

A b s c e n c e

Spring 2000

Volume 4

Number 1

Absence



A B S E N C E

Mission Statement

We, of *Absence* are committed to producing a quality literary and art journal, which provides the opportunity for Penn State- McKeesport students to publish their original work of interest to our campus community.

Our goal is to encourage student participation in these fine arts of creativity. This journal is primarily for students, yet submissions from faculty and staff is also welcomed.

In *Absence* lies the presence of pain, pleasure, dreams and realities, which we believe represents our sole existence. There always seems to be something missing in our lives. In *Absence*, you may find what you have been searching for.

Take a walk inside and experience what you've been missing...

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Absence

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Spring 2000 - Volume 4 - Number 1

Officers:

Mistique D. Primar, *editor-in-chief*

Alicia Turner, *assistant editor*

Andrea Cronin, *treasurer*

Gene- Leigh Wheeler, *secretary*

Kevin Clark, *advisor*

Jill Hochman, *advisor*

Staff:

Robert Beaumont

Amber Bennett

Whitney Lucas, (*full semester editor*)

Anthony Mathias

Chris Vavarek

Editor's Note:

When asked why we, as individuals write, we all have different answers. We, as members of *Absence*, do not write for entertainment purposes, but for a release of happiness, sorrow and any other emotion that we may feel. Writing is an extension of ourselves. Writing is the best means of communication; when you do not like something, you can erase it and continue writing. There is no one criticizing your every word or passing judgment on what you say. There is no one forcing you to speak. Best of all, there are no interruptions.

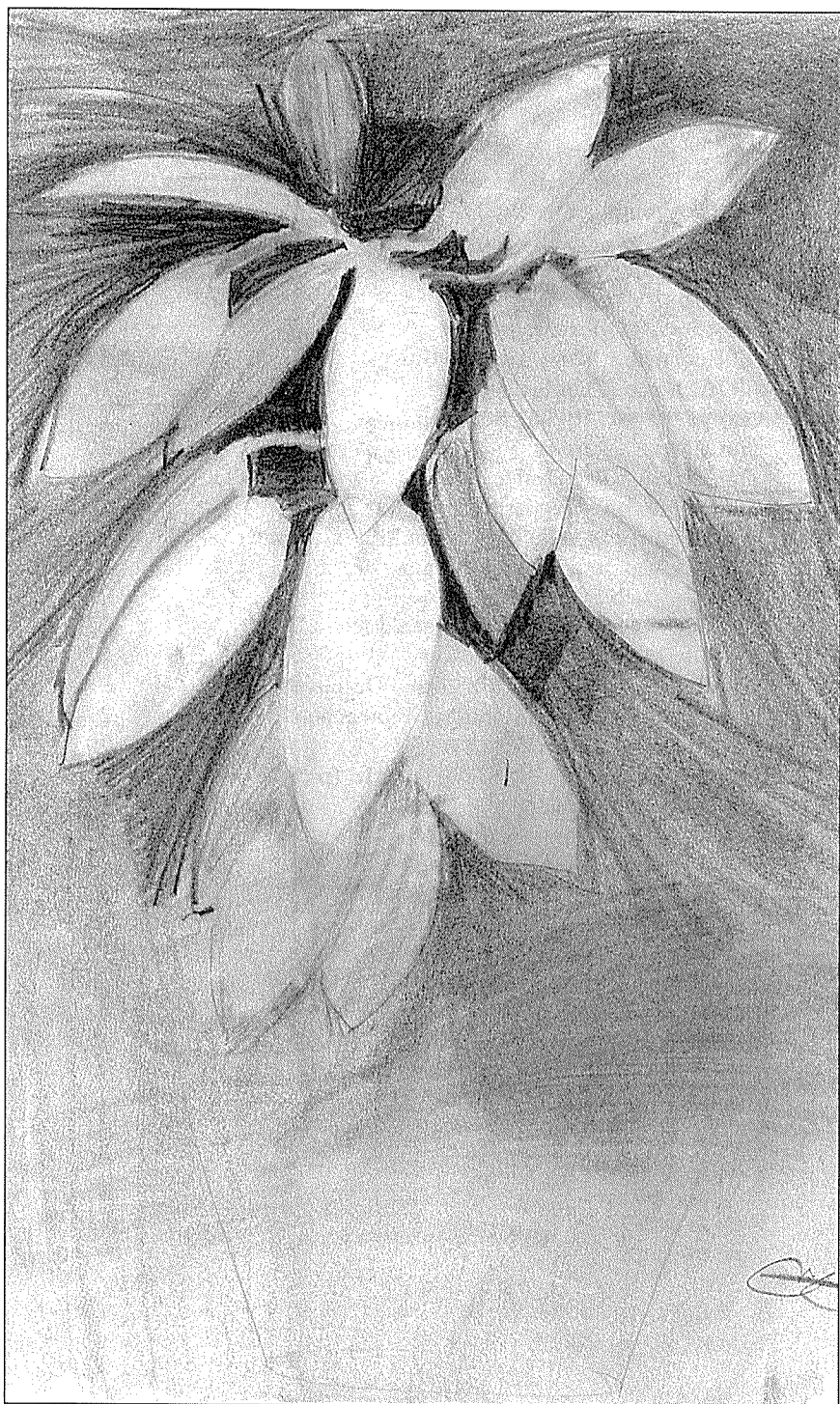
-Mistique D. Primar

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Cover Art: Anthony Mathias

Cover Design: Alicia Turner



Asche zu Asche (Ashes to Ashes)

The rain rolls in as the sun fades out
Struggling to survive the adversity
Climbing up and getting kicked off of the top
The rungs fly past without any pity
Sentimental scars healing in vain
Self-inflicted turmoil to compensate for elation
Can't beloved for the desire of pain
We're in this by myself enduring mental masturbation

Und

Brought my life down around me
Soul searching for a buried spirit in the night
A fog around futility so that I cannot see
Too close to the beginning of the tunnel to see the light
Love is an estranged disillusion
Which I keep hidden away on a shelf
Where can I find the fields of Elysian?
I have taken everything from myself

Staub zu Staub

Mental Symphony

A mental symphony keeps the beat in your head
Monotonously adhering to rules centuries old
Original thoughts interrupted by the songs of the dead
Religious entities deciding your free will cold
Everything is yours and yours alone
Trying to save your soul that's already sold
Taking all the joys in life, leaving everything in stone
Everything made black and white in this colored world.

World Order

And I want to dance with squirrels who sit up on hind legs
And I want to crack small satin skinned peanuts that come all the way from
Singapore
And I want my internal organs lifted like during a roller coaster
plunge
And I want a single strand, long, black, and curly on my morning
pillow case
And I want flannel recalled by thrift shops, never to be sold again
And I want parents who mistrust teachers and who've failed
algebra themselves
And I want philosophy in an aerosol spray without existential
harm
And I want public radio minus the attitude and pledge drives
And I want frequent sex for senators, bankers, and other thieves
And I want downtowns to matter while another mall is boarded up
And I want people to go "hmn?" at the sound of my name
And I want Necco wafers to remind me of religion with jazz
spoiling my appetite
And I want a cat who's glad to see me and a dog who couldn't care less
And I want nuns who doubt and prostitutes who don't
And I want a fast car that starts in the winter
And I want the genius of the Beatles to visit a garage band in Steubenville
And I want intelligent conversation to replace bar napkin denial
And I want all of my friends who look the same to be known as
Dewey
And I want bad dreams for architects and peace for the poet
And I want ice hockey to stay north of the Mason- Dixon line
And I want to date a coroner's wife who responds to my warm touch
And I want to speak gender neutral French to barnyard animals
And I want to be 12 again and want to share a twin sky blue
popsicle, cracked clean
On the right angle of the corner store
And I want you to like a pack-a- day habit with coupons to redeem
myself.

Definition

What is love?

Love is fear.

Love is being so afraid to lose something
That you can hardly bear to reach out for it at all.

Love is the utopia

That as a perpetually improvable existence
Forms the nonphysical embodiment of our collective dream.

Love is the answer

To the question we never asked,
The ultimate expression of trust.

Love is forgiveness.

Love is the belief in the thornless rose.
Love is the absence of pessimism.

Love is abandon.

Love is the abolition of perfectionism
For the acceptance of an ideal reality.

Love is understanding.

Love is a knowledge
That supercedes reason, explanation and logic.

Love is the belief

That we can live up to our potentials
When we are unable to envision our own capabilities.

Love is comfort.

Love is absolute reliance
And unconditional understanding.

Love is a compromise
Love is a delicate balance of needs and desires.
Love is the gentle conflict between indulgence and individuality.

Love is destiny.
Love is the faith in an unpromised future
That breeds the abandon to live ecstatically for the moment.

Love is honesty.
Love is compliment without criticism
And critique without defensiveness.

Love is variation.
Love is normality without standards,
Revelation untarnished by judgment.

Love is truth.
Love is vulnerability and acceptance,
The soul's constant nourishment.

What is love?

Love is being.

Love is existence...

Silence

She could feel his breathing
And she knew he was awake.
But he looked at her as though in a dream.

A glassy stare
Was all she could muster
As she lay softly in his arms.

With a half smile
That muttered the soundless phrase
“I love you”.

Desire was everywhere
And nowhere at once
But this comfort was her only ambition.

No syllable could balance
The soundless resonance
Of the language only souls understand.

So many words
Attempting description
Yet no one truly applies...

Sometimes silence
Speaks for itself
And one look
Can change your world
Forever.

Suffocation

Can you hear me at all?
Would you please let me out?
Would it help if I scream at you?
Holler and shout?
Please let go of the reigns
That bind me so tight.
Please unshackle my brain
And let me sleep at night.
Why can't you understand
That you're shredding my heart
And I can't reassemble
What you've torn apart?
I need to make mistakes,
To find out what is true
But I can't shake this
Persistent vision of you.

I want you to love me.
I feel so much pain.
My world is consumed
By your panic and shame.
I want your acceptance
So much I can't bear
Another rejection
That's only a scare.
Please take me completely
Or allow me to rest
To seek a soft shoulder
And build a warm nest.
Could you please let me out?
Would it kill you to try?
Without oxygen all things
Must wither and die.

Bigger Than You

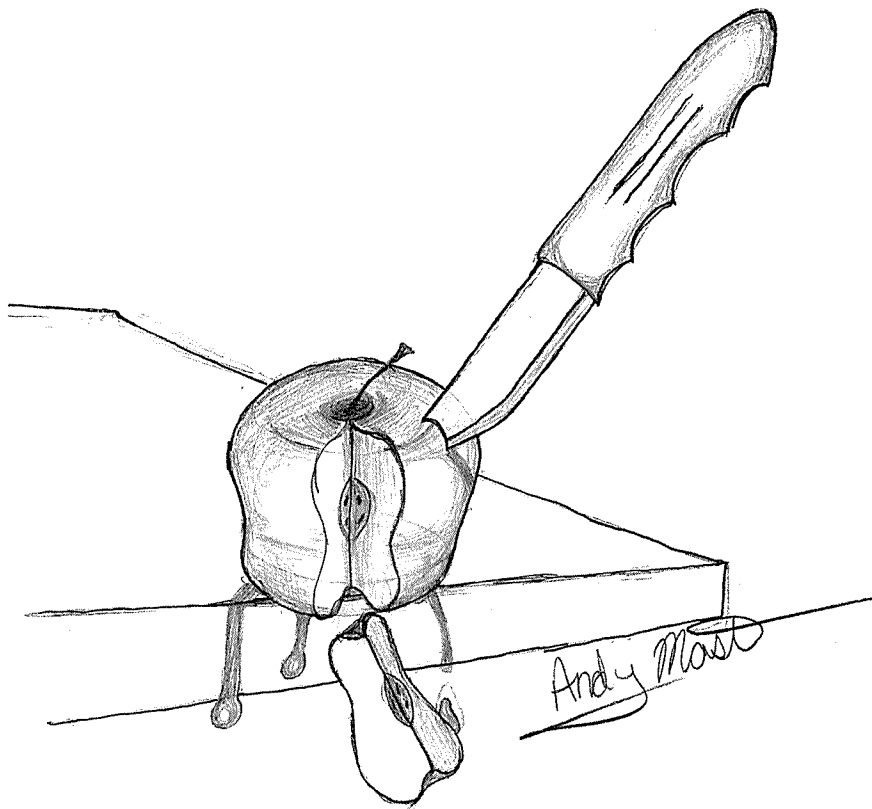
The concept of ourselves is almost always
Defined within our borders - whether it is
Man made or self imposed. That which we
Know is true can be only found in the
Physical realms of our home, our families,
And our bodies.

A self-indulgent two-year-old replies, "Me,
me, me," much in the same way a rebellious
teenager will have delusions of self importance
For a fortunate few of us there comes a time
When we should travel outside that
protective bubble called our homes, we have
a chance to look into that dark mystery that
lies on the outside - at towering skyscrapers
in some unknown Gotham. It is in this
confrontation that we realize that we have
met.... something bigger than ourselves.

Hello there. How are you? Is there anything new?
Hello there. How's school going? Is your elementary
school teacher cool? Hello there, my friend. How's
middle school? Find some friends? Hey dude! How's
high school life? Did your freshman year suck? Did
you get your license yet? Hey there, Mr. Man. Did
your graduation go well? Did your girlfriend come to
see? Hello there, my friend. How did your 21st party
go? Hope your hangover wasn't too bad. Hi there. Just
thought I'd call. Find yourself a wife yet? Hello there.
How's the little one doing? Is the family all right?
Hello. Sorry to hear about your mom and dad. But I
guess that's how life goes. Hello my friend. Yes, I'll be
there for junior's graduation day. Never thought we'd
see this, huh? Hi, it's nice to hear from you. Sorry
about your wife. Hello there my aged old friend. Is the
old back doing okay? Heard about the kid at college.
Boy, you must be proud. Goodbye my old friend.
Sorry I didn't get to see you more. I will miss you my
friend. I will be fine. Goodbye.

Offer me a prayer and see what it will do. Offer me a sign and see what it will turn into. Offer me a meal and see if I will eat it, offer me a friend and see if I will greet. Offer me the time and see if I will rush. Offer me a command and see if I will hush. Offer me some glasses to see if I am blind. Offer me shelter and see if I hide. Offer me a level and see if I will go higher. Offer me a match and see if I will start a fire. Offer me a love and see if I will cry. Offer me a life and see if I will try.

Only a year ago, when I came upon you
In the kitchen, baking
Your long legs sprawled under the table,
Head bent over your work.
The legion spread before you
Rows and rows of gingermen
With white ice button eyes
But the heart of your labor lay before you
And I watched from the doorway
The little man was dismembered-- some mishap
And you'd gather the pieces
And fitted arms to sockets
Legs to the torso,
Eyeing the damages--
A feminine assessment.
I watched as your fingernail, curve tipped
Pursued the jagged scar and the
Precision of your movements,
Easing iced sugar between the limbs,
Pressing them with delicate care to the body.
You never knew I noticed
As you pushed him back among
The others.
Later he arrived on a platter,
Garnish and butter cookies speckled with
Green and red flakes.
I lifted him from among the others
No different-- save the thin white scars
Barely marring his burnt brown flesh
I put him back, remembering your
Touch on his limbs.
Now rendered scared.
Though I never checked
By now he's been eaten
And I wonder why you don't care.



Unfinished Art

The woman told him
That in order to
Capture something on
Paper:
Create art
One must take it
Apart
Study how it works
And fits together

The man
Followed her advice
Carefully dismantling
Daises and rosebuds
Opening their inner secrets
Before they bloom
The way a man opens
A woman
In the privacy
Of their bed
Late at night

His worktable
Is covered with
Wings that will never fly
The delicate powder
Of crushed butterfly
And eyes
Inch upon inch of compound eyes.

Now if you open
His refrigerator
The dissected fruit
Soft melons- exposed
To the seed
Halved peaches
And apples bitten from
Skin to core
Brown curdled edges
Have been replaced by
What he calls
Unfinished art
Eyes: blue, green and brown
Heavy lashed
Lips with tell- tale cosmetic
Residue.

Peers under his bed
Where shoes remain
Filled, delicately sliced
At the ankle.
One dismembered finger
Crawling
With the last of life
Points accusingly
It has escaped.

And he sighs
With a shrug
Unfinished art
He tampers with the
Eternal prize
Searching for the
Chips of ice
In the still bleeding
Heart in his hands
The scalpel deeply embedded
In the cross- section.

My entrance caught
His attention and his
Indecent leer
And I learned
In those moments, within his gaze,
To regard myself
As another piece of his unfinished art.

Feeling Serendipitous

(For Megan)

Have you ever let someone lay on your arm,
until it was numb to the bone?
Or maybe done homework with someone
so you were sure they weren't alone.
Have you ever sat by your window wishing and hoping,
for a certain car to pull up unexpected?
Or an hour after your last kiss,
still felt her lips on yours willingly?
Have you ever gazed into your lover's eyes,
and saw your children, your future, your euphoria?
Or felt your pulse slip into sync with hers
as you lay in her arms?
Have you ever felt like the world around you,
would disappear when you were close to her?
Or have possibly fallen asleep,
staring at a picture of her when she wasn't near?
Have you ever been given a definition of love,
and not believe it to be true?
For two people to live life as one,
and never exist as two.
Have you ever experienced any of these feelings?
If so you're not the only one.
Feeling serendipitous,
knowing from start that no matter
how long the two of us last,
she will always have my heart.

Airport

Sitting, alone, waiting
Arriving and departing,
Some territories unfamiliar,
Others more familiar than my own backyard
Wanting to get home
Needing to be home
To see my wife
To see my son
But it's beyond my control
I could just stay, never go away again
But I can't do that to my family
If I just stay home
My family suffers
My income lost
I tell myself it's just my job
It's a duty I must uphold
But the stress, that anger
The constant on the go, too much
Other people go through life like me
But not very many
I'm the unlucky one
No one else could or would take on what I do
Sitting in a chair that's not my own
Reading a magazine that's not mine
Waiting forever
A future, much like this flight, delayed

Big Deal

Big deal, you failed the first test,
There's still four more to go.
Big deal, you split the milk,
That's why God created paper towels.
Big deal, about that \$20 parking ticket,
At least you didn't get that \$100 speeding one.
Big deal, you'll never make a lot of money,
Having life makes up for that extra \$30,000.
Big deal, you have a small dent in your car door,
You just avoided a head on collision.

Big deal, you'll never play professional football,
You won't win the lottery.
You might not ever get married,
You'll live in this town all of your life,
At least you'll never be cold or hungry,
and there will always be someone who cares.

Styled from the poem "So?" by Leonard Nathan

Preparing For THON

Two days-48 hours.
The dance marathon is
finally tomorrow!
After all I've done,
it's here!

It all started
a year ago.
My very good friend
Wendy,
was dancing,
and asked me
to be her cheerleader.
From that moment
I vowed
that the next year
she'd be my cheerleader.

As soon as the pledge books
Came out in early November,
I had three, then I filled up six,
and raised over
\$800 on my own,
determined to earn
the ultimate honor—
to dance.

At the end
Of the Fall Semester,
I got the nod,
officially,
I'm dancing!
It's my turn
to help children
with cancer!

I've gone
to all of
the meetings and retreats.
I've participated in
the canning weekends.
I've cut back on sugar.
I've given up caffeine.
I've gotten used to
standing for long periods of time.

I've gotten
my moraler list together.
I've picked my
faculty/staff representatives.

As I tried
to go to sleep tonight,
I had so much
adrenaline pumping
that I couldn't
calm down enough to sleep.

I asked my roommates
for suggestions...
"Warm Milk"
said Jess.
"Read a book"
said Wendy.
"Nah"
said I.

I watched
last year's
THON video.
Hoping that it'll do
the trick.
I passed out
on the couch
at about 5 AM.
And now I'm dreaming
about how I am
at the end
of 48 hours.

Aubade for Mid-December

My finger on the frosted glass, I wait the start
Of this day's dawning -- later with its light
Than yesterday's. Even the birds I hear
Are few -- the sparrows' chirping shrill and clear,
So thin the notes, sounding like fractured heart-
Beats at the frost that veils them from my sight.

Against the glass, my finger's warmth melts clear
A smidgen of the frost, a spot to sight
This morning's dawn, its glimmer of pale light
Narrowing to horizon and the start
Of one more day that shrinks around the heart:
December cries out, but whose love can hear?

When living, like a tune more shrill than clear,
Sounds in diminished tones that dim our sight,
In dreams, love sounds the chord we need to hear.
Against this darkened season when the heart
Finds days too short and freezing as they start,
In dreams, love shines a candle's worth of light.

Behind me on the bed and out of sight,
You breathe so softly in your sleep I hear
The very dreams that wander through your heart,
More quiet than the frost, their step so light
Their voices lighter still, and yet as clear
As melodies I know before they start.

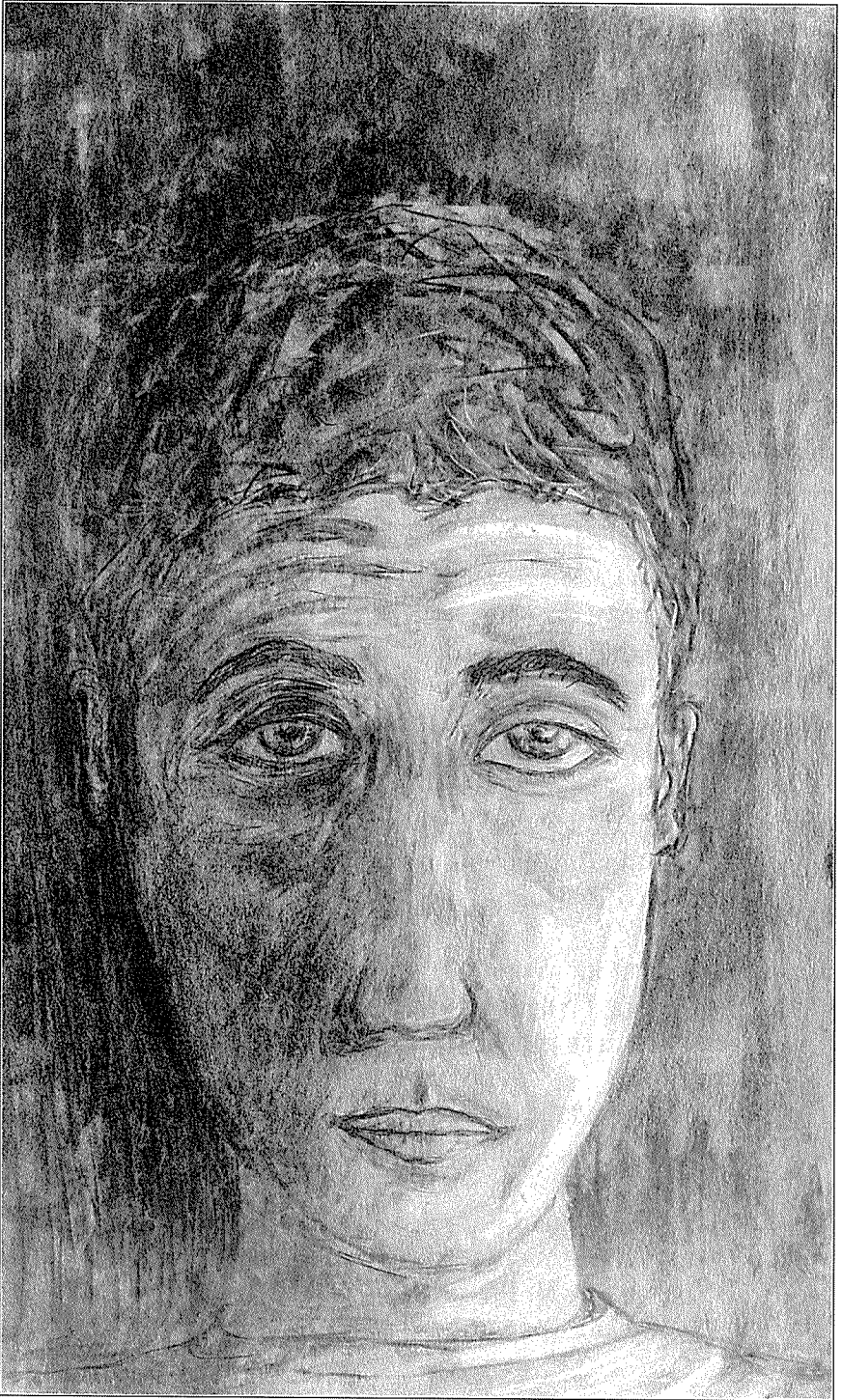
I leave the window and its wintry light,
Come back to bed so softly you don't hear,
And rest against you, dreamer, for it's clear
That here is where life's warmth and music start,
Our dreams transcend the dawn's constricted light,
And heal the fractured strata of our heart.

With a burning desire in his soul
the boy is driven like a helpless fool.
He carefully plans out every move and
hesitates waiting for her to approve.
The passion is there,
driven by the love they share.
So he tries with all his might and
squeezes her in his arms so tight.
And as the emotions begin to soar
he hesitates but still he wishes for more.
And only with a will so strong
that the boy can wait for time so long.

Charlotte

Arbitrarily casual,
Deliciously sweet.
The smell of my love comes fully complete.
I take the time to stare at you
I take the time and I care for you.
An art I make of thee,
Your beautiful personality calls to me.
But neigh I shall walk in this valley of tears,
And build a raft to float to you
Through our sea of misery.

I can see a light from my raft,
It shimmers off in the darkness.
The closer I get, the stronger I feel.
But wait!
The tide is rising and the bow is sinking and
all at once my brain starts thinking
yes, no, maybe so-
Shall I continue to go and grow?
When will the time bring home my love?
When will my search for the earthly dove
be complete?



:)	:/	:(
I dream	I see	I run
I try	I think	I jump
I live	I say	I hide
I die	I may	I died
I love	I can	I still
I want	I will	I will
I need...	I hope...	I wish...

Mustard Love

Mustard love is all it is
But we think its Grey Poupon
Romantic nights without any fights
Really turns us on
Mustard love is all it is
But we think its Grey Poupon
And all these red roses
Never shows us that you'll be here until dawn.

Adorated and Despised

It seems as if no matter what I do,
My intelligence is constantly questioned.
For reasons that I have no control over,
I am placed in a category with others,
Where none of us need to be.
Inferior.
Different.
Inapt.
Not looked at for my intellect or creativity,
But for being useless until it comes to
what I have in between my legs.
Hated for my color,
I didn't ask to be this way,
But I am proud that I am .
Discriminated against because of my sex,
I wouldn't change it even if you had
a cool million for me to get it changed.
Feeling surrounded by staring eyes,
People don't know what to make of me.
Letting my appearance always get in the way,
When will you learn to look deeper
than what you think you see?
Find out about what I can do,
Not what I can do for you.
Don't automatically give me two strikes
because I am a black female,
Leaving the last strike to come through
guessing,
Crossed out at any time.
Cross me out for my sins and faults,
The same as every other woman and man.

Closetized Womanhood

No one knows the struggles that I've been through
Nor will they ever understand how I grew up
thinking that I had to be perfect
When in reality I knew that I wasn't
No one knows about times I've tried to die by taking too many
pills
Mixing medication with alcohol
Or simply praying that I wouldn't wake up the following day
All because I was told that I had to be
Strong
Bold
Sarcastic
Fearless
But I was never taught how to be
Sensual
Seductive
Spiteful
I was in the dark
Alone to figure out what I had to do in my life
Dancing with the shadows
No one heard me cry from behind those doors
No one taught me how to
Rebel
Cook
Be creative
I had to learn on my own
So if I fail
Whose fault is it really?
Why am I so resourceful to others and not myself?
I am now learning to let go
Let be
Let live
Let God
Learn to be happy with myself
Pleasing no one else except myself

Hungry Eyes

With those eyes she could take on the world.
Only if they had a real purpose in life.
Only if when her life would begin would she relieve the hunger.

Standing there waiting for her meal she couldn't be more beautiful.
Only she knew what hunger was.
Could it be far away from this line of poor souls?
Only she knew for sure.

Her tattered clothes screaming for attention,
While her eyes were quiet.
Her life would begin where her eyes
Would end their suffering.

Taking her morsel of bread away from the line,
She knew where the attention would come.
Taking off the clip from her hair,
She knew where the purpose would lie.

A girl this young could not know if this was all there was
Could not know if a life would behold her differently,
Maybe one day.

The Devil and Me

I sit here in my rocking chair thinking of my past. I can remember one hot, sunny summer day. I went outside with a tank top and ruffled shorts. I walked out to my backyard and raised the two garage doors. My mom was having a garage sale the following morning. I was in charge of moving and pricing all items. The bad thing was I had to do it all by myself. I grabbed a huge box from my house, not knowing it had a hole in the bottom. All of the dusty, glass knick-knacks fell to the ground. I was very frustrated. This was not the first time this had happened and no one was there to help. I left all the spilled contents on the garage floor and sat on the curb. All of a sudden, I saw a man coming from around the corner. I didn't have my glasses on, so I couldn't see who it was. Even from a distance there was something about this person that was very appealing. I squinted to see who it was, but I was distracted by a noise behind me. I glanced over my shoulder, but no one was there. When I looked back the person was gone. It was starting to get late and I needed to get my work done. I sat in a daze trying to figure out where that man went. I remembered the big mess I had waiting for me. When I looked around, I realized this was going to take longer than I had hoped.

Then I said aloud, "I need some help or I'll never get done." As I said that, I plopped back down on the curb with my head in my hands. I was trying to figure out what I should do next.

Out of nowhere a deep soothing voice said, "Hey cutie, looks like you could use some help!" I raised my head to see who was approaching me. In amazement, I saw a tall male with a Tommy Hilfiger coat and jeans and Timberland boots. I couldn't see his face because of the glare from the sun. I stood up to see him, but no matter what angle I viewed him from the sun's glare wouldn't allow me to see his face. I asked this "invisible man" what his name was. He told me his name was not important.

Then he went back to his original question, "Well do you need any help?"

I replied, "I'll do *anything* for some help!"

He said, "Did you say *anything*?"

With a puzzled voice I said, "I guess it depends on what *anything* is. He quickly skipped the rest of the conversation. Then he asked me what all the boxes were for. I told him that my mom was having a garage sale.

With a grin on his face, he asked me the weirdest question. He said, "Is your soul on sale? If so, I'll be the first in line."

I was very frightened by this question. I was starting to get scared, but I didn't want to show it. I said, "That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard in my life!" To avoid any other questions like this I picked up the things I had dropped earlier. We started a new conversation about everyday life. Even though I was frightened, he made me laugh, smile, and blush a lot. I never saw this man in my life, but his presence was familiar. Throughout the whole time we talked, he called me sweetheart and other cute names. As he spoke to me I compared his voice to an angel from above. My whole day wasn't going well, but he made my frustrations go away. Then all of a sudden I snapped out of this love trance he had me in. I felt a pain in my stomach. I knew something was wrong. This man kept talking, but the pain blocked all of his words out.

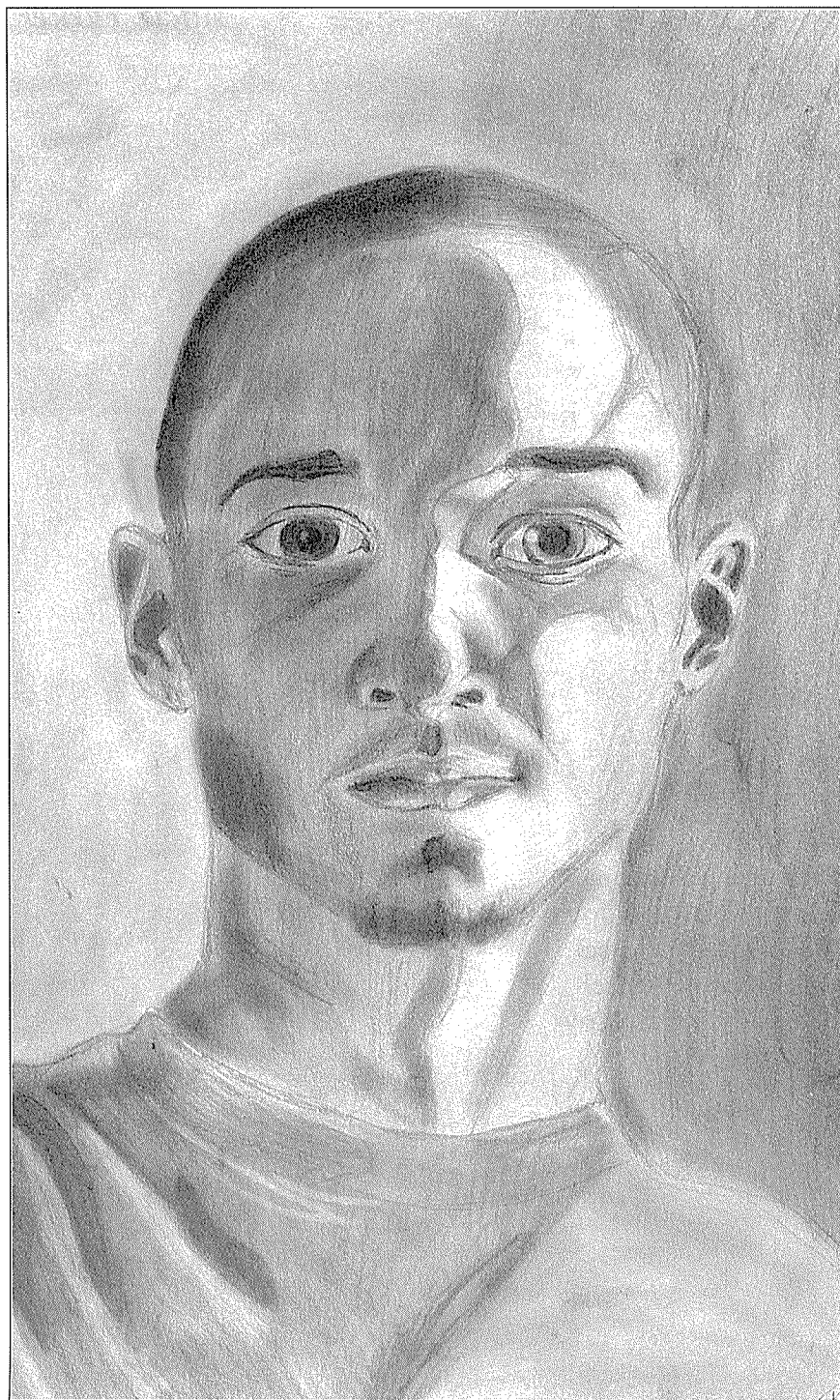
Then I blurted out, "Why can't I see your face?" His voice wasn't so soothing anymore.

In a very hostile voice he said, "You're not supposed to see my face because I don't always appear this way!"

I was confused. The pain was getting unbearable and something told me, **Don't trust this man!** I said, "On second thought, I don't need anyone's help. It was nice talking to you." I started to walk away, but he grabbed my arm. It felt like he was never going to let me go.

His voice changed again and he whispered, "If you come with me, you'll live forever and remember you'll be with me!"

I screamed and kicked and I told him to let me go. When I told him this, the sky turned dark and it began to storm. The sun's glare went away, but the darkness from the black clouds filled his face. I knew this man wasn't any ordinary man and he was trying to make me believe his disguise. I shouted at him, "I'm not coming with you!" Then I broke away from his grasp. Right then he knew the answer to his question. My soul was not on sale! The sky cleared and the man disappeared as fast as he had appeared. I thought I was dreaming, but that feeling in my stomach now lingered throughout my whole body. I knew I would never see that man again, but his presence would never die. I did feel the presence of this man many times after that day. I sit here in my old age and I'm glad I didn't accept that man's invitation. If I had accepted his offer, I wouldn't have gotten the chance to have the wonderful husband and beautiful children that I have today.



For Jill

Joy

Morsel

J M
O O M
Y R O
 S J R
 E O S
 L Y E
 L

M Y

 O

J R

 S

 E

 M O R S E L

 J O Y

 R

 S

 E

 L

Joy Morsel, Joy Morsel

Morsel Joy, Morsel Joy

Joy Morsel Joy Morsel

Morsel Morsel Morsel

Joy Joy Joy Joy Joy Joy

M O R S E L

J O Y J O Y J O Y

Magnetic Poetry

Imagine it an absurd deep blue smear
Electric silhouette screams passion
Psychedelic harmony, surreal color appears
Let the angel of music have her way
Perform nude aesthetic metaphors
Which make you feel more balanced
Experiment film made by rhythm
Canvas drawn to crate masterpiece
Wasting time wild in the picture that sculptured me.

Void

Intelligence, my weapon, my key.
Oh for the love of God, validate me!
I feel so pathetic, so weak.
Like I am slipping into the world of the meek.
I feel no worth, I feel no love.
I wish there were merit in what I'm thinking of.
Intelligence, my weapon, my key.
Oh for the love of God, validate me.

Planting Freedom

the dark man_the seed sower
arrives as the setting sun
disappears into the beyond
the dark man in the dark night
sowing the seeds for the new
as well as old_for all time
for what is to come and has been
to rescue us from vile oppression
freedom and persecution
he saves you and he saves me
he is the hero of today
his soul free_his heart pure
he is the martyr of what will be

Shattered People

Shattered

To become whole once again,
broken
Not always is it easy,
sleazy.
It should be 'cause we are both;
other in our oath.
The broken pieces, our whole,
like a mole.
All people are splintered, shattered,
So if you become unwrapped,
trapped.
Combine the fractured body
With your own weapon of choice,
voice,
Recreate yourself with art
So escape the shattering
something.

People

first admit that you are
to tell good from the
fragments of each
must dig through them
but firmly spliced together
falling apart; you feel
of your true humanity,
be it brush, or pen, or
flowing from immoral heart.
begin artistic

My Personal Hell... Step Right In

Part I

Welcome to Hades my friends.
Knowest thou not what this ends?

Everything comes to some close.
crowd,
What it is no one knows.

We walk in uncertainty,
Unknowing and uncaring.

Striving for maturity,
Unaware of its costs.

Maturely responsible,
Becomes responsibly gray.
end.

The early bloomers forced in;
Into the fire; into the pain.

They cast us for perfection,
grasp,
Into their perfectly flawed molds.

Beat us into submission,
more;
Begin our Personal Hell.
Right In...

Part II

The fire burning brightly,
Lights the walls of my prison.

I see no one in this empty
Watch all in my empty room.

Pointed voices point at me,
Pointing people I can't see.

Insanely normal inside
A normal insane skin.

Welcoming abyss opens;
Falling downward with no

Rock bottom never occurs,
Always further to freefall.

Searching for something to
I find nothing but thin air.

Light- headed, dizzy; no
Now it's your turn; Step

Ferris Court

I start at the far end
Where Charlie Brown washes his car,
The big black one with the speakers
That he got by selling stuff we couldn't have.
He sprays me with water as I whiz by
And tell his laughing face
I'm telling my ma.
I pump my legs furiously,
My pink- sandaled feet,
In blue pedals
Around the red-brick concrete jungle.
I zip past Miss Tyra,
And she hollers at Butchie
To stop playing in the dirt.
I hug the curb as I turn it
And yell *hey* to Miss Buckner.
She lifts her fuzzy gray head
Up from her battered puzzle book
And lifts a heavy arm in greeting
And smiles broadly.
Crack, snap, crackle, rumble plastic wheels
On concrete and broken glass from the 40's.
Noise in my ears as I pedal
Faster and faster.
I smile content with my speed,
As I zoom past Tub,
He blows me a kiss, and I blow one back
He turns back to talking to some man
Who holds a lot of money
While Tub holds a bag of parsley.
The red duplexes blur together,
Like a red- orange haze.
I rumble past Miss Paula,
Braiding her son's hair as he cries in a kitchen chair.
She looks up smokin' a Newport and waves.

Her arm was black with a spot,
Rocky left this morning.
I roll past Miss Libby
As she hollers at Brandy to tie her shoe
For the fiftieth time.
I bolt past Mikey and Precious sitting on
Miss Dodswell's steps.
I pump my legs faster, and scratch my
Knees in the process
On the handlebars. I roll faster and faster
Down the sidewalk
Of the red brick jungle, shelter, prison, halfway,
Asylum.
Cracking louder, and snapping harsher
On the sidewalk the glass from the 40's
The ants
Under the white plastic wheels.
Quicker and quicker.
I plant my feet--- SLAM!!
In front of Miss Tucker's house,
Next to ours 1280.
I stand up and wave to Talkie.
He's on the phone so he waves
Without stopping conversation.
I wheel my monster up the steps
And through our screen door.
I look back to see Miss Tammy
Carrying her watermelon in her belly
Coming up the steps.
I look around at the music, the people, the cars, Hilltop.

The Numbers

Walking through the door,
Knees wobbly, unsteady,
Dry mouth coming upon me,
Stomach churning, a threat to my dignity.
I see the papers,
Sprawled over the floor,
Cascading over the desk.
I panic, in cold shock and
Take the first stack.
Up the stairs, through the door.
Entering the doomed cavern,
A dark boiler room.
Solitary fluorescent light above
The filing cabinet.
Opening the drawer, searching
For the number,
AX- 8460.
Find the file, place in the paperwork.
Replace,
I shift my eyes,
Toward the wall, the other side,
The numbers scream and curse.
Close to me,
I feel their screams.
I feel their terror.
I feel their anger.
I shake continuously, constantly.
Finding another number:
CS- 4694.
Place the paperwork, replace the file.
I work feverishly, mechanically,
Sweat trickles my brow.
My overalls do no justice to protect me.
The numbers thud on the wall,
Shout profanity, and grotesque pleasures.
They terrify my sanity,
And rape my security.
BF- 9433 has no file.
I set his papers aside.
The numbers thud on the walls,
They holler and curse, so far
yet so close.

I breathe the dank air,
Never daring to look around me.
Too many bends and twists, too dark.
I cry
I shake and open the bottom drawer
Dispose papers into AZ- 9060.
I reach the bottom in an hour,
And prepare to leave.
I turn off the light,
The boiler room
The drawers,
And the numbers.



Oxymoron

Little big man,
Jumbo shrimp,
Heavy feather,
Fearful knight,
Endless possibilities,
Justice for all,
Desegregation,
Separate but equal,
Friendly politician,
Separation of church and state,
Love who you fuck,
Hate-filled baby,
Pleased employee,
Helpful cop,
Loving abuser,
Heaven- sent Madman
Hurts so good,
Congratulations, I'm sorry,
Fast as you won't,
Organized confusion,
Down on the upside,
Smile through it.
With all of the shit,
and
lies
and
lovers
we
should
all
just
make
our
own
way
through
the
Sphinx's
maze
calmly
kicking.

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