



Invitation to Artists and Authors

Artwork is invited from all persons who have been students at IUPUI at any time during the last eighteen months prior to submission. Any type of artwork may be submitted. Artists are asked to submit no more than ten pieces for a given issue. If possible, please submit photographed artwork in either color or black and white. Arrangements for the return of artwork not photographed will be made following publication. Please identify each piece on the back with its title, your name, address, phone number and a short biography. Artists will be notified as to acceptance prior to publication. Submit work to *genesis*, care of Geneva Ballard in the English Department, Cavanaugh Hall.

Manuscripts are invited from all persons who have been students at IUPUI at any time during the last eighteen months prior to submission. Manuscripts of essays, one-act plays, fiction, non-fiction, or poetry, on any topic, may be submitted at any time to *genesis*, care of Geneva Ballard in the English Department, Cavanaugh Hall. All manuscripts are considered by a student editorial board. Authorship is not revealed to the board until a manuscript has been accepted.

Manuscripts must be typed; prose pieces should be double-spaced. Please classify prose pieces as either fiction or non-fiction. Poets are asked to submit no more than ten pieces for a given issue. All submissions must be accompanied by a separate title sheet containing the author's name, address, telephone number and a short biography. Names should be on the title sheet only, and not on the manuscript.

Authors whose material has been accepted will be notified prior to publication date. Manuscripts will not be returned. Any manuscripts submitted too late for the current deadline will be considered for the next issue.

genesis

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You Don't Ever Want to Cry

He's getting more ice cubes, I hear them clinking into his big glass. It makes my skin get all funny feeling, then it goes up in goose bumps and makes my arm hairs stick up. Maybe he's too tired tonight. Maybe he won't yell at her.

Brady asks from the bottom bunk is Daddy mad at Mamma, and I know it's probably a lie but I tell him no. So like almost every night anymore he whines "Can I come on top with you, Dunkie?" and I say he can if he'll be quiet and go to sleep and not pee in my bed again.

Brady's almost four and it's my place to take care of him. He's a big sissy sometimes, dragging that dumb, purple Barney around. And he hangs on me all the time begging me to pitch to him, but the little shrimp can't even pick up my bat. He wants to be in Little League like me when he grows up. When I was little I used to want to be a cop, like Dad is. Coach says I'm the best nine-and-a-half-year-old hitter he ever saw, even if I can't make practice a lot of time. But it's pretty cool he said that in front of all the guys. The whole team.

There he goes again. More ice clinking. I hate that sound. He's fixed a lot of drinks real fast so pretty soon Mom'll tell him he's had enough, then they'll yell at each other 'til I have to sneak in the bathroom for toilet paper to stuff in our ears. Or we mash the pillows around our heads. That way they get far away.

Brady's all sticky. I fixed him a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and a Coke with no ice the way he likes it when I got home from school, 'cause Mom was having a sleeping day, which she mostly is, and Brady was hungry. I should've made him wash his face. Sometimes he's not such a geek. Even all sticky. He crowds up next to me real still when he worries, but his hands are squeezing so I know he's awake. It's like we have to get like rocks and not move. No way can

anybody sleep around here when they holler like they're starting to. I knew they would.

It scares Brady bad, even when Dad just hollers and doesn't punch Mom. It just makes me real mad. He's way bigger than her, and anyway, everybody knows you're not supposed to hit girls. I like my Mom. I never would tell that to the other guys, but I tell her sometimes, then she smiles or even gives me a noogie like Dad used to do, which is okay that he doesn't anymore. I don't like him to touch me. He used to be different before he got suspended off the force that time. He'd play with us and come see my games and stuff. Now he just yells. It's not fair. I wish me and Brady and Mom could live here by ourselves. Mom says we can't. Even if I quit Little League and get me a paper route to help buy us food and stuff.

I can't get one with Dad here, because of Brady, me watching out for him and all. I have to keep him quiet and tell him it's okay and everything when Dad starts like tonight. If I got scared, Brady'd cry too loud and Dad would come after us. I tell Brady he makes me brave and that makes his skinny ribs puff out. I try to teach him you have to be quiet. You don't want to cry.

He likes to play Ninja Turtles. I bet that's what he's squeezing in his hand. Mom got him these plastic ones at Hardee's, and he likes to take his Raphael and wipe out the toy soldiers, which I'm in charge of because they used to be mine when I was a little kid. He gets this weirdo look on his face and spits all over making fighting noises. It's pretty gross, but he thinks it's fun so I do it. But he likes to play catch more than anything. I fixed up a little diamond for him out of tape on our bedroom rug so he can run the bases. His favorite thing is to slide in home, so he always gets these rug burns on his legs and butt. He wants to play with my baseball trophy, but no way.

I wish I could just lay here and look at it on the shelf over by the window like I like to do when everybody's asleep. But they won't be quiet. The street light comes off it at night. It makes it light up our room a little bit so I can go to sleep. It's a really cool trophy. And I like to wake up and there it is,

and it makes me think about how great it was to have all those people in the stands clapping and cheering for me, "little Dunkie" Overton. That's what happened four times so far. I like the clapping and cheering, but no way the "Dunkie" part. And I'm not little anymore. Dad is Duncan II and his dad was the first Duncan, but he died when I was little. I wish I wasn't the third and I wish I had my own name. Joe or Brad, maybe. Better than Duncan and especially "Dunkie." I only let Brady call me "Dunkie." I hate it when Mom calls me that. Then Dad yells at her and says she's turning me into a big wuss, which I'm not. Last year some kids at school called me "Duncan Donuts." I about smacked Jason Fuller up side the head 'cause he's the one who started it, but I don't ever want to hit anybody. But I'm not a wuss, though.

Now they're really at it and Brady is biting on his arm again. At least I got him to stop sucking his thumb, the big baby. He'll pee in my bed for sure now. He just does it 'cause of all the noise, and then they get mad and whip him for it. It's not fair. They cause him to do it.

Mom's cryin'. That awful noise she does that sounds like that catfish I caught that one time, with its mouth going open and shut. It didn't really make a noise, but it looked like it, and my arm hairs stuck up so I threw it back in. If she just wouldn't cry. All it does is get him madder. My throat feels like it pinches off when she cries like that, so I have to put the blanket over my head and cough with my mouth closed.

"Hey, Brade, big slugger guy." If I get him thinking about something else maybe it'll keep him quiet. "Your turn at bat in the morning." My voice sounds funny and my breath stinks under the blanket.

Dad is gonna give Mom something to cry about, he's telling her. I can just see his eyebrows bending down over his eyes and his lips getting all wet and slick like they do, and his hair all messed up and ratty. Even when I squinch my eyes shut I can see it.

He shouldn't say that. He calls Mom real awful names when he gets loaded. He'd beat me half to death if I ever talked like that. Brady won't hear if I put my arms around his head so his ears are covered up.

Last time he started in on her she cried so hard he asked her did she want him to just put her out of her misery if she's so sorry she married him, and it made me get to thinking about his gun. Cops are supposed to be good guys. Not my Dad. I snuck out of bed and into his closet and snuck his gun back in here and hid it under my mattress. My skin got awful. It got so stickery it seemed like my hair stood up straight on my head. Then I had to stay awake all night in case I didn't wake up in time to get it back in his closet before he went to work.

Brady used to like to play cops and robbers, but I won't let him anymore. I took his toy guns and threw them in Mrs. Bartlett's garbage can out back.

I knew it, there he goes hitting her. It's the slap sound, not the fists, but he'd better stop it. You better, Dad. If you don't stop beating on her you'll be sorry, I'll make you, you just wait. I think he threw something. What was that? I hope he didn't knock Mom down. It got Brady up and I have to make him keep quiet but I don't know if Mom is okay. I wish she'd say something. Mom, are you all right, Mamma, I want to yell out but I can't. I can't hear her cry or anything. My breathing sounds like some kind of a tornado or something, and Brady is squirming around and sniffing. Dad's yelling worse, nobody appreciates him around here, not even those damn kids, he says. Shit. There he goes on us and I don't want him to, he might come in here. "Brady don't," I whisper, 'cause he's getting too loud, "Keep your mouth shut. Just be quiet and it'll be okay."

She went in the bathroom. Maybe it's over. I think she's washing her face. I bet he hurt her face again. It makes me feel sick when she wears those sunglasses. And it makes me mad that she acts like nothing's wrong, like I'm stupid. He's quieted down. Maybe now he'll start to blubber and cry and get all disgusting and tell her how sorry he is and how he'll never do it again. Yeah, right, Dad. Once he even told me and Brady he was sorry, but he never means it. Maybe if he got in some kind of trouble for it he'd stop. She can't call the police or anything or he'll get suspended again.

"Brady, stop it. Mom's all right. Okay, shhh, I'm moving, okay?" I had my arms too tight around him and it was smashing his nose and he won't stop crying. "Don't make me put 'em back, Brady, you hear? I'm gonna put my hand over your mouth. You gotta stop or Dad'll hear. Stop or I'll have to use my hand. Brady, listen. Shut up and I'll rub your back. Turn over, put your face down hard on the mattress. And don't suck your thumb. I said she's okay, I promise. Wipe your eyes on the sheet." My throat is scratchy from whispering and it's hot under here and Brady is all snotty.

I don't want Dad to come in here and jerk him up by the hair again. I don't know why he's meaner to Brady than me. Maybe 'cause Brady doesn't go to school or anything. Maybe Dad thinks I'll tell if he comes after me. One time Brady wouldn't eat his dinner and Dad made him eat on the floor out of a pan like a dog till his knees were all red and his eyes so swelled I had to put ice on them. Dad wouldn't let Mom so I put a cold rag on them. He'd better never do that again.

There he is again, just when I got Brady calmed down some. Now he's yelling at her about his uniform, he always starts on that. How's he ever supposed to make detective if she can't keep his goddamn uniforms ironed right. His stupid uniforms look okay, it's him that's garbage. She's crying, real soft, but I can hear her saying "please, please" over and over again, so he must be doing something to hurt her. I hate her when she says please to him. And I hate you, Dad. I hate you worse than anything. Brady keeps shivering, I know he's gonna start squalling all over the place till he can't get his breath if they don't be quiet out there. I can't tell what they're doing. The noises are bad, I want to see what it is he's doing, but I don't either, but maybe if I get up, he'll stop. But I can't leave Brady.

She's screaming and he says he'll knock some sense into her. He just won't stop this time. I wish he would quit it and leave everybody alone. He never used to get drunk like this very much. I wish Brady and me could just crawl out the window and run away forever. But we can't leave Mom here.

"You mouthy bitch, shut your mouth or I'll kill you." He's never said stuff this bad before. You're the sonofabitch, Dad,

it's you. My skin is all crawling, but I won't get scared, I won't, I have to think of something. "Brady, just be quiet I said, shut up, listen to me you little butt-head, you got to shut up and fast."

I better go get his gun. "Brady, you stay here and don't make a single noise, not one, you hear? No, let go, lay down. I'm not going anywhere, just over to the door and check on Mom. You get back down under the covers and stay here." I gotta get him to shut up. "I'll let you hold my mitt if you'll be quiet. Here, lay your head down on it like that. I won't come back if you don't stop it, Brady, I mean it. I'll let you look at my baseball cards tomorrow if you stop right now."

Brady's making the whole bed shake. I have to slide down off here so they don't hear me hit the floor. My knees feel funny. If you don't open my bedroom door real slow it squeaks. I'll only need to open it a little bit. Real slow. My hands won't move right.

They're still stomping around in the kitchen. If I can scoot across the floor fast they won't see me and I can make it under their bed. Please, God, don't let the door squeak. If you just let me get under the bed I'll do anything you want, promise to God. I can get to the closet easy from there.

Thank you God, but you gotta keep him out there in the kitchen 'til I get it. I'm gonna sneeze or choke it's so dusty under here. Maybe if I hold my breath. I can see his legs, he's stumbling around the kitchen like a big, loud ox. Just a few feet to the closet. My ears hurt 'cause my teeth are clamped too tight. Hurry. Just crawl out the other side and stay down low over to the closet. No, wait. Brady, you jerk, no Brade, don't cry now, I can hear you clear in here. I close my eyes and don't move and try to send Brady a message with my mind to stop it, but my heart is so fast and jumping around it sounds like I can hear it all over the room louder than Brady crying.

He's pulling Mom in here. I can't get out. I can see her red toenails dragging across the floor and he's yelling at her to shut her sniveling mouth. Mom, if you'd stop crying and I got to get to the closet, I got to get the gun fast. Ow, he threw her on the bed so hard the mattress hit my head and I bit my

tongue. I taste it bleeding. He's hitting her real bad, he must be sitting on top of her and the whole bed might fall down on me. He'll kill me if he finds me under here. Fuck you, fuck all of you, I don't need any of you, he's bellowing.

Brady you stupid little shit, shut up, he hears you, now you've done it. Oh god, he's going after you, Brady. Mom's screaming, no come back. Shut up, Brady, I'm coming, I'm running, my face all screwed up and my eyes feel like fire, but I won't cry. I won't.

"You stop it, Dad," I'm yelling, 'cause he's got a hold of Brady, pulling him down off the bed, so I grab my bat and swing hard. It makes the worst sound as it hits him on the back of his head, I let go and the bat flies over and knocks my trophy off the shelf and Brady is screaming and Mom is screaming down over Dad lying quietly on the floor and blood all over his uniform. No, Brady, don't look. My skin hurts and that sound the bat made on his head is smashing my ears, and I wish it was people clapping and cheering for me but Mom keeps crying and I go under the covers for Brady and curl us up little with my face in my mitt and hold Brady tight.



Illusion

You are a weed in my garden
Your roots strangle my flowers
Nothing will blossom until you are gone

My roses are weak
You steal their life
A beautiful place until you planted
Your seed

I need to pull you out of my rich soil
I need to burn you so there will be
No return

But I can not do these things
Because you look like you are
A flower
And you are my favorite one

You Understand (Of Course)

it implies assent—
a regression
into depths,
the points of
view are numerous
w/ no clear consensus.
barring unseen
difficulties—bearing
untold sufferings,
it should suffice to
say, this and only this.

Help Wanted

Frat Boy with brains
attached
to lower abdomen,
seeks
Sorority Girl
with big hair
and easy virtue.

Dance of Fire and Snow

Fire fell through cold
as snow caught lamplight.
The others had left
and she was silent with him.

The blue flash of her
was bound in wool,
the midnight of her hair
hidden in brilliant jewelled silk.

Immodest words,
drawn out by her hidden energy,
rose up from him
and lay between them like a bridge
or a rope.

“I don’t want you to walk out of my life
just yet.”

Feet close together,
head bent,
she closed herself to him.

With unwarranted familiarity
his hands revealed saddened eyes
and glossy hair.
He remembered her explanations,
and while their logic had convinced him then,
they eluded him now.

“Stay with me, on your terms.”

And even as the sounds flew past his lips,
the world changed.

Chill overcame the fire of light.
Blue energy burst cold and sure.
What had become muted indigo,
now blazed frozen sapphire.

The link made way for tethers,
irons binding and emasculating
him, entitling and enthroning
her.

good morning?

ALARM!!!

shit

cold

shower

dryer

toothpaste

Pants

socks

shirt

shoes

coffee

kiss

coat

scarf

gloves

Kiss

Keys

COLD

door

accelerator

brake

COLD!

sidewalk

stairs

desk

warm

learn.

The Coat

George

“Oh, honey, it makes you look so masculine,” she gushed, standing back. The black wool enveloped him, smothered him, rendering him invisible. Stiffly, arms dangling from his shoulders like two wooden logs, he endured her scrutiny. He felt ashamed when she took him shopping like this, as though she needed to make him different. Or better. But it was a small price to pay; she loved it when he looked classy. “It’ll look so sharp with the gray pinstripe Armani we picked out. You know how important it is for you to look impressive in your new position.” She looked up at him suggestively. “And you know how I like it when you look the vigorous and forceful account executive.”



One last box on the Goodwill truck. The last of the tangible things reminding him of his failure. Of her. Of her leaving.



The job had not been going well. First, Julie, that puny, shellacked, little shrimp of a secretary had questioned everything he did. Then, the customers that were supposed to be his bread and butter weren’t responding. They kept mentioning Brink, the SOB he had just replaced. Yeah, Brink had looked good, but he had left the accounts a mess. He hadn’t been honest with the customers or any one else from day one. But he looked good. He was smooth; he had the calfskin briefcase and Italian shoes. He wore those flashy ties like he was born in them. And somehow George didn’t. And the customers didn’t like that.

Frank, that dynamo of a boss, had called George to his office. “It’s all in the image, George, you know that,” Frank said, swiveling in his high-backed mahogany chair, caressing his massive desk. “If you look powerful and trustworthy, you’ll get the accounts, they’ll eat out of your hand. Now, we hired

you because you know the product line and you know how the enzymes work. Just beef up your image a bit and you'll be great." But it hadn't worked out that way. He hadn't been able to meet quota fast enough, and he'd found himself putting his "#1" mug in a box along with his pictures of Miranda.

Miranda then left in a flurry of excuses. She said that once he got himself together she might be able to depend on him. And, well, she needed someone strong to excite her. He just didn't excite her anymore.



He's keeping his favorite clothes, and those he can't do without in the job search. His flannel and denim, his tee shirts and rag wool sweaters, his sweatshirts and hiking boots, in which he feels warm, that he's worn to fit him. And then the gray suit, two artsy-fartsy ties, and three pinpoint oxford shirts. He refuses to keep the coat.



"Isn't it cool, George?" Trini, the girl scheduled as hostess, shows off her latest acquisition of black wool. "I'll punch in, in just a minute. Cover for me, will you?" He slides her card in the card-punch along with his, beginning the evening cocktail shift. "Can you believe it? I got it at the Goodwill for ten bucks," she yells out of the changing room. "My boyfriend says that girls wearing guy's clothes is sexy. Don't you think this coat makes me look feminine.



Trini

She burst into the apartment. But, not surprisingly, Ray wasn't home. He wasn't around much anymore, going off to "hang out with the guys." Lately she had been trying everything to get him interested in her again. The red hair color had been fun, but it hadn't made even a dent in his growing indifference. The expensive lingerie made him laugh, although not unkindly. The only thing that seemed to make him pay attention was the black coat she had bought at the Goodwill.

She liked the coat, too. She wasn't sure why *he* did because for *her*, it had nothing to do with the vulnerable allure of lingerie. She felt powerful in this coat. It enveloped her slight body, making her visible to the world. She entered the world of Men in it. It still smelled of some expensive cologne, an abrasive sort of scent that gave her walk a swagger. In it she could endure Ray's piercing gaze that questioned her ability to make her way in the world. Wearing the thick, black wool like a shield, her attitude changed from the pliant, coy, woman-child to a risk-taking, thinking individual.

It was time to do something with herself. If the only thing Ray liked was the coat, she would leave that. It had taught her what she needed to know—it's all in the attitude.

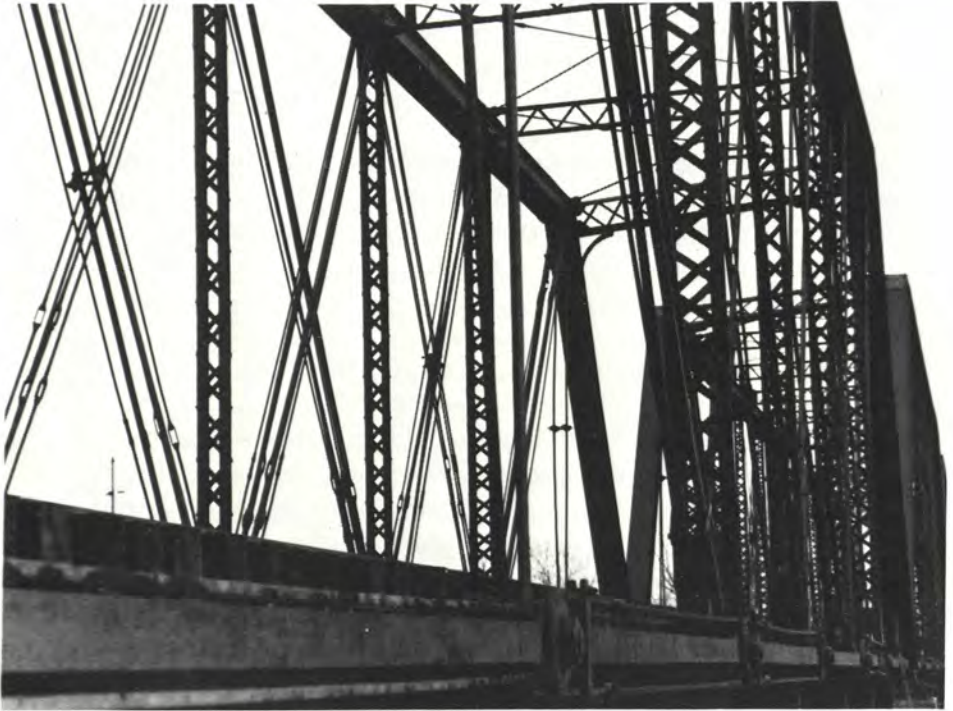


Ray

"Hey, Ray, cool coat," Lomax eyed the double-breasted wool up and down. "Where'd you get it?"

"My girlfriend." It still smelled of her. It smelled of her in some real, spicy way. It smelled of Trini at her best: funny, confident, argumentative. There was something vulnerable about her when she wore those worn, bulky clothes on her small frame, a vulnerability that was honest. Not like when she played that coy, girlish role. Then, Trini, the selfish little girl, had been in control, choreographing a romance. He was just starting to think he might be able to trust her as an equal when she left. "She left it when she moved out."

Lomax jeered, "What are you, some transvestite?"



Open Windows

we journeyed to our dreams on summer air
that whispered of the wood and water,
the green of grass beneath bare feet,
the windows wide throughout our slumber—
we knew then, but will not remember . . .

this time, when starry skies sufficed
to ease troubled thoughts to sleep,
a thousand worries, flickering
about our heads like fireflies—
my dreams belonging to the sky
and breathing constant with the wind,
my heart beat with the twinkling of the stars
and eyes moved with the spinning of the earth

that was too long, too long ago
when, easy in our ignorance,
we cried out for the world to know us,
souls not yet shamed into hiding

I sleep without the stirring of the trees
that used to infiltrate my deepest dreams,
without the crickets chirping low
and even breaths of waning light
replaced by gasps and shivering
and panes of glass . . .

I knew once, but cannot remember—
there is more to the world
than just myself . . .

Chester

He gives a person the willy-nillys.
Is it his twitchy lips
the greasy hair
or shaded glasses?

You can't see into his soul—
what he's about.
He bends over from
the summary of life's disappointments.

His forearms' paintings
speak of brighter days gone by.
Tobacco permeates
the core of his existence.

Suspicion is
his constant companion.
Trust is
Elusive as happiness.

Daydreaming
is his lifetime occupation,
With payment in full
the day he murdered Norman Teague.

Earthquake in Japan

Your Toyota totalled
by the highway resting on its side.
The girders of an overpass
lay twisted like art.
A crumbled skyline lit
by the glow
of a hundred fires.

My radio crackles
with life and distance
bringing your death
to me.
Like a gossip,
Bob Edwards totals the dead,
detailing your loss and fear
before you drink from contaminated water
and eat from meagre stores.

I shower in gray light,
safe in knowledge of
blood and desolation
I do not touch or feel.

Smokey

The S on the side of the hearse,
the brushed gray steel of his coffin;
chrome trim, six handles, white satin lining.

His wiry frame and white hair
hang limp
as an old towel.

Old ladies with blue hair
or pink
or silver.

Old men in formal dress
soldiers suits
and spit-polish shoes.

Long sermons by strangers,
Long drives to the last hole,
Flowers are every where.

Grandma's print dress
and tears.
Fifty-three years married; now forever, alone.

The hearse stops
doors open
we form two lines.

Plenty of young hands
to help,
while the old men watch.

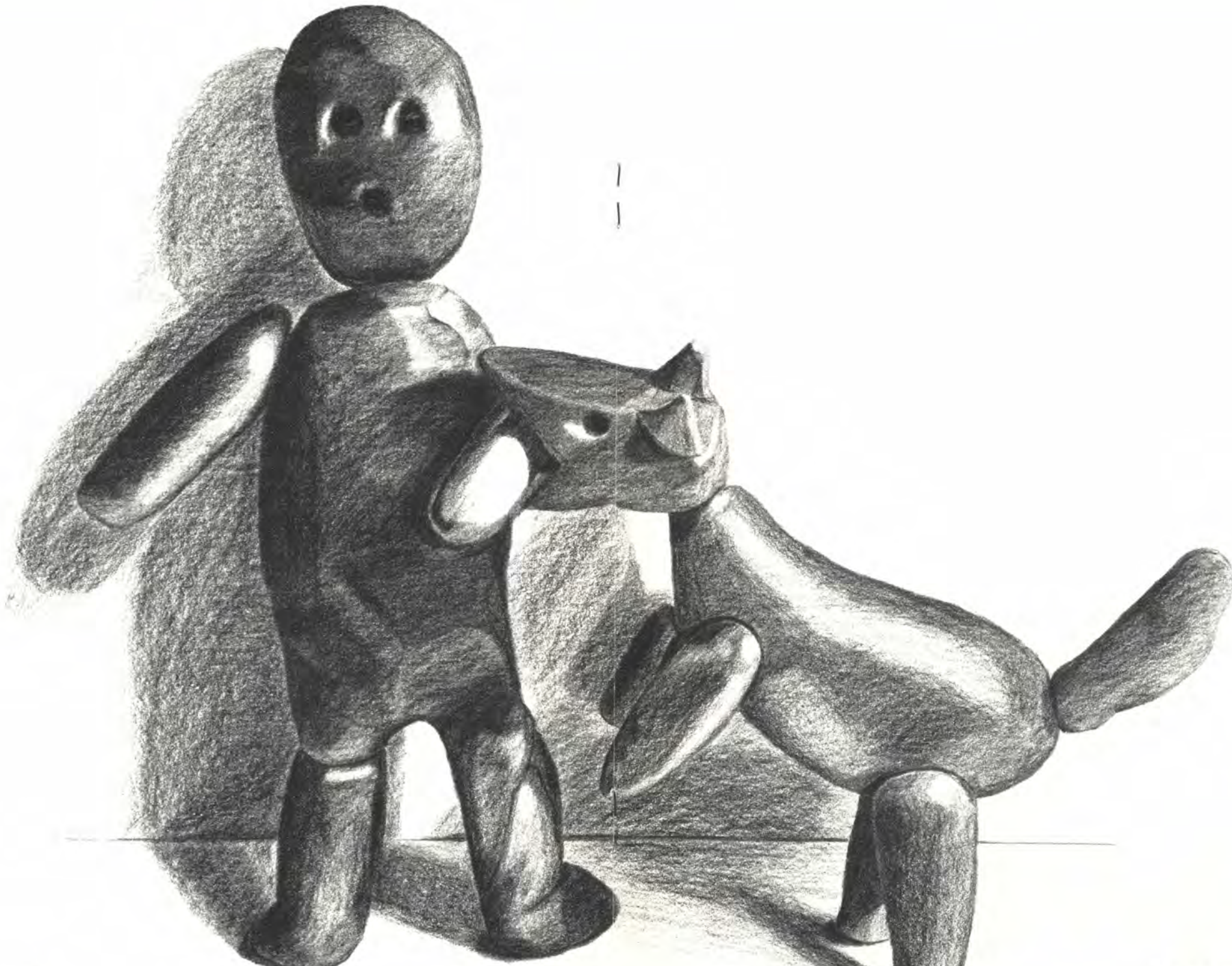
I am the youngest—fourteen
so I get his left foot,
the first handle out.

My cousins take their places,
this is the last chore
we will do for Grandpa.

Coffin is cold
and heavy
and the ground is soft.

Seven guns roar,
one; two; three times.
then silent.

His folded flag
a quiet prayer
in her breast.



*Beats and Buckle
94*

Laughter in the Park

House lights remain up; the stage is blacked out. Out in front of the stage area walks the CHORUS. He is a casually dressed man. He basically has a friendly demeanor, and he talks to the audience as his peer.

CHORUS: Good evening. My name is . . . well, actually that doesn't really matter. I am just a sort of narrator . . . known in Greek drama as the chorus. The playwright has just sent me out before the show to talk to you for a couple of minutes about the short play you are about to see. The thing that we, as an audience, have to keep in mind is that the stage is not as chaotic and lacking in discernible order as the real world is. The playwright is the god of his play and he can make everything meaningful. At any rate: everything that is put into a play is put in for *some* reason. For example, let's take the inclusion of me: the chorus. He could feel that an extra device of some sort is needed for you to understand this play fully because he is just not a strong enough playwright yet or because he thinks, quite frankly, that you as an audience, growing up as a TV generation, won't be able to pick up everything on your own. He could also be putting me in so that he can brag that his play conforms to another characteristic of the Greek drama. (*pause*) Or he could just be a jerk and want you to feel stupid while you watch an overly pretentious play. Any or all of these are possible. (*Pause, then, as if a moment of clarity has just been reached.*) Or maybe he wants to insult your intelligence a bit. Not out of any malice, mind you . . . just to put you on your guard . . . make you alert! This (*small laugh*) is a *very* good possibility! At any rate, you should know that he did it for a reason. Like I said, everything that a playwright puts in is for a reason. (*pause*) Anyway, I must admit that I really don't know much about everything that is going on. I really am just an audience member like you, just with a little

more prior knowledge of the play. The playwright has left most of the judgments up to us as individual members of the audience. I do know, however, that he wants you to remember one important thing: you are watching a play. It comes out of the imagination of a man, and nothing that you are going to see has actually ever happened—it isn't just some bad TV movie. Everything that happens, happens on the stage in a real, everyday sense of the word, but everything up there also holds a deeper significance—a deeper meaning. This is because the playwright believes that when you come to the theater, you shouldn't just come to plop down and be entertained. You should come as a willing student wanting to learn something. There are definitely some lessons that he wants to be learned tonight. *(Pause)* Well, with that said, let's get on with the play, shall we?

Lights up on a studio apartment in what could be any Midwestern college town. There is one small window in the back toward the left (audience view), and a door in the back on the right. On the right side of the apartment is a small half-size refrigerator with a hot plate on top of it. Near the refrigerator is a kitchen table. Close to the window but still in the middle of the floor is a small twin-sized bed. Close to the bed is a desk with a computer. On the far left is a door to a small washroom. The flat is located right outside of a large open area of park land, and it can be seen through the windows and the doors. The set does not necessarily need to be realistically reproduced.

The entire room is covered in papers and books. There are full bookcases placed in awkward positions around the room. MICHAEL is lying in his bed, a copy of Henry David Thoreau's Walden covering his face. He is asleep.

MICHAEL has long hair and is wearing clothes that look like they've been worn for several days. He is dressed in a college style, but he never wears anything like sweatshirts or fraternity garb.

CHORUS: This is a typical college apartment that could be found in any college town in the Midwest. Sleeping in the bed there is Michael. He is *not* your typical college student. Your typical student today does his time at a university so that he can get out as fast as he can and get a high-paying job in what the economists term an “employer’s job market.” Not Michael: he is one of the few today that are truly creatively ambitious. He’s a writer, and he hoped to be a big success at college. Instead, he has found that every idea he puts forth deviates from what “everybody thinks” around here. Every piece he has done has been discarded by his peers with extreme disgust, making each new piece harder to write. So, even though he is brilliant, he’s not doing well at college. As a person would in this situation, he wants to blame everyone, and indeed, he *does* have the right to blame some people, but deep down inside he still feels that it is entirely his fault: that he is a failure. So after two years of college, he has no friends of his own and this room—this small room—has almost become his entire universe. His last tie to the world is all that keeps him afloat.

Enter the GIRL, bringing in a copy of today’s paper off the doorstep and placing it on a stack in the middle of the floor. She is almost the typical college student, but not quite. She is dressed in a more typical “prep” type style. Michael will call her by many different names during the play, for she is not any particular person. On one level, she is one of these identical persons that you see everyday out on the street . . . anonymous, making no decisions on style, etc., by herself. She represents all of conformist society. She never reacts to MICHAEL’s abuses because she is not threatened by them. She doesn’t listen because she doesn’t have to: she has the entire opinion of society to draw from. Any time she makes a statement it is monotone, in the way that one would say one of the Ten Commandments.

CHORUS: And that tie to society is this girl. Michael will call her by many names throughout the play, but don’t be alarmed. She is not a one night stand or anything like that:

she is much more important. It isn't that Michael doesn't remember her name, it's just that she has many, many names. (*Please be sure next statement is done in a friendly manner*) Remember: this is theater. The girl is a representation of a real person, but, on a more important level, she represents all of society itself. (*Pause*) It is easy to meet someone like this girl: there are so many people like her out there. She does what "everybody" does, and it is doubtful whether she has ever decided anything by herself. Michael often attacks her attitudes, but she never reacts. She doesn't even understand what he is saying. Why should she? There are so many people that share her feelings about things that there is no reason even to understand the other side. There are millions of people that could substitute for that girl up there on the stage. Still, she is Michael's last hope, and without her—without society—it's all over. No man can live without society, but how can someone like Michael live with it? (*Pause*) Well, my part is done for now. I leave you to watch the play and to decide which side you fall on . . . (CHORUS *begins to take his seat in the audience and then stops*) or whether you fall somewhere in the middle. (*The CHORUS takes a seat in the audience.*)

GIRL (*putting down her coat and keys and walking over to Michael*): Michael . . . Michael? Hello?

MIC (*coming out of it*): Wha?

GIRL: Michael . . . are you still asleep? Come on . . . everyone is awake by now. The big game is over . . . we won! Isn't that great? Michael?

MIC (*still asleep, dreamily, ad lib from WALDEN*): Simplicity, simplify! Let your one or two. Account on your nails. Three meals a day . . . eat but one . . . five dishes. Reduce . . . simplify!

GIRL: What?

MIC (*finally awake*): Huh? What? Oh . . . what time is it, love?

GIRL: It's after the game. It is time to get up!

MIC: Why? (*sarcastically*) I don't have anything important to do! (*irritated*) What time is it?

GIRL: It's two o'clock. (*crossing over the kitchen area*) This is the third day in a row that you have slept in past noon. No one gets up this late every day. Are you feeling okay?

MIC (*irritated*): I'm fine.

GIRL: If you're not, I have something you can take for it.

MIC: I said, I'm fine.

GIRL: What do you want to want for lunch . . . (*smiling*) I mean I guess it would be breakfast for you!

MIC (*Sitting up*): I was trying to get through *Walden* last night . . .

GIRL: Reading, on a Friday night? Didn't you go out?

MIC: No . . .

GIRL: Why not? People don't stay home reading boring books on Friday nights.

MIC: I just don't go out on Fridays. I never have.

GIRL: Oh yeah . . . that's right. I forgot. Well, I went the movies.

MIC (*Leafing through book*): I guess I still have twenty pages or so to go . . . He is a genius. I just wish that I had the patience to go out somewhere like Walden Pond and stay by

myself for a couple of years. Get beyond all of this stupid drudge life hands me and simplify and get down to what life is *actually* all about. As much time as I spend alone, you would think that I'd get used to it, but I bet I wouldn't be strong enough to handle it.

GIRL: Well, last night I saw some weird art film. I didn't like it. I don't remember the name. There was just so much going on and I couldn't understand it. I just couldn't get into it. (*almost thoughtfully*) You shouldn't have to think something out at the movies.

MIC (*completely awake . . . taking on his usual tone of voice*): Simplicity, simplicity. Intellectuals can't live like that anymore. There are so few of us left, and most of us "smart people" get sucked into the academic system for life just to have too many demands placed on our time and too many students that would rather be getting tanked at the bar than listen to your discourse on your field of choice. For the smart kid it's all special projects and honors programs and G.P.A.s right from the start and we do it all for a bunch of S.O.B.s who only want to improve the statistics they give to the statehouse! Nobody outside of a university professor gives a shit about what I am *actually* saying, and my writing is only read before a captive audience that only cares about when they are going to be able to leave to go get lunch! America, the land of the free had turned into Dante's first circle of hell . . . punishing the intellectuals!

GIRL (*who has ignored the entire last speech*): I wish I could remember the name of that movie . . . it's probably something that you would like. (*abruptly changing subjects*) What do you want for breakfast?

MIC: Huh? Oh . . . whatever is around. (*GIRL starts looking around for food.*) I can't believe I'm getting up this late again! I constantly yell that taking seventeen hours of classes gives me no time to do what I want to do, what I find really important, and when I have a break in classes and I

actually have the time to do some of those important things, I don't get up until noon! I had such high aspirations for this break, Samantha!

GIRL: Oh, don't be upset that you're not getting anything done. People aren't supposed to work on their time off. (*crossing over to bed*) There is almost no food here at all, Michael! There's some cereal, but the milk you have is two weeks past the date! What is the matter with you? You're supposed to eat three balanced meals every day!

MIC: I'm not worried about always having something to eat: that is the least of my concerns lately. (*picking notebook off night stand*) Look here, Cynthia. I've got the entire outline for a novel, an *epic* novel no less, written right here. The entire plot, some of the symbolism, character sketches . . . and I've not written word one! Not word one! Right now this seems more important to me than all of the meals I ate last year.

GIRL: Honey, if you would eat better and get out of this place once in a while, don't you think you'd feel much better? Why didn't you go to the game today? Everyone goes to the games. You are always invited along with me and my friends. They do like you. They really do!

MIC: The game?

GIRL (*patiently, but with a tinge of exasperation*): The *big* game . . . the one I went to today. The one everybody went to today!

MIC: Oh yeah? What game was it?

GIRL: The BIG one.

MIC: No . . . what game? Basketball, football . . . what?

GIRL: Uh . . .

MIC: It's all just one huge social event for you, isn't it? It's just one huge act based on what "everybody" does? You can't even tell me what type of game you were watching. Well, it doesn't matter anyway. I don't care. I don't like either one of 'em. (*lies back down in bed*)

GIRL: Oh, sure you do! Everybody does. It's just that you don't go out. I wish you enjoyed going out more. Everybody enjoys going out, why shouldn't you? Anyway, you still need to eat. Can I go out and get you something?

MIC: No, no. I'm not hungry. There's no time to eat, anyway. I have to sit down today and get a start on writing this novel. Lord knows I've wasted enough time already.,

GIRL (*Lying down and cuddling up to MICHAEL*): Well, since you don't want to eat, can I do anything *for* you?

MIC: What? (*sitting up suddenly*) No! No! No! (*harshly*) Anyway, when you say that, it means is there anything that *I* can do to *you*. Let's get our facts straight.

GIRL (*sighs . . . short pause*): Michael, why don't we do it anymore? All couples do it! Why don't we?

MIC: Do what?

GIRL: Why don't we do *it*, Michael?

MIC: What? Oh... you mean *it*. Come on. It's just another gigantic waste of time.

GIRL: But it feels so good.

MIC: Feel . . . feel . . . I am sick of hearing that word all the time!

GIRL (*sitting up*): I like things that feel good.

MIC (*getting up off of bed*): Well, so do I! (*defensively*) So do I! (*pause*) Well, I guess I used to. You're right. I don't like sex anymore. I have just become very numb to everything lately. That's all. Numb to everything.

GIRL: Oh, honey. Why can't you just do something for yourself . . . something enjoyable?

MIC: I am trying to! I am trying to write this novel!

GIRL: That isn't enjoyable. Nothing difficult like writing can be enjoyable.

MIC: Maybe not for you, maybe not for most people, but expressing my feelings on paper is more than enjoyment: it's a need for me. (*pause*) Aren't you ever going to realize and accept the fact that you and I have some very fundamental differences and that that's just the way it is and there is nothing wrong with that?

GIRL: Deep down inside you are just the same as everyone else, I know it.

MIC (*Michael shakes his head; There is a pause*): Well, anyway, my day was enjoyable. Let me tell you about my day. Maybe that will help, and we can find a way to cheer you up. I spent most of the game talking to Cheryl, remember her? She was wearing this cute dress with wonderful little shoes today. She looked so great. She had a date last night with this really gorgeous guy from the football team. I guess there was some band at the bar in town, well...

MIC (*interrupting, getting impatient, moving to computer desk*): Why can't I just sit down in front of this thing and write and fulfill that "need" that I keep talking about? I have so many things to say . . . so much that has to be said! I have three papers due by the end of the semester. There are fifteen poems that I have started in my mind. I have three novels that I want to have written by my twenty-third

birthday. I also have ten short stories that I have had concepts for since my freshman year. Your typical writer's block doesn't seem to be the problem: I know how to structure each and every piece of writing and everything that I want to say. All I have to do is find the right words and put in the periods and commas, but I just can't seem to make myself do it! (*points to head*) It's all stuck up here. Stuck like a wrench has been thrown into the gears. (*pause*) No . . . like someone took out one of the gears all together.

GIRL (*showing a little exasperation*): Don't worry about it so much! I wish you could just be happy! Why worry about all that? You are going to graduate without any of that. As smart as you are, you'll get a great job, marry a beautiful wife, probably me, and have lots of money. There is no need to worry and there is no need to do anything that you absolutely don't have to do.

MIC: I don't care about any of that. Don't you understand: I don't want to settle down into conformist life in suburbia with my 2.5 kids and work for the bank for the rest of my life. (*pause . . . GIRL looks confused*) Oh, you don't understand! There is no way that you *could* understand. Not one person I know could understand it! Not one person I have ever met could understand it! Nobody around me has that urge. I know other people have had that urge, 'cause I can see it in the writings of the greats, like Shakespeare. Oh, I haven't even mentioned the six play-plots that I have up here (*points to his head*). You see, I just have so many lessons to teach! So many things that I have learned that I want to communicate. It *is* something that I need to. Something wants me—needs me—to write.

GIRL: But writing is so hard. And you have to do enough stuff you have to write for school. Why worry about it?

MIC: There is something inside me. There is something in there that I have got to get output on that sheet of paper or that computer screen for the world to see! Something that is

important enough to publish and send everywhere, to put in the libraries for our children's children's children to read. I have got to get something out! It's burning inside me! It's burning my insides out!

GIRL (*showing that she has comprehended nothing that MICHAEL has said*): You want some antacid?

MIC (*looks to GIRL with a confused look, pause, then sarcastically*): What?

GIRL (*blushes in confusion*)

MIC (*gaining what seems to be good humor, shaking his head, and laughs quietly*): Oh, Christina, I wish I could be like you sometimes.

GIRL (*Perking up*): Really?

MIC (*sweetly*): I really do. (*gaining a sarcastic tone that will continue to end*) Your life revolves around one word and one word only! One little four letter word!

GIRL (*confused*): What word is that?

MIC (*Slowly sounding more and more exasperated*): Oh, to be that single minded. To be that directed in purpose! I think . . . no. I know that my word would be different than yours, but oh, to be that directed! To not be working on a thousand things simultaneously in your mind. Simplicity! Simplicity!

(*Nervous pause as MICHAEL works to compose himself and the GIRL struggles to grasp what is happening. Very slightly, the audience can hear rustling and gaming from the park outside the door.*)

GIRL (*moving over to MICHAEL, playing with his hair*): You know, you have just been too stressed out lately. You are

just like the rest of us: too much to do at school, and on top of it, all this silly responsibility you put on yourself. Everybody needs to relax. You need to get out (*short pause*). You know what, tonight one of the people that I saw at the game is having a party . . .

MIC (*sarcastically*): Oh, wonderful!

GIRL: Why don't you come over with me, have a few beers, unwind...

MIC (*working up to rage, questions asked rhetorically*): And tell me, Catrina, why do you drink beer? I know you smoke pot sometimes. Why do you do it? You know, I wouldn't care if you and all of these other people around here tried booze and drugs once and in a while just so that they can have the experience. I know that I want to have as many experiences during my short life as I can. I could even take it if you all said that you used it to expand your mind. Some of the greatest minds in the world thought *that* was true. Timothy Leary says every era has its drug: their own type of mind expansion the government is afraid of. I respect *that* to a point, but I know you don't do it for any reason like that. (*rhetorically*) Why do you do it?

GIRL (*in confusion*): It's just a party. I don't understand . . .

MIC: And why do you go out to these parties put on by these onesided preppy boys? Do you do it for intellectual stimulation? No. I would say not. I deal with those people everyday. It definitely is *not* for intellectual stimulation there in the middle of all the frat boys raising their cups of beer and yelling "Woooo." They all look the same and say exactly the same things. Do you do it to find out what is new in the realms of medical technology: to "network" with your people? Is nursing is still your major at this place or have you forgotten? Do you go there to talk about music? Bach or Beethoven or even some people with a little talent, like the Beatles? No. You go to shake your ass to some crap that has

an over-modulated bass line and one lyric. As I understand it, the people you hang out with think that anything outside of Marky Mark or under two hundred beats per minute too heady! (*rhetorically*) Why do you go to these things? Why? (*closing in to GIRL's face*)

GIRL (*shyly*): Because it is fun.

MIC: And . . .

GIRL: It feels good!

MIC: A-ha! There is that word again! *FEEL! FEEL!* That wonderful word! It's a four letter word you know! (*as in a spelling bee*) FEEL, F-E-E-L, FEEL (*pause*) What a stupid thing to say. You don't know anything about FEEL. You know what FEEL is to you (*moves to GIRL and runs a finger down the side of her face and down her arm. The GIRL has a look on her face indicating she likes it*). That's all FEEL is to you . . . you'll never understand FEEL.

GIRL (*confused, matter-of-factly*): But I felt that . . . your hand.

MIC: You've never felt anything. Feel is something deep down inside. Feel is what the poets have been trying to put down on paper for thousands of years. Have you ever spent a sleepless night wondering how the world was going to survive another day? Have you ever felt humanity ready to fall down around you in a great heap? Have you truly felt deep down despair about anything? Have you ever felt true love instead of true lust? You've already shown me that you've never had the overwhelming urge to create anything. All you say all the time is "I want to feel good," "I want to feel good," "I want to feel good." Actually, you've never ever felt a thing!

GIRL (*confused*): There is nothing wrong with feeling good. That's what everybody says.

MIC: (*On feet, waling around apartment*) Yes, yes . . . you are right, Lana. There isn't anything wrong with making yourself feel good, even in your sense of the word. There is nothing wrong with it at all as long as it is not your whole life, as long as you try to feel *everything* and not just escape the feelings that you don't like, and believe me there are enough of them out there. Why do all of these people center their life on the next time that they are going to get laid or go out to the frat house and get drunk or on that next hit they're going to get? It's stupid, escapist. It is their entire life. It's wrong! (*pause then quickly as if remembering something*) There is a book called *Brave New World*, ever read it? You don't need to answer: I know you haven't. Ever heard of a thing called soma? People that "feel good" are easy to control. I know that most of the people like you don't care very much if you're controlled, but I do. I wanna be able to open my mouth. Do you want to be controlled your entire life? What am I saying . . . you already are and you don't care! So, I have to care for you. It's just another responsibility the intellectual has to pick up. (*pause, calming down*) Melanie, do you remember anything about the ancient Greeks?

GIRL (*confused*): No.

MIC: You must remember something about them. I know if you've come this far you would have had to have heard two or three things about them along the way. Anyway, they had this thing in philosophy that they called the Golden Mean. They basically believed that anything was okay just as long as one didn't go overboard with it. They believed in drinking and partying just like you. From what I've read I don't know if they had marijuana, but if they did I'm sure they used that too. They just didn't use that stuff every night or even every weekend. They actually developed the other parts of their life, too . . . imagine that. They believed in being well-rounded. That is the ideal that your precious college "Greek" system is supposed to be based around. They don't believe in that anymore. Do you believe in that?

GIRL (*confused*): I don't know.

MIC: No, you don't. All you can say is you like to feel good. Tell me, Mellany, what else is there to your life? What else is there beyond this little four letter word that you really don't know about anyway? When you die, will everyone remember the killer parties that you put on once a year in your apartment? Will they remember the conversations about the latest hunk that your third best friend has hitched onto? Will they remember the nights of drunken stupor at parties? No! They won't remember any of that! Will they remember anything? No! (*pause*) Wait a second... they will remember one thing. Yes! I can see it now! On the tombstone the epitaph will read, "She liked to feel good!"

(*Very tense pause. The GIRL is not as shocked and near tears as you would expect. She is confused, not angry. She cannot take in the entire situation because it is too far away from the normal thinking. MICHAEL steps back and composes himself, thinking that he is right on the verge of driving the GIRL away because of his verbal abuse. He moves to the GIRL to give her a hug. She is still not comprehending the situation.*)

Oh, love, oh love. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Your life means more than that. Your life isn't meaningless, you have a purpose. I didn't mean it. (*near tears*) It isn't meaningless. Sorry! Oh I'm so sorry. Don't leave me! I can't make it without you. I know I always like to squawk about self-reliance just like Thoreau there, but no man is an island. I can't make it on my own. Please don't leave me!

GIRL (*still uncomprehending, almost happily*): Oh, that is okay love. I understand. (*kissing him on the cheek*) I wish I could be smart like you! There is just so much more of you than me.

MIC (*breaking away, unbelieving*): You didn't understand anything! I can't believe you! Someone tells you your life is

meaningless, that you are completely controlled, and you just stand there. Is it that you really don't understand, or do you just not listen? I guess you really don't need to listen to me. You've got plenty of other people to back up your basic ideas. (*pause*)

Well, if you're not going to be angry with me I guess I will just have to be angry for the both of us. (*short laugh*) That's the job of people like me, isn't it? To be angry for a society who could just as well care less about anything? (*pause*)

Yes, sometimes I really do wish I could really be just like you. You have it so simple. You really do! (*matter-of-fact tone*) I mean you only care about yourself. I mean . . . I don't mean it that way. I mean it's good. I mean look at me. Who gave me . . . who gave people like me the authority to sit behind a computer or a note pad and write about how the world should be? I mean . . . who has the right to tell people what their morals should be, how they should live their life. I mean . . . you know how I rant and rave about the church trying to do that, the schools trying to do that, your friends trying to do that, why should I try to do it? That's what I'm doing . . . isn't it? (*breathes deeply in and out*) There is no reason for them to listen to an individual over the voices of hundreds... especially a person like me.

(*Pause. The sound of the people in the park slowly becoming louder.*)

Look at me. Look at this place. Look at my entire life. Like I have any room to talk about the Golden Mean or any type of balance. I am an extremist just like you are. You at least have a life of some kind outside that door. I barely have a life *inside* that door. I want to be the conscience of the world, but I just stare at a bare wall all day.

(*Pause. Continue bringing up park sounds.*)

(*pointing at his head*) My entire life is up here. You know, after some of those long weekends when I don't even poke my nose outside of that door that I feel like I spent the weekend traveling the world? Isn't it sick that I am just sitting around thinking about stuff instead of actually doing it. I mean, all the stuff that you do, as onesided as it is, is at least experience. At least you have had some sort of experience. (*pause*) During those weekends inside of my head I made up a storyline about Turkey or I imagined along as an author described an Aborigine ritual in Australia. No experience—just imagination—nothing valid to even write about because I don't even have experience in basic dealings with people. It is all *inside* for me just like it is all *outside* for you. (*pause*)

People wonder why we are still together. I'm not ignorant. I know what your friends say about me when you are out with them. But they are just like you . . . just like everyone. They can't see that if our personalities could just somehow be blended together that we would be the perfect match. We are attracted like the opposite ends of magnets. If we somehow got together the would achieve some sort of perfection. We are attracted to each other because if somehow we could combine our personalities we would be the perfect person! The Golden Mean incarnate, a better example than any Greek play ever could be. Finally, after thousands of years, the absolute Greek perfection. Oh how I wish it was possible! (*pause*) But it's not, is it. It's just not possible. Why even try anymore . . . why even try.

(*Long pause. GIRL, who has obviously not understood a word of what was going on, moves over to the kitchen area to look for food again. MICHAEL moves over to bed and lies down on it again. The noise from the park slowly gets louder, and after an appropriate period of time, MICHAEL finally notices it and moves over to window.*)

(*after gazing for a while*) Look at the people in the park. Looks like they all went to the game.

GIRL: (*Moving toward the window*) Yeah. Looks like they are having a good time.

MIC: Just throwing the football around—not a care in the world. (*nervous laugh*) Musta been a football game you went today, Melissa. Was it outside in a big arena?

GIRL: Yes, honey, it was.

MIC: Throwing the football around, jumping in the leaves, making noise. Living as if tomorrow might never come. Not even carrying whether it comes or not. I wish I could be like that.

GIRL: You are like that . . . everybody is. Everyone can be happy. You have just worked too hard lately. That's all.

MIC: No. I can't be like that. They're lucky.

GIRL: They are happy, not lucky.

MIC: No. They are happy because they are lucky. (*pause*) Are they taking a bit of their world on their shoulders uninvited? Are they moved by a drive to create something that reveals the "true nature of humans?" They don't feel like destined to anything. I do! They might be products of the twentieth century or the eighties or the nuclear generation or whatever. They don't have any "divine aspiration" like I seem to have. They don't have that . . . that *pain* . . . inside of them that prevents them from just giving in and forgetting about everything else but a rotten four letter word. They don't seek to write the literature that will set the tone for the next century. They wouldn't care to become the next William Shakespeare. They don't hope to create a damn thing in life. They're lucky.

(*Pause in which he realizes what he is saying. Once more becoming bitter*)

What am I saying? Is it really "luck" to not care about the world they live in? I do want to create. What is wrong about that? What is wrong with challenging all this nonsense. Why do I get in trouble when I express a different opinion than the next guy? I *do* want to care about others and make a difference the lives of others. And what am I doing? I am standing at a window crying about the fact that I can't be like a bunch of heathens that are jumping up and down like idiot children in the middle of a park. (*violently grabbing the GIRL and forcing her to look out the window*) Look at them! They only care where about the next time they are going to eat, the next time they are going to get to go to the party and get stoned and stupid, the next time they are going to get that beautiful cheerleader to pull up her skirt, the next movie they are going to see. They are not in school because they feel they have to be the best or because they want to better the world! They could care less. To them their entire world is just me . . . me . . . ME! (*beginning to become enraged*) The highest aspirations any one of them has is to become chairman of the board, corporate executive in that huge tall building downtown, sitting in their window office on the fiftieth floor looking above all of their lowly secretaries and advertising executives, making sure that they conform to the corporate dress code and taking care that none of them are doing anything to embarrass the company! They don't care anything about creating . . . so all they can do is destroy . . . destroy . . . DESTROY. Hold the other people back or buy them out . . . it doesn't matter as long as *my* ass is okay. As long as *I'm* okay who cares about anyone else. (*in frenzied tears*) In the end—let me tell you something—how will care about you? Who will give one shit if you and your corporate buddies buy out Joe Blow Industries at fifty-two dollars a share? No one will care. You'll be dead and it will be like you were never there . . . never existed at all.

(*MICHAEL breaks down and cries. He lets go of GIRL who calmly crosses to other end of stage.*)

But it doesn't matter now, does it. Someday my voice might win out, but it isn't winning out right now. It *can't* win out right now. You all have your selfish little day. Today, everyone can hear the laughter from the park, no one can hear me. (To GIRL) You know, during the worst moments of my life; the times I feel like I should just end it all but I'm torn by the urge to struggle on so that I can eventually create something, anything, that will keep my name on this planet and that will communicate these screaming thoughts to the outside world like I'm "supposed" to; the times when I can't figure out the direction of my life; the times when I spend hours screaming into my pillow because my confusion allows me to do nothing else; those people . . . they are out in that park. Laughing . . . ha, ha . . . laughing it up. Throwing the football, laughing so loud it rings in my ears. Not a care in the world. Never a care in the world. (MICHAEL cries) Everyone is like that! It might as well be the entire world in that goddamned park, laughing while I am in here crying.

(Pause . . . MICHAEL is able to compose himself a bit..)

Why have I been so cursed with this gift of creativity? I want that Golden Mean. I really do! (to GIRL) Why won't you allow me to have it? Why is it not possible both creative and happy? Why have you made me an outcast simply because of my ideas? Why do send that infernal laughter to haunt me? Why . . . why . . . why . . . WHY?

(MICHAEL moves over to chair in front of kitchen table. The GIRL has not comprehended any of the above outburst)

GIRL: You have been working like a dog lately. That has to be it. Come on, let's do something, Michael! People are happy all around, why aren't you? Why worry about this? Let's go out and just have some fun . . . come on . . . please?

MIC: You will never understand, will you? Then there is truly no reason to continue. No reason at all.

(MICHAEL *turns and stairs right out at the audience with a look of confusion and incomprehension on his face*)

GIRL: Are we going to go out? Are we going to do anything except sit and feel sorry for ourselves? Why are you trying to change the world? It's not going to change. Millions of people can't be wrong! Why are you fighting it?

(MICHAEL *does not react . . . long pause*)

GIRL: Don't you realize that I am here because I care about you. I really do. Why can't you bend a bit? Why can't you accept some things as given? Why must you fight so hard?

(MICHAEL *still does not react, another pause*)

GIRL: You know that I don't have to put up with this! There are millions just outside of that door that would love to spend time with me.

(MICHAEL *nods his head*)

GIRL: Is this it? Is this what you are going to be like forever. I want to think that this is just a phase. I've never seen anybody like you, Michael. Everyone is the same... you're the one that's different. You're the one that has to be wrong.

(*Long pause*)

GIRL (*matter-of-factly*): Michael, I'm sorry. I've tried hard. I just can't stand this anymore, and you can't say that I haven't tried. You are just so different, Michael, and the world just can't be the bad place you make it out to be. Everyone else seems to think that it's pretty nice.

(*medium length pause*)

I've tried to deny it for a while, but I can't go on anymore. I have to admit something, Michael: I don't love you anymore.

You are never happy! You never do anything with me. You aren't like everyone else: you are just so sad. (*pause*) People can't stand that, Michael. If you could just be a little happy with yourself and everyone else you'd be fine. I've tried everything that I can, but nothing works. I do want you to be happy. If you would only do as I say when I try to help you, you would be, but you don't even try. All you do is complain about how unfair the world is to you and everyone like you. Well, let me tell you this: it's your fault that you're not happy. The only person holding you back is you. (*pause*) I can't stand it anymore.

(*Long pause*)

I'm leaving. There are just too many people that want to be with me, that will love me for what I am, that will go out and be happy, that do not yell at me simply because I am the way that I am. (*pause, then with dignity*) And there are too many people that will make me feel good. (*pause . . . gathering up her things . . . taking key offring and dropping it on the table. A look of disbelief and madness slowly crosses MICHAEL's, whose eyes followed her as she was walking around*) Good-bye Michael. (*She leaves*)

(*Another long pause. Michael looks out into audience, not seeing anyone. Lights slowly go out except for special on MICHAEL. CHORUS gets up from his seat and moves to designated spot. Special comes up on CHORUS*)

CHORUS: No man is an island. A man can no more live without society than a severed finger can live without a hand to attach to. Michael is now completely cut off; one of his vital needs completely gone. Just as a man undergoes physical death when his supply of food and water is cut off, Michael is now going to undergo mental death. Man without society, at the very least, goes mad. His world turning into a meaningless jumble of pure thought and noise... (*turns to watch Michael, his special goes down*).

(MICHAEL, *begins reciting the following quote from Walden, looking sullen, dead and unbelieving*)

MIC: "Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumbnail . . . Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one; instead of hundred dishes, five; and reduce the other things in proportion."

(MICHAEL *repeats his recitation and slowly, noise clutter begins to come from the speakers. The noise clutter should include the following: Emotionless recitations of basic facts such as "One plus one equals two," "The square root of nine is three," "Columbus discovered America," lists, etc. Also, items that include basic rules of society should be included, such as the Ten Commandments, readings of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence, etc. Other basic noise, such as dogs barking, cars honking, random yelling, even some sexual noise should be included. Lights and even smoke can be used to enhance the effect. As the noise clutter gets louder and louder, MICHAEL's recitation should get louder and louder, and eventually he should be standing up, hands to head and ears, screaming over the background clutter of his thoughts. Continue until the entire scene is blurred and the noise reaches intolerable levels. There is the sound and the flash of a gun shot (but no gun or blood), and then suddenly everything goes black and quiet, and in the split second of silence before the blackout, the audience sees MICHAEL fall down onto his chair. Special on CHORUS up with 1/5-1/4 light on stage, just enough so the audience can make out MICHAEL.*)

CHORUS: Michael is gone. He died mentally and then physically. And don't think that just because the girl lives on that she is not dead. She died a long time ago when she gave herself over to the simple will of "everyone." She will give no real contribution to the world, and now Michael can't give one. (*pause*) You see, people on the extremes just simply

get lost. It's the people in the middle that really make it. We don't need to be right in the middle, but we can't exist on the extremity. The sad this is that sometimes (*pause, short laugh*), most of the time, we, as a society and as individuals, just don't allow that middle ground to exist. (*pause*) I hope you know where you stand (*pause*) and that it's somewhere in the middle. Thank you (*CHORUS walks off stage, his special goes down*)

BLACKOUT

Contributors to This Edition

Bruce Beal A 34 year old nontraditional, returning student majoring in Political Science and minoring in Sociology. He returned to college two years ago, after a career in computing an engineering, to search for truth and meaning. He writes because he must. He would like to create just one small thing of beauty that could reach up off the page and wrap itself around a reader and remind them we are not alone.

Carlotta L Duncan A freshman Elementary Education Major who returned to school after 22 years absence, after working in a bank. She resides with her husband and has two children and two stepchildren. Carlotta enjoys writing and reading.

Joel-Paul Goodwin A second year student working towards an English/Literature degree. I've always had a passion for photography and to write about life and nature. I hope to someday pursue a career in photography and writing. My dream is to be able to capture true emotions through photography and writing.

Jonathan Hawkins Born in Columbus, Indiana, but raised mainly in Kokomo and Evansville, and now Indianapolis. Began drawing at a young age, but not seriously until last year when attended the University of Evansville. Took a couple of drawing classes which planted the seeds of interest and now am planning to submit a portfolio to Herron.

Sharolyn Herring After a twenty-year detour through corporate communications, Sharolyn Herring resumed her education at IUPUI as an English major, where she also works as Advertising Director for *The Sagamore*. She is currently at work on a collection of short fiction revolving around issues that concern women.

Mary Beth Jipping

David Christopher LeFevre A new member of the IUPUI community who hopes to make his mark in writing circles early. Before a recent one year layoff, David attended Ball State University where he studied Telecommunications and English. He is a 1991 graduate of Lafayette Jefferson High School, where he did work in radio and television production. David hopes to finish up an English degree and continue to write plays, screenplays, short stories, and novels.

Elizabeth Myers I am a 23 year old Junior majoring in Psychology. Although my career will be in psychology I would like to be able to someday abandon the office scenario and be a full time writer and painter and travel the world.

Jennifer M Phillips I am currently a sophomore at IUPUI and am majoring in English. My poetry has been published in *Old Hickory Review* and *South Ash Press*. I have been reading and writing poetry for as long as I can remember.

Matt Selig A 26 year-old Accounting major. "Poetry will not rhapsodize or moralize but dramatize an essential action sensible to mind and body."

