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Instress

Fall 1991

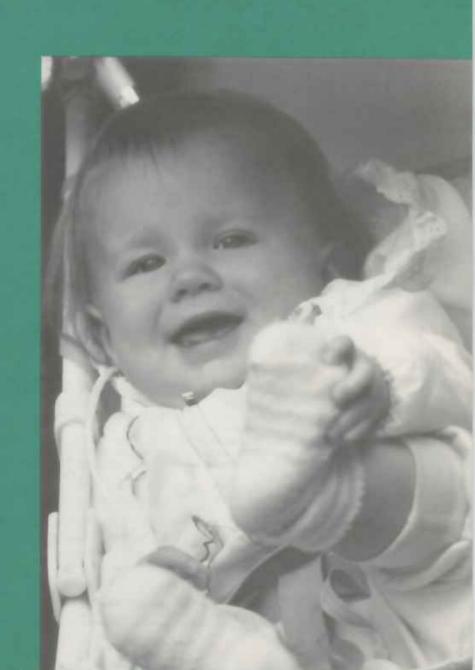


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We, the staff of <u>Instress</u>,
would like to dedicate this issue
to Dr. Regina Kelly, R.S.M.,
whose reverence for the written word,
love of learning,
and standards of academic excellence
will be a lasting legacy.



"LIFE"

A line with two ends
that cries when born
and rattles at the angel's beg
a broken-line puzzle that interconnects
and takes to the world trying to make sense
but lives in a dream that seems to be true
yet all through the ages she waits for a clue
of what fait-accompli she is to be due.

ALEX

Bare feet, oh so foul, roam for warmth Each named with childish giggles. Puppies, tonight, our feet will be. Games shared by sisters alone. Playful puppies nudge weary children As darkness grows into light.

-Paulina Riera



It's funny, but --I don't remember your hair being quite so fair or your freckles quite so many. Sweet little sprinkles of amber dot your nose and cheeks dot your nose and cheeks and remind me of the little girl of ten

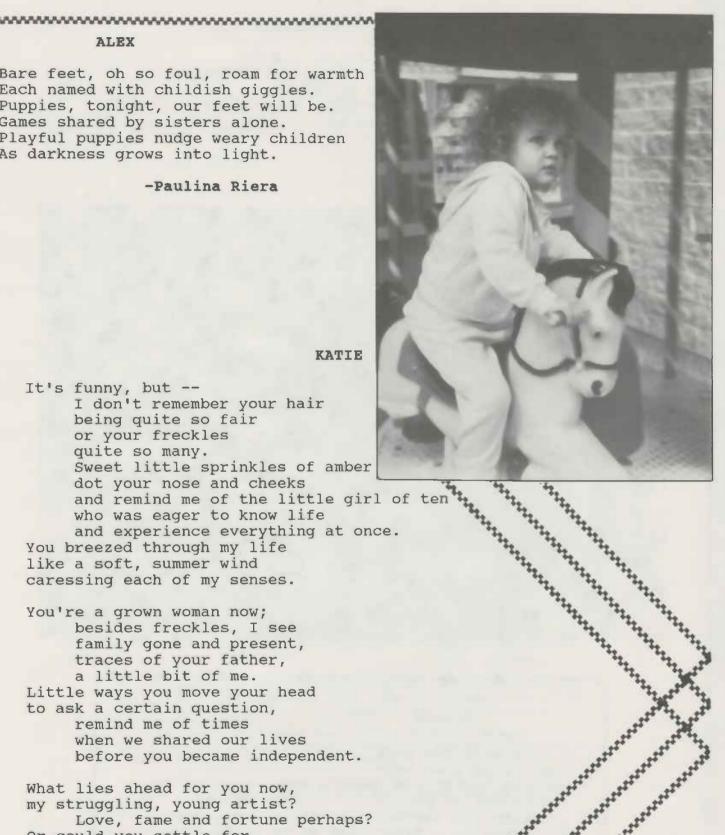
who was eager to know life

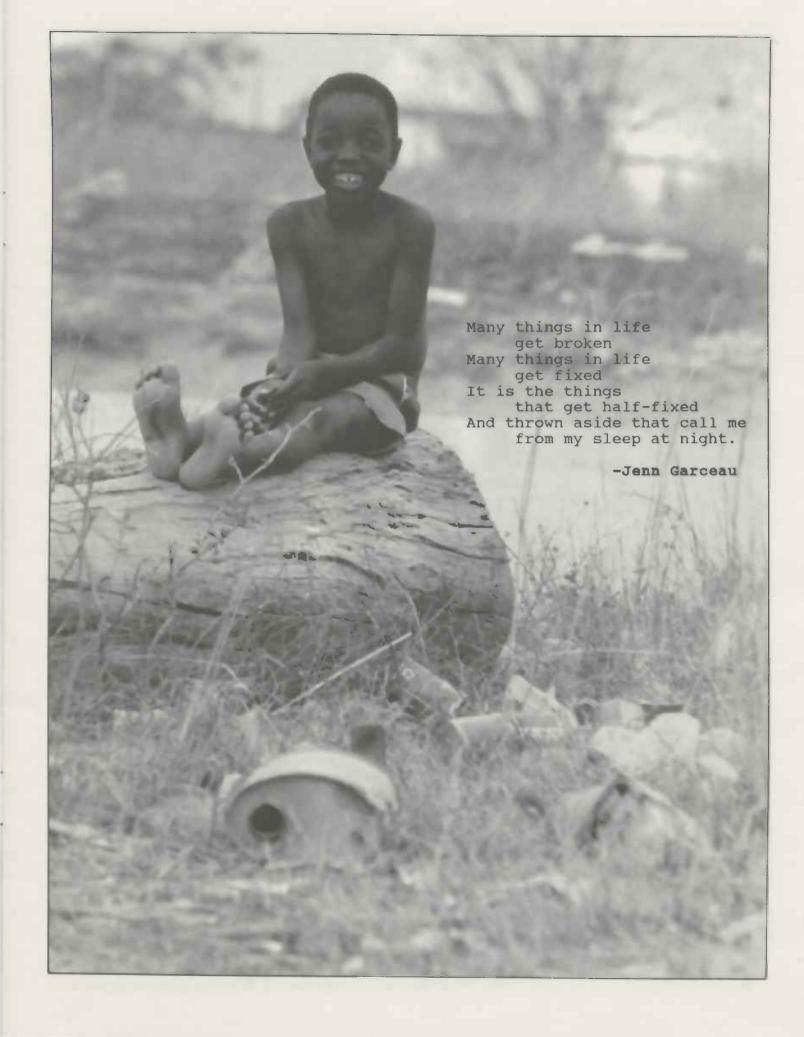
and experience everything at once. You breezed through my life like a soft, summer wind caressing each of my senses.

You're a grown woman now; besides freckles, I see family gone and present, traces of your father, a little bit of me. Little ways you move your head to ask a certain question, remind me of times when we shared our lives before you became independent.

What lies ahead for you now, my struggling, young artist? Love, fame and fortune perhaps? Or could you settle for the happiness you so deserve?

-Mary Beth O'Konski





MOTHERHOOD

Motherhood is a lifetime job with no contract. It is working seven days a week with no vacation, working overtime and double shifts, and working every holiday for twenty-five years in a row. When a woman becomes a mother, she acquires a full-time job for the next two decades.

One of the prerequisites for motherhood should be medical school. Unfortunately, most moms-to-be are unaware of this. They do not know how to treat all of the scraped knees, toothaches, and chicken pox epidemics. Mothers are full-time doctors, nurses, and dentists. On-the-job training is provided for those mothers who are inexperienced.

When a mother is not performing her medical duties, she is required to function as a maid. Her housekeeping duties include laundry, washing dishes, cleaning the car, mowing the lawn, and cleaning bedrooms in cases when the floor has not been seen in six months. Mothers must perform these chores in record time, so that they can catch up on their other duties.

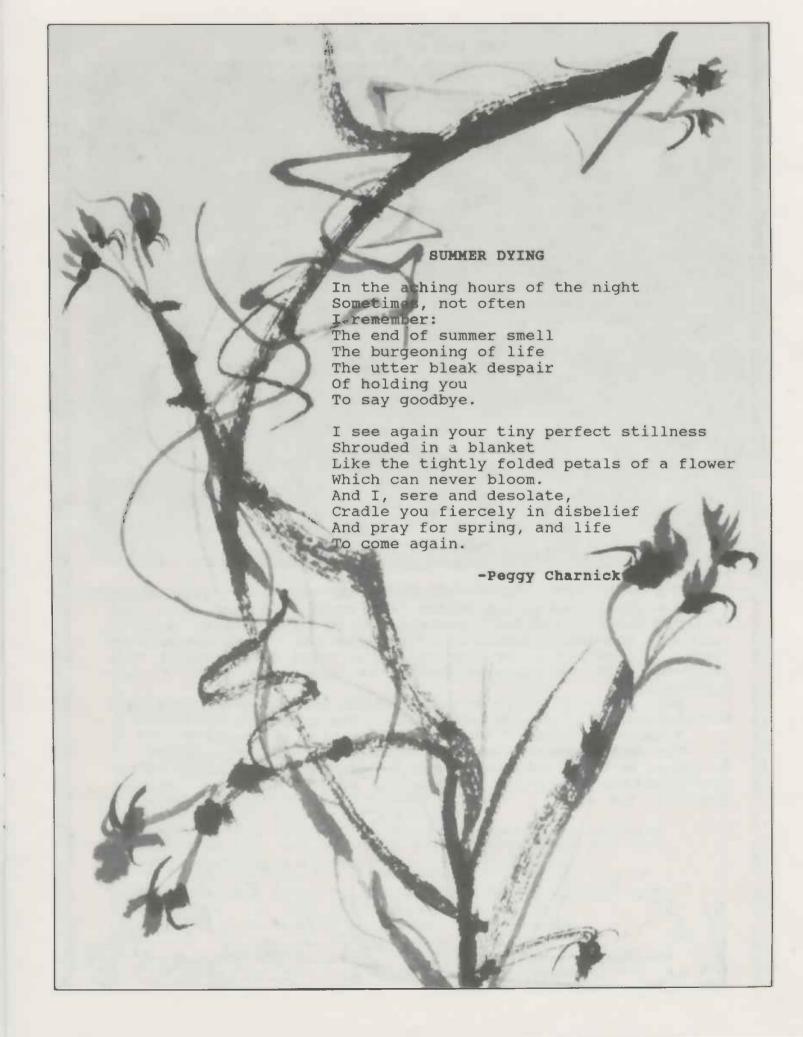
Above all, a mother is a friend. She will always make time to listen, comfort, and advise. The best friend that anyone cam make in a lifetime is a mother. Mothers prove their loyalty again and again, and are seldom appreciated.

A mother is a lot of things, from a doctor, to a housekeeper, to a friend. Motherhood is a difficult job, and there is no guidebook for it. Motherhood is a very complex profession, and is perhaps the most important profession in the world.

-Lisa Nowak

GAINING THROUGH LOSS

The lights are off and suddenly The one who meant or means so much to me Won't leave me be. Horribly, I try to squint, but can't. I want to control this one and get out, But as always, unconscious powers fall short of the mark. It's a great challenge-Somehow some instant passes And I accept she's dead. Scenes flow into one another-Suddenly I'm running up a hill comforted among friends. I know her grave is up ahead, So why do I turn and find her climbing with me, Knowing she wants to say "Be careful, don't fall." But you're dead, mom; I've accepted this not knowing how. Why make it so hard? I'll be alright, won't I? She peers through the curtains of our picture window As I go out for the night, And I know she wants to say "Put your seatbelt on." But you're dead, mom, so why are you still at home? Which one of us can't accept this? Later when the lights are on I daydream it's me.



THE DAY OF THE BUGS

I usually spent my Sunday afternoons admiring the sights and sounds of nature through my hobby of bug-watching. There was no finer way to truly gain a respect for nature than through the rhythmic motions and harmonic buzzing of a bug. Surely it was as close to Heaven as you could get on this fresh green Earth. But my haven was soon molested one evil day when the forces of Hell entered my tranquil hobby by smashing the serenity and goodness of it all.

It was getting late that afternoon when I decided to gather my things and head inside. I had enjoyed the pleasures of bug watching for nearly three hours, which was plenty enough to ensure pleasant dreams for the night. I just started my way back when I noticed a peculiar odor in the air. It was the smell of fire and brimstone. And no sooner than I identified the smell did the ground open up before me and spew forth a swarm of deadly fire beetles. They began to come my way. It looked as if I would be enveloped by the swarm in a matter of seconds. But, luckily for me, I held on to my faculties and made a run for it.

My feet could not carry me fast enough. The swarm was overtaking me with each step. It seemed as if I was surely finished, especially as I tripped, falling before the swarm. I had stumbled upon someone's picnic, but the picnic was over: the bodies of two individuals lay covered with ants. It appeared as if these two had died days ago, and thus became an ant's feast. And as I laid there praying the swarm would finish me quickly, I noticed an aerosol can laying on the picnic blanket. It was Raid(TM)! I quickly picked it up and began to spray at the swarm with as much fury as one could possibly spray an aerosol can. The fire beetles were dropping at my feet. I could taste victory and smell the stench of dead bugs killed by Raid(TM). But unfortunately, the can was soon emptied, and I stood unarmed before the angry swarm.

I had to act quickly or my life would soon end. I fled down a hill where I knew at the bottom lay a pond. I jumped in as soon as I reached it. The swarm hovered over me like vultures awaiting the death of a wounded caribou. I splashed at the swarm, but to no avail. It merely broke them up for a brief moment until they reformed. It was growing dark, the water was cold; I felt hopeless.

But, suddenly, to my surprise, the frogs of the pond formed a gauntlet around the swarm and proceeded to suck them in!

"Yes! "I cried, "Viva la frogs! Viva la frogs! "
The amphibious wonders soon annihilated the entire swarm. I
was saved by those noble creatures. I now spend my Sundays at the
pond admiring the grace and cunning of one of God's greatest
creation, the frog.

THE END





THE COOL

His sound was called the Cool:
Melodic tones which graced our ears like soothing, cool,
ice cream.

BEBEGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGG

Then at times you could feel the turmoil in his tones everchanging like eyes of the storm.

He was the innovator, the great creator, Whose seasons never stayed the same. Always moving within time, changing like the great sea. Each time arriving at our shores in many different ways. Be-Bop the Cool, Fusion.

You know that sound called Jazz, there will always be imitators, but none by far can duplicate the original innovator of that sound called Jazz.

-William Curtis

A letter to my best friend,

As a girl, when times were bad and everyone found in me a person willing to take abuse, I sat in darkness with only the light of the street shedding rays into my room. I sat watching life outside continue, as life inside seemed to come to a stand-still. Things around my home always seemed to be tranquil chaos. As a small adult i never knew what to make of it. I relied on you to supply my life with hope, with serenity, with some sort of happiness.

I never knew who you were, yet, you were always with me. Although I didn't know what you looked like, you always held my hand, always offered to hold me when I cried. I never knew who you were and, yet, if You hadn't been there I may not have made it this far.

Now I know you. I know the beautiful face that belongs to the beautiful spirit I'd always known.

I love you and I need you, best friend.

I needed you when I was a child and I continue to need you. Hold my hand as you did then.

Thank you,

-Paulina Riera



A WORD ABOUT WORDS (IN A lIBRARY)

Silence. Occasional noise. Silence.

Words.

Receptive chairs sit with the sacred thoughts of others Lost forever.

Words.

There's that noise again!
Offensive words!
Idle chatter not fit for a place of
Words.

-Michael Fiato

WHENEVER YOU'RE OLD by Robert Enos

Characters: Henry Charleston (about 77 years old)

Martha (neighbor - 9 years old)

Son (of Henry Charleston - 45 years old)

A bare stage except for the following: a small, Setting: wooden table with two chairs (stage center); and a

door (stage right).
An old man (Henry) is by the table. He is dressed Scene:

in a formal dark suit. The table is set for a meal. There are two place settings. As the stage is lit, the old man lights a candle which is at the

center of the table.

Henry: (sitting down) Another long year, and here I sit,

Martha - as I always do. (to empty chair) Well, happy anniversary, dear. (takes a glass [of wine] and sips, then, looking at the glass) I can't imagine if the grapes for this wine were picked from the same bunch. Wouldn't it be nice if they were? They would feel less lonely then, I suppose

- (to the side) before they're swallowed.

(Quiet knocking upon the door)

Henry: (putting down the glass with a frown) 000h, who

could that be? (getting up) Excuse me, dear, I

should get that.

(more knocking)

Henry: Alright, alright. (crosses to door) Yes, who's

there?

Voice: (from behind the door a child's voice is heard)

It's me, Mr. Charleston.

Henry: (slightly smiling with recognition, opening the

door) Why hello, Martha. What can I do for you?

(A little girl stands in the doorway. She is

wearing a yellow dress.)

Martha: I came over from next door. I wanted to show you

my new dress. (picking at her dress) Mom said it

was o.k. 'cause we aren't going out just yet.

Henry: Why, it's lovely Martha. Where are you going?

Martha: Oh, we're goin' to church. (frowning and looking

down) Mom says we don't do it enough, and we

should start going more. I think it's boring sometimes.

Henry: Sometimes?

Yeah, sometimes. Well, sometimes it's not too bad - like when the people with guitars play and we all sing, or when we go up to communion. Stuff like that. But the other stuff can be boring - like when the priest just talks and talks. (sorrowfully) I know I shouldn't say things like that 'cause it's a sin and all, but -

Henry: (smiling and bending down a bit) But you wish you were somewhere else?

Martha: (delighted) Yeah!

Henry: (In a soft voice) Well, I do too sometimes. But you know it's for the best, right?

Martha: (tapping the ground, and more serious) Yeeaah. I
know. (looking up) Well, I gotta go. (smiling)
Can I come over tomorrow and see the box?

Henry: Sure. Come on over in the afternoon, I'll be here.

Martha: O.k. (waving) Goodbye, Mr. Charleston. (exits)

Henry: Goodbye, Martha. (closes the door)

(LIGHTS FADE)

SCENE TWO

Same room. Next morning. The table is cleared and standing beside it is Henry and a middle-aged man. Both are wearing casual clothes.

Son: (pleading) Dad, please, listen to reason. You are all by yourself here with no one to share the responsibilities for the house. Wouldn't you rather be at our place? You can see the kids as much as you like, and you wouldn't have to worry about fending for yourself.

Henry: (stubbornly) No, no. I am just fine here. I can take care of myself and I'm not alone - I have visitors all the time.

Son: That's what you say, dad, but is it true?

Henry: (Angrily) I am not lying to you!

son: (apologetically) Alright, Dad. But from my point of view, it looks like you are politely turning me down. You know that you would not be a burden on us. Besides, the kids will love to have you around-

The kids, the kids. Never mind about the kids. (pacing) The fact is that it's you I'm concerned with. Soon, I will grow tired of the idea and become a nuisance (pointing a finger) and you know it! After a while the kids will dislike having to be quiet around me all the time, and Barbara - I bet it won't be a picnic for her either. Having to pick up after me as well as the three of you...(pause, faces his son) Look, it just won't work. (gently) I see what you're trying to do, son, but did you really think I would be happy?

son: (looks down but says nothing)

Henry: Go home. (puts his hands on his son's shoulders)
Tell her I was a stubborn old fool. Tell her that
you think I would be fine here. Tell her.

Son: (Wiping his eyes) Alright, Dad. I'll figure out something. (hugging him) But you come to us whenever you want - you hear?

Henry: (patting him on the back) Sure.

(LIGHTS FADE)

SCENE THREE

Henry:

Setting: Same room. Later that afternoon. Old man is sitting at the table. In front of him is a small metal box. He is wearing casual clothes.

Look here, Martha, my dear. I brought out the memory box. You know I saved all kinds of things and put them right here in this box. (working the box open) If only I can get the darned thing open. (pause as he routes through its contents) Look here, (holding up an envelope) this is a letter you wrote to me when I was in school - remember that? (to empty chair) Well, let's see what else is here. (back to box) Oh, here is something! (holding up a small piece of paper This is a ticket stub from the movies. (trying to read) AAAh, "Black Beauty." Remember when we saw "Black Beauty?" (reflecting) What a beautiful horse! You said that you wanted to ride a horse just like that one. (pausing, then lowering his head) You never did get to ride a horse like that one, did you?

(knocking on the door)

Henry: That must be little Martha. (to the chair) I said she could come over and see these things again. You don't mind, do you? No, I know you don't. Isn't it funny how you two share the same name. (pause) I like it when she comes over. (more knocking)

Henry: O.K. O.K. (gets up, crosses the room and opens the door) Hello, Martha.

Martha: Hi, Mr. Charleston.

Henry: Come in.

Martha: (enters wearing a white blouse and jeans - cheerful) My mom says I can only stay for thirty minutes, o.k.?

Henry: Sure, that's fine. Let's sit down. (seating her at the table in the second chair) Would you like some iced tea?

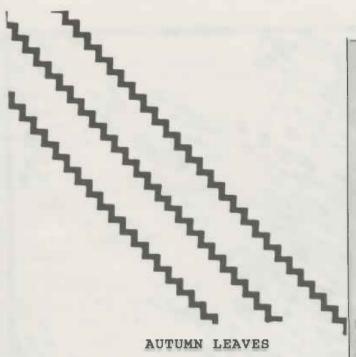
Martha: No thanks. (sits down) I see you brought the box out already.

Henry: Yes, I did. (seating himself in front of box) So, what would you like to see this time?

(LIGHTS FADE)

THE END





We unfurl
the jade and ochre and scarlet
of our autumn hearts.
You envelope me
in the warming rays
of your morning smile.
We giggle-leap
into
soft scattering
piles of pungent
autumn leaves.
We tumble to the frozen ground

We tumble to the frozen ground drowning

unable to catch our falling hearts.

Just me and you outside

God's autumn light show raining

down

on

us.

Laughing, dancing, frollicking-children again:

playing with leaves and yelping dogs and hearts.

Your elfin smile and twinkling eyes

light my soul

and I shiver at the oncoming darkness.

I draw you towards me

in the wonderment of autumn:

the bonfire of our raging hearts.

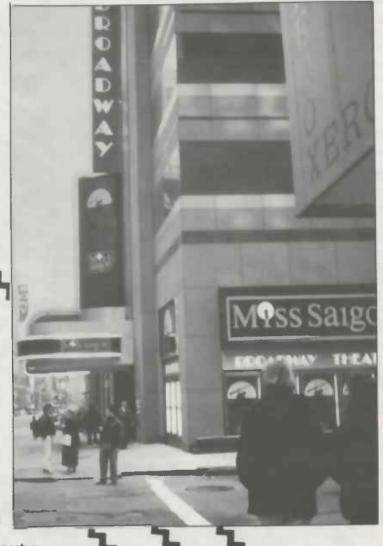
We repose into the peaceful warmness

of each other's embrace,

fitting perfectly

as the bleak grayness whips by

making us cold where we aren't touching.

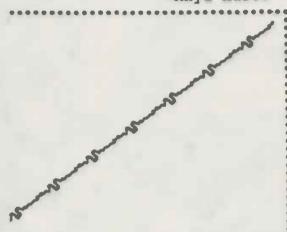




FIRST LOVE

Strawberry Springtime: Face resolute I didn't want your yellow roses. Friendlier, warmer Mushroom Days: I shy from your awkward hellos. Backseat music-playing: my vanilla soul perched next to your boyish tuxedoed heart. We clung tender hands ashamedly over melting chocolate ice cream. Could they feel what we did? HELP! But I could not keep you from coming to my Watermelon Summer.

-Anya Musto



DREAM LOVER

In desperate dreams when comes a storm I'm safe in love's embrace, and all the stars my pain has borne his tender lips erase.

The wind whips furious skies of black that mock me, so alone, Until my lover calls me back-his arms my second home.

His body shields the winter winds, His eyes, they melt the snow. His hands, they hold my heart within; His spirit owns my soul.

I acquiesce in solace sweet that joins two hearts as one, 'Til morning marks his sad retreat and our love, as ever, gone.

-Donna Darmos

ASTAN STANDARD STANDA

THE BENCH

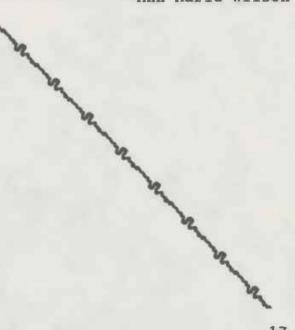
Listen: to the water gushing over the rocks of the dam the kids built this summer.

Look: at the circular ripples the trout leaves as it jumps up to catch a water bug.

Feel: the warmth of your hand as it encircles mine.

Experience: the disappearance of the world as our gazes meet; blue lost in hazel, hazel lost in blue.

-Ann Marie Wilson





THE BLACK WOMAN

Cheeks of bronze, hair of darkness
Eyes of Dawn
Shine your ever-glowing light
upon this existence called life

Your enchanting voice is like a mystery which cannot go unsolved

Oh, Black Woman with eyes of fire:
Give me a sign

My body aches, it pains, it throbs not knowing how wonderful it would be to touch, to feel, eyen to kiss for a moment

Like grains of sand in an hour glass slowly does it pour ever-reaching for fulfillment

I am like a lost traveler in a sea of time trying to find my way

Reach out let your hands touch mine

Woman of mystic powers body of hell and fire unleash your desire.

-Melvin Yancey

BEAUTY IS:

- -long shadows of summer
- -a friend that goes bump in the night
- -new buds on a tree that at night appear to be Christmas lights
- -friends who know you and still like you
- -love

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- -Mom's lentil soup
- -a call from home
- -the new colors of spring
- -a late night chat with a mug of hot chocolate and a friend to call all your own
- -a smile from someone you love
- -pizza when you're starving
- -a new bud on a plant
- -an honest game of tag
- -a butterfly's wings in the sun
- -the smell of freshly cut grass
- -baby's blue eyes
- -seeing a bird eating a worm

-Paulina Riera

She closed the trailer door and found herself alone in The crisp wind rushed down her shirt but she felt no need to button the long black coat that loosely hung over her. "This is what it is all about," she briskly remarked as she lit her cigarette. Flashbacks from late-night flicks flooded her mind, and she saw a woman with a short imitation-fur coat and thigh-high boots counting the money in her hand and looking at her watch. Up above, a sky full of eyes looked down on her. The entire night of moments seemed to blend together, somehow becoming a distorted picture of something--not love, not hate, not ambivalence--but rather indifference. "You left your gloves inside," the voice sounded from beside her. She met his repugnant, alcohol-laced kiss with a turn and walked down the steps to his car. She dropped the cigarette on the ground and crushed it with her boot. suddenly up at the stars, a cold wind crept into her numbed chest. She looked down at her watch, placed herself in the car, and spoke to no one in particular, "Take me home."

-Jill Gorman



i would go to sleep right now but i can't.

perhaps it's the satin wind running through my window, wrapping itself around me, trying to soothe me into submission. or maybe it's the towering street light watching over me, waiting for me to fall unsuspectingly. or perhaps it is the endless nothingness that echoes inside my walls.

but, for the sake of convenience, let's just call it you.





COALTOWN

A broken line trips down the ugly street
A stab of color on a slab of gray;
It flees away on ochre-tinted feet
Toward brighter hopes in places far away.
The street once bloomed with bars and gaudy signs.
King Coal fueled all, but all but few were poor.
The tired sad men trudged into the mines
And hacked the rock until there was no more.
The town is now a used-up grimy husk
The buildings tumble down in grim despair.
The phantom steps of miners in the dusk
Still ring in ghostly echoes on the air.
The road in mocking testament still passes
A town built on a dream which lies in ashes.

-Peggy Charnick

ANDERSON FIELD

Beyond the lawn,
where athletes strive
against limitations
of the will and of the flesh,
stand of trees
redoubles anxious cries
from those who find there
Christ raised upon the cross.

-Jeff Johnson



JOURNEYMAN

-August 14, 1991 Ocean City, NJ

I.
Two figures
bobbing like gulls
- now clearer Men at play,
riding the ocean's tide lunacy in daylight!

Moving, rolling
riding the rhythm
of wind and time
Measured to a moment's
scale.

Taking steps on fluid fields, hoping to harvest life at depths unseen.

IV.
Tasting and breathing the salty smoke from passage rites inscribed on the soul.

V.
Turning toward the force
of ocean's heaving breast.

Nursed by
Knowledge
from caverns
within,

VII. Following their heart.



NIGHTMARE

The preparation
The mare lies in watch,
Still for now
Slowly the body wakes
To the power of cruelty
Hasten to defense!

The point
Mirrors of the future, little shall it be
Mares of red on tattered walls,
Lie in wait for a stolen moment
Breath taken, though dread be not
For I in he, the mare runs rapid
Exhume O' fear,
The trounce!
These eyes scatter, strewn to lesser
Yet more powerful than strength
To hope to heal I ask no longer
Weep O' shadow and bear the burden
Fit be not this temporal world
Forever be on guard!

The triumph
Lie still vicious villain
No home be cast
For the next victim awaits.

-Chris Jones



The mind-is lost
The heart-is aching
The soul-is longing
And my arms are reaching to you.

-Jenn Garceau