

GREAT LAKE REVIEW

WINTER 1991



A Point of No Return



Renee Page

Great Lake Review

Winter 1991

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ANGELA SPIEL (

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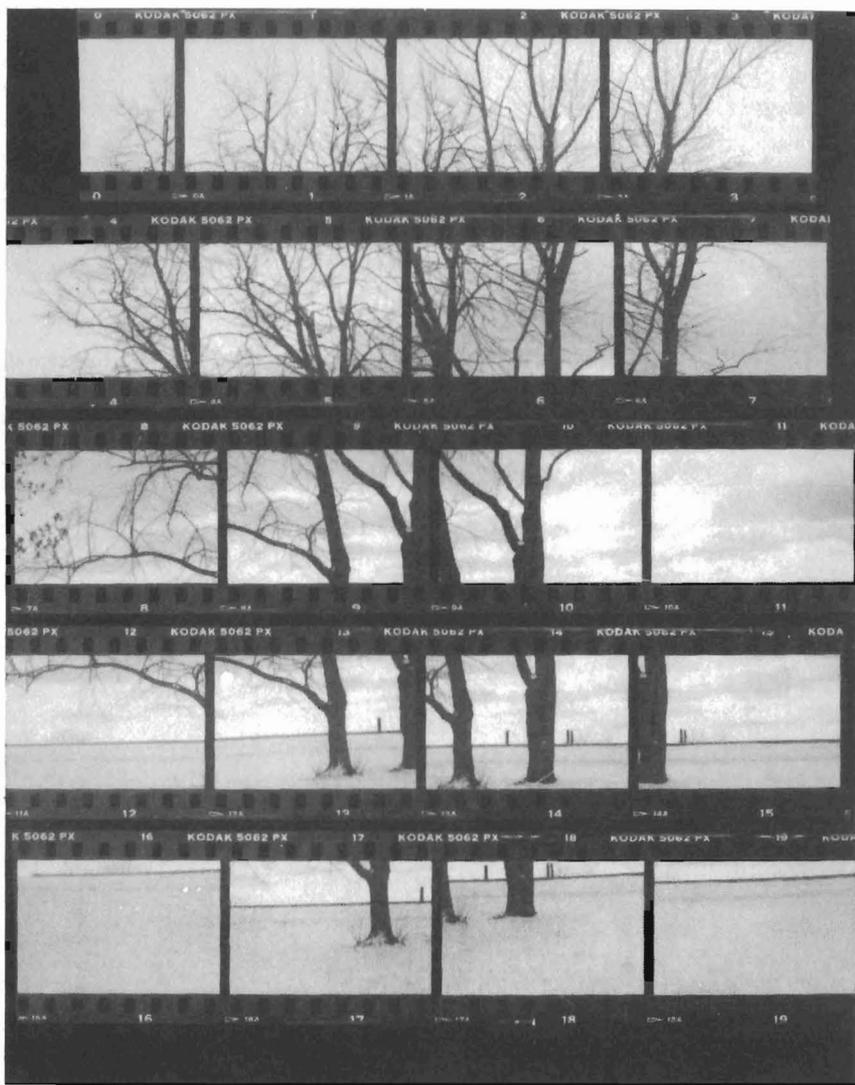
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Double Vision

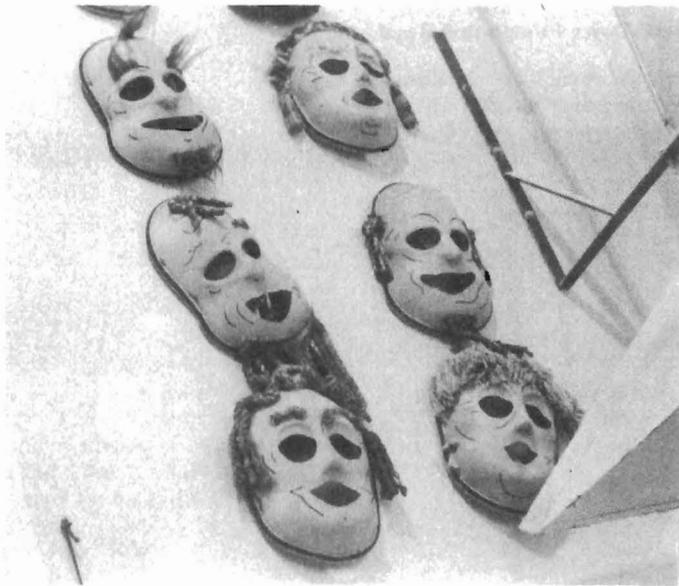
Renee Page

The Walk Down Pumphouse Road

Old battered brown wood dwelling
 Out on Pumphouse Road
 Made her crossover
 To the other side
 When she walked past.
 With quickened steps
 And round eyes fixed
 Upon the doors and windows
 Waiting for a movement,
 Signal,
 She'd find speed
 To pass on by
 Around the bend
 And down the hill.
 Old man behind the ragged curtains
 Baked big pies of little girls
 And washed them down
 With cold mint tea.
 She knew.
 She had been told.
 Garbage picking was his trade.
 He always searched the local dump.
 Old stoves and cars
 and washing machines
 Were rusting in his small front yard.
 So little room to find a way into the
 Squeaky side porch door.
 The big front door was only used
 If the census taker came around.
 Her heart would pound
 when she walked by,
 And barefoot in the summer sun
 She'd get a death-wish hope
 To see him.
 One day while she was staring hard
 And stepping off her wary pace
 The side door opened
 On the battered brown wood house.

Oh, no! she thought,
 He's coming.
 He's coming after me.
 And my feet will move no faster.
 And I think my heart has grown
 For it's filling up my ears.
 Oh, God, forgive my trespasses.
 I'm going to be a pie.
 And Ralph, I'm sorry I peeked
 at you and Jeanie
 In the grass.
 And Dick, the pennies I stole are
 Underneath my bed.
 And mom, I'm sorry I made you trade
 My brand new dress
 For a chemistry set.
 And daddy dear, your little girl
 Is going up to heaven.
 Oh, no he's coming straight at me
 With dirty skin
 And oily clothes.
 And look at the way his nose
 is wrinkling.
 I believe he has got horns.
 Her body started to stiffen
 As he turned quickly to the right
 To open up the tin mailbox.
 A letter or two distracted him
 As she crept past
 Ever so slowly
 So as not to catch his eye.
 Relief came to her
 In gentle waves
 And in good time she was
 down the hill.
 I might as well keep
 The pennies, she thought.

— Beverlee Salley



Untitled

Renee Page

WORDS

spinning at the ceiling

WORDS

sinking down to me

WORDS

in my head — through my ear

THINGS

that you said made
me afraid, scared of

THINGS

in the closet under the bed

afraid to be alone with

THINGS

crawling about — trying
to get at me.

i wanted to call you back —

i wanted to apologize —

explain what i'd done ask why?

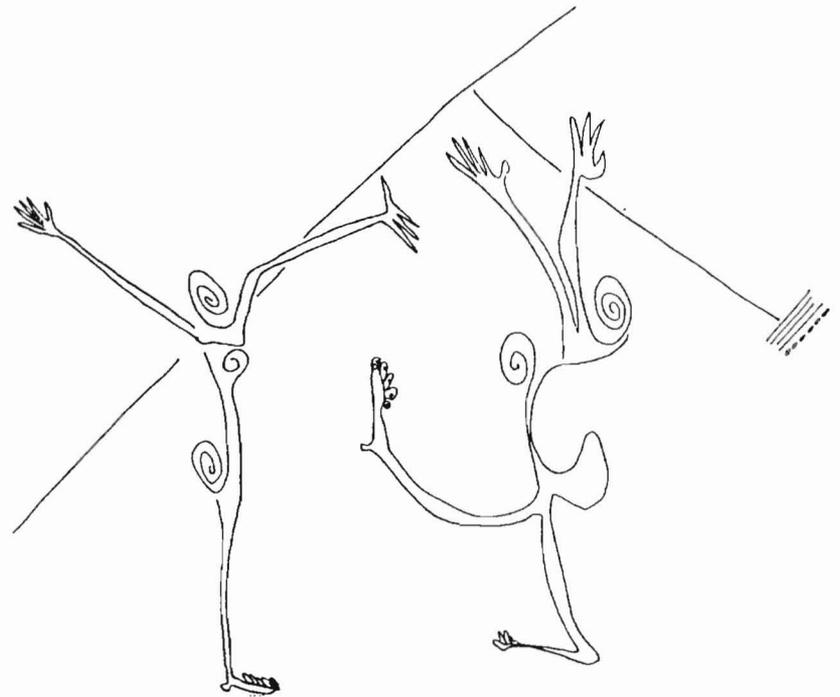
but You returned on your own —

by **Your** own will and

Forgave me

And i slept with the light on.

— Cindy A. Guadagno



Untitled

Kate

State Unnamed

Emotions run wild

blending, crashing, meeting, converging

Sweet piano keys gently fingered

Dripping window and snow covered album

Numbers that are intrusive and rude.

Time agrees with practicality.

Therefore, stifle these feelings,

or save them for free Thursdays.

— Garrett Wagner



Sunspot

Renee Page



The Cove

Renee Page

The Visitor

Again
I find myself
In this lonely place where
Time seems to be eternally
Frozen.

I see
Row after row
Of headstones and flowers.
Why am I here to speak to you
Again?

Isn't
It pointless to
Speak to a stone? Aren't
My words scattered in the wind like
Ashes?

So is
It you I come
Here to soothe, or myself?
I will ask you when I come back
Again.

— Tom Fugalli

Purple

Blessed Night
Enfold Me
Draw Me A Movie
Of How Life
Could Be Different
If Only . . .

never mind
i would
rather not know

Rather, Wrap Me
In Your Beauty
(Your Empty Darkness)
Show Me How . . .

never mind
i'll find out
for myself

Blessed Night
Unleash Your Bounteous Fury
At My Puny Arrogance
If My Actions
Strike You As Contemptuous

i, for one
am going to bed

— Robert LaRocque

The Girl By The Window

The girl by the window
Noted me curiously
As I staggered past her quiet home
One sullen winter evening.

Engrossed by the snow
And my own self image,
I didn't see her at all.

As I passed by her house
Without stopping,
I stepped in and out of fantasy
On a sullen winter evening.

— Robert LaRocque



Cowpoke

Staci Page

Howl

You've seen my face in town before,
but don't know who I am.
Inside a tavern or a store,
I'm just an average man.
I roam the foggy midnight moors
without a sound and in disguise,
with moonlight in my eyes.

I'm sure you've heard my voice as well;
it echoes through the night.
And screeches like a soul in hell,
which crawls and cries in fright.
I roam the foggy midnight moors
without a sound and in disguise,
with moonlight in my eyes.

Perhaps one night we'll meet alone,
and you will see my flaw.
Once I was also flesh and bone,
but now I'm tooth and claw.
I roam the foggy midnight moors
without a sound and in disguise,
with moonlight in my eyes.

— Tom Fugalli



London Calling

by Brad T. Parsons

"A pint of 122 to go."

"Ten minutes."

"Okay," you say as you take a seat near the counter. You've always found this place a bit gaudy and much too bright for your taste, but the food makes up for the decor. You lean your head against the wall and look at the glossy pictures of Chinese models hanging on the wall. There is a man behind the counter wearing a stained apron, yelling into the phone in Chinese occasionally throwing in the English phrase "how much?" There is also a little Chinese girl, around six years old, standing on a chair eating a spare rib. This makes you smile. You reach into the pocket of your raincoat and take out a worn copy of *Richard III*. By the time you finish act I, scene II your food is ready. You pay for it and throw in a few extra packets of duck sauce.

Outside, the weather is still nice for a late evening in mid-September so you decide to leave the top down on the MG. A used model that you picked up in grad school; it's color British racing green with a slight dent in the back. You pull out onto the boulevard and in a second, from the radio, Bowie's telling you that the smell of fat chicks puts a smile on his face.

You're home in fifteen minutes. Over the past three and a half months you have come to realize that you live in a haunted house. Not a worn structure built on top of a hill possessed by the lost spirits of the dead, but instead, a small second floor apartment that contains memories of sounds and touches, and things that you would rather forget about.

Your machine is blinking. A message from your agent in Manhattan. You sit down in front of the TV and work at your chicken and broccoli. Eating with chopsticks is one thing that you are good at; maintaining a relationship is not. Hannah left for London in June. This was right after she had sent all of her possessions via UPS to her parents down in Westchester. She was a graduate student studying art history and you were here writing on a grant from the N.E.A. You met, of course fell in love, and then she moved in. Eight months later she was gone. You swish a hunk of chicken around in some soy sauce and pop it in your mouth. She's in London studying art and you're eating out of paper cartons.

You teach two writing classes at the university. Your first novel was published late last year when you were twenty-three and was received with critical acclaim and immediate attention was taken to "this promising young novelist". The novel chronicled a year that you spent in Japan studying; a tale of youthful idealism set in the heart of Tokyo. You then got the grant, found an apartment, and met Hannah.

Your first class consists of eleven students who would kill to be in your shoes; the successful young novelist. You wish you could break their bubble and tell them that the fame dies quickly and the money goes even faster. But you don't.

The first story you go over is a horrible tale written by a guy who has obviously watched too much HBO. It's only ten pages long and contains two murders, a rape, an act of incest, a suicide, and a castration. You try to helpfully criticize and push him in the right direction; or at least get rid of one of the murders and the act of incest.

After class you meet Lewis Rattigan for lunch. He was your mentor and the man who persuaded you to get an agent and get published. Your novel was dedicated to him.

"You don't look too good, pal. What's wrong?"

"A little stressed out," you say tapping some pepper onto your soup.

"Anything you want to show me?"

"I just sent something to *The Atlantic* and I'm screwing around with the second chapter of the new thing."

"It'll come, trust me."

"Yeah, I used to think that misery was the key to inspiration."

"You can't wait around for inspiration, that's bullshit."

"Do you know what sleeping alone can do to a person?"

"I don't want to know. Sleeping *with* someone has always been my muse."

You laugh, a single 'ha'. He picks up the tab.

You decide to go biking after class. You drive home and change into khaki shorts and a gray T-shirt and slip on your gloves. You take your usual route that brings you up to the university. As you glide through the courtyard a student waves to you. You get back home forty minutes later and grab a bottle of Evian from the refrigerator and decide to take a shower. You go into the bathroom wearing only a pair of boxers and grab a towel to use to turn on the hot water. Hannah broke off the handle by accident and now you can only turn on the water by wrapping the end of a towel around the broken screw that sticks out. You remember when she broke it. It was a Sunday, and you had just finished your weekly ritual of bagels and the *Times*. You were in the living room sprawled out on the sofa scanning the Arts and Leisure section when you heard "oops" and she came out with a towel wrapped around her with the broken handle in her hand. The expression on her face was amusement mixed with shocked innocence. You tried to fix it with your tools which consisted of two screwdrivers and a set of pliers but after trial and error you decided that the towel method worked best.

You order out for pizza and try to do a little writing.

You call in sick the next day and stay home and go over some of the student's stories. Later in the day, you call your friend Graham in L.A. and talk for roughly an hour. he asks you when Hannah is coming back. You tell him that you don't care. When you sit there and try to play the video over in your head, you really don't know why things ended. A lack of communication began that was followed by an out and out resentment for each other. But still, things always seemed to work out. She was a rare, intelligent woman with a quirky sense of humor that balanced with a sensible maturity. The fights started and then she told you that she was going to London. This came out of nowhere. From the second she told you that, everything went downhill, until eventually without a word between you, she boarded Flight 381 out of JFK. She called the night before she left. You got the message on your machine: "Clever message, um...this is Hannah. I just called to say goodbye. I'm leaving tomorrow. Give me a call if you want to. I'll be home all night. (Pause) Goodbye." She sounded terribly sad but you didn't call her back. That was three and a half months ago. The only correspondence you've had was a package that contained two of your oxfords and a pink piece of stationery with a line from one of her favorite songs written on it. The blue ink read, "However far away, I will always love you."

It's around midnight and you're starving so you decide to drive down to the deli and grab a sandwich and get back before "Letterman." You park your car in front of the deli, a place where you are recognized and remembered as the young, quiet guy with glasses who comes in around three times a week at this time for a roast beef on wheat with lettuce and a little mayo. The owner, an old man with a dark mustache, smiles as you walk in.

“Dare to be different tonight?”

“No, the usual.”

“Little butter on the bread?”

“You know it.”

He is from Brazil and he always manages to bring up his career as a forward on the National Soccer Team many years ago. You nod in the right spots and occasionally bring up the fact that you played in high school. As he wraps your sandwich you go to a cooler in the back of the store to pick up a six-pack of Rolling Rock. You hear the bell on the door ring and then you hear the old man shout something. You shut the cooler door and head up the aisle and come face to face with a young Asian guy wearing jeans and a leather jacket, wielding a pistol. He pushes you back and alternates aiming the gun at you and the old man.

“The money, now.”

“I’m closing. I already made the night deposit.”

“The fuck you did!”

“I tell you — ”

“He said he doesn’t have anything,” you hear yourself say.

“Shut the fuck up,” he says turning the gun towards you. The old man makes some kind of quick move and the kid whips around fast. You drop the beer and try to grab the gun. There is a shot.

Your head is throbbing. You’re sitting on the curb outside of the deli. There is an ambulance and two police cars parked at awkward angles next to you MG. An EMT is cleaning up the cut just below your eye. You see blood on your shirt. You panic for a second. It was only from your nose. After talking with the police you’ve found out that the old man was killed and the kid let you have it with the side of the pistol to your face. They found you knocked out in aisle two covered by a display of Fritos. You tell your version of the hold-up several times desparately trying to sort out the details.

You drive home very slowly. You get to your apartment tired and hungry. You secure all three locks on the door and sit in the living room. You could have been killed. You could have been a statistic in a matter of seconds. You sit there shaking, wishing that Hannah was there to hold you. If she were here she would listen to your story hanging on every terrifying detail you described. And then she would probably run a hot bath and after, wait until you fell asleep on the futon before she settled down next to you taking you in her arms. You could have been killed and she has no idea at all. She’s probably sound asleep right now in London. You quickly calculate the time difference in the your head. Something that you oddly enough find yourself doing all of the time. It’s around six in the morning. She’s sound asleep. You’re furious as you storm about the apartment. You find yourself gathering all of the little things that remind you of her: cards, photographs, books, letters. They are all lies now. You throw these in a paper bag and go outside and toss them into the dumpster slamming the lid shut.

You go upstairs and find yourself in the bathroom with your tool kit and a tube of epoxy. You’re kneeling in the tub attempting to fix the hot water handle. Twenty minutes later you are at your limit sprawled out in the tub with epoxy lightly sticking most of your fingers together.

The next morning you think about walking down to the corner and picking up the paper but you’re terrified of the headline: *RISING YOUNG WRITER WINDS UP UNDER FRITOS*. The phone rings at 10:15. It’s Friday and you have a class at 11:00. You answer it. A voice that sounds like it’s talking through glass says your name twice.

At first you don’t recognize it and then it sets in. It’s Hannah. You want to be mean, to hold a grudge, to blame your screwed up life on her but you can’t.

“What’s that beeping?”

“It’ll stop in a minute.”

“When are you coming home?”

“There, it stopped — December.”

“Do you even miss me?” you ask.

“I miss you so much. I miss you more than I miss being able to shower standing up.”

You decide not to persue the meaning of that last statement.

“Are you calling me to make yourself feel better?”

“I was going to wait to try to talk to you until I got back. You never wrote me or called so I figured that’s how you wanted it.”

“I don’t want it that way.”

“I deserted you long before I went to London and I’m sorry.”

“So what makes things different now?”

“This may sound stupid but I’ve really gotten to know myself here. Find out who I am.”

“Do you think about me?”

“All of the time. In the park, in the tub, in the tube, in classes, all the time. I always count back to see what time it is there and I try to imagine what you’re doing.”

“I do the same.”

“It’s so good to hear your voice. You sound so sad though.”

“I was almost killed last night.”

“What?”

“I could’ve been killed last night.”

“What happened?”

“It’s a long story.”

“Well, what happened?”

“I want to see you.”

“What?”

“I want to come over and see you.”

“You can. I’d like that.”

“I’m sorry about everything.”

“Don’t be.”

“Do you still wear the bracelet I got you for your birthday?”

“Every day.”

“So, tell me all about London.”

As she goes into details about her flat and the parks and the museums you find yourself letting down the cautious guard that you’ve had up for months. The mask of bitter resentment starts to leave as you find yourself smiling and crying at the same time. As you cradle the phone to your ear you realize that you must now find that somewhat elusive area that lies between the heart and the mind.



Grandma's House

Renee Page

The Tunnel's End

Once there was this life in my heart that burned as fierce as flame. Infused by the draught of youth, I fought and laughed and sang 'til I cried and went my way, in my mother's

arms to sleep. Today is, however, fused with all the others, one in a string of many.

Stuck between my bills and by job, what time I spent as a kid is

lost in work and memories only sate my mind. Now each and every new day will bring me closer to the last, when the final gusts of life will depart. Where

once I lived and breathed, there is just existence. At the tunnel's end, there should be a final cheer to aid me, rather than milk and prunes and pills in my passing.

— Justin Goltermann



Cotton Creations

Renee Page

For Ann

Your son sees you in me,
and I sometimes wonder if
that's why he claims to love
me so much. I guess I mirror

the years you were his mother.
I was seven then, but I knew
something was wrong when I
saw him cry for the first and last

time, while talking to the man
in the white
lab coat in the hospital cafeteria.
That same man told me I was
too young
to visit you one last time, too young

to say goodbye to the woman
whom I now reflect.

I remember your son
telling me you'd wave from your
hospital room window if I waited

outside, safe from the dying I was
too young to witness. I waited with
your sister who squeezed my hand,
and I realise now that it was more for

her comfort than my own. She was
old enough to know what death meant
and wise enough to explain it to me.
So when you were too weak to get out

of bed and wave, I saw you in a puddle
being soothed by a rainbow. "There she is,
there's Grandma! Whenever you want
to see her, just look in a puddle

and you'll see her rainbow." You died
that day, and your son doesn't cry
anymore. He hasn't cried in
years, and now he's my father.

— Barbara Flayton

The Breadman

I was in love with the breadman.
He arrived around noon every Monday and Wednesday
Bringing bread
And cookies
And cakes
To people who lived outside of town.
I even started a Bond Bread Club
In a small unused room off the kitchen.
My younger brother
And the fresh-air girl
Were the only other members.
The breadman was dark and handsome and forty
And used to listen to my ideas for writing a book.
Encouragement came from the strangest places.
I can see him leaning in through the open back doors
Of his panel truck,
Putting the goodies back in order
After we had dug through
To pick the boxes
We would convince mom to buy.
I didn't even like sweets much.
But he would smile down
At my gawky ten-year-old
Skinny self.
And maybe he saw my future.
And my heart pounded.
And my shy mouth talked endlessly.
And I was in love.

— Beverlee Salley

Pasta

I love
Spaghetti;
Spaghetti and meatballs
Is my favorite dish.

I eat
My pasta
And it fills my stomach
Where it expands like foam.

I hate
Ricotta
And yet it is tasty,
Baked within lasagna.

Noodles
Go very
Well with marinara
Sauce and parmesan cheese.

— Justin Goltermann



Dirty Feet

Staci Page

Run through you
that's what I do
Not near you, nor around you
but right through you
I feel you encompass me momentarily
Inside is not where I want to be
Then I'm alone
The feeling gone
I've passed right through you
It's all I can do
I've no place in your body, your home
I'm lost still — I continue to roam

Tonight I sleep in the street.

— Garrett Wagner