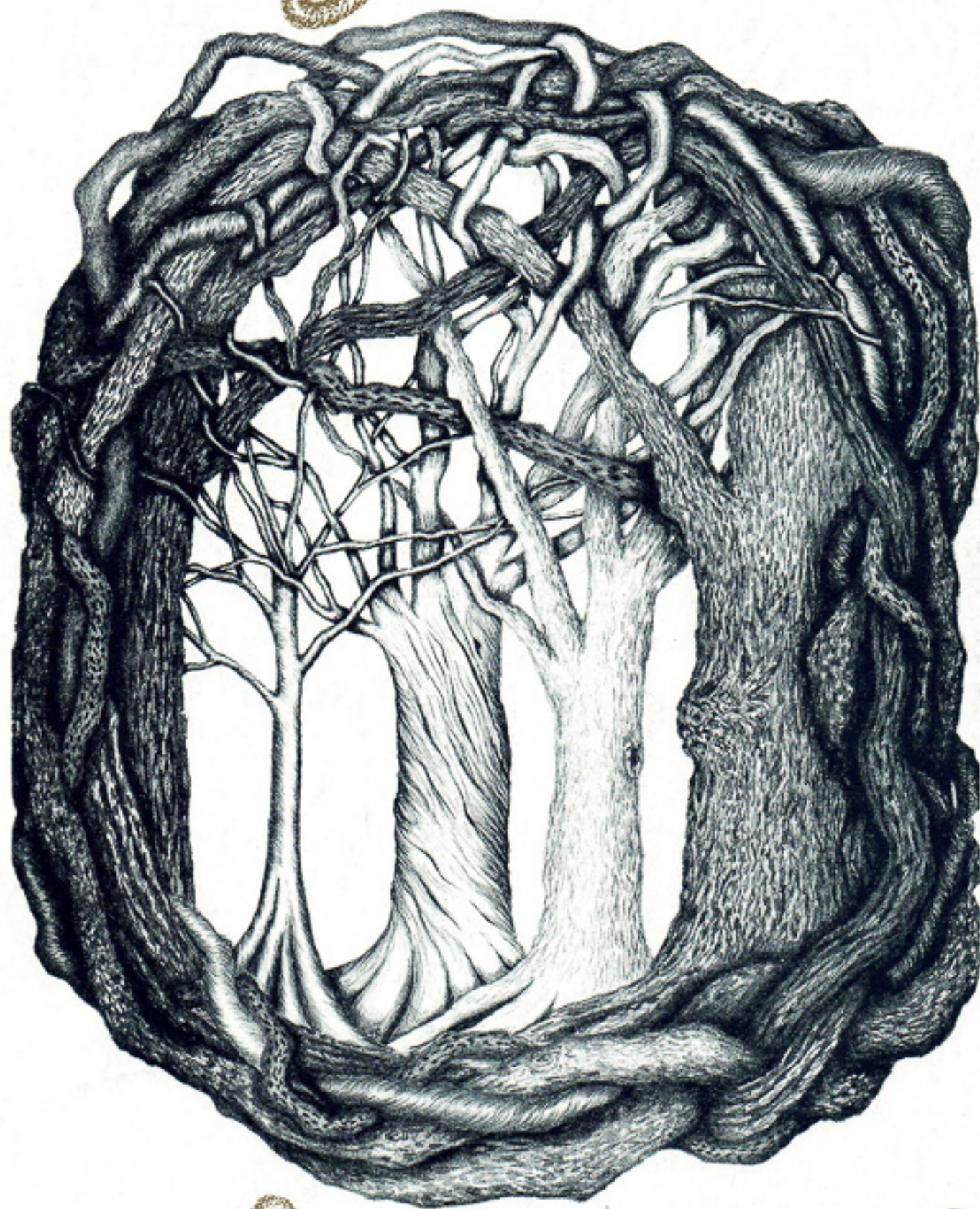


Labyrinth



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Table of Contents

Title Page Art

Laura Hall

Table Of Contents Art

Christopher Sims

4.....*Etchboard*

Henry Nwalipenja

5-10.....*"Miseries"*

Erick Flamenco

9.....*Oil Painting*

Mohammed Islam

10.....*"Why Are You Afraid of Me?"*

Michael A. Norford

10.....*Pencil Drawing*

Szekit Hsu

11.....*"She Is Just My Sister"*

Shelle Silva

11.....*Photo*

Katherine Bradley

12.....*"It Was Time"*

Nora Gaines

12.....*Colored Pencil Drawing*

Jennifer Kane

13.....*"Her Thoughts"*

Shelle Silva

13.....*Pen and Ink Drawing*

Birgit Kaas

14-16.....*"A Knight's Journey to Another
Age"*

Jaqueline Ferrand

16.....*Pencil Drawing*

Nkechi Ofulue

17.....*"Good Morning"*

Christiana Callahan

17.....*Photo*

Katherine Bradley

18.....*"Youth At This School*

Ian Bodden

18.....*Photo*

Khalysa Cross



Gallery Art

19.....Pencil Drawing
Ritzy Boyd

19.....Pastel
Susanna Thornton

19.....Oil Painting
Mohammed Islam

20.....Acrylic Painting
Carol Naguit

20.....Oil Painting
Jennifer Kane

20.....Pencil Drawing
Mimi Phrasavath

21.....Pencil Drawing
Bill Lacey

28-30....."Nothing At All"
Michelle Cao

30.....Print
Laura Hall

31....."Hypocrite"
Katherine Bostick

31.....Photo
Katherine Bradley

32....."The Man Jumps Off the
Brooklyn Bridge"
Scott Porter

32.....Etching
Sarah Godfrey

33....."All One Crazy Thing"
Ian Bodden

34-35....."Rugby Team"
Joseph Prichard

35....."Toupee"
Holly Botkin

36....."Sunset Before Sunrise"
Maciej Kobialko

36.....Print
Jennifer Kane

36....."Same Place"
Alex Domeyko

36.....Etching
Luke Miller

37....."In Memoriam"
Alex Young

37.....Photos
Alex Young

38....."We Can Do That Tomorrow"
Michael Sharp

38.....Etching
Jennifer Kane

Staff Page Art
Christopher Sims

22....."The Park"
Nini Tang

22.....Pen and Ink Drawing
Jennifer Kane

23....."Donna Reed"
Lisa Goldstein

24.....Photo
Katherine Bradley

24.....Oil Painting
Mohammed Islam

25....."Empty Bottle"
Daniel Osborne

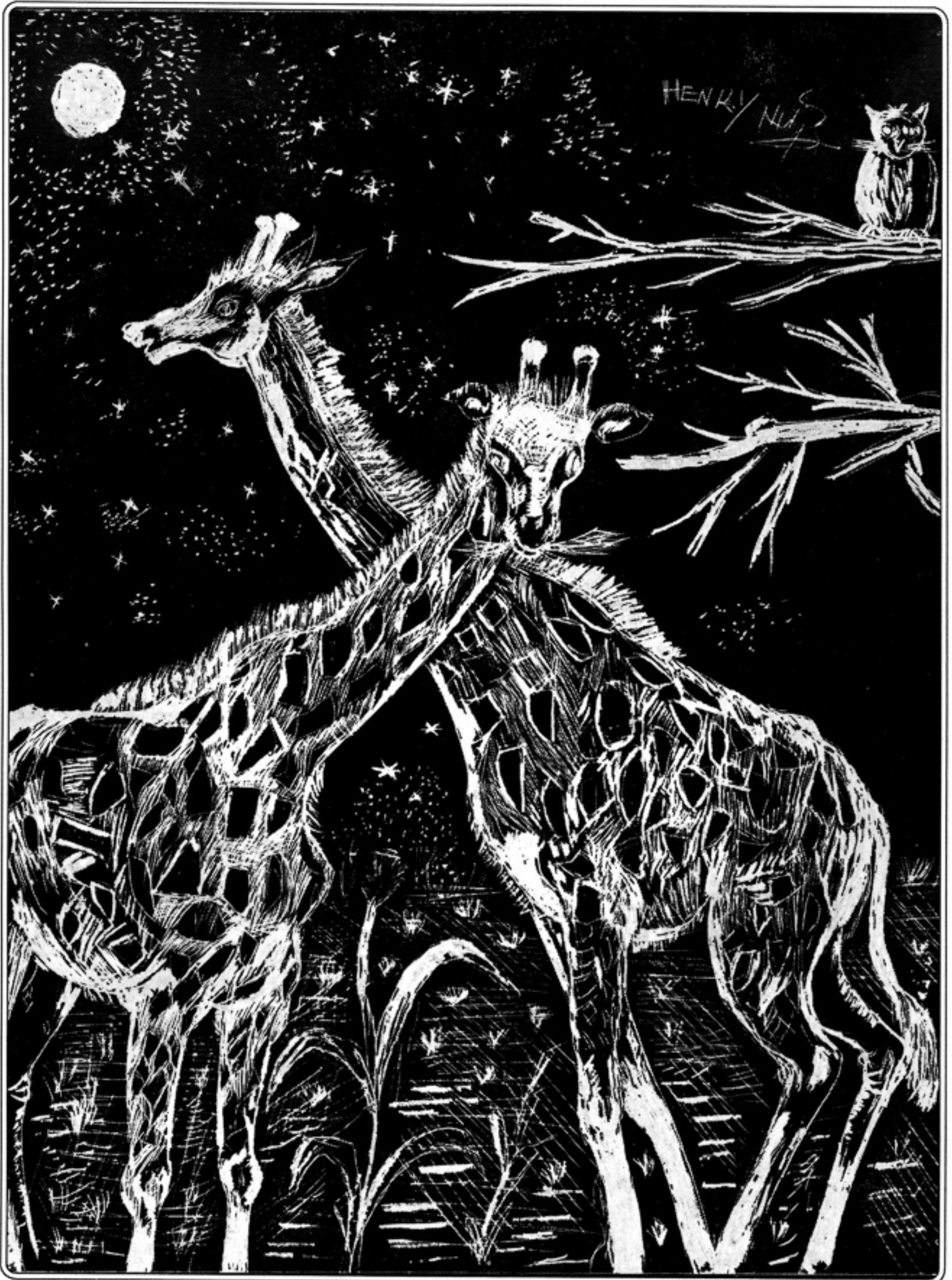
25.....Acrylic Painting
Kelley Shackleford

26....."Extreme Consciousness"
Aaron Rannenberg

26-27.....Water Color
Cristina Villalba

27....."Society"
Hawa Kabba





Henry Nwalipenja

MISERIES

by Erick Flamenco

There was a family who lived in a cabin for many years in the middle of the Guazapa woods in Tonacatepeque, El Salvador. The family consisted of Dona Zoila, an old widow, and Anastasio and Epaminonda, two orphaned boys she had raised who were just entering manhood.

As brothers, Anastasio and Epaminonda had conspicuous physical and moral dissimilarities. Anastasio was so skinny that when he took off his shirt he looked like he was a starved man. He helped Dona Zoila in any way he could. He was a polite and pious Christian who devoted part of his time to praying in the back of the cabin. He was interested in nature and the relationships among different species. He observed the ways different animals behaved and the ways they communicated. At night he liked to look at the universe, and to observe how stars moved in space. Peace was the universal force that made him happy within his own world, his mind. He dreamed of making big changes, of ameliorating the conditions of people who lived in slums, of helping people who were not happy. Anastasio was anxious to do good deeds and be generous, but his brother was always an obstacle for him.

Epaminonda looked like a sumo wrestler. He enjoyed hurting others. He was greedy and selfish. Although he expected a good life for himself, he was gluttonous, indolent, scornful, belligerent, and malevolent. He devoted his time to killing different kinds of animals for no reason. He enjoyed seeing people in adversity and tried hard to keep them suffering.

The two boys grew up in harsh circumstances, living a miserable life, fighting each other, hating each other; only their poverty kept them together. They never agreed on any matter.

One day, despite their incompatibility, they both decided they wanted to improve their living conditions. They agreed to go far, far away to King Eulogio's palace near the borders of Zamuria and Jucuaran on the other side of the Chirilagua's woods.

That summer night, Dona Zoila prepared food for the boys' journey. She prepared fourteen pupusas* for Epaminonda and seven for Anastasio. While she cooked, the boys went to the nearest brook to fill their gourds with water. When they came back home from the stream, they were ready to begin their journey the following day. The next day at dawn, after a few hours' sleep, they watched the slow fading of the moon, which they knew would mark their departure. They looked directly into each other's eyes.

"It is time to leave," said Epaminonda.

Each grabbed his own burlap sack and started to walk into the woods. The moon was shining on their bodies; they were able to see their shadows over the dried leaves covering the ground. They walked silently for several hours, neither having a word to say to the other.

Late in the afternoon they stopped to rest and eat. Anastasio ate one pupusa and Epaminonda ate two, and then they fell asleep.

As the sun rose a second time, they began another day of silent walking. After a few hours, Epaminonda said simply, "We will stop to rest."

While they rested, Epaminonda reached into his burlap and pulled out a pupusa. "Aren't you going to eat?" he asked Anastasio.

"Well, since we have stopped, I will join you," Anastasio replied. He also pulled a pupusa out from his burlap and began to eat.

Epaminonda reached for the gourd and took a sip of water before setting it back on the ground next to his lunch bag.

*A thin, flat round cake made of corn meal, baked on a flat surface, and filled with beans and cheese. Typically eaten in El Salvador.

After a while, Epaminonda said, "I guess it's time to continue on our journey; we are still very far from our destination."

They got up and proceeded to walk eastward.

"I am getting a little tired," said Epaminonda.

They walked for several hours in the hot summer day. Their bodies were sweating, especially Epaminonda's. Both the air and ground were dry. Their mouths were dry, but they continued walking.

Anastasio looked at the sun and said, "It's noon. I need to take a drink of water; my throat is dry." They stopped for a little while before they started to walk again.

While they walked, they heard a dove and its young crying in their nest.

Anastasio immediately stopped and approached the nest.

Epaminonda also stopped and watched what Anastasio was going to do to the doves. He thought, "Anastasio is going to kill them to stop their racket."

Anastasio discovered that the dove and her young had no food, and the nest was destroyed. He reached into his burlap, pulled out a pupusa, and fed them.

"You are so stupid!" shouted Epaminonda. "You are wasting your food on those stupid birds."

Anastasio reconstructed the nest, and then pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and laid it over the nest, forming a roof to protect the baby doves from the sun.

He said to his brother, "Now they will be all right. We can continue to walk until late in the afternoon."

Just after sunset they stopped to eat again. They were tired and losing hope.

"In about another three days we will be there," said Anastasio.

"You probably won't," said Epaminonda. "You will not have enough food to survive in the woods those three days, while I have enough to make it there

myself. You have been throwing your food away on birds. Eventually, you will have nothing left for yourself, and I will not share my food with you."

Shy and humble, Anastasio said, "Well, I am hungry now," and he reached slowly to his burlap and pulled out another pupusa.

Epaminonda glared at his brother. "I am not going to eat tonight. I'm going to save my food for the following days."

*'I will let you eat
one half of a pupusa
only on one condition.
Let me take out one
of your eyes.'*

There was silence for a period of time. Then Anastasio said, "It is time to sleep again. Tomorrow is another day." Covered with only the darkness of the night, they fell asleep.

When Anastasio awoke he found that Epaminonda was already awake.

"How long ago did you wake up?" asked Anastasio.

Epaminonda did not answer right away. He was eating.

"I... I woke up a while ago," he replied as he continued chewing like a swine.

"I was a little hungry so I'm just finishing two more of my pupusas," he said.

Anastasio did not eat, he took only another sip of water.

"Let me know when you are ready to continue our journey," he said.

"Well, I am finished," replied Epaminonda.

They were about to begin their third straight day of walking. Anastasio had only three pupusas left, while Epaminonda still had nine. Neither of the two said a single word. A warm breeze was blowing over their bodies. Far away, a stronger wind was lifting dust from the ground. The sun was shining hotter than before. They could no longer continue walking. They both had to stop.

Anastasio pulled another pupusa out of his burlap sack and started eating it right away. He sat on a hot, flat rock. In the dust there were trails of iguanas, rabbits, and snakes. Epaminonda ate another one of

his pupusas, but his hunger was not satisfied. He ate another. No one spoke. When they both had finished eating, Epaminonda stood and started to walk away. Anastasio followed.

They walked along, hoping that they would soon arrive at their intended destination. Suddenly Epaminonda stopped. "Hu...hu...hu...!!!" he laughed. He said to Anastasio, "Look at those silly fish trying to survive in such a dry pool!"

Anastasio felt compassion for the fish dying in the mud. He poured all of his remaining water from his gourd into the pool and reached for his sack.

"What are you doing, you fool?" shouted Epaminonda. "You are going to run completely out of food and water, and I am not going to give you any of mine," he said.

Anastasio silently fed the fish his last two pupusas. The fish felt very comfortable in the water he had poured into the pool for them, and they were enjoying the food he had just given them.

Anastasio now had neither food nor drink for himself, and Epaminonda was very angry. The temperature was rising and they were still not sure of how far they were from the palace.

Anastasio looked at the fish for the last time, and was pleased that they were enjoying the food and water he had given them. "Let us continue our walk," he said finally.

They did not walk very long before they needed to rest. Epaminonda decided to eat while he rested. Anastasio watched him in silence. He was very hungry, but he had no food.

Epaminonda got up and continued to walk. Anastasio followed. They walked until sunset, when their legs would not allow them to continue. They were forced by their fatigue to stop again.

Anastasio was almost dying of hunger. Epaminonda reminded him of his foolishness of feeding the dove and the fishes. He also reminded Anastasio, that he would stay true to his warning that he would not share his food. Anastasio had no energy and little hope.

With barely any energy left, Anastasio said with little hope, "Epaminonda, por favor!"

"You have heard my final word," Epaminonda said

scornfully.

"Please, share with me just one of your pupusas. I will die if I do not put food in my stomach." Anastasio pleaded.

"What is it that you don't understand?" said Epaminonda furiously.

Anastasio could no longer move. He waited to die. For him, there was absolutely no hope to continue his journey.

Epaminonda looked at him with deceptive compassion. "I'll tell you what," he said. "I will let you eat one half of a pupusa only on one condition. Let me take out one of your eyes."

Anastasio paused only briefly before nodding weakly. The grinning Epaminonda let him eat half of a pupusa before he ripped out an eye.

"You are really evil," said Anastasio.

"Well, you have some energy now!" Epaminonda shouted proudly.

Bleeding from one eye, Anastasio walked only a short distance before calling, "Epaminonda!"

"What is it that you want now?" Epaminonda grunted.

"I... can't.... I need water." Anastasio said weakly.

"Forget it!" Epaminonda smirked, "Unless... you let me take out your other eye. Then I will give you water and the other half of the pupusa."

"I will die without water! Do what you will as long as you give me water." answered Anastasio resignedly.

Epaminonda gave him water and the other half of the pupusa. Then he pulled out Anastasio's remaining eye.

"It is past sunset now," Epaminonda told Anastasio. He left him and continued his journey alone.

Anastasio was unable to continue because he was blind. He was left alone, hopeless, and in despair. Tears flowed from his empty sockets. He cried and cried, feeling his pain. Suddenly, he stopped crying, and visualized a dove before him.

"Why are you crying, good man?" asked the dove.

"I have no eyes," replied Anastasio.

"Do not worry. I can restore your sight," said the dove soothingly. Magically, she restored Anastasio's sight.

"You are not far from the palace," she said. "Just continue walking in this direction."

Anastasio felt hope return with his sight. He walked through the night, and at dawn he reached the palace.

When Anastasio entered the palace, he was amazed by the opulence in everything he saw. Anastasio was well received at the palace since his good reputation was already known there. He was surprised that others seemed to enjoy the eloquence and clearness of his ideas. He was pleased to see Epaminonda already working. Epaminonda returned his gaze with contempt, but when he saw Anastasio's eyes he was very surprised. He grew angry and showed even greater scorn for his brother. He felt disdain, but mostly he felt envy.

Epaminonda went to the king to make false statements about his brother. The king called Anastasio before his throne.

"You have said that you can find the sapphire ring my daughter lost last year," said the king.

"No, your Majesty, I have never said so. I swear," responded the bewildered Anastasio.

"You will find the ring or you will face the penalty of death," the king threatened.

Poor Anastasio walked away, very sad and uncertain. He searched all around the palace and did not find the princess' ring. Crying, he went outside the palace to continue his search. Walking by the ocean he heard a voice ask, "Why are you crying, good man?"

He saw that a fish was speaking to him.

"I am looking for the sapphire ring the king's daughter lost last year. If I don't find it, the king will

kill me," he said mournfully.

"Don't worry, good man," the fish replied.

"I know the whale that swallowed it. When she is at play, my friends and I will get it from her. You wait here," said the fish before disappearing beneath the waves.

Anastasio sat on the shore, lost in thoughts about his own death. He was interrupted by the splash of a fish flipping in the water as it shouted, "Good man, we got it! We got it!"

Anastasio gratefully accepted the ring from the fish. He thanked his friend and became full of happiness again. When he returned with the ring, he was honored for his achievement, and the king made him a distinguished servant.

Epaminonda could not control his anger. He went again to see the king. "Anastasio will sleep with your daughter," he warned. "He boasts that after just one night with her she will carry a baby in her arms the next morning."

The king sent a servant to summon Anastasio. When he knelt before the throne, the king asked him whether he had boasted such a feat.

"No, your Majesty," replied Anastasio. "I have never said such a thing."

The king responded: "You will spend the night with my daughter. If she does not carry a baby in her arms tomorrow morning, your penalty will be death."

That night, Anastasio went to the princess' bedroom. When he stepped inside the room, he was amazed at its magnificence. There were lifelike marble sculptures, silken curtains that swayed with the breeze, urns and vases filled with gigantic fresh flowers, hanging lamps glittering with diamonds, and mirrors framed in emeralds and rubies. The walls were decorated with paintings and portraits. The soft featherbed was covered with a long velvet spread. Anastasio wondered if it was a dream until he saw the princess

Anastasio wondered whether it was a dream until he saw the princess sitting on a red brocade sofa, waiting for the man who was going to make her a mother.

sitting on a red brocade sofa, waiting for the man who was going to make her a mother.

Anastasio could not sleep. At midnight he arose and walked around the chamber.

Opening the window he stared at the sky and began to weep. He was startled by a hoarse voice asking, "Why are you crying, good man?" Anastasio grew silent. "Don't be afraid. I am a friend of the dove," the voice said.

Anastasio stared into the darkness. In front of the window he saw a sparrow-hawk. "My brother, Epaminonda, has told the king that if I sleep with his daughter one night, she will have a baby," he said timidly.

"Then I shall help you," said the sparrow-hawk. "A lady on the other side of these mountains has just given birth to twins she could never feed. I shall bring one of them to you." With that, the sparrow-hawk took off in the direction of the mountains.

Anastasio waited at the window for some time. He saw a small speck in the sky grow larger until he saw that it was the sparrow hawk. When the sparrow-hawk reached the window, he gently released the baby he had carried by its swaddling clothes.

"Go back to bed and put the baby between the two of you," the sparrow-hawk said. "I am going to get you goat milk. Go to bed and close the window. When I return, open it again," advised the sparrow-hawk.

Anastasio did exactly as his new friend had told him. The princess slept soundly, dreaming her private dreams. Anastasio was filled with joy. At a distance he saw the sparrow-hawk returning, carrying a pail of milk. When he opened the window, he took the pail from the bird's claws.

"Good man, here is the milk. Put some of the milk around the breast and on the chest of the princess. That way, she will be able to nurse the baby tomorrow, but you must protect yourself. In the

morning tell the king that Epaminonda has claimed that he will build him a ladder to the heavens so that the king might visit God at any time he wishes."

The suggestion made Anastasio feel uncomfortable since he had never wished to vilify another human being, especially his own brother. He tried to find an alternative solution to sacrificing his brother for his own happiness, but he knew that Epaminonda's

bitterness would never allow him any peace. He concluded that if his brother was so engaged in building the ladder, though, that he could not continue to plot against him.

The next morning, the king was very impressed when he saw his daughter nursing a baby. Anastasio went to the king and repeated the words the sparrow hawk had suggested. The king was very happy to think that he could visit God whenever he wished. He sent a servant to call Epaminonda. When Epaminonda appeared at the throne smiling, the king asked, "Have you said that you can build me a ladder to the

Mohammed Islam
heavens?"

"No, your Majesty," replied Epaminonda, the smile completely gone.

"That is a lie!" the king roared. "If you do not do so, you will pay with your life."

Epaminonda had no alternative but to initiate building such a ladder. In three days the king began to see his way to the heavens. "Epaminonda, is my ladder finished?" he asked.

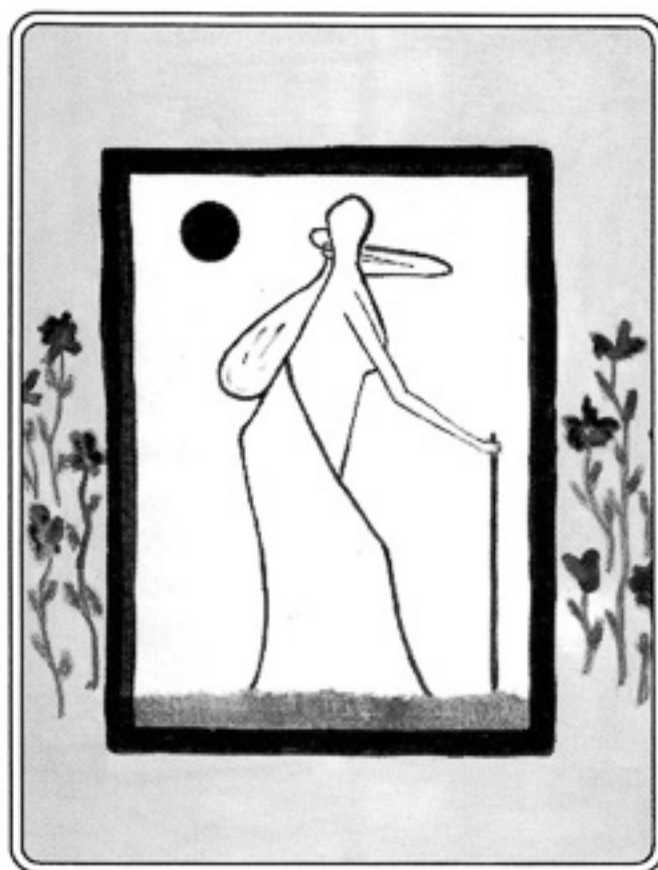
"Not yet, your Majesty," Epaminonda replied.

The king was unhappy that the ladder was taking so long to be built.

A month later, the king went again to inspect the progress. He could barely see Epaminonda in the skies.

"Epaminonda, is my ladder finished yet?" the king asked.

"N-not yet, your majesty," Epaminonda replied.



In three months the king came again to see whether his ladder to heaven was ready.

"Epaminonda," he shouted.

"Yes, your Majesty?" came a distant voice. Epaminonda was so high up that he could no longer be seen from land.

"My ladder should be completed by now," said the king.

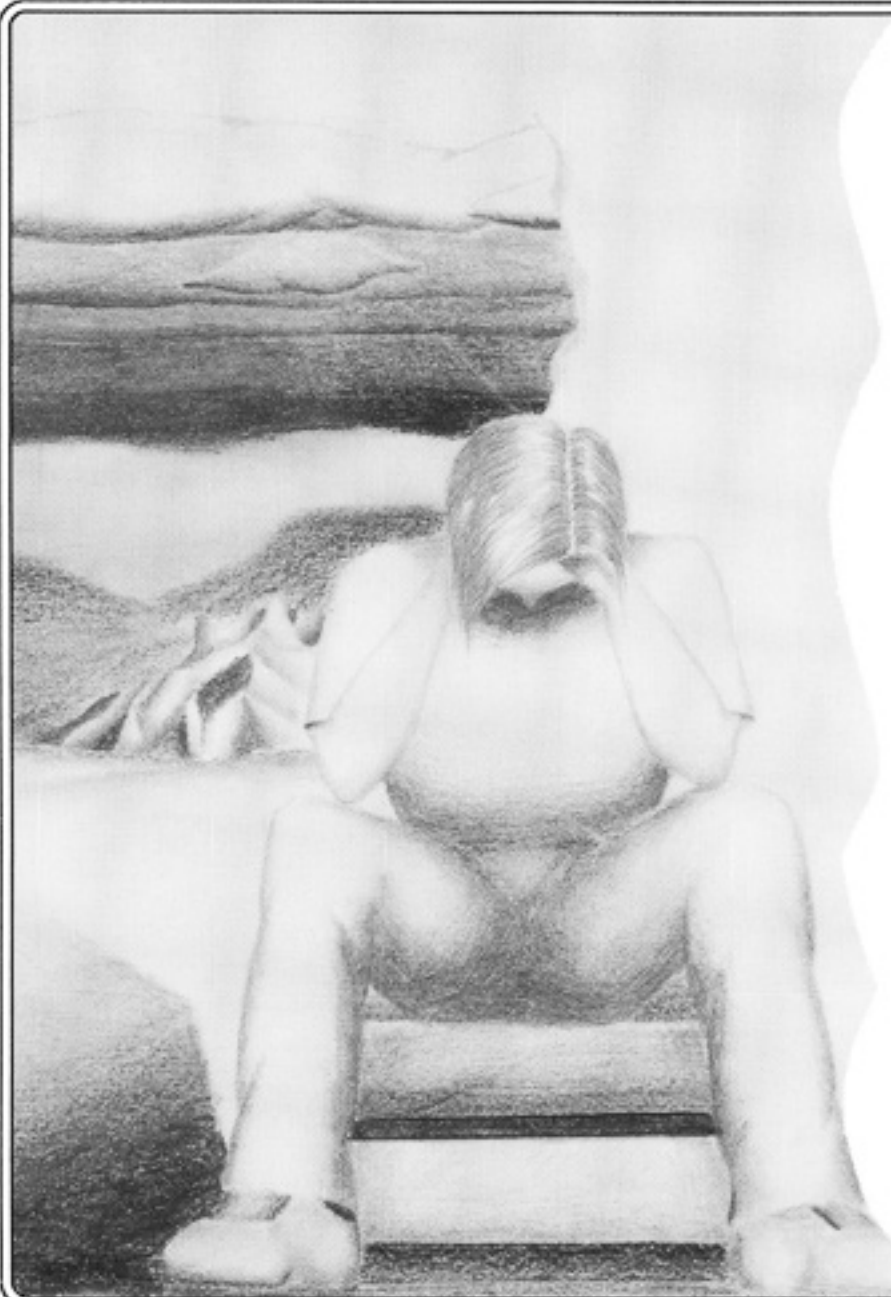
"Not yet, your Majesty," called back Epaminonda hopelessly.

The king was furious because he wanted to visit God immediately. "Come down now," yielded the king.

As Epaminonda climbed down the ladder he appeared to grow bigger and bigger. As he reached the bottom rungs, the king had drawn his sword. Before Epaminonda got off the last rung his head was rolling on the ground.

Anastasio, however, was far from happy. Remorseful about his brother's death, he quickly withdrew, and spurned society. He became a most miserable man, never again to show an act of kindness. ☸

Why Are You Afraid of Me?



*What are you afraid of?
I'm afraid of turning my back on the monster.
Why?
Because he hurts me.
What will he do to you?
He will crush my world and take away what I love.
How do you know he wants to do this?
It's all a part of being a kid.
You wouldn't understand, Dad.*

*Why are you so afraid of the monster, son?
Because, sometimes the monster is nice.
Then why be afraid?
Because other times the monster is not so nice.
I understand, son.
You can't understand, Dad.*

*Why do you run from me, son?
You're a monster, Dad.
Why are you afraid of the dark?
Because I can't see you coming.
Why are you afraid of me?
Because I love you and you hurt me.
Do you realize that it's all your own fault?
Yes, sir, I do.*

Michael A. Norford

Illustration by Szevit Hsu

She Is Just My Sister

*the government says she's handicapped.
she is just my sister.
doctors say she has brain damage.
I know she is smart.
many people think she is less than human,
that she has no feelings.
my sister is human and she has feelings like everyone else.
many people think she has no opinions
but they never heard her laugh at something funny,
make fun of someone she doesn't like, yell at me when she's mad.
and many people would think she is talking to brad
just because he's nice.
but they're wrong. she's talking to him because she thinks
he's cute.*

Shelle Silva



Katherine Bradley

IT WAS TIME

by Nora Gaines

In an old house, exactly like the other houses that surrounded everything in her world, sat a beautiful young woman. Her beauty was so subtle that those who rushed by never noticed; perhaps even she was not aware of being beautiful.

She sat in an almost broken chair and stared at her reflection. With each crack in the mirror, another image of her appeared. The first image fully displayed the deep brown of her eyes and the long wavy hair that blended with her dark skin and simple red dress. The other reflections appeared more faded than the one proceeding.

She continued to focus on the mirror and ignored the crying boy at her side. As he let himself drop to the dirty floor, she turned her head slowly towards him. She took a minute to freeze that moment forever in her memory. Though always beautiful, his eyes had never been as clear, nor had they ever shown as much of his soul as they did just then.

She accepted his hand and all too gently she kissed away the tears on her young brother's face. Before she could finish, he kissed the middle of her palm and raised himself with all the elegance he had once possessed. He walked over to and laid his body on the bed.

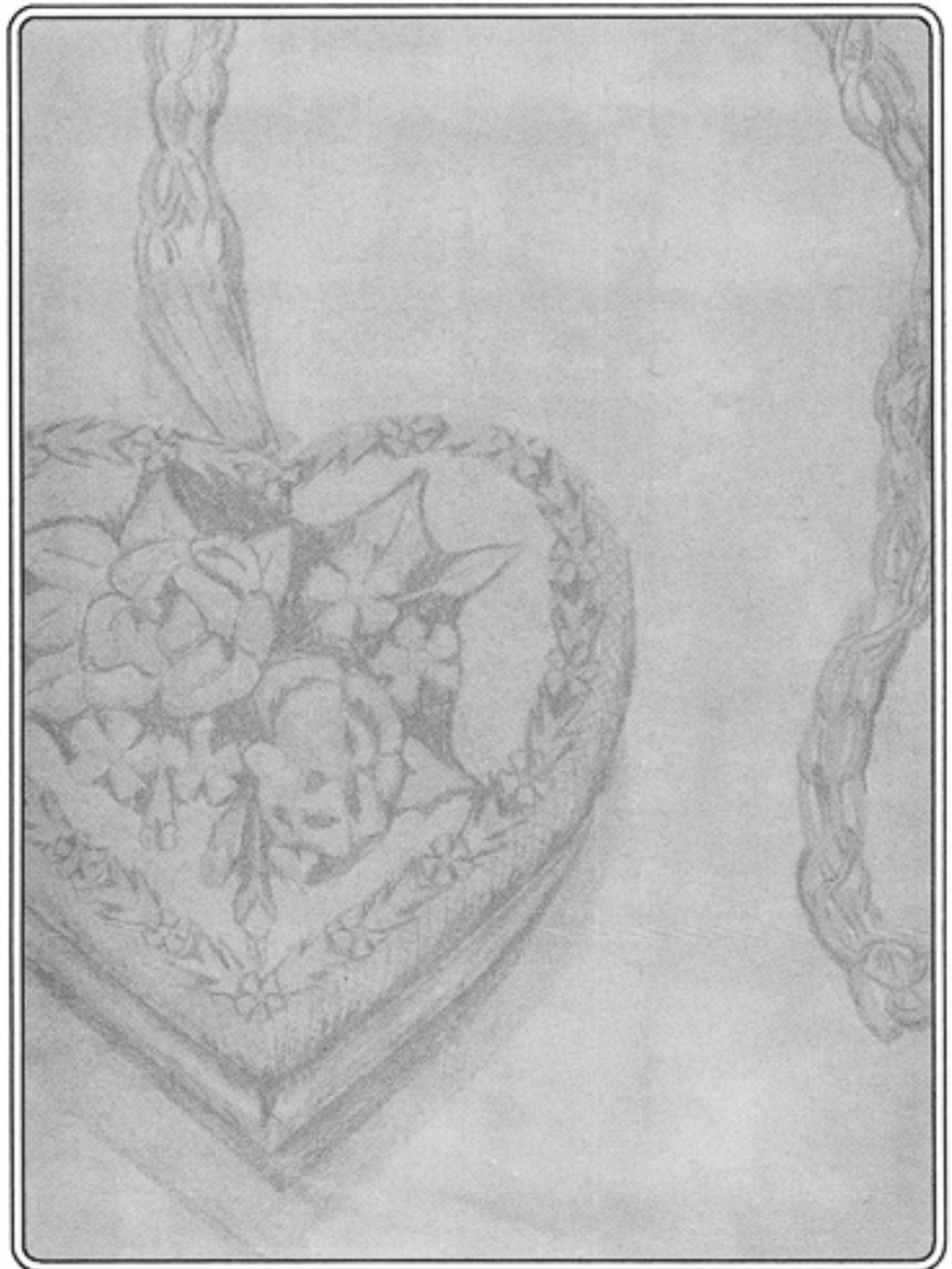
Yes, it was so hard. These things always were. Lacking half the grace of her brother, she raised herself from the chair and quickly crossed to the closet. A minute later a heavy silver dagger was in her hand. Ingeniously carved, it managed to shine despite the tarnish.

She walked over to the bed and sat down next to the boy who had always belonged to her. His eyes were open. That was good. She had taught him well.

He stared at her (or was it the dagger?) in

longing. She had to do this. It must have been written in the heavens.

She placed her hand over his heart, her eyes never leaving his eyes. Then, with inhuman quickness, she thrust the dagger into his heart, where, barely a second before, her hand had rested. She removed the dagger and kissed his beautiful mouth for the last time. She lay down beside him, and held the dagger close to her own heart, with the red of his blood almost matching her dress. Now it was over and she fell asleep beside her brother, her child. ☼



Jennifer Kane

Her Thoughts

Her thoughts were strewn
about the ground like pebbles
and she bent over
to pick them up
and place them in a candy dish.
plink. plink. plink.
There were obviously
some missing; she
could not think where
they had gone.
She noticed that
those which were left
were smaller and
more polished than
before.
So she, trying to fill her
dish up with thoughts as
high as before,
picked up some nearby rocks
and placed those, too,
in the candy dish.
thunk. thunk. thunk.
And when she was
satisfied,
she placed the dish
gently
on the ground and
walked away.

Shelle Silva

Birgit Kaas

A Knight's Journey to Another Age

by Jaqueline Ferrand

Gaheris' eyes flickered, shut, and then opened wide to let in the daylight which shone brightly into his tent. Sleeping on the ground and riding hard the previous day had made him stiff and sore. He stretched his aching muscles, yawned, and slowly donned the thick, padded suit which must be worn, despite the hot weather, beneath the heavy armor.

"Alan, come hither!" Gaheris called. "I must have thy aid with this battle gear!"

Today, Gaheris' squire Alan was unusually slow; on most mornings he anticipated his master's needs and rose early.

"He has slept too long," Gaheris grumbled, growing impatient. "Alan!"

Worried that he would be late for war council because of a silly squire, Gaheris lifted the flap of his tent to call for Alan once more. He started to form the lad's name, yet no sound broke the silence. The word "Alan" died on his lips. His eyes viewed a foreign place, and not the familiar fields filled with white canvases flying their red, gold, and blue standards; only the cornflower blue sky seemed the same.

Iron sets, like the ones bolted into the castle's walls, rested on walkways encrusted with pebbles. A field of brilliant emerald grass seemed to be permanently wetted by the twirling of water-spewing green snakes. This grass was clipped like shorn sheep without their long winter coats. Small trees with unusual blooms

bobbed in the breeze, and huge towers, tall and flat, touched the gray sky beyond the small clearing in the forest of stone. He could see nothing beyond these colorless towers. Ducking behind the flap, he mopped his forehead with a long sleeve.

"Dear Lord, what sort of country have I come to be in?" he whispered. "Perhaps 'tis that some evil sorcerer has cast a spell to place me in this alien land. Mayhap this is the country beyond the great forest, yet no matter where I am, I must find a way to return! I must serve King Arthur against the barbarians, and see my lady again."

Gaheris resolutely buckled himself into his heavy armor, and fastened his sword at his

right hip. He wondered in what manner he had materialized in this foreign land, certainly east of Gaul and, therefore, many miles distant from his home. He tore a hunk of crusted bread from a large, brown loaf, and used his dagger to cut a slice of goat cheese from the pale moon wrapped in cloth. He washed the meal down with a swig from his wine flask, and then put on his metal gauntlets. He was a fine figure to behold, tall and strong-jawed, with far-seeing onyx eyes and a head of curling dark hair. He gave a final glance around the tent and then secured his helmet, with the visor lowered, over his head.

Trodding heavily on the rocky pathway that crunched like broken sea shells beneath his feet, he did not look back at the white tent.

He was a fine figure to behold, tall and strong-jawed, with far-seeing onyx eyes and a head of curling dark hair.

Marching along, he marveled that he saw no people. Occasionally, he saw pillars with silver fastenings that constantly spurted a clear liquid. What could they be?

Tall, copper statues of strangely dressed men posed gracefully on high pedestals. He moved towards a distant stand of majestic oak and maple, and soon saw what almost looked like a flat, black river, over which shining, multicolored beasts moved swiftly, growling as they passed. He drew his sword from its sheath with one liquid, practiced motion, the sun glinting on its burnished surface. As he advanced, all his senses fixed upon the strange beasts. He observed them for a time, and noted that they never swerved off this black river, and never stopped to eat or play with others.

There were many of them, but they all continued their progress as though each was entirely alone. Gaheris grew bold. "If these great brutes were to enter my homeland, I would not want them to harm Lady Charlotte, for they seem sinister in their actions!"

Boldly, Gaheris wrapped a piece of ruby silk taken from Charlotte's sleeve around his arm, and hoisted his sword high as he charged, running with all his might at the steady stream of beasts with lustrous coats. His blade crashed down on the head of one silver monster; he attacked the shiny beast again and again from the edge of the still, black river. The beast slowed to a halt, and to his horror, the creature flapped a wing. A coffee-colored, woolly-haired nobleman in linen mantle and loose fitting hose was able to escape. Gaheris held his sword ready as he danced cautiously away from the obviously angry man. Flitting his blade in quick flashes at the beast, he could tell he was causing the swordless knight to blink. The man opened his mouth to speak, yet Gaheris could not understand his tongue. He knew only that the man was angry; his voice was loud and he gestured menacingly. Gaheris turned from him and continued to keep the evil, shiny beast at bay. The man retreated for a moment. Other beasts stopped and strange faces, which he could now see, watched from within the shells. The man returned with a royal blue stick in his dark hand. Gaheris decided that this nobleman must be a king, or else he would not have a scepter of that

shade. Not wanting to offend a strange nobleman, Gaheris stood still, and raised his sword as a sign of the code of honor. The man made some strange noises, pointed to Gaheris' sword and then to the ground. He gestured to include himself and other beasts on the black river which Gaheris now knew must be frozen with black ice. Now the man shouted at Gaheris and gestured rapidly, and then he raised his scepter.

When Gaheris realized that the man wanted him to fight, he was perplexed. "Doth thou not realize that I have just saved thee from the ravenous appetite of the silver monster? Why dost thou fight me when I do thee no harm, kind sir? Art thou ungrateful for the kindness that I have done for thee?" Gaheris asked

angrily. The king responded with more angry sounds and crashed his scepter harder on Gaheris' sword. Gaheris could feel his face burning in fury, and he paused to throw off his helmet with one hand, so that perhaps the king could hear him better.

"Thou art an ungrateful, thankless wretch!" Gaheris yelled. "Get thee gone! I didst thee a favor. I saved thee from the jaws of the monster, and this is the thanks that thou givest!" Gaheris sprang at the king, feinting with his sword, and causing the king to

counter with his scepter. The scepter was light and had a curved handle like a shepherd's crook. No real protection, it was swiftly knocked to the ground, but then magically opened like a butterfly spreading its lapis wings. The scepter now was in the shape of a huge bowl. Gaheris advanced on the evil king, who grunted in terror, and rolled his eyes. Gaheris hit him with the flat of his blade, as one would a child, and then prepared to aim a damaging blow to the king's shoulder. Suddenly, hands of iron clamped on Gaheris' steel arms and his sword clattered on the ice of the river. Strange bright suns glowed on top of a white beast which had crept up quietly behind him and now crouched on the bank. The beast began to wail a shrill cry, louder than any Gaheris had ever heard. Gaheris was terrified as more men emerged from the beasts' bellies. Worst of all, they shoved him into one of these metallic dragons and now Gaheris silently looked out from behind a wall of iron as he sat

He had been captured by the hostile inhabitants of the far country, and he was sure to be made a slave.

on a soft beige tongue. He had been captured by the hostile inhabitants of the far country, and he was sure to be made a slave! Gaheris felt a gust of air as a wing opened. Seeing his opportunity, he struck out against the nearest knight, crying, "I shall not be taken prisoner by cowards such as thou! I would rather my life blood end on the field of battle than to be hostage to men of thy mettle!" The knight fell to the ground, surprised at Gaheris' attack, and Gaheris leaped from the monster's belly and ran towards the sheltering trees. He heard a loud sound and suddenly he felt a burning brand sear his head.

Velvet grasses stroked his smooth cheek, and then he knew nothing, only darkness and drifting on an ocean of pain. Once, he thought that he heard Charlotte and his sister Ellen's voices, calling his name, but all too soon, his dark prison was quiet again. He felt the pain in his temples expanding, and it seemed that he cried out without making a sound. His head seemed to grow larger, the pressure rising within the swollen globe. His face and body were on fire with ice, but satin hands smoothed his brow.

Gaheris' heavy eyelids could not open, yet he heard lowered voices talking, and it was strange to him that he knew what the words meant. "Gaheris seems much improved, I dare to hope."

"Yes, he doth not toss nearly as feverishly nor does his skin burn to the touch. 'Tis not such a bad wound as was thought; it mayn't scar so deeply. He shall soon enough be well." The words became a soft lullaby, blending into meaningless phrases, and then faded as he drifted into a peaceful slumber. Stroking his silky head, Charlotte watched over Gaheris lying on his cot in the castle. A good nurse, Charlotte continued to prepare cold compresses, and apply them with fresh dressings to the almost fatal arrow wound on his brow. ❁

Editor's Note: This short story was written in response to an assignment given by Dr. Jacqueline Gorski to her tenth grade honors class. After studying the *Legend of King Arthur* she asked her students to imagine that a knight from that era was suddenly thrust into another time and place. This delightful story, which won first place in our annual short story contest, was engendered by that assignment.



Illustration by Nkechi Ofulue

Good Morning

6:40 a.m.

I should get up, I really should.

Just 5 more minutes.

Then I'll get out of bed.

*I remember sleeping in on Saturday mornings
when I was little.*

I couldn't sleep too late- or I'd miss the cartoons,

Eating cereal that comes with toys,

Then drinking the sugar-filled milk afterwards.

Life was great!

But not always.

Sometimes I'd oversleep and miss "The Gummy Bears"

*And sometimes my Fruit Loops would sink because of
too much milk.*

I guess I'll get up- maybe today

Will be the kind of day

Where I found the plastic watch

Before my brother!!

Christiana Callahan



Katherine Bradley

youth at this school

*glory had passed them by in a fervor of impressions,
souls shredded and reassembled in such a delicate machine;
dictating their needs and wants as a unification
amongst themselves and what contrasts itched at their skins.
children dressed in the ideals of themselves
packaged by their elders,
they were left in a fulfilling enclosure of blight.
and their giver of life:
the city.
none else,
#1.*

Ian Bodden



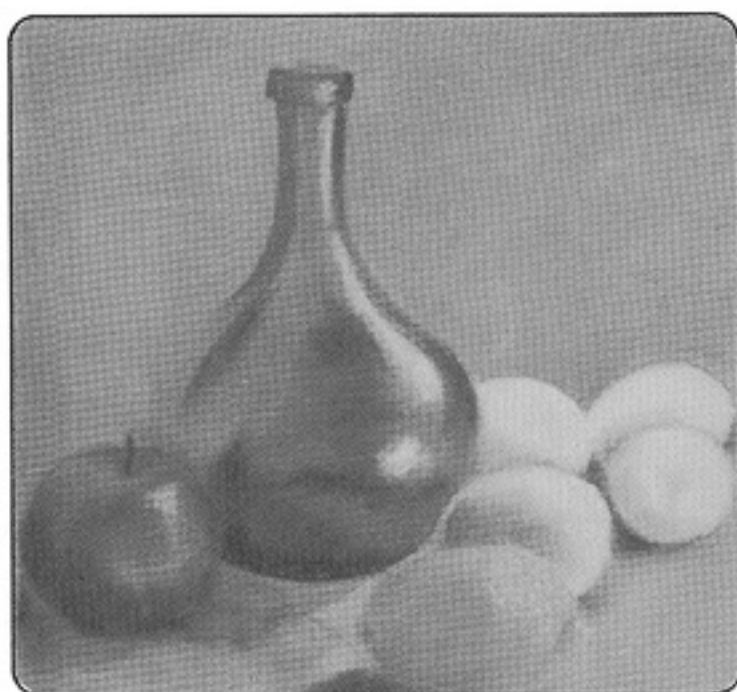
Khalysa Cross

Gallery

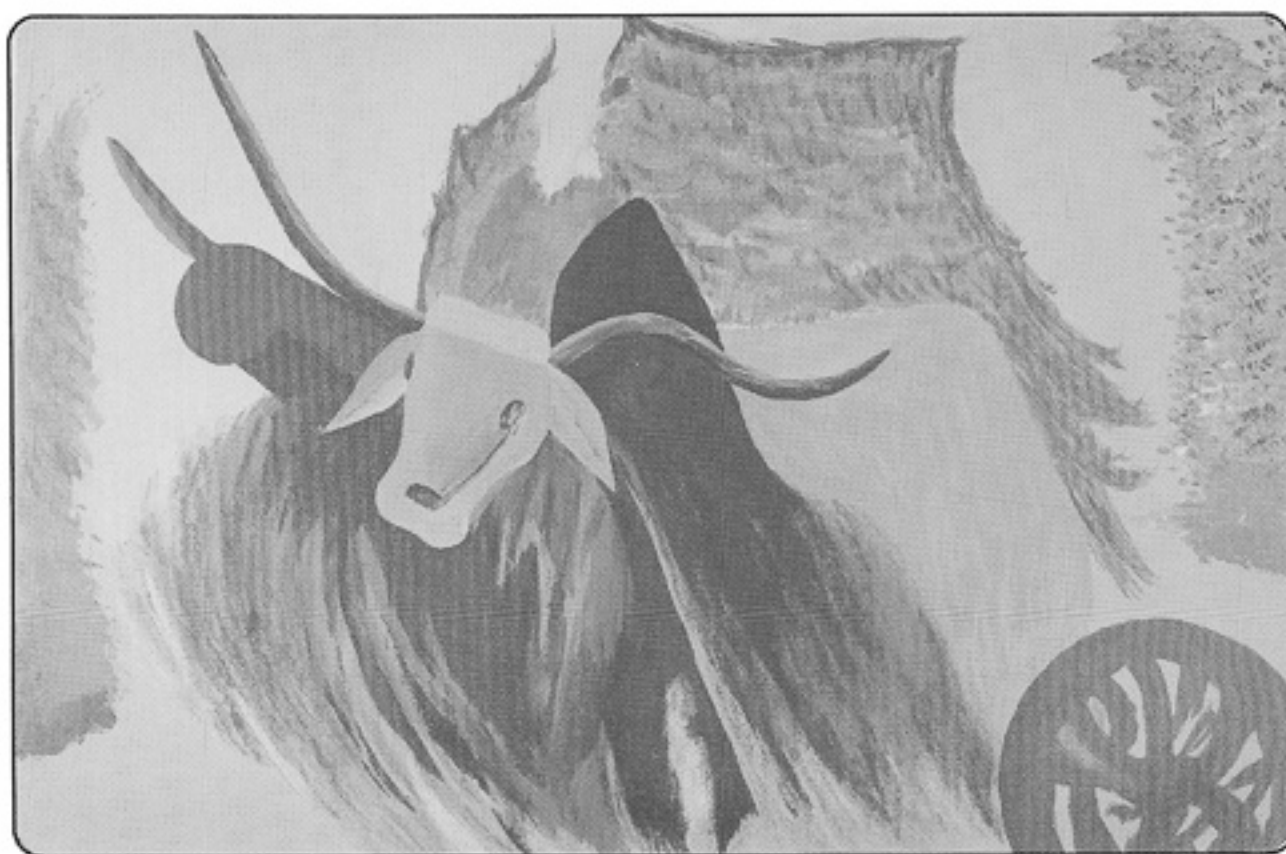
*The works of art featured in this section were all finalists in
Labyrinth's Annual Art Contest*



Ritzy Boyd



Susanna Thornton



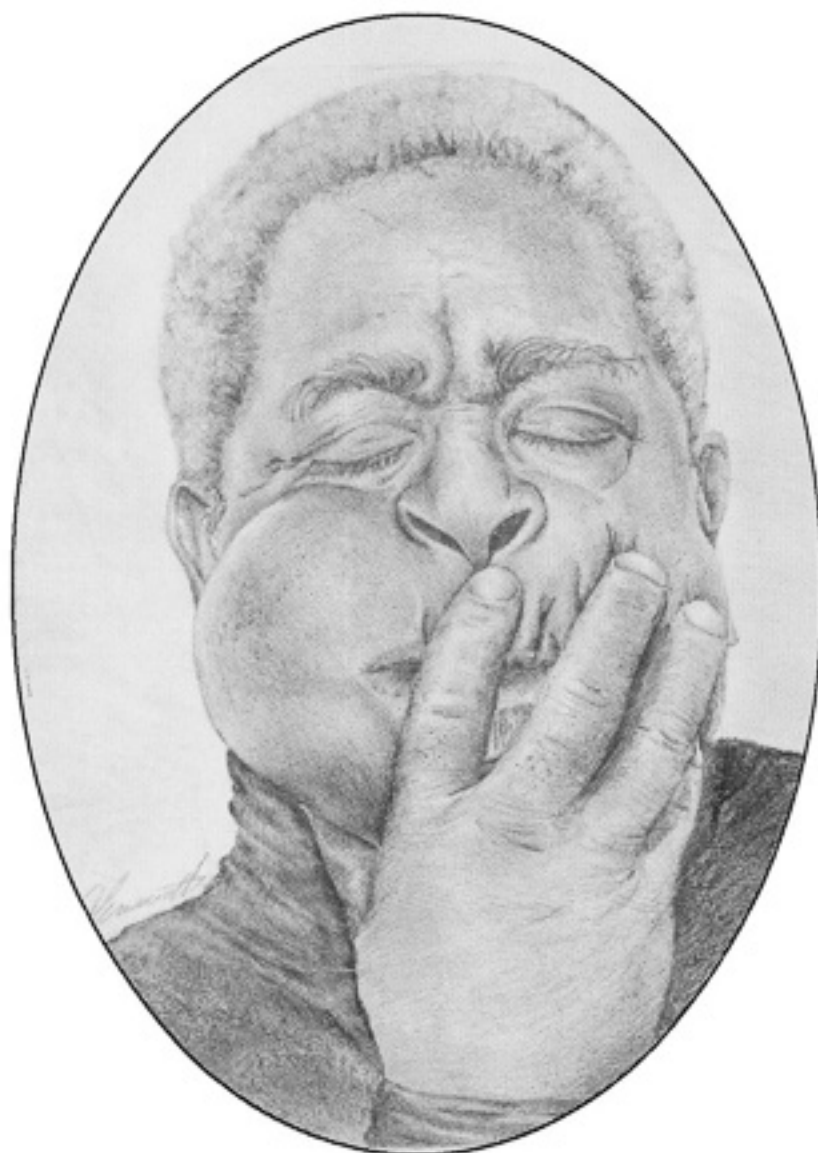
Mohammed Islam



Carol Naguit



Jennifer Kane



Mimi Phrasavath



Bill Lacey

The Park

You and I,
We used to pedal with all our might
until we reached
a "can't go any faster" speed,
so that we'd pick up enough
momentum
for our own thrill ride.
Swerving
 down along
 that annoyingly bumpy path,
Slicing
 our way through
 the dense heaviness of the heat.
Yes, we were well aware of the danger.

Our trail,
It was always
abruptly discontinued
by a cliff that dropped
far below us.
If we didn't smash
all of our puny bodies' weight
into the brakes, we'd fall.
For certain
we'd break
a limb or two.
Hell, we might've even broken
all four,
and our necks as well.
We'd be trapped in a full-body cast
for the duration
of what little time
we had left together.

Once, I accidentally forgot,
and activated my brakes
later than I should've.
I could picture myself encased
in that hard, icky plaster
as I neared my doom.

I was now
one inch,
two inches,
off the edge.
I could see the remains
of a once-green carpet
ready to receive me...
And then I stopped.

Dead in my tracks,
I stopped.

I never fell,
and neither did you.
We wouldn't allow ourselves
that disappointment.
All we wanted was
to run back in line,
to get back on our bikes,
our rollercoasters,
and feel the rush
a few more times
before the park closed.

Nini Tang



Jennifer Kane

Donna Reed

Fireplace smoke

cozy, secure

starched dresses, starched hair

glasses and glasses of

cold refreshing nourishing

nutritious healthy milk

7:00 AM - Got up

Rest of the day - Did housework

waited for children

waited for husband

Coffeecake for dinner

the milk again

Go to bed

and wait

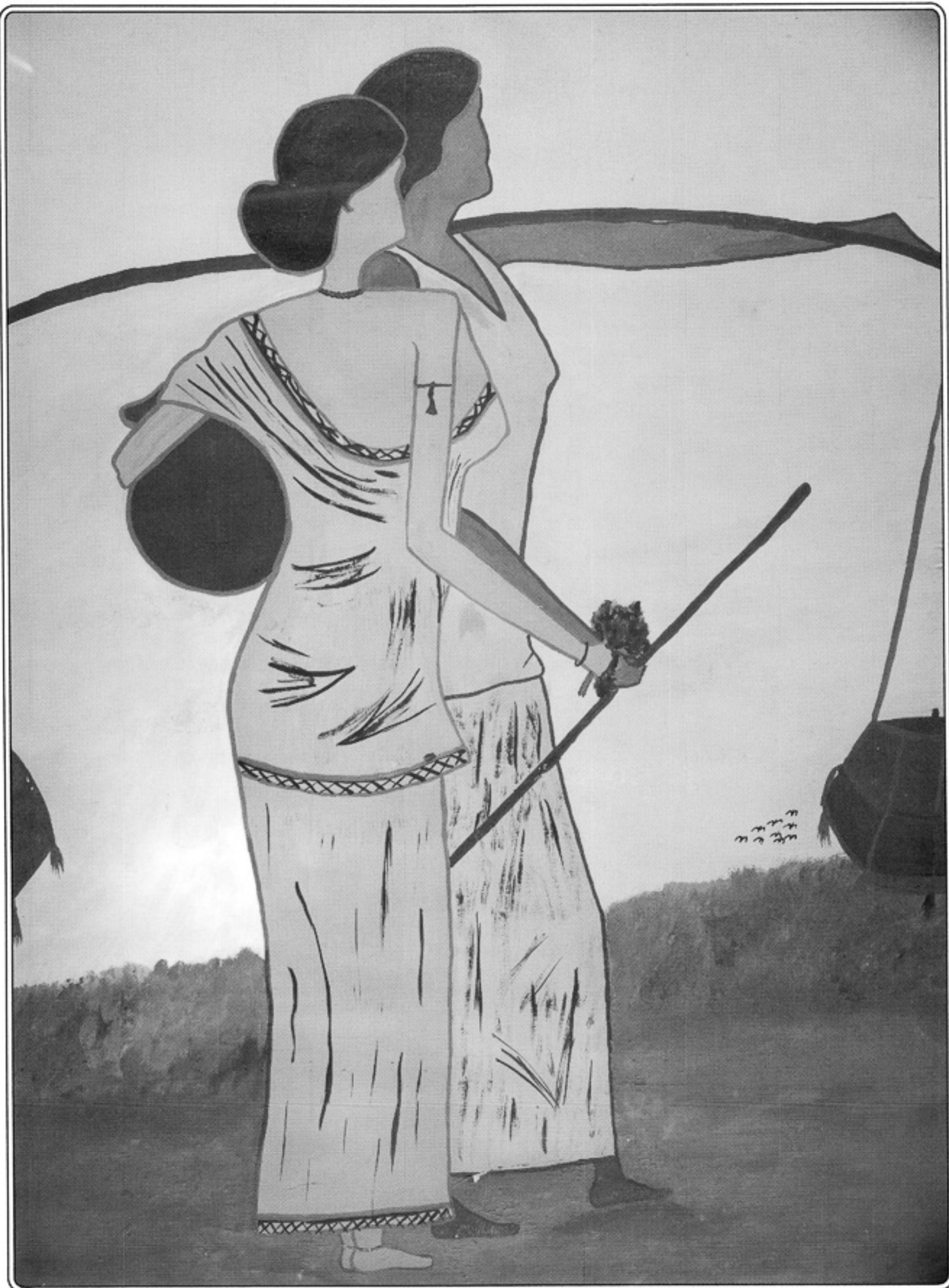
to get

up.

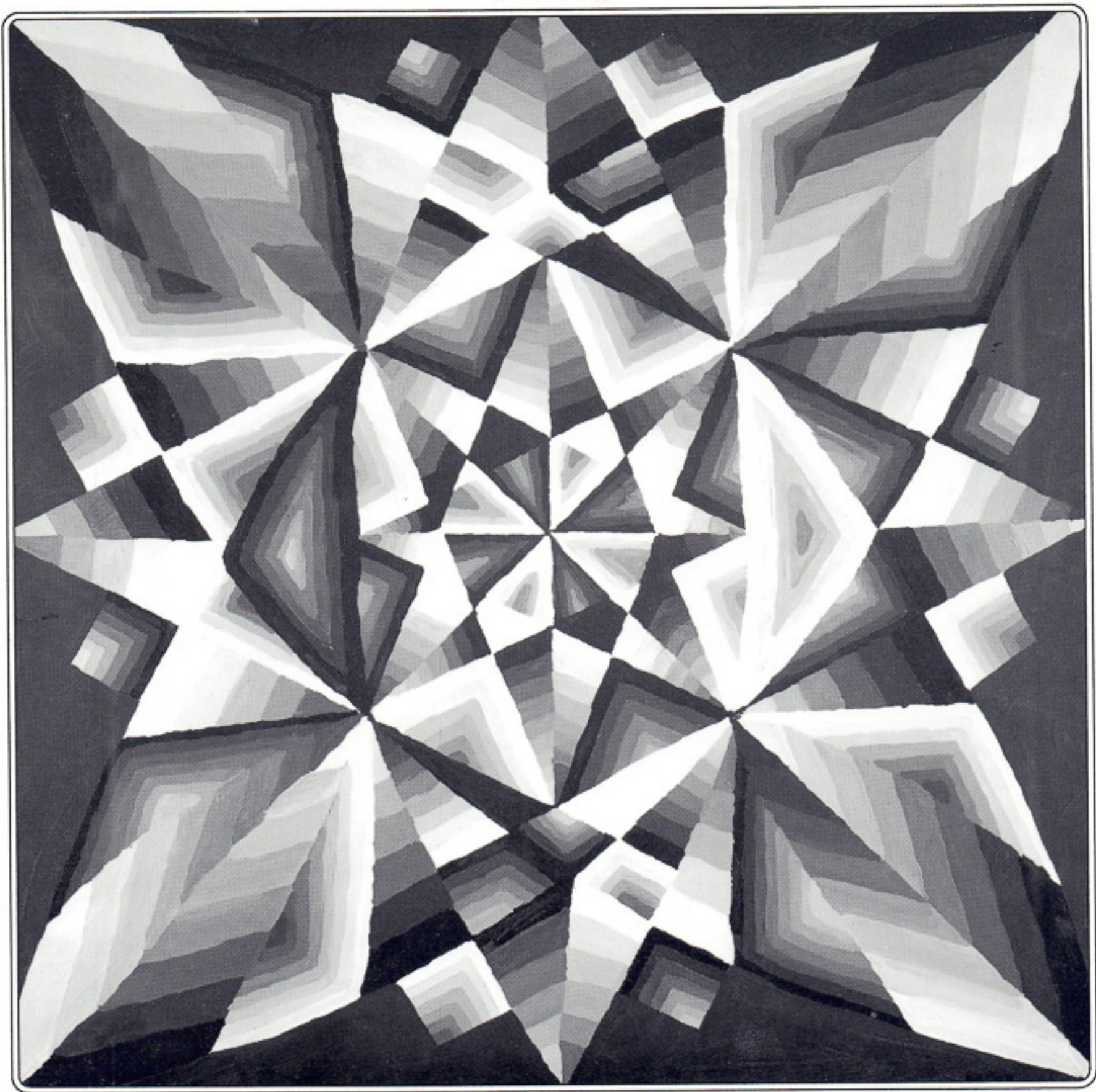
Lisa Goldstein



Katherine Bradley



Mohammed Islam



Kelley Shackelford

Empty bottle

*A reminder of moments past
Once full but now cast
Into a pile of shattered glass.*

Daniel Osborne

Extreme Consciousness

I

ran to
the store
yesterday. I
was hunting some
milk for my cereal. I
believe it was Captain Crunch.
The cereal, not the milk. Crunchy
milk is not a pleasant **experience**.
Anyway, the store was closed. I thought
that odd, even though it was Sunday, because
it was 7:06 in the morning. I did not know Safeway
closed that early. As I walked away from the complex,
with **no** milk to be had, I was greeted by an angel of mercy.
The rays of light emitted from her body blinded me for a moment,
but I was not afraid. I stared directly at her, blocking the
illumination with only my right hand. She looked down upon
me, taking mercy on my desperation, handed down to me a
carton of the milk made by the grace of God. After it
was handed to me she warned me of its power and I
listened, for I did not want to seem ungrateful
for the gift I had received. With the words
she spoke the angel disappeared and I
walked home. I got home and opened
the carton of milk and poured it
over the cereal in front of me.
After giving thanks for the
bounty I had received I
began to eat. And
as I was eating, I
looked over at
the holy
carton
of
milk
I had
received.
I noticed that
there was a missing
child on it. I wondered
to myself who could be missing
in the kingdom of heaven, so I took
a closer look. I saw on this carton, upon
closer inspection, that it was my **soul** and
I wept for I knew it was true.

AaronRannenberg



Society

*You die by the stake
You open your eyes
You see angels around you
They throw you in flames*

Hawa Kabba

Cristina Villalba

Nothing At All

by Michelle Cao

“I can't believe he actually said that,” whispered Jenna, turning around in her seat.

“Not only that,” continued Shelby, leaning across her desk, “but when I told him what I thought of his bright idea, he had the nerve to tell me that it was a logical idea and nothing to bitch about.”

“Jenna, Shelby!” ranted Mr. Copper from the front of the room. “The bell has rung, now shut your mouths.”

Jenna righted herself to see the formidable, bushy, grey eyebrows furrow upon the teacher's growling face.

“I am not in a good mood today, so don't test my patience,” he said, looking straight at the two girls. Slowly, he turned to face the rest of the students.

“This isn't working. There is no excuse for these test scores. They are the lowest set of scores I have ever had to grade for an A.P. Chem. class. None of you are working as hard as you should. You're not putting in the work, the time, nor the commitment.” Letting out a sigh of

disgust, he tossed the tests onto the nearest student's desk to be distributed.

Shelby sank lower into her seat for the duration of the class period, which proceeded in much the same manner. The dark grey cloud that settled upon the room was so gloomy that it was almost tangible. When the bell finally rang, dismissing them, the students all filed out quickly and silently.

“So, what did you get?” asked Jenna as they were walking out the door.

“D+,” replied Shelby desolately. “How 'bout you?”

“Let's just say that on a scale of A through F, I got about a Z-,” answered Jenna.

Shelby lifted the end of Jenna's blond, curly hair that seemed more unruly than usual. “Jeez, what time did you get to sleep last night?”

“You mean this morning,” corrected Jenna. “And the answer is three.” After playing a game of human dodgeball with the three thousand other teenagers in the hallway, they finally reached Jenna's locker.

“I can't come to lunch today,” said Shelby, “I have to go down to Guidance.”

“How come?”

“Apparently the computer has computed my GPA to be -0.16,” said Shelby with a sarcastic smile. “Now, it may be just me, but that doesn't sound quite right. This is shaping up to be such a great day. First thing in the morning, I get into a fight with my mother. Then, my car breaks down, so I'm late for school. When I get here, Jeff tells me that he thinks it's a good idea for him to see other girls but that I can't see other guys. And then there's that delightful class period we spent in Chem. where we were

treated to such an inspiring lecture. And the day isn't even over yet.”

“Hey, where's that new girl that we met after school yesterday?” asked Jenna. “I thought today was supposed to be her first day. What's her name?”

“Damn,” swore Shelby. “Her name's Tatianna something. I totally forgot about that. I was supposed to meet her this morning. She's probably down at Guidance now.”

“Yeah, well, have fun down there,” replied Jenna with a sarcastic twist of her own.

“Gee, thanks.”

“If it's any consolation to you, I'm missing lunch, too. I have to make up a test in Pre-Cal,” added Jenna.

After playing a game of human dodgeball with the three thousand other teenagers in the hallway, they finally reached Jenna's locker.

"Good luck. Meet me at my locker after school?" asked Shelby.

"Yeah. See ya later," Jenna replied, slamming her locker shut.

"Bye."

Shelby shoved open the door to the Guidance office to find it packed with a hundred haughty, obnoxious and crabby teenagers. Folding her report card in her hand, she leaned against the door to shut it.

A secretary wearing granny glasses and an annoyed expression on her face was trying to make her way back to her desk, which was next to Shelby. Seeing the piece of paper Shelby was holding she said, "Don't waste your time, young lady. If it's about your report card, we're already on it. Now go on to lunch or wherever it is you're supposed to be."

"Actually, I'm here because of a request from Mrs. Buchanan," replied Shelby, trying to keep the irritation she felt out of her voice.

"Well, go into her office then. We're trying to get this outer office cleared," snapped the secretary.

"Have a nice day to you, too," mumbled Shelby under her breath as she weaved her way through the sea of people. Even the narrow hallway from which the counselors' offices branched off was crowded. She finally reached the office that read "Mrs. Buchanan - Guidance Counselor" on the window. Once again, she had to lean against the door to shut it once she was inside. While she had been doing this, she had been facing the door. It wasn't until she turned around that she realized somebody else was in the small room.

There was a girl with long, black hair that came down to her waist standing in front of the window with her back to Shelby. Slowly, she turned around to look at Shelby.

As soon as Shelby saw the girl's green, almond-shaped eyes and tan complexion, she realized who it was. "Oh, my gosh, Tatianna, I'm so sorry about this morning," apologized Shelby as she dropped her book-bag down on one of the three chairs in the office. "I was late this morning and the

rest of this day has been just plain hell."

"Oh, Shelby, it's so good to see someone here that I actually know," cried Tatianna before she burst into tears.

"Tatianna, what's wrong?" asked Shelby as she quickly put her arm around the sobbing girl.

Tatianna continued to weep uncontrollably.

"Come on, sit down," said Shelby soothingly as she guided Tatianna to the chair. Shelby tried to pull away because she herself preferred to be alone when she cried and thought that maybe Tatianna felt the same way, but Tatianna held on to her, as if she needed someone there. So Shelby hugged her as she cried on her shoulder.

After a while, Tatianna gained control of herself and tried to calm down. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to cry like this in front of you," she said.

Her eyes were swollen red and she seemed to Shelby to be lost and scared. "It's okay," replied Shelby. "Everyone needs to let it out sometimes. Do you want to talk about it?"

Tatianna hesitated for a moment.

"It's all right," said Shelby quickly. "You don't have to tell me anything if you don't want to. I know we haven't known each other for along time."

"No, it's not that," said Tatianna. "You're the only person here I know and you've been so nice to me." She paused and took a deep breath.

"I don't understand," she said when she began again. "Why couldn't they just leave us alone?"

"Who?" asked Shelby. "Who do you want to leave you alone?"

"The Serbs," she replied. "Do you know what it's like trying to live in the middle of a war zone? And a ludicrous war at that."

"Serbs?" said Shelby in reply. "You mean to tell me that you come from Bosnia?"

"Sarajevo, to be exact," answered Tatianna. "Everyday we were afraid to venture outside for fear of sniper fire. If we went out to get water from the only water pipe in town that they hadn't blasted open and returned safely it was considered a blessing. There was no electricity. At night we had to light

*"Don't you see?
If I had been
there, she wouldn't
have been
killed...."*

small kerosene lamps as if we were living a hundred years ago."

Shelby sat there, disbelieving and stunned.

"Do you know how many relatives I have lost already? Four uncles, an aunt, and three cousins. Valdimir was two years younger than me, he wasn't even fourteen yet. And now," she said, her voice barely dropping to a whisper, "my mother."

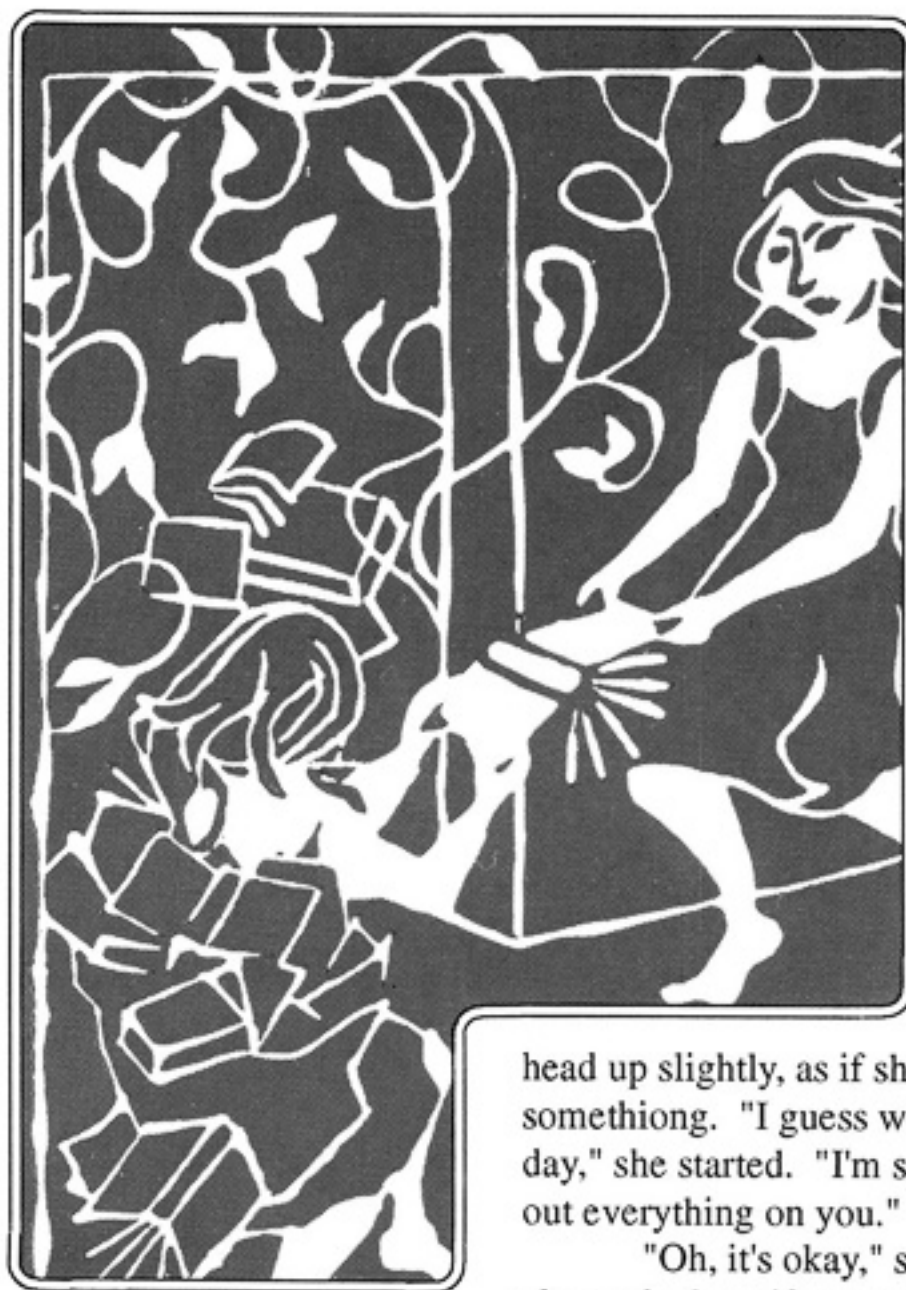
"Oh, my goodness, I'm so sorry," said Shelby sincerely.

"And it's all my fault, too," added Tatianna quietly.

"What?!" exclaimed Shelby. "How can you say that?"

"I shouldn't have left," she replied simply. "She was killed when she went to the marketplace to buy food. She shouldn't have been there. I should have stayed there to take care of her, to get the water, make sure there was enough oil in the lamps, to cook the food. Don't you see? If I had been there, she wouldn't have been killed when the Serbs attacked."

"Tatianna, you can't say that. It isn't your fault. There's a war raging over there. If you had been there, you might have been the one killed. Your mother wanted you to leave because she loved you and wanted you to live. Let's say that you were there and neither you nor your mother were killed this time. She might have been killed tomorrow by a bomb while she was sitting in the house. She would die worrying about you and regretting the fact that she couldn't take care of you so that you lived to see your twenty-first birthday. She raised you to live, not to die."



Laura Hall

Tatianna sat there as if she were letting Shelby's words sink in. She seemed to be in a far off place. Then, suddenly, she gave a little laugh. "Where in the world did you learn to give a speech like that?"

This made Shelby burst out laughing. "I have no idea." After a while she asked, "How come you're able to speak English so well?"

"It was a part of the curriculum in school," replied Tatianna. "And I guess I inherited a knack for languages. Everyone in my family speaks at least three languages fluently. That's how my sister

met Daniel. He was the cameraman for one of the news crews sent into Sarajevo. Another cameraman was sent to replace Daniel because he was called home for some project. He hid us on the plane that he took and promised to see us to our uncle who lives here in the United States. My uncle's out there talking to Mrs. Buchanan right now." Tatianna turned to stare out the window.

Shelby was astounded. She had no idea what to say to such an amazing story.

Tatianna jerked her head up slightly, as if she had just remembered something. "I guess we both have had a terrible day," she started. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to pour out everything on you."

"Oh, it's okay," said Shelby quickly. "I'll always be here if you need a shoulder to cry on. I think it's remarkable how well you're handling this."

"I wouldn't call wailing my eyes out handling it well," replied Tatianna. "I've told you everything. Now, it's your turn."

"I don't have anything to tell," answered Shelby.

"Yes, you do," coaxed Tatianna. "You told me when you walked in that everything today has been hell. What made it hell?"

"Nothing," replied Shelby. "Nothing at all." ❁

Hypocrite

I watch...

As you talk,

And no one listens.

As they turn away laughing,

And the harsh cries shatter when they hit the thick wall of defense

Which you put up with the agility of a veteran.

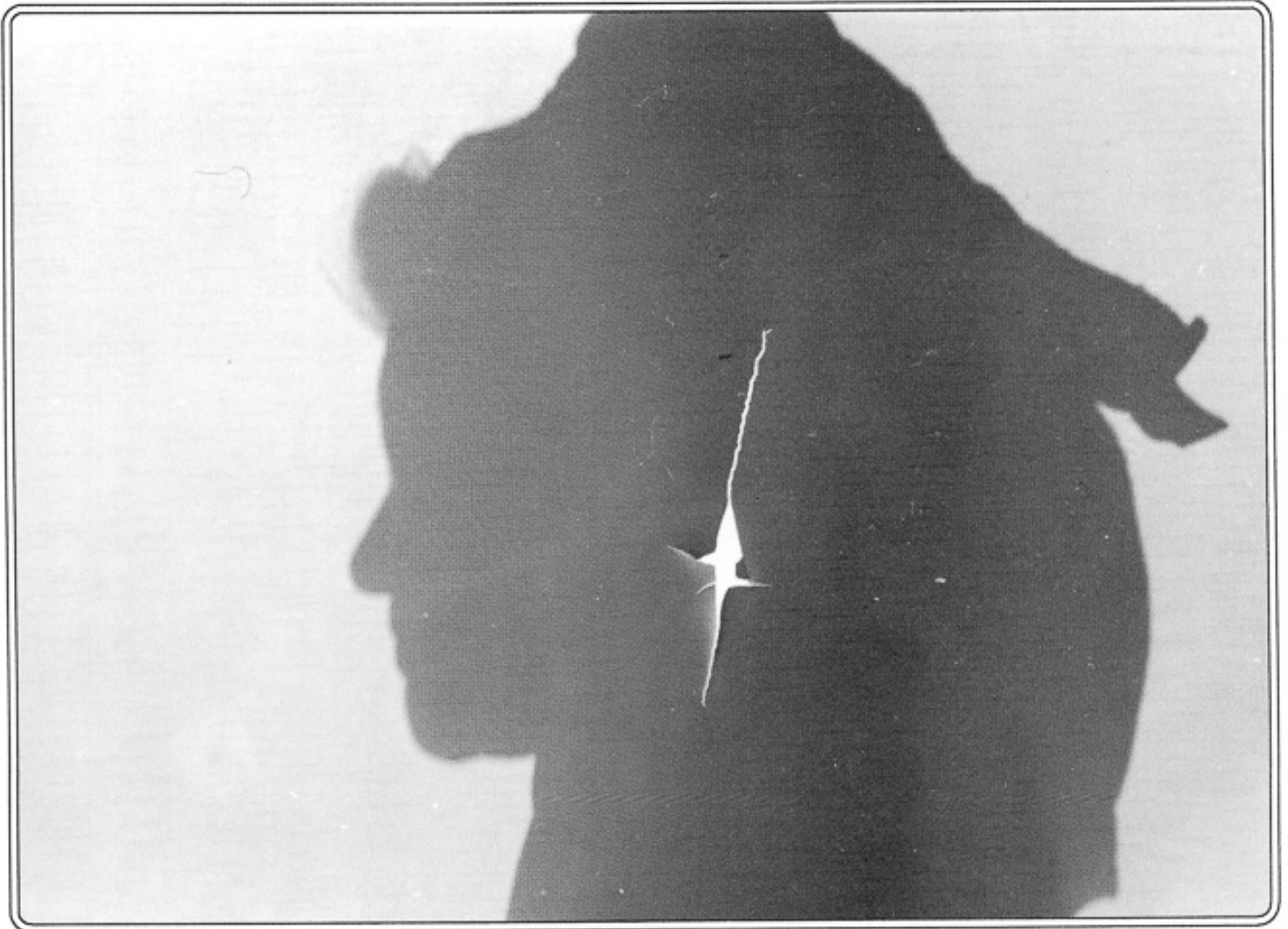
I watch...

Yet never lend my ear.

Questioning their superiority

While assuming my own.

Katherine Bostick



Katherine Bradley

The Man Jumps off the Brooklyn Bridge



Sarah Godfrey

*The man jumps off the Brooklyn Bridge
He cries and then he laughs
The baby also laughs and cries
when he takes those dreadful baths*

*The woman sits around the house
waiting for her knight
But instead comes home her drunken man
Oh! how she hates her plight!*

*The kid waits around the Christmas tree
hoping for a gift
He waits for over thirteen hours
His mind begins to drift*

*Yellow Fever strikes the place
in the cold hard winter days
The teenager drinks the beer
to get a little hazed*

*Life goes on
The settlers die; nothing has much weight,
except the 5000 pound woman
who walks into Jenny Craig*

Scott Porter

All One Crazy Thing

*but the only way to beat life
is to never open yourself to the strife
of believing there's only one way
to approach existence day by day,
despite the fact that all is one
and we breathe the same air as the moon and sun;
never believe there is a flock of ways
for one thing alone raging in craze,
it's all connected by one thread of time
weaving and tangling with one great spiritual climb.*

Ian Bodden



Susanna Thornton

Rugby Team

by Joseph Prichard

The rugby team got on the train just past midnight. Having totally given up on the prospect of sleep, I believe I was pretty much the only one in the car still awake. I don't know if they constituted a whole team. (I must admit that I don't know too much about the game.) There were only about nine guys, but anyway, they were definitely rugby players. I could have told you that, even if they hadn't been wearing uniforms.

Obviously drunk, they settled in noisily, shouting, laughing, singing, and swearing. Two of them sprawled across from me, throwing their luggage into the aisle and standing a case of beer between their seats. One of them was short and squat with an all-engulfing smile that pushed his fat cheeks so high up on his face that his eyes were nothing but two half moon slits. The other one was only slightly taller, at least a hundred pounds heavier, and his head was completely shaved, even his eyebrows. I mean it. And he was so drenched in sweat that his bullet-shaped head shone like a light-bulb.

From across the car they were loudly recounting their exploits. "Did you see that try he made, though?" shouted one of them from the far end of the car.

"It was brilliant!" responded someone with an English accent from somewhere behind my head.

"Ah, it was a load of s---!" cried the squat fellow sitting across from me, setting the rest of the

team into hysterics. Suddenly he turned and stared at me awkwardly, tilting his head. He kept this position for about a minute, not speaking, not moving. "Who are you?" he said finally. "You're American, aren't you?"

"Yeah," I answered.

"Hmm," he said "I could tell, the way your hair is, and your shoes, definitely American. Don't you think, Graham?"

"Uh, huh," muttered his bullet-headed compatriot as he popped open a can of beer.

"What are you doing here?" the short one asked bluntly.

"I'm on vacation," I explained, "from school. I'm visiting some relatives. I have been staying with an uncle in Edinburgh and now I'm going to see a second cousin outside London."

"Ahh," he muttered, "that's no way to spend a vacation. No way at all. You ought to be having fun somewhere."

"Well," I answered, "it's not that bad. A little boring at times- Relatives."

"Hmm," he said again, "I guess so. Here, let me show you something." He reached into his jacket pocket, and, after a bit of searching, pulled out a golf ball. "Here," he said, throwing it to me, "take a look at it." I examined the ball, turning it over in my hand. There was some kind of name on it I couldn't

*One of them was
short and squat with
an all-engulfing
smile that pushed
his fat cheeks so
high up on his face
that his eyes were
nothing but two
half moon slits.*

make out, "S" something, "C" something.

"Who is it?" I asked, throwing the ball back to him.

"Sean Connery," he answered "got it one summer when I was caddying at the golf course over in St. Andrews. Connery, himself, came there to play a game. He was only there for the afternoon, and then he took a helicopter out."

I didn't really know what to say. It was kind of impressive--not that impressive--yet still, I suppose, it would only be polite to say something. "Wow," I said.

"Yep, it's quite a story."

"That never happened," said bullet-head,

suddenly coming to life. "Never."

"Aye, it did."

"No!"

The two of them began to fight, verbally, of course, but then there was even a bit of pushing. I stopped paying attention and started reading my book. They were both drunk and if things kept on like this it would be a long night.

As I tried to read my book, I looked up for just a minute. They were slugging it out in the aisle, putting on a show for any interested spectators, so I decided to stop watching. On the table sat the golf ball. I looked at them for a minute, then grabbed the ball, and put it in my pocket. It would make a good story. ●

Toupee

Are you wearing a toupee?

A full head of hair and lots of gray.

Tell me this much, is it real?

Confess the truth and not some false spiel.

Don't hide your baldness for me or anyone;

Take that rug off and sit in the sun.

Hold your head high and shout with glee;

Toupee no more, that rug is history!

Holly Botkin

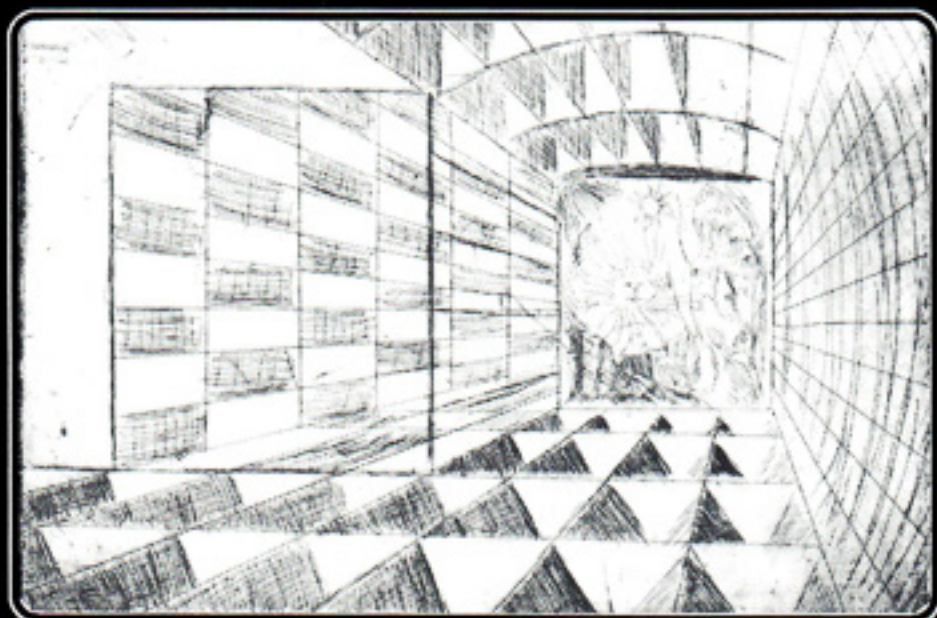
Sunset Before Sunrise

Darkness all around me
It's so black I can not see
Brightness spreading it wings
Orange clouds over the trees
Blue and yellow sky shines
Boy tells his girl lies
She listens to his voice, silence
Lake's water, shades, violence
Sunset that kills the day
There is nothing to say
Sunrise that brings happiness
To those that are helpless
One lonely tree over the top
Just like a boy, he can't stop
Loudness of light kills
Time is gone, past, future
Present does not exist now
Woods shade on lake's surface
Sunset comes before sunrise
Darkness is older than light
Lies are older than love
You will never die
Like a hope for sunrise after sunset
Goodbye

Maciej Kobialko



Jennifer Kane

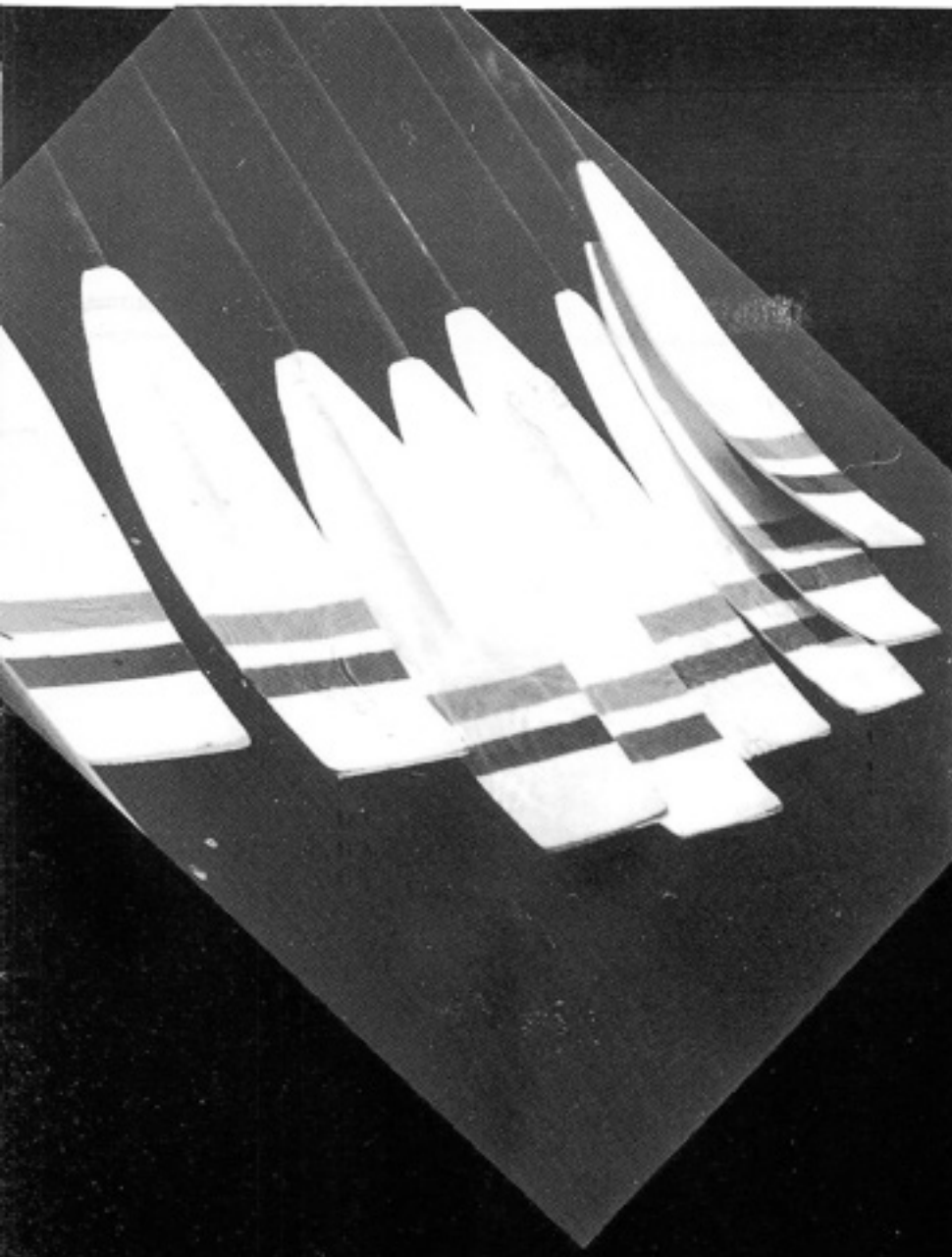


Luke Miller

Same Place

This is for my god,
For all my thoughtless thoughts,
For all my losing battles.
I take away my sorrow,
And the pain in my chest.
To replace it with a new pain,
In the same place.

Alex Domeyko



In Memoriam

*the Memories come... and go
big smile, hearty laugh i often regret
my actions (inaction) that
month, a visit, a note: you, i am sure,
would appreciate, and then the news,
sunday 10:00 P.M.*

*(you're joking, right?) If if if
in anger just if
But now....*

*you should have known
i we looked up to you. (i worshiped you)
you are my friend, i hope i
was one of yours. you touched me,
you touched us all. It will be harder now.
please remember us, all of us.*

Goodbye Phil.

Alex Young



photographs by Alex Young

We Can Do That Tomorrow

*I know you're not tired, and you don't think it's fair
You have things to do, and toys to share.
But the sun has gone down, night has filled the air,
So all I can offer you, is this simple prayer.*

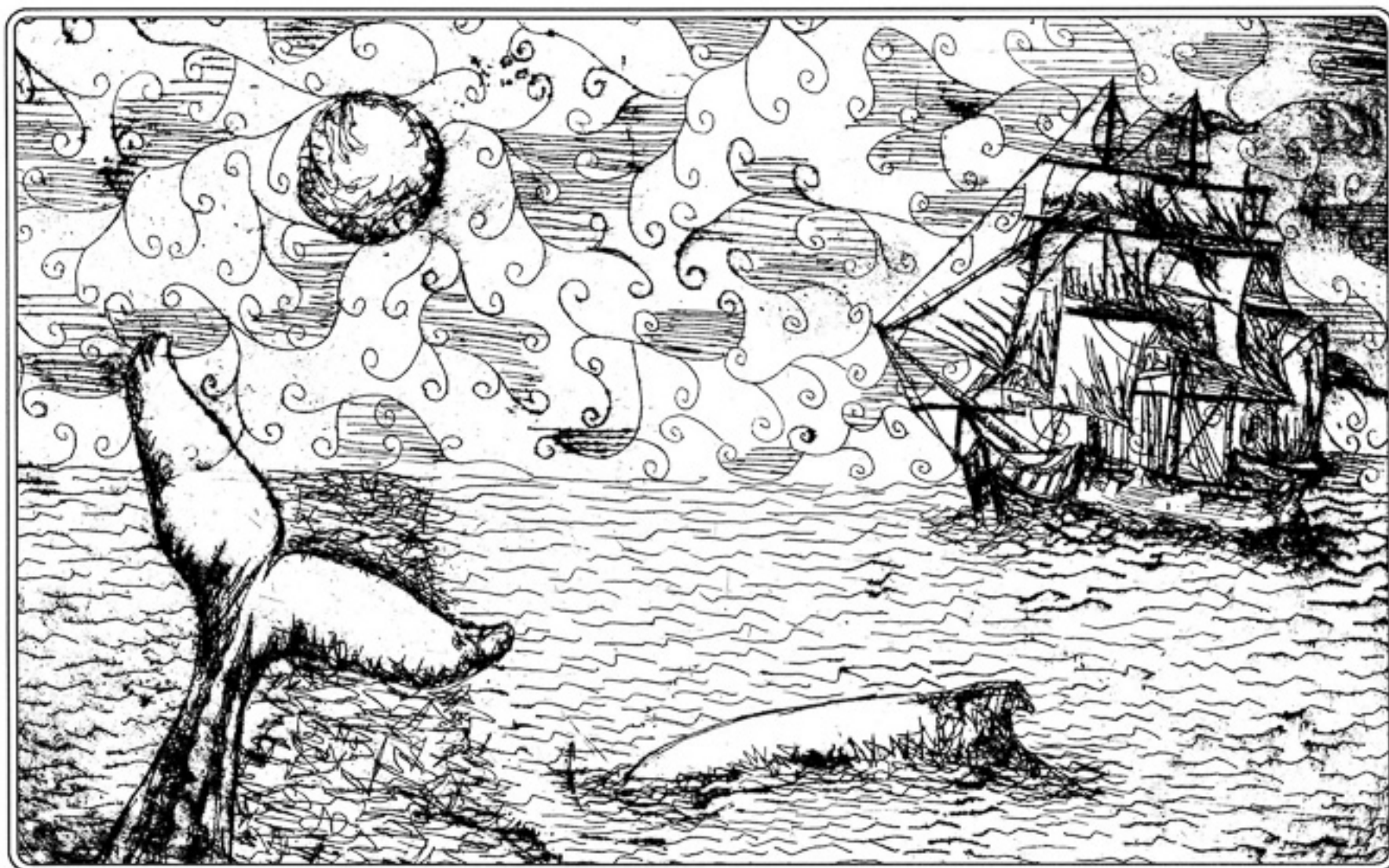
*Go to bed now, so that early you may rise
Go to bed now, and close your eyes.
Sleep for now, and tomorrow you can do,
Anything that your heart most wants to do.*

*You can be a cowboy and ride the lands,
You can play the trumpet, for famous bands.
You can be a knight, and fight dragons with your sword,
You can find a lost kitten, and collect the reward.
You can sail your boat, across the great blue sea,
Imagine the many fish, that you will see.
You can build a huge tower made out of blocks,
You can start a new collection, of very shiny rocks.*

*Why not buy a convertible, and ride it all day long?
Why not join a choir, and sing a happy song?
You can score a goal, to win your soccer game,
You can join a circus, lions you will tame.
You can be a chef, and bake a great big cake,
You could help your dad, the leaves you could rake.
You can be a pilot, and fly around the world,
You can be a doctor, and cure someone's cold.
You can be a postman, and deliver all the mail,
You can be a sailor, around the world you could sail.*

*So get into that spaceship, that you call your bed,
Put your rocket on cruise control,
and lay down your head.
Dream of all the places, that you can go at night,
Dream of all the people, that you can be tonight.
So now discover an island, where no one's ever been,
And when you wake up, you can play again.*

Michael Sharp



Jennifer Kane

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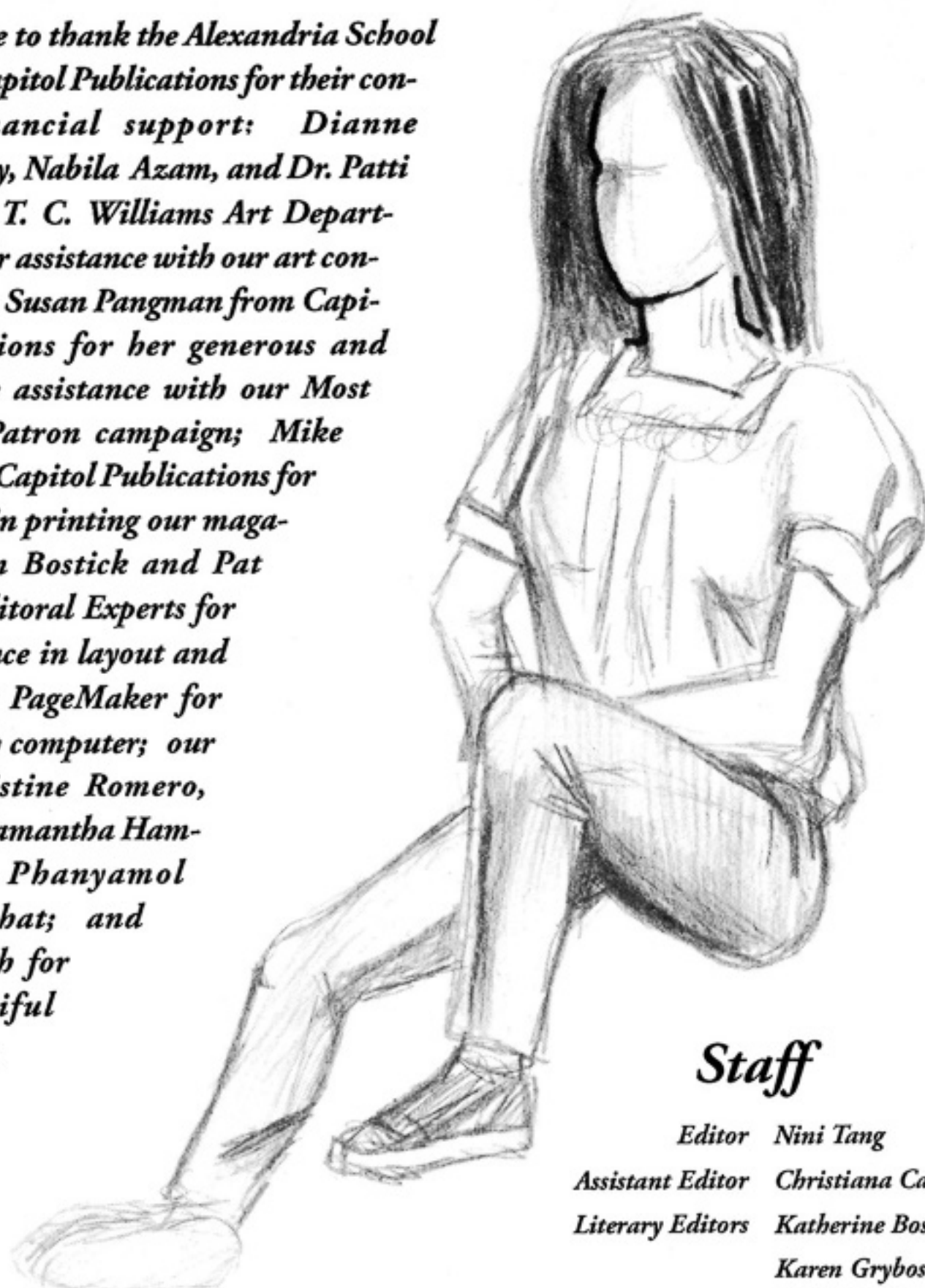
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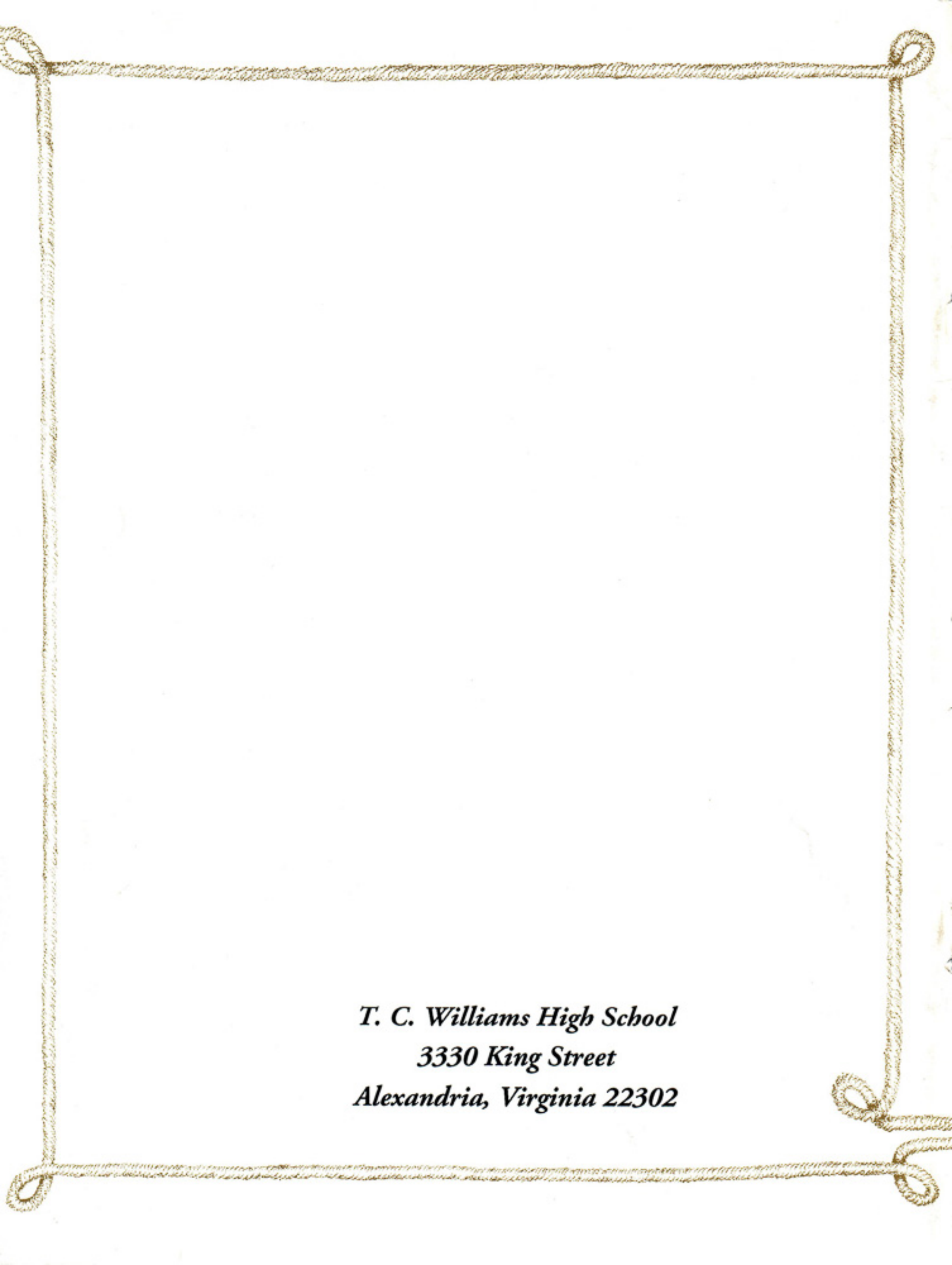
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Christopher Sims

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