

SURVIVOR

Magazine

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Premiere Issue



MY NAME

Paula Re

you do not know
my name today

the torrid swing
of your fist will
not touch me
not really

i have hidden
my head in the wall
i am becoming
one of the neighbors
living on the other side

i will ask them
who i am

i will know my name

i will learn to breathe again

that runs from your eyes
stronger than blood
is the holy water
woman
that runs from you

we who hurt
will create a world where

CHILD MOLESTATION

Susan Weaver

Abstraction becomes reality when
she describes the day at four years old--
the neighbor's cookie, his cold basement floor,
the invasion of tongue and lips. His threat
as he forced her arms into the furnace,
the smell of singeing hair. Upstairs
he laid her on the kitchen table.
Sixty years later she recalls it
as white porcelain banded in red.
To it he brought a crochet hook, a knife.
She doesn't tell me what he did then,
but says simply, "I'm lucky I ever had my son."

within a holy circle
we will create
a holy circle to heal
ourselves whole

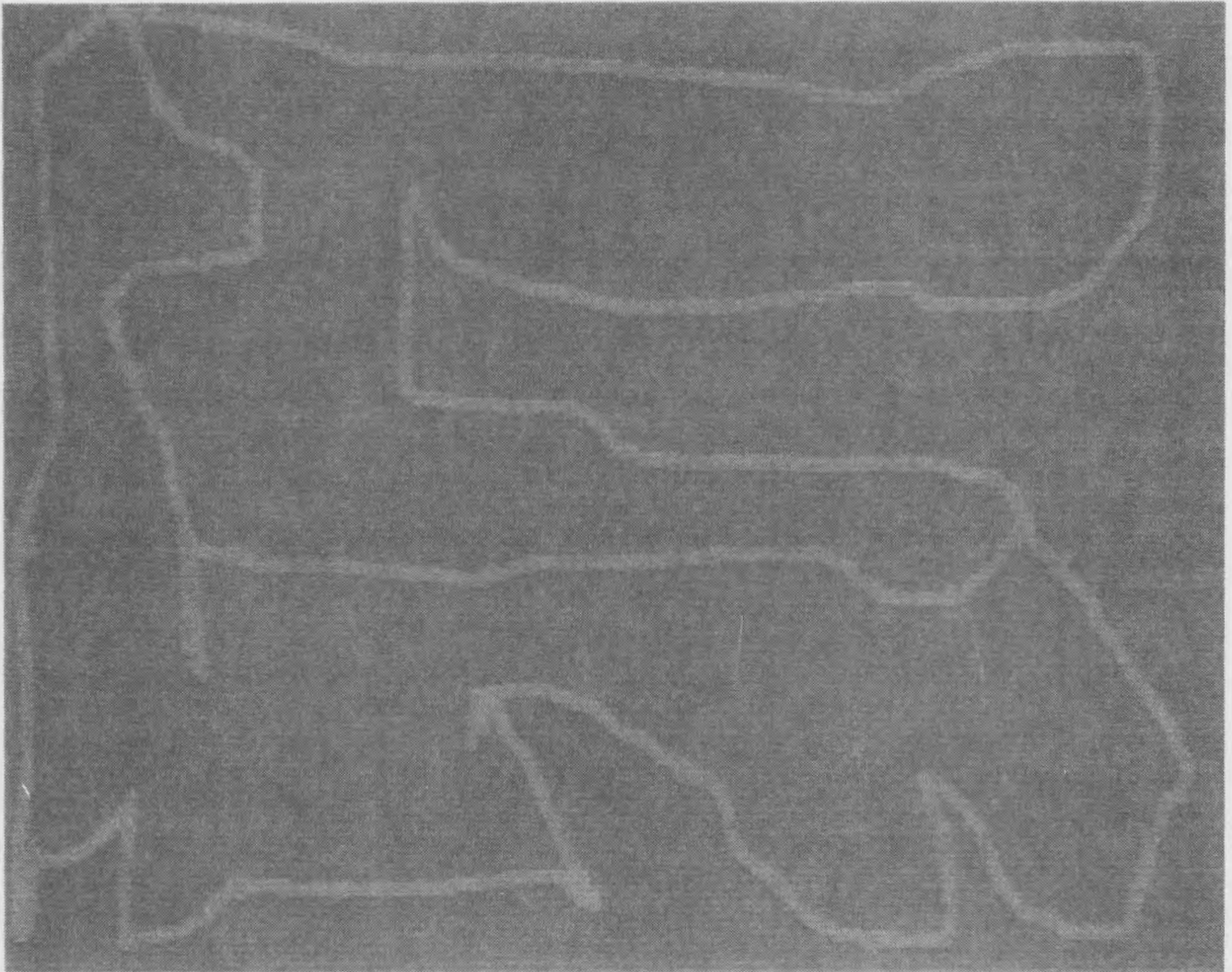
your waters
holy women
our liberation
your blood
our bond
stronger than water
holy

PURPLE CRYING EYE
TERRA DHT
by Laverne Williams
amollitD omeVdJ yd

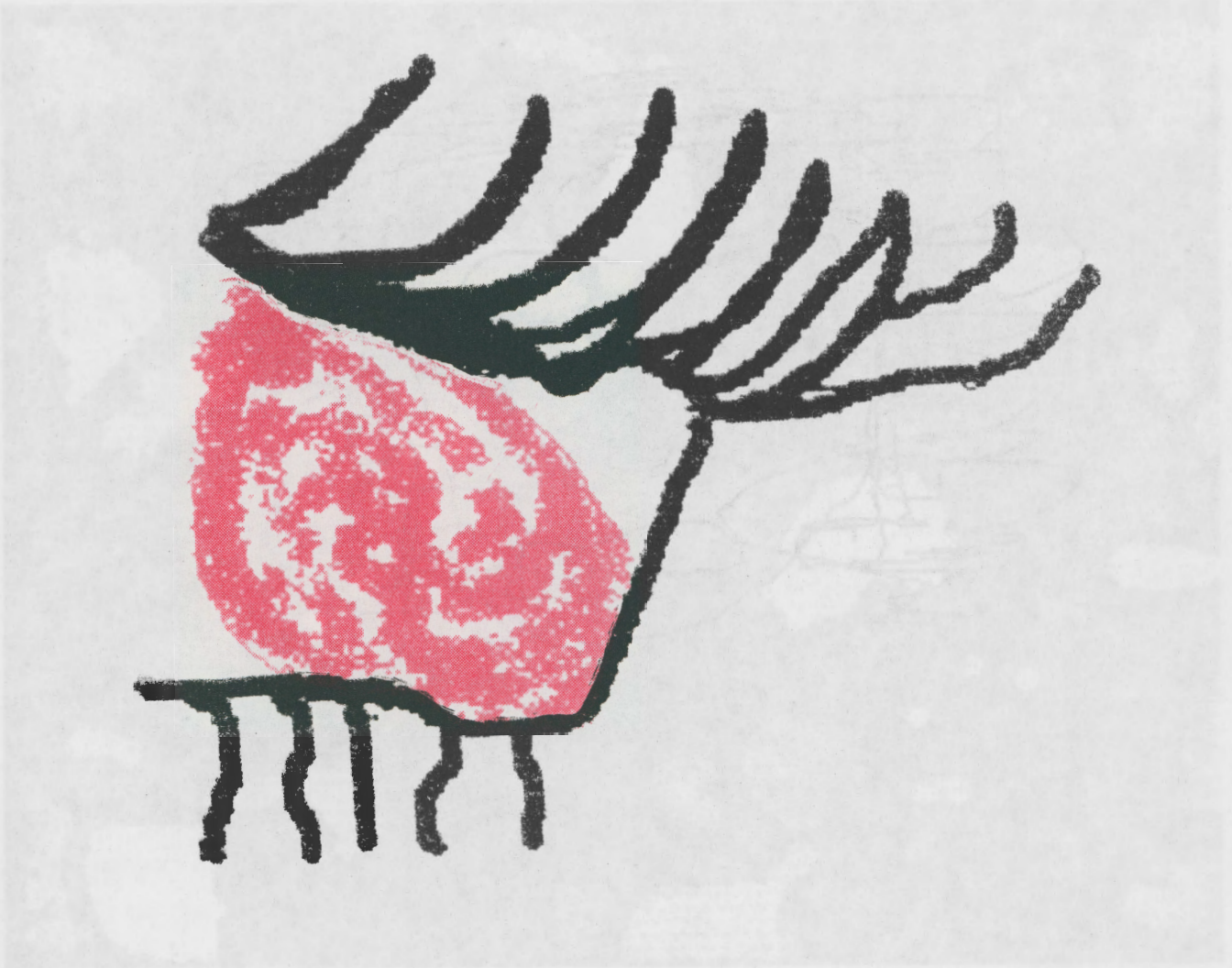
THE ART OF HEALING

THE RAPIST
by LaVerne Williams

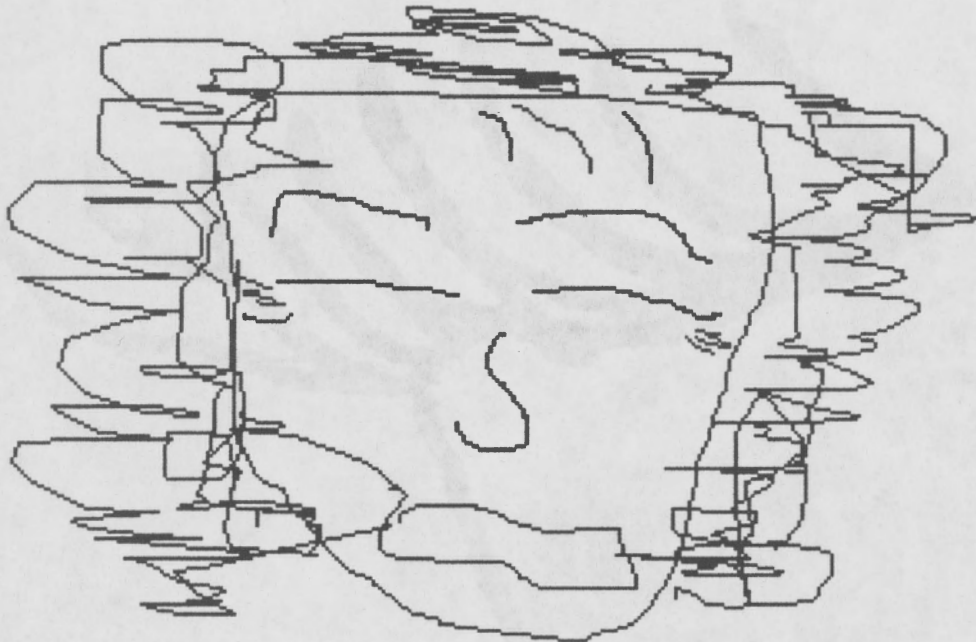
CHILD MOLESTATION
From *Unseen*



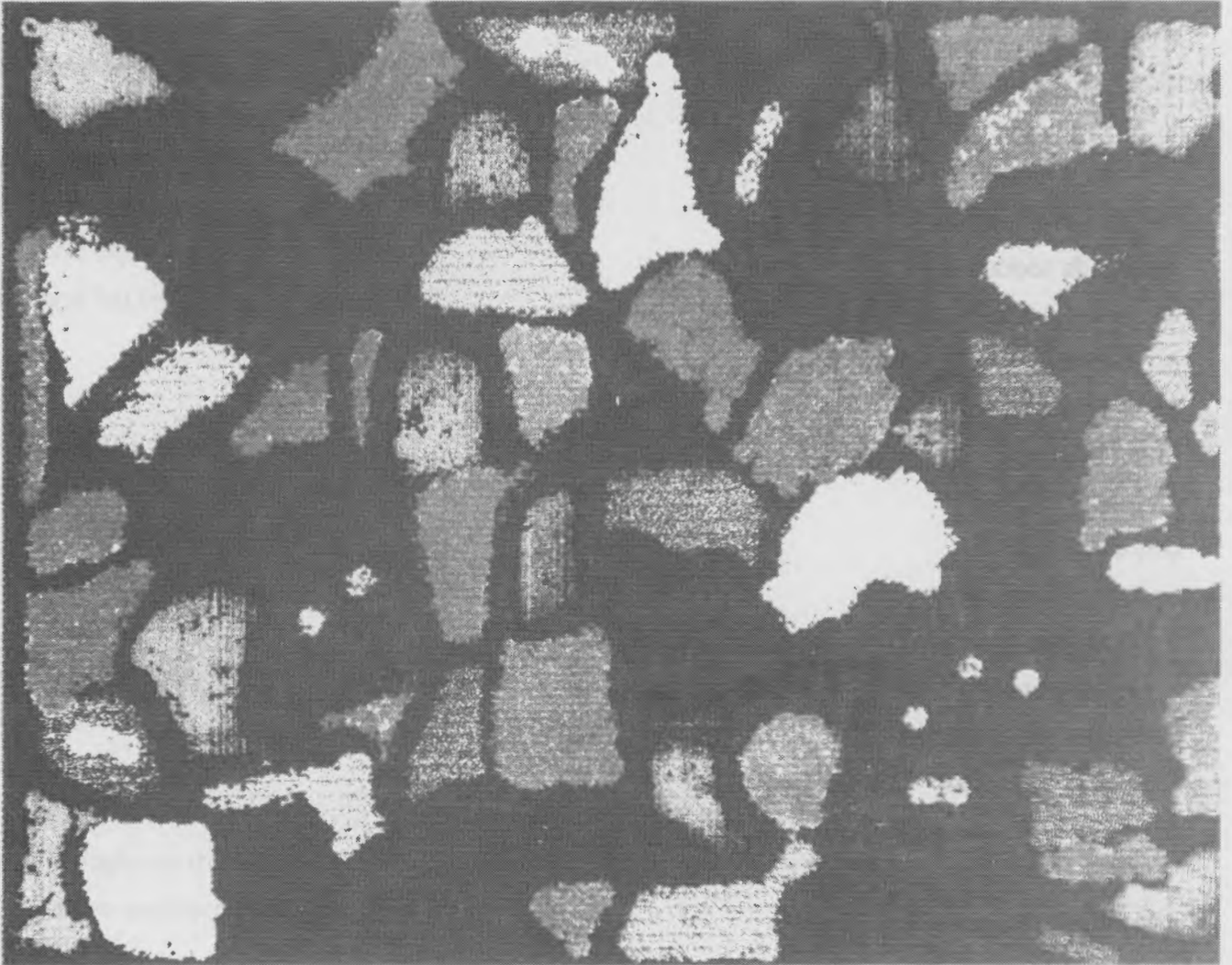
PURPLE CRYING EYE
by LaVerne Williams



SCREAMING WOMAN
by LaVerne Williams



MOSAIC IN PINK
by LaVerne Williams



TONIGHT
Suheir Hammad

when you get into
my bed at night
my head tonight

i scream
screams that feel scratchy
blood that sounds violent

when you raped
our bodies today
our minds today
we heard our screams
echo in the blood flowing
from our womb
from our wound

you come into
my head every night
my body tonight
i feel your breath
hear your rough hands
roar with the power
of your weakness

when they tell me
to get over it
i'm crazy
you laugh and pull me close
and i embrace you
cause at least i know

you're there

when you pull my hair with
your hands
your eyes
i feel the pain
know i'm alive
and wish i were dead

no one knows
wants to know
how you come into my bed
every night between
me and my lover
me and my teddy bear

when you
breathe into me
suck out my life
i can taste emptiness
while you fill me up

when you come into
my bed
my head
i feel
your weight on the mattress
your stain on the mattress

grimace as you smile
face contorts
you contort
my body

TRANSLATIONS
Toni La-fee Bennett

How do you suck and breathe at the same time?

Baby - you learn.

to me," he says.

ch again using," he says.

of this right thing," he says.

me," he says.

er many enone with so much experience.

THOUGHT

my life

they can't see

but i feel you

heat you

taste you

hate you

love you

cause of least i know

Translation: "Suck my dick," you're there

Translation: "Suck my dick," when you come

Translation: "Suck my dick," head of night

Translation: "You've got to be a dick,"

TONIGHT

when you get into
my bed at night
my head tonight

my life

they can't see

but i feel you

hear you

taste you

hate you

love you

cause at least i know

you're there

when you come

into my

head at night my

bed tonight

you won't surprise me

i'll await you

hate you

i no longer sleep

no longer dream

night and day

hear my screams

as i laugh and joke

cry and breathe

know i'll never be without you.

TONIGHT
Suheir Hamoud

you're there
when you pull my hair with
your hands
your eyes
I feel the pain
know I'm alive
and wish I were dead
no one knows
wants to know
how you come into my bed
every night between
me and my lover
me and my body part
when you
breathe into me
suck out my life
I can taste emptiness
while you fill me up
when you come into
my bed
my head
I feel
your weight on the mattress
your stain on the mattress
your face
your smile
your face
your contact
my body

TRANSLATIONS

Toni La Ree Bennett

How do you suck and breathe at the same time?

Baby – you learn.

1. Be nice to me," he says.

Translation: "Suck my dick."

2. "We on for lunch again today," he asks.

Translation: "Suck my dick."

3. "Make 50 copies of this right away," he orders.

Translation: "Suck my dick."

4. "You're so nice to me," he says. "But
I'd never marry anyone with so much experience."

Translation: "You've sucked too
many dicks."

HALLOWEEN

Rhonda J. Nelson

He raped Eulah-Lee at Sultan's laundrette;
Spread her across the folding table
like Daddy's clean, white shirt.
He whispered, "This ain't no game of chicken."

It was Daylight, and he took her
like a bolt out of the blue;
hands chopped at her cheeks like heavy hatchets.
She did not move.

From where she lay,
she could see other children
eating Kool-pops in front of Prince's Market.
She did not scream.

A grinning Jack-O-Lantern, pulling up his pants,
He fingered her braids and said:
"Cover yourself, angel, or I'll be back again."

He winked, then walked across the street
for a Schlitz Malt Liquor Bull,
before he gunned his Mustang
and lurched down the avenue.

She rinsed off in the bleach bucket,
knowing she would not tell.
A while ago, when her momma died,
she figured out this way of life:

Some girls listened to records all day in their rooms,
Some got a dollar for the Saturday matinee,

Eulah-Lee learned that men's truths hung
like ghosts from the Halloween trees.

She pulled her wagon full of clean clothes
'round the corner to her house.

For the rest of the day, she ironed
and played "My Girl" on the phonograph

Over and over again.

and
soon,
stone hands touched
my young breasts,
tears gutted silent rivers
through my cheeks
as he pulled me closer
to kiss me again.
three years
my god ignored me
mother always in the next room,
her laughter echoing across
the kitchen—
my heart breaking
body
trembling—
fear stunning me worse than any
poison.
I could not move
I could hardly breathe
the dear
trapped in headlights
mentally begging mother to
help please help me
she never came
never came
she never came
dog my to later I ran to
safe a girl
place to hide
but he laughed

and turned away
please and asked a few dollars
I was not welcome
THE WOMAN IN ADAM'S COUNTY
ad ton must be
before
John O'Brien
dist a won for
corps,
dog a new ton
he comes in the stiff silence, with the children
one duter. The turtle "no" comes
like bitter tea -- he never listens.
his swings his body over mine, dings
to my neck -- accelerates, moans, finishes
and leaves me lying there, wounded, whimpering
beneath the crumpled, musty sheets.
I count the days. Consider my options.
Only one drub of four asleep down the hall
was planned. The rest began on nights like this.
My pondered mind reels its awful movies.
imagines giving this one to a woman
with a husband who cares; imagines steering
the Plymouth, drift inside, into Bed's Pond,
watching the water close, saying nothing.
The battered phone booth sits on the nightstand,
page marked, clinic number circled in red.
When I call, they won't ask any questions;
they'll know it's me.

HALLOWEEN
Rhonda J. Nelson

THE WOMAN IN ADAMS COUNTY

Jean O'Bryan

He comes in the stiff silence, when the children
are quiet. The futile "no" tastes
like bitter tea -- he never listens.

He swings his body over mine, clings
to my neck -- accelerates, moans, finishes
and leaves me lying there, wounded, whimpering

beneath the crumpled, musky sheets.
I count the days. Consider my options.
Only one child of four asleep down the hall

was planned. The rest began on nights like this.
My panicked mind reels its awful movies:
imagines giving this one to a woman

with a husband who cares; imagines steering
the Plymouth, child inside, into Beck's Pond,
watching the waters close, saying nothing.

The battered phone book sits on the nightstand,
page marked, clinic number circled in red.
When I call, they won't ask any questions;

they'll know it's me.

MICHELLE I. CZAIKOWSKI

the face comes to me
even now
in nightmares i wake from
drenched in sweat and
ice cold
 (god
turned his back
pretended not to see)
the tongue rose
from rotten breath--
stench of stale urine
enclosed around me.
I clench my lips
tighter
prayed it would all
end
soon.
stone hands touched
my young breasts,
tears gutted silent rivers
through my cheeks
as he pulled me closer
to kiss me again.
 three years
my god ignored me
mother always in the next room,
her laughter echoing across
the kitchen--
my heart breaking
body
trembling--
fear stunning me worse than any
poison.
i could not move
i could hardly breathe
 the deer
trapped in headlights
mentally begging mother to
help me please help me
she never came
never rescued me
no one ever came.
years later i ran to my god
seeking a safe
place to hide
but he laughed

and turned away
called me a tease and said
i was not welcome
i was not pure.
innocence could not be
restored
my soul now a fetid
corpse,
not even a god
could love me.

NIGHT WALK

Fern Levin Flores

She never expected to use the gun. She just kept it for safekeeping. It made her feel secure. No one even knew she carried it, except a handful of close friends. And only then did she speak of it in guarded easy words, careful not to step on anyone's toes or get caught up in issues. Because ever since that night, she wasn't concerned with issues, just her own well-being. So she kept the gun concealed, inside her left pocket, out of the holster and out of view as she walked west down Huron Street; this time ready to use it.

She moved easily along that street, long after the sun set, and after the men and women dressed in three-piece suits, armed with briefcases and portfolios, shopping bags or packages, dispersed to high rises along Lake Shore Drive or Lincoln Park brownstones or third floor Lakeview walk-ups. She wore her bag slung over her shoulder. Inside it was her spiral notebook, the address she'd hastily scribbled from the Chicago Reader torn and folded neatly in her other pocket. The ad promoted the formation of a new theater group, followed by a discussion of "Women in Theater."

Tuesday, August 16... 8 p.m.

Ring 2nd Floor -- Karla or Judy...

It had been so long since she auditioned for anything.

The sun was slipping behind the rooftops. Everything looked glazed and blurred in that pink time of night that seems to camouflage trees, people, even entire buildings in the shadows. But as she walked past familiar streets and sights, like the cherry red sign of Woolworth's, or that venerable Catholic church with its manicured lawns sprawling across State Street, she never took her hand from the gun. Because this time she was ready to use it. Each weekend she would practice at the pistol range, all her anger and hatred packed tightly in that finely controlled movement. And with her earphones in place, she would stand inside that small booth savoring the muffled sounds of shots ringing out around her and the sweet smell of gun powder in her nose. She kept her legs slightly apart, her arms and shoulders straight; and with her fingers curled around the trigger, she took careful aim, hitting that paper target, that silhouette of a man, every time. In the heart. In the stomach. Or in the groin. Anywhere she chose.

The odds of it happening again were slim, her friends told her. "Go out -- don't hide," they said. Her friends, never knowing the terror that turns your bladder inside out so you stand bathed in your own urine when two men leap from the shadows, one with a gun, one with a knife. And even through your coat you feel that blade poke your ribs, the gun caress your temple, as they stuff you into a waiting car and tear off into the night.

Her heels clicked against the pavement as she picked up her pace, her shoes echoing loudly in the quickly falling darkness as east turned into west. She kept moving, passing Clark Street, passing Dearborn, then LaSalle. The address written on her paper was 647. She still had several blocks to walk.

A wino hunched in a doorway, the red brick wall turning a syrupy brown from his urine. A group of children on bikes tore around the corner forcing her off the sidewalk. She took her shelter beside

a building where a rusty air conditioner dripped on her head, coaxing her to move on. And her fingers cramped and her knuckles whitened from the grip she had on that weapon, that 25 caliber automatic pistol, that fine nickel plated piece which had such astounding accuracy at close range. Soaked with perspiration, she pulled open the collar of her raincoat. She touched her forehead where moist curly strands of hair stuck so she had to pry them away with her nails. There were no clouds in the sky despite earlier warnings of rain. But the night hung thick with the stagnant smell of hot dogs and old onions, grease and car fumes and the lingering odor of absent people. She walked so fast, her chest wheezed. It was much too hot for the coat, but she wouldn't take it off, not as long as her hand wrapped snugly around that gun.

A car approached slowly, illuminating her. She froze like a doe blinded by the headlights. Only when it continued did she move on. And the streets stretched out endlessly before her, suddenly strewn with too many warehouses, abandoned buildings and parking lots, row upon row of dull metal, on these streets where no one seemed to live. But it had been so long since she auditioned for anything. And now, she was the only woman walking in the middle of that block. The only woman, even with all those people bustling in the distance. The only woman, like that night in New York City. On her way to dinner to meet friends at the corner deli when she was plucked off the street, whisked away to lie blindfolded and curled up in a wet ball on a cold car seat, her only thought of how she would be found: slashed to ribbons in some alley, floating face down in the East River with a bullet in her head or maybe even not at all.

The vapor of street lights threw off an eerie fog, so a mangy dog running toward her glowed a sickly green.

"Get back," she yelled in a voice she hardly recognized as she walked on rubber knees, watchful of the darkness and mindful of the distance she had already travelled. Too near her destination to turn back now.

A basketball hurled over her head followed by several teenage boys whistling, throwing their cat calls. They bounced around her but their thumps grew fainter as they fell back into the night. And she felt the pattern of that gun would be imbedded in her hand forever.

She crossed the street. One low warehouse stretched out for half a block, reaching the railroad tracks. The address on that building was 501. And beyond those tracks a long factory abruptly halted her journey. She removed the crumpled paper trying to focus on the numbers in the darkness. 647. But there was no 647. She must have copied the numbers wrong. Or maybe the street was Hudson, not Huron. Or Franklin or Superior or Ontario. She stood in the middle of that block looking back into the darkness from which she had come, searching for a phone, a gas station, anything. If only she could be there already -- at Karla's and Judy's -- sitting cross-legged on a wooden floor, sipping wine in a cozy brownstone, discussing the characters of Hellman or Williams, or some new production. Erase this fear that nipped at her, like hundreds of bugs converging on her skin all at once. A gust of wind sent a beer can skipping across the tracks. She jumped, but she never took her hand from that gun. And this time she was ready to use it.

She began that long walk back, her feet like lead in that shrouded quiet. And she felt like a speck in the middle of one long block that was sealed up tightly at both ends. Occasionally, she

stopped to listen for other steps, for rustles, for wind, for anything beside the pounding of her heart. Her eyes darted around the corners, walls and trees; and she wanted to scream, to drag out the whole neighborhood to chase away her night monsters. But just like that night, she knew no one would come to her rescue. She slunk down one block, then up another to go back. They were all the same. Deserted. Dark.

She shivered, despite the heat and her coat wore her down like an iron suit, but she wouldn't take her hand off that gun. She fingered the trigger. One chambered. Five lay in waiting. But she couldn't shoot the night away. She couldn't shoot the horror that still festered in her memory so for years after it happened, it would be her first conscious thought whenever she awoke: The men. The knife. the gun. The long ride to that roach-infested apartment where they dragged her up that fifth floor walkup. The smell of bacon hanging in the air. But especially those men looming over her with dark, cruel eyes and angry mouths, speaking words that had no meaning anymore as she squirmed and slithered beneath their touch, melted away, slowly spilling down the furniture until she finally disappeared. But the thrusting, groaning, pounding frenzy continued all through the night as they kept coming at her, not caring she was gone; those men with their large hands and huge bodies coming at her and using her over and over and over again, never even knowing that for an endless time, she had ceased to be. And somehow, the morning sun sneaked up without her ever even knowing it.

But this wasn't New York City. This was Chicago. This was home. And tears spilled down her cheeks even as she tried to walk calmly, rhythmically, still wondering if someone was lurking in the shadows, waiting to get her one more time.

In the distance, she saw the flickering sign of the Erie Cafe, the Old Town landmark, its neon alternating with its "Brother-That's-A-Steak" promise, and flashing a huge sirloin. She broke into a run, her heels bouncing senseless against the pavement. The restaurant was at least a block away, but she ran so fast, her head rattled. The gun shook inside her pocket, ripping the lining of her coat. But she wouldn't stop until she reached the restaurant and opened the doors. Panting, she walked inside and tried to straighten her wind-blown hair. She lifted her body onto a stool, taking comfort in the drone of dinnertime conversations, the clinking of glasses and silverware in the distance, grateful to even inhale the cigarette smoke billowing around her head.

"Wanna drink?" the bartender said as he neatly toweled the inside of a glass.

"Just a coke, please," she said, setting her bag on the bar. Then she felt her grip loosen as she took her sweaty hand out of her pocket and placed her gun conspicuously on top of the bar.

AD LIB FOR THE MUSE

Pat Huyett

Here's that raw resume

giving rise

to the tempered cry.

I've put in my time, rasping sass with the radio,

travelin' hard on back highways,

bustin' ass on assembly lines,

fighting string-out demon speed,

wired to nerve from rape's sick joke,

beating bedlam walls,

Godohgodohgodohgod -- I'm no better for this,

just another pilgrim, lost on the way

to City Lights Bookstore....

Maybe now I'll start collecting on dues overpaid.

Cuz legendary Step Buddy digs me,

murmuring after an all night jam,

"Darlin', you are a Most Strong Singer."

So hand me the blue pencil.

Let me sit in on your session and scat;

Lay down diminished chords

And give me my key,

to convert, to condense

this ragged riff

into a bass line

for lucid musing.

THIS IS NOT A POEM OF FORGIVENESS

for Nonno

Donna J. Waldtlow

Does your hair still grow wild
in the dark of your grave, unruly
as your mind, your groping hands?

I hope it bothers you that I'm
dancing on your marble slab, on the
Here Lies The Beloved bullshit

carved for eternity. I'm savoring
your bad death -- pissing on yourself
in dark and lonely rooms. I'm glad

it was slow and painful, glad you
saw witches chasing you, clawing
at your face -- you always feared

those Tuscan demons -- females.
I was only a girl, fresh from the womb,
trying to make sense of your touch,

your anger. I learned not to scream,
but hear me now;
I'm singing on your grave.

Full-throated glee. Soul-felt.
You get no mourners ache, no lament.
They tell me: *forgive*, not for you

but for me, and I'll see that I'm bellied-up
and I see
to this bitterness, drinking again
my poison. I'm not ready.

I still need to dance, to spike out
this flamenco, fingers snapping, heels
celebrating your bad, bad death.

DYMPHNA'S DAUGHTERS

Topeka State Hospital, Women's Wing, 1976

Pat Huyett

Kate

I am the only Angel of Mercy here.
That's why I wear white,
why I knew *Cuckoo's Nest*
would sweep the Oscars.

I record their transgressions,
they who call my visions hallucinations.
I smirk at their label of grandiose.
God called me to this mission
to check up on them.

They think I don't know
how the night aides raped
Anna in seclusion.
But I know for my visions
have shown me--
even if Donna can't remember,
begging for mercy as they pinned her down,
refusing to let me change places with her--
I know God's mercy shines
in her forgetting.

And I know
they're going to pay.

Muriel

She whimpers from punctured buttocks,
bleeding from daily thorazine
and a nurse's slap to her behind.
Set her bed on fire with forbidden matches
Oh, please gimme a good cigarette, she begs.
I roll her one from the butts they leave.

DYMPHNA'S DAUGHTERS

Melba

Her tongue too numb from Haldol to feel
the clog,
she choked on her french toast
they should have cut up.
Killed by her own breakfast.
I went hungry two days to remember.

Donna

She frets over poinsettias,
spits out her
Mellaril-Stelazine cocktail
in the one by the book case,
her control plant resting
on the ward's dumb piano.
The subject hasn't withered
as she expected, but it's free
of spider mites.

Rita

Here "elopement" means to run away.
Rita's tied in a chair, soaked with her pee,
jilted by the bridegroom of freedom.
I mop the floor around her chair.
"Do we all go to hell when we die?" she asks.
We can't, I tell her, for we've already done
time in purgatory.

Alice

Our sixty-year-old lobotomized baby
grins through teeth blackened
with delectable cigarette butts.
When she serenades us with
"If I had the wings of an Angel,"
someone says she once taught music.

Kate

Our social worker
 with the wedge hair cut
 asked on the sly what
 St. Francis revealed to me.
 That we should be instruments
 of His Peace, I whisper.
 Then she wanted to know how I got
 Dorothy to talking after three months
 of catatonic silence.
 I read her Blake, I said.

But there's more
 I blew a psych tech
 on the night shift, so I could
 phone Legal Aid.
 Got Muriel out of
 three weeks solid lock up.
 I wrote the AMA of Donna's findings.
 I leave the door open for Rita to try again.
 I slipped the nurse
 thiorazine in her coffee
 so she'd know how it feels.

I ask each day
 for Dymphna's intercession.
 And each summer, I'm avenged
 when over this city
 of madhouses and politicians
 I invoke the heavens,
 the sword of St. Michael, so
 the air smells like matches,
 the winds boil,
 the sky turns yellow
 and cyclones descend.

*Dymphna is the patron saint of those afflicted with "nervous disorders."

HEALING THE BODY/MIND

Anne Wennerstrand, CSW, DTR

SURVIVOR MAGAZINE would like to welcome Anne L. Wennerstrand, CSW, DTR as our regular columnist. As rape survivors, we have many issues surrounding the body-mind connection. Ms. Wennerstrand will address these issues for us in her column and give us advice as to how to heal from the trauma of sexual assault.

The body is the place where all of us "live" and experience life. Body is the very medium and container through which we sense being and belonging in the world. The body and mind are so connected that it is difficult to call one "body" and one "mind." Each cell of our body has an intrinsic intelligence, therefore, the "mind" is not just in the brain or the head. The "mind" exists in each part of our body. The functioning of the body affects the emotions. The state of the emotions affects the mind and body. To see a human being from a body/mind perspective means seeing that a person's psychological, physical and spiritual aspects are all interrelated. We may know this deeply and still feel very frustrated. It can be very difficult to care for our body/minds. We may be afraid of caring for our bodies for many reasons. We may not think we are worthy to feel good. We may simply not know how to care for ourselves on the body/mind level or where to start.

In my therapeutic work with survivors, I draw on many mind/body techniques to help women recover the deep, intrinsic healing power that they possess. Mind/body techniques such as yoga, dance therapy and tai chi are founded on the principle that a vital connection exists between the way in which one moves and the way in which one feels. As a dance/movement therapist, I believe that the changes in the way one moves can affect the emotional, intellectual and physical health of an individual. Many people, particularly those who have been traumatized, cannot put feelings (including bodily sensations) into words. Sometimes "moving" those feelings can be tremendously healing. The work of deep healing on a mind/body level should be done with the guidance of a trusted teacher, practitioner or therapist if you have never tried it before.

There are some things that you can do on your own to begin healing on a mind/body level. It is important to just begin to care for yourself in this way if you have never done so. Right now you can practice by noticing the position you are sitting in as you read this column. What position is your body in as you read? How are you breathing? Are you taking deep breaths that come from your belly or are you breathing shallow and from the throat? Is your jaw tight or is it relaxed and light feeling? Are your shoulders inching up towards your earlobes or are they dropping down towards the floor? Are your feet touching the floor evenly or is one supporting you more than the other? Are your eyes squinting and tense or can you let the little muscles around your eyes gently "let go"? Is your spine curving like the letter "C" or is it more like the letter "I"? Take an inventory of your body right now. Are there any places that are gripping or muscles holding more tension than necessary? One way to relieve body tension instantly

is to notice which places are extra tense and uncomfortable and try "tightening" them on purpose for a count of three. For example, if you notice that your shoulders are very tense, try drawing them up towards your ears and holding them tightly while you silently count to yourself, "1-2-3." Then take a big deep breath in and when you let the breath out, drop your shoulders. Do this once or twice and you will notice a difference. Notice the effect it has on your emotions and feelings to practice this along with deepening your breath. No one else can describe your feelings for you. Doing body/mind work helps you to connect to your own special and individual experience by helping you to name your feelings and begin to heal from them. Ideally, this work is done with the help of a trusted teacher or therapist.

Another way you can begin to care for yourself in

**...YOU ARE ON YOUR WAY
TO HEALING YOUR BODY/
MIND...DECIDE TO START...
DECIDE YOU ARE WORTH
IT... DO IT FOR YOURSELF
AND YOUR HEALING.**

this way is by practicing breathing. This may sound strange at first because breathing is seemingly the most natural thing that we do. However, we take our breathing for granted. Most of us go through a typical day taking very shallow breaths. To feel better, the flow of the breath should be slow and deep. Try this. Sit back in your chair and try to relax your body as much as possible without falling asleep. Without exacerbation or hyperventilating, just slow down your breath. Focus on the feeling of the air as it passes through your nostrils. Notice the temperature of the air. Notice when the breath "in" turns over and becomes the breath "out." Notice what happens to the rest of your body as you purposely slow your breath down. For many people, just the simple act of slowing the breath down brings relief from anxiety and slows down the constant stream of thoughts flowing through the mind.

By practicing these simple techniques, you are on your way to healing your body/mind. To go deeper and further, consult a therapist or yoga teacher. However you decide to start, decide you are worth it and do it for yourself and your healing.

JESSY

Jamie Parsley

Jessy Griffin read the last words and closed the book. She was done. She sat there, a pile of three over-stuffed pillows at her back, looking at the cover. *Atala and Rene* by Francois-Rene de Chateaubriand. A slight smile played on her lips as she brushed Andrei, her cat, from her lap, sat up from her bed and made her way to the kitchen.

The dented tea kettle creaked as soon as she set it to the gas flame. She dangled the tea bag into the empty black cup. The thin book lay nearby on the counter, finished, the spine worn, the threads fading a little where her fingers had held it. It took several moments for the silence of the apartment to engulf her completely. She stood there counting her breaths as the water clicked loudly in its kettle. By the time she reached ten and started over again, she caught herself and shook her head slightly.

now I'm only falling apart...
nothing I can do... a total
eclipse of the heart.

She reached for the small transistor radio that sat atop the refrigerator and turned it on. The final strains of one song ended. The DJ came on. His voice was hoarse. He was joking about the fact that he had a cold. Then, a commercial.

Outside the kitchen window, snow was falling, thick and wet, in the darkness. It was almost blue as it fell past the light of her

window. It settled in a thick layer on the window sill. There were lights still on in the building across the street. They glowed there through the falling snow like bright, white stars. Shadows moved in one of the lighted squares. Two of them. They came together, merged, then moved away from each other. They're dancing, she thought to herself.

Two more commercials on the radio and then the announcer with the sore voice. A rushed weather report. Snow tonight, with moderate temperatures. More snow again tomorrow with partly cloudy skies.

The snow fell.

The kettle clicked on the stove. The blue flame beneath it hissed.

The first strains of the song hit her full-force. In a single flowing movement, without a thought in her head, she reached up and knocked the radio from the refrigerator. It shattered with a loud crash on the linoleum. The batteries rolled across the floor. One rebounded from the radiator on the opposite side of the kitchen and rolled back towards her bare toes. The other rolled beneath the stove.

Silence.

Andrei had whispered into the kitchen, attracted by the rolling movement of the batteries. He slithered around both of Jessy's legs in a curly-cue motion and sniffed first at the battery and then at his food in its bowl near the radiator, before he moved back into the livingroom without a sound.

The snow fell at the window.

JESSY

The teapot tapped.

It was too late. The song... the words... were already pounding in her aching head. Beginning piano strains. Bonnie Tyler.

*Once upon a time I was falling in love,
now I'm only falling apart.
Nothing I can do...
A total eclipse of the heart.*

It had been raining all day, that day. And thundering. She never forgot the thunder. It rumbled through the night, low and guttural.

He was drunk. She could smell it on his breath when she got into his car and leaned across the seat for a kiss. As his chin brushed against her cheek, she felt the stiff, dark stubble scrape her skin. As he backed out onto the street, an empty bottle of Jack Daniels rolled clumsily from under the seat.

He was playing the radio too loud. He kept drifting over the center line into the oncoming lane. The headlights of the cars moved over their faces. He had the windshield wipers on high. Their dizzying motion made her feel ill. He kept looking over at her and smiling. They were half-way across town when he finally said something.

"We're not going to the party tonight," he said. His voice was low.

"What do you want to do then?" she asked. She had to raise her voice. The music was hurting her head.

He looked over at her again and smiled a wide, perfect grin. All teeth. They were so white in the darkness. She looked back at him and frowned. He had had a haircut; it was clipped short in the back and over his ears, but hung loose and long over his forehead and eyes. Even from across the seat, she could smell his breath. It was thick and bitter.

"We *could* talk," he slurred.

"About what?" she asked.

He shrugged and smiled again.

"Nick, why don't you just tell me what's wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong."

"Yes. Something's wrong. You call me and tell me we're going to this party. Then you pick me up, drunk nonetheless, and tell me we're not going. Something is very much wrong."

He looked straight ahead at the road. Finally, after several moments of silence, he said: "Today's the sixth anniversary of my mother's death."

She gasped.

"Oh Nick," she sighed. She reached for his forearm. His muscles were hard and tense as he gripped the steering wheel tightly. "Why didn't you tell me?"

He shrugged again.

"I said no." She slapped his hand away. His face collapsed... His voice was low and he kept missing vowels.

"I try not to think about it."

She looked at him.

"It hurts. Still," he said. His words came out slurred. It took everything in his power for the sentence to make sense.

"Oh, Nick." She squeezed his arm.

He looked at her. His eyes were dark and depthless.

"I think about her all the time."

His jaw was firm, as though he were biting the inside of his cheek.

He wasn't crying.

At his apartment, he kissed her again. Long and tender. His hot, wet tongue pushed past her lips and caressed her teeth. His hand moved across her chest, tracing the line of her bra beneath her blouse. She let him move toward the waist of her skirt.

"No," she whispered.

His hand was big and red. The veins under the skin were thick and blue. They made their way up his arm, into the rolled-up sleeve of his black shirt. His fingers moved over her thigh. Her hand was small and white against his forearm. She pushed him away.

"No."

He moved close. She could smell his cologne. It stung her eyes. His breath kept catching in his throat, creating a little rattle. The smell of the alcohol was sour on his tongue as he forced it between her lips again with a loud sucking sound. She turned her head slightly to the side and as she did, his wet lips moved slowly across her face. He kissed her cheek. He bit, hard, on her earlobe, pulling at the ruby post earring there with his teeth.

"Jessy," he moaned in her ear. His body was

huge and tight. His shoulders completely covered her. Both of his hands were everywhere at once.

"Jessy..."

She felt small and weak.

"I said no!" She slapped his hand away.

His face collapsed. In the dark livingroom, his skin was almost purple. His hair hung in his dark eyes. He pulled away from her. As he did, the couch moved with him.

"You know something. Sometimes I just don't understand you."

His voice was low and he kept missing vowels. He moved behind the couch.

The only light was coming from the kitchen and, occasionally, from the white flashes of lightning. In the half-light, she looked at her hands folded in her lap. Her fingers worked against each other nervously. Claspng them together, she dug the fingernails into the soft flesh of her palms. Her heart slammed inside her chest.

once upon a time there
was light in my life, now
there's only love in the
dark. nothing i can say... a
total eclipse of the heart.

JESSY

"I really cannot figure you out sometimes," he hissed from behind. She could still smell him. His bare feet slid against the carpet. He had always had that rule: no shoes on the carpet. Like an old lady.

"I know what you want though. I know what you *really* want."

The room was suddenly filled with music. He had slipped a cassette into his stereo.

"You love this song," he whispered.

She almost didn't hear him. He turned up the volume. The music poured from the speakers:

once upon a time there was light in my life

now there's only love in the dark

nothing I can say

a total eclipse of the heart

He was standing behind her, his hand moving over her neck, squeezing and releasing. Squeezing and releasing. They almost covered her shoulders completely. He bent at the waist. She felt his nose moving against the top of her skull, smelling her hair. His rank breath was hot and wet on her skin.

"Jessy," he whispered into her skull.

His hands were strong, more aggressive than before. He was pulling at the collar of her blouse now.

"Nick. Please." Her voice was quivering, sore in her throat.

"Jessy."

His hand was moving rhythmically against the couch behind her. He was singing along with the song.
*and if you love me hold me tight
we'll be holding on together*

"don't you move one inch, bitch... i swear, i'll crack your neck like a twig."

She pulled away from his hands, from the smell of his breath and his stinging cologne. From his overwhelming presence. As she moved from the couch, he pulled at her shirt.

"No, Nick!"

She was standing on rubber legs.

"I think I want to go now. You said we were going to talk. *This* is not talking."

He was smiling at her from behind the couch. His fingers were fumbling now with the top buttons of his shirt.

"I know what you want, honey," he said, his voice deep and husky.

He moved from behind the couch toward her. As he did, she moved instinctively away from him. She found herself backed against the patio screen door. The rain was falling hard. There was thunder. It growled low, like his voice. The room smelled dirty. Lightning flashed again. Then once more. Quick. Like a camera flash.

"I know what you want," he repeated.

and we'll only be making it right

cause we'll never be wrong

together we can take it to the end of the line

When he came upon her, she slapped him hard. Her fingers burned with pain as they connected with his high, hard cheekbone. The connection made a dull, thudding sound. It scared her. Never in all her life had she hit anyone. She felt her jaw slacken. Her stomach tightened.

He jerked away from her, his hand moving from his half-unbuttoned shirt to his cheek. It was already red. She could see the mark she made in the half-light. When the lightning flashed again, she saw that his eyes were wide with shock.

"You..." he hissed, as he recovered. His eyes disappeared into thin slants. "You stupid bitch!" Spittle wet his pale lower lip.

and love is like a shadow on the opposite side

The pain didn't settle in until he had pinned her, face-down on the couch. Her arm went numb as soon as he grabbed it, just above the elbow. Her legs, precarious before that moment, gave out completely as he dragged her towards the couch. Her body went completely limp as she landed on the soft cushions. They smelled rank... a sour, sweaty smell.

Any sound she might have been able to make was forced out of her by the heaving weight of his body against hers.

"...dumb ...bitch." His slurring voice mumbled the words over her.

She was panting and tried to force herself to look over her shoulder at him. Maybe, she thought, he could see the panic. Maybe he would take pity. Maybe...

Both of his knees were over the backs of her legs.

"...stupid..."

"Nick," she finally managed, but the word was lost in her throat. All her breath was gone. "Wait. Please!"

She heard his shirt rip as he tore it off. Then she felt his hands moving over her body, over her back, over her legs. He mashed her buttocks painfully.

The rain was falling. She could hear it over the music.

*turn around, bright eyes
every now and then I fall apart.*

"I can't believe you did that to me, you stupid cunt," he hissed in her ear. He licked at her ear lobe as he groped beneath her. She tried to move, tried to stop him. One arm was pinned under her body. She struggled.

And then the pain. He had hit her in the small of the back.

"Don't you move one inch, bitch. I mean it! I swear, I'll crack your neck like a twig."

Her skirt tore as he pulled at it. Her underwear was like paper beneath his fingers. He was wheezing loudly as his hot fingers kneaded her.

"Ohhh," he moaned.

That was when she heard his zipper.

*I really need you tonight
Forever's gonna start tonight.*

"No," she spat into the cushion beneath her. She felt it against her back. It was hard and long and slimy. He was jabbing it at her buttocks. She could feel its heat against her bare skin.

"Puh-leeeeeze," she pleaded. Her mouth was dry and her teeth hurt. The pain in her back was so excruciating, she didn't know if she could stand it much longer. He was forcing the brunt of his weight against her.

And then, she felt him lunge. His chest moved against her back. He ground his chin into the top of her head. His fingers worked their way beneath her and squeezed violently at her breasts. Her mind exploded with pain.

The music was loud... louder than her voice.

"Noooooo!"

turn around bright eyes

His breath quivered when he finished. He collapsed on top of her. His breath was beading like steam against the back of her neck. Her ear bled where he bit it. He had scratched and bit small tears into the small of her neck. Her clothes were torn. She had bit her own lower lip until it tore and bled its salty taste. Her gums were even bleeding.

Her back throbbed and ached. It was greasy and hot with his sweat. His body, its entire weight now collapsed onto her small frame, was hard and heavy. His breathing in her ear slowed. The hand that had crushed her breast was now softly caressing her side.

"Honey," he hummed tenderly in her ear. It was a groan.

She could barely hear it. The music was too loud in her head. The piano. The song was ending. The thunder. And that rain. The lightning flashed into her eyes through her thin, closed eyelid.

turn around

The shriek was loud. She shook her head as though she were waking from a dream. The teapot was whistling. Her robe had fallen open and cold chills wracked the entire length of her body. She closed the robe over her and moved the kettle off the open flame. The scream died to a moan and then to a soft, hollow hissing deep in the kettle. She took up a tea towel and removed the nozzle. She poured the boiling water into the cup over the paper bag. The water turned light brown as the tea seeped through and took hold.

A light went out in the building across the way.

Snow fell at the window.

Her apartment was silent.

The radio lay smashed at her feet.

She stood in her kitchen, blowing on the hot tea. Her eyes were dry and stinging. She was humming.

THE STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS FOR RAPE IS ONLY FIVE FUCKING YEARS

LaVerne Williams

The statute of limitations for rape
is only five fucking years... five fucking
years of burial, unearthing and mental
breakdown: a stiffened corpse oozing poison
into the land infested with rabid rats spitting...
riffing... this strange outrage of radioactive bile.

The statute of limitations for rape
is only five fucking years of bleeding
flutters in the gut... the ulcers
of burnt wild mind and heart explosions
from the fires of hell dreaming vengeance
in these breasts of old stone.

The statute of limitations for rape
is only five fucking years of silence
and dance therapy that dis-covers
all the black holes holding volcanoes
of fiery, bitter aloe tears searing
the eyes into a blind pool of phlegm.

It has been fourteen years... for me.

Fourteen years and the semen
has evaporated, or at least, its stain
is undetectable by any mechanical
device a weak judge could ever require.
Yet I can tell you that I still smell
the malodorous odor of rotting yogurt--
his thick, stinking cock goo soiling
my deltas with his distemper... his
disgusting sneer... his swaybacked swagger
stomping my womb... his ass-ugly face smiling
as if I hadn't said no 30 times between
midnight and 12:17 a.m. on November 4, 1984.
I must have been talking to the moonlight...
like the wind in that dreadful forest of cancered
oaks choking
on my bellows. Hatred is a gnat compared
to the scorpion stings I would give this so-called
man for stealing what I cannot give again... get back.
I must have his head... neck... gizzard... to kill

THE STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS...

my New York City roaches with. I must have
his dick -- a.k.a. Lorena Bobbitt-style -- heroine,
but with zippered lips which never tell where
his weapon of flesh is.

The statute of limitations for rape
is only five fucking years and fourteen years later,
I still scream oceans of salty tears...
retribution due in years of arrears -- shears
in the back where kidneys bleed astronomical acid
colling into cobras which refuse to dance
to a fucking flute, but spit into the eye
of the fool who plays the cacophony of schizophrenic
drums.

Since I began to rage this poem, fifteen
women in the United States are raped,
now limping... fisting... down a long, slow
road lined in lynched dreams bleeding
from their palms.

BIOS

(In order of appearance)

Magie Dominic is a writer whose work in this issue was previously published in "Countering the Myths."

Anney Baez Hernandez hails from the Dominican Republic and is a social worker in Westchester County.

Suheir Hammad is the author of "Born Palestinian, Born Black" and "Drops of This Story."

Paula Re is a writer.

Susan Weaver is a poet, freelance journalist and author who works at a shelter for victims of domestic violence. Published in several literary magazines, she lives in Allentown, Pennsylvania with her husband.

Toni LaRee Bennett, a writer for the past 24 years, received her BA, MA, and Ph.D. from the University of Washington in Seattle. She now works on translating her poetry into Italian and raising finches.

Rhonda J. Nelson has been published in literary magazines including: Slipstream, Panhandler and Dexter Review.

Jean O'Bryan lives near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and conducts writing workshops for people of all ages.

Michelle Czalkowski lives in Raleigh, North Carolina and is working on her master's degree at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Fern Levin Flores is a published poet and singer who is working on a novel.

Pat Huyett is the author of Eldorado Rosa:Voices from Midtown.

Donna J. Waidtlow, editor of the internet poetry journal Switched-on Gutenberg, won a 1997 Chapbook Award from Floating Bridge Press for A Woman Named Wife. She earned her MFA in Creative Writing from Goddard College.

Jamie Parsley, author of four books of poetry, lives in Fargo, North Dakota.

LaVerne Williams is a published poet and artist who has been featured at several New York City locations such as The Knitting Factory, 13 Bar Lounge and The Nuyorican Poets Cafe.

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