



**Cauldron**

Fall/Winter 1978

Colette -  
¿Que pasa  
sees-toor?  
I'll see you  
este verano.  
Luv

Aime  
Sauer

**Cauldron**

Fall/Winter 1978

*Editors*

Lisa Springer

Beth Ryan

*Production Manager*

William Watson

by Diane Seuss

## The Autobiography Of Kid Koon

If you wants to know  
I tells you.

I were born in a log church  
out in the middle a nowhere  
and it were one of them  
Saturday in Venice churches  
where they don't eat meat  
and eyeshadow's a sin.  
And that church were full  
of seats from the Rialto movie house  
and stacks of old rubbers and baby shoes,  
ain't kiddin.

Jean my mama was a red-head nut  
from Lousiana with scars all over her face  
from a cat she tried to set afire with a kitchen match.  
I'm her 13th baby and Jean name me Kid  
cuz she weren't smart enough to come up with  
no more than 12 names.

I'm a pretty smart cookie though,  
flat as a pancake and proud of it,  
used to have big crazy visions  
of saints and rodeos when I were  
still in the crib,  
and if that ain't smart,  
you tell me what is.

I always have been a sucker for rodeos.  
Man, daddy, we never knowed where he went.  
Jean my mama says, hmmm, she don't know neither  
but thinks he's down in Texas  
earnin a shit load, don't have no faces to feed,  
hell no, he down in the hot country  
where armadillos is like lap dogs

When I were 8 years old  
found a lectric guitar and amp  
in the junkyard and toted it in the wagon  
down to Frank's Dairy Delite.  
Frank was damn good at fixin' up appliances  
and he said he'd get it goin  
if I'd take off my clothes and hug him.  
You see, everybody here does it young,  
Brenda J. when she were 9.  
I spose cuz down here in mole country  
you either do it or it gets done to you,  
ain't kiddin, I seen a pair of three year olds  
frenchin on the viaduct.

Anyhow, soon as I got that guitar home  
painted it turquoise and was playin  
Louie Louie like a pro.

Only man I ever loved  
name was Noah Insane  
and you stress the In— Insane.  
His ancestors was from the Alps mountains  
and he wore a snake round his neck  
like it were a tie,  
he was dumb and hairy as a wolfspider.  
Everybody I ever screwed  
either hung hisself  
or moved to Florida.  
I bet there's a whole colony of em  
down at Daytona,  
and another bunch down in hell.

I won some mail order art lessons  
by drawin a picture of Bambi and sendin it in.  
They just send you drawins of Popeye and stuff  
and you copy em, no big thing,  
but everybody can't say they got  
a genuine art degree.  
Also sent in \$12.50 and got a card  
says I'm an ordained Minister of God.  
So I'm a artist and a preacher  
and that's bout as much as you can handle  
in one life.

I had one baby, name Diangelo Honolulu Coon the First  
Diangelo after that Italian on Combat  
Honolulu cuz his daddy was from Honolulu  
where they grow honest to god coconuts  
and cook pigs out on the beach  
in bathtubs full of fresh pineapple rings.  
Diangelo were a runt, and croaked,  
and I buried him in the junkyard  
and marked it with a steerin wheel from a DeSoto,  
and that's that.

I done bout everything,  
was even in the nut house for awhile.  
And man, all them folks jumpin through windows  
and stickin tacks in their feet  
and all the men thinkin they's Jesus  
and all the women thinkin' they's ugly  
I thought, hell,  
this ain't no place for Koon,  
I should be eatin a taco  
and watchin the Elvis special.

Only two more things I wanta do.  
One is to meet up with that Sambo character  
and ask him how tiger butter tasted.  
And the other is to  
bust through the blood cell of God  
and that's bein dead  
so  
this here's been the story of my life. -3-

by Diane Seuss

## Kid Koon Tells About Annie

After Annie croaked,  
food — it all taste like *mutton* to me  
I ain't kiddin  
Cow in the mouth, tastin like mutton  
that's understandable yeah  
but I go out to the garden  
to test it on them sweet peppers Annie set out  
and lordy, them too,  
like mutton with the fur hooked on.

Annie my honey pie,  
she wore the sweetest orange slip  
and threw together a salad fit for a  
queen  
ain't kiddin now  
bird seed, even,  
that chick would sprinkle in my dish  
and it were good as gold.  
Didn't bother with the intestines, man,  
that stuff sunk right to my soul.

Annie quit eatin though  
cuz Satan's eatin on her.  
Who ever heard of a grapefruit in a body?  
Well here we is livin happy on her ten acres  
when somethin grows up  
big as a grapefruit says the doctor  
in the place where child's grow  
in Annie's body  
and I think, shit,  
is this some whippin we's gettin?  
She say no, it's like a garden growin  
and some weed's crowdin her out.

We ain't got the bucks for no hospital  
so she dies at home  
and some bitch fat as god hisself  
teach me how to give her the shots.  
Her butt gets skinny, man,  
like two ole walnuts.  
We make it though, make it comfy and true,  
I play little tunes on the flute  
and she say I give the best shots in Louisiana.

I brang the goat right in the bedroom  
and milks it and rubs her legs with milk  
you know, good as I could do,  
till one night she whisper  
"hey kid, I see a bein of light in the corner  
and it got the Lord in it"  
I don't see nothin but cobwebs  
but from then on Annie can't talk  
just write down on the rainbow pad  
what she needs.

Ambulances ain't been invented yet  
so what to do when she starts gaspin  
but give the shot and play the flute?  
She writes on the pad  
"good"  
and I can't feel air comin outa her nose.  
Annie's dead I say  
and start quick cookin up some soup,  
put it in my mouth and it's *mutton*.

Annie's a light load out to the hole I dug.  
Me too, I'm losin weight.  
This place ain't no garden of eden,  
sure nuff.

by *Blue Oldham*

## **Surrounded**

It is a desert around you  
flat then rising slightly  
miles never to be crossed away.  
Cacti grow everywhere  
except where you are standing;  
they possess various  
individual and special characteristics,  
of which you have made abundant mental notes.  
Birds are jeering and taunting you horribly,  
but with remarkable intelligence.  
Everything is very coarse,  
even the air: the sand is tearing your feet  
as you shift, wishing  
for an improbable winter.  
The birds dive and come up  
with sweet-looking red fruits which they swallow;  
there are no fruits within your reach.  
Dry bird droppings are everywhere, but  
all the recent ones are nearby;  
as they dry they have a distasteful aroma,  
but you are getting used to it.

by Patty Gossman

## **Makola Market No. 2**

The women torn of cloth  
will sell their children in the market,  
tie them into bundles  
of rags and basket straw  
and weigh them in the baskets  
on their heads. The children  
smile like coconuts cracking  
in the sun. Before night,  
they will sell you their eyes.  
Market women scrub cassava,  
yams and tie-dyes pale  
in the river's blood. They wash  
the children too, scouring  
them like colored rags that swirl  
at their feet. Surrounding  
them, the houses  
never move. The women's hands  
move quick as fish  
wringing out their children,  
stretching them across the bamboo  
crosses, slatted sugar cane  
raw as ribs. Rag children sleep  
in fits like flies, and dry  
before noon. In Takoradi,  
men will trade their hands  
for leather. The houses turn  
their backs on them, shrugging off the eyes  
of children, to wear away  
like women baptized in a river,  
ground to shell beneath the sand.  
At night the children bleed-their colors  
in the river. The women wring their hands.

by Dennis Kurtzhals

### for every face

for every face: a picture show  
made some year when the soldiers fought  
and the crowds grew hungry  
for lack of bread

so we prayed  
like actors in the hero's role  
while the others sat along the avenue  
and begged

we looked on and stole the chairs  
to burn for wood  
even forgot the pain and shabby clothes  
for a seat that cost 15 cent

and listened to a story  
not our daily routine  
sitting back in 1943  
when the moment flew and  
we missed the afternoon train

like a river  
carried us back  
we did not grow old  
unless we thought to leave  
and turn our backs on death.

## **for sarah...i never knew**

death wears a mask of shrouded cloth  
to disguise his fear of time  
stretching out -out of the year- greening  
as, he observes no color to justice  
or the yearly seasons dictating youth  
to weather the seas, age one day empties

instead, with our faces turned  
he steals the waking grasses  
(the dew with friends watching)  
and makes pigeons fly against a sterile window -away-  
away from the living

while ahead, he hides  
a blacken night beneath  
sheets painted white in an earthen house  
made to hollow out the flesh once  
so young, o' innocent  
where dreams collect dust  
and you travel an empty space  
with no need of books to teach  
you, the smallness of man's ways  
here embraced.

look!  
we've leaves stuck in a book  
preserved in plastic,  
only our memories grey.  
see our faces fading  
breaking down our backs  
like waves  
our faces fading breaking down our backs

by Ann Hobart

## Departures

When you left we stood by the river.  
Today, walking along its banks,  
I remember the sound  
of train whistles in Kalamazoo  
And how a friend had said that his  
life was determined by those departures.  
That he woke and fell asleep to  
the whine of the morning and  
evening runs.

Now, watching the dark water work  
its erosive way  
I am reminded how much we  
invest in these separations.  
The growing distance which swallows  
the last wail of night trains,  
The stone's pull at the heart  
towards the mud choked bottom.

In the autumn, after the burial,  
His bicycle was hoisted  
To the barn rafters, handles down,  
Like the antlers of a dead buck  
And he imagined that the spokes of its  
Single wheel, spinning aimlessly round the axle  
Brought some strange vision to that cold eye.

Stopping years later  
At the abandoned windmill  
He watched its arms tilt  
in the wind and draw  
Another summer to itself.  
But between that aerial turning  
And the pump at his feet,  
The shaft dangled,  
Splintered beyond all use.  
Still, he cupped his hands  
And waited for the flow.

by Janet Moore

### Poem for my Father

Poor man  
got a new family now  
follow you around  
like dogtags  
clack  
and clatter like broken  
crockery  
on the new linoleum  
Don't blame me  
it's the color of blood  
dried into chips  
Poor man couldn't get  
away  
he's so tired  
I didn't start any war,  
but this is bitter as rust  
In the mouth of a baby.

## **Atonement**

White and warm, this day  
is thick with sin.  
Like my people, it stands  
apart. We separate  
as would cream and whey.  
We are the one in many,  
the many in one.  
We teach our children ancient words.

The young one has two hands  
of butter.  
Smooth and plump as a cow's  
teats, her fingers draw her hair into  
a fountain  
at the nape of her neck  
again and again

her brother has a simple hand,  
a steel butterfly  
resting on the unfinished arm.

The old men cover themselves,  
milking the tallit.  
Their hands speak holy words.  
The cantor wails for the pride  
and the sorrow.

*by Eva Fernandez*

They walked me on a leash  
When I was three.  
They took me to the beach  
And fell asleep in the sun.  
And I slipped the rope,  
Starting a holy sprint for the waves.  
But realizing no future there,  
I settled for the shallow horizon  
Where water meets earth instead of sky.  
I ran down the beach  
With no cap on  
Like a seagull in my sleek head.

Papa woke first  
From a dream of my absence  
Where all the family had been laid out  
Like a plot in the sand.  
He rose and walked calmly  
To the shallow line.  
He looked left, and then right,  
And then safely crossed  
But never reached a shore.

Mother woke last  
In a nightmarish spinning.  
Face down at first, with sand in her mouth,  
She raised herself up on her elbows  
And turned.  
And the sand spun around the water  
And the water around the sand  
And somewhere at the edge of planes  
A child ran her orbit,  
A crazed satellite burning on the interface.

## Deadly Influence

Our children play  
In these streets we have paved  
And find dead cats.  
The cats, with sloping faces,  
Stare their yellow-eyed contempt  
Like the old men on the corners in town  
Slanting their blinded heads  
To anything that moves.  
Our children come howling home.

There we console them,  
Feed them hamburgers and hotdogs  
And love for Uncle Edward  
Who sits and sucks his dinner through a straw.  
The cats are soon forgotten -  
Their cuspid teeth, their night-keen eyes,  
And the midday tar that holds them  
Unable to decay.

Later, at night, we go out in cars  
And not looking for children, find them.  
They are kneeling and the tar has set.  
They have vomited their suppers  
And the cats rise in vomit to be stroked.  
Our children, of course, are at home, asleep.  
Frantic, we drive in the streets.

by Eva Fernandez

## Thirteen

At the mill,  
Men sit on sacks of grain  
And stare at their hands,  
Counting the knuckles,  
Noting the joints in place.  
The people in town have closed their doors.  
They huddle in their bathtubs,  
The fat uncles and aunts  
Clasping all the fat they can.  
The babies suck their fingers and arms.  
Their tongues will always plead  
Against the rooves of the mouths;  
The teeth slicing through now  
Will always slice and sink.

Eating wheatnuts at breakfast,  
The people avert their eyes  
And cross themselves.  
Each lifts his finger from his right shoulder  
And holds the hand before him,  
Carefully counting.  
On Sundays they open their doors  
And go out to a Gypsy in bright scarves,  
A number keeper, a palm reader.  
The question they ask is always the same.

Ah, my beloved children,  
The severed head on the gatepost knows.  
The piles of mouse feet and tails, they know:  
In a ring where roosters fight,  
In a sleeve that waves in the breeze,  
In the market's walk-in freezer,  
In a sack of grain  
And a missing thumb.

Rhiannon, your articulate laugh  
Skips in the room  
Like a stone headed out for the other shore.  
And we come splashing behind  
Like so many pilgrims  
In our land-bound flippers,  
Hovering over the circles you leave,  
Diving, like all pilgrims,  
For the bull's eye,  
The dead center.

But you are new alive.  
Your sound skims on the surface  
Leaving simple shapes in its wake.  
For the immediate splash of breaking through  
You split a pathway in a cold lake,  
An immovable mirror that clamps shut behind you  
Like the two steel doors of a butcher's deep freeze.  
When your laughter dies,  
We are left frog-footed and confused  
On a sheet of ice as still as a string  
When the music is over.

Your father sets you down.  
The disturbance is gone.  
The lake seeks its level.  
The bull's eyes have grown too big to see.  
And the stone pauses at the surface,  
Then sinks, declining,  
To the wavering shapes at the bottom.



## Eclipse

by *Katie Fancher*

She didn't notice him standing next to her until he bumped her arm at the corner. She must have looked annoyed because he said "excuse me" in a very polite tone, almost as if he were talking to a child. She looked at him again suspiciously to see if he was mocking her. He was tall with carefully combed black hair, and he was wearing a gray suit. There was an oblong, yellow box sticking up out of his pocket and she noticed he was wearing a tie. The tie—even in summer—impressed her; at least he was not a bum.

The man raised his eyebrows and held out a pack of cigarettes. She was somewhat mollified to find that he was treating her like an adult and she accepted his offer. They were waiting in a crowd of noisy pedestrians near a lamppost. The traffic roaring by forced him to pantomime "May I give you a light?" She nodded and stared at the close-up indistinctness of his features as he lit her cigarette; his eyes were dark blurs and his face was pale, expressionless. Smoke swirled between their faces and she turned her head slightly to exhale.

The streetlight changed and the clump of people thinned. He kept walking beside her, making her nervous and flattered at the same time. When they were forced by the crowd to walk single file, the man led and she followed, staring blankly at the flapping hem of his jacket. They passed a big department store and came to the next corner. She watched him blow two streams of smoke out his nostrils; he was like a fascinating dragon, snorting perhaps, in memory of a princess.

"Nice day," he said as they crossed the street.

"Yeah," she said.

"Pretty crowded for a Tuesday."

She looked down the road as if there were something tremendously important in the distance.

He continued, "You must be in high school. Which one do you go to?"

"Central." They passed a music store. The people looking in the window were jiggling slightly to the vibrating sounds.

"Do you have a job?" he asked above the noise.

She shook her head, "No."

"I teach at the University..." he began, and then broke off suddenly. There was a pause. She glanced up at him, and then quickly away when she saw he was watching her. She knew what he wanted her to ask.

"What do you teach?" she said.

"Art, art history." The man was quiet for so long that she thought she could almost forget him. They had finished their cigarettes by the time he spoke again. "My name is Robert," he said with the same implied question.

"I'm Carol," she said.

He told her that she was a very honest-looking girl. "Or perhaps I should say woman," he added.

Carol looked down at her sandals.

"Probably children love and trust you," continued Robert slowly, as if he were telling her a favorite story. "You probably babysit for the neighborhood children, play little games with them to get them to cooperate...that's nice. You may even watch them grow up — get a few years older..."

Carol was not listening to the words. She recognized something in his tone. "Do you have kids?" she asked abruptly. They stopped walking, and she could tell by the way he smiled that he liked her question. She smiled back. Robert began to answer but his voice was drowned out by a greyhound bus spewing foul air. He turned his words into an exaggerated cough and with a motion of his arm he indicated they should go inside a nearby coffee shop. Carol hesitated and he touched her arm. Suddenly the noise and the heat tired her; she didn't want to argue with his persistent look and followed him in.

The room was small and sunken, dark and deserted. Carol could see the dim outline of some booths, and to her left she saw a row of small tables by the front window. The table tops were about at the level of the pavement outside. Robert

led Carol to one of the tables — the farthest one — and told her to have a seat. He said “coffee” to the waiter, speaking for them both. It was so quiet inside the restaurant that she began to feel apprehensive. I am here with a stranger, with a man twice my age, she thought. She liked the sound of that, though. A man twice my age, she repeated to herself. She wondered if the people outside could look down and see them leaning together, like accomplices, in the coffee shop.

Robert lit another cigarette. “Well,” he said, “What were we talking about when we were so rudely interrupted?”

Carol remembered but she didn’t want to sound too eager. “I don’t know,” she said. “Something about children.”

“Oh, yes, you asked if I were a father, and that’s when I knew you understood...” The waiter brought the coffee and set the cups down with a thud. Carol blushed.

Robert poured sugar into his coffee. “How old are you, Carol — if you don’t mind my asking,” he said.

She looked at her cup, at the steam curling above the black. “Sixteen,” she said.

“Sixteen,” repeated Robert. “Why, if you had been born into some primitive tribe they would have beaten the drums long ago, you’d be an old (and probably toothless) hag by now.” Carol smiled a little at the image and they sipped their coffee.

Robert put the box he had been carrying on the table. “Would you like to see some pictures — well, art slides I have just had developed?” He barely paused for her to agree, and then continued. “I’ve been to a lot of museums lately and I’m curious as to how they’ve turned out.” He opened the box and shuffled a few slides. “These we can skip,” he said, “They’re just details in black and white...” He tugged the frilly curtain back. “Let a little light in here,” he explained.

“I won’t tell you about them all,” he said. “There are too many and it would no doubt bore you.” She watched him hold the slide to the light, squint, and then pass the slide to her. She took the square carefully, ceremoniously, by the edges and copied his squint. It was a landscape. She put it down on the table in front of her as he handed her the next slide. This one was a sketch of a nude, fleshy woman. Carol glanced quickly across the table at Robert. She was relieved to

find he was concentrating seriously on the next slide. Robert gave her the next slide and the next, sometimes silent, sometimes commenting, and she fell into the rhythm of the lifting arm, the slight pause and then the drop. She felt mesmerized, as though he were conducting a strange, hypnotic waltz for her.

Carol started a new stack of discarded slides on the table. She was no longer focusing on the slides themselves; instead she was looking somewhere outside the window. Through the tinted frames of the slides she watched the legs of the people on the street change color. The angle — looking up at the people like that — made Carol feel vaguely guilty.

"Ah," Robert breathed, forcing her attention back inside. "Here's a good one."

She knew he was watching her as she took the slide. It looked like a dirty smear of yellows, reds, and black until she moved the frame into more direct light. She gasped. It was the painting, terrifying even in miniature, of a reddish and beast-like man devouring the head of the child encircled in its arms.

She dropped the slide on the table and the colors went dead. "I don't like it," she said, and, startled at the strength of her own reaction, she sounded angry.

"You're not supposed to like it, Carol," he said calmly. He leaned forward and picked up the slide. It flickered red and glinted in their eyes. "Look at it again," he ordered.

She looked at Robert instead. "I hate it," she said.

Robert spoke quickly. "Actually," he said, "it doesn't matter what you think, whether or not you approve. It is far more important that the artist *did* affect us in the first place. A swirl of paint, a violation...you see, Carol, what I mean... Carol," he repeated and his voice changed.

She scraped back her chair. "I have to go now," she said. Without getting up Robert held out his hand for her to shake. She looked at it without moving and he let it drop with a shrug. Then he laughed softly, infuriatingly. "I don't bite," he called after her as she walked away.

Outside, sunlight glared off the glass of the front window as Carol passed; her reflection was faint, like an over-exposed photograph in the brightness. For an instant, as her body eclipsed the sun, her reflection went dark, distorted, and it fell, a sacrificial shadow, across the table before him. She panicked and backed off into the crowd as he lit the match.

## Dreamday

by William Watson

I didn't see him fall, but it must have been only moments earlier when he fell from the window. The filmed yellow pane of a third floor window was pushed up far enough and it was the only one that was open above where he laid. There on the white concrete, he was facing the grey flagstone hotel, naked and hunched up so that his legs were pressed tightly against his motionless chest.

Around him stood several pedestrians, all with eyes cast down in silence. No one touched him: we just stood there gazing blankly at his body on the sidewalk. I turned away and walked to my car parked along the curb, but I couldn't leave. I turned again and stared intently at the body.

I waited for what seemed an hour or more, fully expecting this reclining figure to awaken from some delirium. He didn't move and neither did those around him. I looked away from the sidewalk and down the empty street: there was no one except those gathered near the body to accompany me in this reverie of death.

Without looking back through the mirror, I drove away with the late afternoon sun glaring in my eyes. I pulled down the visor and for the first time I felt the unbearable heat of the steering wheel. Still, I continued my drive down the street noticing nothing except my direction.

I had no feeling of pity for the body that lay back there, nor did I feel remorseful about my inability to help him. Instead, I felt a surge, an irrepressible drive. After each stop light I pressed my foot firmly against the accelerator at the earliest moment after the light turned green. I lit a cigarette and tried to relax as I drove to the apartment. I could not restrain that compulsive drive within me.

I turned off Oak Boulevard, onto Vine Street, and eventually arrived at my apartment on the corner of Vine and Rose. The white pillars of the second floor veranda loomed over me as I approached the apartment door.

My brother Joseph arrived at the same time. We both walked up the stairs to my apartment in discomfoting silence. His frequent visits were usually a solace to me, but last night he had no effect.

"You look as if your world just collapsed. You've been looking awfully intent lately," he said as we entered the apartment.

"Have some wine and relax a bit," I offered.

Joseph went out to the veranda while I went to the kitchen and poured the wine.

He and I grew up together in the same household, yet we were so different. His life has always been dominated by his passions, and he lives to gratify them. He's never held a job for any great length of time or tried to settle into a secure living. Instead, he drifts around aimlessly. For a week he's decided to stay with me. We are close brothers but I cannot confide the sort of feelings I have to someone obsessed with his life: he would have no time for mine.

Joseph was always very emotional; he gives no thought to controlling it either. If someone angers him, Joseph lashes out with a vengeful wrath. But if the same person were to offer him a drink, he would be equally complacent and amiable.

I went out to the veranda and handed Joseph his glass as he looked at me pensively.

"Why so somber?" he asked.

"This silence is too relaxing and I damned well need a scotch," I replied, shrugging my shoulders.

"Well I didn't bring a bottle with me, but if we can still move, there's always a bar," he offered.

I nodded in agreement and stood up again. Leaning out over the veranda railing I felt the night breeze pressing against my face. At that same instant my eyes focused on my wine glass in its descent to the sidewalk. It crashed against the pavement shattering the silence of the night. The sound echoed from every direction, off all the houses, down the street, and then faded into silence. My grip had given way as I stood there reliving the scene I'd witnessed earlier. I am possessed by it.

"Sweep it up tomorrow. I'm not in the mood for anything other than walking around it and getting to the bar," said Joseph.

We went down the stairs and walked toward Vine Street. The night air was stale and humid, the trees were motionless with their new greens, and only the distant sounds of passing cars filled the void as we walked. I lit another cigarette as Joseph brushed the glass off the sidewalk with his foot. The last drops of red wine were all that remained.

The door was propped open and we walked through to the bar, giving no attention to the few people inside. The barkeeper stood with his back to us. He was slowly, almost reverently, mixing a drink: his hands moved methodically from bottle to bottle. In front of him a large mirror allowed the keeper a full view of everyone there. He looked up into it only when someone asked for a drink. He'd mutter the same words to each person who approached him. "Whada ya want?"

"I'd like a drink," I said.

The keeper glanced into the mirror along the back of the bar and without turning around he said, "Whada ya need?"

I waited for him to turn and speak rather than continue speaking to his back but that empty moment ended abruptly as he turned and glared at me. His face was pulled cadaverously taut and his jaws were pressed firmly together. Grey smoke rolled from the cigarette dangling out of his stained mouth as he sternly asked, "What do you want?"

I stood mute as Joseph said, "Two scotch on the rocks please." The keeper turned again and looked at us through the mirror. "We don't have liquor, just beer and wine."

"Then give us two glasses of rosé," I replied.

He moved slowly to the center of the bar and reached up to a shelf with a decanter of wine. Joseph and I stood leaning against the bar, our hands folded in front of us. My brother looked around at the others in the bar. I lowered my head and began meditating again about the body on the street.

I was awakened from my reverie by a glass of red wine and the stiff hand holding it in front of me. The keeper looked at me with a dispassionate expression. "What's wrong with your buddy?" the keeper asked Joseph. I looked up then as Joseph replied, "Nothing. Just tired."

The keeper turned around and began moving his hands again: they moved through the air with solemnity. He looked into the mirror and asked, "Are you hungry?"

"Yes," I said.

"Then here, maybe this will help." He placed a yellow plate in front of me. Several small round pieces of toast were placed in the center of it. He held one up to my face and the repugnant odor of garlic wretched my stomach. The keeper laughed mockingly at me. "I thought you were hungry," he said.

Joseph put money on the bar and grabbed my arm. "Come on, we'll get a table." I turned and for the first time I noticed the bleak interior of the bar. It felt cold and damp; the air was musty. Along the back wall there was a balcony that faced the bar where I saw several darkened figures. They sang like a chorus, drinking at their tables along the balcony rail. Around us, tables were cluttered and scattered around the bar. The walls and ceiling were painted flat black and the tile floor was grey and opaque. The morbid atmosphere seemed to anesthetize those inside it: they were all faceless figures slumped over their drinks, some asleep. They would look up occasionally at the mirror vainly hoping to catch the keeper's eye.

We sat at a round table, one leg of which was shorter than the others. It tottered as I leaned on its surface. Joseph sat across from me and said nothing for several minutes. I watched my reflection in the glass of wine.

"Look at me," demanded Joseph. Looking up at him, I lit another cigarette.

"What's eating at you. I'm your brother. We've talked before," he continued.

"I don't need to talk to anyone," I replied as I tilted the stem of my glass up. The wine poured into my mouth as I sought words to express my feelings. There were none though, not even for myself. The wine glass was empty as I turned and sucked hard on my cigarette so that the end was a bright red.

I noticed everyone in the bar without really focusing on anyone.

"Look you don't understand one damned thing about me. What's worse—neither do I. So let's just sit here and drink," I said reeling back at Joseph.

I couldn't contain the exhilaration within me as I swallowed my thoughts. The feeling had been with me for hours but I couldn't talk about it, even with Joseph.

Joseph walked to the bar and returned with two more glasses of wine. I began to feel delirious from the wine as I slumped back and thought more of the incident.

The scene was vivid in my mind again like a painting that endures after the artist is done. There was no blood, no commotion, no chaos. He just laid there in silence. No one mourned his death. He fell perfectly so that no one had to stare at his face or the expression it bore as he was facing the hotel, away from us. I imagined it to be a content one though. He was no longer transient.

"This is my blood: it runs through my veins," I cried, as I swallowed the wine and dropped the glass on the table. "You see even my wine glass didn't break."

"How long are you gonna keep going like this?" asked Joseph.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Well you've been depressed for weeks now. When are you coming out of it?" pleaded Joseph.

"Look, I'll decide that when I need to."

"Well I hope that it isn't much longer," he answered.

"It won't be long now."

Joseph was exasperated with my obstinance then. He stood up and said, "Let's go. I've had enough."

"Fine."

I stood up, leaning against the table, and tried to move, but neither the table nor my legs could support me. I stumbled to the front of the bar carried by my near fall at the table. It was all one perfect sweeping motion as I reached for the door frame and missed. I fell out onto the side walk.

The rest of the night is lost in a fog even now, and Joseph wouldn't be of much help either. I do remember, though, looking through blurred eyes at Joseph standing over me as I lay sprawled on the ground. He said in a half-audible voice, "I can't help you up; you'll have to do that for yourself."

I laughed and said, "I'm not bleeding. I won't need your help." I followed him with a taunting laugh as my brother walked away.

I awoke this morning in the hammock on my veranda. The sun was rising through the haze and there were no sounds of pedestrians or traffic in the streets below. I am still dressed in the same acrid smelling clothes from last night.

I didn't wake Joseph as I left but that's nothing unusual. I walked down the steps, out to the street curb. I got in the car and lit a cigarette. Turning the corner to go up Vine Street, I flipped the turn signal to make a left turn onto Oak. I remembered then the scene from yesterday as the green light on the dashboard flashed on and off. I glared at that flashing signal and hesitated before making the turn. There on the other side of the street stands the hotel. I went no further.

The building is washed white again by the early morning sun. It's actually quite beautiful. That old man over there is the reason I stopped: he's washing blood from the sidewalk out into the street. But there was no blood when I saw him there yesterday. You see, that was important because he did it so perfectly. The pain would be only momentary I think. Believe me—there was no blood.

Now I must return to my car and leave. I made my decision. I really must go now.

## Interstices

by Suzanne Jones

"And you stay in this house!" and "I don't care, you stay in this house!" (Poking the pen into the web and breaking it apart now, twirling it to see if there were any spiders left inside or perhaps the semi-embalmed, semi-eaten remains of fruit fly; twirling it around and around the pen so it would stick to the metal head so that she could remove it) And then, "You stay in this house," quieter now. Then, "Get the hell out of this house!"

Thinking all the time, "Aw, come on little girl, you sound just like your mother whom I've never seen (I think) but who my mother says talks and yells and shouts at her kids so loud that she (my mother) knows what she's having for dinner that night while she's still at the store. Don't you even know, even recognize, little girl, consciously or unconsciously recognize that it's her you're aping? And doesn't everyone else know it when they hear it and doesn't she know better than anyone else that's what you're doing, and yet no one takes you seriously. You're growing up to be just like that loud-mouthed woman who lives catty-corner back of me and who I don't know, and no one will even tell you."

(Pulling off a grape and turning it round and round to check for torn spiderweb. It had marks on the frosty covering where she had fingered it while washing or eating them. Wondering if the spider had crawled out before she washed them, (and they were just sitting there on the kitchen counter in a beer box that her father had left), while she was washing them or when it had felt the first disturbance of its vine, its clump of grapes being pulled and thrown into that box by her father's hand. But it didn't have any bits of spiderweb on it and so she put it into her mouth and crushed it to one side of the seeds and thought "This must be the sweetest thing I've ever eaten," thinking "It's no wonder why grapes were that food that was chosen to be brought from Canaan in the Bible.")

But she couldn't understand when people saw that little girl aping the mother (who doubtless they thought was too loud and just too impolitely there altogether) why they didn't warn the girl and say, "Why, honey, you're talking just like her, just like your mother does" instead of thinking "It's cute" or what's worse, saying it. Because she doesn't know it yet, just because she's too young to realize the full meaning of any of the things she does so far, eating or having a nightmare or loving her father, and she'll go on doing it, that same aping, along with a few other traits she's picked up from friends or relatives, and she'll become that very loud-mouthed woman in fifteen years and supply the up-and-coming generation with a model and so on.

(But now she was spitting the seeds out where she had spit the others out on the concrete, imagining after twenty or so had fallen that it looked like a map of the United States with all the important cities marked with a dot. Just all marked, not outlined so that they (the cities) did not show their size; just marked, creating the illusion in the mind's eye for a moment that Columbus Ohio was every bit as big as New York City. But then her mind corrected itself and she recognized the slip and knew very vividly now that Columbus, although it might have the very same components as New York-in differing proportion perhaps, but the very same components-was a mere village in central Ohio's rolling hills when compared to that vast, imposing city).

## Contributors

*Katie Fancher* - Senior English major from Ann Arbor; Story taken from her S.I.P. "Short Stories by Katie Fancher"

*Eva Fernandez* - Sophomore English and Biology major from Lawrence

*Patty Gossman* - Junior English and Philosophy major from Detroit; currently on Foreign Study in Ghana

*Ann Hobart* - Sophomore English and Philosophy major from Gagetown

*Suzanne Jones* - Senior English major from Lima, Ohio

*Dennis Kurtzhals* - Junior English major from New Boston

*Janet Moore* - Sophomore English major from Midland

*Blue Oldham* - Senior English major from Benton Harbor

*Diane Seuss* - Senior English major from Niles; Poetry taken from her S.I.P. "The Midnight Ride of Monster Woman"

*William Watson* - Senior English major from Fort Wayne, Indiana; Story taken from his S.I.P. "Looking into the Gully"

## **Credits**

English Department-Kalamazoo College  
Graphic Communications  
West Colony Graphics