


Spring 2001

et cetera

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Recommended Citation

Marshall University, "et cetera" (2001). *Et Cetera*. 8.
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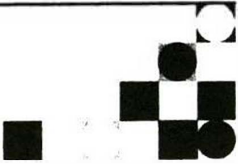
Et Cetera

Marshall's Literary Magazine

Spring 2001



Et Cetera



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Contents



Poetry

- 5 *Fireballs* I Sarah Dooley
6 *Children's Hospital* / Luke Mencotti
7 *Abacus* I Mora Lee Finnerty
9 *Moongridding* I Ben Barish
10 *Anchored* I Mora Lee Finnerty
12 *Cold House* I Sara.beth Mills
14 *Protrusion* I Kim Tingler
15 *Deployment '99* I Jere West
17 *Wife* I Sara Pennington
18 *Birthday Guest* I Heather Dooley
20 *A Friend Fell in Love* I Sara.beth Mills
22 *Second Shift* I Adam Barraclough

Fiction

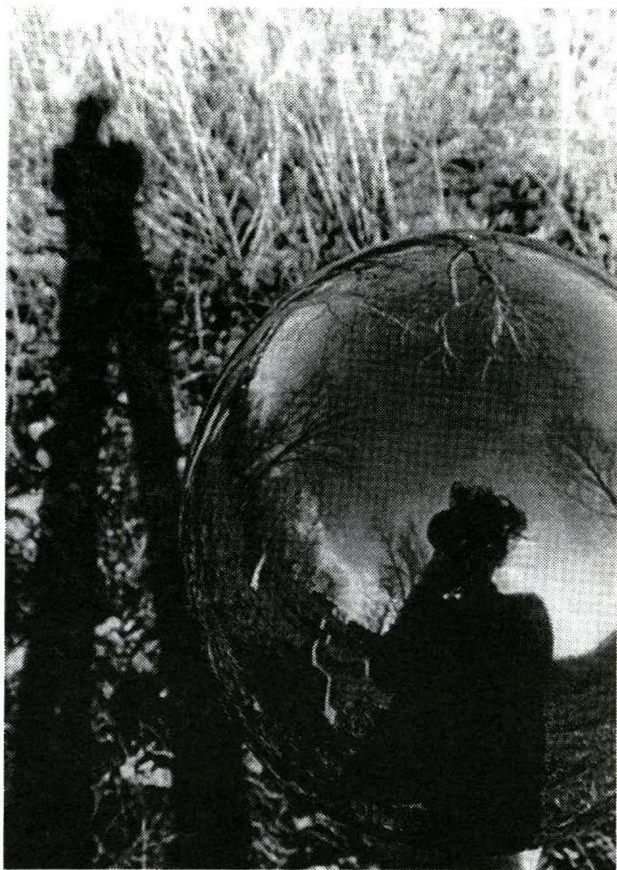
- 25 *Waiting* I Sara.beth Mills
31 *Faida & Apache* I Bert Fulks
40 *Apartment 9D: Sarah and Lydia Turner* I Wadia Whalen
44 *Blue. And White Cotton.* I Adam Barraclough
55 *Virginia* I Andrea Fekete

Art

- Molly Woody / 4, 13, 16, 24, 43, 60
Chris Worth / 21, 54, 57
Sara Pennington / 8, 30, 39

Contributors / 58





Mollie Woody

photography (black and white)

Fireballs

2nd Place Poetry

Sarah Dooley

The man in the old-fashioned suit smiles and spills his coffee
We feel close, as if semi-darkness and the rain outside unite us--
The man in the suit and the woman behind the counter
Who's been working all night and is probably only feeling tired
and grumpy

And not connected at all.

My eyes sweep back across the long counter
With its neat piles of *Newsleader* and *Chronicle*
Reesees cups and candies

And unexpected, suddenly, I'm shocked by something missing.

There are no fireballs.

No round, red candies to burn my tongue,
To suck on for seconds at best before spitting them into
the palm of my hand.

No contests to be held with sisters –

Who can suck on a fireball the longest?

And no pop-rock candy

(Rice Krispies flavored and magnified)

No gravelly strawberry bursting on my tongue.

No white candy, either, with its tangy powder for dipping,

To sit on the stone wall outside the courthouse

And lick the powder from the candy stick without ever taking a bite.

The man with the spilled coffee nods good-bye and
ducks out into the rain.

The woman behind the counter is tired.

She probably doesn't even know that there were fireballs.

She probably doesn't even know what I've lost.



Children's Hospital

Luke Mancotti

The air is grape and bubblegum
as she glides through each hallway
past countless doors, sticker'd with bear and balloons.

The days, the overtime, and the graveyard shifts melt into
each other,
dedication feels like a cancer growing inside tiny bodies.

There's a birthday party in Room 215 -
parents have hired a clown and someone in a bunny costume.
A mound of gifts in shiny, dinosaur wrapping paper adorns the
meal tray;
a chocolate ice cream cake with butter frosting chills in the
refrigerator.

She looks happily on with a small, empty smile
barely cracking her pale porcelain face, this nurse
who everyday fruitlessly brings hope to the hopeless;
this nurse who lives in the staff lounge;
this nurse who balls herself to sleep in the corner every night
knowing that soon on the bed holding the birthday boy
will recline a bundle of flowers with a small stuffed bear on the
pillow.

Abacus

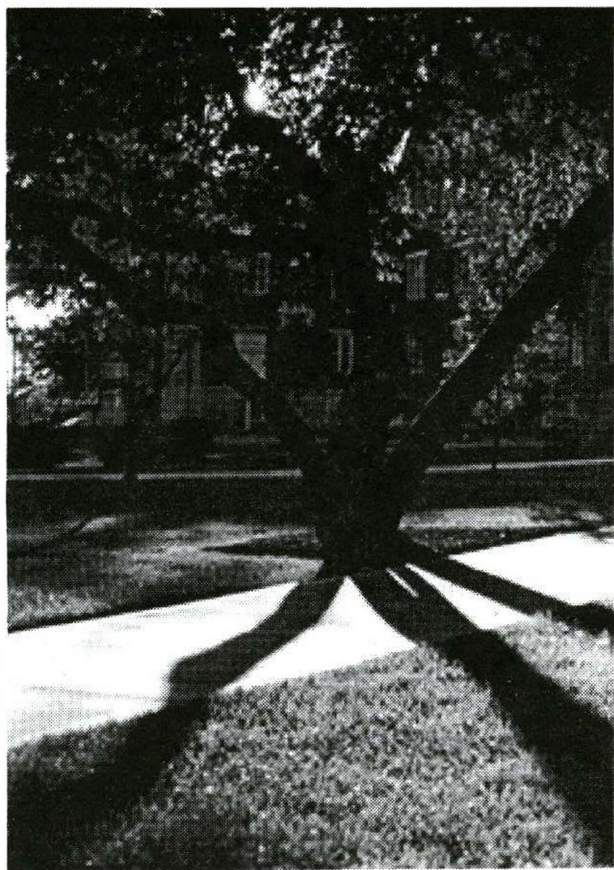
1st Place Poetry

Mora Lee Finnerty

*There is a tribe near the Amazon who call themselves the Piraha.
They have no counting system, and if you asked them why,
they would tell you it's because they have no need for one.*

In America, we have:
miles, minutes, dollars, dozens, hours, ounces, seconds, inches.
calendars, calories, slack, surplus, acres, axes, bytes, bits, pi,
pounds, pennies, pixels;
miles per hour, words per minute, dollars per dozen, dots per inch.

I am holding a copy
of *Time* magazine in my hand.
They're charging \$2.95
for two weeks now,
a hundred and some pages.
And there's a man on TV,
Channel 9, telling me we have
23 shopping **days** left
until Christmas. I eat
3 chocolate chip cookies
(500 calories),
a bowl of Rocky Road ice cream
(400 calories),
wash my hands.
Walk 5 miles (bum off the cookies),
brush my teeth
(25 real, one fake),
drink water
(one quart, or 32 ounces),
take 2 pills
(500 milligrams)
to sleep
so I
stop counting.



Sara Pennington

plwtography (black and white)

Moongrinding

Ben Barish

We sat in your car with the engine
Off
And were in no hurry to turn the key.

Between breaths we both looked upwards and
Noticed that the stars were falling,
Dancing across the sky in wild, handsome pairs.

You said it was symbolic---significant.
All shooting stars fall for a reason.

In desperate need of meaning I believed you.

Years pass, keys turn, you fade,
Leaving behind the smothered notion of us,
And the phantom taste of

When I smell raspberries
Or feel small drops of rain tease my skin,
I forget we turned that **key**.

For a moment I hear the blue in your voice.
For a moment I **know** you again.



Anchored

Mora Lee Finnerty

They talk about me
Like I'm not even here
I want to tell them
I don't need these machines
Pumping stale air
And lifeless fluid into me
I want to tell them
I'm not solid
They think I'm solid

But they can't see
or touch these thoughts
and you can't kiss
the fact that I love you

So maybe I want
to be solid
feel
 your cool lips
 moisten my forehead
 your Elysian tongue
draw a line
 down the smooth
 curve of skin
bridging hipbone and ribs

the slow, good sex
 that follows

I lose my gaze
White hospital wall haze
wander into wet green meadows
gather wildflowers for my hair
walk barefoot
over mossy fallen logs
across a shallow stream
meet you under the cypress tree
where we dance in the autumn rain.

Cold House

3rd Place Poetry

Sarabeth Mills

The bed wishes for silence of my
Thrashing body,
Wishes for the calmer
Form that once rested on its
Other side.
The candle in my bathroom
Hammers small flashes of
Light into my sleep drowsed eyes
Before its charred **wick** dies in
Seeming disappointment.
My dresser sleeps beside me, half empty,
Ignoring the grandfather clock that
Drives me to wakefulness with
Ticking whys and hows.
The piano dwells on memory of
Holding hands not my own.



Mollie Woody

plwtography (black and white)



Protrusion

Kim Tingler

Not with splendor my belly protrudes
But with an angst.
A tiny fonn conceived in battle.

A contaminated uterus
Growing Stronger.
After attacking my weakened mind.

Ground pelvis into abstract concrete-
Where there I laid.
Infective waste grazed a bloody thigh.
Growing Matter takes human shape
When left alone.
Three months, I will rear its ugly head

Violation killed my human spirit.
The right to kill his
They are removing from my grasp.

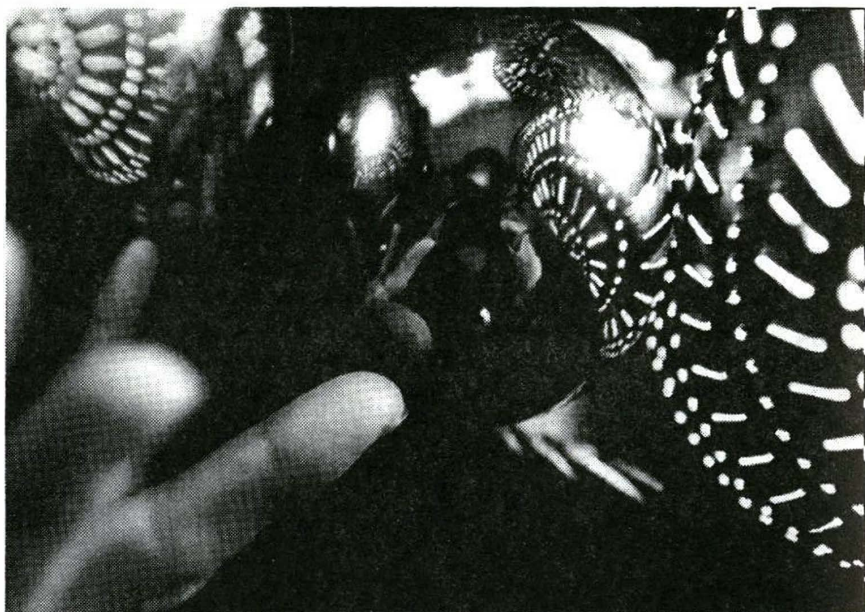
Deployment '99

Jere West

My son called home today.
His new assignment: Saudi Arabia •
The Mid-East, where Peace
crouches warily on the sand,
Flaring nostrils twitching as
The reek of War, old and new,
Drifts among the dunes.

I remember 1969: when
The North Koreans
Took the *Pueblo*.
Again, we were on the brink of war,
Nervous airmen stood ready
On dark runways
Amid transports and cargo planes.
We boarded and flew to South Korea.

My son deploys tonight •
More transports wait,
Like gaping hungry mouths,
Eager to swallow my son
And lumber ungainly to the sky.
Leaving, they fade to darkness ••
Great owls winging
Through the night,
Clutching captured prey.



Mollie Woody

photography (black and white)

Wife

Sara Pennington

like his abandoned lunch box, aluminum, dented
around the edges she remembers
one of the new neighbor girls there, her night to stay

the back room not yet piled with newspapers
yellowed or leaning, not her weekly columns

why did the room glow blue from the black and white tv?

pot chops and green beans television buzz
suddenly, the glint of distant metal
shadows hanging in the corners like old workshirts

the airy thinness of her hair not yet silver
then, the Giant Leap
clank of two forks and two knives

the static hum the girl's perfume
softly, the puff of moondust
and his lunch box still sitting beside the refrigerator



The Birthday Guest

Heather Dooley

It's late, she said
Here, sit with me
I'm about to switch to chardonnay
And oh, that rain is gorgeous from in here
There's trucks on the highway
And you know how that affects me. . .
But I never seem to go.
There was the various clutter about the table
And bricks around the fireplace
And she wouldn't have dreamed of closing the window.
What if it snowed?
Well, then it'd be a different evening and we'd probably have
Peppermint Schnapps or tea. . .
Is it ok if I'm in love with you?
She laughs, I swear. . . !
I keep drinking this stuff even though.
This letter I wrote last night,
Would you read it?
It was written years ago.
(He takes it
In hands as still as mountains
And she thinks,
If I always had words to describe these movements.)
She fumbles,
Looks down at the table –
Later it will be morning and she'll step alone onto the porch
And feel the sunlight;
Wrap her hands around the porch railing.
She thinks of the days she walked with her parents
Into the woods behind their house
She thought they could be lost;
She thought it was still possible to lose them –
She comes back to the table and

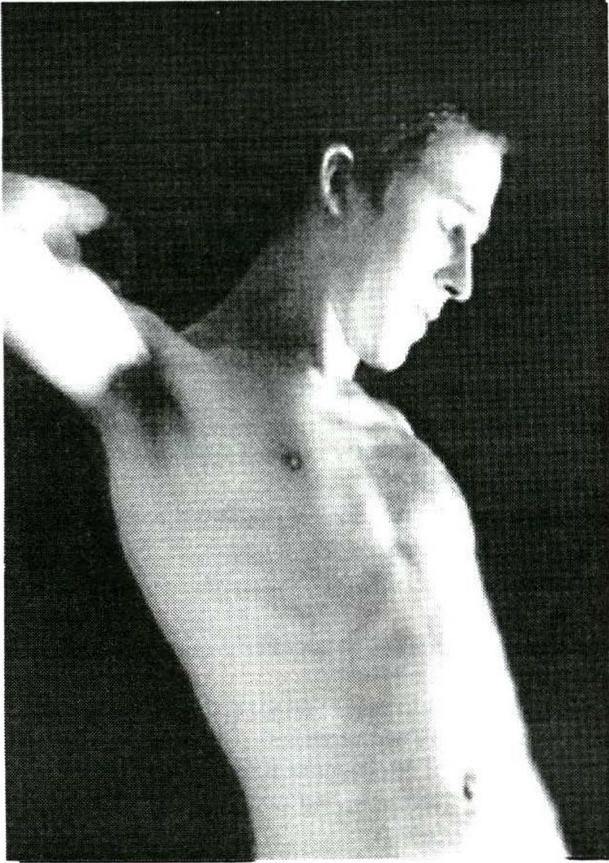
Brings out a deck of cards
Here, play with me, she says
It will help to pass the time until I'm old again
That always seems to be when I can sleep the best.
He looks at her painfully
But all she can say is smile
She finishes her drink,
Shuffles the cards and pours the coffee.
Let's play for a while
So that when you go, I'll be what I am plus this.



A Friend Fell in Love

Sarabeth Mills

It struck me strange
How she ran
Across ice,
How she fought
Face-mauling winds,
How she gave all she had
For a raffle-ticket chance
At touching him.
It struck me strange
How she slipped,
How she fell,
In lust's resulting slush,
How she merely glanced
At the hand I extended
And kept on running,
How she ran so fast
She saw all else
As speed-blurred scenery.



Chris Worth

photography (black and white)

Second Shift

Adam Ba''aclough

Just me on the second shift
at Lynch's warehouse.
At first it was kind of nice
like a kid home alone
for who knows how many hours
(usually 45 a week).

FIRST DAV-

I loaded all the palettes in 3 hours' time
and then spun the forklift down the aisles
'til it ran out of gas,
stalled out in front of thirty-five hundred pounds of Purina Dog Chow.
Couldn't find the gas can,
spent the last 3 hours of my shift wrangling that heavy bastard forklift
back into its cubbyhole next to the office.

SECOND WEEK -

I brought in a radio to keep me company
tuned to 98.6 FM; Easy Listening.
I soon had the volume turned up so loud it almost hurt
and it was still no more like the sound of someone else
than the clicking hum of fluorescent lights.
I climbed to the top of the shelving unit - 40 feet up
and pitched the radio down
exploding like the fourth of July against hard dark concrete.

THIRD MONTH -

Had a hard ride home
decided this was the worst of it.
3am and I'm all alone, riding in the middle of two-lanes
cruising by the empty gas station
spinning circles in the gravel of the middle school parking lot.

Driving through downtown with two wheels on the sidewalk and
two on the street

I am drunk on loneliness
running the town's single red light at fifty miles an hour
coming to a squealing stop in the mayor's own parking spot.
I relieve myself on the steps of city hall.

THE NEXT DAY-

I told old man Lynch he could stock his own damn warehouse.



Mollie Woody

photography (black and white)

Waiting

by Sarabeth Mills



1st Place Fiction

JOHN CARL WAGNER SAT IN HIS rusted out '84 Ford Escort and watched his breath steam up the glass. A joint wastefully burned beside him as he waited, silently, for them to walk by. He knew they had a meeting at 7:30 and hoped to catch them on the way. He just needed to hear her say it one more time, needed to hear the affirmation in her voice. He hadn't seen her for a week, but he'd talked to her on the phone several times. She was always angry when he called. John couldn't quite figure out why.

Digits began running through his head again, *five-two-five-seven-nine-four-four-seven-five*, her social security number, the mantra of inspiration for all his actions. He saw it on her driver's license once a long time ago. *Five-two-five*. Call her, tell her to rot in hell, shout obscenities. *Seven-nine*. Call her, profess love. *Four-four-seven-five*. Call her, shout obscenities, beg her for friendship, hang up. *Five-two-five*. Wait in lobby of her apartment building, try to hug her when she comes down, cry when she refuses. *Seven-nine*. Try to follow her to class, leave when she calls security. *Four-four-seven-five*. Remember her schedule, sit in car waiting for them to walk to meeting, jump out and profess love, shout obscenities to new boyfriend.

John Carl stared at the patch of moisture his lungs exhaled onto the cool surface of the driver's side window. He almost wanted to write her initials in the droplets so she could see it when they walked by. Nah. He couldn't do that. It was too childish. He'd been trying to be an adult about things so far. He remembered the joint. Taking a puff, he thought about how much she hated it when he would smoke up. He lied to her about it several times. What they don't know doesn't hurt 'em, that's what he'd always heard. Besides, everyone would have thought he was really lame if he didn't do what they all did: his brother, his roommates, his brother's roommate, his neighbors. He couldn't stand the thought of being different from them. He'd been different all through high school and it was hell.

As the cloudiness began to move into his brain, he felt he was delving into the glass. moving through it into the outside,

where he would somehow float into her head and win her back. *Five-two-five*. See them coming, see them hand in hand, think of vomiting. *Seven-nine*. Slink down in the seat, but remember she can recognize car. *Four-four-seven-five*. Blink, glare at them out window, open door, say hello. *Five-two-five*. When ignored sprint after them, follow them in restaurant, sit at table. *Seven-nine*. Stare at them, get menu from waitress. *Four-four-seven-five*. Watch them leave, follow, light cigarette, stare.

John realized he had dozed off. His windows were almost completely fogged by this point, and the puffs of smoke rolled around in the air from the heater. He'd have to get out and wait. He found a nice bush that still had all its leaves and sat down behind it. Maybe he could scare them. That would be pretty funny. Maybe he could jump out and push them into oncoming traffic. Yeah. That would be pretty nice. Yeah. *Five-two-five*. See them coming, see them laughing, jump from hiding. *Seven-nine*. Wait for cars, push them into road. *Four-four-seven-five*. Watch them bounce off hoods, hear them slam into the pavement, watch their blood ooze, hear them gasp for breath. *Five-two-five*. Smoke cigarette, listen to people screaming, laugh. *Seven-nine*. Laugh, laugh. *Four-four-seven-five*. Slowly slink back into shadows, smile, get in car, go home.

There was not much left to the joint, so he hoped they'd come soon. He had a gross anatomy exam the next day and needed to study. John thought about how strange it would be if he lifted the cover off his cadaver and it was the new guy, freshly hit by a few cars. He wondered if that would make him do worse or better on the test. Probably worse. No, no better. 'Cause he'd have her back. Yeah. He wouldn't push her out after all, just him.

She just didn't understand how much he'd changed since she left him. He was seeing a counselor, which really helped. He learned how to deal with anger, how to handle things maturely. They told him to write her a polite letter asking her a few questions to clear things up for him. He thought, hell, why not do even better and talk to her in person. He knew she had a meeting at 7:30 and would be leaving her apartment soon. He could ask her then.

The joint crumbled to a pile of ashes between his fingers. He blinked a few times, thought he saw someone coming out of her building. Nope. It was just a trick of the light, his mind messing with him, still a little toked. He felt cramped sitting behind the bush, so he began pacing. Back and forth, back and forth, back

and forth. Five-two-five-seven-nine-four-four-seven-five.

John could almost see the numbers swimming before his eyes. They flowed into each other, melted into a huge orange heap, like the leaves on the sidewalk. He picked one up. It was crisp between his thumb and forefinger. The leaf sprayed tiny, dust-like bits in all directions as he rubbed it between his palms. All the memories of his life with her sprayed everywhere. Anyone could pick them up, take them. He needed to get them back.

He stared at the ground. She was somewhere down there, scattered about. He could never recollect her. John didn't know exactly when she stopped loving him. Maybe it was the time he grabbed her and left finger shaped bruises on her arms. Or maybe it was the time she found out he'd lied about still smoking pot. Maybe it was all the times he'd yelled at her, called her neurotic, no fun, too serious! all the times he'd made her cry. Or maybe, it was the time he'd pulled into her driveway and called her father a cock-sucker. Yeah. She was so stupid that was probably it.

He carefully avoided crushing any leaves with his feet as he paced. They were too fragile. They had to be preserved. Her smile flashed in his mind, her teeth sharpening to small points as she told him she no longer loved him. He wanted to laugh, but it caught somewhere in his chest and wouldn't escape. Instead, he cried. Again. John felt each drop rolling down his cheek, slinking towards the ground to be spilt out in the open air. His mind would be displayed to all the passing traffic. He kicked leaves to cover the moist spots on the ground. They seemed to grow, to spread into giant puddles where he could see his disheveled reflection. He dug in his pocket for a cigarette, in hopes of making his buzz last longer.

As the smoke swirled around him, it took the shape of his heart. Not one of those corny valentine hearts, but an indistinct, throbbing blob. He poked it with the burning end of his cigarette and was sure he could feel the pain in his chest. John had loved her more than anything in the world. Anything. Five-two-five--seven-nine-four-four-seven-five. She'd promised to love him forever, wrote him a poem about it and everything. He felt in his pocket for his wallet, where'd he'd kept it, squarely folded, for the past two years. There was nothing but emptiness and a few dollar bills. As his mind fought to regain clarity he remembered he'd left the poem on the kitchen table, anchored by a bottle of vodka. Seemed appropriate. The words were stretched and distorted by the liquid in the bottle, and if you stood far enough away, they

spread out until they became invisible.

John never meant to be such an asshole. At least, that's what he told his therapist. As his vision regained some focus he realized the leaves on the sidewalk were worm-eaten, full of holes. So were his theories on why on treated her like shit. He was in med-school, had lots of work, had demands on him from his family, had to deal with her cock-sucking father, had to deal with her constant nagging. Yeah, it was definitely her nagging. What a whore! But maybe if he called her she'd have dinner with him. She needed to know how much he loved her and would always love her. The bitch!

The cigarette made his stomach feel especially acidic. He needed to eat something. The restaurant where they would have their meeting was right across the street. He could wait there. He pushed through the line of people waiting at the doorway and sat down at a table. They could wait. They hadn't been dumped by the love of their lives. John remember'd the moment she told him she'd met someone else, someone like her, someone she could talk to—someone nice. Fuck! He was nice. Why else would he point out to her how annoying she was? He was just trying to help her improve herself. Slut. Didn't appreciate his help.

God, he couldn't even comprehend in his own head how much he missed her! He put his cigarette out on the plastic table cloth. The black, melting, spreading hole ate the red and white flowers. John could picture himself crawling through the hole, crawling into himself, trying to find the dark emptiness she had left there, trying to find what he had done to drive her away. *Four-four-seven-five-four-four-seven-five.*

Maybe it WAS all his fault. *Seven-five-seven-five-seven-five-seven-five.* The waitress brought him a menu. He ordered a margarita. He was beginning to enjoy the acidic gnawing in his stomach. Reminded him of how he felt every time she made him go to one of those boring poetry readings. He wanted to get in touch with his memories, wanted to remember what it felt like to be with her. Maybe his stomach would gnaw through to the outside and she could see through him. See that he meant it when he said he'd wait five, no, thirty years for her. The waitress brought his drink. She was kinda cute. He winked. He should probably move on with his life, after all.

He heard loud whispering from across the room.

"Please, please don't leave me!!!"

"God Robert, shut up!"

"But you don't understand how much I love you!" A girl got up and stormed outside, a somewhat frazzled looking guy trailing her.

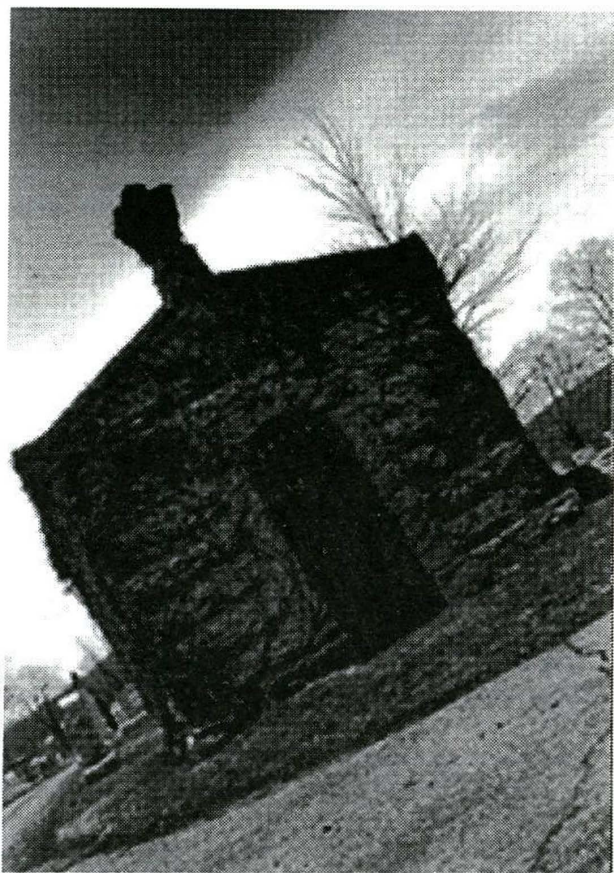
What a moron, John thought. Can't he realized that it's fucking over? People were so stupid. Yeah. His buzz was definitely wearing now. God, he was starving. *Seven-five-seven-five-seven-five-five-five-five*. Where the hell was the fucking whore? She probably wasn't coming to her meeting cause she was probably sleeping with the new guy. What a slut...

John was going to ask her to marry him over Christmas. Maybe if he went ahead and asked her now... The waitress returned. He told her he wasn't hungry. "Where's the phone?" he asked. She pointed.

As he dialed the number, his fingers shook. Need more pot, he thought. This was it. He was going to ask her. He didn't have the ring yet or anything, but. She answered. The sound of her voice sank through his ears into the folds of his brain. Couldn't forget the sound of her voice. "Hi. I know I said I wouldn't call you, but. .but I wanted to ask you something I was going to ask you over Christmas. No response. "Will you spend the rest of your life with me?"

Click. Dial tone. Bitch!

He left the restaurant and returned to his car. He found a half-melted candy bar in his glove box. Maybe, if I just wait a little longer, he thought. The white chocolate melted in his mouth as he starf'd at the front door of the apartment complex. Maybe...



Sara Pennington

plwtography (black and white)

Faida's Apache

by Bert Fulks

THE CESSNA 172 BUZZES the runway, wobbling like a wounded duck. Its wing dips to cut a tight arc. Final approach. More final for some than for others, Faida thinks.

Dingy white with yellow and blue piping. An emblem of some sort on the tail. Faida can't make it out just yet. The wheels almost touch down when the pilot over-adjusts. You've got to compensate for the winds that shoot off the river and get trapped in the valley. But OVER-compensation can make a spot to remember out of you. Faida knows that.

Pitch left. Roll right. Steady, boy. Steady. Just like dancing.

The wing of the 172 almost kisses the edge of the runway. Idiot, Faida thinks. Going to kill himself. But just then, the pilot levels out the small aircraft; the wheels bark like trumpets of ancient Rome.

Faida sits on a bench outside the hanger and watches as the pilot climbs out and begins anchoring the plane.

Noah's Ark.

She can see the childlike painting on the fin of the 172. A cartoon-looking brown vessel with stupid, grinning animal heads sticking out the top.

"That **was** a close one," the pilot says as he approaches the hanger. A wry grin slides up his face like a pair of spooning slugs. A short, balding man in a Hawaiian shirt and khaki slacks.

"It's the valley," Faida replies. "Those hot winds get trapped in here and knock you all over the place. You handled it pretty well, though. Better than some of the regular jockeys that fly here, even."

"We'll chalk it up to luck." He stabs a chubby finger into the air. "Luck and that chief controller of the big tower in the sky." He gives Faida a wink. "Pride before the fall and all that, you know." With that, he disappears into the hanger.

She goes back to watching the lifeless airstrip. Several times she finds herself staring at the silly picture on the tail of the

172. An oafish face with a Cheshire-cat grin. Both out of place and at home among the animal heads. Peach-colored skin, blue eyes, snow-white hair and rosy circles above each corner of a cheese-ball smile.

A child's image of Noah. Perfect.

"You fly?" His voice startles her. She looks up to find him coming toward her. He has removed his sunglasses and she notices a mismatch: one blue eye and one brown eye. Not exactly a freak of nature — she's heard of such things -- but it's something that she's never seen. Not in a human, anyway. Dogs, sure. Happens in huskies, she thinks. But not humans.

Faida smiles politely and looks away, pretending not to notice the oddity.

"No."

"Waiting on someone?" he asks as he lands beside her on the bench.

"No." She doesn't want to sound rude, but she's not in the habit of explaining her~~e~~ to strangers. Like to that asshole at the football game who stared at Stephen and asked what was wrong and what happened and was he going to be okay and did he need help going to the bathroom. As if Stephen were a child who needed his diaper changed.

They sit in silence for a few moments. He breathes heavy, Faida thinks, wishing he would either say something or go away. She doesn't like the sound of him breathing.

Faida feels something against her arm and turns to find him handing her a piece of paper. She takes it and studies it as he stands.

"Noah's flying circus of faith," she reads aloud, then looks up into his grinning face. She tries not to stare at those mismatched eyes or his thinning hair, focusing instead on his thin lips. Dry, scaly, and white. Not slugs. Albino desert snakes, if there are such things.

"Just a little revival," he says, like an emperor making a royal p~~r~~clamation. "I would love to have you come and worship with us, Missus..."

"Faida," she says. "Just Faida."

"Well, Faida, **we will** have music and stories and dancing. Just an all around good time. So, if you're not busy, please come and join us." He holds out his right hand and she takes it without thinking. As his hand swallows hers, her first instinct is to recoil. She pastes on a smile and nods, wondering why he hadn't offer~~d~~ his left hand instead. The one she now holds is

missing two fingers.

"Please *comer*

"We'll see."

He accepts that and bids her a good day. As soon as he's halfway to his plane, Faida rises from her seat and heads for the parking lot. She climbs on her motorcycle and inadvertently squeals the tires as she throttles her way across the pavement. She needs to get home. Stephen will need to be bathed before she puts him to bed. Faida doesn't want the nurse to do it.

A circus tent. Roughly the size of a football field. Two giant peeks in the middle and bright canvas panels: blue and yellow and green and pink. It stands at the east end of the Lawrence County Airpark. Just enough daylight remains so the runway lights aren't yet burning, but when they come on, they will lead visitors down a cracked asphalt path, right up to the gaping mouth of the revival tent.

Faida can hear singing and clapping mixed with occasional shouts of "Amen," and "Hallelujah," and "Rock the boat!" She rolls her eyes at that last one. As she approaches the tent, she realizes just how thankful she is that she doesn't have to enter alone. Throngs of people surround her as they make their way from the parking lot. People from all over the place. License plates from West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, even some from Virginia and Maryland.

She's not sure why she decided to come. She despises the notion of holy-rolling propheteers. And religion hasn't done much for her since she got her first kiss from Brad Harlow, the preacher's kid, at a church retreat. It wasn't even a good kiss, she recalls. Slobbery and without grace, like a dog eating soup out of a can.

But here she is, just the same.

She mills in with her adopted group and finds a spot near the back. The people are all standing, waving their arms in the air as they sing.

"Lord, Lord, LORD, come on in!" A voice trumpets through the public address system. "But there's no room in our circus for you, Satan!"

Faida almost laughs when she spots the man on the tiny stage. A bushy blonde wig and a pink, sequined gown. His squat figure strains the seams of the dress as he sashays back

and forth, screaming into the microphone. His eyelids and lips are painted black with glitter}Old outlines. The pilot of the 172. Faida receives confirmation from his misshapen hand, gesturing wildly.

When the singing ends, he asks the crowd if they have intellect or faith.

"FAITH!" they shout in unison. Like sheep. A number of fists shoot into the air to reinforce the answer.

"Oh, my children," the man says, "don't let that dark one steal you away. Don't let him tncx you into making judgments with your brain instead of your heart, with your intellect instead of your instinct. That's why He told Noah to take the animals, you know. He could have wiped the whole slate clean and started over, but he wanted Noah to save them animals, because when He made them, He got it right the first time!"

A number of "Amens!" float out of the crowd like cartoon thought-bubbles. Faida looks around the tent and spots several people she knows. She inches down a bit.

"You've heard the saying, if it ain't broke, don't fix it? Well that was HIS line. 'SAVE THEM ANIMALS' He told Noah. Save them animals, because they live by INSTINCT, and they're not going to THINK their way into hell!"

Shouts of praise fly around the room.

"If you want to SURVIVE, then you just go right on thinking with your brains. But if you want to LIVE, then you, my brood, have got to set yourself FREE. Wild like HIS creatures! Wild and free! Instinctual! Faithful! Because instinct IS faith! And faith is WHAT?"

"Life," mumbles a few in the crowd.

"WHAT?!"

"Life." Louder this time.

"Faith is WHAT?!" he screams into the microphone, that diminished hand stabbing at the audience and his ridiculous wig quaking as his head spits out the words.

"UFEI!"

The unified shout is so powerful that Faida thinks for a moment that the tent is coming down around them. The music starts up again and a group of men rush through the aisles with large crates. They space themselves, about one at every fifth row, and drop their boxes. Next, they quickly distribute the contents. Faida watches people take hold of the items and immediately place them on their heads. She's not sure what she is seeing until one of the funny things finds its way into her

hands.

A hollowed-out, brown furry mass.

She turns it over in her hands and stares into the toothy snout of a beaver.

"Instinct and faith!" the pilot continues to shout. "Instinct and faith! Unless you want to drown in your thinking world, you be an animal! It's no coincidence that instinct and innocent start and end with the same letters! I and T. IT! IT! IT! And if you want IT, then all you've got to do is tell Him that you're ready for IT!"

Faida places the pelt on her head and watches the tent transform into some kind of grotesque menagerie. She sees Mr. Harris, the bank president, sporting a mallard duck. Susan Wentworth, her hairdresser is singing and clapping while her giraffe head stares out at nothing. Badgers and skunks and deer and birds and snakes. Faida finds herself clapping to the beat of the music. And then she sees Dr. McGregor, the first to have diagnosed Stephen's disease. His eyes meet hers and she looks away at once, pretending not to have seen him.

~~*~*~*

The people are herded out. Not quite two-by-twos, but close enough. They drop their bestial headdresses into the crates as they make their way to the exit. Faida removes her beaver and lingers. She tells herself that she doesn't want to face Dr. McGregor. Once he is gone from the tent, she begins to move.

"I'm glad you made it, Faida." She turns to find him. The pilot. Noah. Whoever or whatever he is. A smile crawls up her face. His mascara has blended with sweat and now runs down his face in black rivers. He reaches out with his good hand and takes the beaver from her. "This doesn't really suit you."

"Why not?" she asks before considering that maybe she doesn't want that answer. She's also embarrassed by the quiver in her voice.

He smiles and tosses the furry hat into the nearest crate.

"Stick around for a bit?"

She starts to tell him no, but catches herself. It's still early. The runway lights have just come on and her mother-in-law is with Stephen. She shrugs.

"Please stay," he says, giving her puppy-dog eyes.

She notices that both are now blue. Colored contacts, perhaps. "I'll just be a few minutes." He turns and scurries toward the back of the tent, the bottom of his pink gown brushing the grassy floor. She puts her hand to her mouth and covers a smile.

When he returns, he looks more like the man she knows. His hair is now slicked back, which makes him look even more bald, but it's the same man Faida remembers seeing manhandle the tiny Cessna into submission. He takes her hand and leads her down the aisle, toward the stage. As he passes one of the crates, he grabs an animal and tucks it beneath his arm. Faida allows herself to be led around the stage and out the back of the tent.

"No," he says as they walk in the thick August evening, "not a beaver. That's not you at all." She sees his 172 in front of them and her pulse begins to quicken. "I know people," he says, "and I can smell them the way a dog can smell the difference between friends and enemies. You are not a beaver, Faida." He walks her around the plane and opens the door for her. "You were meant to fly."

Without warning, she feels tears explode from her eyes. He remains there a moment, watching her, then asks, "Are you afraid?"

Yes, she thinks, but her head shakes from side to side. His mouth hangs open as his blue eyes darted this way and that, as if tracing the outline of her face, looking at pieces of her without seeing all of her. She knows it. It's the same way she looks at Stephen.

His hands touch her shoulders. The three fingers of his right hand begin to gently rub against her skin as if trying to make up for their missing mates. "Fly with me," he whispers. "Fly with me."

And then his lips are pressing against hers.

The runway lights are like fire in the night sky. They cast ominous shadows of the tent, covering the two with an airy fabric.

When it ends, he leads her from the field. Inside the tent, he takes her to a small, private compartment and begins to touch her again. Not once does she consider his thinning hair, his portly figure, or his missing fingers and mismatched eyes.

She falls asleep in his arms and dreams of a 1957 Apache. White with a single red stripe. Twin engines. She feels the vibration as those engines wind up and carry her and Stephen into the sky. She squint-eye smiles as the clouds

come closer and then envelop them in misty waves.

Her stomach tightens the way it always does when they come back to earth.

Faida wakes to the sounds of clanging metal and harsh men giving orders. She sits up and sees the thing he had taken from the crate. At her feet is a feathery cap with the stern face of an eagle. Without thought, she grabs the idiotic thing and charges into the central area of the tent.

Dozens of men are at work, disassembling the stage, packing up sound equipment, carrying crates out the side of the tent and loading it all onto a giant truck.

Faida hears the familiar buzz of an airplane. She runs out of the tent.

The 172 is picking up speed as it darts **away** from her. She holds her breath as the wheels leave the earth — just as she always did with Stephen. Her eyes don't blink until the small plane disappears over the hillside.

She ignores the few men who are snickering.

Faida mindlessly makes her way. Destination: parking lot. A walk she has made thousands of times. But this time it's different. She won't be back.

She climbs onto her motorcycle, wincing at her new-found tenderness against the firm seat. She grabs her helmet but stops before putting it on. Her eyes lift toward the sky.

Instinct and Innocent. I and T.

She sees the letters in the sky, as if formed by the clouds. Stephen once drew those symbols when explaining the difference between a single- and a twin-engine plane. He colored a circle at the top of the •I and one at each top end of the T.

"Let's say those are your engines. Lose an engine on a single and you glide for as long as you can. Lose an engine on a twin and the good one remaining gets you to the scene of the accident a helluva lot faster!"

They both laughed at that.

But they bought the Apache **anyway**. More power. Faster ride. Two engines. One goes out and the other shortens the flight.

Faida throws her helmet as far as she can, then places the silly bird carcass on top of her head.

It feels funny. But she likes it. She can identify with it.

Faida kicks the engine to life and throttles it a few times, feeling the harsh vibration of the motor. She closes her eyes. Imagines flying with Stephen in their Apache. And then races home to him like an obedient child to an ailing parent, anxious to share the wonders revealed when the circus came to town.



Sara Pennington

plwtography (block and white)

Apartment 9D: Sarah and Lydia Turner

by *Wadia Whalen*



3rd Place Fiction

MOST OF THE MOTHERS, the ones who said they cared, forbid us to play with Tanesha. She was a big, solid girl, with a hangdog look, round empty eyes, and a dopey grin. At twelve she looked older than the rest of us girls and could easily pass for sixteen. Her clothes were always too tight, like her mother didn't notice she grew a foot and gained about twenty pounds since she was ten. She either hung or burst out of most of her clothes. Unlike the rest of us she needed a bra, but if she had one, she never wore it. This aggravated most of us because we were all impatiently waiting the opportunity to wear a training bra and she could have worn a real bra, but didn't. Some people said Tanesha was slow, others said she was just stupid.

The mothers disliked her because she had several different boyfriends and went with them to the playground. The playground was an abandoned lot behind Blasbury where people went to drink, do drugs, and have sex, or so I was told. We didn't care as much about that as Tanesha's attitude. She was fat, too dark, with hair too nappy and didn't have the sense to feel inferior to us. There was a hierarchy that we all followed and she refused to acknowledge it. At the top was Sarah with her wavy blue-black hair and cafe au lait skin. In the middle was me, nothing special, a dull milk-chocolate brown. At the bottom was Tanesha. Personally, I also took issue with her telling everyone I was her cousin. It was true, but by marriage only.

On my way home from school two **weeks** before summer vacation, I saw her standing outside the playground. She was leaning against a fence with her head tilting up toward the sky. Even in a light summer dress she was sweating heavily and the neon orange dress clung to every fold and swell of her *body*. She was eating a grape Popsicle, which was melting fast in the sun. More seemed to get on the front of her dress and drip on her bare feet than got in her mouth. When she caught sight of me she tossed the stick into the weeds and ran over. Aside from her usual odor from not bathing, she smelled strongly of loose dirt and sweat.

"Hey, Lydia. What you doin' down here? Your mother gonna tear you up, she find out."

"I wasn't down here. I was just walking by."

"Are you goin' home?"

"Yes."

"Can I come?"

"I don't think so."

"Why?"

"Look at you. Mama wouldn't want you at our place lookin' like that."

"But I'm hungry."

"So go to your house and eat."

"There's no food. My Mama forgot to shop."

"Well go home and clean up, then come over to our place."

"Come with me."

"Why?"

"I might not be able to leave if I go by myself."

"What?"

"Please?"

"Fine, lets just hurry. It's gettin' late."

In the hallway on the second floor, Tanesha's little brother threw a deflated football against the wall.

"Hey, Christian. I said as we moved past him through their door. He didn't respond.

Inside, Tanesha's mother lay on a couch. She didn't move when we came in, but I spoke anyway.

"Hi, Aunt Lucinda."

"Who's that, a man asked, startling me.

There were two men sitting in the dark on another couch. I couldn't make out who they were, but I could tell that neither was my Uncle Michael.

"That's my cousin, Lydia, Tanesha said as she walked towards the back room.

One of the men got up and followed her. The other turned toward me.

"You hear 'bout what happened earlier?"

"um... no. What?"

"Man got shot. The guy just moved in. Police shot him."

"Why?"

"They need a reason? Actually, I heard he shot at them when he saw them walking into the building. I don't believe it. I mean, why would he do that?"

"I don't know."

"Because he wouldn't. Then again, I don't know that guy. He could have been as crazy as that bitch in 4A. That's who they came to get. She killed her mother."

"Oh." I looked toward the room where Tanesha went and wondered what was taking so long. I glanced again at Aunt Lucinda, but looked away quickly when I saw she wasn't wearing any underwear.

"Smoke." The man held up a cigarette.

"No."

"Got a boyfriend?"

"No, um, I'm only twelve."

He shrugged and lit his cigarette. I heard Tanesha and the other man talking in the back but couldn't make out what they were saying. Then something fell and someone groaned.

"I have to go, Tanesha. See ya." I quickly left and shut the door.

Christian stood in the hallway looking at me.

"You want to come with me to dinner at my place?"

He shook his head and started throwing the ball again. I left him and ran upstairs. My mother was waiting for me when I walked through the door. Someone had seen me going into Tanesha's apartment and reported it to her. I got whipped that night for the first time since I was eight.

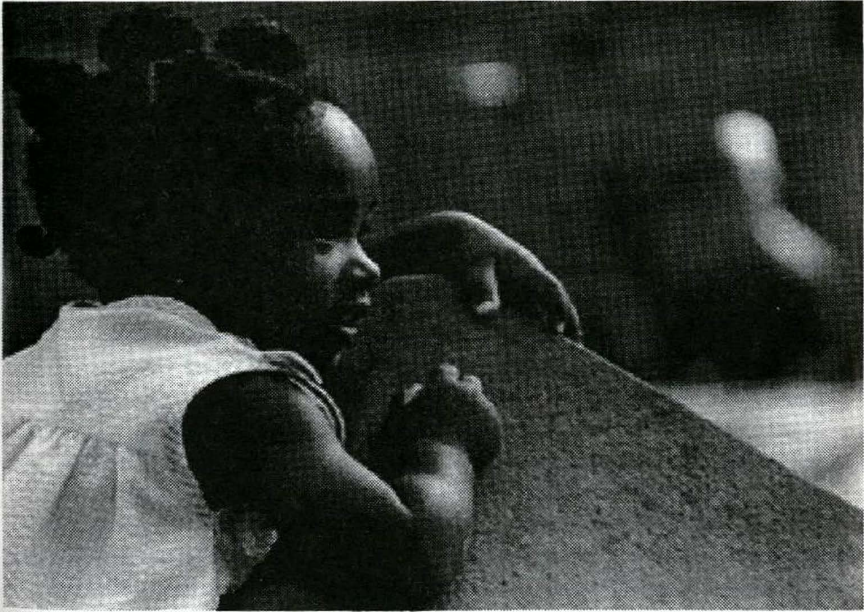
You want to end up like her? Crack! You want to be one of those girls banned from a decent persons home? Crack! Ten babies from ten different daddies? Crack! Smell like dirt and sin? Crack! Not in this house. No nasty girls comin' from my house/ I'll beat the black off you before I let anyone look at you sideways/ Crack! Now go/ No supper. Go to bed.

On my way home from school the next day I saw Tanesha standing outside the playground again. When she saw me she ran up, but I pretended she wasn't there. She started talking, about food mostly, but stopped when I bent down and picked up a rock. I ran a few feet ahead, turned, and slung the rock at her face. It hit her in the mouth and split her bottom lip. She stared at me with that dopey look, twisting her swelling lip. Blood and spit dribbled down her chin onto her dress.

"Big, stupid idiot!" I yelled, waiting for her to do something.

She stood there, drooling and staring. A part of me I never knew wanted to go over, put my arms around her, and tell her everything would be alright. Although I knew for her it would-

n't, that didn't matter. It was enough when my mom said it and I knew it would be enough for her if I said it. But a larger part of me was disgusted. Those glassy, blank eyes were begging me to come over, to forgive her, even though I was in the wrong. If I offered her my arms or even a few indifferent words she would attach herself to me and never let go. Like a kicked dog she would keep coming back to abuse, needy for any kind of acceptance or connection. Through the blood, sweat, and tears just starting to form I saw in her face the blatant display of that need, and the reflection of mine. Unnerved, I ran home.



Mollie Woody

photography (black and white)

Blue. And White Cotton.

by Adam Ba"aclough



2nd Place Fiction

BLUE VELVET CURTAINS DRAW silently apart to reveal a television screen. The screen glows blue with the programmed standby fed in from an attached VCR.

<PLAY>.

An image crackles to life on the television, static scrolling off the screen vertically like a second curtain being drawn. On screen, a fuzzy rhesus monkey glares into the camera from atop a heap of garbage. The monkey pulls his lips back over his teeth in a grimace and reaches behind himself with a sinewy paw. As the monkey draws a handful of feces from beneath him, the audio kicks in. Sparse clicking sounds resolve into the trebled high end of a sticky beat as the monkey swing his paw back towards the camera, slowed to time his movement to the music. The feces strikes the camera in the upper right corner of the screen just as the heavier bass end of the beat kicks in.

The music I can place, this is the stuff Cole has been working on for the past month, but the visuals could be salvaged from any number of sources. Despite the anonymity of the material, there is something naggingly familiar about it, about what is going on in their little world. As the music fractures off into a series of breaks, the image switches. Now a group of monkeys chase on of their own through piles of refuse. Their prey; a thin grey-furred male who scabbles over cardboard walls and plastic bottles as though running from Gestapo. The grey slips in an oil-slicked puddle and goes down. They are on top of him in moments, beating scratching and biting. A flicker on-screen shows the ghosted image of Rodney King being beaten by police officers, layered subtly over the nature-show documentary. Nightsticks fall over and over as one of the monkeys rends free a greyish arm and begins wailing with it.

My stomach turns and I notice that Cole, seated next to me, has leaned forward in his seat to stare intently at the screen, a worried look wrinkling his forehead. James, who has produced this video for Cole, sits diagonally from the couch in a broken armchair wearing the grin of someone who is secretly proud of

his work despite its potential to offend. I have to give him some credit, it is seamlessly edited and the violence on screen synchs fully with the flow of the music. I look back up to see that the scene has changed slightly.

Now a female is being chased by a male, her vulva distended and glowing with an angry redness, bouncing like a target in front of the pursuing male. The camera switches angles and we see them from above, watching as she comers herself against a portion of chainlink fence and a cube of compacted garbage the size of a refrigerator. The male is on her in a flash just as the music changes gears to introduce a sleazy organ sample Cole stole off some seventies porno. James has spliced in a layer from one of these old films, the pale negative images of some less than famous porno stars pounding it out overtop of the monkey-rape is more disturbing than the King footage. The male is thrusting violently and you can see the label from a Coca-Cola bottle pressed into the huge cube of garbage just over the monkey's shoulder. A shudder passes through the male monkey just as the over-image shows, in whitish outline, the man spraying his seed all over the woman's back and rear, rubbing it in with his penis and hands. The music shifts away from the funk of the organ sample, back to the hard driving beat at the core of the track.

It is at this point in the song that I have always imagined people dancing along. Cole always preaches about how this is the test of fire for a dj, it can sound great on the demo but if people won't dance to it then you're fucked. I **knew** he had it right the first time I heard this song. Hearing it now, I am forced to watch not a club full of happy people on a dancefloor, but it's Rhesus monkey equivalent. Heads thrown back, they howl and jump, pound and shout, all to the beat. I do notice that James has overlaid the image of a club crowd, flickering in and out as the monkeys rage to the beat. The song reaches its peak and as the last few measures glide out we are treated to the image of the shit-flinging monkey again, though it momentarily flits to an image of Cole at the turntables mixing before cutting back to show poo striking the camera, and then all fading to black.

"Well, what did you think?" James leans over and hits stop as he asks this, flooding the room again with the blue glow of the auxiliary screen. His grin fades into nervousness as Cole struggles to comment.

"It was... intense. I... don't know. The editing was really sharp, but..."

"But what?"

"Well, it was intense, that's what. Almost too political for a dance crowd... I don't know. What did you think, Dita?"

I feel James and Cole turning to face me, their eyes full of expectancy. I take a moment to loathe Cole for passing the buck my way before I answer.

•James, you did a really good job, but does it have to be so damn violent?"

"Well, yeah... I mean, I think I've really captured something. Cole's music taps into all that primal energy. I thought the violence would be a nice comment on human behavior...like how most of the time we're led to do really ugly things by that primal nature, but sometimes we can do something beautiful...like dance."

"Bullshit," I blurt in, "You found some good monkey footage on Discovery and you couldn't pass it up."

James almost pulls off looking genuinely hurt by my accusations before he bursts into laughter.

"You should have seen the looks on your faces! You two were actually convinced I was serious, Cole's all, like 'Really sharp editing...almost too political...', you're just as full of it as I am!"

A huge grin cracks Cole's face and he flashes me some eyes. James walks over to the couch and nudges me on the arm.

•And you, you just tell it like it is. Cole tries to be diplomatic, but you Dita, you tell me straight up. That's what I like about you."

I can tell from James' leer that that's not all he likes about me, in fact it looks like he might be trying to stare down the front of my tank-top right now. I cross my legs, sitting back to obscure his **view** and bringing the tip of my sneaker right up to about crotch-level, waving it menacingly. James dodges back smoothly and the whole thing is over before Cole catches on. This isn't the first time James has hit on me, though he's usually a lot drunker than he is right now.

"Why don't you show us the real video, James?" I suggest.

He seems grateful for the suggestion, pulling the blue velvet curtains back over the alcove in which the television sits, allowing for another overly-dramatic drawing open, another wildly gesticulated pressing of the PLAY button. This time, the blue glow is replaced by a dark screen which resolves into some kind

of title-screen. Like when you turn a video game on, the words jump off the screen in glowing digital, "Roller-Disco-Arcade," the song's title. An icon on the bottom of the screen lights up, a shining coin, as though someone had dropped a quarter into this video game. The music kicks in as the screen shows a little digitized dj behind the turntables. Digital dancers move onto the screen and dance to the beat, as though the little dj on the screen was spinning some really hot shit. The graphics are crap, they remind me of the stuff my dad used to download and play all night, the stuff they call vintage.

I guess James' video had all the necessary requirements. Nostalgia, retro-coolness. He had spliced some actual Super 8 footage of kids dancing at a roller disco in with the video game footage and the thing came to a nice peak with the dance floor and the points counter piling up with the beat. We all had to giggle at the butterfly collars and polyester pantsuits of the more serious roller disco enthusiasts, but to be honest I was still a little pissed at James for trying to steal a peek. Ninety percent of the time he's a really decent guy, but the other ten percent is something I'd rather not have experienced. Cole seems oblivious and I've never said anything, it's just that...a shiver hits me as the image of the female monkey being raped flashes through my mind.

"Are you okay?" Cole whispers to me as James pops his masterpiece out of the VCR and hunts down the case.

I smile warmly in answer to Cole, glad he's not too absorbed in the whole video thing to notice me. Moments like these bring the word love swirling back into my head; something I feel for Cole, something that we share seeming to defy definition beyond that overused and overtaxed cliché, love. James interrupts my reverie, shoving the video into Cole's outstretched hands and raining down some unasked-for "you're welcome" upon him.

I've got my coat on and the door open as Cole shakes James' hand goodbye for the umpteenth time. Cold air blasts in from the hallway and it makes me realize how stuffy and confined James' apartment is. I hear the air rushing through the weatherstripping on the door downstairs, a soft howl, and I realize that this is the type of music I usually take for granted. It's the music made when things are quiet, a time we would usually call "silent" if we weren't listening like I am now. Those are sad and beautiful songs, lonely and joyous things whose only beat is that which can be salvaged from the pings and cracks of a settling building,

the sound of distant footsteps, or from the methodical chum of buried machinery running its course.



Later, I'm trying to find a rhythm in the random explosions of keyboard clacking that accompany one of Cole's programming sessions. Sometimes it sounds like he's actually flinging his hands at the keyboard, mashing keys down in a rage, while at other moments there is a steady staccato clicking that could almost be described as a beat. Hearing him now I know that he is lost in his microcosm of code, that I am probably the furthest thing from his mind. I decide to slip back into the bedroom and indulge in one of my more selfish sins, caressing Cole's shoulder lightly as I pass him rigid at the terminal.

In the bedroom now, I throw myself onto the bed and stretch out in its soft comfort. I flip the TV and punch in channel 777, to see my favorite show has already started. Deprogrammer is trashy right-wing television at its finest. A hunky lead character, Blake Armstrong (played by real evangelist Donnie Southmyer), holds together plots that are coated in the thinnest veneer of morality, allowing for the show's proliferation on the Falwell Evangelical Network. The story is usually the same; parents concerned about the crowd their son and/or daughter has been hanging out with lately contact their local minister who in turn puts out a special request for the Deprogrammer, a bad ass missionary dedicated to saving the souls of good Christian teenagers from demonic influence. The Deprogrammer shows up, talks to mom and dad about how they can prevent this sort of thing by encouraging positive moral values and regular church attendance in their children, and then disappears into the seamy underbelly of the city to abduct the kids away from whatever "devil cult" has found influence over them.

I like the show primarily because of the way different notions of popular culture are demonized. One week it's all night ravers bringing kids in with ecstasy and subliminal devil dance music, the next week it's a Buddhist plot to convert all the young teenagers into potheads and dope fiends. The Deprogrammer always manages to show up just in the nick of time, before any of the mind-altering drugs ruin the lives of the kids he's looking for. It's really laughable how these different stereotypes are portrayed, how paper thin the message behind the whole thing is. Cole says it's fundamentalist propaganda, that the FEN is just a

front for fascism, so he won't even sit through an episode. I find the whole thing too funny to take seriously.

This week's episode looks like a good one. Blake Armstrong has already arrived at the home of the parents and is wandering through some poor girl's room, trying to get a feel for where he might find her. It looks like the girl may be some kind of goth, there's black lace draped over everything and huge Nine Inch Nails and Bauhaus posters plastered on the walls. Blake is looking studly as he cases the room in a pair of leather pants and a black button-up shirt that exposes his well cut chest. He picks up an Anne Rice novel off the desk in front of him.

"A classic case of the sheep straying from the flock, and the devil guiding her all the way!" he shouts at no one in particular, slamming the novel and some black Mardi Gras beads into the trashcan next to the desk.

He moves on the CD rack on the wall, tearing case after case out of it's slot and tossing them in the can. I count one Ricky Martin CD, two Madonna discs and a Sammy Davis Jr. greatest hits collection going into the trash can along with the standard armful of black-cover spooky looking industrial artists' discs. These are the details I love about Deprogrammer, that and the little rants Blake gets fired up on. Right now, he's going off about how the record industry should hold more responsibility for the immoral garbage they shove down kids throats. That's when he discovers the drugs in her nightstand. In a small box covered in the familiar black lace, with a crappy silver cross glued upside down to the lid, Blake finds a strange assortment of paraphernalia. There is a bent spoon, tarnished black at the bottom, along with a syringe, a lighter, a rolled up baggie of marijuana and what looks like a vibrator. Blake, ever the conscientious Deprogrammer, loses it.

"The dark one has gotten ahold of her so hard she's taken to shooting up her devil-weed!! And she has taken to unnatural fornication! It's no wonder this poor young girl considers herself to be one of Satan's own brides!"

Apparently, this chick thinks she's a vampire, and now it's up to Blake to save her soul. He pulls a black bible from his back pocket and kneels next to the girl's bed, praying for her safe return to the arms of the Lord. The drugs and the box seem to disappear in a ball of heavenly fire, and as Blake is praying for guidance towards the girl's whereabouts, the same fire appears on the wall opposite him-this time spelling out the address of some nightclub. Blake's got it scribbled down before the fire

spreads to all four walls, scouring the room clean of any gothic influence, burning away the contents of the trash can in a ball of blue fire.

"Whatcha watchin'?"

It's Cole at the doorway, and I turn to him with a guilty smile.

"Deprogrammer. •

"That stuff will rot your brain..."

"Yeah, well, you're the one missing out. This shit is hilarious. There's probably some good cheesy samples waiting for you, if you'd just sit down and watch an episode."

"I'm scared I might want to go to church the next day."

"Your loss."

"I heard about some new show on the Japomo channel just now."

"Yeah, what's it about?"

"It's called *Panty Sniffer* and it's this guy who can tell almost anything about a woman just by sniffing her dirty underwear."

"That sounds absolutely disgusting."

"It's set up like a game show too, so that if the guy gets any of the information wrong, these girls win all kinds of prizes. Only, I guess the guy is pretty good, so they don't have too many grand-prize winners. •

"What kind of stuff does he have to tell them?"

"It's all weird shit, like what year they started their period, what they had for dinner three days ago, when the last time they had sex was. Anyway, I haven't actually seen it, just heard about it, Ncode was talking about it online."

"Well, don't expect me to watch it with you."

"Why not, it doesn't sound any worse than Deprogrammer. •

"You're crazy."

"At least they don't ask you to donate to the church during every commercial break. •

I look up to the screen to see a spectral image of Jerry Falwell, begging for donations from beyond the grave. He is weeping and it looks like there is a little lamb curled up at the foot of his white robe, or maybe he's supposed to be standing on a cloud or something. I look back at Cole and raise my eyebrows in mock defeat.

"Maybe you've got a point. What's Ncode up to anyway?"

"Oh, the usual. You know how he was studying to be one of those phone psychics, right?"

"Yeah."

"Well, he made it. I guess he's actually pretty good at it, but they already fired him."

"What for?"

"He told some woman she was pregnant with a Down-syndrome baby and she shot herself in the head."

"That's horrible!"

"He didn't tell her because he wanted her to do anything stupid, he said he just had this strong feeling that she needed to see a prenatal doctor right away, that the kid had Downs and that something else was wrong."

"Is he in any trouble?"

"That's the weird thing. When they examined her they found a lump of brain cancer the size of a baseball, and it had obviously affected the way she was thinking. The coroner said that she would have died before morning anyway and that since she wasn't in her right state of mind, the phone psychic people couldn't be held liable."

"That is really fucked up."

"Yeah...he seems really bothered by the whole thing. I was going to head over there, maybe take him out for a few beers, give him a chance to talk about it. You wanna come?"

"No, that's alright. I don't know what I would say other than 'That's really fucked up.' Besides, I've got Blake Armstrong to keep me company."

Cole laughs and leans to kiss me good-bye.

"And remember Dita, don't let Old Nick catch you lusting after Blake Armstrong, you know the devil is strongest when young girls are at their weakest." He tosses this out in his best impersonation of the star of *Deprogrammer*, and it comes off flawlessly.

"Hey, I thought you never watched this show!"

"Just teasing. I love you and I'll see you later."

"Be careful...• I call after him.

Turning back to the TV, I see that Blake is roughing up some punk in a plastic dracula cap, tossing him around with the fury of the Lord scorned. He has obviously penetrated the secret lair of the vampire cult and is probably ready to grasp the young lamb from the clutches of the Dark One. He proves me right by kicking open the door of the hotel room the "vampires" are using for the hideout, and there she is; black fishnet stockings, vinyl

skirt and satin bustier, all covered in white face makeup with fang caps on her teeth to complete the ensemble. Apparently, the first Satan makes all young gins do is dress up like a total whore, this is priority number one. The Deprogrammer doesn't even flinch at her attempts to seduce him, he just throws her over his shoulder and bolts for the big black van that serves as the base of operations. She is kicking and screaming, trying to bite with her fake little fangs. He's got her trussed and bound before you can say "Amen!" and is speeding off to some remote locations to brainwash out all the brainwashing she's undergone.

This is the part that always makes me a little nauseated. About fifteen minutes of the show's hour-long running time is soaked up with this little sermon every week. They make it sound like an attempt to read anything other than the Bible or FEN sanctioned materials is outright heresy. And of course, there's always some insane product placement going on. Like, he'll bring out his copy of *The New Young Teen Study Bible*, or he'll pop in *Understanding Christ's Sacrifice* and *How to Make Your own* video series as part of the deprogramming. I decide to flip the channel and maybe flip back to this later to catch up with the last ten minutes or so.

"Carrot ... snow pea ... noodles ... grilled pike eel ... and ... yes ... the pike eel marinated in sake!"

I read these subtitles from the bottom of the screen. I have inadvertently flipped over to the Japomo channel, and as I realize that I am, in fact, watching the television show *Party-Sniffer*, I realize also that there is no way I *can* pass this up. An older Asian man sits reclined in a leather armchair with a pair of wispy white cotton panties resting over his nose and mouth, his voice loud and commanding over the squeals of the young female contestants and the frantic screeching of the show's host.

"Yes, that is correct." The humiliated young woman on the screen admits before bowing out of the contest.

This seems to be some kind of final round, there is only one other young woman on stage and she is smiling bashfully as she peels off her fresh underwear. The man in the chair has removed the other pair of panties and seems to be clearing his nasal passages into a moist towelette which he then vigorously rubs into each nostril.

"I am prepared for the final challenge," the subtitles read.

The shrieking host takes the panties from the young woman and places them gently onto the man's face. There is almost a minute of complete and total silence. Then the party-

sniffer erupts.

"Asparagus! All I smell is asparagus! The girl has cheated ... she has used an unsanctioned vegetable!"

The crowd in attendance gasps, the host wails like a banshee and the young woman bursts into tears. I decide this is just too damn weird and flip back to *Deprogrammer* for the last few minutes.

Blake stand proudly, Bible in one arm, immaculately dressed and preened young teenager in the other. The parents are crying, like they always do, and the father has even fallen on his knees in prayer he is so moved by this personal miracle.

"You see, all it took was the proper guidance and a little extra persuasion to bring young Tammy back into the fold." Blake beams as he shows off the girl, looking now like a refugee from a talk-show makeover.

"That's right Daddy, and you'd better believe I'll never mess with drugs or Satan's music ever again."

"You mean, you don't still think you're a vampire, one of Satan's brides?" the mother asks.

"No, I've seen the glory of Christ rise into my life as I watched the sun rise on my undead flesh this morning. I'm born again and I'll never turn back?"

"But how?" the father pleads from his place on the floor.

"Simple," Blake explains, "I let the light of God and the light of his sun shine down upon your daughter, and when she saw that she wasn't going to burst into flames, she seemed to understand that eternal life really was in her grasp, only this time the way God intended it! Your daughter might be a little sunburnt, sir, but I guarantee you that she won't soon forget the promise she made to God, at least not when she sits down for Sunday prayer tomorrow."

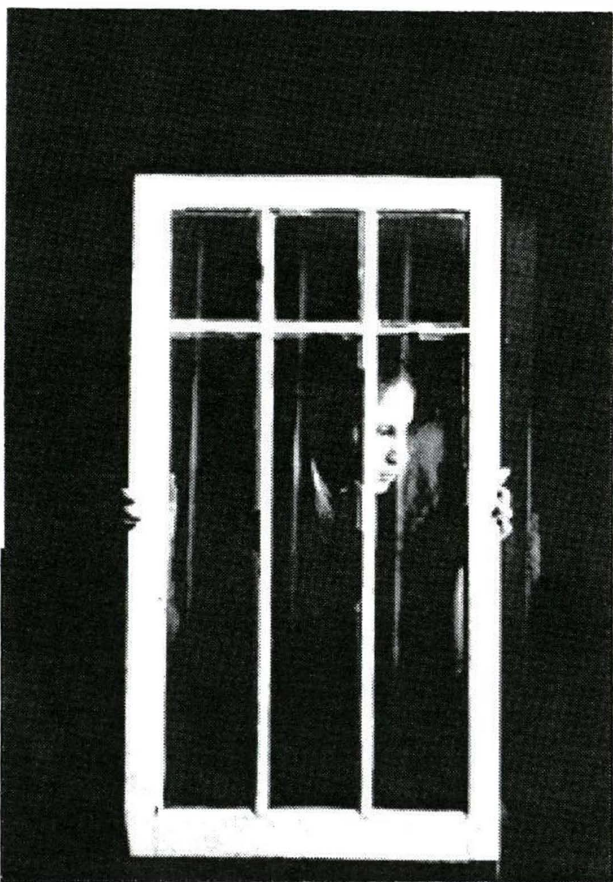
"Whatever do you mean?"

"Show your father, Tammy, show him the reminder."

Tammy turns so that her back is facing her father and gingerly lifts the pleated skirt she is wearing to expose her rear, clad only in a white g-string. There, sunburnt onto each cheek, is a blistering red cross. The father is the first to laugh.

"Spare the rod, spoil the child," he chokes out between guffaws, "I guess we all learned a lesson today."

Soon they are all laughing, even Tammy. The camera zooms in on the tiniest twinkle in Blake Armstrong's perfect smile before fading to black.



Chris Worth

photography (black and white)

Virginia

by *Andrea Fekete*



WHEN'S THE RAIN GONNA quit? Anna May, and Ezra lay side by side in my bed, asleep. I can't help, but watch them, the way their little chests move up, and down, just below those angelic faces. I'm sure angels must be skinny little children, with round, pasty-white faces, and half-dollar-sized blue eyes, pouty pink lips that say no evil. I put Anna May in the only gown she owns, a small white one, with long sleeves, and ruffles that hug her bird-like wrists. How I wish I had something to curl her hair with, to turn her dishwater blonde hair into streaming circlets of shining gold. I lay beside Anna May, watching the purple shadows move across her face as she breaths through her tiny nostrils. She dreams of shooting marbles, maybe chasing rabbits in the hills with Ezra I hope she ain't dreaming of nothing else. Mama always tells me there ain't nowhere to go for girls like us. •Jennie, you gotta love these hills. Love 'em, honey, 'cause if you don't, you'll be the saddest girl there ever was." But what did she mean by "girls like us?"

Ain't we tough as nails, strong as the meanest storm to hit any valley? Can't we scrub, sew, and chop wood till our knuckles peel like oranges, and bleed? I've seen my Mama's hands slowly twist up like the branch of a rotting tree over the years, fonn all the plantin', the packin', the cannin', and diggin', and the cold mountain air that gets in through the cracks of our walls that she tries to keep out with torn newspapers, and blankets. Can't them hands dig through these mountains, build our own road, a road for "girls like us?" Isn't our skin as thick as any horses hide? Our backs like the steel shovel Daddy has in the barn? What does she mean, "girls like us?"

Now I don't know what to tell Anna May. Maybe I'd be happier if I loved these hills more, or maybe I'd be just the same. But I want to know what I'd see if I ever climbed to the top of the mountain outside our house, and looked over. What if I climbed even the next one, and looked, and the next, and the next. Wouldn't there be something besides valleys if I kept going?

I imagine two crosses standing tall, and white at each side of a wide black road. The road leads to somewhere full of strangers, lots of handsome men. I imagine them. Lots of men. Tall men with big black eyes, silky hair, and soft hands. Short men with broad shoulders, stiff-brimmed hats, and gold watches. Women in new dresses, and white gloves, walking with lean, straight strides, their shiny curls glistening in the sunlight.

Anna May grips my finger, and twists it a little. Her large, soft eyes roll like eggs underneath her thin eyelids. She is dreaming. I kiss her cheek, and she slaps me away. I almost wake her laughing. "You're even rotten in your sleep," I whisper. She is dreaming of the rabbits. I hope she ain't dreaming of nothing else.

The rain pelts against the window like tiny rocks. Outside it looks like the ground is coughin' up dust. The air sticks to my lungs, but I breathe in hard, enjoying the heavy smell of the honeysuckle that always gets riled up when it rains, or when the wind blows. The smell of rain always makes me want to be in love. Somehow, I know the man I fall in love with will smell like a rainstorm, like the raw, dirty wind.



Chris Worth

photography (black and white)

Contributors



Ben Barish is a 21 year old English major from Hagerstown, Maryland, and the co-editor in chief of *Et Cetera* magazine. He is currently involved in the project of living.

Adam Barraclough, an English writing major at Marshall often finds his inspiration from elements of pop culture. He is currently working on a collection of stories entitled *I Dream in Subtitles*.

Heather **Dooley** is a sophomore English major. She is currently working on "scrapping together" a bunch of her poems into "something like a book." Recently, she was given an old typewriter which, for some reason, makes her want to write short stories.

Sarah Dooley is a sophomore elementary education major who has worked on several publications during high school and her first semester of college. Currently, she writes brief, illustrated children's stories for a child she tutors in sign language.

Andrea Fekete of Man, WV is a graduating English major/sociology minor and one of *Et Cetera's* poetry editors. Currently, she is working on a project titled *I Dreamt My Name Was Maria*. The excerpt, "Virginia," has been published previously in *The Smithville Journal*. Other excerpts from her novel and her poetry appear in literary journals such as *The Adirondack Review*, *The Virginia Adversaria*, and several others.

Mora Lee Annerty is a first-year graduate assistant of Marshall University's English department. Her nonfiction work is published in the *Rock n' Roll Reporter*, and in *The Pitt News*. Current projects include a memoir and several short stories and screenplays, ranging from thrillers to satirical comedies.

Bert Fulks, a former high school social studies teacher, now splits time as a graduate student and a stay-at-home dad. His guest columns have appeared in the *Herald-Dispatch* and he recently won 1st Place in the 2001 Maier Writing Awards. Bert works part-time writing and co-editing MU's *Multicultural Exposition*.

Mattie Henry, one of *Et Cetera's* fiction editors, is an English/Writing major in her third year at Marshall. She has not yet sought to have any of her work published. If you're curious about her style, she likes to write from perspectives other than her own-- male, Christian, and optimistic.

Jamie Johnson is finishing her artwork for her senior art exhibit in mid-April as well as working with *Et Cetera* for her second year as art editor. She will graduate in May with a B.F.A. in graphic design.

Luke Mencotti is a Marshall senior who hopes he will graduate this summer. He has written many poems and short stories and is currently trying to compile enough poetry and short fiction to eventually publish an anthology. Either that or become a professional wrestler.

Sarabeth Mliis is in her third year at Marshall University, majoring in English-Writing and Basic Humanities-Philosophy. She has been writing creatively for many years, and this is her second year of publication in *Et Cetera*.

Sara Pennington, is a graduating English/Creative Writing major. This is her second year co-editing *Et Cetera*. She will be attending graduate school in the fall for Creative Writing.

Rebecca Settle, one of this year's fiction editors, is a junior year English literature major with a special interest in 20th century British poetry. After graduating, she plans to study abroad for her masters.

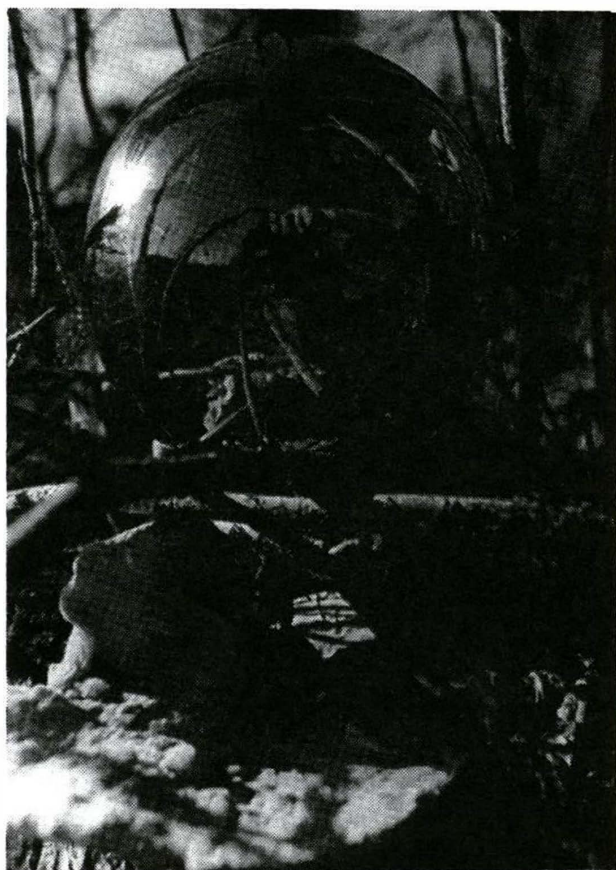
Kimberly S. Tingler, one of *Et Cetera* poetry editors, is a 21 year old English graduate student, who decided to follow her love of writing after achieving a B. A. in Psychology. She enjoys writing and performing art that "offends to the point it causes introspection." She is currently laboring over a series of poems on bodily functions.

Jere West, a 52 year old non-traditional student seeking his Regent's B. A. degree, won a 1999 Maier award for creative non-fiction. This is the first time he has been published.

Wadla Whalen is a senior English writing major at Marshall. She started writing when she was in the 5th grade with wrote a choose-your-own-adventure-book for friends. Today, she listens to the characters' stories and puts them on paper. "Apartment 90: Sarah and Lydia Turner" has been excerpted from a longer work entitled *The Apartment Complex*.

Mollie Woody, a Huntington sophomore, is a visual art major at Marshall. Her work has been accepted to be printed in 2000 - 01 *Photographer's Forum* Best of College Annual.

Chris Worth of Pocahontas County, WV is in his first year as a photography major at Marshall. His work has been displayed at the Renaissance Coffee House, Calamity Cafe, and Goodwill Industries executive offices. He is currently working on a series of photographs which illustrate moving from the physical realm to the kinetic-temporal.



Mollie Woody

photography (black and white)



