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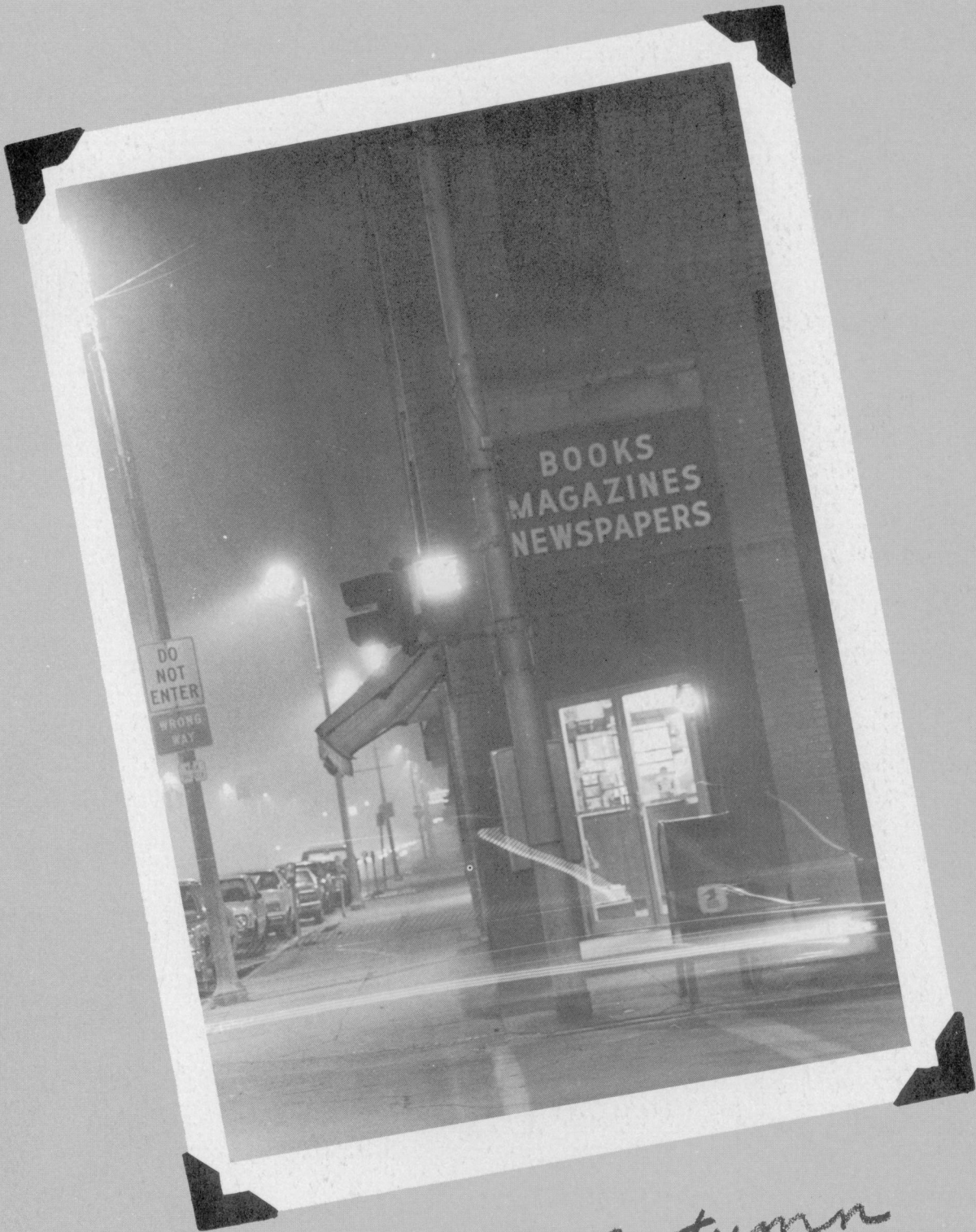
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Opus, Autumn
1984

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PHOTOGRAPHS

John D. Armstrong	Cover, 24
Kelly Nolan	5, 8, 14, 17

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HOPE COLLEGE — HOLLAND, MICHIGAN
DECEMBER 1984

I Heard on the Radio That the Trees in New York City Are Suffering from Stress

There's a rumour today
that autumn has come
to the city
breathing its chills
finely around the edges
making our air seem somehow purified
somehow more breathable,
it is a false hope
and while the mercury dips lower
and lower
the things that inhabit the streets
try to die.

Susan Marks

Letter to Stafford from Holland

Dear Bill: You remember this bar.
God knows why you were in Michigan
that winter, or any winter.
I can only try to imagine
the faces of those who knew,
when you slipped in: tears of wind
and ice in your eyes. Stamping snow
from your galoshes. English professors.
Academic fools doing what they do in Oxford,
Portland, Holland. Drinking
and stripping away layers of their selves.
To you, perhaps, a hint of warmth,
this bar. On a gusty Tuesday in December.
And me, that February. Chipping away
at a pitcher of Bud. Swallow by swallow.
Both of us groping for warmth
through fingertips, inside of wrists,
whispering that sacred poem only two
can know. Your poem. That very first poem.
Screw life, Bill.
I'm back here again gripping an edge of a table.
The place is remodeled. We know that.
Last night I actually dreamed you were here.
And after you spoke to the faculty,
you wanted to play games. In this bar,
the poems, certain faces, and dreams,
I know you. I touch your black-penned name
in this book and shiver
at the first word: "Our."
Speechless in Holland, Mary.

Mary DeJonge

Jennifer at Sixteen

Jennifer at sixteen
Wishes to throw open
The bay window that faces west

Wishes to run up this windy canyon
Wants to glide over it

Needs to stand in her front yard
doing handsprings in the long grass

Watches the moon every night
Knows the winds

Walks behind her shadow
Stepping gently between cracks
in the concrete

The threads of light
That slip through shutters
Cast fog across eyelids
of the morning.
The world
is not the same.

John D. Armstrong

The Incredible E.

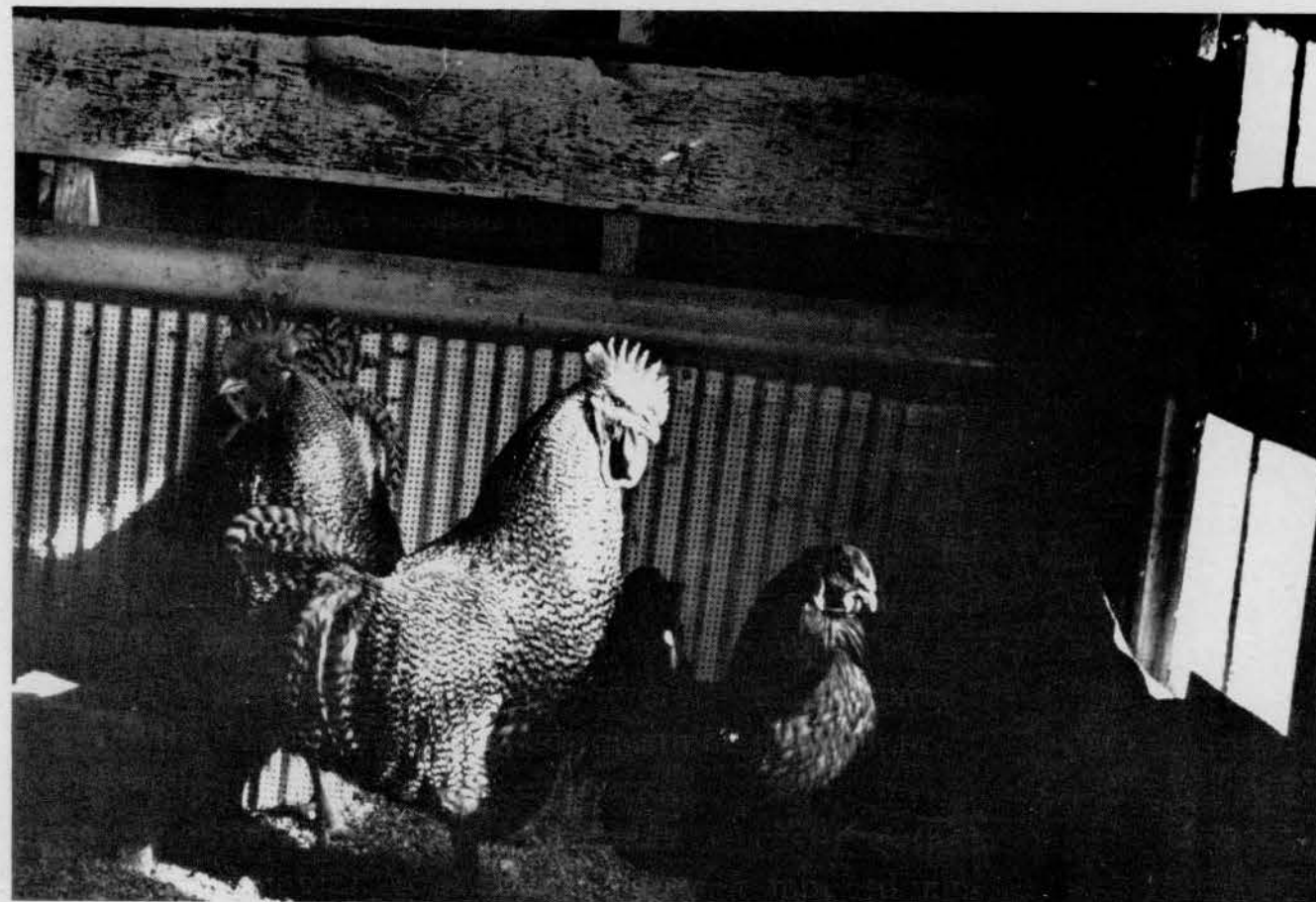
Classical music falls from the painted pipe ceiling
slides down the walls postered with Monet
Van Gogh, and Degas
I come here after hours at the factory
Have a book, or paper and pen, a warm bowl of chili

And a bagel that the owner delivers
business is slow, and besides, he likes me
I watch a thin, well-dressed man walk away
wonder what he thinks of the greasy-clothed woman
me, who comes in every day after four
my eyes vaguely glow when he passes by

Other regulars smile, nod in recognition
let eyes take hold long enough to warm
Trees, Y, and library are all in view
despite the fact that this is near city-center

Through the glass, old men sleep on tree trunks
Dancers come in bright colored for coffee
Day-bound ones take their time as their own
The factory fades long before I go home.

Julie Moulds



When the Man in the House Around the Corner Raises Chickens

And keeps a rooster in his backyard
people are not usually
concerned
unless he lives in Manhattan
and you are on the eighth
floor of an office building
and the rooster is screaming
during office hours.

Susan Marks

What Kids of the '80s Do When They Feel Like Kids of the '60s

They fight with their parents and
try to get arrested for not
registering for the draft.

They can't.

and write bad poetry
lacking images
but all the images have died.

There is no vision.

they listen to music of the sixties
but don't really understand
and listen to music of the eighties
and don't understand at all.

Is there anything to understand?

and read about John Lennon
and wish and dream
and wish they could drop out
but realize they can't afford it.

Whoever could?

and then
they go back
to studying their accounting.

A wise choice.

Brian T. Gardner

Common Fever

I sneezed you out of my system last summer
But now it's September, and you're back:
the red, runny nose; the swollen,
sore chartreuse eyes; the scaly,
scratchy skin; the A-A-A-ACHOOS.
Your ragweed scent drives me crazy.
It sends me reeling into pollen fields and
ragweed hills.
I tried antihistamines, a series of hate
injections, and air conditioning.
I sold Varnish.
I even got a new synthetic-foam pillow.
The Doc says when the freeze sets in it'll
be gone with the wind.
Now it's winter and it's cough drops,
cough syrup, ACHOO, and all the rest.

Corrina Bellefeuille



Trying to Explain

Your name is like pulling leeches
from between my toes
and the taste of sunflower seed casserole
against the back of my throat.

You remind me of the pus
on the underside of my cat
and stringy pink gum
on fresh asphalt in July.

With each hair I pick
from my moldy shower drain,
I recite your name.

So, I damn you

to suburbs,
1.8 perfect children,
a faithful Labrador retriever,
mutual funds,
IBM,
the Yellow Pages,
Sports Illustrated,
eightendaysseventeennightsinAustriaGermanyFranceItalyandSpain,
a shiny Toro lawnmower, and
by now ancient love poems.

For a start.

Mary DeJonge

The Old Man at the Market

He's always there shuffling
about the Spring Street Market
pushing his walker and grey head
this way and that
as if he's shopping
but never buys.

Sometimes he chooses a banana
takes it to the boney girl
at the register and she nods
charging it to the account
she keeps somewhere
in the empty air between them.

On busy days he patrols
the corner as if
guarding the market
protecting the boney girl
from the hoards of other
street people
who never invade.

Today he has a broom
pushes the dirt around on the sidewalk
balances the inches his walker
stoops still in the dust
the colour of his skin
and clothes.

For a moment he is the market
--supports the bustle
of sandwich makers
cheese cutters
boney girls behind the register
in his own soundless
and colourless way.

Susan Marks

Monday

Il faisait nuit, je descendais l'avenue du Maine. . .

Jean-Paul Sartre
La Nausée

I.

The day before, it rained. Rivulets of sour water still fight their way through soggy chestnut leaves clogging the gutters of the avenue du Maine. Damp awnings flap and smack in the wind, and oily plastic shelters racks of postcards outside the *papeterie* as I exit the metro at Gaité and hunch down the avenue toward rue Daguerre.

II.

At 94, rue Daguerre
trails of white chalk
on the asphalt sidewalk
remember how the left arm
cradled the head
and the right foot pointed accusingly
at the Algerian *épicerie*,
at the world,
at me.

III.

Spanish tangerines, bloated
figs, mint, waxy
yellow peppers, Greek
dates, mottled October
pears huddle in damp oak boxes
tended by Algerians.
I always cross the street--
to avoid the stares, the smell,
flirtatious odors.

Except today.
When I slouch on by
to avoid the chalk
on my side of the street.

IV.

Like a cold, grey woman
I crunch my body
into the corner of the seat
and stare

at my umbrella
oncoming white lights,
a smudge.

I stare, blink my eyes
a hundred times. Faster,
faster, faster
around a last curve.

And run up the stairs
violently sucking in the night,
pummeling it deep inside my lungs.

Mary DeJonge

Zack 1

(after John Berryman)

After Zack borrowed a thermometer
that measured a small dog's whimpers in Texas
God came to him as a U.P.S. man
delivered his ending in a brown padded envelope

Surprise.

Zack had wanted to pour his brain out like concrete
carve happy hieroglyphics in the semi-solid with his big toe
Allow himself the bliss that Pascal had spoken of.

Didn't he know his guardian angel
ate the star he wished on for breakfast?

That his lover's heart burrowed like a termite
through moulding when she saw him?

(She left him today, with just the shed skin of her tarantula
the eight legs hairy and brown)

Misery strangles him but like a chicken
his body keeps twitching
He wishes for caskets; nightmares of women
in his arms complaining of morning sickness

Too bad he didn't open his mail.

Julie Moulds

Zack on Vacation

(after John Berryman)

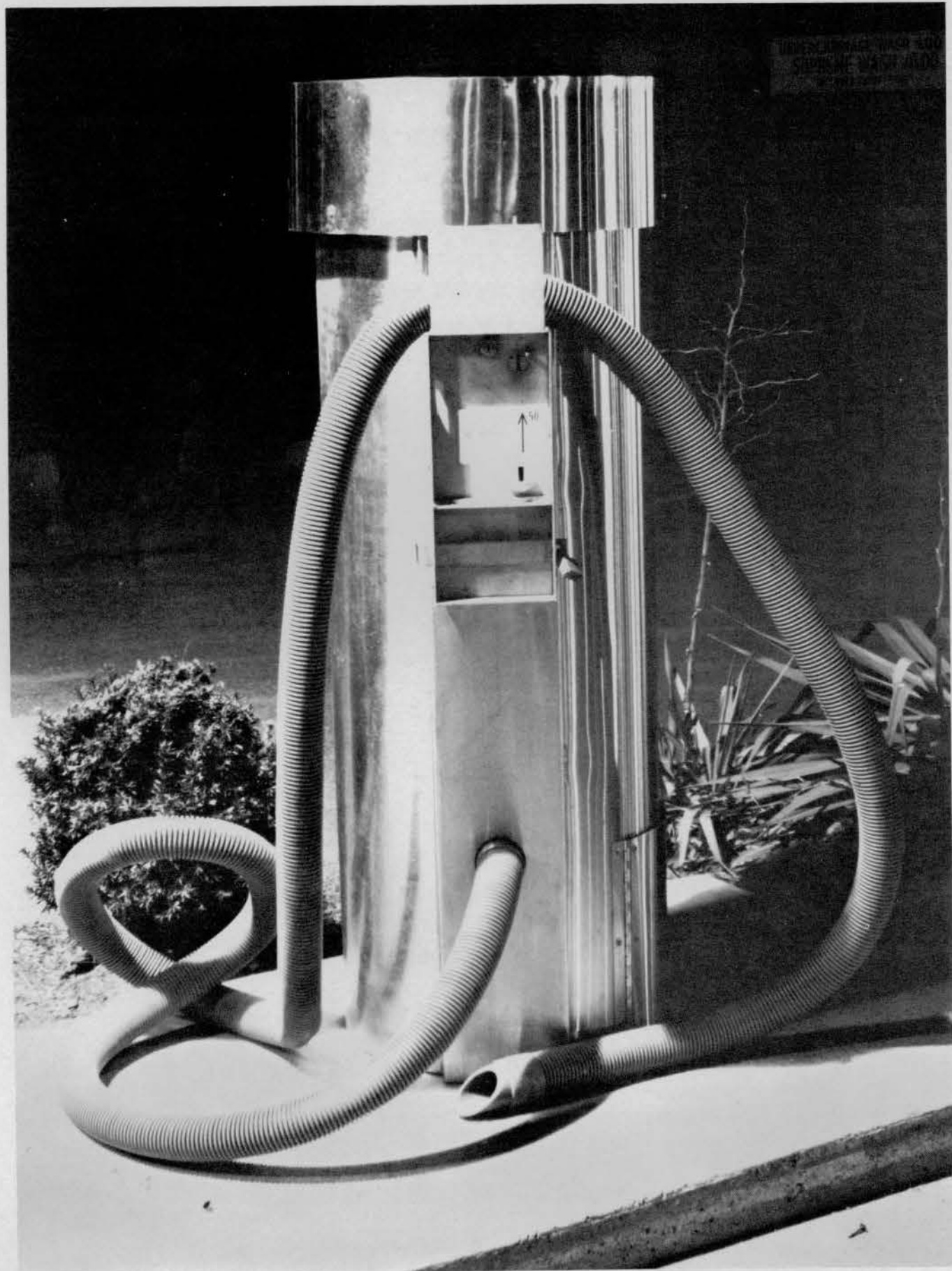
Zack feels cruel. Imagines the shag
continuous caterpillars to crush
A fish rots in his heart's boat--
he doesn't mind the smell
(Hell, he mutters. At least it's my own)

The swans on the hotel wall
have clipped wings
otherwise they'd leave his single

He leafs through a magazine
found beneath the Gideon's
notices spit on a photoed baby's chin
puts it down. Holds instead
a warm skunky beer. (Zack
has no hair. His checks bulge out
like rubber balls)

A woman hurries past his window--
amber rivers his stubbly neck
He's been here a week; doesn't use his door
wishes he lived in the brochure--
it had promised he'd do more than
(she had hoped he wouldn't) drool.

Julie Moulds



A Homage
To Carlos: Custodian

You always push a broom
as wide as the hall.
Plod in black steel toed
work boots
that follow the rest of you
through the corridors,
Roll your own cigarettes
like your ancestors in Havana
Stain your fingers
with American tobacco
Smudge your cracked glasses
Pocket a crumpled handkerchief

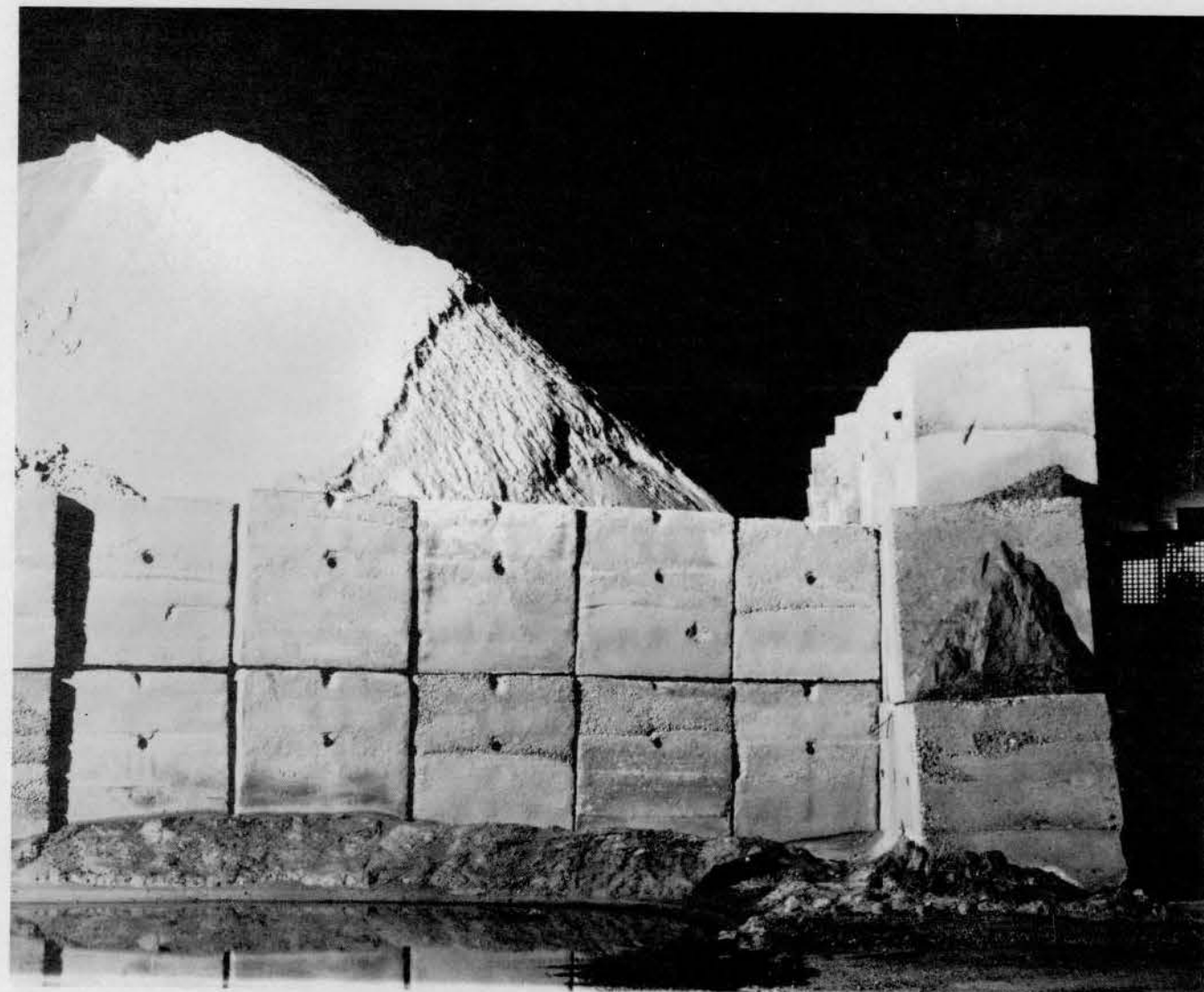
Squint at the horizon
that disappears like sunset
into the hands
of the clock.

John D. Armstrong

Thanksgiving Day

On the Petit Pont
in Paris
six Japanese men
making a movie
struggle with a
hand-painted
silk screen
in the wind.

Mary DeJonge



Doggerel After History of the English Language

Come and listen to a story 'bout a man named Bede.

Who wrote lots of stuff that we really love to read.

Wrote about the Picts, how they ran around and screamed,

And all the Romans wished that it was just a dream.

Weird men.

Screaming loud.

And painted blue.

Well. . .

King Vortigern called the mercenaries in.

The Angles, and the Saxons, and the Jutes and all their kin.

They drove out the Picts and they settled down to stay.

And that's how we got all the words we speak today.

Ann Bower

To Debbie: Something Deep and Profound

Take One:

I saw your face brighten as I approached.

My face brightened in return.

Then your bright face passed by,

And thence approached that jerk Robert.

Ah, well.

Take Two:

I saw your face brighten as I approached.

My face brightened in return.

Then you spat right into my bright smiling face,

And said, "You're icky."

Ah, well.

Take Three:

I saw your bright smiling face.

It showed concern as I approached.

"What be Wrong? . . . White Woman?"

I asked with glee, And you responded,

"has the VD person contacted your parents yet?"

"no," I responded, "Why should they?"

"Oh, I'm sorry Brian. It was your brother
they should have contacted."

Contrived? Yeah.

Ah, well.

Take Four:

I saw your face brighten as I approached.

My face brightened in return

We met, Our eyes met. Our lips met.

After a long passionate kiss, we held each other close.

"I love you, Brian," You said. "Never before
nor ever again will I know such love."

We sighed mutally, then kissed again.

Then I awoke

Ah, well.

Brian T. Gardner

The Eulogy

They finally won. The residents of Upper Arlington finally won the battle — the Sciota Trails had to close its doors, permanently.

The Trails wasn't a typical bar — there were no barroom brawls, bottled Michelob was 75 cents, there wasn't a band only a jukebox that played everything from "On the Road, Again" to "New York, New York," and its customers weren't disco-dancers or ritzy socialites but rather softball players. It was the most prominent softball bar in Columbus.

In the summer, the dark wooden floor resembled a peg board from the hundreds of pairs of cleats trampling, dancing, and stumbling across it. The air smelled not of beer and stale cigarettes but rather dust, softball diamond dust. With every Saturday victory party, there was a Saturday drink-until-you-drop defeat party; but it really didn't matter, by the third round everyone had something to celebrate — that great hit, that snowcone catch, that slide, next week's victory.

In the winter, conversations were concentrated on "remember whens" of the summer. Elbows still stuck to the picnic tables from sticky rags that mopped up Michelobs and Schnaaps. The jukebox still flashed "Tecquilla Sheila" and "California Girls" for 25 cents. A paradise for softball players.

But this paradise was not only lost, it was never regained. Residents surrounding the old horse barn bar wanted to increase their property value. That meant the Trails must close. Fighting all the way to the Ohio Supreme Court, the Columbus landmark struck out — Arlington residents one, the Trails zip.

I'll miss the Trails. I'll miss the carousel horse staring at me from his perch on the center rafter. I'll miss the breathalyzer that commanded in red "Don't Drive!" I'll miss the minibowling machine that could never score correctly; it didn't matter though, I always lost. I'll miss sticky elbows, Willie Nelson and Frank Sinatra, cheap beer, my parking space, and the memories of that catch, that throw, that game. I'll miss the sign, the one that hung above the bar in between the Jack Daniels and the Jose Cuervo Tecquilla, that said, "the four saddest words ever heard in a bar are the words 'this bar is closed'."

Jill Riepenhoff

Harlequin Grotesque

A girl of 18 is walking across the stage picking daisies and laying them in her basket. The girl is slender with long blond hair tied in a light blue ribbon which matches her dress. She has bare feet and a very contented smile on her face. As she walks through the meadow she sings softly to herself.

Enter a tall, dark man of 30. He's wearing a black hat, suit, and trench coat. He stands for a moment, stage right, watching the girl and twirling a big, black mustache. Slowly he walks towards the girls. She is not conscious of his approach. When he gets directly behind her he grabs her arm and yanks her around to face him.

Girl: (surprised) Oh my! You startled me.

Man: Oh.

Girl: Yes. I was just walking along humming a little tune. I never expected anyone would come by.

Man: Oh.

Girl: In fact, I was just thinking how nice it was to be alone, enjoying the lovely sunshine, and picking daisies for my sick and lonely grandmother who lives in the woods beyond.

Man: How sweet.

Girl: I never expected anyone to come along. Especially not anyone as tall and handsome as yourself. (She reaches up and caresses his chest.) My what a big, strong man you are.

Man: Look kid. . .

Girl: What nice eyes you have.

Man: Now cut that out. (He grabs her roving hands.)

Girl: Why? Don't you like it when I touch you? Don't you want me. . .

Man: Listen. . .

Girl: Don't you want me to touch you? I can make you very happy.

Man: I just. . .

Girl: Really happy. I know I can. Just let me.

Man: Your Grandmother. What about your Grandmother?

Girl: Who? No, I don't think she could. She's getting older now. (She reaches up and clasps her arms around his neck, pressing her body close.)

Man: (trying to get out of her grasp) I just wanted. . .

Girl: (moving ever close) I know what you wanted.

Man: (still struggling) No. I mean. . .

Girl: You don't have to pretend. I can make you very happy. I can give you what you want. I can give you more than you ever dreamed of.

Man: (finally breaking her grip. He holds her wrists behind her back and reaches into his coat. He pulls out handcuffs and locks them over her wrists.) There.

Girl: Hey! I'm not into this kind of kinky stuff.

Man: (flashes his open wallet in front of her face.) FBI ma'am. You're on government property. You have the right to remain sil- (the girl brings up her knee and nails him in the groin. He crumples and falls to the ground groaning. The girl slips off the cuffs, picks up the daisies and walks off stage.)

Isabella Griffin

Reaching In

The battered red-and-white tram rattled past the sidewalks carpeted with umbrellas. "Al-serbach-strah-sah," hummed the mechanical conductor. Kate squashed her nose and chin against the cold, rain-stripped window. This plunging rain had to be the first forceful, nearly violent thing she'd encountered in Biedermeier Vienna. Land of café lectures. Herr Doctor Professor Beim warned her, chubby finger cautiously placed before the gold-toothed smile, "Ah! So! The beidermeier spirit captures you, Kate! Soon you become Viennese! You ignore your homework, you are late for lectures. This is not an American student. You like this Biedermeier way, no? Ahso, you must stay in Vienna." Stay in Vienna. That was fine with Kate. Vienna held magic; enchanted dust glowed in the festive palais-lined streets, in the smooth sheen of the velvet-coated horses, in the smiles of the city. Even in the rain.

"Sah-nee-tore-ee-um, Hay-rah." Kate jumped into the aisle as the tram whickered and wheezed to a stop. Impatient for the obstinate doors to creak apart, she swung around the clean aluminum pole. Sanitorium Hera. The doors convulsed and began to fold open. Rain smacked the soaked pavement. Oh, Hera, goddess, keep all of us, the weak and umbrellaless out of your sanitorium. Stop the rain. Kate bounded down the steps into the downpour.

Run! Her mother's scream echoed at the base of her skull. Chill! Ruined clothes! Influenza! Pneumonia! A date in two hours!! Peppering her light blue slacks with muddy water, Kate dashed across the street. Gregory would die laughing at her helpless flight. Wait a minute! She stood in a puddle for a moment of reasoning. It's July, Mom, high eighties, no chance for pneumonia. Permanent press clothes. And I need a shower before Greg picks me up anyway! The ghost grey sky cried into her upstretched, welcoming arms. Okay, Hera, let it rain!

Hera's wet fingers darkened and tossed Kate's curls before the girl had squished down two soggy blocks. Warm as blood the water

trailed down her neck and chest. Gregory would die laughing at her, casually strolling along in this torrent. Queen of inclement weather, he would tease, devil's fire in his clear blue eyes. God, if he only strolled beside her, she'd blaze right back and call him Zeus, king of thunder. And they'd both die laughing at each other. Like they'd laughed last night, stumbling from the wine cellar in search of a taxi. Kate smiled to the rain because she couldn't remember what the joke had been. And who cared anyway? I love you, rain.

A drop kissed her on the nose. If she squeezed her eyes shut tight and cocked her right ear to the rain, she could hear Greg whisper it again. I love you, too, Kate. She clamped her lips together, muzzling the joyous squeal. Her tense eyelids bolted open, and she darted a look about. The saturated streets were empty. Good thing. Anyone who saw her listening to a torrent would bustle her off to Hera's place. She poked herself along toward home.

Her squirrely roommate had cheered her on to it. Go for it, Kate! He hasn't got another girlfriend, so he's yours. Go for it! But good God, he's my friend! The stress was enough to make you lose weight. And that's not easy with Herr Beim spooning Sacher torte to you every day. Kate grinned at the rain. Right? The rain laughed.

Kate adored Gregory. She had adored him since the first day in Economics 101. The senior basketball star had teased the freshmen girl. She had teased right back. Love bloomed. Matter-of-factly pursing her checks, Kate stated the case like a prosecuting attorney. No doubt of guilt, I shall produce witnesses. The whole world kows; even the rain knows. The question is, does Gregory?

"Now he does!" sang the girl to her rain. Bravery musted through a liter of wine, she had told him and he didn't laugh. He didn't laugh. I love you, too, Kate. Warm deep blue oceans, his eyes, reaching in.

She hated to admit it, but she knew for a fact,

absolutely, totally, positively, they would get married. Trumpet fanfare to announce the bride! Groom, gleaming sword at his side, smiling down the aisle at the gowned self! Two short skips, and Kate began to run, slapping the wet sidewalk, tearing down the aisle, towards her apartment door, through Greg's arm, into the dry lobby. The building shuddered as the heavy iron door clanked shut behind her.

She simply had to stop dreaming. Come down from cloud nine-squared, girl, and make yourself a presentable date, or he'll turn tail and dash down these ninety-three steps. Her thighs groaned as she wound up the three flights of stairs. No lights, no roommate. The dear had scrambled, granting privacy to the evening. Invaluable friend. Priceless wonder of intuition. Jiggle key in door. Three thirty! Greg in an hour and a half and his date a drowned rat. She giggled into the kitchen and imagined a devil's sparkle in his laughing eyes.

Kate peeled the clinging clothes from her limbs, plopping them into the bathtub next to the stove. A wonder in plumbing, this apartment. Designed for efficiency. She padded into the bedroom and found a note on her pillow. The tooth fairy? "Have a hot time, you lucky woman, you, and don't lose anything you can't replace. Nance." *Not* the tooth fairy. Priceless wonder of intuition.

"Hi, Ben!" she quipped, cloaking herself in a heavy robe. Benjamin, teddy bear extraordinaire, life-long companion, bed-mate and king of the seventy-two bear empire she had collected onto American bedroom shelves, bid her a silent salutation. Kate studied his face. "You're upset." He didn't deny it. "Look, Ben I'm eighteen years old. I can't sleep with you for the rest of my life." He didn't argue. "You're just jealous. Aren't you?" Not a sound. "Now don't tell me you're not speaking to me." Silence. Heart flooded with compassion, Kate scooped her friend from the bed and smashed him in a hug. "I still love you, Ben. Didn't I bring you to Europe with me?" He conceded the argument.

After settling the old bear comfortably underneath the eiderdown quilt, Kate padded back to the kitchen to shower, do laundry and make a cup of tea, all at once. Miracles of modern efficiency, these kitchen bathing facili-

ties. Three sharp knocks rattled the window in the door before she got her kettle on the stove. Nance had locked herself out again. "Yep, yep. Coming!" Kate twisted the door open. Gregory! You're not Nance! What time is it?

"What time is it?" she demanded.

Puzzled, he checked his watch, "Three forty-two." He grinned at her and winked.

God, don't wink; I die when you do that. "Don't we have a date at five o'clock?" This has to be a trick.

He stared at his shoes. A long way for a basketball player. "Can I come in?" Love, deep, and something urgent in those eyes. Kate feared. Something. She stepped aside.

She trotted behind his determined stride into the bedroom. "Benjamin, my buddy!" Gregory cradled the bear and sat on the bed. His eyes, blue, deep, love, there was love there, but somehow empty. Something haunted. Kate dreaded ghosts.

She whispered love. "Do you need a hug?"

Absently he tugged Benjamin's ear. "No. Not yet."

Somebody had died. She knew it. Somebody must have died. She waited.

"Kate, I have to tell you something."

Somebody had died.

"I love you, Kate." Not very much, not more than life itself, not without end, amen. Simple love. She wanted that.

"I love you, too, Greg." I think that's what I'm supposed to say.

Gregory sucked in a swift breath, deep, as if trying to burst his lungs. No go. He blew it out. "I love you and trust you." Okay, Kate leaned forward, digging her heels, bracing herself for the blow. Somebody had died. Be brave, Kate. Be supportive. Be gentle.

"Kate, I'm a homosexual." Blood thundered in her ears. She couldn't hear him. What? What?? The echo called back from the base of her skull: homosexual. Adrenaline coated her throat.

"Oh." What time is it? Three fifty-one. Has the rain stopped? It's dark in here. She switched on the overhead light. Bulb must be out. Still to damn dark! Blue eyes absorbing every move. "Well, I'm glad you told me." Those hands, why don't they touch my face?

"Kate, I don't want to hurt you." He hugged

Benjamin tighter. "I'm sorry."

"Oh, God, Gregory, don't be sorry. You'll give yourself a complex." Laugh, damn you! Sparkle, wink at me! Gregory, where are you?

He rose and tenderly handed Benjamin to her. "Bye, Ben. Take care of him, Kate." Blue, blue, water. Has the rain stopped? "You can do it better than anyone. I'll see you tomorrow in class." He left.

The kettle must have nearly exploded by now. No? No. Who turned it off? Laundry. I'll never get it clean. It's so damned dark in here. Nance must have broken a bulb. Out. It's lighter outside. Jeans. T-shirt. No. No shoes. "Come on, Ben." Come on, bear.

The rain plunged into the buildings and

streets and Kate's jeans soon weighed like iron. She turned toward the tram stop, steps biting brutally into the sidewalk. "Nance is in town somewhere. I'll join her for dinner." Find her quick! Hurling water she splashed up to the stop and the red-and-white tram lumbered away. Six minutes until the next.

"I'll walk." She looked at her friend the bear, brown glass eyes empty. "You wait here for the tram." She stopped holding him, and the bear fell on the track. She walked away. It figures it would rain.

Poor Gregory. His eyes were so empty. She knew, absolutely, positively, somebody had died.

Elizabeth A. Trembley



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"Washed and Dried
Along Lake Michigan"
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