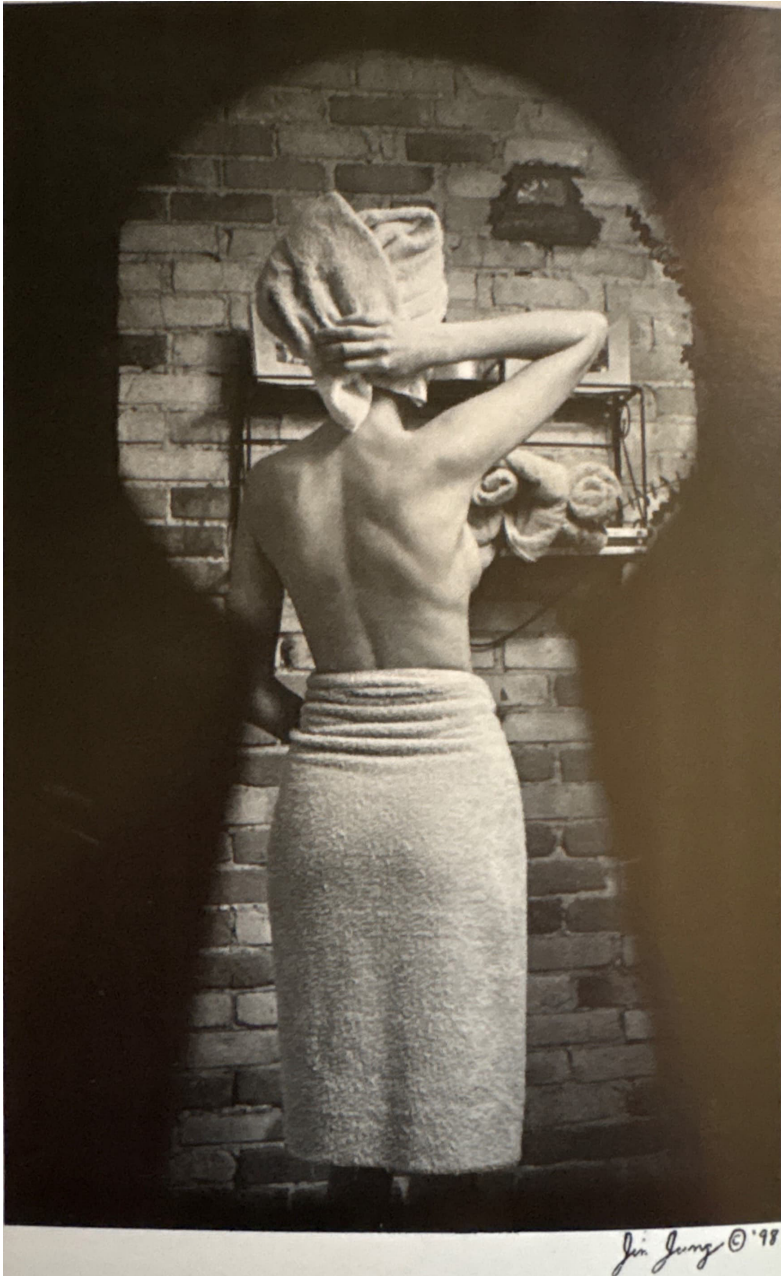
I buried him in the backyard and replaced the sheets on my bed. I had just enough time for a few hours of sleep

before I had to get up. Get up and throw flowers on the graves of children buried alive.

Lying there I began to weep. I cried for the children. I cried for my wife and daughter, dead for eleven years. I cried for Lewis. When I had no more tears left, I cried for myself.

*I dream of boys who play sports and girls who play with dolls. I dream of a baseball diamond where happy children run and jump. I dream of a father who takes time from his work to watch his daughter pitch. I dream of kittens and little kids who love them. I dream of long afternoons, and sunbeams.*

*Alex Duncan*



*Jin Jung © '98*  
**Voyeurist** *Jin Jung*



*Beach Side*  
*9/5* *B. JANKENS © '98*  
**Beach Side** *Benjamin P. Jankens*

## Sweet Victory

Grandma kept her candy in a small kitchen drawer  
just under the countertop,  
in the corner next to the sink,  
just low enough  
so I could see in when I stood on my tiptoes.  
Among the boxes of Ziplock bags and wax paper  
she kept the goods:  
Kit Kats, Hershey bars, M&Ms, red licorice.  
It was all wonderfully sweet and would melt on my tongue,  
but it was much too easy to get my hands on.  
I didn't have to ask permission, only to offer a  
"Fank you, Gramma," between bites.

Grandpa's stash, however, was kept well-disguised  
and heavily guarded.  
He kept his sweets in cans of Planters nuts  
on the floor next to his recliner.  
If the Tigers were winning the ball game,  
he would turn down the radio and offer  
"only one" treat.  
If they were behind, I would sit at his feet  
and stare at the cans,  
waiting until he needed something to  
take his mind off Gibson's error.  
Slowly he would open each can,  
allowing me to survey its contents:  
Creamy caramels, Butterfingers, Snickers,  
and cinnamon bears.  
Just the type of sticky treats that I wasn't supposed to eat.  
The Goo Goos he kept for himself,

though they were the most dangerous  
to his fillings and crowns.  
When I had made my selection, he would replace the  
bright yellow lids and turn the game back up.  
I would sit and listen, quietly sucking the remains  
of my Babe Ruth out of my teeth.  
Victory tasted sweet, even if Detroit didn't win.

*Sara J. Engelhardt*



*Angel Jin Jung*

### **Vacant Transport**

Stumbling like a cricket  
he unzips the leisure suit  
powder blue, wrinkled, shiny  
pale smooth skin  
tattoo

It is a face with big teeth  
he stretches the skin surrounding it  
the tattoo smiles, then frowns

Smoothing back his cowlick  
he hops right beside me  
The bed moves and I giggle  
smiling like a bubble blower

Tongue on my cheek  
hand on my back

And all I can do is stare  
at the pile of leisure suit  
there on the floor.

*Christina M. Silvers-Schall*

## Postindigo

I am sad to see you go  
your hard plastic curlers  
and perfume like a tissue box  
half-eaten apple next to the sink  
and tv's on in every room

It is after the time of your natural beauty,  
the serenity you had in the mornings  
when you sat, squeaking the old faded rocker  
you would stare...

while we ate bowls of cereal in the kitchen,  
spilt orange juice,  
called each other "dork" and "stupid"

you sat there in your purpleness  
your flaxen hair  
in purpleness

*Christina M. Silvers-Schall*

## The Good Old Days at St. Joe's

Jolly Bouthumburger was not cool. He did not run with the pack. While he wouldn't exactly be considered a nerd today, he wasn't teacher's pet either. He was a pleasant boy, though; quiet. I can still see him sitting all the way up in front of the class, on the far right, his hands folded on the desk.

Jolly had a few strikes against him early in the game. First off, he stuttered. And then he had this thin blonde hair and a head so round it almost looked bald. From behind, he looked exactly like Elmer Fudd. This was definitely not cool; but strangely, nobody ever made fun of him. When I think about it now, I know he'd be eaten alive today.

One evening during a lecture about my poor report card, my dad said, "You should try to be more like that Johnny Bouthumburger. I bet he's a smart one in school."

Whoa! Were there two Jollys? The boy I knew could barely keep his head above water in school. The nuns could hardly get a word out of him, and when they did, he hardly ever knew the right answer. But I could tell by the puzzled look on Dad's face that something was not right about our perceptions of Jolly's IQ.

After work each day, Dad and Schnozz Bouthumburger... (that's what everybody called Jolly's dad, it had something to do with the size of the man's nose, I guess)... would stop for a beer at Martin's Cafe. Schnozz lived right across from the bar, and when supper was ready, Mrs. Bouthumburger would send Jolly over to fetch his father. My dad told me that as soon as young Johnny entered the tavern, all the men seated at the bar would start shouting questions at the lad. Young Johnny's face would light up, and his stammer would all but disappear. This little scene had gone on almost every day for years according to Dad. As fast as the questions were asked, the answers came back like bullets, and with the conviction of a sports announcer. Baseball!

I could hardly wait till Monday to tell Smitty and the boys about my discovery. Jolly Bouthumburger was a walking baseball encyclopedia!

Smitty couldn't wait either. Before class he blasted, "Jolly! What is Robin Robert's pitching record?" Total silence. A puzzled look came over Jolly's face.

"Seriously, Jolly. What's his record?" The answer stumbled out of Jolly's mouth. We all strained to see the back of the baseball card Smitty held in his hand to verify the answer. Sure enough. Jolly was right.

"Okay, so who pitched the winning game in the World Series last year?" And again, the answer jumped out of Jolly's mouth, but this time his face turned red. Was it Smitty's tone of voice that frightened him? He must have thought we were out to make fun of him. Everyone was staring at him, and I felt a wave of panic come over me. This was not going the way I pictured it.

"Jolly!" I jumped in with a big smile on my face. "My dad told me that you were an expert on baseball. All the guys at Martin's Bar think you're great!" A slow smile started across Johnny Bouthumburger's face. Just then Sister Mary Emelda came into the room. The test was over for now.

The rest of the morning was spent passing notes to Smitty, loaded with questions to ask Jolly. And for the rest of that morning there was a different look on Jolly's face, a smile, an alertness that we'd never seen before. Jolly wasn't sure what happened, but he knew it was good.

At noon, the kids were all over him. The questions came, and so did the answers. By the end of lunch hour, the kid who never opened his mouth was in debate. Not only did he know the facts, he stood ready to defend them. "They should never have traded their shortstop." No stammer. No shyness. Jolly finally had the home-field advantage.

There were more wise men at St. Joe's that year. I suppose the grown-ups would've called us wise-guys, but

to us, well, we liked to think that Frackville had never seen the likes of us then or since.

Paul Dimicelli....Dingy, we called him....he was cool. He had that internal cool that great gamblers seem to have. Always a slight smile.... never seemed to get into trouble. But you could always be sure that whenever there was trouble, Dingy had something to do with it.

Not really an athlete, Dingy's talent was that he could make a basket from anywhere on the court. He never had to run all out; he'd just slow dribble, pass, or shoot. That's why Father Forgash never put him in until the very end, or maybe if we were losing real bad. But then, the very second Dingy got the ball, our team would get two points. Then Dingy had to score as many points as possible, because it didn't take long for the opposing coach to realize that all Dingy could do was to shoot and pass. If the three-point rule had applied back then, we would have won every game. I never quite trusted cool Dingy, but I sure admired him.

Smitty, now....he walked like a tired farmer and had a blank look on his face most of the time. He always looked like he could use a nap. But despite his passive impression, Smitty was a good athlete, strong, and very intelligent. He could sleep all through algebra, only to wake up and ace the review, while the rest of us had trouble just grasping the lesson.

To Smitty, nothing was sacred. Once when Pope Pius XII was gravely ill, Smitty asked Mother De Pazzi if we could get a day off from school if the pope died; and then the whole class had to stay after school for snickering. Smitty was just that kind of guy, but I would have trusted him with my life.

What made us so special? We did. We thought we were the greatest; we were funny; and we found fun in everything and everyone. *Mad Magazine* was our bible. We were poor and we knew it, and we even thought that was funny.

Once I asked Dingy what he got for Christmas. He said, "Socks."

“No; seriously.... what did you get? I asked.

“Three pair,” was his response.

I was a little embarrassed, so I quickly asked, “Well, what did you have for Christmas dinner?” and he answered, “Soup.”

“Aww, come on...,” I nudged. But Dingy just shrugged his shoulders, smiled, and walked away. He even made poverty seem cool.

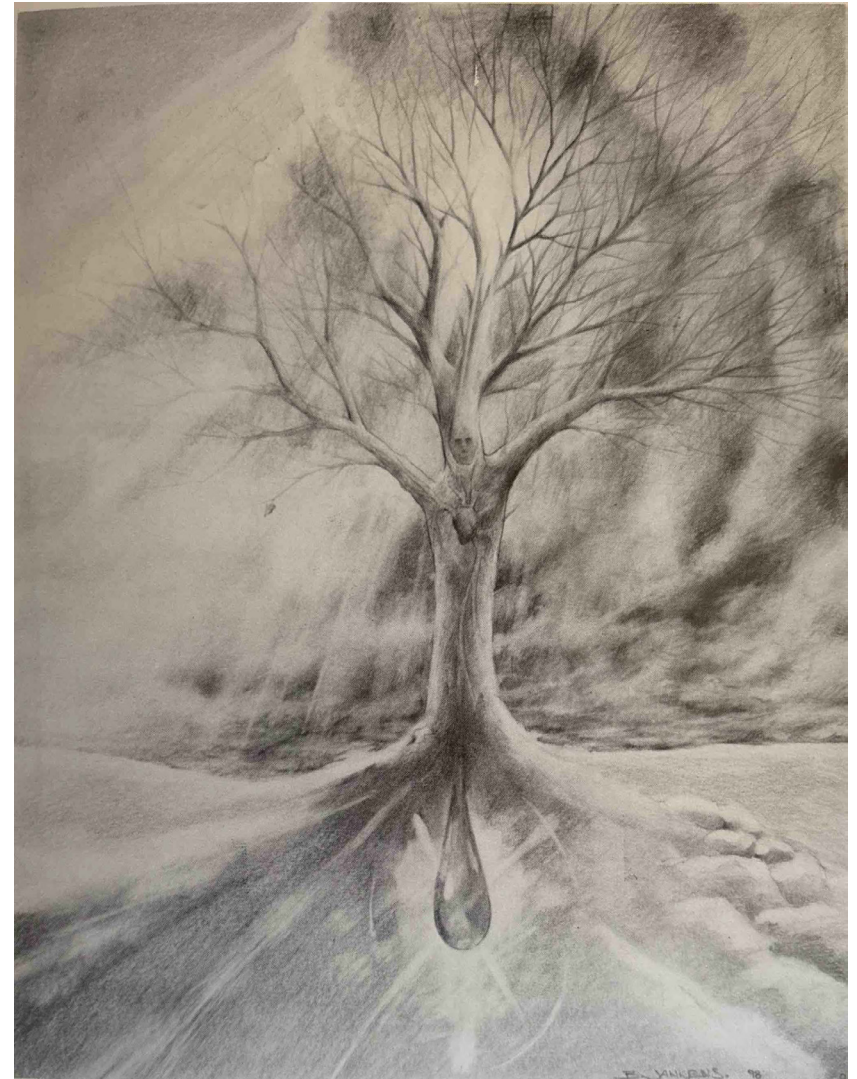
Smitty was one of sixteen children. His dad was a conductor on the railroad, and his mom was always cooking. She looked real tired and never smiled. At the end of our school days, Smitty spent a few years in the army and then went to Penn State to become a teacher.

When I was twenty-four I ran into him at the Mountain City Diner at two a.m. The diner was everyone’s last meeting place before going home after a night on the town. It had been ten years since he and I had talked.

Holding a cup of hot coffee, Smitty walked over to me as though we’d never been apart, leaned over, and with a slight smile, whispered, “Dimicelli’s dead. Think we’ll get a day off?”

Dingy was killed in a jeep accident while serving in the army in Italy. Smitty and I just smiled, and sat for an hour drinking coffee at a corner of table, talking about Dingy, *Mad Magazine*, and the good old days at St. Joe’s.

*John F. Curry*



**Untitled** *Benjamin P. Jankens*

### **Carrousel Dream #1**

I am walking in the Park near the old carrousel. It is shut down, all the openings boarded. It looks like a brown puff-ball squatting on the ground. I go up and sit down with my back against one wall, with the sun shining on my face. As I lean back, the wall feels soft and squashy. Then I feel myself falling backward into it. Carrousel horses begin to go around in complete silence, but they are floating in the air, and the building itself is gone. I am suddenly terribly sad.

### **Carrousel Dream #2: Ghazal**

the crystal earring, turning;  
the gold cup

every morning the sun comes  
the stars bleach out

(hold it in your hand - it's wet  
and slippery; it shines)

I am in love with an old globe,  
with old maps, where it says, "World's End."

Mount up and fly  
the horses have escaped

### **Carrousel Dream #3**

stroke the nose of the carrousel horse  
(disappointed by the hard smoothness of  
wood)  
mount up and fly  
slowly  
ferris wheel, tilt-a-whirl, gate  
Mom, Pop, the ring machine, the man with  
tickets, ferris wheel, tilt-a-whirl, gate  
around the spinning world  
the rise and fall of  
tides, dreaming  
the hot bodies of horses

### **Carrousel Dream #4**

it turns by itself  
all night, air sweaty and  
sweet with grass  
sweet with the sound of  
blunt teeth grinding their hay  
the movements of hooves in the damp straw  
the snuffling hot breath  
repeating its commentary  
in and out  
the curved pupil of the eye  
reflects the dark wood of the stall, the gleam  
reflects the lost day  
or the lanterns, fills the barns with  
small lights

*Judith Kerman*

## Brown Water Rafting

Thick grass beds hide the twisted banks,  
hard to tell where's river  
and where's not.

Buxom branches spread flush  
cloaks down around us.  
The green idyll harbors spiders  
and two-steps.

Boonie hat and neck rag  
blue jeans and green face.  
Crouch low  
one leg hooked across the black, tubular bow.  
Foul water slops in.

*Spit it out.  
If it gets in your mouth  
you'll get the shits.*

My little black tool  
firm, slingless in my grip.  
It leans toward the heavy box,  
hung on the side, between my fists.

The little motor we could have trolled with  
back in the world  
buzzes like a manic grumblebee  
rejoined by catcalls from monkeys and birds.

An ascetic tiger  
more like a reassuring shadow  
saunters away into the green haze.

\*\*\*\*

Today I watched my youngest son  
step out of his bath.  
A yellow plastic soap dish  
drifted in the eddied brown water behind him.  
After he toweled off  
he reminded me of a damp muskrat.  
Hair all fuzzed up  
topped an expression of amused innocence.

I thought then of my brown water friends  
and wondered whether my son and theirs  
would someday go rafting too.

*Michael Howe*

## Sailing Dream: Four AM

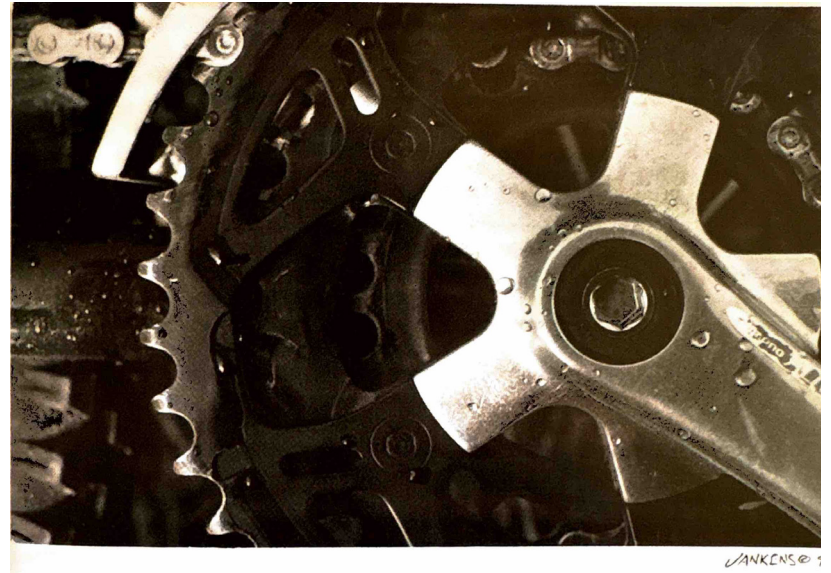
Pull of tiller gives  
the early morning helmsman  
news of building air.

The mainsail fills,  
then luffs,  
then fills again.  
Dew slips off the stern.

He shakes himself  
from night's hypnotic stare.  
He checks the numbered compass course,  
slightly eases tensing sheets,  
then settles slowly back  
to find his steering trance again.

Down below a sleeper stirs.  
From hull-side berth  
he dimly hears the swish  
of parted water's steady path.  
The sound fits in.  
Not yet his watch,  
he lets the morning go  
a dream in harmony  
with sliding through the sea.

*Charles Bailey*



**Untitled** *Benjamin P. Jankens*

## The Blind Painter

He wasn't really quite blind.  
But in his paintings the smiles  
On the swimming children's faces,  
The drifting gull wing curves,  
The flowing foam at water's edge  
Were noticeably indistinct.

The blues and white  
Of sea and sky and clouds,  
The ochers and indigos  
Of sails in setting suns,  
Were noticeably mute.

And in the gallery  
When the studied, artistic critic  
Stood back and said  
His paintings stood alone; and  
He was, of course, a genius;  
Anyone who wasn't quite blind  
Could see, of course, he was.

*Charles Bailey*

## Unemployed Bob- An American Tragedy

I stopped one day on my way through Arkansas. I spotted a small tavern and decided to go inside. The place was practically empty. Four men sat in a booth playing cards, the bartender toiled behind the bar, and at the far end sat a man by himself. I sauntered in and took a seat near the door. The man at the end of the bar began shaking his head back and forth as if rejecting a proposal of the phantom seated next to him. I could barely hear him whisper, "What... the...hell?" He repeated this phrase over and over.

The bartender came over and asked me what I would have. I asked for a glass of ice, a full fifth of Captain Morgan, and an explanation concerning the crazy bastard at the end of the bar. I savored the rum as I listened to the bartender tell the tale. The fifth was for me, but the story needs to be shared.

The man's name was Bob. He was a pretty average guy. Bob had no family and his only friends were those people who shared his long shifts at the local automotive factory. His days were filled with a pretty regular routine, 12-18 hour days at the factory, a few drinks, and off to bed. The factory had a policy on alcohol and drug abuse and Bob was careful not to cross it.

Bob was a model employee. Mr. Lu, Bob's boss, loved having Bob on his shift. The superiors were given the bonuses when the workers met and passed quotas. Bob was a very productive worker. This was odd because Bob utterly loathed his work. Bob hated the factory.

One day, while scrutinizing fuel injectors for defects, Bob developed a headache. He hadn't been sick in ten years and had never missed a day of work. Bob took some aspirin

and went back to the fuel injectors.

When Bob woke up the next morning his headache was worse. It was so bad, in fact, that he could barely get out of bed. He went to the factory early and headed straight for the nurse.

The nurse didn't know what to tell Bob. She was stumped. (It should be noted here that the nurse wasn't really a nurse at all but more like a woman who was handy with a first aid kit. Local legend maintains that she was actually an eighth grade dropout who was the older sister of the shop's owner. I really don't know much more about that.)

The nurse sent Bob to see the Official Doctor of The Automobile Factory. He really was a doctor. He sat Bob down and ran a battery of evil tests. It was a strange and terrible experience. The doctor told Bob to go home, rest, and come back in a week for the results. Bob went back to work.

Well, a week came and went and Bob logged 93 hours at the factory. That is a shop record to this day. Mr. Lu was so excited that he went out and bought himself a brand new silk suit. Bob still had a headache and he went to see the doctor to find out what was wrong. The doctor invited Bob into the exam room and asked him to sit down. Doc had a worried look on his face and Bob began to grow nervous. "Bob," the doctor began, "I'm afraid that I have some bad news for you." Bob shifted in his seat and prepared for what would come next. Whatever it was, he decided that he would be ready for it, a change of pace, whether good or bad, would be nice. "Bob," the doctor began again. "I'm afraid you have what we in the medical profession call Terminus Headacheus. Quite literally, Bob, you have a killer

headache. I give you precisely one month to live before your head implodes."

Bob stood up, shook the doctor's head, thanked him and headed for the door. "Bob, do you need to talk with someone?" asked the doctor. Bob shrugged his shoulders.

"No thanks, doc. I guess that's just the way it goes. There really is no stalling once death comes calling." With that being said, Bob went to work.

Two and a half weeks went by and Bob went to work every day. He had decided that three days before he was to die he would quit the factory and take some time for himself. In the meantime, Bob assembled the biggest, most diverse stash of narcotics that he could. See, other than the few drinks that he had every day, Bob had never tried drugs of any kind. Now, with only a few days left to live Bob figured, "What the hell?" Apparently the closet in Bob's apartment had begun to resemble a DEA confiscation room. He had put together an impressive collection of grass, blotter acid, mescaline tabs, three different forms of heroin, cocaine, crack, speed, downers, various prescription painkillers, horse tranquilizers, and booze to wash it all down with. Bob was intent on dying without a headache.

Just four days before he was to die, Bob walked into the office at the factory and respectfully resigned. Mr. Lu set down the Hawaiian Islands vacation pamphlet that he had been thumbing through and wept. Local legend has it that he could physically feel his monthly bonuses flying away. Bob told his superiors that he was going on an extended vacation and thanked them for the opportunity that they had given him. He tipped his hat and walked out of the factory for what was surely the last time. That night The Official Factory Doctor called to tell the superiors what was

going on. They briefly stopped counting their money and said a prayer for Good Ole Bob.

The next morning, Bob woke up. He accompanied his permanent headache to the closet, thrust open the door, and dove right in. For the next seventy-two hours, Bob helped himself to every drug at his disposal. He never fell asleep and therefore had plenty of time to try it all.

He checked his watch and realized that he had only twelve hours to live. (He remembered to do this only because he had written himself a note in large red letters on his closet door. "Bob- Don't forget to keep checking your watch. --Bob.") At this point Bob found himself left with only grass and whiskey, so he rotated back and forth between the two. He wondered what the big deal was with the drugs. He was glad to have experienced it all, but once was enough. "This isn't a very productive feeling," he thought. He sat back and smiled, thinking about his record 93-hour work week.

With one half hour left in his life, Bob lay down in bed....and passed out.

A week passed and Bob awoke with a start. He later reported his first thought as being that he must be in hell because there was no possible way that heaven looked exactly like his cramped, one bedroom apartment. In any case, he got up and walked around. His headache was gone and he felt very much alive. He milled around in his apartment for awhile, fixed himself something to eat, and called the doctor.

"Doc," Bob said, "it's...uh...it's me, Bob From the Factory." When the doctor regained his breath, Bob continued. "Um, my headache is gone and I...uh, well, I think that I'm alive. Any suggestions?" The doctor told Bob to

get over to his office right away.

On the way over, Bob decided to stop by the factory to see if they had filled his job yet. Mr. Lu and the other superiors were thrilled to see Bob. They pinched him a couple of times to be sure that he was real, and quizzed him on the subtleties of his job. They asked him the kinds of things that no one else but Bob could know. When they were convinced that Bob was the real deal, they offered to hire him back. His old position was already taken but they could always find something for a worker like Bob. Of course, since Bob had quit he would have to start at the bottom of the pay scale. He would also have to fill out all the necessary paperwork...in triplicate... again. As Bob began to leave, Mr. Lu called out, "Oh, you'll have to do one more thing for us, Bob..."

The drug test came back overwhelmingly positive. So positive in fact, that a simple urine test couldn't even determine exactly what drugs were present. Mr. Lu and the other superiors were very disappointed in Bob. Bob just shrugged his shoulders. "I guess that's just the way it goes," he said. With that, he walked out of the factory for what would definitely be the last time.

Bob's reputation for being a tireless worker was well-known around town. He figured finding another job wouldn't prove to be too difficult. Now however, his reputation was that of a chronic drug abuser. Bob was taboo. He couldn't find a job anywhere. Bob decided to join the army. He went for his physical and when the toxicology report came back they gave him five minutes to leave before they called the Military Police. It seems that Bob had done enough drugs to kill the entire population of a small nation.

Bob now wanders around town mumbling to

himself, “What...the...hell?” and shaking his head. His savings are gone and he lives off handouts. He will forever be known around town as Unemployed Bob.

I finished my bottle, tipped the bartender, and headed for the door. I stopped to shake Unemployed Bob’s hand. I know one thing for sure, I’m never going to Arkansas again.

*Josh Fahlsing*

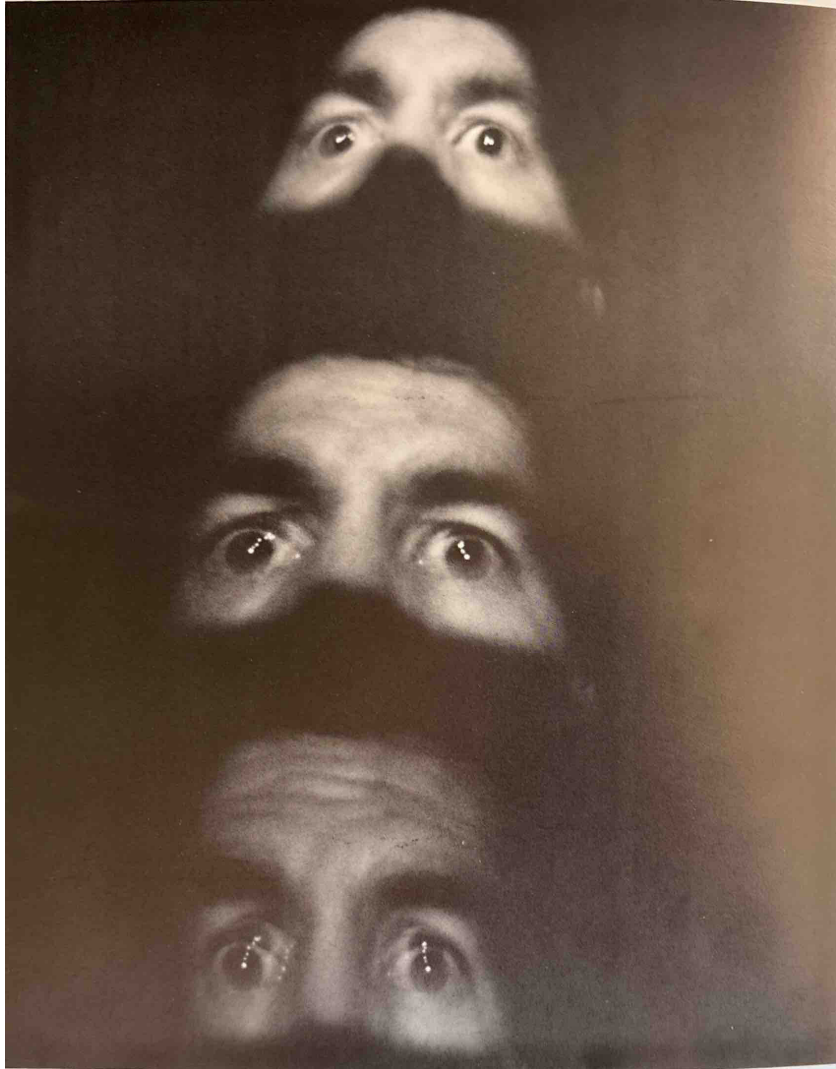
### **Blue Dream**

Dreamin’ of blues women  
Dreamin’ of blues  
Feelin’ the scales  
On my old Les Paul.

Dreamin’ of a blues hall  
Full of hot blue gals  
In high spike heels  
And flamin’ black dresses  
Splashed with Mahogany perfume.

Dreamin’ the scales  
Up then down  
Till the tune almost gets lost  
In the laughs and peals  
From red lipstick lips  
And the deep pullin’  
Mississippi rollin’  
New Orleans, Chi-cago,  
Blue dream again.

*Charles Bailey*



**Eyes Without a Face** *Gary E. Rocha*

**collision**

you told me  
people are  
born to suffer  
i said  
people are  
born to live  
but are made  
to suffer  
by people  
like you.

*Lorri Dvoracsek*

## Montreal

When I get old  
and my beard is gray  
I'll go to Montreal.  
I'll take my old Gib-si-on  
and play there on the mall.

I'll take an old kitchen stool  
and sit there in the sun.  
I'll strum a chord  
and sing a verse 'bout a girl  
I almost won.

I'll sing a song  
from Brother Bob  
and Brother Taylor too.  
I'll tell a tale  
of a straining sail  
and a Great Lakes' storm abrew.

And if they throw  
a quarter in  
my Gibson's old, black case,  
I'll know somebody followed me  
and recognized the place.

*Charles Bailey*

## Winter

Lone bird  
throat strangely full of song in the predawn cold  
I open my eyes  
and remember

Another impossibly mild February day of a year ago:  
A cardinal sang  
I have always loved cardinals.  
For a second then I wanted to shoot it dead.

The coming of spring  
The gradual lengthening of light  
More hours now to fill  
Oddly, still cold, grey hours  
(How has this much time gone by already?  
How have I not noticed?)

She was always optimistic by February  
And last winter was especially mild  
"The days are getting longer," was one of the last things  
she said.  
Lying on her side on the couch  
I didn't notice  
I didn't notice anything that last time.

With blind faith in the dialysis  
I forgot how she never complained  
the most she said when asked how she felt was:  
"Pretty rough."

How frustrated I was with her that last time:  
The emergency room, she eyeing me occasionally,  
my lapful of books,  
my thoughts:  
“Here we go again. Don’t let it be like before.”  
Her last images, me shaking my head (negation, disgust?)  
The doctor on call told me:  
“Some of the arteries leading to the intestines have  
hardened, much the way those leading to her kidneys did;  
it’s part of the overall aging process in her case,  
unfortunately there’s not much we can do, other than  
some oral meds for the pain. As a result of the restricted  
blood supply, a portion of her bowel seems to have died,  
causing bacteria to spill into the abdominal cavity; hence,  
her discomfort. Technically, we cannot admit her, since  
the situation, although uncomfortable, isn’t anything we  
can really treat.”

Uncomfortable.  
Kidneys gone, colon following  
I drove back to her apartment to get her street clothes

Ten minutes later:  
She was unable to sit up without moaning, begging,  
“Please, just let me rest a little while longer.”  
I was supposed to take her home like this.  
I tried to get her shoes on.  
The attending surgeon appeared:  
“We repeated the ultrasound test on your mother when  
we noticed an elevated temp. I’m afraid she has an  
abscessed liver, a very serious situation for someone in her  
compromised health. We need to drain it immediately,

but you need to know: the prognosis is very grim.”  
I was supposed to be taking her home.  
“Should I - do I need to notify anyone?”  
No intake of breath.  
“I would.”

Fog.  
I left to run back to the apartment.  
Several minutes before the abdominal drainage  
under X-ray  
I had to call my brother, let him know the  
magnitude of things  
I couldn’t get my mind around it.  
Still, it was my voice speaking.  
My brother must not have believed what I said either  
his response: “Keep me posted.”

She was bad before. Bad.  
That summer  
her internist had flashed a pair of crossed fingers at me  
behind her back.  
But she had made it.

I drove down Washington Avenue.  
Maneuvered the Oldsmobile into the automatic car wash  
saying nothing  
bargaining aloud  
was still a ways off  
But it was coming,  
I sensed it deep in my skin

The next hours

bled into days  
last days  
Now winter again  
True winter  
with long, dark silences  
No spring, no birdsong  
Howling winds, blowing snow.

*Cynthia Lyman*

## **My Autumn**

The earth swallows the chrysanthemum  
crumpling flavorless meat  
I touched it once, loved it once  
fingered its bloodless petals  
ate its strawberry warmth

It is autumn now, so I surrender  
to sausage, parsnips, and applesauce  
sharpening pencils  
pumpkin pouring  
and peppermint spice

Find the missing boot  
crunch the crumpled  
mash them into sleep

The oak is looking at you  
wondering why...

While shards and snippets of past cold snaps  
swirl like indigo singsongs

Take the blanket  
Throw me the football  
Mom is crying again  
salted wooden tears

Never mind, the pies might burn  
a brown impenetrable layer  
pigskin

*Christina M. Silvers-Schall*

## **Eight Days Late**

He says through miles of telephone wire,  
“Don’t worry.”  
Hes snowboarding in Aspen for a month,  
while I sit in my trailer park  
reading white man’s Literature  
wondering how I’ll ever pay back my student loans.

“Easy for you to say,”  
I snap. Snapping guilt.

He says he’ll quit his job  
move for me  
when I go to graduate school.  
Lucky girl.

“50/50,”  
he assures,  
“Just as much my responsibility as yours.”  
Today.  
Tomorrow I could be smothered  
by a miniature him.

I worry.  
He snowboards.  
“Wish I was there.”  
You could be.  
“It’ll be okay.”  
You will be okay.

*Paul VanHaitsma*

## **Outlet**

I pretend sleep  
at 2:39 a.m.  
Tracey Chapman’s singing about  
new beginnings,  
starting all over.  
I stare  
into black, cotton sheets:  
nothing.  
Lifting heavy head,  
skull full of facts and thinking skills:  
worthless.  
A single tear drops,  
dark, wet spot on black, cotton sheet.  
I stare  
into white, cinderblock wall,  
grooves, notches, cracks,  
an electrical outlet.  
Let me crawl in,  
shocked, toasted, gone.

*Pam VanHaitsma*

## Full Hands Empty

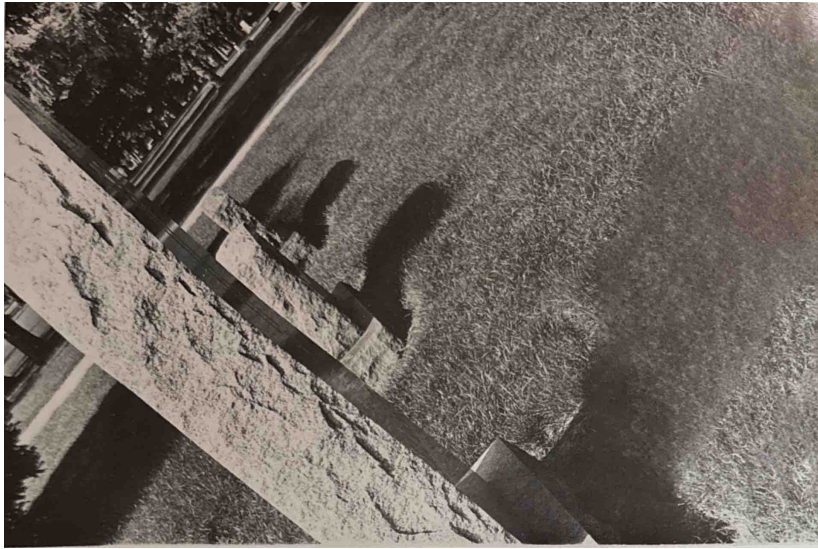
The boy bobbed in pleasure,  
surrounded by candy.  
His palm overflowed  
with pennies, nickels and dimes.  
Pennies, nickels and dimes - chocolates, gums and suckers

He approached the counter,  
balancing a jumbo candy bar  
and a jingling mound of coins.  
There were more pennies than dimes;  
he was short.

He twitched about,  
looking at the mass of change  
and the hunk of candy bar.  
“Hey,” I said, “hold out your hand.”  
I plopped two worn quarters  
in his hand.  
He actually hopped in unison  
with his thank yous.

A tangled mess of a woman charged in.  
“Give it back! You ain’t gonna keep it!”  
The alarmed boy  
closed his free hand  
over his money-clenching fist.  
Whap, whap, the woman finally  
slapped the quarters from his grasp.  
“No thanks,” her spittle  
settling across my face.  
The coins spun down the aisle  
and disappeared from sight.

*Greg LaMarr*



**Party Animals** *Tim Rooney*

## **Blue Collar Cliches for Life**

Life begins at  
the crack of dawn,  
feeling Zest full clean  
once the shower ends.

With a quick stop  
at the Golden Arches,  
it's time to join the  
rat race in that  
nine-to-five job,  
working for the man who is as  
dumb as a box of rocks.  
He does pay the almighty dollar.  
A punch of the time clock  
signifies the beginning  
and the end of the  
day at the office.

A drive-thru dinner  
at the King of Burgers  
is good, since he  
does it your way, right away.  
Giving the burger flipper  
a few dead presidents and change  
pays for the delicious  
meal cooked over an open flame.  
Who cares if the grease  
causes a slow death,  
since we all  
kick the bucket anyway

*Billy Windsor III*



**Untitled** *Dean W. Paul*

**above the line**

i used to live above the line  
and chose to use another mind.  
at nights i'd go to heights unreached  
to places few would dare to search.  
and there i found a lawless ground  
where blood was mixed and lust unbound  
to even hell. how well I know  
that place nobody dares to go.

*Craig Heaslip*

## Long Straight Rows are Boring

Long straight rows of hard wooden pews are boring  
but not half as dull as Pastor Struck was to a six year old.  
I dreaded the Sundays when  
he came out of retirement, filling in for our regular pastor,  
on vacation in the Holy Land.  
He preached about the rich man and poor Lazarus,  
the ministry of John the Baptist, or Peter's disloyalty,  
never anything exciting  
like the Flood or the Burning Bush.  
He stood in the pulpit,  
barely visible from behind the lectern,  
holding the wooden ledges with both hands  
to keep himself erect.  
His voice never wavered, a deep raspy monotone,  
through his body shook with age.  
He wore a shock of white hair around his head like a halo.  
Heavy glasses, much too large for his small face,  
rested on the end of his nose as he  
droned on  
about the Israelites wandering in the desert.

So I was left to entertain myself with a hymnal, a pencil,  
and my imagination.  
I was allowed to do anything that kept me quiet  
and out of trouble.  
I counted the pews, the people,  
and the pieces in the stained glass windows.  
I watched the ceiling fans spin round and round.  
On Communion Sundays I watched the flames  
on the altar candles flicker.

If no one was looking,  
I could make faces at the kids behind me.  
Some days I scanned the hymnal for familiar songs,  
"Amazing Grace," "Onward Christian Soldiers,"  
humming the tune and tracing the words with my finger.

When Pastor finally said "Amen," we all stood  
And I thanked God it was almost over.  
The sun would shine brighter through  
the 104 pieces of glass in each window,  
making Pastor's halo glow every color of Noah's rainbow.  
Fans would spin a little faster,  
the organist picked up the tempo,  
the congregation sang a little louder.  
And when we were ushered out,  
I shook Pastor's had good and hard.

*Sara J. Engelhardt*

## Gotta Go

Why'd I choose paper?  
Paper, lost two overtime shifts  
on paper, rock and scissors.  
I should hit that SOB with a rock  
and stab him with scissors.  
What good is paper?  
Treaties, contracts?  
Fuck'em all.

I notice him looking back,  
scared little shit.  
Thinks I'm crazy, crazy cause my wife left me.  
Changing but not crazy.

Don't have much interest in punching parts.  
Need the money like anybody,  
but it ain't going for her credit cards or the mortgage  
or damn union dues.  
The only thing due is me, I gotta move.  
Breathe a little, see what's out there  
instead of seeing it on TV or magazines.

It's not the divorce,  
that's just the starting and the ending.  
I'm not spiritual, only been to church four times,  
four funerals.  
But there is something pushing me along  
like I can't be still anymore.

I met my Daddy once, I was only eleven.

Tried to punch him; you know, hurt him  
for all the pain he put on me.  
He held me down and looked straight in my eyes.  
His were wild and intense,  
there was pain in there, but beautiful.  
"I had to go," he said. "I always do."  
"There's something out there for me, I don't know  
what it is. But I gotta have it."  
He rolled off and never even turned to look back.

*Greg LaMarr*

## **If Bugs Could Think Like Me**

If bugs could think like me they  
would only bother people who deserve to be bothered  
annoy the annoying and harass those who harass  
crawl on idiots who might crush them just for being a bug.

They would live in clean bug houses  
not invite humans over for dinner  
avoid people who spread germs on food  
not have neighbors track mud indoors.

They would travel whenever they wish  
driving bug cars and trucks  
outlaw Venus-speed-traps  
fly the speed limit.

They wouldn't go out to eat  
wouldn't watch TV  
wouldn't invest in snack foods  
don't want any fat little out-of-shape bugs.

They would sing songs for everything  
to the seasons and elements  
be happy to form bug bands that only play polka  
and a few slow ballads.

They would move somewhere warm  
get a tan and eat pineapples  
have beach volleyball parties  
barbecue vegetables.

If bugs could think like me,  
we would appreciate the bugs.

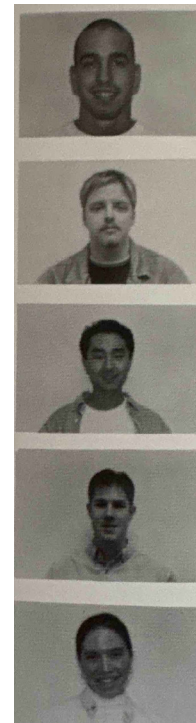
*Ryan Schrock*

## Editor's Note:

As the editor of the *Cardinal Sins*, I wish to thank all of those who contributed to this Winter's art and literary magazine. As can be expected, judging was difficult, but I am certain you will agree that the Editorial Staff did an outstanding job in selecting the winning submissions.

For those who are unacquainted with us, the *Cardinal Sins* is a student-run publication. All judging is done 'blind' meaning that the identities of our contributors are not revealed until after the final selections have been made. Works by students, staff, alumni, and faculty member are eligible for submission.

Again, I thank my Editorial Staff for their insightful judgment. It is with pride that I present the winners of the Winter 1999 *Cardinal Sins* contest.



*Michael Foley*, winner of the Cover Art segment, is a junior in Graphic Design and intends to pursue his Master's at Western Michigan University.

*Alex Duncan*, winner of the Short Story category, is a freshman, having transferred from Park College, Missouri. This is his first submission to the *Sins*.

*Jin Jung*, our Photography Award winner, is no stranger to these pages. A Fine Arts major, Jin feels fortunate in having a great instructor.

*Benjamin Jankens*, winner of the Art category, is a senior, graduating next winter. A Fine Arts major, he plans a teaching career.

*Sara J. Engelhardt* is the winner of the Poetry section of the competition. She is a junior majoring in elementary education.

Congratulations to all of you, on behalf of the Editorial Staff of the *Cardinal Sins*.

*Leslie Duperon*, ed.

