

Janus
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Cover design by Brooke Butler

This issue of Janus is dedicated to two special Westminster professors from the English Department.

Jay Karr, founder of Janus, taught literature and prose writing.

Bobbie Jo Allen taught literature and poetry writing.



Load

Marija Hadziska

(winning prose)

She was standing by the dirty window and looking outside. Flies and mosquitoes, even a few unfortunate butterflies had ended their short lives on that glass that looked like it had never been cleaned. The window frame was broken and torn out in certain places and if you looked through the cracks, you could see the bare ground that she was looking at. The soil had a washed dark color that fall always gives to things. The smoke from the cigarette in her hand was enveloping her like mist on a fall morning. She looked at her fingers; they were turning yellow from the ever-present nicotine. Her finger nails were broken and she tried to clean the dirt that formed black lines marking the point where the flesh ended.

It had been raining since the time light was expected to show up from behind the black clouds and the earth was damp, but you couldn't smell the bathed soil. She didn't see the dawn that morning. The heavy smell of mold and sour wine floated around the room and she couldn't tell which made her more sick. She had that bottle of cheap tap wine open for two weeks. It just stood there in the corner intensifying the sense of sourness in the room. The mold. She could easily forget about that because she was so used to it.

The smelly graveyard of a window was

just a tiny detail in the misery that surrounded her. So was the bare wooden floor because she didn't have a carpet to cover all the cracks filled with dirt. Her bed was placed by the window. An old pillow was thrown on the bed and a greyish blanket with multiple cigarette burns and remains of food on it. At night, the light from the room next door found its way through the cracks on the ceiling. The thin walls kept no secrets and gave her no peace. It was never quiet when she wanted it to be. Day after day, she knew what her neighbors were having for dinner, if the meal was burnt or overdone. The sweet, sticky scent of Uzo was inevitable. So was too much pepper.

When spring comes all is going to be green again, she thought. Not green like the paint on the old tin closet that stood behind her, but bright and vivid. Caterpillar green.

Bare ground - bare trees. Bare floor - bare table. Things fit in couples.

A glimpse out through the window brought back all the chill in her heart. No matter how hard she tried, she could not avoid seeing the bars. A bit curved and made of steel. Painted white. Cold. Those bars were all she ever saw when she would look out the window. Even in summer when the earth was just flooded with life she could not see it. It went right past her.

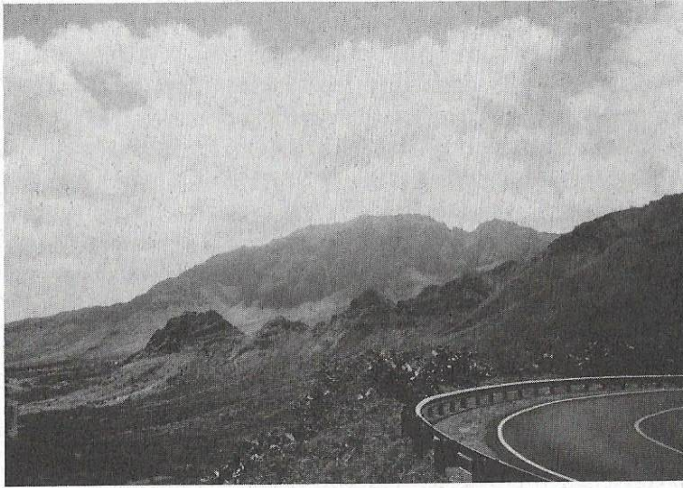
She had no memories. She had no hope. She was a person lost somewhere in a time that wasn't past and wasn't future. And the present was not even an option for her. If ever there was a gap in the universe, a vacuum where wandering souls made pointless

attempts at finding their way through the temporal space called life, she was in there. Trapped. And she knew it.

When she thought of green, the only image that came to her mind was a caterpillar slowly trying to climb her foot. Different shades of green lingered before her eyes. They were all slowly fading into one faded green. Ugly green. She felt that in a while it would turn into dark brown or grey. It had to. Those were the only colors that she was capable of noticing.

There was a line from a poem she fell upon the thorns of life. I bleed. once read that kept turning and returning in her mind.

I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!



(winning photo)

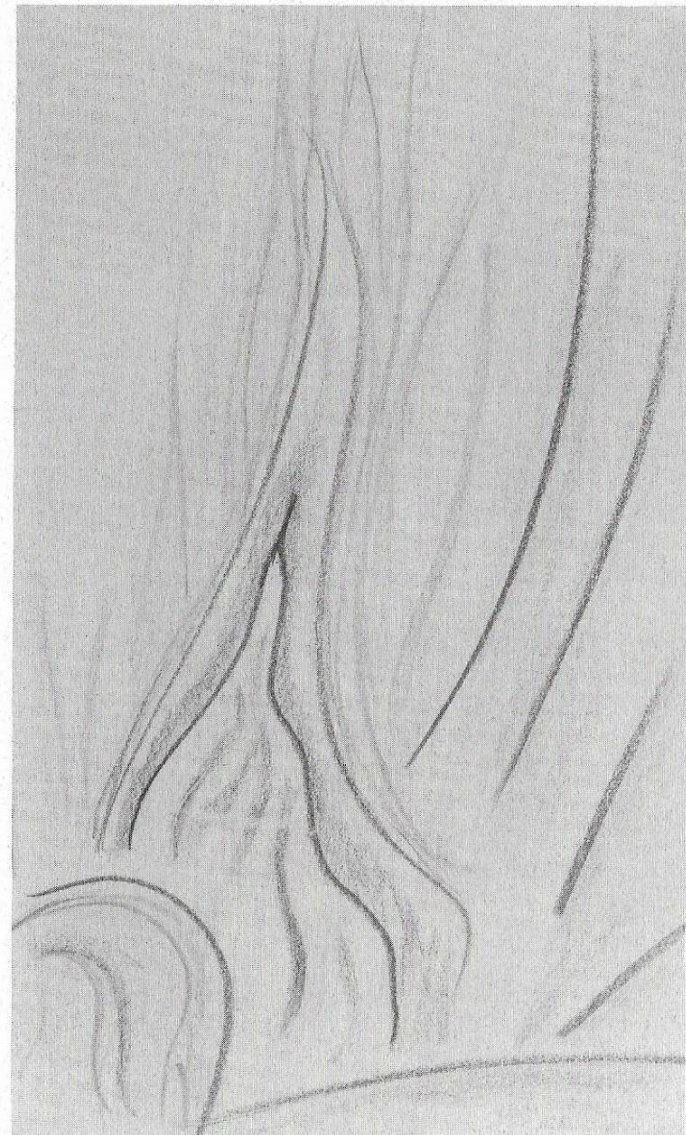
Untitled
Ashley Tatum
(winning poetry)

She is a dreamer
Every ash tray is half-full
Until she dumps it on the table
And draws triangles in the ashes
She is a dreamer
She walks on cotton candy
And it shrinks to pink crystals
Beneath her wet Botticellian feet
She wades through the Mediterranean in her mind
Waves crashing against a convoluted shore line
The salty water ignites the fires
Wherever it touches
And she walks through them effortlessly
She is a dreamer
No one looks when she enters a room
But everyone is aware
And the clocks pause to notice her for a moment
She is the Secret of our time
The one all men want
And all women want to be

But she wonders why everyone stares

She sits silently screaming at a desk
Screaming because no one knows her
And she knows it's her fault
Her thoughts are constantly naked
But they are hiding
Behind faded tapestries in her mind
And everyone is "it"
But if you count for long enough
And if you're lucky
They may come looking for you
And crawl out from hiding as tears
Or that precious sound she makes when she laughs
They will use your mind as a junglegym
A playground for infant thoughts

That have been cooped up too long in the safety of their crib
For too long
And after months of climbing they will know you
And you will have their fingerprints on your consciousness
And you will realize
That these are the fingerprints
Of a dreamer



(winning drawing)

Mountains

Karen Oyerly

Moonlight

On a dark mountain
Silent by night
Historian by day
Telling a
Story spanning
Unimaginable time
Formed by the abuse
Of Mother Nature
Bearing scars
From the Human Race

The Mountains,
the Stars,
the Moon
All bearing witness to
The Rise and Fall of
Humanity
With no one to tell
Except each other

P.M. Trey Davis

As stars spin and twirl one another
across the dance floor we call night,
two souls float erect, motionless,
but yet still in beat.
Looking up towards the unknown, still
knowing what dreams lie ahead,
a kiss is given and recieved, thoughts
intertwine with thoughts.
I stare into your crystal blue eyes and
see what I want most in life,
what, until the moment our glances first
met the other, I had never known.
Something so perfect and beautiful, something
so wonderful and caring, something that has
drawn me so close I could never let go--you.

Untitled
Larissa Konstantinova

My life stepped out of the shadow
Into the bright unveiling light
Things that have been hidden
Somewhere down deep inside
Turned out not to be so right
As I thought them to be...

I find myself being stupid
For hundred thousand times
I've been looking for the verses
But I couldn't find the rhymes
I performed some little crimes
Against myself...

I try to move a bit further on
But there's no chance for me to find
The Holy Grail to survive
In life I must make up my mind
How I can reach the humankind
Only by myself...

Where is that hope most people have?
Where is that line that I can't cross?
Can't find the exit out of file
I feel myself being at a loss...

Tornado, Nine
Sandra Anible

Eery Feeling of Sickening Stillness
Arkansas Autumn of Eighty-Six
Uneasy Air Clings to My Lungs

"God, why are you doing this?"
This thought hiding in the back of my head
And I am ashamed of thinking it

Electricity, Evil, Leers from the Darkness
The whisper of wind that kissed my face
Gusts and then dies, gusts, then is dead

Watches are posted and I wait for my Punishment
As Building Clouds Climb, Twisting,
Like the lies I told last week

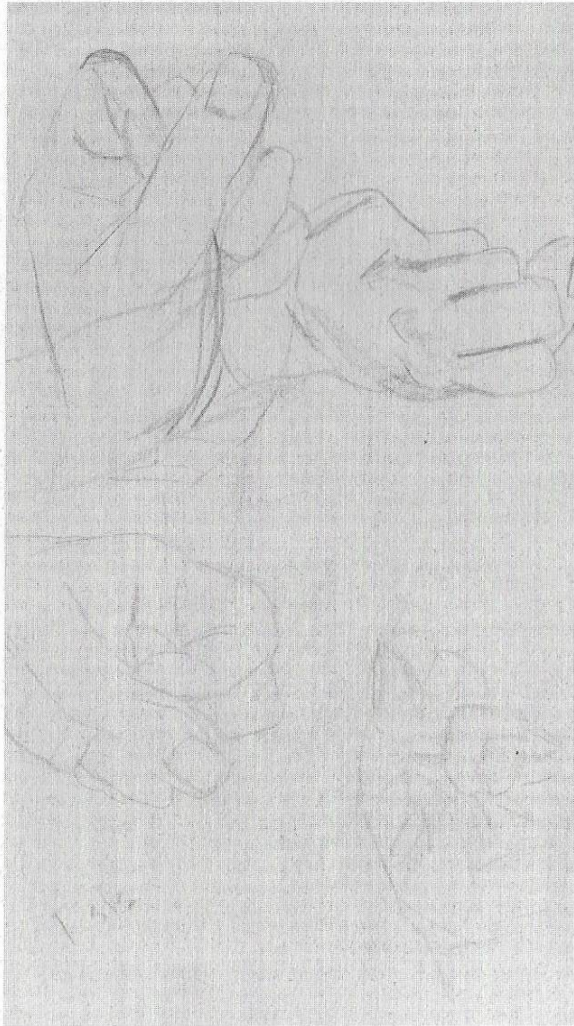
Hail and Beating Rain, Hell and Mortal Shame
Dishonest, Delinquent, Devil's Daughter
Undeserved of Christian Name

He Yells, He Yells, He Throws His Madness at my heart
And I huddle in the hallway, a Rat in an Electric Cage,
Shocked and Crying, Trapped Soul Dying

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry,
He Raises His Hand...
I'm sorry, I'm sorry,

And then, glass, and wood and nails
He Breaks the Windows
And He Tears off the roof the find the Bad Girl

Shattered Glass and a Siren
Stillness, Silence
"Why didn't you just take me?"
And I am ashamed of thinking it.



The Cabot High School Coal Mine

Sandra Anible

My Blackened Baby Brain
was Clouded with Self-Doubt
from the Smoke of Burning Pages
Skimmed so Quickly
during my Mental Sleep
at the Cruel Coal Mine of Cabot High

Anonymous #94007
I was called
by Pick-Axe Guidance Counselors
in charge of Assessment tests
as I was Caught in a Current
of Over-Flowing Faces
Flooding into Aisles.

Gym Class was Most Un-Cool
for someone who
trips Up the stairs
All the time
and whose face is Amazingly
Attractive
to Kick-Balls

Preps, Stoners, Band-Jocks. . .
Goat-Ropers
a bunch of Minors
in the face of a principal
who knew us better on paper

it was hard
Not to be a Star

among a
(Nerd-Herd)
Slick and Shining
Yet I Aced Absence
with Near-Perfect Attendance
the black coal camouflage hiding my face

and WHY my Father
I do not know
had to ask
why, why, why,
was I so withdrawn
Lately
two months to graduation
I had to ask
Where have you been
all my life?

I do not miss the darkness
of all that Time
in the Over-Crowded Mine
of Cabot High.



To Bobbie Jo Allen
Larissa Konstantinova

The game is over and you have to stop
You have to go back to 'normal' thinking
I am so glad I didn't drop
Although I was sometimes sinking.

You have so many things you've said and done
Some people would consider them abnormal
But having class with you was so much fun
So friendly-sunny-warm-informal

Thank you so much for thoughts you've shared
For time you've spent with our class
And now I won't be that scared
Of thoughts of mine - I'll let them last

You were the star that shines at night
You were the music only we could hear
You were the painting: shadows, light
THANKS, BOBBIE JO, FOR BEING NEAR.

The Dance of the Angels
Trey Davis

With the hourglass turned upside down
and the sands of time racing to be first in line
the angel on the hillside rests her wings
and smiles at the children dancing in her head

Only she can see the path each joy will take
leading up, leading down, all around
swimming in circles of song and laughter
bright-eyed and full of life

Entering the world without a care or worry
the angel spreads her wings and says hello
caressing the cherub as if it were her own
a kaleidoscope of clouds fill her eyes

A happiness that can't be expressed is the angel's torment
each and every time a new life enters the world
heavenly mother she is for a moment
a moment that seems to last a lifetime

Then mother and child are united in reflection
the beauty of one is seen in the other
time spent wondering and waiting
gone with the vision and smile of another

The angel rests her wings on the hillside
realizing that she is married to life
connected with each and every one of us
souls all dancing to the same tune

For the angel we all know and love
each one unique and yet quite the same
An angel that will heal our wounds and share our joy
An angel that is known to us as mother



Playground Dreams: A Youthful Ode

Trey Davis

The swing is but an escape and a pendulum:
The children reaching higher, for the sky,
The swing isn't remembered by some,
And no one asks why:
Not for lack of innocence,
Youth has its trustfulness,
But to reach our hopes and dreams we
need only, a push in the back:

In A Restaurant

Noelle Nicodemus

A red cummerbund worn by an olive skinned waiter floated across the restaurant towards a table in a dark corner where a man sat alone. The waiter served the man his food as an arm reached out of the shadow and placed something on the waiters tray. The waiter put a hand on the old man's shoulder and returned to the kitchen.

"That old man is just awful. People like that shouldn't be allowed to even go out in public. Especially not in a restaurant where people are trying to eat." The woman's voice coated the noise of the clanging dishes that before had been the only noise in the small family owned "Chop 'n' Wok." Marty's mother continued her selfish display sighing and shaking her head in disgust as she reached with her red acrylic tipped fingers to pick up her chopsticks again.

Marty sighed felling as though a deadly cloud of gas had floated over his head and begun to fall. "Mom, you don't even know the guy." Marty's mom just shrugged her shoulders. Marty continued to watch the old man talk to himself. The tapping of his mother's plastic nails became part of the silence.

"I can take care of her just leave us alone!!" He was saying "No...No...I told you!!" The old man held his hands to the sides of his head and pleaded with the chair in front of him as if he was trying to get a point across to someone that wasn't listening. He wore black pants and a white oxford shirt underneath a dark green vest. Hooked over the back of the

plastic covered cushioned chair was his black hat. The man wore a modest gold wedding band on his left hand. The man's hair was completely and flawlessly white.

The red cummerbund swished across the room again and stopped at Marty's table. The olive skinned man slid the check and a plate of two fortune cookies on the table and left. Marty's mother then threw it on the floor and left the restaurant. There was a momentary pause of confusion then Marty got up with his coat and fortune cookie in hand. He cracked his cookie open and shoved it in his mouth as he carelessly tossed the tiny slip of paper that was in it on the table. As he was leaving he caught a glimpse of the red handwritten words on his mother's fortune that lay next to a wad of one hundred dollar bills. "Give the man a break his wife just died."



PRAYER TO MY SISTER

Stacey Garrett

What once was
will never be
And what we want
we'll never see.
One day, we'll be apart
except for the memories in my heart.
One day, your voice and laughter will stop,
but never will you leave my thoughts.
You are destined for a journey
that I will not soon join,
So let us remember today
that our love will keep us together,
forever.
Even if only in my mind, dear sister.

As the days fade away
like so many leaves in the fall,
I find myself desperately hoping,
desperately wishing
that our final farewell will never come.
Even though I know that each day
brings us closer yet to the day
when we will meet once more.

Against my prayers
and against my wishes
I find you slipping,
slipping slowly from my grasp.
Thru my tears
I hope that the unthinkable won't occur
And that your memory will Never,
never fade away quite so easily.

Always the strongest
You have tried to prepare me,
to insulate me from thoughts of the inevitable.
And yet I still find the tears flowing
long after yours are dry and cheeks are glowing.
Forgive me sister fo this selfish streak
For I am mortal and tend to be weak,
But I don't want to let you go just yet
to whatever lucky god that calls your soul home
with no regrets
for eternity.

August 1969: A Reflection

Trey Davis

Dotted hills and fields of Corn...
a time that feels so long ago,
We sang and drank
like the Greeks of Old,
And for once...the first time ever...
time stood still for one afternoon--

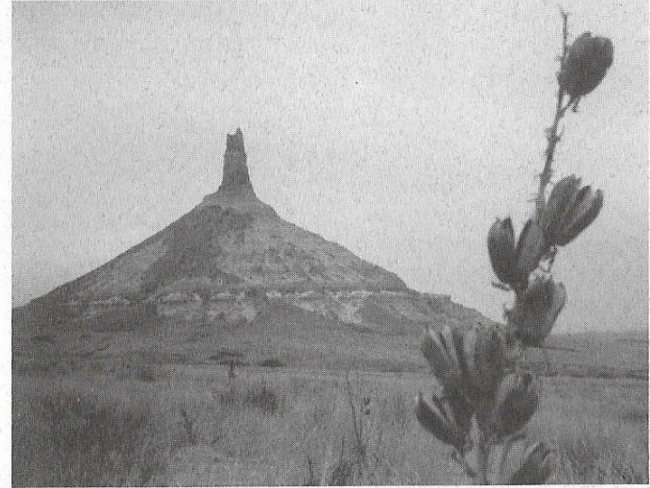
Everyone knew...Get busy Livin'.
As the sun began to set on times of regret,
Voice to Voice did we join all the
harmonies that brought us there--

Laughter together...Sittin' on
dreams and hopes of God's green earth,
ridin' the waves of music and
Youth--Get busy Livin'...
live for today...
Cherish the world around you...
Empty houses silent with dusk...open your eyes.

Eyes of the Lost

Jeannie Roseberry

I stare into the eyes of a stranger...
There is no longer that gleam,
 Only a dull emptiness.
There was once hope and cheer in those eyes,
 Now there is only pain and wisdom beyond the years.
Where is the innocence they once bore?
Has it all the life been snatched away from within?
Where there once was light,
 now there is only fear...
Fear for what has past,
Fear for what is happening now, and
Fear for what is to come.



Strawberry Tangerine

By Ashley Tatum

I call her the perpetual Tristessa.
She tromps through the weeds as if
she were Aphrodite, but she is not graceful,
and has the untouched wholeness of Baucis and Philemon.
She speaks not much, but her eyes
are filled with flowers. All different
colors and smells. Longing to give them
away, but scared to let go of even one.
You are lucky if you can catch scent
of one. Oh, I have. And her
candle burns strong and deep.
She screams loud, and is heard, yet
listens soft, seeping it in with her
mooneyes and tangerine lips.
She says, "That rocks," and lives Beat,
and acts beat, and breathes Beat.
What she longs to be, she is, and
doesn't know it. And never will.
Her blue innocence seems unfitting
to her constantly burning mind.
She burns like Kerouac.
She intimidates with her prowess; she
is lion and lamb.
Everything touches bottom. She feels
strong and loves way down. And
way deep-but only for a few. They
might not know. Because she does not
act or show strong. She wants you to
just know. Her heart and soul are
tattered and fringed by too much fear.
She knows. She just knows.
Her spirit, once inside you, manifests into
many, many little snowflakes.
It makes you look and marvel and
shiver wonderfully.
Her voice sweats with desire, but drips
beads of weariness.



Locked Doors

Amy Wagner

The thirty-minute car ride up was unexpectedly comfortable. No, not comfortable as in the physical surroundings. I was, in fact, burning up in the back seat as Jeff had the heater on way too high. Not to mention the fact that my left knee was helplessly pressed against the side of the car and consequently cutting off the circulation in my foot. And for my right foot, well, that had been searching the entire way up to find a place to rest. So, it in fact had been rather uncomfortable. But it was surprisingly easy. I'm not sure what exactly I was expecting. I had never done anything like this before, nor had Jeff or Natalie. But I wasn't nervous at all. And the conversation (the fact that there was any surprised me) was unforced. Then again, I have no idea what Lisa was going through during all of this. I'm sure more than just Jeff's lack of thermostat control was on her mind. Don't get me wrong, it was on all of our minds, but it was happening to her, not us.

I sat quietly through most of the trivial conversation, adding my two cents here and there. I glanced up occasionally to catch Jeff's brown eyes in the rearview mirror as he looked back on all three of us in the back seat. Lisa sat unmoving in the middle. Unmoving, yet not silent. The conversation had turned to school and I remembered Lisa

saying something about one of her crazy biology professors. We even talked about baseball. From Cleveland, as most of Denison University's population, Lisa said she was betting on the Indians to win the pennant. The sound of her voice startled me. I guess I had expected her not to talk at all, and especially not about something like baseball. The whole conversation seemed ironic to me. You would have thought we were going to a picnic or something. I remembered eyeing the lock on Nat's door to make sure it was locked ...just in case... I hoped Lisa hadn't caught that not-so-casual glance.

That was an hour ago. Now she was in some room, behind a couple of series of locked doors. I sat staring at the magazines on the glass coffee table in front of me. Might as well read something. Golf Digest, Travel and Leisure, McCall, ... nothing jumped out at me. I glanced over at Nat curled up on the soft, maroon couch (that looked like something out of Star Trek), asleep. A copy of Ski was under her arm. That's all she ever talked about. From Denver, Granvilles's rolling hills--hints of the eastern Appalachians--didn't quite cut it for her. She was promising to show us the real skiing over the next spring break. We would see. I'd hate to ask Mom for any money, and I definitely couldn't afford it on my own: the Spot Cafe offered pretty minimal tips--mostly just college students who were as broke as I was. It would be so much fun though..... I refused to let my mind wander and studied Jeff as he entered the waiting room. Images of snow-capped mountains would wait. For now, I needed to make it through this Ohio night. Jeff had been smoking a cigarette outside and his cheeks

were scarlet from the cold November air. He was a wreck. His eyes nervously darted around the room and I could tell he really didn't want to sit down, but had nothing better to do. He picked a chair opposite Nat's Star Trek couch. It took him about two minutes to decide whether to cross his left foot over his right knee or vice versa. Christ, he really was a mess. Jeff and I were both from the same small town and had been friends ever since the fourth grade. He had talked me into going to Denison U. With him and after two years I knew it was the right decision. Nat and I were roommates freshman year and we all met Lisa last year when she transferred in from Ohio State. She had been Jeff's lab partner and fit right in to our clique. Part of me felt sorry for Jeff. He had always had a crush on Lisa but she was always dating someone else. Never one guy for very long though. Lisa was like that. I never told her how Jeff felt about her (Jeff wouldn't have let me live if I had) but I'm sure she knew. At any rate, Jeff was a wreck and Lisa's life was in question. I wondered what was happening behind those locked doors.

The locked doors. The cold, dark, iron bars. Locked. The images started coming again. The concrete cell; musty, dirty, and alone. A shriveled figure crumpled in the corner. The guards pounded down the stairs shouting things only they could understand. Stop. Stop. The beatings on the man who

remained crumpled and silent. He had given up long ago. Get up. Get up. Yell, fight back. The blood, vivid and thin, flowing onto the gray floor. It was the only color in the bleak cell. Stop. Stop. The blood. Flowing, pounding. More confusion as the voices became louder and frenzied. No! The pounding was too much.

Pounding. The pressure pulsed throughout my brain, centering behind my eyes. Why? Why didn't he fight back? Why did he give in? Why did he give up? How could he let Mom down? How dare he let us down. It wasn't fair. He should have been strong enough. We needed him.

The pounding was rhythmic ... Mom didn't talk any more about Dad. She told me once about him when I was younger. And then for about a month or two I asked a lot of questions. It exhausted Mom, I think. But she knew that I needed to know. I don't know how she could forgive him. I knew Vietnam was hard on men. But how could he leave Mom and me like that? It was different for him. Mom was three months pregnant, for Christ sakes.

My eyes suddenly shut tightly. The pounding was growing stronger.

Captured and imprisoned. Mom said he had been tortured while in Vietnam and after two months had managed to escape. He made it back home. In a way. Mom never went into the details of his imprisonment. I'm not sure if she knew all the details. It didn't matter. I couldn't help but to fill those in. I knew he had witnessed the death of a friend while in Vietnam. At least he was considerate enough to not let Mom witness

his. I found the palms of my hands over my shut eyes. God damn it. The pounding kept on. I put my hands down and slowly opened my eyes. Jeff hadn't noticed. He was engrossed in a magazine. Nat was still curled up on the couch. Get a grip of yourself. Breathe, Anne. Breathe. Now my hands were trembling. Shit. Dad died twenty years ago... And with him, your chance at having a real family. Bastard.

"Anne."

"Wha-"

Jeff was talking to me, saying something about him going outside for a cigarette. I mumbled something back to him and tried to forget about the man that would have been my father. The pounding was lessening. Lisa. I had almost forgotten why we were here. Lisa. Please, Lisa. Be okay.

Things started getting crazy with Lisa about two months ago, right at the beginning of school. Lisa's parents had gotten separated over the summer and were now filing for a divorce. On top of that her cousin Danny, who was the same age as Lisa, had gotten killed in a car accident in late July. I think Lisa thought she could handle it better once she got back to school and left the city and all her problems behind. We all thought she would handle it. Lisa was strong. Always joking, never letting us get down, or stressed for even a minute. Well, Lisa didn't exactly handle it. No, she left that up to the vodka. We knew she was in trouble. But not this kind of

trouble. I shuddered at the thought of Nat not happening to come home early from basketball practice. I didn't even want to think about all the what ifs... All the what ifs and the mental picture of Nat finding Lisa sitting on the toilet, naked, staring at a razor blade. I had been over at Jeff's studying for a psych test when Nat called. Jeff could barely hold the receiver he was trembling so bad.

The pounding was beginning again. The images were coming again, this time of Lisa... Somehow we had gotten Lisa into Jeff's car. We even managed to find the Charter Trauma Center without any major difficulties. At the time, I don't think any of us took the time to think. We just acted. And now we waited. Waited for Lisa to emerge from the locked doors with the doctor that would tell us everything was going to be okay. I was tired of waiting.

Jeff came back inside and the cold draft woke Nat.

"How's Lisa? How long have I slept?"

"We don't know anything yet. Go back to sleep." Nat turned back over and Jeff pretended to be interested in the watercolors on the walls.

Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed Jeff looking down the hallway. A tall balding man dressed in khakis and a navy shirt was leading Lisa, eyes cast down, into the waiting room.

"Thank you for waiting and being so patient with us. We're going to admit Lisa. She will be here for at least a few days, maybe a few weeks. Right now, Lisa needs to have someone bring her some things from home. Lisa, I'll let you have a few minutes with your friends."

As the doctor turned away, Lisa looked at us all, in one sweeping look, and desperately

attempted to smile. Nat went to her and gave her a hug. Jeff and I just stared. Neither one of us knew what exactly to do. Lisa moved for us. She finished hugging Nat and walked over to the sofa that Nat had been keeping warm. She spoke to us in a quiet, controlled voice and told us what things she would need. She didn't want us to tell her parents; she would call them later. Then she told us to leave, go home, and get some sleep.

"Thank you guys." She was looking at Jeff but speaking to us all. Then she turned to go.

Our part was over. The Ohio night was beginning to dawn.

The car ride home was expectedly quiet. Jeff numbly drove; his only movement was playing with the radio dial. Nat continued her nap and I was alone in the back seat with my thoughts and the fading stars.

I closed my eyes, thinking of Lisa but a picture of Dad came instead. It was the only picture Mom kept out of him. His wide smile was aimed straight into the camera. He was standing behind Mom, his arms gently crossed over her chest. It was taken two weeks before he left for Vietnam.

Jeff changed the station for the fifth time and I turned to look out the window at the dead corn fields speeding by. Lisa was going to be all right. She knew it. We all knew it.

I didn't blame Lisa for what happened. Each of us needed her in our lives. But not as much as she needed us now. No, I didn't blame Lisa. Then again, Mom never had blamed Daddy.

FEAR

Richard Sepko

we all fear
sometimes

like meeting new
people

a moment of
silence

or being left
alone

IT
Andrea Ravens

It
is forbidden
is a dirty-bad deed

It
is natural
is a source of life

It
should be hushed
should be silent, secret, functional

It
should be celebrated
should be loud, shared, sensual

It
is just this once
is only for purpose

It
is all the time
is when desires are spoken

It
is both
is one and the same.

Untitled
Karen Oyerly

The silence surrounds me
the still night around
Dark trees
against the midnight blue sky
lonely, yet together
The solitary moon
orange and full,
is with me
making its silent journey
across the heavens
And a single star
smallly brightens the
clear, clear twilight
A house on a hill
lived in, yet today,
empty
lies behind me, but
I resist its confines
for tonight
I am not there in spirit
I am other places,
better lives, well-lived
I do not belong in that
house
Where am I?
My heart longs to know
A scandalous night - it
shouldn't be so beautiful
When I am so sad

This Tree's Life

Stacey Garrett

I watched silently
as they destroyed my family.
As I grieved for my kind,
I saw a town rise up
as if transported from another time.
Slowly I began to forgive
just as they soon began to forget.
I began to cherish my new life:
The summers that I was sought after
as a refuge from the unrelenting sun,
The cries of joy and of sorrow of the children
that found me to be a wonderful toy
and a never ending source of joy,
The winters that transformed me
from a simple piece of wood
into a mysterious masterpiece of nature's art.
Then as soon as I had begun to forget
that long ago tragedy,
I heard the cry of an old enemy:
The battlecry of the axe
that would soon destroy me.
As the blade slowly stole my life away,
I looked around the town and realized:
I had been the last..
After my passing,
the children would no longer know
the simple joy of climbing
and the adults would no longer know
the beauty and respite of my leaves.



Beat
Sandra Anible

Pulse of a steady rain
on window pane
Sings soothing Music
As I lie cradled Inside
My blanketed Womb
Listening to the Lullaby
and dreaming of
Sleeping
Long and Deeply
Leaving Physical Places to be
Lost in Familiar Mind-Space
As I ingest an eye-watering yawn
and slowly
lap up a nap.

The Deception Within
Jeannie Roseberry

Peering into the looking glass, I notice a face
full of emotion well hidden.
The mouth is shaped in a crooked smile, appearing
natural, though the display is applied by force.
The cheekbones are high and appear rosy as from
a natural blush.
The eyes are as deceiving as all the rest --
almost as black as night, they behold an
enchanted mystery.
Staring into the depths of those dark pools
I detect a glimpse of fear--fear of
their knowledge and also their lack there of.
In the past few months, more has been viewed
through them, than in all their lifetime.
They contain such feelings of love, worry,
fear, and guilt; these emotions may never
be separate again.
These deep dark eyes are the only things giving this
face away, but one must look deep into their
depths to discover the deception.

Untitled

Chris Thomas

I sat eye-balling (sight-fucking)
women
looking over and under and around
like some fly crawling
over a piece of cake

and I was sitting back
on the couch, in some
sorta cool compost.
And I watched them
(and they knew it)

Wondering about the rooms
looking for some type of truth
I came across a group of young
people-sitting, smoking

So I joined in
this strange type of ritual
with rules and policies and justice
(whom few know of)
and feeling light headed I said
my "Goodbye's," and wondered on

Back in the Game
I forfeit my turn at Bat.

Hanging from rafters
(Bat-like) peering in
swooping down with visions
of wanton bliss (dick in one
hand, bottle in the other)

I can't stand the misery
of sleeping alone
I can't stand the idea
of being hung up with the
wrong woman.

Someone please step out
someone please step up

"It's cold, and I'm ready to
go home."

A Waitress and Her Friend

Jodi Fowler

"I see Greeks everywhere make t-shirts every time they take a shit. I thought it was just here."

"Yeah, it's pretty bad."

"At least you can joke about it; they treat it like religion here. I've missed you, hon. Did you know I got a job?"

"No you didn't."

"I'm serious; it sucks and I think I'm gonna quit but listen to what happened the other day. There was the sexiest middle-aged guy sitting in the corner so of course I wanted to wait on him--to get a break from all those wannabe intellectuals reading their Kerouac and smoking their Marlboro Lights. Like I'm supposed to be impressed or something because they're literate and can properly inhale. All they order is coffee and they don't tip at all. I swear sometimes they're there for hours. Did I tell you I'm about to quit? Dad'll send me money if I ask and Bill hardly lets me pay for anything. Anyway, there's this gorgeous, well, you probably wouldn't think he was, but I did. You remember all those older guys I went out with in high school--spitting image. Anyway, I almost didn't notice him in the corner because I was hiding in the back room eating a bagel but then he got up and went to the bathroom and I saw him. So he comes out and we barely make eye contact

but I decide I'm definitely going to go wait on him. If nothing else, he'll probably tip. So the first thing he says when I walk up was, "Wow, you have beautiful hair. Is it natural?" And of course I'm now completely bored and turned off because that's so blasé and I sigh and give my standard, "The curl is; the color's not." He laughs, blah blah blah, and orders coffee. Coffee only. I see my tip disappearing. Then, get this, he whips out his cigarettes and lights up with me standing there and I'm like that's so spectacular."

"He was just lighting a cigarette."

"No, I swear it was for effect."

"Alright, keep going."

"So I come back with his coffee and amaretto creamer - amaretto mind you - and I'm thinking this guy gets cheesier by the minute. But then he notices my Save Burma t-shirt. Oh, did I tell you Bill can print these cool graphics on his computer and then get them made into t-shirts at this shop? I have like four. We can make you one if you want. Not with Save Burma because I know you don't care about that stuff."

"It's not that I don't..."

"No, I didn't mean you don't care, you're just not exactly a political activist. Now where was I?"

"Saving Burma."

"Right. So he knows all about the stuff going on there and we start talking about it and he starts redeeming himself. Did I tell you he kept folding and refolding his paper while he was talking? It was neurotic. But then he started redeeming himself. He tells me about this page on the Internet that he reads that tells all kinds of social injus-

tices around the world that go virtually unnoticed. I mean stuff that would just appall people if they only knew. And then he tells me about his horrible thing going on in India where tons of the women are forced to sell their bodies everyday just so they can feed their families. There's this organization in America trying to do something about it. I mean, it's absolutely appalling. So this guy gives me the address of this page on the Internet and I'm thinking this is just awful, these poor women. So I came home and read it and wrote in and Bill might help me start an organization on campus."

"To help end prostitution in India?"

"Not just...give me a little credit. Like some kind of worldwide awareness organization. Stop smirking; I see your look."

"I have no look."

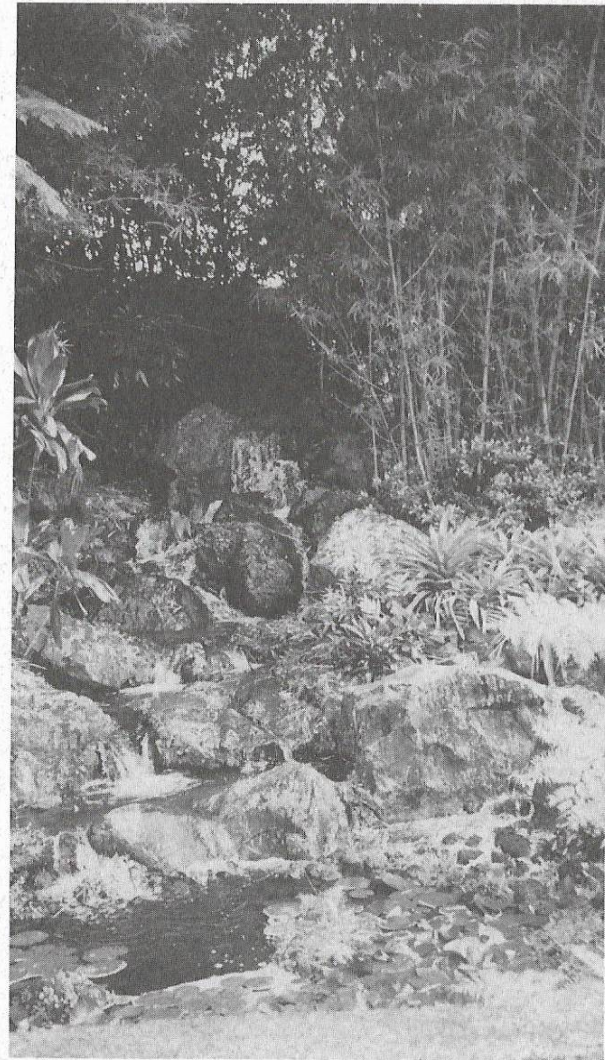
"Yes you do but that's ok because I promise I'll have a look when you want to tell me about your sorority crap."

"So I take it he tipped well?"

"Of course not. He didn't even have to. It was like we had this mutual understanding that money can be better spent. I mean, I would almost feel guilty taking his money."

"But you wouldn't feel guilty taking some rich Republican's tip or your dad's money for that matter."

"No. They'd just spend it on something stupid anyway."



I'll Always Wonder

Stacey Garrett

I still remember that day.
I still recall exactly how I felt
when you told me that this was the last time
that I could depend on you.
At the time I thought it was a joke,
that it was all just a bad hoax.
Now I know, even better than you,
the truth of what you spoke.

You always wanted me to be brave,
but were always there ready to save the day.
Now I only wonder why you
weren't the one I could have saved.

Everyone wonders why we've drifted apart.
I can't give them any reason
except for what I feel in my heart.
Once I looked up to you
and hoped that we would be close forever.
But now I only wonder what went wrong?
What happened and when
that changed you into this being that
looks like your twin,
but whose soul I've never known??

Somehow, though, I still remember
how strongly I once cared for you.
This alone is enough to give me hope
that someday you'll resemble the wonderful person
that I remember every minute of the day
and that we'll forgive ourselves
for having treated each other this way.

EYES

Andrea Ravens

"The eyes are the window to the soul"
--or so I heard
Whoever said this
Needs to have a conversation with some
members of the population

Walking down the road
the sidewalk
the aisle

I feel
Sliding eyes
chest hips legs legs hips chest

Thou shalt not covet
thy
neighbor--

Sorry
It's mine
Maybe if you had noticed
I had eyes.

Extinguished

Jodi Fowler

Blood red carpet was what you first noticed as you walked in the door. Everything that wasn't blood red was black or white -- the modern Oriental furniture spaced with no particular symmetry around a black leather couch. There was no TV, just a CD player and four huge speakers hiding in corners around the room. White spaceship-looking ashtrays had landed on every available surface -- all filled with lipsticked cigarette butts and chewed green gum. One neglected cigarette burned in an ashtray on the glass coffee table; the smoke curled up in an almost perfect circle.

Peter and Jasmine didn't have a typical first date. By the time he actually picked her up at her house, they were already inseparable. But that was ages ago. Picking her up today, he actually felt like one of them, one of the elite. Looking out his Mercedes window into the enormous glass houses, he pictured perfect cutout Hollywood people eating their caviar and drinking their martinis, like they did.

The lighted cigarette kept burning on the coffee table like a detonator. All the lights were on, but it was still dim in the living room. Sarah McLachlan sang "I would be the one to hold you down, kiss you so hard..." so loud that the spaceship ashtrays shook on top of the speakers. A short, black, size 2 dress had been unzipped and thrown in a heap, but you could hardly notice it against the black couch. In the back corner, facing the couch and stereo, was a wet bar with vodka and

club soda and then more vodka. Shot glasses lined the shelves, but one had strayed. It sat there on the black counter with a fresh lipstick stain around the rim and a sliver of clear liquid left in the bottom. Blown up covers of Vogue and Mademoiselle and Cosmo lined the black walls; the same pair of sad green eyes peered down from each one. They begged for understanding. Sarah had become deafening, "Through this night I've wandered, so many times betrayed..." and the enormous photos shook on the walls.

He opened his car door and immediately heard Sarah McLachlan blaring from the house. As he walked up the driveway, the music became louder and his head swam. Would she be drunk or sad or both. He used his key to get in and walked straight to the stereo. He heard shower water running after he turned the stereo down and thought about interrupting or joining. He sat down on the couch instead. Picking up her silky black dress and drowning himself in its scent, he remembered her the night before, looking mysterious and exotic, entrancing every man in the room. Last night when they had made love, he felt far away like he was watching from the back seat of a theater. And she had sensed it; she made Peter leave right after. After their fight a couple of weeks ago, Jasmine and Peter had gone on as normal, waiting for the next explosion. He went to the bar, then, to make a drink and noticed an empty bottle of pills on the counter, next to an empty shot glass. One tiny white pill had spilled on the blood red carpet and fear settled in his stomach.

The cigarette burned even slower now. Everything was still and quiet, except for the

shower tiles, wailing under the weight of the water. A thick layer of steam covered the mirror. She lay there, her naked body like snow against the black tiles, her black hair plastered across her white face like cobwebs, her eyelids indifferent to the pelting drops of water.

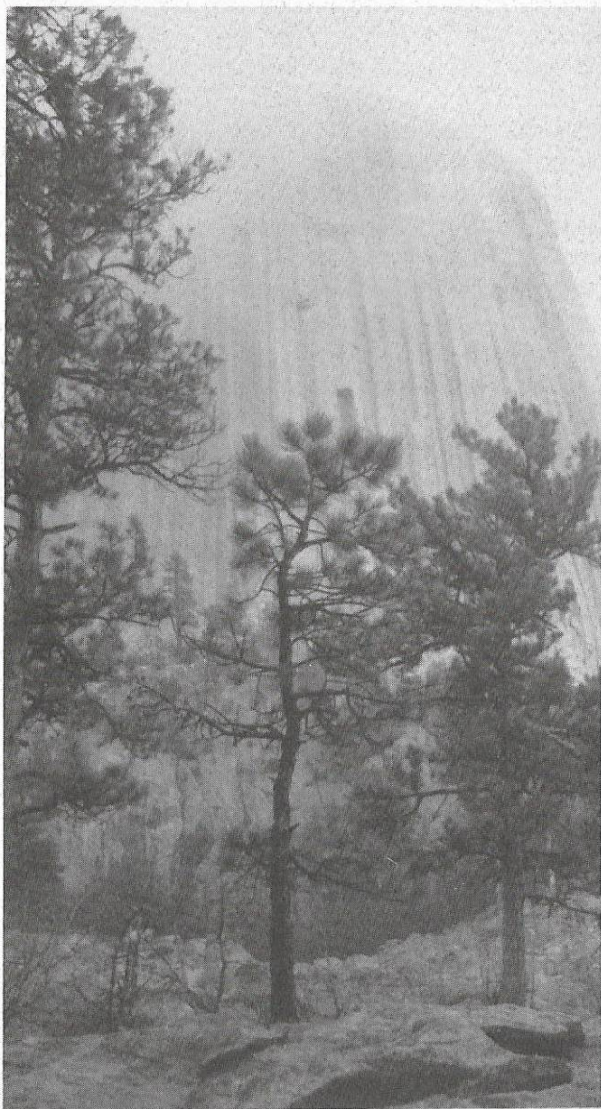
He rode with her in the ambulance, holding her hand and stroking her wet black hair, telling her to hang on. Lucky Hollywood houses, the ones he'd always wanted to live in, flew by outside the windows. Medical people pushed him out of the way and he felt peripheral to her existence. But then, he always had been.

Sarah sang slowly and quietly, filling the room with her dejected passion. A trail of water from the bathroom to the front door darkened the blood red carpet. The cigarette had burned all the way down now, no longer neglected, but extinguished.

Untitled

Karen Oyerly

Sadness becomes me
Despair fills my body
until I can feel no more
The low orange moon
contains these emotions
masking them
from all
Loneliness
on a picture perfect night
Longing
for people and places
scattered far and wide
My heart is gone
Left in someone else's care
Tread lightly please,
but keep it as you like
It was meant for you
Envy
colors my life green
friends unseen
far away I miss
friends close
living in a separate world
And I
cannot connect or commit
to either
Come, help me
I want you
I need you
I love you



LIGHTNING

Karen Oyerly

Lightning
 Streaking across the sky
In my mind.
Pictures
 Flashing like a movie
In my head
And I can't stop them
I want to slow them down
To see the details
 To know what they're for --
These thoughts in my head
 Dancing a pattern
Weaving my life.

Heaven

Hanh Ha

Heaven is looking into the eyes of your beloved
Blue and bright no matter the color
Seeing the way one feels through the other's eyes
Knowing that love will always shine true
For you and me
For love is free
An offer with no guilt or obligations
None expected and none taken from the other unknown
Heaven is holding the hands of your beloved
Soft and smooth
Hard and callused
No matter the texture
The love is still there
Forever and true
Heaven is hearing the voice of your beloved
The deep soft rings as he sings
The sparkles in his laughter
The special lovingness in his chats
The warmth in his voice
True love shines above all!
Heaven is the magic chemistry between the two of us
The magic is the love that exists between us
The love is how we feel about each other
And that cannot be described through any words
Only Heaven knows the meaning
Of the love that exists between us
Forever our love will sing for us
Heaven is where we are

Untitled

Karen Oyerly

All the clouds converge to
a point, distant
where they
seem
to
diverge
The Beginning
and The End of the Universe
If I found that
point
Would I find
Utopia?
Or would it
be just another
Small Town

The difference between
the Country
and
the City
is
in the Country,
You can see the
Stars
you Dream for
While
in the City
you can Reach the
Stars
you can
No longer See

Road
Holly Sinclair

Lifting the curve of the road

The body pulls in a deep arc

The field is wide-angled

Sunny and without birds

Clouds are isolated in the sky

All the voices of the day

Are funneled into one

Radio announcer

Plastic and at a distance

Three beings, car and driver

And amputated speaker are left

To bend their separate voices

To the wind and s

Of tires on asphalt

The space is an absolute good

The road is life

Distinguishing of its borders

Pale blue air

Clarity exists

Even in the dust

That rises lightly from the street

And settles on the fence-posts

Age is measured by speed

And reversed

By the ranches and trailer homes

In which we do not dwell

Beauty

Jon Harper Fahnestock

It would be foolish of me to go out tonight
It would be foolish to think I would belong
Or I would blend in

I have often wished away my layers
Or what my mother would call my big bones
"Beauty is on the inside dear."

Oh, how I wish that were true
Oh, how I wish that he thought that, when
He looked at me

I should wish that I thought that, when
I looked at me
But too often I have no concern for my own
thoughts

So what am I to do, sit and mope
Cry, or perhaps curse god for what I am
Or, shall I go out tonight

Drape myself in lavender and blue
Not covering, but coloring with
My own personality

I will put on my red lipstick and smile at
society
To make up for all the
Frowns in solitude

I will smell and look like
Big, beautiful, bright flowers
I will dance, and laugh without covering my
mouth

Perhaps he will see something other than
skin
For I will be blinding all who look, with
Shades of myself

Perhaps, even I will see lavender and blue
instead of
Black and white
I think it's time to go out tonight.



Untitled

Rebecca Dillender

I'm nobody! Who are you?
Are you nobody, too?
Then there's a pair of us—don't tell!
They'd banish us, you know.

—Emily Dickinson

There are different types of people in this world. There are winners. There are losers. There are spectators and officials. But what about those eternally mediocre people who run the race but finish somewhere between first and last? What do you call them? Or is their role in life so minuscule, so unworthy of note that they need no title because no one will ever refer to them anyway?

It seems these people have no champions. The masses love a winner. Those that are “The best” become “celebrity endorsers” and are elevated to the role of hero, like Michael Jordan. And then there are always the few among us that love to cheer for the underdog. We know there's no way in hell that he's going to win, but there is something so unique about the circumstances that brought him to compete that we can't help but make his struggle our own and will him to at least make a strong finish, as with the Jamaican bobsled team. Yet the guy in the middle must face his challenge alone. No one is quite sure what drives him, but it doesn't really matter because no one really takes that much notice of him anyway. He has to

be his own cheerleader and find within himself the will to keep going. He knows there will be no award at the race's end. No cheering masses. No media battling just to get one comment from him. In fact, he's probably be completely overlooked. Everyone will either be that number one guy's victory party or waiting for their precious bottom man to cross the line. Once again our subject will finish the race alone and unheralded. Only he will note what he's done. But don't feel sorry for him. He's used to it. Yet he always finds within himself the will to keep running and try again.

This accomplishment, dear reader, would not be trivialized. Our subject's is no small feat, especially when considering he is faced with a life of endless, uninspired mediocrity. He runs each race knowing that no one would pay any more attention to his absence than they do his presence. His accomplishments are quite impressive, but no one really takes notice because they can't be hung on a wall or displayed on a shelf. He has improved himself with each race he has run, but he's never been commended because no one has ever watched him. The fans all had their eyes on the lead guy hoping to catch a glimpse of greatness, or they were concentrating too hard trying to will that lowly last-place fellow across the line. But our subject is faithful, nonetheless. He has resigned himself to the fact that he has no one to count on completely except himself.

Each of his finishes is somewhat different because each race is a new experience for him. The course changes. The competition is different. But a race is still, after all, a race, and he knows his objective. And, in spite of the differences, some things, at least where

our subject is concerned, never change. His efforts are always diligent. He always runs his best and hardest. His mind is focused and his body is strong. His strides are sure and his purpose is true. Yet, no matter what, he will never break the tape. He will forever be just one of the anonymous finishers. And whether he finishes near the end of the pack or he is close enough to the lead man to hear that taut line snap as it breaks across the winner's chest, he always feels the same. Deep down inside he knows he is wasting his energy. He knows that the feeling of the tape breaking against the force of his own strength will always belong to someone else. Yet he also realizes he's just a little too skillful to revel in the compensatory affection the crowd showers on the underdog. He knows these things for fact. He's seen the outcome too many times to fool himself by thinking things could ever be otherwise. All the same, though, once he's made his again all but invisible mark, he walks away from the track, his head held high in the delusional hope of things to come, and he says to himself, "I'll show 'em next time!"

"He's crazy," you say. "Why does ne keep torturing himself if he knows he'll never win?" you demand. Calm yourself, dear reader. Our subject is no fool. He is simply realistic. He knows his lot in life. He knows he can't change anything. He awakens every morning to face each new day with a strong and bitter dose of reality. Just because he keeps doing what he is doing. doesn't mean he likes the way things are. But he realizes that each of us has a role to play in life. His role is to be anonymous and mediocre. In order for a few to be great, many must be ordinary. And so he plays the role

in which he's been cast.

How do I know so much about our subject? How have I come to be such intimate friends with this unsung hero who daily fights an unnoticed battle? Who pointlessly runs in this metaphorical race that represents life? If he is so obscure, how have I come to know his secrets? The answer is simple, dear reader. I am his kindred spirit. And I myself once rounded the last turn ahead of the rest. I could see the elusive tape before me glimmering in the sun. The prize was just outside my reach. I could taste the victory. The prize was mine. But I hesitated. Those sensations were so foreign to me, so strange and new that I indulged myself to revel in the moment and I faltered. I failed to claim what should have been rightfully mine. Another came from behind and claimed that gleaming, perfect medallion, and I lost it forever. Now these were the feelings to which I was accustomed. As a result, I fear the thrill of true victory is one that now I shall never know.

Yes, I am one among these mediocre millions of whom you shall probably never hear again. Do not feel sorry for me, though. I do not need your pity. My lot in life, though full of disappointment, is not shameful. While I may never be the winner, because I am among the runners I am at least a participant. If you feel you must pity someone, then pity the mere spectator, cheering from the sidelines with no real drive of his own, doomed to live vicariously through the blood and sweat, victory and defeat of others, never knowing life in the first person. And I must admit, I take a little satisfaction in knowing that without me and those like me, the great could not be great

because greatness only distinguishes itself when it can step outside the great masses of ordinariness.

So you see, I have my proper place in life. And, if nothing else, I am always certain to be in at least highly amusing, if not always the highest quality of, company. I cannot, however, say that I am always proud of the role in which I've been cast. It is often depressing, frustrating, redundant and lonely. Yes, lonely, because although there are many of us, our struggles are entirely individual and must be borne alone. I long for repose from this often unlovely and tormented existence. I wish that for once I could be the one to know the glory of victory and to be showered with the affection, fickle though it may be, of an adoring crowd. But, as I have found, I gain nothing through wishing and dreaming. And so I run. . .