

The Messenger


Volume 2000
Issue 1 *The Messenger*, 2000

Article 1

2000

The Messenger, 2000

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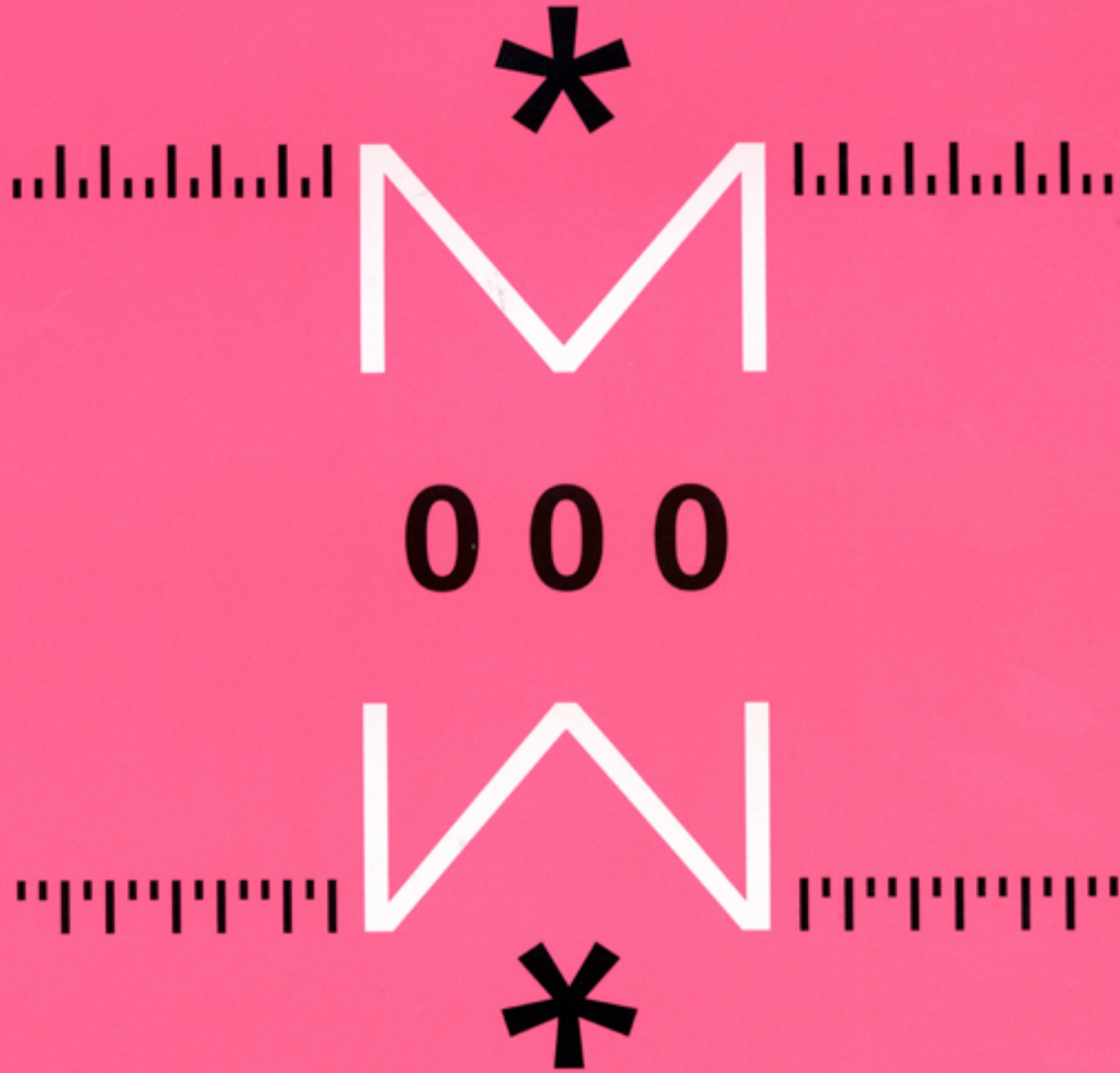
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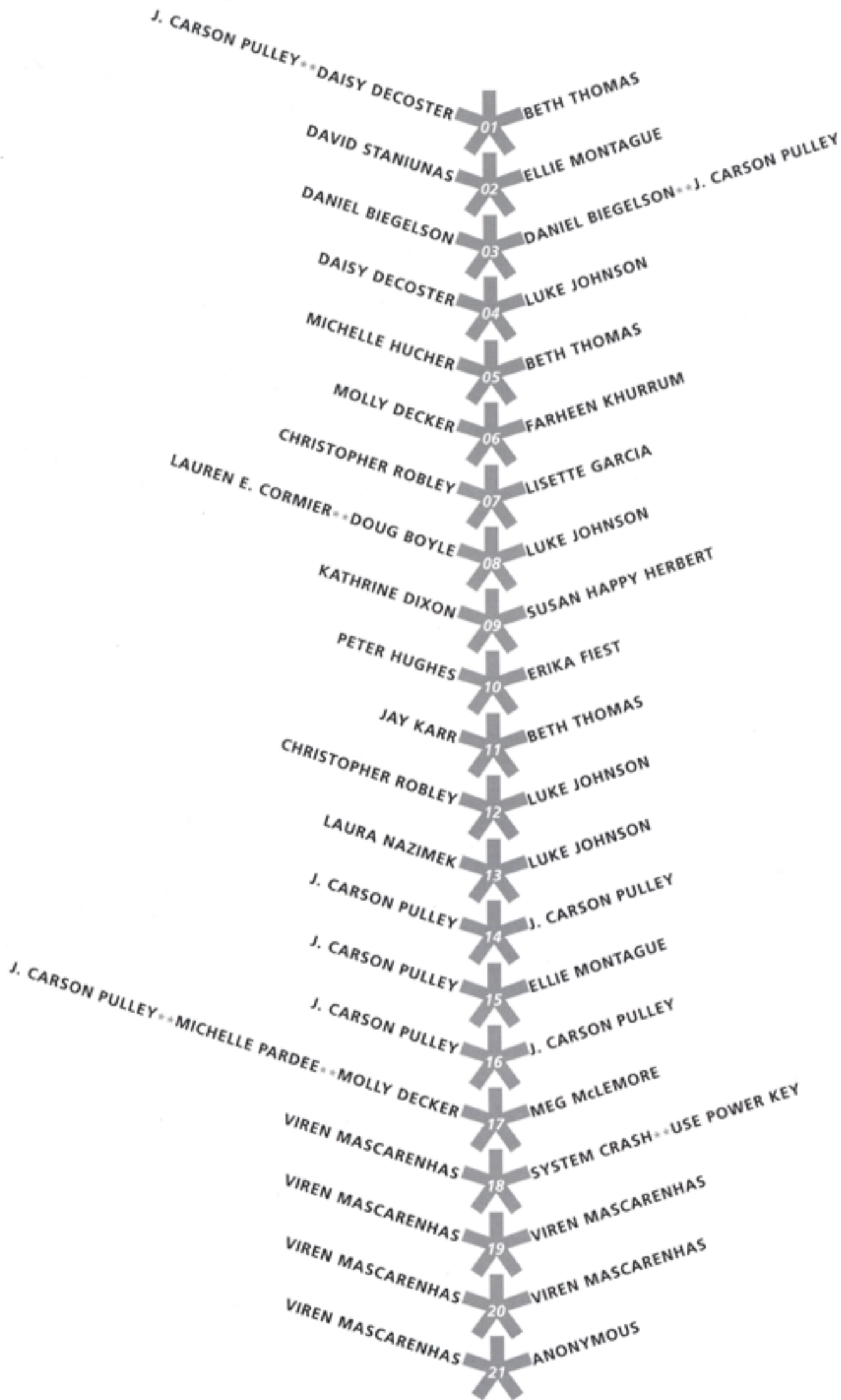
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<--ABOVE ** BELOW-->

From: j. carson pulley <jpulley@richmond.edu>
Subject: Tree of Life
Sent: February 20, 2000, 11:08 pm
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

*Dry grass covers the yard in patches
In the bare spots the earth looks shattered
Flecks of baked mud roll up at the edges
The fragile buds of the crab apple have wilted*

*They dangle as hanged men, flaccid and life-less
Black carpenter bees explore in vain
Darting from tip to tip, a hopeful frenzy
Dead things have no sweet secrets*

From: Daisy Decoster <ddecoster@richmond.edu>
Subject: The Corsets
Sent: February 17, 2000, 8:26 am
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

*hang
behind glass panes
and lines of solemn
stares stacked upon stares
their eyes suspend like*

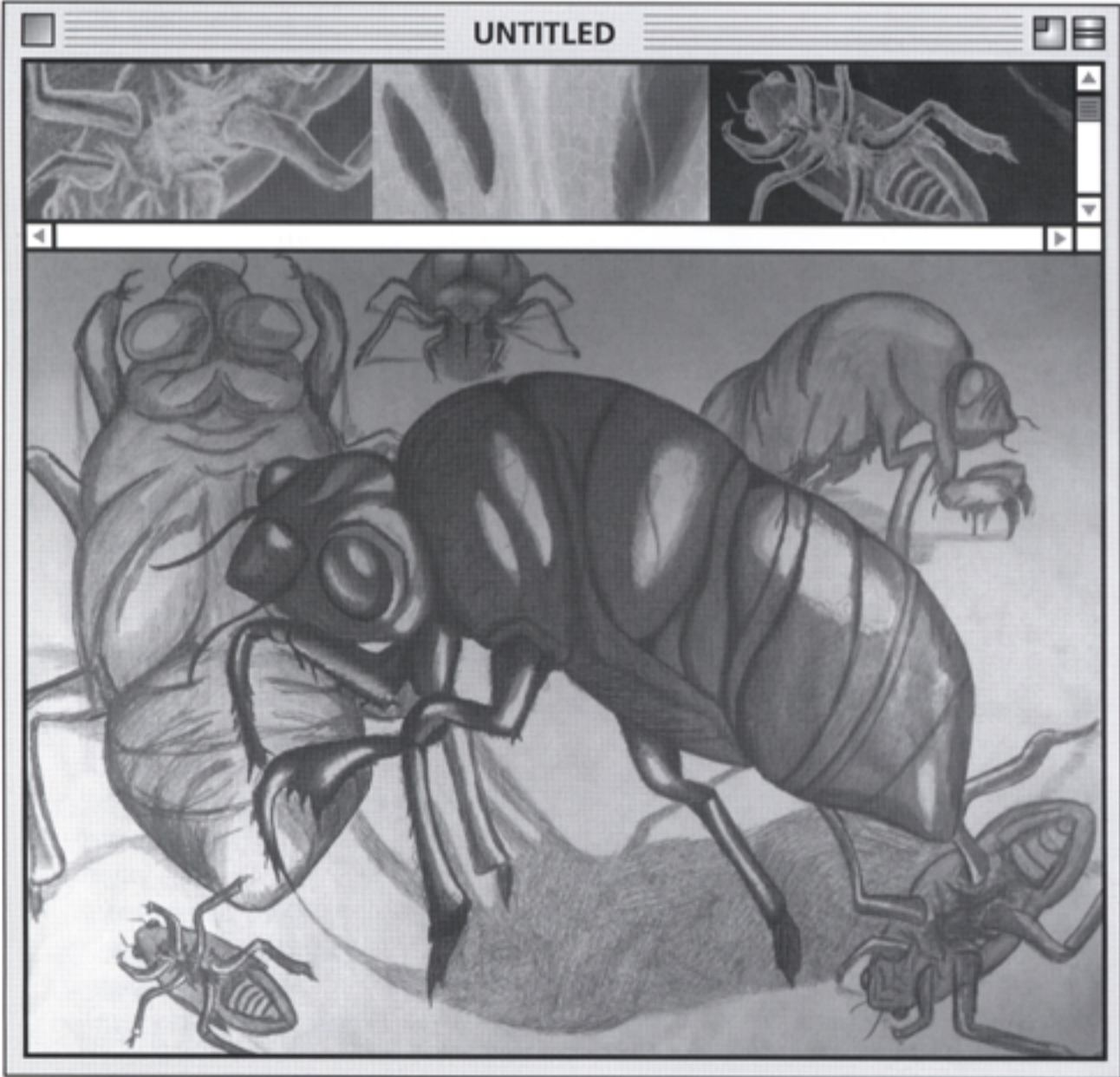
*olives
drift in martinis
and dilate behind fashion's designs
on flesh
ass, face, and legs soon spawned from*


*super-model eggs
fertilized and dividing
pinched neatly with smooth bulbous
explosions
kept serene and refined*



} the] messenger [000 { -----

BETH THOMAS



 }the]messenger[000{ -----

From: David Staniunas <dstaniunas@richmond.edu>
Subject: double-decker, London (from the French of Ezra Pound)
Sent: February 12, 2000, 1:16 pm
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

*A dead woman's eyes
Hailed me,
Caged in a dumb face
whose bland traits
Hailed me.
I saw clearly
The back of my memory
mutely moving
and aging.*

*A duck-flock neared a minuscule lake's meniscus
close to a child, hunched double laughing*

*I saw the archaic columns, knock-offs
of Monceau Park
A pair of lithe little
aristocrats
flaxen-fleeced
pigeons
fat
like pullets.*

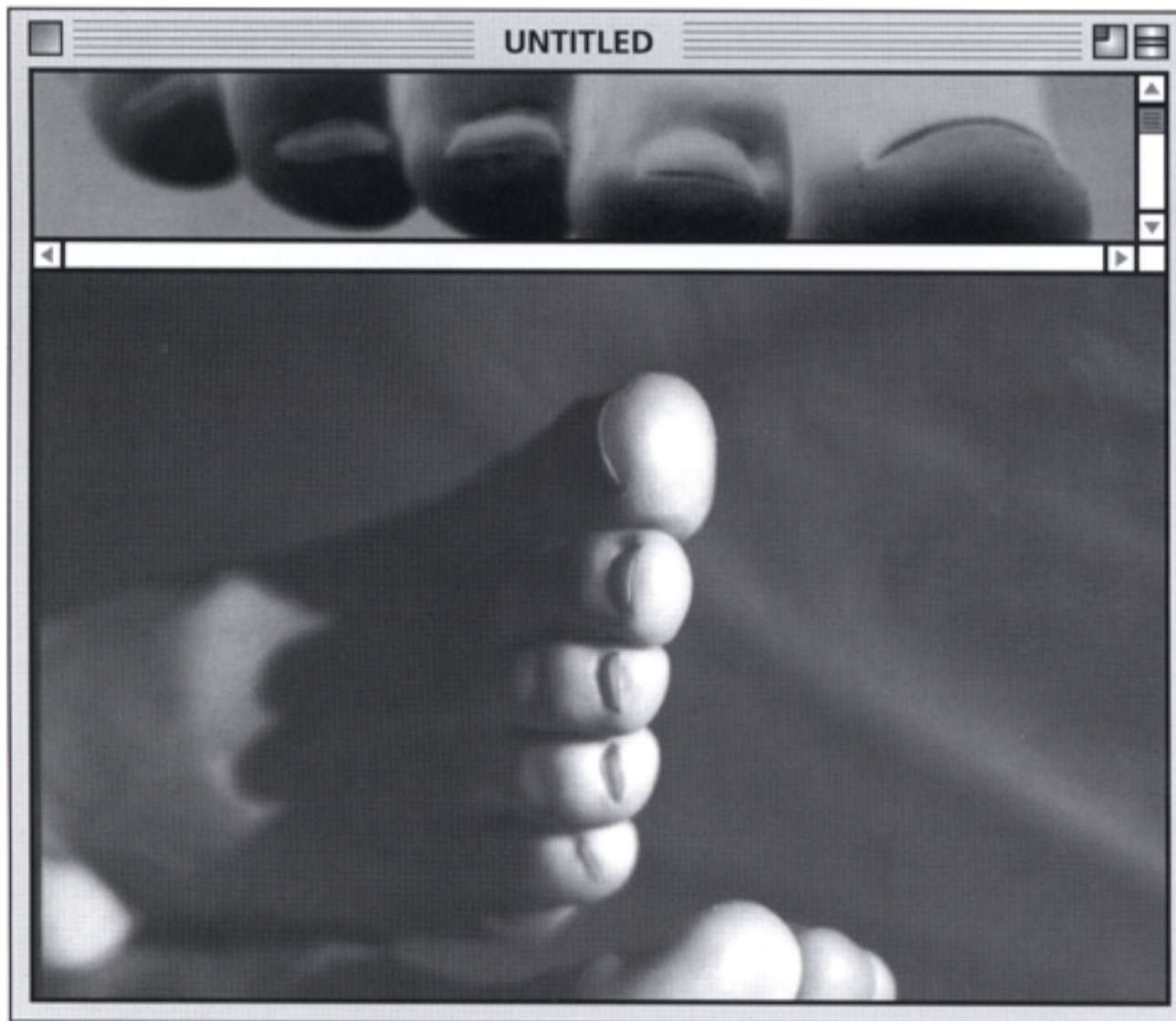
*I saw the park
the patchwork lawn
Where we rented chaises lounges
For four p. each*

*And black Japanese
swans
with wing-tips tinted dragon's blood
among the flowers
of Armenonville*

*A dead woman's eyes
hailed me.*



ELLIE MONTAGUE



}the] messenger [000{ -----

From: Daniel Biegelson <dbiegelson@richmond.edu>
Subject: *I will take my time as I move to the East*
Sent: February 08, 2000, 3:45 am
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

*In some worlds
salt mist settling over the ocean
and the foundation of a house creaking to rest
are the same things.
In some worlds they are not.*

*Here the way we walk is awkward
like swaying fountain grass.
Showcasing our calves,
muscles filling in
for the empty spaces that our feet fall in.
The empty spaces, the worlds, the rickety fences
that separate this one from that one
roots that split deeply, water that divides air,
out there from in here.*

*I am pulled along by
every grain's contour
riding their smooth surface
lulled into changing direction like the tide.
the hair on my neck parted by ghosts walking down the cracks of my skin
watching sand wept away into the water
isn't as easy as you think.*

*As the sun washes out like a painter's smock
blurring night and day
the cool Atlantic breeze brings truth on its coat-tails
wakes up the eyes.
A clear glistening that magnifies
until you can see the ocean and horizon vibrate back and forth
Humming squarely and flat.
Until the west wind whistles, grabs it
and circulates fiction through the faint resemblance of rust-twined wire.*

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*So who can tell a paradox
in this weather?
When did the earth get so round
and the sky so tall?
When did worlds differentiate
into long division?
What happened to Mount Olympus
and my grandfather?*

*I have always loved the clock
and I have heard from the settling mist
that everywhere time can be told from cold stars.
So at midnight
it's all about the waiting
the paradox is eager breath wading in the breeze
and the creaking of the house filing its way past layers of rock.*

*In some worlds
digging for lost artifacts
and charting the fickle stars
are the same things.
In some worlds they are not.*

*In any world
distance brings clarity
In any world
cold dead stars
are easier than warm hands.*

From: *j. carson pulley* <jpulley@richmond.edu>
Subject: *Compromise for a Dependant Woman*
Sent: *February 11, 2000, 5:23 pm*
To: *Messenger* <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: *Zinc Design* <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

*Maul my child's eardrums with jagged words
Sting its adolescent love with a folded belt
Crush innocence with your pelvic thrusts
Just promise to never stop loving me*



} the] messenger [000 { -----

From: Daisy Decoster <ddecoster@richmond.edu>
Subject: tonight a streetlight
Sent: February 19, 2000, 4:06 pm
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

nightlight, nightlife
reveals absence, brick upon brick
from the perched bulb this device omits its veil
keeping her from my sight

streetlights turn on at night
and the moon?
Some shape, some degree of bright
unclear beyond the pompous fixtured globe

and the blind policeman pronounces his glare
stationed to deter assault, rape, miscellaneous derelict activity
and he is tall
a patchwork design for what originates from human minds
minds like moons obscured in this light

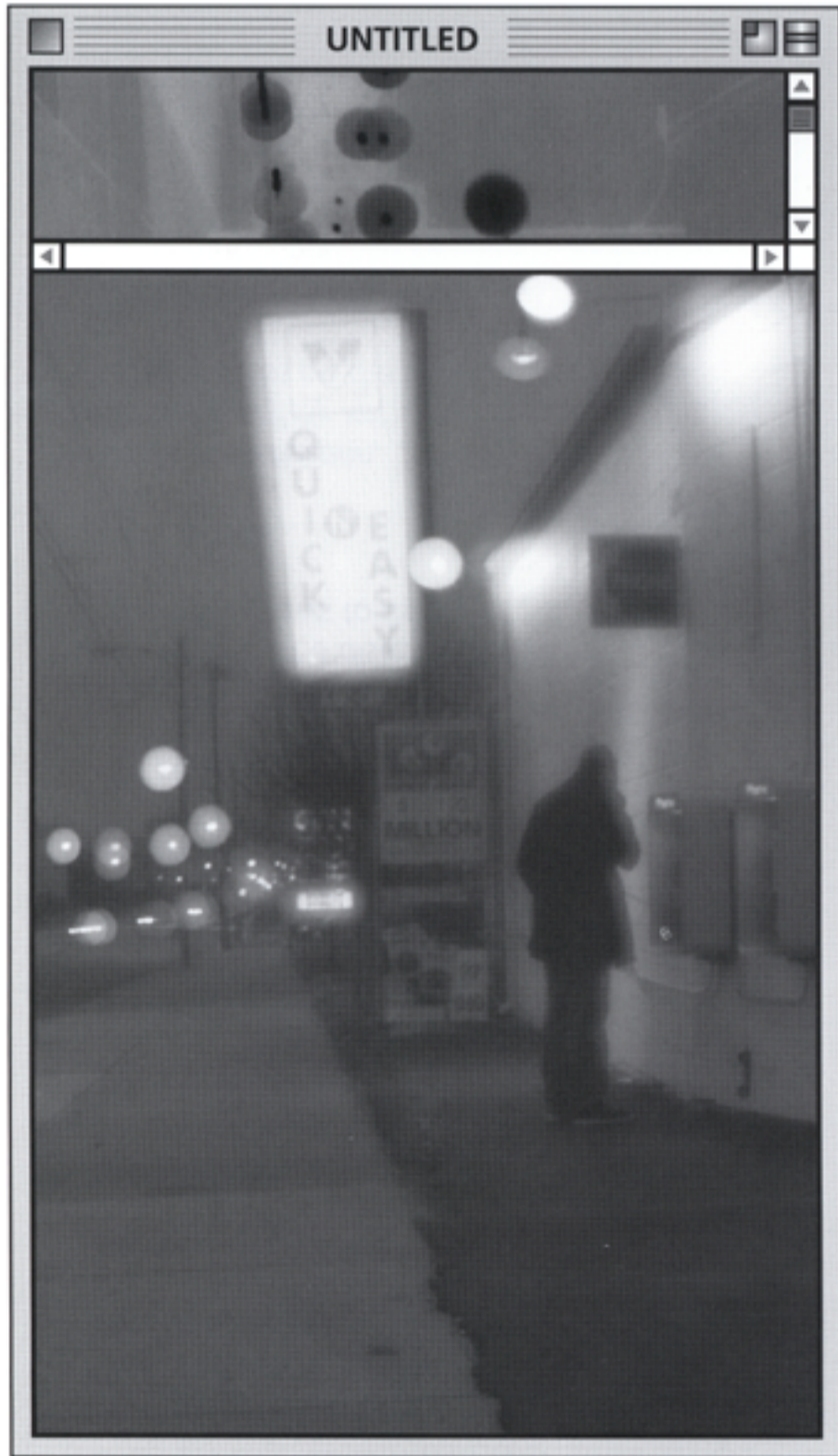
we love in circles
we touch in curves
full spheres, cautious crescent swerves
those illuminated maples do from green to brown to bare
and back like bodies
revealed here in the artificial haze
rounded shapes like hills and huts
globes and spheres
but bricks and mortar
right angle upon right angle
still unchanging streetlight

I can't feel my circle
can't see the moon this night



} the] messenger [000 { -----

LUKE JOHNSON



}the] messenger [000{ -----

From: Michelle Hucher <mhucher@richmond.edu>
Subject: Phone Call
Sent: February 14, 2000, 3:22 pm
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

*a pair of cool grey eyes,
glassy and distant, sparkle
while recalling an old war story*

...are you sitting down?...

*a mottled white beard
draped over sagging cheeks,
chest rumbling in a chuckle*

...I've got to tell you something...

*a gnarled hand gesturing,
tufts of hair dancing wildly,
skin ashy and dry*

...I'm so sorry...

*cracked fingernails
scraping against a distended stomach
as the story draws to its end*

...your father...

*a pause for reflection,
head turns slightly left
to accept a kiss on the cheek*

...passed away this morning...



} the] messenger [000 { -----

BETH THOMAS

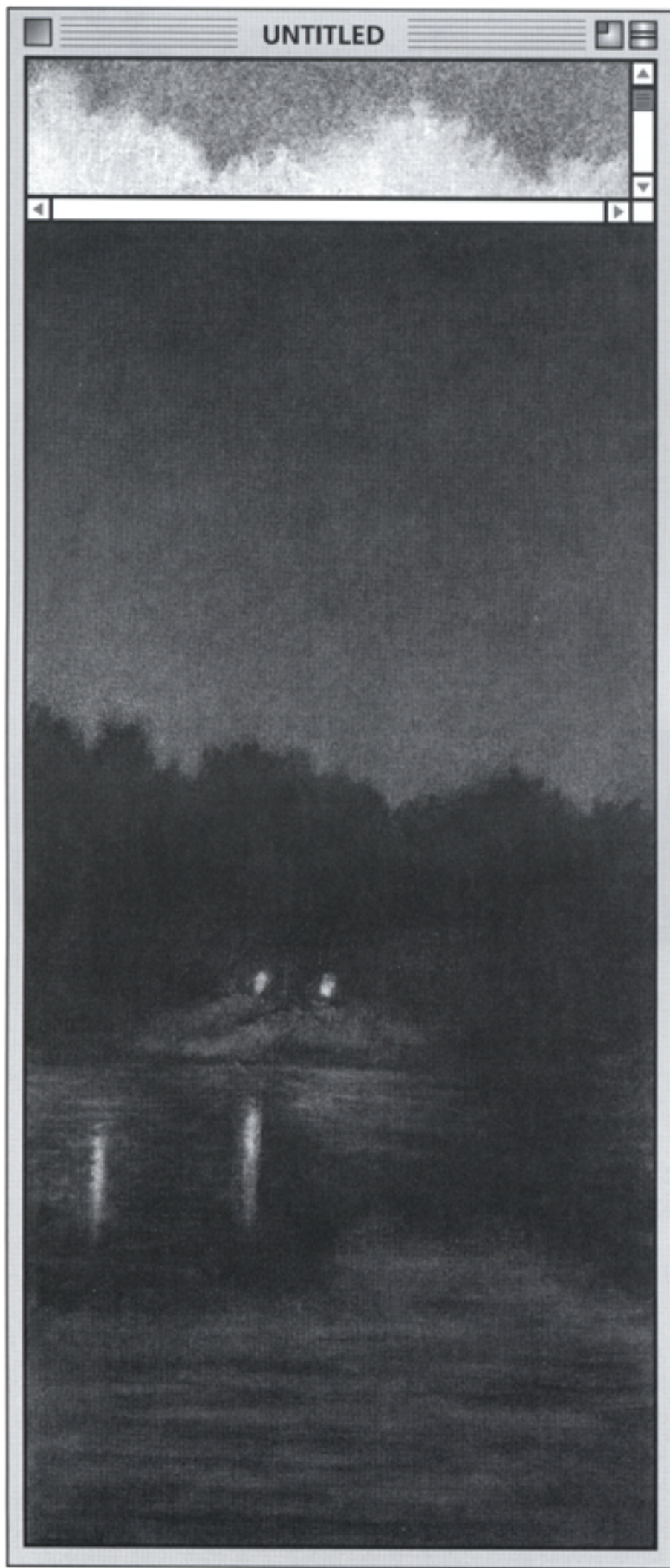


From: Molly Decker <mdecker@richmond.edu>
Subject: unzipped
Sent: February 2, 2000, 6:55 am
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

she lingers casually in front of the screen door,
facing the sun setting behind the trees in her backyard,
nose pressed flat into the mesh wiry smell,
and thinks of that time they went camping,
and how they constructed a blazing fire
using two bottles of lighter fluid
and sixteen store-bought logs;
how the flame was so strong
the smoke hurt their eyes
and they had to retire
to bed early,
and, how,
sometime,
in the middle of the night,
her hair
got caught
in the zipper
of the tent's
screen door
and had to be
cut out
with a
swiss
army
knife.



} the] messenger [000 { -----



From: Christopher Robley <crobley@richmond.edu>
Subject: Communion
Sent: February 16, 2000, 7:57 pm
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

*At Scotland Yard's,
unpopular haunt for the ghosts of drunkards,
I beheld the exchange of unkindly words
between priest and minister, both in beards,*

*both Irish, both wagering how much wine
could be communioned before it was a sin.
Amidst the spindrift of lager, they wiped their scruff
of dribbles and drabbles of drink and chanted, "This is enough!"*

*In subtle solidarity, both touched fingers under the single goblet,
taking turns with the spirit under dark florescent light,*

*exchanging the cup
in a game of reverse roulette
to see who would get
the last sip.*

From: David Staniunas <dstaniunas@richmond.edu>
Subject: couchée
Sent: February 11, 2000, 8:41 am
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

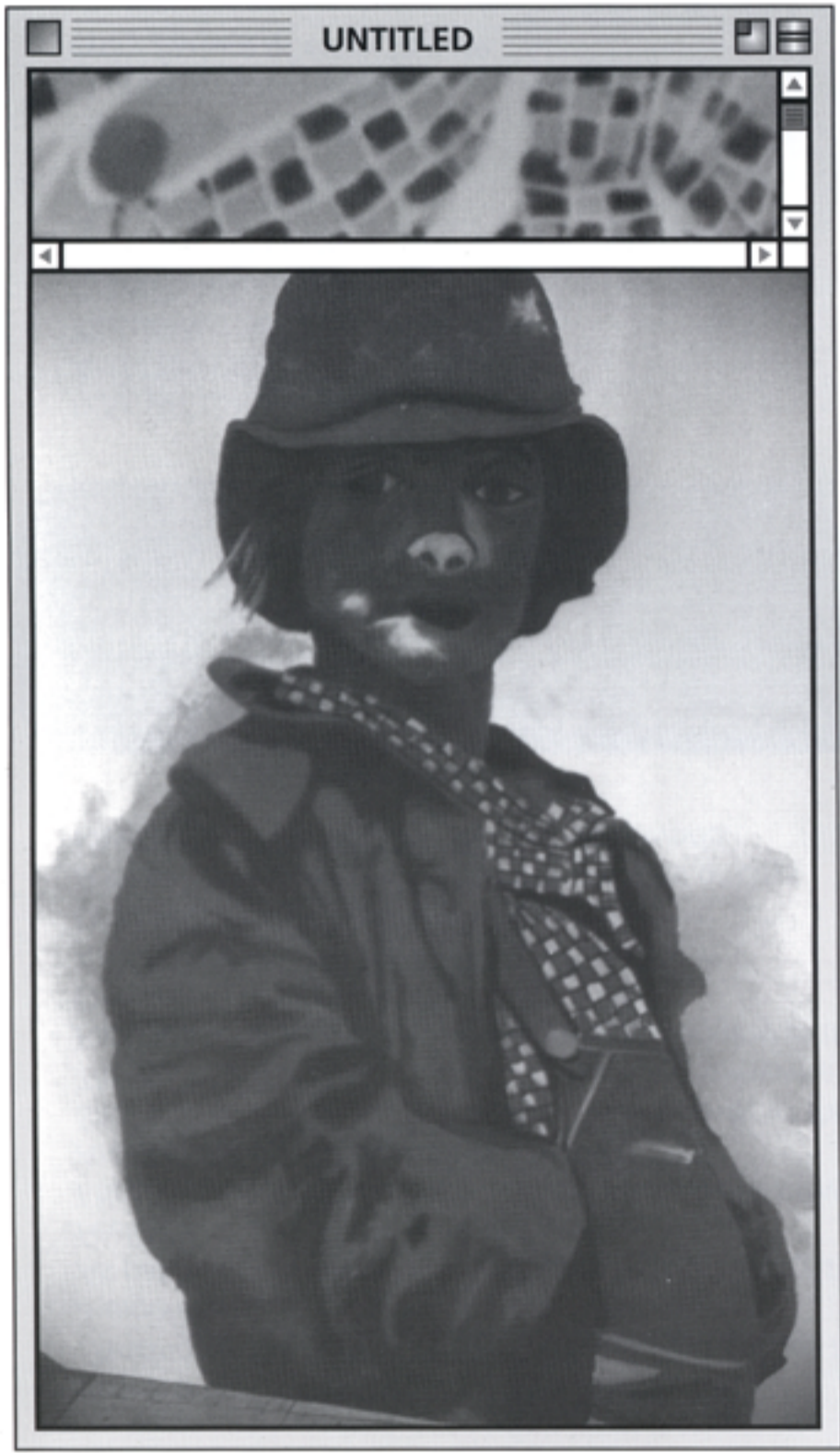
*in a hotel bed
I held you like a breath, like
twine looped and tied around brown paper
skinny limbs loose enough
to hold and not hold down.
dim lamplight, distant gossiping
traffic a soft counterpart to
your stir, sigh, jet-lagged eyes.*

*how quiet fits sight - how a song
stays in memory. where
the hollow below my clavicle held your face,
where dawned on me, during afternoons,
the whitening likeness of **album** and **aube**.*



}the] messenger [000{ -----

LISETTE GARCIA



}the] messenger [000{ -----

From: Lauren E. Cormier <lcormier@richmond.edu>
Subject: The Woods at Big Cypress
Sent: February 06, 2000, 4:14 pm
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

*Bearded trees of moss and vines welcome me,
Dancing to the rhythm of circles of pulsating congas and the soft moans of
a digeridoo,
As palm fingers wave with each breath of the sultry swamp breeze.
Feeling like part of the swamp-forest myself,
I tiptoe, on naked feet, embracing the soft black-brown mud beneath.
Around stumps, or sprouts, of trees
Straining as we do, pulling away from the earth to the heavens.
The knobby things dot the dirt, making it a somewhat difficult walk
Past people lounging lazily in hammocks hanging in the trees
Or dancing along with the natural sounds
And I come upon a skull, animal of some sort,
Displayed by the Seminoles in some ritual.
Borrowing their land for these few minutes or days
I feel one, like them, with this beautiful world.*

From: Doug Boyle <dboyle@richmond.edu>
Subject: Morning
Sent: February 09, 2000, 6:37 am
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

*I stir, yet she dreams still,
And I take this time to watch.
The perfect peace of her visage
Complements perfectly
The even tranquillity with which she breathes
The new morning air.*

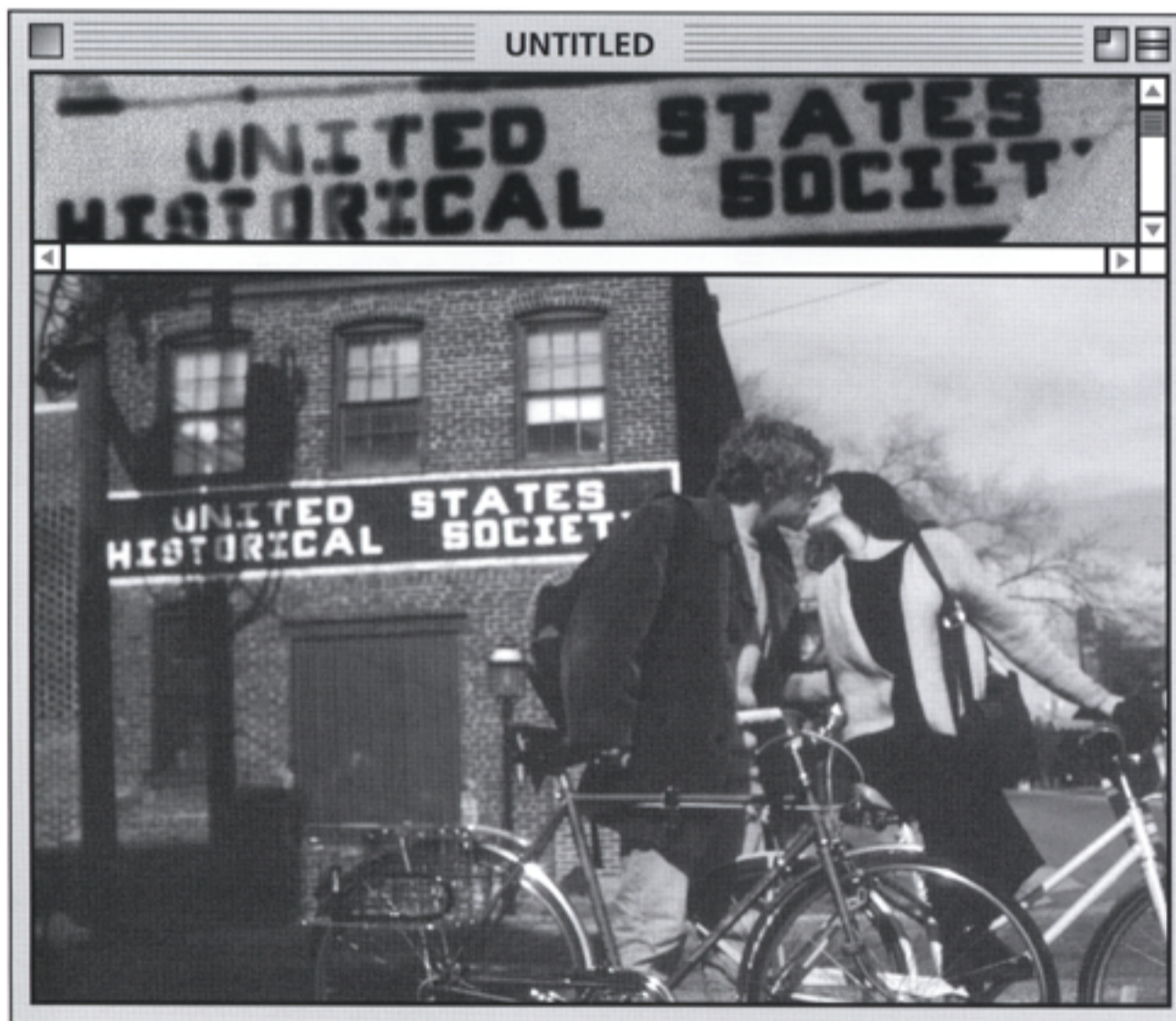
*I lean close to her face
In order to know better
Every feature of every feature.*

*I kiss lightly her forehead
With half-intention to wake
And I behold her eyelids slowly flutter
Then open to reveal
The blue sunrise of dawn.*



} the] messenger [000 { -----

LUKE JOHNSON



}the] messenger [000{ -----

From: Kathrine Dixon <kdixon@richmond.edu>
Subject: Sestina for the 'artist'
Sent: February 01, 2000, 9:15 pm
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

We say, "We are the creators of art.
In us, sounds, rhythms, colors live
freely: no restrictions or facades.
We mold the clay, the words, the world, anything
and everything into the contents of our soul, but
above all, we say, "we are happy."

In truth, we have conditioned ourselves to be happy.
We are a work of our own art.
We fashion, not the truth of beauty, but
the lies that make existence simpler to live,
the fronts that allow us to do, to say anything
without thought to conscience or consequence - liberation in facade.

Or is it that we are caged by the facade,
forced to make others believe we are happy?
For the reality, we would give anything,
most readily of all, our art;
for we are more willing to live
in darkness of soul than in solitude. But,

we never wonder, if we could but
burst the seams of suffocating facade,
how much more deeply we could live,
how much more truly we could be happy.
We could be worthy of our art.
Pretense is unnecessary. But no, we believe anything

before we believe the truth. For truth, like anything
of value, as we perceive it, is but
another form of art
(in the eye of the beholder) - the ultimate facade.
We proclaim it, but are not happy
with it - it is an unsatisfying code by which to live.

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*We don't see that, without truth, we do not live.
Instead, we fight desperately to grab onto anything,
however fleeting, that tells us, "we are happy."
In our hearts, perhaps, we know, but
we are unwilling to forfeit the comfort of our facade.
In the end, though we could make an art of life, we choose to make a life of art.*

*In art lies our collective facade.
If we are to live, best the world see us happy,
Though, really, we are anything but.*

From: Susan Happy Herbert <sherbert@richmond.edu>
Subject: Cattails
Sent: February 18, 2000, 10:12 am
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

*I imagine that the cattail came to town on a pick-up's front fender
when its driver, off with his rifle in search of game, parked in a ditch.
On the way home, the pod fell off at Libby and Broad to lie where I
saw it -- a swollen brown finger, overused the way Grandma's were after
she scrubbed my childhood clothes against her washboard and hung them
to dry in the winter air. They froze into stiff silhouettes that looked
like my paper doll's clothes -- flat and hard and cold as Grandpa's
heart when he drowned the new litter of kittens in the horse trough.
The cattail lay on city pavement till a passing tire broke it open, spilled
seed that lay useless on the asphalt that grows nothing but potholes.
A sudden gust of air swirled the fluff into a giant puff-ball, blew
displaced bits into whorls like dust-motes looking for sunny places
to settle. Wipers brushed my windshield clear of what looked
like the down of chickens, like the feathers Grandma plucked
from bloody birds and sewed into the pillows I'll sleep on tonight.
Now, far from the farm where I once lived, I try to set down
shallow roots in my tidy, city apartment.*



} the] messenger [000 { -----

From: Peter Hughes <phughes@richmond.edu>
Subject: Commuters
Sent: February 19, 2000, 12:02 am
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

We walk
on the way to work
violently stepping to some circadian rhythm
that beats unrecognized
each time our loafers touch the pavement
an uncongenital pulse that shivers imperceptibly
emanating from Hell
Maybe where the steam seeps through man-holes
or from the first and successive Wall Street tickers
No one really knows

Our gazes are steadfast and straight
not regarding anything
avoiding other's eyes at all cost

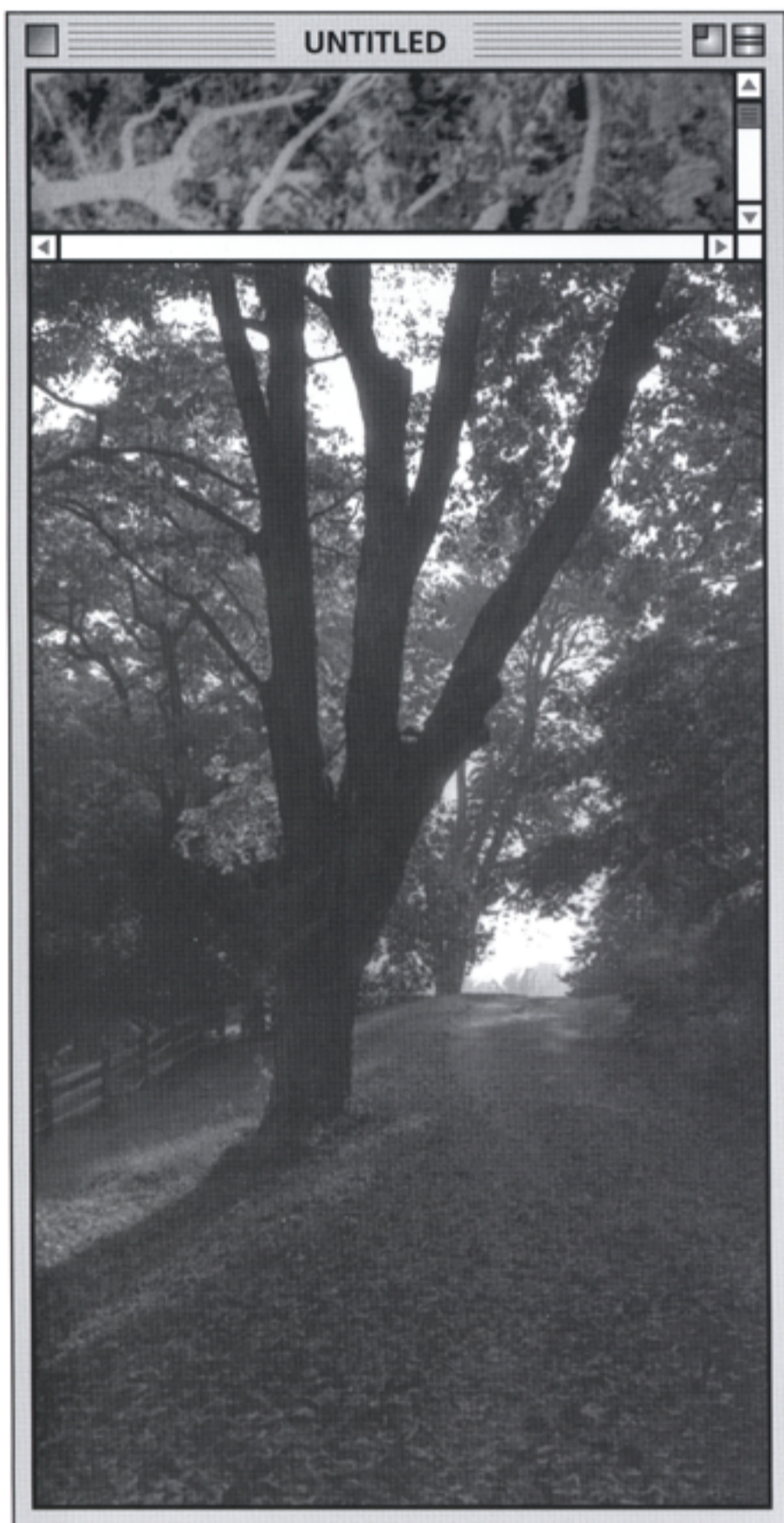
Among gray men and women in gray suits forms a gray sea
these thick currents wash out slow, crumbling cities

From: Michaelean Ferguson <boo@richmond.edu>
Subject: Surgeon General's Warning
Sent: February 13, 2000, 11:22 pm
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

My love for you is like saccharin -
those chalky white pellets
that fizz away in boiling water.
It's sweet but it's fake
and it's been known
to cause cancer in lab rats.



ERIKA FIEST



}the] messenger [000{ -----

From: Jay Karr <jkarr@richmond.edu>
Subject: untitled
Sent: February 18, 2000, 9:34 am
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

where to begin
in a position
I hadn't moved
original thought's imposition

night over europe
wearing weak light
shoulder over
saffron generations overture

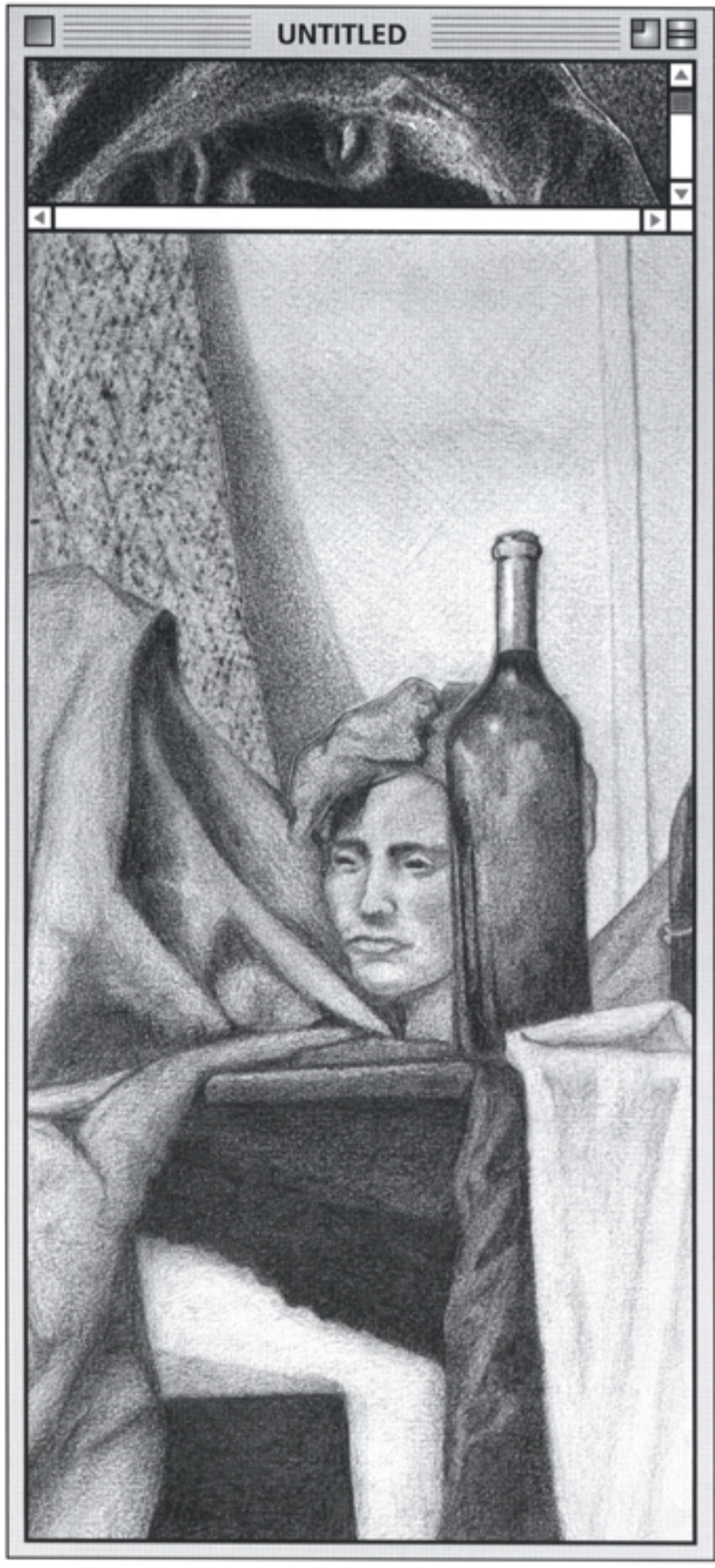
grass-stained secret shade
sun slanted homogenous runs
the soap still burning
stings the entry wound

shattered bloom softer
falling sounds of a summer somewhere else
crushing the state
flushed and eager in youth

were we where before
second facing in the mirror disappear
lines upon shadows of not one face
but two ways leave touch behind
let it go
doorway to the hall
junction
destination
procrastination



} the] messenger [000 { -----



BETH
THOMAS

From: Christopher Robley <crobley@richmond.edu>
Subject: Going to Market
Sent: February 12, 2000, 10:16 am
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

*A long-tired snake
of a road routed around
the mountain pass between
San Pieta and the broadcast center.*

*Sent a **aldea por viveres**,
I talked my way aboard
the bed of a rusting truck, the only
White among paper faced women,
wrinkled like their brown bags
brimmed over with ripe mangos.*

*I made faces at a little boy across
who, clinging to his mother, seemed satiated despite malnourishment.
He slid between her knees, curled
his tongue out, and giggled
his eyes back at me.*

*The dirt rouge reddened in her cheeks
and she grasped the child's elbow
like a finger vice, yelled quick Spanish
that flew by me.*

*In the hurried moment, her brown bag
lost equilibrium and somersaulted over
her arms. Hopping against the bed-gunnels.
Smashing under the tires.*

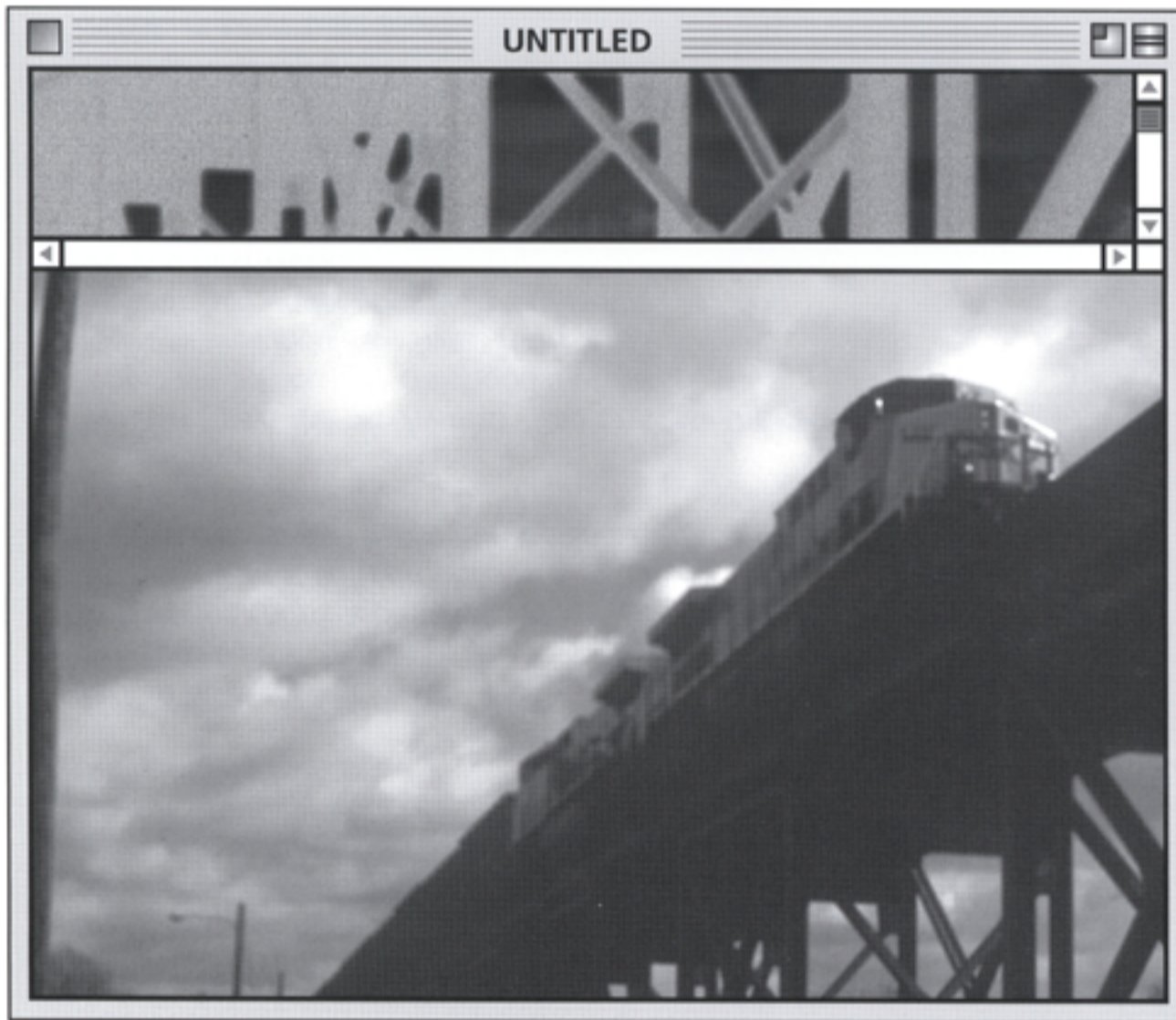
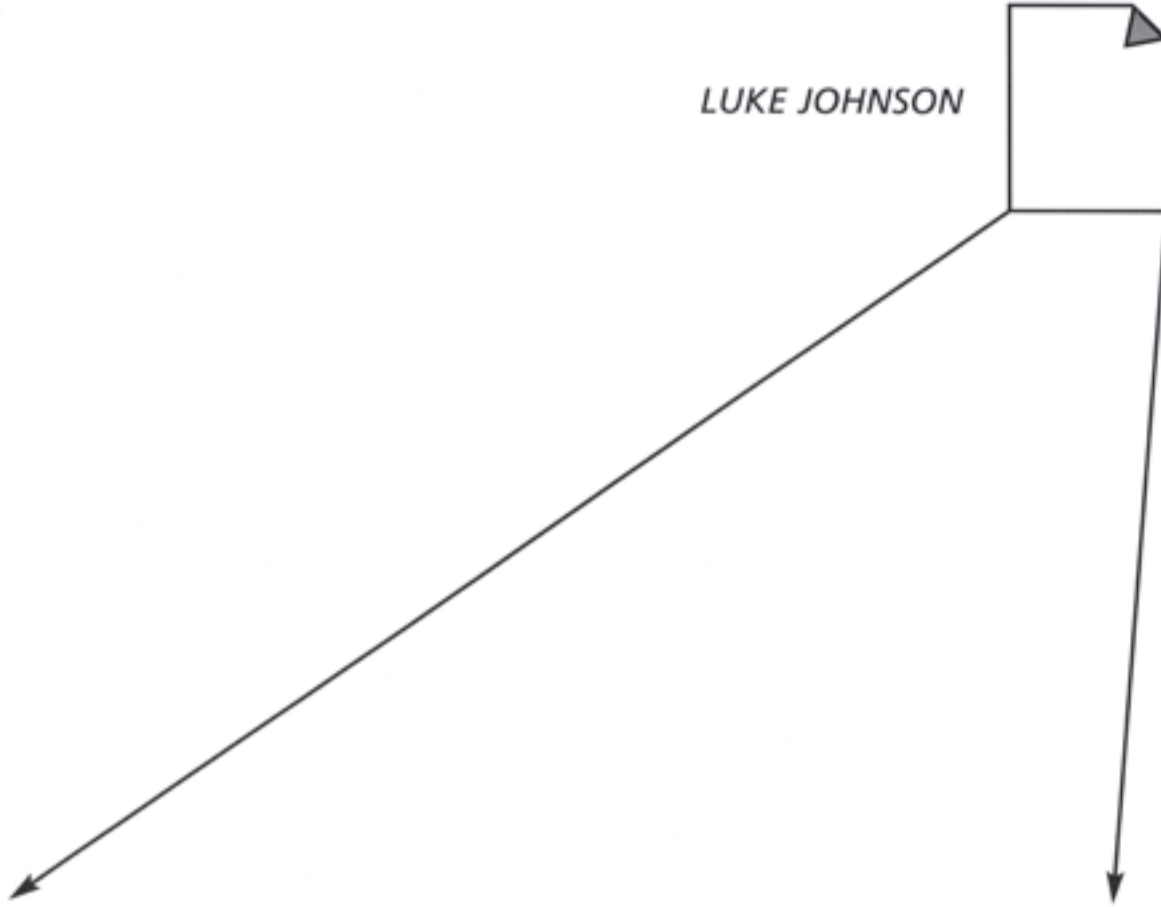
*The passengers all looked with familiar
horror as broken mangos sputtered in
the dirt or soaked up mud from tire ruts.
Already ahead of them lay a hundred or so
oranges that had rotted into the road
and spread stale citrus into the air.*


*The truck began to bounce. We turned
our faces inward, grasping tight what was
in our hands.*



} the] messenger [000 { -----

LUKE JOHNSON



 *the*] messenger [000{ -----

From: Laura Nazimek <lnazimek@richmond.edu>
Subject: *Untitled*
Sent: February 09, 2000, 9:54 pm
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

*Coinless Dan at a vending machine.
No collect calls here.
Some cruel punishment of unrequitedness.
Years ago, self-love was masturbation.
Now, it's pushing buttons.
Until nothing comes.*

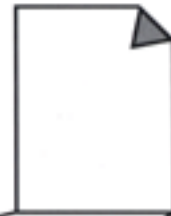
*Back in his highchair
a zealous aunt
Stuffed one chunk too many.
His little pliant mouth dropped
strained carrots and dense puree spinach to the tray.
A stain on his terry-cloth bib.*

*"No, kid," says the psychiatrist, "Can't reverse the cycle.
People are addicted to childhood diets.
Might as well indulge. Sweat it off later.
A plastic bag under your work-out clothes will do.
See you next week."*

*The plastic is unresponsive.
The stomach shrinks to tripe.
All is passé.
Nothing feels right.
Except, of course, to drown
in dad's aboveground pool -
oh, no, never mind.
That's been done.*



LUKE JOHNSON



}the] messenger [000{ -----

From: j. carson pulley <jpulley@richmond.edu>
Subject: A Big Mess
Sent: February 20, 2000, 11:48 pm
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

I haven't always been a violent man. However, before I disclose the nature of my condition with the following narrative regarding an actual event in my life, let me first acquaint you with a little about myself. Unlike so many others who become what I am, my childhood was what most would describe as average, even nurturing. I was diagnosed with diabetes at the age of 14, but this did little to influence an alteration in my lifestyle. I always felt a natural aversion to school; however, I was extremely successful. This fact had led many into pressuring my attending a prestigious university upon graduation. I had given into the pressure and enrolled at Columbia University. The social scene there hadn't particularly intrigued me, though I did manage to make plenty of acquaintances. Some I could even have called friends; yet somehow there was always a sense that I didn't quite belong. I attributed this condition to what others perceived as an overly cynical attitude. Those who ever carried on a serious conversation with me often remarked that I displayed an uncanny ability to find fault in just about everything. I can't say that this wasn't true, because it certainly was. I never imagined that the imperfections of a human could evoke a sense of rage. True, I had always desired the complete elimination of anything with less than admirable qualities, but the manifestation of that desire was quite surprising.

It had been an abnormally humid day in late March. I was drinking coffee in my favorite Starbucks just outside my apartment on 104th. Recently, I had begun to spend more and more of my free hours there drinking espresso and reading the Journal. The tables and floor were kept exceptionally clean and I was often able to enjoy relative solitude. Although it was not yet noon, the day had already proven itself quite unsatisfactory. I had cut myself severely just beneath the nose while shaving and the bleeding had taken an inordinate amount of time to stop. I have impeccable shaving skills and such a blunder is particularly rare for me. My Intel and Pfizer stocks had dropped 1 3/5 collectively in the first 30 minutes of trade. I suspected that they were poised to plunge many more points by the day's end. Most infuriating of all was that my dog had presented me with vile, watery excrement in front of the refrigerator. Sammy was a remnant of a failed relationship with a Barnard student. She had always loved dogs, so much that the methods normally used for training them to evacuate their bowls outside were viewed as cruel and unusual. My keeping the dog had been vindictive, a mistake I was beginning to regret.

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While I lamented these events and sipped my coffee, which fortunately tasted exquisite, a grotesquely obese man in a generically tailored suit entered the shop. His mass was overwhelming.

His pants hissed as he shuffled over to the counter. "I want three ice cappuccinos. That heat will wear on you," he said, pawing the counter.

I looked on in disgust. It seemed that the room revolved around the globe-like man. I hated him. He looked over the room, his eyes investigating me. Would my face reveal my contempt? I wasn't concerned it if did.

Sweat trickled down the fat man's face and over his swollen neck. The collar of his shirt served as a reservoir for excess sweat. His minuscule ears pulsed red. "Here is your order, Sir. That will be \$12.35," the boy said. The fat man squeezed a paw into his front pockets to extract loose, crumpled bills. He slid the boy several of the soiled bills. One massive forearm hugged two of the cappuccinos, while with the other he greedily slurped down the third. Frozen cappuccino spilled from the sides of his mouth, mixed with sour sweat, and soaked into his filthy collar.

I felt ill.

I was reminded of my obese aunt who constantly insisted on hugging me, pressing my face into the collection of food and sweat that perpetually covered her, caked deep into the grainy fabric of her clothes. My sphincters tightened as something inside me shattered.

The fat man lumbered over and sat down several tables away. Air passing in and out of his nose whistled sharply. He was contaminating my space. On a mirror across the room appeared my reflection. My dark brown hair was noticeably thinner than it had been several months earlier, and although my blue eyes were bright, they seemed tired and occupied. I smiled at myself;

I finally had a solution for everything - for life and his.

I approached the man. "Mind if I join you?" I said. He raised a thin eyebrow. "No, no. It's nothing like that. I am certainly not one of those homosexuals. Just kind of bored with the complete absence of conversation," I said.

"Sure, I guess. You're lucky I am not a native New Yorker, else I would never talk to some shady character like you. Ho ho ho," he said. I sat down. "So, I am Chad, Chad Connely. I appreciate you letting me join you."

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"No problem at all. Greg Turner. Good to meet you," he said. We shook hands. Mine was swallowed by a moist, doughy mass. I felt, in those brief seconds, as though it weren't only my hand being suffocated, but my whole self, buried beneath heaps of lard. I would need a thorough scrub down.

"You say you aren't a native, eh? Nor am I, at least originally. I am out of Maryland, just north of Baltimore. Yourself?" I said. I looked directly into the blacks of his eyes. Any other part would surely provoke a reaction likely to disclose my intent.

"Yeah, that's right. I hail from Ohio. Right outside Cleveland actually. I moved out here not quite a month ago after my wife and I separated. Back in Cleveland, I was an engineer, but I haven't secured a job here yet."

Darwin would have laughed. Naturally he couldn't have secured a job; such a pathetic human specimen could never compete with the sophisticated. Only the fit survive. Or only the fit should survive. "Sorry to hear about your wife, but New York City is a great place to be a bachelor," I said.

"Actually I am hoping she will have me back, but I would rather not get into that. So how long have you been here, you sound like you have some familiarity with the life around here."

"Yeah, you could say that I suppose. I have been here since my freshman year at Columbia where I majored in business. Now I am a broker for a small firm," I said. I couldn't continue this much longer. Talking to this man was nearly unbearable, but for the plan to succeed I had to be absolutely certain that he would be willing to assist me back to my apartment.

"Columbia, huh. Yeah, I had some friends go there. I attended Brown myself. Graduated '83. It's always nice to meet another Ivy leaguer, even if he does wear a crown. Ho ho ho."

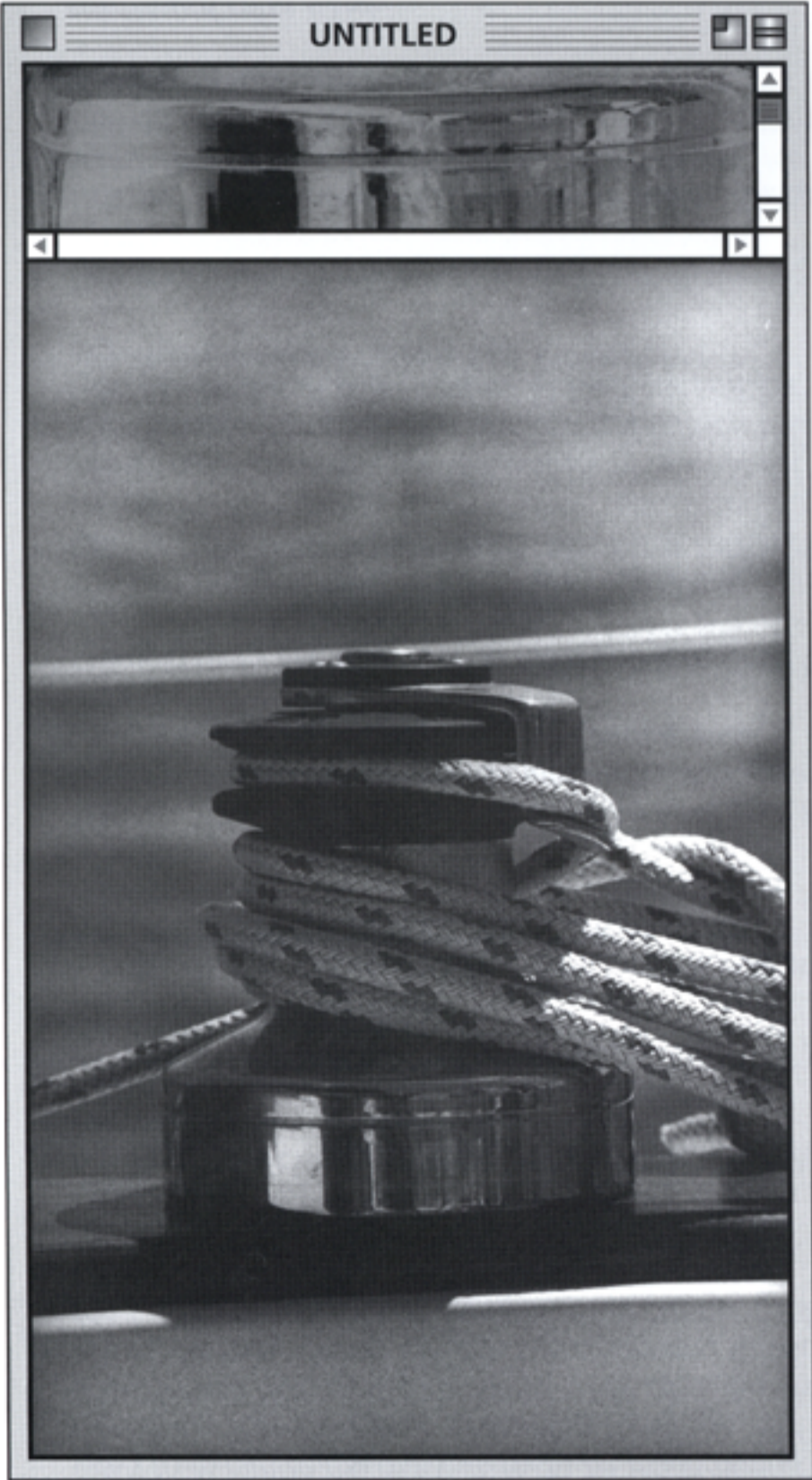
"Yeah, always wonderful to meet someone who can appreciate life in the Ivy. People just never can understand it, you know?" I said. "They think we are just a collection of rich shmucks that buy our way in somehow. My dad was a very small-time attorney, we only had the absolute necessities."

"I know exactly what you mean. I didn't grow up with many luxuries either, but people thought I had. About the best thing I had as a kid was my mother's cooking. She sure could make a fine pot roast..."

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ELLIE MONTAGUE



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It was incredible. This son of a bitch was talking about food. He was so stereotypical it was laughable.

As his husky voice droned on incessantly about the wonderful things his probably equally fat mother stuffed into his filthy hole, I thought about ways to minimize the mess surely to be made during and following the cleansing. It presented an interesting challenge, and deriving the solution was going to be thrilling. "...her apple pie was even better. Wow," he said, staring off into space, seeming to visualize mounds of food. "I apologize for talking so much about her cooking, but damn if it wasn't good."

"Sure. No problem. I know how a mother's cooking can be. Although my mother was never an extraordinary cook, it was hard not to love her meals."

"And your grandmother's was even better, right. Ho ho ho," he said.

It was time for it to end. I just hoped the first part of my plan was complete. Establishing trust. Now I was ready to lure him into the slaughterhouse.

"Exactly. Well, listen, Greg, it was nice to meet you. I should really be heading out. Maybe we will run into each other again sometime. We can compare more notes on food," I said with a smile.

"I would really like that. Nice to meet you too, Chad."

This was going to have to be performed flawlessly. I hoped that he was as ignorant about the physiology of diabetes as I suspected. If so, I would be feeling much better, much cleaner, soon. I stood up with the remainder of my coffee in hand. I paused and shook my head. I dropped my coffee, spilling it over my pants and blanketing the floor. Taking a small, feeble step, I collapsed. A chair crashed to the floor along with me. Just as I expected the fat man jumped up to help.

"What's wrong?" he panted. "Should I call someone?"

"No, no. I am diabetic. I just need some insulin. My apartment is just across the street, if you could help me get there." His gigantic frame loomed overhead. I felt that at any moment his gut might erupt, cascading its putrid contents over me.

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"Sure. Sure," he said. He was every bit as ignorant as I had suspected. He had no idea that when a diabetic feels faint giving him more insulin could kill, while glucose is really what is needed.

"Is he ok?" the coffee boy asked. "I think I can take care of it. He says he just needs some insulin and that it's in his apartment across the street," said the fat man. He helped me to my feet. This was going to be the most difficult part of the scheme, additional physical contact with this behemoth. He rapped his heavy arm around my back. Initially, all I smelled of him was Old Spice, but I soon detected a distinct pungency. With the odor and the weight of his arm, I felt trapped in a trash compactor. I need clean air.

Space.

Freedom.

We lumbered out into the hot street. As he walked, rolls of gelatinous flesh brushed over my entire frame. I thought of the years I had spent as a child in cotillion. I was forced to dance with Nancy Fisher, the fattest girl in middle school. Quite possibly she was the fattest girl in the entire world. Her white gloves were always covered with brown oily stains and as she pressed her blubbery body to mine, I imagined giant pustules infecting my neck from contact with those revolting gloves. It had been nightmarish.

"It's up there, on the second floor. Room 2356. We should hurry," I said, motioning with my head. "No problem." Sweat pored from his face, leaving streaks. Beads of sweat clung to his first and second chins before dripping onto my shoulder. It was nothing when compared to the gore that would surely cover my clothes shortly.

We took the elevator up. It was terrifying. Every possible angle of his malformed frame was visible simultaneously on the mirrored walls of the elevator. Each angle was multiplied millions of times as they reflected back and forth between the mirrors. I clinched my eyelids shut.

As I unlocked the door, I inventoried all the possible tools I had available in the apartment. There was a nice array of knives that had seen minimal use and were consequently still exceptionally sharp. But knives seemed overly clich  for my first kill. I remembered hunting wild boar with my roommate in Florida over one Spring Break. The beast had squealed violently when my spear pierced its tough hide. Perfect. The spear hung over the couch as a crude decoration.

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Sammy appeared to greet us. His odor preceded him, indicating that he had again defecated some where in the apartment. "Nice dog. I have one just like it. Always so friendly, but it smells like he might have made a little mess" he said.

"Yeah, sure does. It's nothing that can't be cleaned up. Could you just set me down over there on the couch? The insulin is in the refrigerator... hope you don't mind," I said. "Not at all. I am more than happy to help. So, what does it look like exactly?"

"Just a little glass cylinder."

Alone, I quickly detached the long spear from the wall. I couldn't help but break out into a wide grin as I examined the serrated edges of the seven-inch spearhead. It was razor sharp. I crept behind the couch and listened for my approaching prey.

From: Michelle Pardee <mpardee@richmond.edu>
Subject: Lullaby
Sent: February 4, 2000, 1:06 pm
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

Whispered by a philosopher of dreams and words left unspoken.
Caressed for slumber's sake,
While lying under a waxing, spotlight moon.
Life molded lyrics twirling with softly strummed chords.
Listen as low humming voices drift farther away.

From: Molly Decker <mdecker@richmond.edu>
Subject: No Need For a Guard Dog
Sent: February 1, 2000, 5:52 pm
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

A screen door is a barrier.
Stronger than your door and scarier.
Hop the fence, climb the gate,
there's a chance, you'll out-do fate,
but try to run through a screen door, son,
and your shame will keep you straight.



}the] messenger [000{ -----

MEG McLEMORE



}the] messenger [000{ -----

From: Viren Mascarenhas <vmascarenhas@richmond.edu>
Subject: Untitled
Sent: February 16, 2000, 2:24 am
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

As usual, she doubted herself. She had met him at a pub a few days ago. He had seemed enamoured by her. He commented on her dark, flowing hair and her clipped, distinctly foreign accent. She, in turn, had observed his kindness and gentleness. True, he was considerably older than she was. But Natasha was not looking for something romantic. Quite simply, she was looking for a friend, a confidant. Frank had kept himself in check as well. Throughout their chance encounter, he had tried to draw her from her naturally quiet self. "Well," Natasha reflected, "Perhaps I'm really not that quiet by nature. After all, mother and I used to talk incessantly." When the conversations had run their course, Natasha would snuggle close to her mother to keep warm. The heating did not work, and it cost too much money to repair. Her mother used to run her fingers through Natasha's hair, and tell her that the only reason she continued living was for her daughter. That was before her mother had died. Now Natasha lived alone in the one-bedroom apartment. It was lonely.

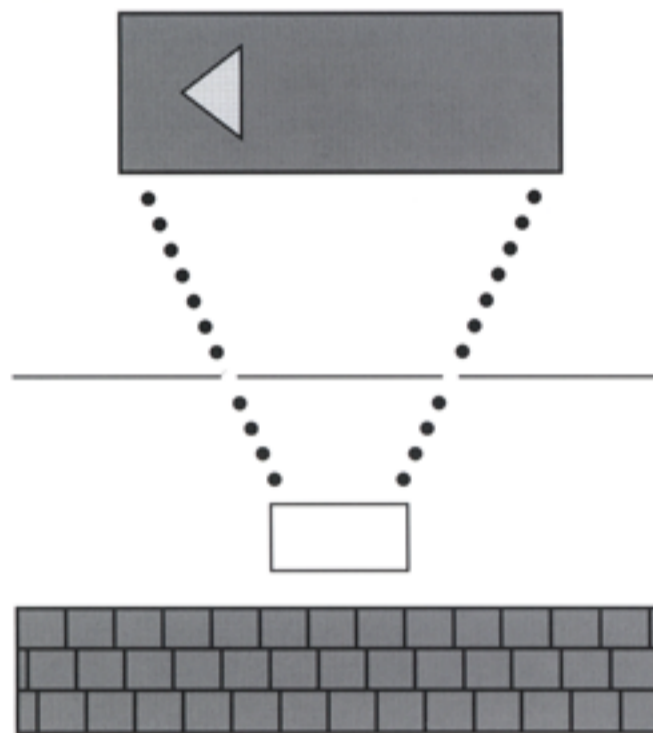
"I should be used to loneliness," Natasha chided herself gently as she walked towards Araby. It was chilly, and she drew her coat closer around her neck. Her coat was torn in a few places. Natasha fancied that the wind was investigating her jacket for rips. Then, when the time was opportune, it would infiltrate her warmth through these outposts and consume her with the cold. "Or perhaps," she hoped, "the wind will look kindly on me and sweep me away to a far away, distant land." At this, Natasha laughed aloud. She recalled her mother telling her, "Natasha, you have the most active imagination of anyone I know. Please tell me a story." And Natasha would sit by her mother, and charm her with tales of children who played in the sun the whole day. Then, coyly, she would ask her mother if she could go outside and play, knowing that her mother could never disagree.

"Of course she always had the most interesting stories," Natasha thought. Her mother said that the stories she spoke of were based on truth, and the truth made them so exciting. Natasha liked nothing more than to listen to her mother talk about Natasha's father. She would sit rapt with attention, completely absorbed in her mother's story. "One day," she had told herself, "I too will have a thrilling love story. But my story will have a different ending. The man will marry me." The one thing that Natasha disliked about her mother was that she came unattached. A child was supposed to have two parents ("My classmates made that clear," she thought wryly.) Apart from the image of him that she had created from her mother's memories, Natasha only had a solitary note to remember her father.

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This computer may not have been shut down properly the last time it was used. This was due to a severe system crash. To turn off this computer, always press the **POWER KEY** on the keyboard.



OK



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She came to the end of the street and turned right. She would soon be there. Araby was really quite far from where she lived. She initially had not wanted to meet him there. She had never even been there before. But when he first mentioned the name, it sounded so familiar to her. At the time she had not been able to recall where she had heard of the pub before. Curiosity got the better of her and she agreed to meet him. Now she was as excited to see the place as she was to see Frank. When she had returned home after her first meeting with Frank, something had urged her to open the box of items that had belonged to her mother. Perusing through the contents, she had come across the note. "This," her mother had said, "is the only thing your father gave me. He gave this to me after he met me once. It says Araby, which is the name of the bar where he wanted to meet me. But I showed up there and waited alone. He did not come that night." How Natasha hated this ending. She would play the story over in her mind again and again, always concluding with a happy ending. "Her father did meet her mother, and they lived happily ever true." This was too much of an untruth though. So then she would start creating reasons for his absence. "He forgot the name of the bar, went elsewhere. Till today is waiting for his woman to show up."

She hurried towards the pub. It began to drizzle, and the night grew darker quickly. She turned the final corner; her destination was now across the street. She quickly bounded the last few steps and went in. She scanned the room - he was nowhere to be seen! Distraught, Natasha swiveled around and motioned to leave. She looked out the window through the corner of her eyes. Two people were walking down the street. The young girl was holding her father's hand. She was skipping alongside him, trying to keep up with his long strides. The orange streetlights bounced shadows around them. She felt a warm hand on her shoulder. It was Frank.

"Didn't you see me waving at you from over there?" he asked. "No, I guess I must have glanced over you," Natasha faltered. "Are you alright? Come let's sit down. I think you should have something to drink." Frank took her to his table, and pulled out the chair for her.

"Sit down, make yourself comfortable. You look cold. Are you cold?"

"You weren't expecting anyone else, were you?"

"Of course not. Why would I plan to meet with you here tonight if I was going to see someone else?"

"It's been done before."

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"Well, she was standing there - beautiful, cold and shivering. She looked lost, and all I wanted to do was help her. She was next in line and I was worried that she would collapse any moment. Finally it was her turn, and she stood behind my counter. I was all ready to sign her form and waive her through. I didn't want to delay her - she looked sick, I tell you. Then I realized that there was a problem."

"What was wrong?" Natasha asked, strangely. "She had forged her form. I thought to myself, 'How can I destroy this woman's only chance?' So I signed the form and let her through. I followed her into the next room as soon as I could. When I thought that no one was looking, I quickly told her where she could meet me.

Natasha choked, and urgently reached for the glass. "Is there something wrong? Do you want something else to drink? Are you upset because I am rambling about this old story when I should really be listening to you?"

"Just go on."

"If you insist, but please remember that you asked. Well, I told her a place where the two of us could meet. That entire day, all I could do was hope that she would come. And she did come. She was every bit as wonderful as I thought she would be. We talked for a while. All she could say to me was 'Thank you. Thank you for saving me.' That made me feel uncomfortable. But all this came to an end when my wife found out. It was the last time I ever saw her."

"Didn't you want to meet her again?" Nastasha asked. "Yes, yes...I wanted to see her more than anything else. I had only talked with her for a night. But in that night, we shared so much. We created something that night - something new and grand."

"So why didn't you meet her then? I don't understand."

"I'll tell you why. Have a little patience, this is my story you know. Only it's not a story - it's true reality."

"Stories can be real," Natasha whispered.

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"So we will meet tomorrow. Goodbye for now then." Frank flew around the corner, his feet hardly touching the street. She continued walking away. She moved slowly, weighed down with the torn, brown suitcase that she had no place to store. Finding a quiet street, she sat on the pavement, and took out a shawl from her suitcase. Wrapping it around her, she fell asleep.

She had a mission the next day. She had to meet this kind man. She quickly removed the note he had given her from her pocket. She smoothed it, pressing down the edges with her thumb so that it would not crease the note. She did not want a single word hidden or covered. Looking at the note, she realized that it was written in English. She could not read English. She glanced around, and saw two men in blue uniforms standing nearby. She felt anxious, "My first day in this country and already the policemen are following me?" Then she rebuked herself, "Why should they be after me? I will ask them to read this note." Timidly, she approached the police, "Please, sirs, can you read this for me?" She spoke quietly. They were eager to help her. They explained the directions and quickly left. Now they were in a hurry. That night, she took their directions and went to Araby. She sat in the corner. She had no money with her, so she asked for a glass of water. She waited. And he did not show up.

* * * * *

"The police met me at the pub. They took me away and told me I was under arrest for helping illegal aliens. My wife had warned them. She suspected that I had been seeing another woman. I lost my job."

Natasha choked. Her eyes took on a strange look, and she started shivering. "What's wrong?" he asked.

"Nothing. I'm just cold. It's cold tonight."

"Put on your jacket. We should leave here soon. I'm going to take you home."

"Were you ever curious about what happened to her?"

"What? Oh...I was, in the beginning."

"What was her name?" Natasha asked.

"You know, I don't remember her name."

"You don't remember her name? How could you forget her name? I need to know her name."

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"I don't know -- but it was a foreign name. Of course I don't remember it now. I don't understand why you are so annoyed."

"Don't ever underestimate the importance of a name. It tells everything that is necessary to be told." Her eyes flashed angrily, and she took another sip of her drink. There were hardly any people left at the bar now. Natasha listened for a moment. She thought that the torrent was stalling. She gathered her purse.

"Before you leave," Frank said, "please tell me if I can meet you again."

"I don't see why not." The rain was coming down harder again. "Here, I know a really nice restaurant. Let me write down the name. We can meet there, have a good dinner."

Frank passed her a piece of paper. Natasha glanced at it. She was shocked. Nothing made any sense, her head started spinning and she felt her legs buckle under her. She let go of the glass in her hand. It fell and the melted ice spilled on the counter. She saw the orange lights on the street. "They will show me the way home," she thought absurdly. She read the note again. It was unmistakably clear. It said, "Magi, at six o'clock on Saturday." She recognized the handwriting. She knew where she had seen it before. Frank had written on the back of his business card. She turned the card over. On the front, the card read, "Frank Joseph. Assistant Manager, Burlington Department Store." She had not known his surname until now. Natasha Joseph could not stand up. It felt like someone had punched her in the stomach - very hard. She was winded, and could not breathe. "So this is how the wind gets you," she thought. "It gets right inside you and knocks life out." She looked across the table. He didn't know, he didn't realize. He still did not realize. Natasha looked around the table. Sitting by her plate was a meat knife. The bulb over their table glittered in the knife. She picked it up, running it between her fingers. It was sharp. "He doesn't know who I am." The words struck her harder and deeper each time, until she was finally ripped apart. Clutching the knife tightly, she lifted it and brought it down as fast as she could into Mr. Joseph's arm. Her eyes burned furiously into his. She left. It was still lonely outside.



From: Anonymous <address suppressed>
Subject: dark secret
Sent: February 8, 2000, 3:12 am
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

*she likes to swallow lyrics
though conversation be like butterscotch.*

*words sung, words spoken,
different candy.*

melodies be strange

vibrant

*like addiction is OK
on a sunday night.*

*raping her, waking her,
making her read the morning paper with conviction.*

From: Anonymous <address suppressed>
Subject: chocolate chip pancakes
Sent: February 8, 2000, 4:33 am
To: Messenger <messenger@richmond.edu>
Cc: Zinc Design <etownsend@zincdesign.com>

*Morning shades of lemon grey
pool and seep into your navel.*

*time parades dressed digital:
<flashing blood on bedside table>*

*all the while I lay:
twitching...switching...
bitching about the whether or nots of gettin' up or off.*

*when all she desires
is chocolate chip pancakes.*



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MARGARET HALEY CARPENTER PRIZE FOR POETRY

I Will Take My Time As I Move to the East--Daniel Biegelson (winner)

- *Tree of Life--J. Carson Pulley (nominated)*
- *The Corsets--Daisy Decoster (nominated)*
- *Double-Decker, London--David Staniunas (nominated)*

STAFF ART AWARD

Untitled (photograph of a rope & pulley)--Ellie Montague

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Without your creativity, the Messenger could not be possible.*

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