

The Messenger

Volume 1989
Issue 2 *Messenger - Fall 1989*

Article 28

1989

Messenger - Fall 1989

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.richmond.edu/messenger>

 Part of the [Fiction Commons](#), [Illustration Commons](#), [Nonfiction Commons](#), [Photography Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

(1989) "Messenger - Fall 1989," *The Messenger*: Vol. 1989 : Iss. 2 , Article 28.
Available at: <https://scholarship.richmond.edu/messenger/vol1989/iss2/28>

This Complete Issue is brought to you for free and open access by the University Publications at UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Messenger by an authorized editor of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu.



THE MESSENGER
FALL 1989

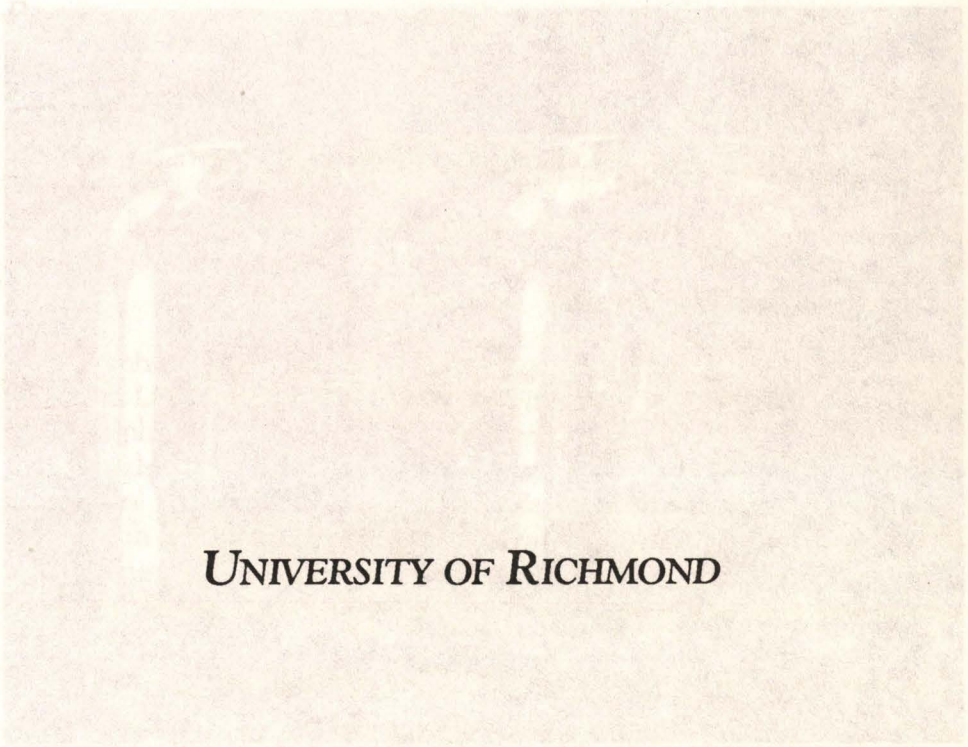
TABLE OF CONTENTS
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

PREFACE

What's New in the Messenger	1
Helping the Messenger Staff	2
Richard College, Westminster College, and E. Christian College	3
The Business Student Organization	4
The Messenger Over Park for Creative Writing	5
The Messenger's Future	6
University of Richmond	7
Department of English	8
Faculty of English	9
Editorial Board	10
Staff	11

THE MESSENGER

FALL 1989



UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 1989-90 Messenger Staff would like to thank the following for their help in creating this magazine:

Richmond College, Westhampton College, and E. Claiborne Robins School
of Business Student Government Associations
The Margaret Owen Finck Prize for Creative Writing
The Margaret Haley Carpenter Prize for Poetry
University of Richmond Art Department
Steven Barza, Faculty Advisor
Aereopagus
Herb Peterson, Controller
Tony Fleming, Collegian

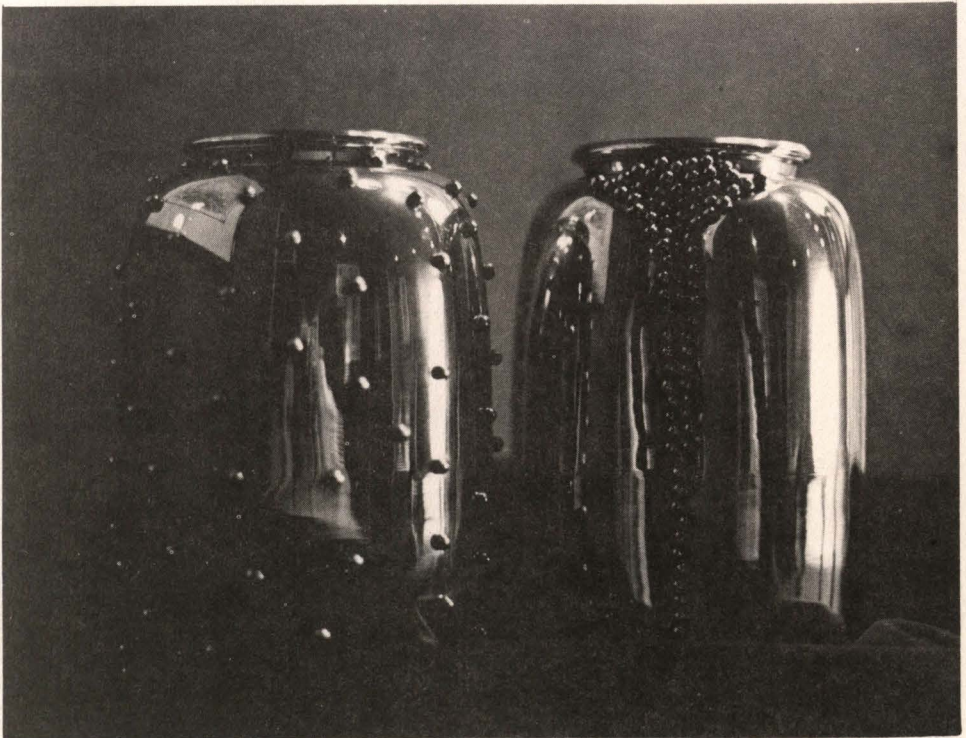


TABLE OF CONTENTS

POETRY

What If	<i>Baron Blakley</i>	5
Misty Morning Blues	<i>S.K. McMillan</i>	6
After the Passion	<i>Michael Williams</i>	11
Untitled	<i>Sally Lyons</i>	13
The Office	<i>Sandy Tan</i>	22
Occam's Razor	<i>Rich Miller</i>	23
I Saw Death Walking		
Down the Street	<i>Edward Tayloe Wise</i>	25
City Scape	<i>Grant Sterling Mudge</i>	26
Creatures of the Night	<i>Jeff Fowler</i>	27
Despair	<i>Simon J. Shapiro</i>	30
Poems on the Underground	<i>Katherine Clark</i>	31
German Articles	<i>Sean Keller</i>	36
Encounters	<i>Amy Joyner</i>	37
I Had a Friend	<i>Stacy Boothe</i>	39

PROSE

Fishing for Turtles	<i>S.K. McMillan</i>	7
No Voices	<i>Grant Sterling Mudge</i>	14
Quartz and Onyx	<i>Rich Miller</i>	32

ARTWORK

trees	<i>Kris Shonk</i>	cover
photograph (jars)	<i>LeeAnn Courie</i>	2
Abraham Lincoln	<i>Anthony Vittone</i>	4
Metamorphosis	<i>Ruth Appert</i>	13
The Clouds	<i>Jerry Hanley</i>	20-21
pine cones	<i>Adrienne Reaves</i>	24
photograph (children)	<i>LeeAnn Courie</i>	29
In A Corner	<i>Ruth Appert</i>	36
Piss Rights	<i>Joseph Aranyosi</i>	38
photograph (McDonalds)	<i>Ida Boodin</i>	40

This year's prizes for prose, poetry and artwork will be decided during spring semester, 1990. Candidates will be drawn from both fall and spring issues. Fall candidates for prose and poetry have been chosen and cited as such in this issue. All artwork will be considered.

What if...

Shakespeare had Owned a Computer...

Ready,

GOOD MORNING, COMPUTER...

Good morning, Professor. What shall we do today?

I HAVE A QUESTION FOR YOU...

Yes?

QUERY: WHAT IS LOVE, AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Love...

Happiness? Expected. Rejected.

Sadness? Rejected. Expected.

romancesorrowsweethearttheartachesexamourhoneyprecious
affairillicitpassionadorationinfatuationdarlingdeary
sweettalklightofmylifebelovedsweetnothingheartsentertwined

Mathematical Reasoning: $1 + 1 = 2$

Object of love is to make $1 + 1 = 1$

Therefore love is impossible.

Therefore love does not exist.

Therefore love has no meaning.

Conclusion: The question is null and void.

THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING. THANK YOU. GOOD DAY
COMPUTER...

Good day, Professor.

Baron Blakley
RC '93

Misty Morning Blues

Interstate 77

Drifting through the Carolina mountains,
Rigid altars to the sky
Line a winding, windy road.
Cloudy hazes hide their summits,
Seep through crevices and cracks.
Grey ornamentation
Shadows stately beauty,
Like antebellum "ma'ams" who fast become old maids,
Growing weathered and wrinkled
With age and tidy tears.
They rest in early morning,
Cradled in the mist
Savoring a sweet last moment
Of refuge from the sky.
Sighs in gentle winds,
Tears in cleansing rain
Wear slowly on the shells
That face the August sun.
Sacred interstate ground that so demands a view--
Man encroaches in his rush
On misty morning blues.

S.K. McMillan
WC '91

Fishing For Turtles

It was a lazy day at Aunt Liddy's pond. I never called it Uncle Jake's—always Aunt Liddy's. Don't know why. I reckon (that's Uncle Jake's word) it's as much his as it is hers. Maybe more so, seeing that it was his grandpa's and all. Well anyway, it was one of those days. Tennessee sun high in the sky, filtering down through the oak under which I sat. I shoulda worn shorts. I was wrapped up now in the heat of denim Levi's, hoping to God it would cool off.

"Think we'll ketch the turtle?"

That was my little brother. His hair was a blaze of red in the sunlight—the same color as Mary's robe in the stained glass window at the Mt. Ebenezer Presbyterian Church up the road from Aunt Liddy's. I noticed that Sunday. His freckled face contorted as he squinted in my direction.

I popped a bright pink bubble. Bazooka. We had laughed earlier at the dumb cartoon inside, can't even remember what it said now. I bought it at the store across from the park in Troy. There are four main streets in town. They make a square around the park. There's a grocery store (where we bought the Bazooka), a drug store, Bea's hair salon, a fancy flower shop, the Main Street Diner (which is really on Church Street), the old newspaper building (my favorite because it has an ad for a Chocolate Soldier painted in blue and yellow on the side), and the pool hall (which I am never allowed inside of). That's Troy—about thirty miles from where we now sat in the green of the Tennessee hills.

Anyhow, that's where I bought the gum. Washed down a Mr. Goodbar with a cold soda and saved the gum for later. I popped it again before answering Teddy.

"Maybe. Did we ketch it last time?"

"Yeah, I did."

I paused, trying to remember last summer and the pond. I chewed the gum harder and louder, and gulped the sugary saliva building in my mouth.

"No ya di'nt. I did. I remember cuz I thought it would bite me."

"You did not. I caught it. I know."

You don't know nothin' kid. You're only nine. I'm thirteen. I remember.

I didn't say that, but I wanted to. Actually, I had no idea who caught it or even if anyone did. It was just an argument, which was game enough for me.

"Listen Theodore," (I called him Theodore because he hates it. I

think I'd hate it too.) "I know I caught it last time. I *distinctly* remember it." I enunciated my big word and he shifted uncomfortably. Feeling very powerful because of my vocabulary, I leaned back against the tree, resting the rod of my fishin' pole against my patched knee. A clod of dirt rolled into the pond as Teddy kicked at the small bank. His forehead was creased with frustration and his ruby lips twitched angrily. I sure do love to see a nine-year old mad.

"Well, I caught it." It figures that that's the only retort he could come up with. With his logic waning, I tired of the argument.

"Whatever. It's really no big deal." I said this as nonchalantly as I could, and yawned for emphasis. Something in the water moved. I heard it glide beneath the surface of the pond. We sat quietly for a moment, watching and listening, afraid to breathe. I could hear every sound around me at that moment. A bird rustled in the leaves above me and argued intermittently with a bird in the next tree, the one under which Teddy sat. I heard the wind blowing in the tall grass, the blades so smooth that they squeaked at the touch of the breeze. The sun, its heat humming around me, beat a rhythm against the ground where ants scurried from one patch of grass to another. The pond grew quiet once again, our rods still peaceful, undisturbed. "I caught it," I said quietly.

Teddy yanked his pole out of the water and stood with a grunt. He glared at me and then resumed another position at a tree farther away. I watched as he gently put his pole back into the water. I knew he wasn't really mad, just saving face. Maybe I even convinced him that I did catch it.

"Ya know what I heard 'bout snappin' turtles?" I said this loud enough so he could hear me from his new tree. It was my way of making up.

"Whut?"

"I heard that if one bites ya, he'll hang on and won't let go 'til it lightnin's."

"Where'd you hear that?"

"Uncle Jake."

I could see Teddy thinking. Uncle Jake had told me that last night as we sat on the porch in the dusk. I was rocking in the porch swing, my bare feet grazing the wood beneath, my fingers scraping the peeling paint off of the swing. It was soft and stretchy. I tried to see how long a swatch of paint I could pull off. Uncle Jake and my father were talking quietly, their conversation going in and out of my own thoughts at random. Dad's voice was gentle and not as low as Uncle Jake's, who had a deep, laughing voice. I could hear Mom and Aunt Liddy in the kitchen, dishes clanking, Teddy in the living room with the small black and white T.V..

"Mary Ellen," Uncle Jake's voice startled me from my little world of

swing and sound. "You'n Ted goin' fishin' tomorrah?"

I beamed. "Yessir!"

"Better watch out fer that snappin' turtle. I seen him take an arm off, yessir I did."

I laughed. Uncle Jake looked hurt.

"Ya think I'm kiddin'? You ever seen a snappin' turtle take a bite?"

I shook my head.

"Whooooee, them snappers grab aholt a ya and they don't let go. They lock them jaws up and hang on til it lightnin's—and that there's the truth I'm a tellin'."

I looked at my dad, and he nodded in agreement. I smiled and said we'd keep an eye out for him. The screen door slammed in the kitchen; I heard Aunt Liddy giving scraps to the dogs. I looked up at the stars. I could hear the laugh track from "Happy Days" on the black and white T.V., Teddy giggled every once in a while. There was still clatter from the kitchen, but dad and Uncle Jake had grown quiet; they sat in silence. I saw a lightnin' bug flit past. Suddenly inspired, I leapt from the swing to get Teddy and a jar.

"Ya think that's true?"

"What?"

"About the turtle."

"I reckon so." I relished my new word.

Teddy's pole suddenly went taut. He jumped up. "Hey! Hey! I got somethin'!"

"Well pull it outta the water, dummy."

Teddy lifted the pole out of the murky water to reveal a gyrating fish, not too big, but by no means small.

"Hey, lookit!" His freckled face held a grin as wide as his fish was long.

"Wow!"

After Teddy's fish, the afternoon seemed boring. The sun was still hot and the turtle still wasn't in sight. I almost fell asleep under the oak tree, waking up to a tug on my own pole. My fish wasn't as big as Ted's, but still big enough to fry for dinner. I noticed Teddy yawning.

"Hey, what say we stop for the day? I'm hot and tired." Besides, I was out of Bazooka. "We got two fish, that's dinner."

Teddy nodded. He looked out across the pond, ready to call it quits. All of the sudden his eyes got real big and then he started to laugh.

"Mary Ellen, look out there."

I looked, didn't see anything. "Where?"

"Out there on that log."

If it wasn't that old turtle out sunning himself on the log.

"Gosh-dang, he's been there all day, hasn't he?"

"Yup."

Teddy had pretty good eyes for a nine-year old. I didn't tell him that, though. "Well, we might as well go. He ain't gonna git caught today."

I turned, letting Teddy carry the fish, and together we began our way back up the hill to Uncle Jake's place. The grass brushed against our legs. I wished I had more bubble gum. Both of us quiet, we were obviously thinking about the turtle. As we neared the house, I could hear Uncle Jake whistlin' in the barn. "King of the Road"—that's what he was whistling. The lyrics bounced in my head. "Trailers for sale or rent, rooms to let fifty cents..."; I always forgot the next line. I heard Mom and Aunt Liddy talking on the back porch. Boy, fried fish sure sounded good for dinner. I'd let Dad clean mine. I always weasled out of the bloody work.

"They won't let go 'til it lightnin's, huh?"

I realized Teddy had been thinking about the turtle the whole time.

"I reckon so," I said again.

"Yeah, I reckon so," Teddy echoed.

I put my arm across his shoulders. He wasn't such a bad brother, I guess—even if he did have hair the color of Mary's robe at the Mt. Ebenezer Presbyterian Church.

S.K. McMillan

WC '91

Candidate for The Margaret Owen Finck Prize for Creative Writing

After the Passion

After the Passion
Has possessed me and fled...
Fled, leaving a scar
That is subtle, subconscious.
Then the air is bitter,
Caresses of Autumn stroking
A soul that is spent, unresponsive,
Washed over by silent reflection.

It is at this sacred moment
That the world becomes so distantly beautiful;
Now there are no tears,
No heartbreaking frustrations.
Peace could be sleep,
Or Death, or the continuity
Of lifeless observation.
So much becomes so little,
and yet the heart longs to embrace it,
As if it could ever be a home.

As I stare at the point
Where Sky meets his earthly bride,
It is so easy to imagine a god,
Human in a blaze of creation,
Painting a world—at once beautiful and grotesque,
Then stepping back,
Observing wearily, distantly
—And yet not without longing,
The result of his imperfect craft.

I long for such a god,
For then I could understand
His distance from this cold, beautiful world.
An artist-god, whose passions
And imperfect brush strokes
Are the only true Divine Will;
Whose remote and alien nature
Is simply the emptiness that follows
The fury of creation.

continued

Perhaps one day,
In a renewed fit of inspiration,
He will send fire to the world;
Recreate it with one brilliant stroke
That will light up the sky.
Changing, altering, perfecting—
Perhaps completely recreating,
Before again stepping back empty,
And viewing quietly with detached love.

Not now. Not tonight.
Tonight the passion of creation
Has passed; the creator remains
Silent; unanswering.
Only rain and bitter cold
Sing their uncaring song.
I hum along...softly, to myself...
and stare.

Michael Williams
RC '93

Candidate for The Margaret Haley Carpenter Prize for Poetry



As foam-rimmed warriors
 attacked our fortress;
(watching their rise and fall I never realized how strong the
enemy was)
 you kissed me in the sand,
as our castle dissolved.

Sally Lyons
WC '90

I

You listen to the music as if it were the first rain of the summer season. The first droplets are like the notes at the high end of an old upright grand piano. It is music you have heard many times and it has always led you to yourself, to thoughts of your own life. Now, it empties your mind. Your world, if only for a moment, becomes the music. The song you are listening to has no words. There are no voices. None even speak inside your head. You have always known that this song is instrumental, but today is the first you've actually focused on it. It conjures up images of deep green fields, devoid of trees, stretching a thousand times farther than the eye can see. Closing your eyes, you can see the grasses blowing and waving in the breeze. The music plays on, its notes now strummed by the wind, an aeolian harp sitting motionless on a windowsill. You rise and move to the window. The leaves on the trees are as green as the darkest all-winter fir. The sky has grayed and the dark green of the trees takes on a similar soft tone. The music moves. The small, short lived circlets appearing on the surface of the lake tell you your vision of rain was correct. Again there is the notion of the upper octaves of the piano, playing lightly as the droplets increase in number and the circlets grow wider and vanish more slowly.

So came the first rain of summer.

It is a cleansing, feeding rain. You step outside as it begins and it washes away everything that the music has cleared from your mind. This is what you came for. This is what you have needed. All of life's little, everyday annoyances and even larger, darker problems are simply washed away. The rain is strengthening, and as it is being thrown down at the earth, the surface of the lake is disturbed by a thousand tiny ripples. You step back into the cabin, clean from your morning shower.

II

You pick up a towel, and move to the portable stereo on the mantelpiece of the old stone fireplace. The song ends, and the tape runs out, a resounding click signalling the completion of its task. Feeling cool and relaxed, you wrap the towel around yourself and sit down to breakfast. You recall a similar breakfast, almost fifteen years ago. It was raining, and you were newly awakened.

Richard Barnhill, age 10.

The rain came down in a constant drizzle as Ricky hurriedly ate his cereal. He loved corn flakes with plenty of fruit as his grandparents had first shown him. Strawberries, fresh from the patch, raisins scattered throughout, blueberries next to bananas, and nectarines after oranges were a part of almost every breakfast. Even still, he rushed to empty the bowl. A rainy day. That was always a good excuse for indoor play. When the sun was out, Ricky felt guilty for playing inside, but not on rainy days. When his grandparents smiled at each other knowingly, Ricky knew he was about to be excused.

"Give your hair a good comb first." Ricky's grandmother was not about to let her grandson meet the neighborhood with messy hair.

Ricky quickly obeyed and dashed out the door as soon as his bed was made and his pajamas were folded and put away. He met the neighbor's children and in their basement began the day's activities. Although they all wished to be in the lake or elsewhere outside, they relished giving life to their toys. The toys usually were pooled and each boy in turn would chose his army. Spaceships there, ground forces there, they would set up their own individual "bases" and then the three would reenact favorite science fiction movies, or create adventures of their own. Rescue missions flew around the house, behind enemy lines, and commando scout parties climbed the highest mountain for the best spy view of another ten year old's creation.

Strange that only now as you have reached adulthood that you can see your memories in your mind, watching them as if they were a movie unfolding before your eyes. You can't decide if you like watching yourself on the screen.

You look once more at the three boys playing. It is one of the fondest memories you have of the cabin, and you almost chuckle as you add the strawberries.

III

The rain has ceased as you clean up from the morning meal, and you decide to recline on the dock. Picking up a practically nameless book which you bought for "fall asleep reading," you carry a folding lawn chair down onto the dock. You open the book, lean back in the chair, and begin reading. And, at almost the same instant, nod off. You dream of past summers at the cabin.

Richard Barnhill, age 15.

Amy Reed was the kind of girl Rick had played with as a child, ignored as she reached about age eleven, and then started to notice again around age fourteen. When summer came that year, Amy had an attractive bathing suit which, of course, caught Rick's hormone influenced eyes and mind.

His motives were not purely physical, however. Since their cabins were not over twenty feet apart, he saw her often. They swam in the lake together, had lunches, enjoyed the summer sun of their vacations, and talked. Future plans, past experiences, friends come and gone drifted out over the lake on warm July days. The one date they did have would remain etched in Rick's mind for years.

With thunderstorm threatening, the two slowly finished their dinner, not wanting it to be over so soon. They were beginning to discover how much alike they were, and they were wondering what it meant to be in love. They drove homeward as the pouring rain slowed to a drizzle and finally a barely perceptible mist. Lightning still flew overhead, and the earth was drenched from the downpour. The air was a force so fresh it was as if the two people were breathing life, pure and unobstructed. The car at rest in the driveway behind them, Rick approached Amy, thinking he'd like to kiss her, but he was unsure about her feelings. It was one of those times when one's hopes come to meet with reality. They are few and far between.

Rick had never seen her again. They had written for a time after she moved away, but their summer vacations never seemed to meet. They eventually lost touch, but Rick always had hopes.

When you awaken, you are startled to find yourself apparently adrift in the middle of a lake. Then you recall your surroundings and wonder about the time. It does not feel like night, and yet certainly many hours have passed since you fell asleep reading. What was the title of the book? You pick it up and refresh your memory. "Summer of Lost Love" That explains the content of your dreams, but not the length of your nap. There is a faint glow all around and a slightly brighter one to the east.

"Dawn." you think out loud. Then, as if in response to that, you say, "I never cease to amaze myself. Sometimes my grasp of the completely obvious boggles the mind. For my next feat of magic, I predict that the sun *will* rise over that hill within the hour."

Every now and then, you wonder about this habit you have of talking to yourself.

"It's the only way I'm guaranteed intelligent conversation," you reassure yourself. It is your usual excuse. Deciding that your brain is too disturbed at the moment for conscious thought, you find your watch, gather

your towel and chair, and head for the cabin. Glancing at the time, you carefully make your way along the slippery boards. You notice that they desperately need painting.

"Four thirty-six. The dock needs painting, dew has fallen, and I..." You look down and notice your damp clothes. "...I am rather wet." You give a tremendous yawn as you step off the dock onto the small, grassy hill leading up to the cabin. You are still tired.

You enter the cabin, dry off, and climb into the same bed you had climbed into every summer evening since you were four years old.

So ended the first full day at the cabin.

IV

You wake once more, and look at the clock. It reads eleven forty-three, A.M., and you are struck dumb by the sheer number of hours you have spent unconscious in the recent past. You slept when you arrived after watching the sun dip into the trees on the far shore of the lake; you woke, tasted the rain and breakfast, and then slept again until the following dawn. Then, you added seven hours on to that, and it is close to the following afternoon.

"Not surprising," you say as you climb out of bed. The springs squeak as they always have.

"I was awake for a week before I came here." But you don't want to think about that. You notice your hunger, and arrive at the conclusion that it must be time for another breakfast.

As you make your bed, you are reminded that you did not climb into this same bed since you were four. You remember your father putting you to bed in the room that had been your Grandmother's, many years before. Your bed was, and still is, on the enclosed porch where the adults stayed up and talked. When they were ready to retire, your father would carry your sleeping form to the porch and put you in your own bed. Every morning until you were too big to carry, you awoke in a different room than the one in which you remembered falling asleep. That *was* an experience.

The lake seemed much bigger then. You were not allowed to swim past the end of the dock. The swim out to the floating raft thirty yards from the dock was an eternity, even *with* a life-jacket, but compared to the rest of the lake it was child's play. You're pleased with that thought. An eternity of child's play.

Richard Barnhill, age 6.

“I can do it, Dad! It’s easy! I swim that far for the swim team every day!”

“The pool at the ‘Y’ is only four feet deep all the way across, young man.”

“I only swim on top! I know I can do it without the life-jacket.. PLEASE?!” Ricky was begging. And Dad decided to give in. He started to smile.

“All right... all right!” He sat down on the edge of the dock and looked at Ricky bouncing up and down in the water. “We’ll go together.”

“GREAT!! Thanks, Dad.”

The swim was tougher than Rick thought. He was exhausted by the time he reached the raft, and he almost wished he had the life-jacket. After a long rest, and several daredevil jumps off the diving board, the two swam back to the dock, and Rick’s father knew that the boy would sleep well that night. After all, they had only ridden horses in the morning, gone fishing in the afternoon, and had four swims in the lake somewhere in between.

That was the second to last time your father ever visited the lake.

V

With your meal out of the way and the cabin in fairly good order, you decide to take the small sailboat out into the lake. You feel a slight breeze blowing when you step outside, and you make for the old garage, now storage shed. The sailboat is small enough that one person can push its trailer to the water and launch it alone. “Convenient,” you mutter as you push the boat into the water. Once out on the lake, you take the sail down and relax. You pick up a fishing pole and bait the hook. Dropping it over the side you watch as it sinks out of sight. The last time you fished from this boat was with Dad. You’d been out in it once or twice after that, but never with a fishing pole. Not until now.

Richard Barnhill, age 20.

“Dad, I...”

Silence only returned. The wind played at the loose sail, beckoning, almost pleading.

“Dad, tell me. I have to know.”

The lake’s surface rippled slightly with the breeze. For a very long time there was only the sound of the fishing poles, the lake, and the wind now barely touching the sail.

“About six months,” his father said finally. “Maybe more.. Maybe a

little less.”

Richard resisted the temptation to say *I told you so*. But he had. He had told both his parents.. hundreds of times.

“Don’t you think I tried? We never got around to it.” He paused again. Richard cast his line, and his father continued. “Maybe now your mother will.”

A flat, faded and dried-out cigarette pack shifted out from under one of the seats as Dad leaned back trying to pull in a fish. The line suddenly went limp, and Dad started to reel it in.

“Looks like he got away,” Richard mumbled pathetically.

“Yep.”

Dad looked down and saw the cigarette pack. The wind ceased and there was complete silence on the lake.

“Yeah.”

VI

Two weeks have elapsed in the same manner. You have spent most of the time thinking about people you loved, people you still love, but are gone. First, it was Dad. Then, Mom succumbed for the very same reason. A different disease, but the same final outcome. That left you alone. You buried your Mother three weeks ago today. And now you are alone. Yours is the only voice you hear now. You continue to talk to yourself so you don’t have to listen to the silence. Mom had said something as she lay in that hospital bed linked into six different machines, wasting away. She had said, “Please find someone, Richard. You have always been too alone.”

You’re afraid that you’ll never find anyone. Or that you will, and you’ll lose them. you said that you came to the cabin this time to sort things out, to have time to think, and you did, you had needed that. But now it was time to return. it was time to go home and start again.

You leave the bags in the car and go down to the dock just one more time to see the sunset. You see someone standing alone at the end of the dock. You walk out to the end of the dock and Amy turns around. She has been watching the sunset.

“Hello, Richard.”

“Thanks, Mom,” you say skyward.

Grant Sterling Mudge
RC '92





The Office

Heavy beige carpet
Wall to wall
And glare off
the glassy frames of
a girl and her pussycat
Reflecting all
gray buildings
and windows of glass
Lightbulb yellow
creeps along
the wax veneer
of the rich oak desk
with dirty brass handles
Mute green China vases
stand as stone soldiers
on the half-cut
oval table
And powder green sofas
bathe under gray
window lights
Even silk flowers grow here
The round glass table
bears its hard-bound magazines
and deftly crowns
the old Persian rug
The frays tangle quietly
against the grating of
the plastic walkways
As the water colored
Indian prints
fall straight along
The sharp white blinds

Sandy Tan
WC '91

Occam's Razor

"So tell me, do you write at all?"

"Well, yeah, I've done a story or two, maybe a poem; nothing to really write home about."

drifting

fingers poised

hovering over the expectant keys

that can be played with such rhapsodic rhythm so as to salve the fractured
soul,

or slice with a scalpel's edge,

I see the edge of the razor,

and wonder how best to apply it; keeping necessary while trimming trivial...

am I butcher or surgeon?

stonecutter or sculptor?

have I the delicacy, the steadiness of hand,

and...

who am I to dare?

"O Great Sculptor, how does one sculpt an elephant?"

"Simple. Cut from the block all that looks unlike an elephant."

confronted with Language,

intimidated by the immensity of WORD,

I wallow, struggling as the monkey trapped in quicksand

before the morass of all that is my self-constructed monster.

Swimmer versus immutable tide

I am Surgeon operating blind

and Knight liberating the realm from the beast's terror

I see my creation; the fruit of my labor

advance-

murder in its eye,

ugly and therefore evil,

but also terminally ill and pleading for cure

and the razor becomes a broad, double-edged sword;

a scalpel,

but-

the monster, the vile dragon

is

MINE!

continued

how can I cut, possibly maim or even kill,
that which is an expression of myself?
every word, every scale in its repulsive hide;
every drop of the sucking mire,
every organ in the patient in danger of death (oh god it's my CHILD),
is
suspect.

so I pray to whatever gods may listen,
and cut.

Rich Miller
RC '93

Candidate for The Margaret Haley Carpenter Prize for Poetry



I Saw Death Walking Down the Street

I saw Death walking down the street,
and I cried out to him,
But he continued on.
I ran and caught up with him,
And we walked hand in hand
down the street of chaos.
I kicked the gargage cans out of the way,
And stumbled over the trash and tin cans,
But we kept on.
Fire raged all around us,
And buildings tumbled down.
The wind blew against us,
But I kept pace.
The snow was deep and cold,
But we trudged slowly onward.
Not a word did he speak,
And I was content.
We climbed the hill
And watched the filthy gutters fill.
The sun beat down upon us,
But I kept pace with him.
He moved more slowly now,
so I too slowed my walk.
He seemed to hesitate
As we reached the top
I reached out my hand,
but he flung it back.
We neared the end of the street,
And he stopped.
He turned and pointed,
And I looked back.
floods of joy overcame me,
And I realized what I had seen.
There was beauty in that mess,
And I turned to tell him so,
But he was gone.

Edward Tayloe Wise
Grad

city scape

"Hey. Buddy. Can you spare fifty cents?"

Awkward pause.

"Just used my last dollar for this burger."

A blank stare.

"No, wait." Digging into pockets. Forty-three cents falls into his hand. He disappears without a smile.

A shrug to the very fat woman who was watching. She gives a look and raises her eyebrows. Why not scream

"DON'T ENCOURAGE HIM!""???"

The hell with you, bitch.

With the burger, out in the bright sunshine.

Forty-three cents walks by, with a small cup of coffee. He turns and smiles. Then he walks on down the street and is a part of the noon day heat and the city scape.

Grant Sterling Mudge

RC '92

Edward Taylor Wise
Grove

Creatures of the Night

The swollen pregnant moon
Is giving birth to a cascade of light.
In the clearing it soaks my form.
Aids my eyes.
But it cannot seep into the surrounding woods
Where the creatures of the night
Perform their cacophonous symphony—

Or is it a hip hop house jam?
chirp—croak—buzz—chatter
chatter—click—chatter—buzz
Step to the beat
Back and forth
And spin at 45 r.p.m.
Er, excuse me—
Stuff yourself into the CD player
And press repeat 'til the laser beam's busted—

At least the moon tells me where I'm walking
Down this rocky dusty road in the dark.
She shines now, but I know tomorrow
The eclipse comes and when Elisa and I
Get on the ferris wheel at the fair tomorrow night
We'll be watching her light fade away.

And I know now that Bela Lugosi was right
In the words of the Dark Count—
"What music they make"
Those creatures of the night.
I know there are bats out here
Because the one caught in Mrs. Baber's window
(She's the old lady that lives at the end of this road)
I let it out with a flyswatter. It was small.

I'm just waiting for a drunk to barrel down this road
In a big Plymouth
And shadows are starting to crawl now and I can't shake the
feeling that Freddie Krueger and Jason are conspiring to
Jump out of those bloody nightmare woods

continued

Ready to hack me, slice me, dice me to pieces
Before they even get to the good part of the movie.

“Oh, good evening sir. I didn’t see you there. I’m just out here mailing a letter. Yeah, I know sir. It’s late (but I just finished writing it two thousand years ago when I was still in my cozy comfy bed about to embark on this ignorant journey and) I’m sorry I disturbed you, sir. Yes sir, I’ll keep my eye out. Yeah, uh, good night.”

Mr. Warren looked like he might have shot me with that shadow of a shotgun.

Raise the red flag and curse the postman who comes too early
for all good people who want to sleep in
On a lazy summer day.
But now it’s night.
(or is it morning now)
And the road is long
Back to the house
When you think you’re seeing ghosts.
Maybe if I sing a song
The ghosts will hide
Behind the moon...
“...I’d go out of my mind but for you...”

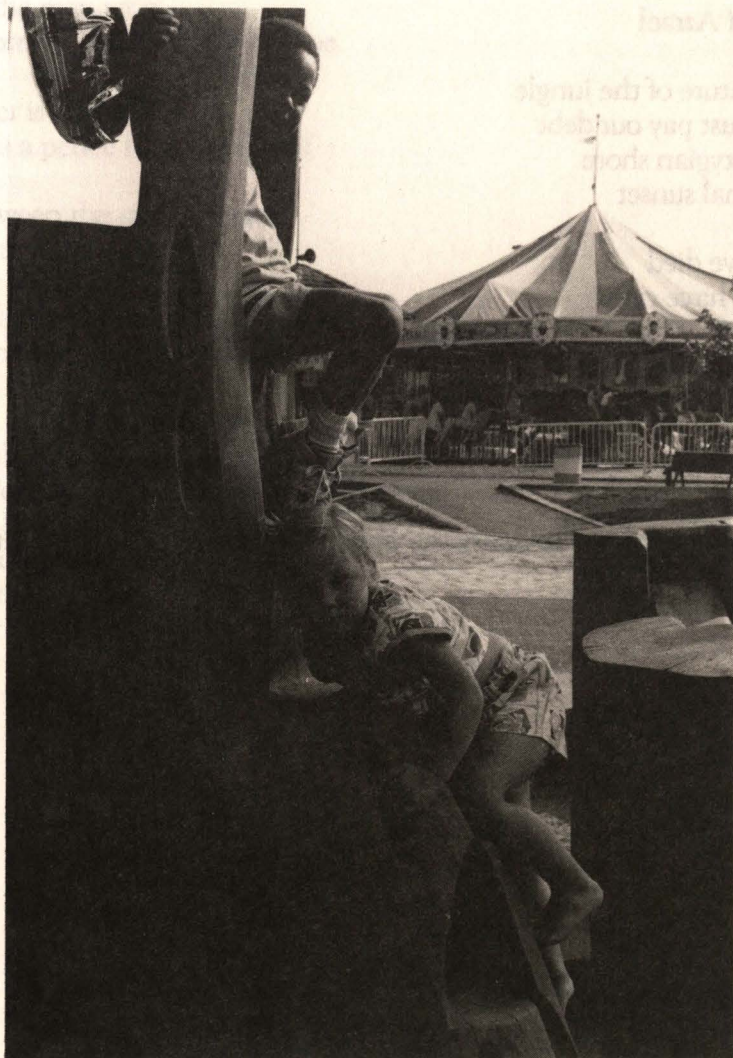
And as I come closer to the house
It seems unreal with its glow from within
Casting a shroud of shadows across the front lawn.
Only the living room light is shining—
My brother is watching the game
He taped Sunday while he was out again
With all his friends.
The game that—correction—I taped
Sunday while Mom and I watched one of those old movies
(“Suspicion”—A Hitchcock film)
Yeah, the modern wonder
Of the Video Ca-sette RE-corder...

And as I make it home alive

continued

(We all knew Clark Gable wasn't capable of murder)
I make sure I keep the porch light out
And come in and close the door fast
Because the creatures of the night make beautiful music
But Mom raises Hell when they get in the house.

Jeff Fowler
RC '91



Despair

The Ruiner of Life
Stalks the Jungle of Time
Searching for souls
Ruining rhyme

Release in a requiem
Heaven or Hell
Eventide eternal
Sonnet of Azrael

To the nature of the jungle
We all must pay our debt
On the Stygian shore
At our final sunset

Many have died
Manifold have cried
Simple, it is, to sing the song invisible
To listen though...despair.

Simon Shapiro
RC '93

Candidate for The Margaret Haley Carpenter Prize for Poetry

Poems on the Underground

Waryfaces

Mass-produced masks lined up on the platform
That stretches into a dark eternity,
Or to Kensington High Street

The faces pour
Into the train with their bodies attached
and, of course, their bags
All but the man who,
In the corner, pets his dog with one
Hand;
The other is a frozen cup.
Have you a pence to spare, mum?

And between the map and the
Modern art graffiti
Just next to the bomb alert notice,
A wary face reads Edna St. Vincent
Millay and four letters on the wall.

And the walls swell and fade away
They melt into the outside worlds
That touch each other, shoulder to shoulder
Like the bodies of the masks that
Stream towards the exit in perpetual
Enjambment

Katherine Clarke
WC '91

Quartz And Onyx

A shale-gray firmament wafts a fine mist to the asphalt beneath my docksiders. I lean my head back to catch a few droplets on my tongue and score an extra one on my nose free of charge.

I'm wearing dark drawstring pants, a snow-white turtleneck, the aforementioned docksiders and a crystal; but I'll get back to the crystal.

My eyes close and I listen to the lake wisely whispering to my right. Behind me, a nameless bird fluffs away. In a sedate sort of way, anthropomorphized Nature hovers in expectation. (Nature can afford to be sedate about this; she has plenty of other things to keep her busy; cutting fjords with glaciers, that sort of thing.)

In my human ignorance, I simply smile and shuffle my feet in the forming protopuddles as I head back to the dorm. I sit down and begin to write; shallow, overly-sappy tribute to rainy days in general and protopuddles in particular which, upon second reading, I promptly obliterate from both memory and diskette, smiling wistfully as the drive light kicks off.

* * *

I walk down a brightly-lit corridor. All is whitewashed cinder-block, with fluorescent tubes along the upper corners. Forward and back seem identical. The sckritch sounds of my docksidered-steps echo endlessly—the only sound. Frightened, I yell, "Who—"

* * *

The computer's off now. I lie on the lower bunk, contemplating the woodgrain of the upper. I pick up "The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy" and read the chapter about the Infinite Improbability Drive. As usual, this rekindles my urge to write (the "Mood"), and I turn half an hour into a very silly, very not-quite British treatise on bunkbeds and woodgrain and exactly why they complement each other so well, based on Adamsian Improbability Theory. This one I save, as a humble example to myself demonstrating why NOT to connect bunkbeds and Improbability Drives.

* * *

After the echoes die away without reply, I look for a way out.
Pound the walls and floor: no.
Karate-kick a particular cinder block — nope.

Charge full-shoulder into the wall — OUCH! Not that way.

Frustrated: "But WHO-"

Reluctant to just off and run, I sit down and think.

* * *

The beginnings of frustration begin to assert themselves as I shut the computer down once again; the Mood is still with me, and I grab my sketchpad in the hopes of alleviating it. Subtlety of hand seems to have gone bye-bye in my mounting frustration; a feeling of trappedness has emerged from nowhere.

I finger the onyx on a chain around my neck and reflect that it is beginning to fit my mood.

This thought cheers me not, so I elect to take another walk.

Nature isn't as sedate this time around; the sky has taken a marbled blackboardish hue and lightning flicks and mutters from the horizon. I am without a coat or umbrella, and so revolve to keep the walk short.

The lake is restless; the wind takes innocently-mean ripples and blows them into irritable chop. Noting this forces me to notice the wind, which has picked up considerably. Leaves begin falling from the autumn-ripened trees ahead of schedule, and suddenly all the birds have thought better of flying.

By now I'm three-quarters of the way around the lake, and inside looks more and more attractive than out.

As the decision to run for home has coalesced behind my eyes, Heaven throws wide the floodgates and I'm drenched before I've run five paces. I chant several South Philly mantras for similar situations as I run, and become so lost in original oaths, total wetness and deafening thunder that I miss the fifteen-foot fallen branch with everything but my foot.

I sprawl headlong into the tangle of maple and lose my shoe. After a status check ("not bruised or broken, but definitely wet and aggravated"), I retrieve my shoe, remove an opportunistic frog from it, put it on, and sprint (albeit more cautiously) the rest of the way home without noticing the absence of the onyx.

* * *

After pondering for what seems like eons, my mind wanders. Contemplating a cinder block, I am drawn into its white, craggy surface: chaos rent asunder and brutally beaten into order — the bricks of the wall.

The more I stare, the more I'm engrossed in the paradox of the wall.

Just as I am about to grasp its structure and purpose, something snaps.

Chaos warped into Order stares accusingly at me from every direction — gradually, painfully warping me in turn (the Picasso with the screaming horse and the light bulb bubbles to the surface of my roiling mind) into a maddened parody of myself. I beat and thrash at every surface until my hands, knees and elbows are torn and bloody; a wrist feels sprained.

The spasms passed; I sink to the floor. Spent, I whisper over a bloody lip: “Who am I?”

* * *

The realization that I’m dripping brings me around.

I’m staring at my computer screen. I’ve apparently typed something, but I don’t feel capable of reading it so I save it, kill the power and go to bed.

I wake up an hour later, dress, and notice that the onyx is missing. I shrug, snag a Pepsi left over from last night’s pizza binge, figuring the crystal got misplaced when I undressed for bed. I put on my leather-thonged quartz instead.

I boot up the computer, find the file, print it, and find complete gobbledygook. Complete incoherence. “...thrigorisnASH gobarrtfJOYstyck!...”

Lord, what was I on?!

Repulsed and terrified, I delete the file with a vengeance, rip the sheaf of printout in half and shove it in the hallway trash.

The Mood brings me up short. It has me by the throat now.

I start a new file.

* * *

I rise to my feet, and, drained but physically refreshed, come to the halfhearted but seemingly inevitable conclusion that running is my only option.

Resigned, I choose a direction (left?) and begin to run.

* * *

The quartz swings frenetically as I type, from time to time thumping my sternum.

It had begun rockily. My earlier incoherence hadn’t completely passed, so I’d ordered a pizza and Pepsi to mellow a bit.

When I started, the clock radio above my computer might have

displayed hymns in Cyrillic for all I noticed — time, to coin a phrase, had no meaning.

Now I type, pouring myself out onto the keyboard. Gradually, I type faster and faster, neither using nor needing the backspace key.

My roommate comes in at this point, wanders over wondering what typing-tutor game I'm playing, reads a line, widens his eyes, gathers his books, and leaves. I never miss a keystroke.

* * *

As I run, my fatigued muscles wear into a rhythmic dimension beyond hurt.

I discover that I'm still lightheaded after my previous ordeal, and shake my head to clear it. My perceptions remain decidedly fuzzy, though.

My clappy footsteps at first echo violently into my skull, but after I get the rhythm, the claps blend with their echoes and a slow, throbbing pulse envelops me and buoys me along the corridor.

My feet eventually stop touching the floor. A light appears at the heretofore infinitely distant nexus of the tunnel's four sides.

I'm gliding, arms spread wide and leading with my chin. The walls, floor and ceiling have become arbitrary; I could be traversing the galaxy or a capillary blood vessel. The rush of air buffets and deafens me until I realize I'm shooting through a vacuum. I then move faster still.

The light at the end of the tunnel glows ever brighter.

* * *

I feel freer with every word. The clatter of the plastic keys soothes like a masseuse doing karate-chops up and down my back.

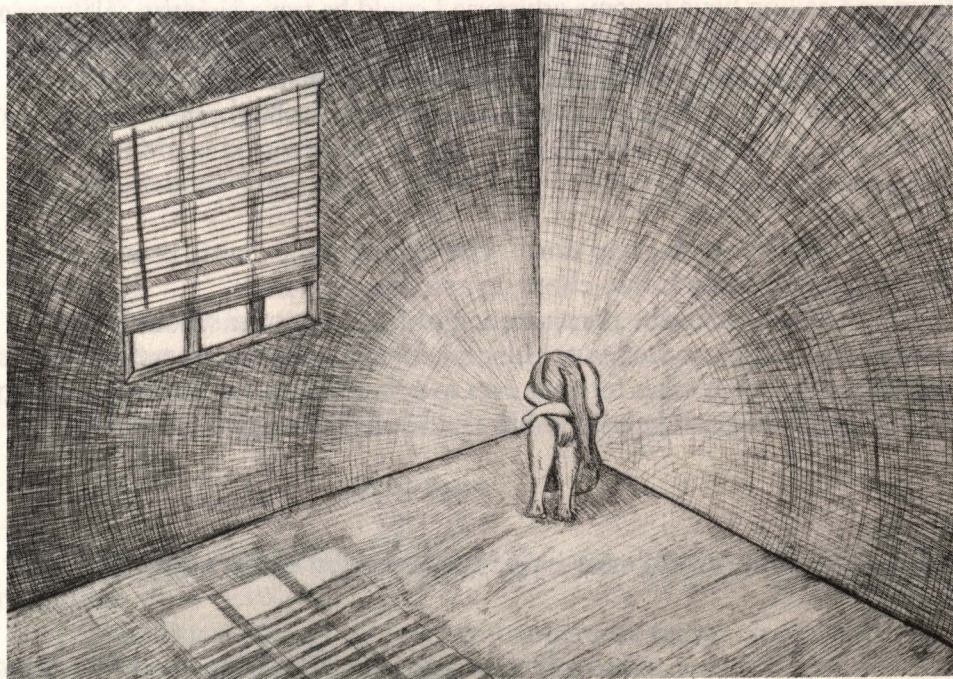
It's a catharsis; the pent-up energy of the past twenty-four hours gushes, super-concentrated, into the beaker. I dangle a quartz crystal into it and after the time it takes for your eyes to scan this line I'm left with a solid, perfect, gorgeous crystal cluster on the end of a leather thong.

Rich Miller
RC '93

German Articles

Das, Die oder Der
To try and guess, I would not dare.
But in my state of near confusion,
A vision comes, a mere illusion.
Das is Der und Der is die,
for what else could it ever be?
Or was I crazy as I was crammin',
But is Das Der und die zusammen?
No matter if Das is Der or Der ist Das,
I still must decide on was ist was.
My professor comes, my time is nigh,
He can see it in my eye.
So, as he stands before my row,
I do "eenie, meenie, mynie, moe."

Sean Keller
RC '90



Encounters

Pharisees and Saducees and
All those other "ees"
Beady eyes and bald heads covered
With beany caps
Snakes and vipers all of them!
Point crooked fingers at the
Angelic Jesus
Yell Crucify him! Crucify him!
He changed our wine to grape juice!

Fagin grabs little Oliver by the
Collar
Rips his only shirt
Rotten teeth and bloated, cracked lips
Worm their way into scratchy shrieks
You will steal or you will . . .
And a chipped fingernail drags
Across the boy's throat

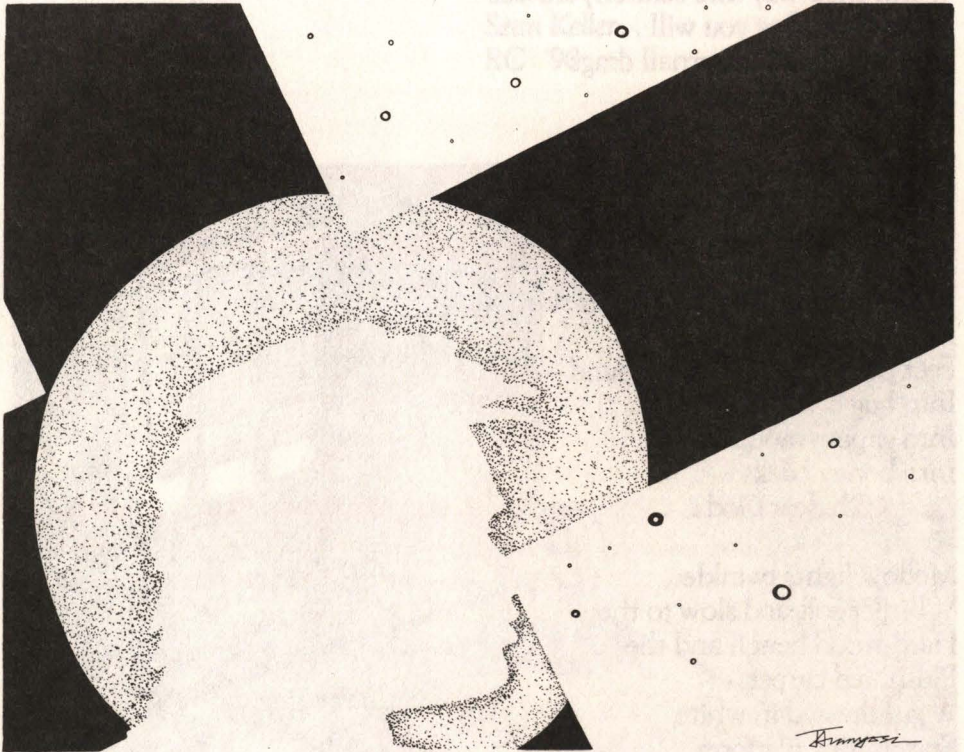
Stick people piled like tinker-toys
Lift bug eyes at me . . .
 Oh dear God
 They're real
Bones poke through the paper skin
Arm interlocks with leg
Feet poke up, down, all around —
Into bug eyes
Into gaping mouths
Into boney backs
 Oh dear God . . .

Mellow lights twinkle
Whisper soft and slow to the
Hard-wood bench and the
Plush, red carpet
A girl dressed in white
Stands on a platform
Shocks of brown hair fly
 Every which way

continued

Refuse to be tamed
By the little black cap
She sing-songs along and points at the
Worn parchment with a tender reed
She is off key and she stumbles
Over her words at times
But in her face I see the sun
Burst with a radiance
And fire
I have never known

Amy Joyner
WC '91



I had a friend -

Once upon a timeless time,
In a sleepless dream.

A misty curtain moves between us;
Made from the same mysterious veil
Which covers my face at waking.

Tell me what I want to hear:

I'm still dear to your cold heart;
Your indifference isn't meant to cut my soul.

Tell me fairytales of hope:

"Sleeping Beauty will wake my darling,
And she, too, shall have a prince."

If lies will console,

Conceive for me the grandest of them all.

Let me dance the floor at the masquerade,
Lest I be just another shadow
Fading into the morn.

Stacy Boothe
WC '93



**THE MESSENGER STAFF
FALL 1989**

EDITOR

Eileen Lynch

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Sunni McMillan

STAFF

John Aguiar
Michael Baucom
Baron Blakley
Stacy Boothe
Jeff Fowler
Anne Manning
Grant Mudge
Jon Paulette
Amy Snyder
Sandy Tan

UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND

