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# THE ROARING MUSE

*Literary Arts Magazine*



*FALL*  
**2001**

DULUTH  
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# THE ROARING MUSE

*Literary Arts Magazine*



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Published 2002

Printed in the United States of America

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# NY Crisis

by Monica Petersen





## When In Crisis We Don't Remodel

by Kathryn Humes

(Previously published in "Rogue's Gallery",  
1997, Southern Oregon)

When in crisis, we don't remodel.  
We don't paint the kitchen blue  
or sign up for tango classes.  
We don't redo our resume  
or scan library shelves  
or go for long walks with  
an idle mind.

What we used to touch  
with a certain regularity,  
the cat's arched back,  
the bone-dry geranium,  
we touch once and  
wish out of sight.  
Later just comes  
around sooner.

Afterwards,  
whenever after is,  
all things left undone  
wait in the wings,  
while time rolls out a long carpet to  
where we never thought we'd be  
and we blink back  
at blankness  
where minutes  
used to count.

## Red

by Megan Gerlach

please let me take your blacks and greys  
because I can close that chapter, your happy ending, a final goodbye  
so take my hand  
take my hand baby, we'll paint the town red  
ill pull you behind that building  
ill kiss your lips between hurried breaths  
of promised that this girl's not going anywhere  
that she's found her solid ground in you  
and you wont forget what it feels like to live in color  
has your black and white world lost its glow?  
have you forgotten the things you dont want to know?  
because im on my knees here.  
Im falling but my heart wont hit the floor.  
your cloud never never escaped me before  
take my hand baby, we're painting this town red.

**madness**

by A.M. Brunner

when light fails us,  
the crazy ones,  
the ones who go mad for every heartbeat,  
loosing yelps and raucous laughter into the  
darkness,  
refuse to fall from the atop their world,  
and they dance to the madness—  
it's blues, oranges, crazy reds and hollow blacks,  
and haunting purple in their eyes—  
the crazy ones  
make their own light.

## At First Sight

by Jennifer Hoffman

You seem like a climax  
in me  
like a broken corset  
the pressure is put on.

I am not your keeper  
I am just as hungry  
I am just as desolate  
as your abandoned shirt  
as your homemade corpse.

A thought that is hidden  
a dream that won't last.  
This is far into the distractions  
the abstractions temporarily  
numb the situation.

# Untitled

by Jacob Voit



**dust**

by A.M. Brunner

watching winter unfold before my gazing eyes  
as a piece of paper drawn from your pocket,  
saying,

“come dance the world away”

we'll love our fears away

under stars

we were like dust:

from which we came and to which we will one day return...

while the year is still new we will scream softly spoken, serenading me

the spirits of your winter's breath float off into the  
promises of spring

**Beauty**

by Amy Anderson

The delicate lure of a flower,  
The magical shimmer of fireworks  
As they are dying to the night and the moon...  
They burn themselves into my mind  
And haunt me with what I could never have—  
Beauty.

The watercolor whisper of a rainbow,  
The first green leaf in the spring  
At the fingertip of a wise, gnarled tree...  
They paralyze me with silence and awe,  
Fueling my unassuming twisted obsession—  
Beauty.

# Untitled

by Jacob Voit





## PLEASE STAY ON THE LINE

by Fred Zachau

A.D. 2001

Harry Anderson sits next to the living-room window of his third-floor apartment. When he looks out the window, he sees a tree-lined street and the well-maintained lawns of clean apartment buildings in a pleasant middle-class neighborhood. In the distance he can see the gleaming white buildings of a highly automated factory against a clear blue sky. He holds a telephone handset against his ear with his shoulder and hears the following recorded message: "Thank you for calling your Social Security Administration. All of our agents are currently busy serving other citizens, but please stay on the line because your call is very important to us. Your call will be answered by the next available agent."

Harry has been listening to this same damn message for twenty-seven minutes. I'll give them thirty minutes, he thinks, and if no one answers by then, I'm gonna hang up. When his watch tells him that thirty minutes have passed, he does hang up, patience exhausted. Harry has called both the Social Security Administration and the Internal Revenue Service every day for the past week. Each time he got a recorded message telling him to please stay on the line and an agent would be with him shortly, but no human being ever answered the phone before his patience ran out. He is trying to get a statement of his 1996 earnings. He doesn't care which agency gives it to him, he just needs one. I guess what I'll do, he says to himself, is drive down to the government building, take a number, and sit there and wait. It's bound to be better than this. Maybe there'll even be a pretty girl there that I can look at while I'm waiting. He puts on a light jacket and leaves for the government building.

A.D. 2021

Harry Anderson slowly and painfully climbs the three flights of stairs to his third-floor apartment. The last flight he negotiates on all fours. When he finally reaches the third floor, he struggles to his

feet, stumbles to his apartment, enters, crosses the room, and slumps into the chair next to the window. A computer screen on a table on his right displays page after page of the addresses of the National Food Shelves ((the A.D. 2021 equivalent of the old soup kitchens of the depression era)) in all of the major cities in the United States. Although the government is distributing food at those locations, the information does Harry no good. Harry lives in a small midwestern community, one that is too small to be included in the data base of the National Food Shelves. His best bet for getting a meal is to check with the local government to find out if food is being handed out anywhere in town today. Then if he has the strength to walk there, he'll be able to get something to eat. He dials a local government number and hears, "Thank you for calling the Centerville Food Shelves. All of our agents are busy serving other citizens, but please stay on the line. Your call has been placed in a first-in, first-out queue and will be serviced as soon as it reaches the top of the queue." One minute later he hears, "Please stay on the line. Your call will be serviced as soon as it reaches the top of the queue."

Harry hooks the telephone handset on his shoulder and looks out the window. He does not see a tree-lined street and the well-maintained lawns of clean apartment buildings in a pleasant middle-class neighborhood. Instead, he sees crumbling brick buildings with dirty windows that stare forlornly out at the same cracked sidewalks and trash-littered street that he sees. In the distance he does not see the gleaming white buildings of a highly automated factory against a clear blue sky. Instead, he sees lonely looking gray buildings silhouetted against a polluted, late-afternoon sky. As he stares out at the dismal scene, he remembers how it was before automation ran society. Back when one human being could communicate directly with another without a recorded message or a computer between them. Back when Harry once walked into a library and was able to ask a human librarian where to find a book that contained the poetry of Edna St. Vincent Millay and one that contained the major writings of Mark Twain and discovered, to his delight, that the librarian's favorite poets and authors were the same as his. Back before automation botched up everything, everything including the pro-

duction and distribution of food.

How could the world's civilizations have gotten into their current state? he wonders. The course they took is clear, but why couldn't they have seen where they were heading and changed it? At first the path looked like one leading to a greater, brighter future for all of mankind, but the promise of automation was never fulfilled. As computers took over more and more of the functions required to run civilization, it became more and more difficult to get correct information to any user who needed it. Although the communications industry was able to transmit vast amounts of data very quickly, users usually received irrelevant information, seldom got what they needed. Artificial intelligence failed to solve the problem. In spite of the best efforts of computer scientists artificial intelligence always lacked one essential ingredient needed to manage a complex society: imagination. Bottlenecks in information transfer developed and worsened, and society functioned less and less efficiently. Farms could no longer get the resources needed to produce enough food to feed the population. The transportation industry could not move what food there was to where it was needed. Famine resulted. In some areas law and order broke down, and people began killing each other for what food there was, but mostly people just sat back and hoped for a miracle.

Harry feels the telephone start to slide off his shoulder. He grabs it, presses it to his ear and hears, "Please stay on the line. Your call will be serviced as soon as it reaches the top of the queue." Harry looks out the window into darkness. He must have fallen asleep. He leans back and looks up at the sky and sees a few stars that are bright enough to shine down through the polluted atmosphere, and Harry wonders if any of those stars has orbiting about it a planet upon which dwells a happier civilization than his.

A.D. 2031

A crow flies in through the broken window of Harry Anderson's third floor apartment and lands on the table next to Harry's skeleton. A computer on the table tirelessly displays page after page of the addresses of the National Food Shelves in all of the major cities

of the United States. There is no food at these locations, but it matters not. No human lives to eat food. But completely automated nuclear power plants continue to supply power to machinery that does work of no value and to a telecommunications industry that continues to send useless messages back and fourth between computers and information to the dead, the dead such as Harry Anderson. The crow surveys Harry's skeleton. The eyeless sockets in Harry's skull stare up at the spot in the sky where Harry last saw the stars. The crow hops from the table, lands on one of Harry's ribs, and perches there. It inspects Harry's skeleton more closely for a bit of meat. There is none. Other birds and small animals picked Harry's skeleton clean years ago. The crow is about to fly away when it hears a sound coming from a telephone handset that lies on the table next to Harry's skeleton. It cocks its head, listens, and hears, "Please stay on the line. Your call will be serviced as soon as it reaches the top of the queue." The crow flies off.

**Untitled**

by Rachael Erickson

It's your hips

(I think)

That made me wet.

Your lips

(I know)

That soothed my screams.

Your breasts

(I remember)

That caught my eye.

Your thighs

(I believe)

That held me tight.

Your arms

(I sought)

That drew me near.

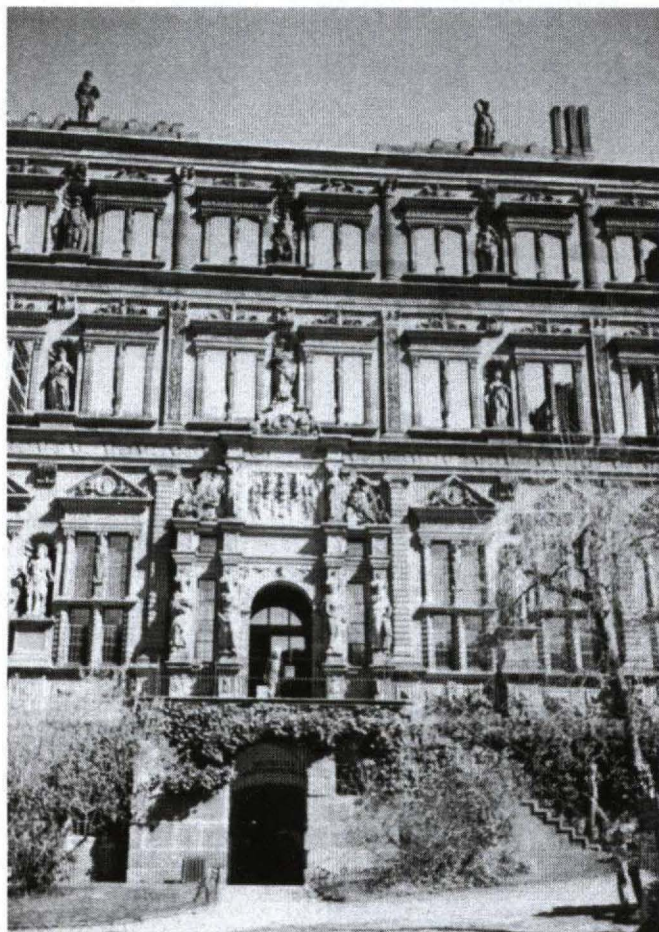
Your soul

(I craved)

That took me home.

# Untitled

by David Erickson



## I've Come To Bury Your God

by Lee Lewis

The nameless nomad arrived in town around noon.  
 He wore a duster designed without mirth,  
 Boots built to besiege dark drifting,  
 Hat that hung shade across his sight,  
 And a long barreled shovel slung  
 Across his back that he took to trough earth.  
 As he dug, he mouthed, "I've come to bury your god."

Preacher with pressed slacks came to pick at the drifter.  
 On the whole, the holy man had skin drawn  
 To successfully stretch over his feeble frame.  
 "The spider seems to have your spirit, son"  
 The preacher said with perfect pronouncement of shame.  
 "You are tomorrow, and I will not take  
 Tomorrow tainting the town of Yesterday's blame."  
 The drifter merely took from his duster  
 A glossy paged Bible and tossed it for earth's claim,  
 Whispering, "I've come to bury your god."

Businessman with a tie tried to buy the drifter.  
 For sale, the salesman would always draft  
 His hair into a sand shaded, slippery knoll.  
 "I'd like to market your manner, my man"  
 The businessman told with a melody like toll.  
 "Your mug could be on a lunch box— low price—  
 As long as your stock is hot on Wallstreet like coal."  
 The drifter merely took from his duster  
 Golden coins carved by his kids and sent them in the hole,  
 Muttering, "I've come to bury your god."

Politician with pride stood aside the drifter.  
 As a law, the lawman would always drag  
 His loose hair across his head like a nervous itch.  
 "Plant your rinds of revolt elsewhere, you fool."

The politician complained with a pious pitch.  
"Your voice is not the current currency  
Since my civic duty is of a corporate niche."  
The drifter merely took from his duster  
Campaign pins for logos and plucked them in the ditch,  
Uttering, "I've come to bury your god."

Reporter with spiked high heels hounded the drifter.  
For the news, the newscaster always dressed  
To bring some flash to a dull lead she might follow.  
"Stand my your shovel and look sad, my star."  
The reporter requested in hope he'd wallow.  
"Don't speak and be cursed as Apollyon, but  
Pose for me, and I can cast you as Apollo."  
The drifter merely took from his duster  
Narrow lensed cameras and flung them in earth's hollow,  
Expressing, "I've come to bury your god."

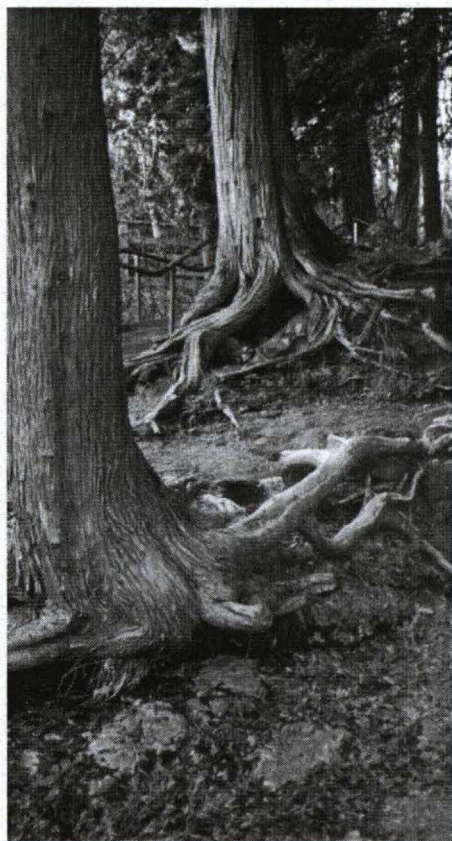
Army man with stripes sought to suppress the drifter.  
Generally, the general had metals draped  
From his passionless apparel like a proud slave.  
"Move, or I'll be forced to remove you, foe!"  
The army man barked to badly mimic the brave.  
"Do what I command for you are nothing,  
And I take commands only from my sharpened stave!"  
The drifter merely took from his duster  
A bloodied flag without stars and gave it a grave,  
Declaring, "I've come to bury your god."

The gunslinger galloped out of town at midnight.  
He wore a duster designed by the fire,  
Boots born for destructive drifting,  
Hat that hid the moon from his sight,  
And a shovel slung on his back  
When he traveled with a tall trail of fire.  
As he rode, he warned, "I've come to bury your god."



# Untitled

by Maria Bataglia



## angerrepetition

by Haley Bryn Bonar

angerrepetition  
tight fists and  
wide mouths  
cold sweats  
and  
bloody girls  
(me)  
that is me.  
untidy, strenuous work  
at love  
anger  
aggression  
passion  
dying with every dawn,  
every sunset fading out with  
another days'  
weakness.  
lessons upon lessons.  
strange periodic kisses  
tight fists and loose lips  
hips and  
hands and  
my finger tips  
in my sweatshirt  
  
in my sweatshirt.  
in a coma  
half awake  
with one eye open  
the rest seems vague  
alone, never  
afraid, yes  
questions upon answers.  
each day a train wrecks.

angerrepetition  
tight fists and  
wide mouths  
cold sweats and  
bloody girls  
(me,  
that is me)  
untidy strenuous work,  
at love  
anger  
aggression  
passion dying  
with every dawn  
and every sunset  
fading out with another day's  
weakness.

in a coma  
half awake  
one eye open  
the rest seems  
vague  
alone, never  
afraid, yes  
questions upon answers.  
each day a train wrecks,  
each day a train wrecks.

## Windowsill

by Amelia Anderson

Windowsill

Below a cold window.

Dust untouched.

Why do flies

Always die in the corners?

An inch to my left—

Four foot drop

To the cold hard floor

Of a back stairwell

Echoing with emptiness.

An inch to my right—

Two and a half story drop

To a dirty parking lot

Brutally exposed

By a receding snowline.

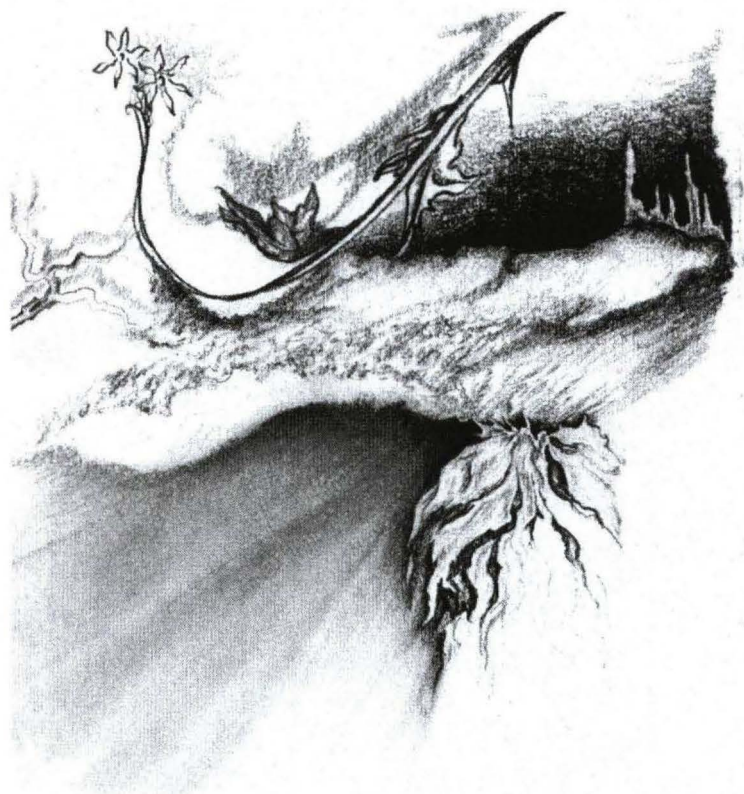
**choke**

by A.M. Brunner

what if i choke on these days,  
or on a moment handed to me as a piece of a greater whole:  
at 5 am i know that no one can be sure of themselves,  
at 5 am i am lost...

# Untitled

by Shelly Wilcox



**coffee shop folk**

by A.M. Brunner

crumbs lay brown  
about a greenish table of october  
nights,  
and i sit staring across  
at your friend's purse,  
while sounds of northcountry folk  
do their best  
to tell me why  
i'm alone tonight,  
and sadly,  
their best is not quite enough.

## Library of Ghosts

by Amelia Anderson

Library of ghosts  
Lit by the orange evening sun  
In lengthening splashes  
Across the stains on the littered tile floor.  
Signs still guide  
To genres on the wall  
And the clock still keeps time,  
But if a clock spins  
And only ghosts are there to see it,  
Does time really pass at all?



## Just One Friend

by Acica Mekosch

Just one friend...who can brighten your day  
Just one friend...who can make it all okay  
Just one friend...who will lend you a hand  
Just one friend...who always seems to understand  
Just one friend...who will push you to succeed  
Just one friend...who will help when your in need  
Just one friend...who will be there when you cry  
Just one friend...with that twinkle in their eye  
Just one friend...who makes it seem all right  
Just one friend...who will listen through the night  
Just one friend...who can always make it seem all right  
Just one friend...who can always make you smile  
Just one friend...who would go that extra mile  
Just one friend...who you know that you can trust  
Just one friend...who would choose you over lust  
Just one friend...who's advise is oh so wise  
Just one friend...who seems to shine above the rest  
Just one friend...that you would call your best

## Literature...

by Lee Lewis

Gives contrast throughout  
Still sands and wild undergrowth—  
Road map for nomads.

And

Casts beliefs abroad  
Like dandelion seeds in wind—  
Breeder of insight.

And

Is gasoline for  
Tumble weeds that run from flames—  
Enforcer of thought.

And

Craves Utopia  
Like waves engulfing beaches—  
Writings of vision.

And

Gives compassion to  
The hunted fox who stalks mice—  
Reflection of us.

**sunday**

by A.M. Brunner

walking the same street,  
every day is new, still born,  
and i pretend like i'm too scared to ask;  
the truth keeps me chained to my bed on a sunday night  
when january is passing us by for the very first time,  
("and many more...")  
keeps the pen in my hand,  
the lights to a glow  
the music slow,  
and my heart in a plastic jar,  
(the lid screwed down tight  
and no holes to breath)  
you'd think it would die in there...  
"i'm an aesthete..." —  
i should melt under the weight of the truth,  
that all my questions are answered  
in the way she looks right through me,  
that my worst fears are confirmed  
in the way i love her with each step  
and she refuses to learn to crawl with me...

# Untitled

by David Erickson



## Written in Stone

by S.A. Gorden

The old man struggled through the gate. He leaned heavily on his cane with each step. It was quiet in the cemetery. The large oak and pine trees shaded the cool stones from the hot summer sun. He got to the first stop in his ritual journey. The simple stone read Uno Osterholm March 18, 1912 - November 10, 1919. It was the head stone of the brother he never knew. Uno died during the great Spanish Flu Epidemic. The old man's earliest recollections were of playing by the stone while his mother took care of the family plots. The warm sun had played shadows across the stones while he smelled the fresh turned soil as his mother planted flowers. The brother he never knew always brought contentment.

His next stop was John Stephens 1923. That was the year the old man was born in. The headstone that had seemed so large when he visited the cemetery with his mother was now only slightly above his knees. He looked down on the stone trying to bring his crippled body back to the exuberance of youth when one of his secrets from his mother was climbing the headstone and jumping from stone to stone across the length of the graveyard.

William Osterholm 1934, his father, the half-remembered giant of boyhood. Next to his stone was Hilda Osterholm 1946. Father and Mother. The old man leaned against the stones. Loss dulled by the decades still weighed heavily on the old man.

Henry Osterholm 1945. The plain white marble cross of the World War 2 veteran said all the old man could handle about the death of his brother.

The next stone Mary Elizabeth Johnson September 17, 1918 - April 5, 1948 was the first headstone he cut completely by himself for The Great North Monument Company of Cool Springs, Iowa. He started working at the company one month after leaving the Army, a corporal in supply. '48 was one of the best years he ever remembered and Mary's stone had become a part of it. It was the year he met Gertrude Mary Heinnen, Gertie. 1950 John Joseph Jones's headstone, the year Gertie married him. Next came Baby

Osterholm November 4th 1953. The small headstone still caused an ache in the old man's heart for what might have been.

The first tears arrived with another white marble cross, John Osterholm 1969. The death of his first son brought more than remembered pain. The Vietnam protesters yelling obscenities at the military honor guard as the lines of coffins were being transferred into the waiting hearses. One protester spit on the windshield of his son's hearse as they slowed at the gates of the airbase.

The old man had to stop. He leaned against a knurled oak he remembered climbing so many years ago when his mother first brought him here. Slowly strength returned, just enough to finish the rounds. 1976 Sara, daughter, and the horrid night when the police came to tell him about the car accident. 1986 Jeremy, son, police officer, shot during a robbery. The sadness of watching your children buried beat down upon the man.

The old man finally made it to the marble bench next to the final stone, Gertrude Mary, May 18, 1926 - August 4, 1996. It was the last headstone the old man ever cut. During the years since her death he had sat twice a month winter or summer on this same marble bench. Every day for the last week he had come here to finish the job. He eased himself to the stone. Both knees popped as he slowly knelt. The pain brought flashes of black red color to his eyes. His hands still held steady the battery operated diamond-grinding stone. The cancer hadn't yet started his hands to shake. Pain ground through his body as the vibrations from the tool traveled through his arms. So little time left. The retirement home only gave him to the end of the week before they would send him to the hospice in Ames.

Finally he was done. He stayed leaning against the stone for at least a half-hour until he could finally make it back to the marble bench. From a small metal flask he took a drink of the 180 proof whiskey before swallowing the first of the 40 pain pills he had saved over the last six months. The burn of the whiskey was the first time in years that pain brought a calm to his body. He looked at the stone, across the top the words 'Passage of time written in Stone', second line 'Osterholm', to the left 'Gertrude Mary, loving wife and

mother, May 18, 1926 - August 4, 1996'. Finally on the right the words he had finished today, 'John Patrick, husband and father, March 14, 1923 - August 4, 2003 not alone anymore'.

The old man smiled and finished the pills and whiskey. His eyes closed. For the first time since summer had come he was without pain. The sun felt warm upon his face. His smile deepened.

## Control

by Brian Blitz

I was twelve when my sister was raped. I still carry her in my mind every where I go. Once at summer camp when I was fifteen I fell like a stone to the bottom of the lake.

She was there too,

sitting complacently in the fine dirt, waiting for me. She was calm as the water above us as she stroked her silken hair, which flowed like gentle waves. But soon I was grabbed around the waist and pulled to shore. That was the most beautiful moment in my life, also the most painful.

Today I'm twenty-one years old, I go to college and I struggle with my mind much like my sister struggled with her rapist. Today I'm fine, yesterday I was Ok, a year ago I went to a hospital for awhile. The doctors told me that I have chronic depression, fairly severe, well no shit. I still think about those times while I'm lying on my bed, staring blankly at the ceiling. When the shadows and light can touch, and swirl, the realm, back in the hospital. I went to school today and tried to talk to the girl that sits next to

me, her name is Brooke. Her Hair falls about her Shoulders like golden splashing light. She smells like flowers and summer wind. I asked Her for a piece of gum. She agreed and I had it. Today I made great progress I tell myself. About 10 days ago I let my knee touch Hers ever so briefly. I made great progress that day too. Next time when I ask Her for a piece of gum I'm going to let my finger linger on Hers just a bit longer. Gather all the love and desire which burns my tongue and skin and let Her feel that too. I walked home and congratulated myself. I marked off the calendar in my mind. Put a check mark next to "Talk to Her". Only seven more checks to go until our first date. Only nineteen to go until she loves me. I took the long way back, walked around the lake and kept the birds in their trees. I walked faster and kept the sky in its place too. As I reached the last bend before the wooded stretch the waves greeted me. They slapped rocks and twigs and gave tremendous applause. Thank you, thank you.

I walked to my front door and slid

my hand over the brass knob. I gave a little push and the door swung open. Throwing my coat on the chair and giving myself a good scratch behind the ear I went into the bathroom. The mirror was dirty, but really it was always dirty. I turned the faucet under the mirror on and let cold water stream from the piping. Turning the knob further right I made it colder still. Satisfied I threw my hands under the gushing and churning and slapped my face hard.

Blinking a few times I was able to chase away the streams of gray from my eyes and I could now see her more clearly, my sister, looking back at me from the dirty mirror. Water ran down her face just as it ran down mine and water dripped off her nose and chin. We let our foreheads touch in the usual way but boy was she surprised when this time I flashed her an awkward little

smile.



**listen my son**

by A.M. Brunner

the night i heard your voice,  
defined by waves of screaming silence  
rushing in and evanescing out over all of me,  
scared and still,  
i listened from shores of your Spirit  
and you silenced my cries  
with those three silent words...

## Mi hermana

by Elizabeth Kakac

I lost you that day in the water.  
The little-girl's swimsuit hung  
on your woman's body leaving  
gaping pockets  
like your starving wide eyes.  
Bleached bones rose like wounds  
crying under the skin; the skeleton  
you wanted to own before the black dirt.

Within the scavenged skin and bones  
you folded, letting the little girl's  
iridescent strap slip slowly  
off your shoulder.  
I always knew you were a four-o'clock flower waiting  
for the sun to cool.  
Sandcastles and bare feet fleeting  
over hot pebbles, became only memories.

Mother says you are still  
A daisy picker chanting,  
"He loves me, he loves me not."  
But I know this song  
is not for the man's leathery ostrich neck,  
but for the dying skin  
of a multicolored woman  
who forgot the water games.

I lost you that day in the water.  
And even now, as the grit of the sand between  
our toes fades,  
my voice still screams,  
"Marco, where is Marco?"  
half expecting your little girl's  
round, red face to answer  
in high, sweet tones, "Polo."

## Nuclear Surgery

by Brian Blitz

Heavy, dark and closed like a stone...

I was digging through their little books again today. That old stone building by the water... Full of so many cracks and peels. The rats and I are the only ones that really feel at home there. There are others around, always the formless drifters, but this is my place. The dirty water has stopped bothering me.

This building has always intrigued me. There are so many tunnels; it's layered like an onion. I walk around this building and the sun crawls a few fingers across the sky. She's always casting her shadow, playing with us, taunting us. Today she is tired... my building is dark and lonesome and I come to it as a stranger.

This building is as high as four trees and it is white... At least I think it was white. Now it's covered with just as much dust as the little books in its womb. There is a little climbing hill made of rock on the very far end underneath two pillars. It is slippery and dangerous to climb but I'm far away from home now, and no one will notice my body here... should I perish.

I always close my eyes as I enter it. It's nothing but bad luck to make the sun go away purposefully. There is a little red pole I use to guide myself down into its belly. It's flaking and dirty, but really, everything is dirty. Today I scrape my hand, steadying myself on the pole. Strangely I feel that my blood belongs there, and I do not cry out. I shrug my shoulders and continue down. I'm coming to my favorite part now... I can feel my skin burn.

It always amazes me how busy they were. They must have been piled up a score deep in this room... Writing and writing and making little drawings with ink. Where did they get so much ink? There is a really big pile of little books there in the corner. It comes up to my chest and smells of earth and water. I gently shake the earth from the little book on top and look at it, streaked like a tear worn face. Grandma taught me a lot of these words, but still, there is a lot I will never understand.

There is a word on the top of the first little book. I know this word and have come to fear it. Grandma tells me this is what brought the fire and I believe her. Brother called grandma a liar, said she burned her face and arms on the cooking fire. But I cannot imagine how long you would have to lie in the fire to make burns like these!

I don't with to think about that anymore.

Sharp, coiled, powerful with fear...

I first met Sue by the waters surrounding Old Washington. I was playing in a steel drum, rolling on my side, making it bound through little puddles. She had been working with her father and was sore backed and cranky. I could see this and did my best to stay out of her way. Mother told me that it's best not to bother a woman when she is tired... I listen to mother. I went on playing as I usually do, making quite a good show of ignoring her.

That's about when I felt the first rock strike me leg. She had been perched, about twenty feet away throwing them at me! They either hit my barrel with little "pings", or they hit me, with little "thuds". I have never come so close to anger in my life... Anger is something we avoid; most people call it suicide.

I stopped rolling and got to my feet. What was this girl doing? What had I done to deserve such disrespect!? I barked a thousand questions in my mind but didn't say a word. I couldn't talk because she was smiling. Her smile raped the essence of myself and sent it running; teary eyes with tail between legs. She consumed the spirit from the whole world and spat it out in her smile. I've seen sunrises more pathetic. I wanted to die. I got an erection.

Stirred ashes, waking sun, devil.

At night we come together as friends. Our skin and eyes float with the fluid of friendship. It boils in our bodies and causes us to move in strange and wonderful ways. But as dawn creeps upon this world, we

leave hollowed out and empty... strangers. In the morning I often look upon her, and she me, with curious and frightened eyes. Our eyes poke upon an already dead thing like a grieving child. We wonder where the other has gone long before we say goodbye.

### Wood in a tree

I think that next week I'm going to take her up to the tower. It is so incredible from that height. I think I'm going to prepare us a lunch, something special. I love her more than is natural. I'm nothing but a falling leaf, tumbling through her soul.

I got a lot further on my bow today, I've been watching the older folks around water crossing and they are helpful. They have a skill I'm afraid can only come with age. Their bows are truly great things... Long slicing shafts of walnut and oak, stretching like a wooden muscle. I wonder why all the old folks are so skinny? I cannot imagine an animal that could escape such a bow...

The old folks gather and tell their stories... Stories of drought and hunger. Stories that are as gray and meager as they are. Sometimes I listen to them talk of birth and death and I imagine my own end. My visions come to me uninvited... They drown me.

I'm lying, back broken, across a roof of trees. My arms and legs are stretched out and weak. My body aches and is in numbing pain but I'm smiling. My mind is so far away from my body that I can no longer feel it. I close my eyes and become the cloudless sky. I lift from the earth and go higher and higher until I'm dizzy with joy. The lights and sounds of a world slip away... darkness yawns and consumes me.

For awhile time gets lost, I don't know where it is either. But when I next see myself I'm lying on the base of a stone statue. The sky, no longer clear, is filling with black and red scabs. They start right above me and layer outwards. They unfurl upon the earth like a womb and before long I am cast in their shadow. The shadow brings confusion and doubt. I forget myself.

Not long after I am shot in light. The light coming from right above me, a pinhole in the scabs. There is something coming through from above... It is a boy's body, tearing through them as he falls, caus-

ing them to drip fire. As fire empties from her wound it causes others, and soon the whole sky is ripped apart and bleeding. The gush of fire spreads with rolling waves and crashes to earth like thunder. This time there is no blackness... and there is no light.

Hands that are far too big to be useful.

I took her to the tower today and she pretended to be impressed, although I could tell that she wasn't. I tried to talk to her about them, but all we did was have sex and smoke tobacco. She doesn't care about them anymore than dad or my brother did. They were dead with the past and dead with the future. I cannot say that I think much of them.

I've heard that they're smeared well across a group of sharp rocks. I heard that it wasn't an accident and I believe it. They were always on the brim of anger. I could always feel their voices tinged with poison, ready to wound, like the sting from a bee.

I refused to look at their bodies. I did not cry for them.

Cold and biting air

I have climbed to the top of a hill to build fire. It is cold and I fold in on myself like a ball to keep warm. The sky is littered with stars tonight and they all blink for me. They stay right where they're supposed to be, and I appreciate it. The earth yawns in front of me and is pulled towards the water like another current.

I can't even smell the bodies from up here, but I see them, little specks of gray and black in a pile. Some still keep a fire going for them too, but I fail at seeing the purpose. A lifeless body does not need heat. I need heat; I am dying with the cold.

I was able to catch a few squirrels today. I swear they are getting lazier. All one has to do now is walk behind them, they do not bother themselves to run away. The look of fear and panic is in their eyes, but it's as if their bodies are already dead. I do not understand but also do not care. Meat is meat and I am hungry.

Tomorrow I'm going back to the building... I've heard that she still goes there too and I would like to see her. I have not had sex for several seasons and would surely appreciate the chance to have sex again. She's nice if caught in the proper mood. I am dying with cold.

Deep as fluid, thank me... it's time for rest.

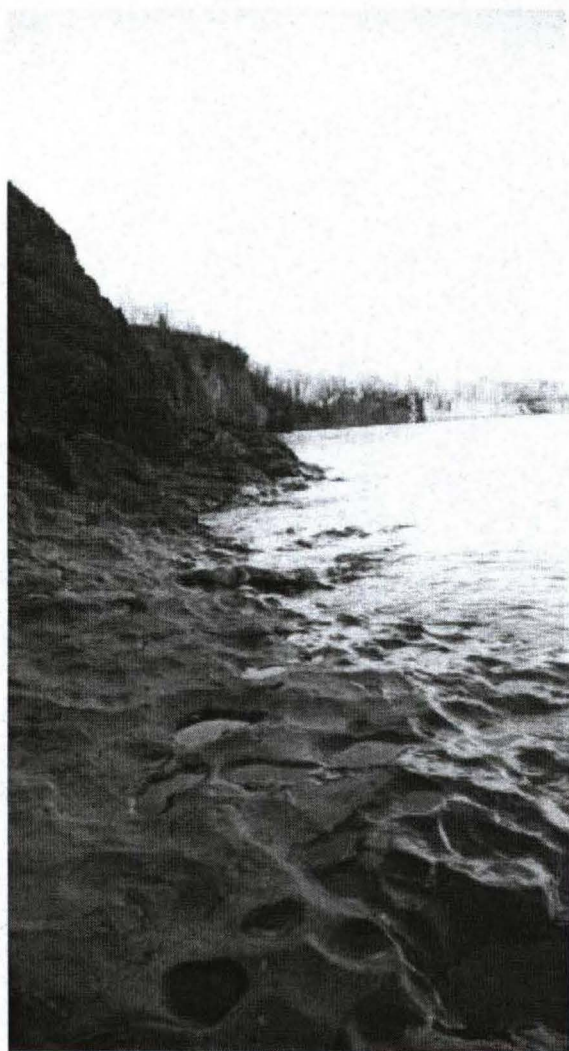
Today I threw myself onto rocks. Today I found her bloody body underneath a pile of little books in the building. Some men call that place home. They do not like strangers. I came upon them forcing her and I later dropped large stones on them. She was breathing when I first came to her but my anger filled me. I felt an all-consuming rage that I have never known. My body filled with a power stripped from the sky and tore from the earth. I saw all of them and all of us in a blink of my tortured eyes.

I hate them. I hate the filth and sorrow of Old Washington. I hate their little books and metal heaps and wire giants. I hate rivers of stone and metal trees. I killed them. I killed it all in one push of rock and dirt. The looks of their dead faces filled me with such an empty joy... When I went back to look at her I was angry. I hated her too.

Today I threw myself onto rocks. They bit into my skin and splintered my bones, but I did not cry out. I belong here, scattered among the earth like raindrops. As my head comes apart I see a great fire split the night sky. I see my grandmother, nervously trying to cover those scars on her arms.

# Untitled

by Maria Bataglia





## Superior Moon

by Alexa N. Hester

The Moon's humble murmur  
Lays down upon the Water  
They play their ballad on current,  
On whispering rolls of blue-black liquid  
The crisp leaves whisper to me  
They are nature's offbeat  
American barbeque is the aroma  
That sails under my nose  
One solid line of vibrant light,  
Of song-sweet water  
Is a path to Heaven  
The lovemaking of Moon and Lake  
Is a being in itself  
Electric lights attempt to seduce the Water,  
Failing in comparison  
They commence in a harsh teenage fucking  
The romantic lover Moon knows the Universe  
Far more intimately than any man-created light source  
Moon fades into and out of Water  
Subtle sweet nightlong lovers they are  
This is simple happiness  
Beauty melted along the water and flowed through me

**wait**

by A.M. Brunner

last night

(your love...)

you saw me with a million eyes

shining and smiling

in the great big black of it all,

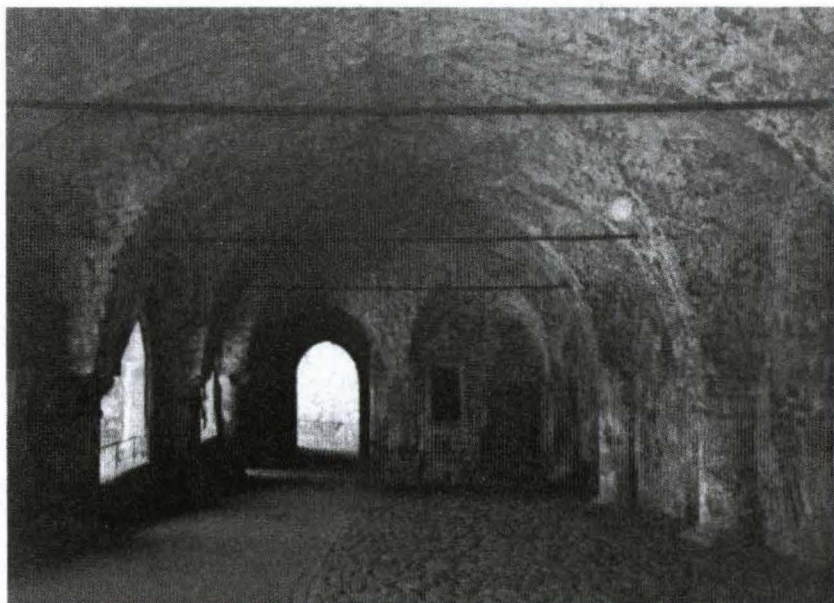
under an infant spring's sky I came to you like the child,

and you said it all

in a single moment of silence,

that tonight can last forever...

**Ancient Chamber**  
by David Erickson



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by David Erickson

Co-Chair, UMD Literary Guild 1999-2002

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