shona cowart
melissa leahy
shelly barger
henry school
kc stout
alicia reed
nikki agee
shawn whitset
jennifer steinfeldt
lera rooker

amie leeking
jennifer bardoner
bryan barnard
stephanie tennis
amber goodman
jessica dungan
jennifer jennings
denny mcbride
rachel parrish

cover painting:

leslie miller
untitled
acrylic on canvas

photographed by:
amie leeking

Jonathan Trundle | fringe in frippery | 8 3/4 gallons of house paint
35 x 130 cotton duck canvas
105 pounds of human canvas

(image 1 in series of 3, continued on page 20)
her and him, or milk, penises, and cookies
Maya Nitis

that morning she flew twice
her mind repeating the word
naked over and over and again
she analyzed her dilemma
she imagined his soft playful penis
sleeping in her mouth
she remembered his notions of romance
and how secretly, they were hers, too
but then she had only smiled
as he stood pink, freckled, and naked
in front of her chair and she
thought of milk and cookies
and how messy he was and the milk
always got all over his face
and it was a little gross.

Night Meeting

They met almost nose to nose.
Lying in the leaf-speckled dark,
Backs spotted with pools
Of silver and ebony.
Sprawled within a few inches of each other
Staring, his eyes shadowed
And hers wet with the moon.

The boy was naked, weeping,
His skin scratched.
Hot against the cool soil.
His long brown hair hung before his face.
He reached with one limp hand
To brush the strands from his dirty cheek.

She was angular and lean.
Her flanks heaved.
From exhaustion.
Her ears moved back then forward
Listening to his breathing.
Rough and rasping
Like her own.
The pink tongue lolled out
To lick a forepaw gingerly.
Her muzzle wrinkled
As she yawned.
Her long teeth
Pale in the light.

The boy raised his head,
Trying to imitate the gesture.
They looked up.
And with one voice,
Howled.

My Dark Confidence
Lindsey Turner

I crawl into my ultraviolet coffin
thrice a week
to lie in my own
pig sweat
for some twenty minutes
or ten
until my skin is parched
and I am the paradigm
of the modern white girl.
I gain confidence with
every tedious
shift in
melanin.

Declaraton
Lindsey Turner

I am woman
hear me shop
as I browse the racks
for duds
(and that they are)
that make me
comic-book boxy
and abnormally heavy-footed
while the shelves
stacked with paint
and complementary gifts
beckon for me
and cordially request that I pay
$59.95
just to cover up my
disgust.

Jeremy Brown

Things Left Unspoken

The philosopher clicked his mouse.
"I found this on the Internet."
"I can't call it sound."
"More of an increase in pressure in the ear:
Tension,
Relaxation,
Tension.

In a definite rhythm...
I looked at the speakers.
He laughed.
"Odd isn't it?"
I nodded.
"That's the sound of one hand clapping."
Then he clicked again.
"Listen to this.
I heard absence.
A sudden clearing of the ear of silence.
"What was that?"
My hand trembled on the edge of his desk.
"A tree falling in the woods
When there's no one there to hear it."
Then the mouse clicked again.
"What are you going to play now?"
"This time I'm going to play...
The World!"
"The World!"
"You know, the Logos, the World
Made flesh—God, in essence."
He reached for the mouse.
I snatched at his desk.
The heavy bust would have to do.
Plato kissed the back of his head,
And I left—
Unenlightened.
The Curse of Davis Market

Turner Hutchens

On the corner of Tennessee and Main sits a small convenience store whose signs announce "Coldest Beer in Town" and "Kegs To Go." The painted window also pronounces that Davis Market is the center of the universe.

The only important information missing from the signs is that the friendly little beer store is cursed.

"If for some reason you happen in there, you'll be stuck in Murfreesboro," explains Ryan Malina, an MTSU senior, as he sips his beer in a local bar. "If you do manage to leave you come back here to die." This legend, or some variation of it, has been told around Murfreesboro from the keg parties of Greek Row to the wobbly tables of the Boro. "If you go in the store, you can't ever leave Murfreesboro," says Lori Brewer, another MTSU senior.

"No," disagrees Jessica McKee, a junior sitting next to her. "You can leave, but you'll always come back." The two are drinking imported beer.

There are other explanations. "The reason is it's an Indian burial ground or something bia bia bia," says Malina.

Others have heard different theories. "Some team of, like, astrophysicists or something came down from some university in the north," explains John Wall, a graduate of MTSU still living in Murfreesboro. "And they had somehow determined that Murfreesboro was the center of the universe -- right around Davis market. If it's the center of the universe, it's got to have some pull." It's a theory that continues:

Many people believe monks from a new-age cult declared the store to be the center of the cosmos in the 1970s. MTSU senior Craig Murphy has heard some of this version of the story. "They offered to buy it from the owner, but he wouldn't sell," says Murphy.

Though the Davis Market does seem to have some pull, whether by gravity or some other force, many believe the curse is escapable.

"There is a way to get out of it," reports Murphy, a senior of many years at MTSU. "To break the curse you have to go to the Geographic Center of Tennessee Monument. Then you can leave." Murphy is not the only person who has heard of this strange antidote to the curse. The monument is just the other side of campus from Davis Market, a little ways from Old Soldiers Road. It's a typical stone obelisk, stacked a few years ago to commemorate Murfreesboro's pride at being at the center of the state. Most people interviewed for this article had heard of urination as a cure, and a few who prefer to remain unnamed have actually relieved themselves on the memorial.

"You visit some statue and piss on it," says Malina. "Then you can leave." "Yeah, you just pee on the center of Tennessee," says McKee.

Charles Wolfe, a noted folklore scholar who has taught at MTSU for more than two decades, is also familiar with the urine antidote.

"Yeah, I've heard that," he says, chuckling a little but not offering further comment. Wolfe doesn't recall who first told him about the legend, but it was about 25 years ago. He says Davis Market has always had a certain mystique about it.

"I'm not aware of any legend quite like it," says Wolfe, reclining in his office filled with stacks of books and journals. "It's certainly not a motif in folklore. "You have to understand that back in the '70s Davis Market was very different," he explains. "It was much more funky. It was dirty, and full of all sorts of stuff. You could find almost anything you wanted there. There was a whole counterculture in that area around there that was really into alternative lifestyles."

The area was the closest thing to a hippie enclave Murfreesboro has ever had, says Wolfe, and Davis Market was the headquarters for many of the people, a place to meet, mingle, buy whatever one needed, or maybe make a connection.

At the time it operated not just as a convenience store, but as a general store, counter-culture hang-out and even a pawnshop for a while.

Now the Market sticks to more tame merchandise: mostly empty shelves with a thin supply of crackers and personal hygiene products, full racks of pornography (magazines and movies), and a whole lot of beer.

One Murfreesboro lifer cites this as the source of the store's pull: "It's just the beer."

"It just comes from MTSU tradition," John McGhee says. MTSU has always been a party school. Davis is a party place.

McGhee first stopped at Davis Market in 1977 when he was still a child. He first heard the legend in 1985 -- years too late for him to avoid it.

"I'm 31 years old and I'm still here and I still go down there to buy beer -- the best selection in town. "I believe it," he says of the curse, "I actually went away from Murfreesboro for a year. After eight months I started feeling the pull back to Davis Market. The first night I came back to buy some Guinness. That was four years ago. I'm still here."

The market's broad selection of beer ranges from Milwaukee's Best (The Beast), priced at about six dollars a twelve-pack, to specially brews like Young's Double Chocolate Stout which can put you out five bucks per bottle. The store has two full cases of beer, kegs to go, and if you're looking for a cheap drink you can buy milk jugs of domestic on tap.

The Market has capitalized on the idea of the curse, an initiative first taken in the '70s by the store's owner, Mr. Davis, who has since died. Key chains, generally free with a purchase, proudly advertise the store. They are printed "Davis Market The Cosmic Center Of The Universe."

The key chains don't mention the curse. But now you know.
Naranja dulce,
limon celeste,
dile a Maria,
queno se acueste.

Maria, Maria,
ya se acostó,
vino la muerte
y se la llevo.

Naranja dulce,
limon celeste,
dile a mi amada,
que me conteste.

Maria, Maria,
no contestó,
vino la muerte
y se la llevo.

Sweet orange,
celestial lime,
tell Maria
not to lie down.

Maria, María,
in bed she lay.
Along came death
and took her away.

Sweet orange,
celestial lime,
tell my beloved
to answer me.

Maria, María,
did not reply,
death came round
and made her die.

*Traditional Day of the Dead Calavera*
Staring at the Coke Machine over Chaucer

When Noah Left
Noah carved the boat with little help and let all the animals parade in front of me. Now the current gains on my knees it drags and my new brown shoes are ruined. There he perches proudly, above the ugly waters filled with anger of the drowning dead and I know he didn’t realize He’ll have to mate with a giraffe.

Melissa Leahy

Kissing the New Rapunzel Goodnight

Breathe
No more lips play- rolling tongue or soggy cheek
quit the sexual nature of human tendencies
silence the pulse of this animal
that lurks and waits to jump and hunt again.
Dance with the devil one last tango
with smooth pale hands
to cover vulnerable flesh of man
and girl who stands facing herself.
Her innocence as a reflection
in a broken mirror-
his emerald eyes cracking and displaying her beauty.
Pristine striking white teeth.
To taste her is to end the world
of Rapunzel and poisoned apples-
new story full of truth and her length
swaying back and forth between reality
and what dreams are made of.
Kiss the angel fair and sweet,
hard and long until the river breaks
the dam and love comes
rushing in to feed the emptiness
Inside- the void
of lost prayers and swollen feet from stumbling
so far, so close to her heaving breast-
lonely sleeping singing enchanter stalks your mind.
Behold the sun, shine brighter every day
light her mouth so kiss at dark, flying
on a shooting star bound for nowhere, everywhere, anywhere but here.
Breathe and release her to the night.

Shelly Barger

#1
Run with me in golden heather fields.
You stand poised on the rim of my eyelid
dive in.
He says if you can’t tell what color it is,
decide what color it is not.
Love is not endless slumber.
Red roses twirl in your eyes, or maybe the pink
clouds
I want your hands to feel like.
The wind strings invisible veils over my face.
You want to know who I am
and I am afraid I will shriek from the constraint
of fear the grain underneather
I could choke it out
only if hurts to tears.
Toss me a donut, will ya?
Kill one little dragon for me.

#2
The ocean shore down I dove
into cool water.
Never smelled the salty ocean air
though the taste was always at the tip of my tongue.
Sheathed in water,
I dove down for pearls and smashed them
for the tellin grains choked smooth.
Perfectly smooth sand travels in an hourglass
sharded by a million fiery explosions.
Scouting for the bomb that smashed my majestic sailboat.
Where is the captain wheel amidst the shambled aftermath?
Dove down for pearls and
cracked in the threads of crimson silk
rippling up the ocean
threatening to dredge anchored mystery.

One for an Albatross

Henry School

If you ever see me smile, remind me of sadder change for sake of change and show me waves of blankness pouring from your eyes onto the tile. We’ve stuttered through another day.

If you ever see me smile, remind me of bruises, howls and waiting rooms. I’d save a corner of myself for others’ uses but I couldn’t do this carving for you.

No, they’re not the ones who failed.
I guess it’s sad we’ve never staggered past brittleness.
I guess it’s sad we’ve no real lies to break.
You were my field of buried mirrors and you were the wings in my way.
You were the wings in my way.
they sang a song of endless nights waiting for the next sundown
Jennifer Steinfeldt

fishtnet tights
tiny holes ripping
down the leg
nailpolish streaks curling around
little muscles
they sang a song of girls in deep pantomime
twisting their hair so tight that their scalps can’t breathe

high heels clicking down the pavement
they listened to the sirens weep
between second and fourth street
a little banjo here, a little drum
a garbage can lid
mingling with the old men smoking cigars playing chess
in the alley.

the younger ones must be home before midnight
they drip out the rest of their bottles and scramble into the driveway
still young enough to think about a bowl of ice cream before bed

the older ones look for a bed
perhaps smoke long slim cigarettes held daintily between two fingers
and roll into a club farther out of town
dancing on the tables
finding somewhere to sleep that night.

the taxis weave in and out of the morning traffic
pushing debris with the wind from their tires
horns and business suits and clean shoes that smell like
cheap perfume
the morning sounds make music
a hectic rushing sound from the other side of the city.

Arctic Valentine
Shelly Barger

I wore my heart spotted shirt
two sizes small.
Driving, your eyes glanced,
want ice cream?
No, love, loves me not.
Do you then want to spend the night?
Yes, of course.

Turn the page now
to see me losing my pants
for a fiery red head.

Be mine, but not too close.
Let’s fuck the world away.
Pray for closeness.
Walk like strangers to breakfast.
Arms extended
forever pushing a prayer for protection.

You call this love?
Didn’t you know that we don’t want what we secretly yearn for?
Can’t make ruby from sidewalk.

The snow outside the ice crusted window
couldn’t quite-cool the up roar
of flattened blankets
cheap whore
feeling.

Love, will I ever lift the embargo?

Average Man
Shawn Whitsett

Don’t have much money
I’m down to my last two dimes
Can’t promise you diamonds
All I have to give is time

The muscles on my arms aren’t that big
But my heart is
And the only six-pack I have is Pepsi
But you can have a swig

I don’t own a car
Don’t even have a bike
But we can always walk
Or catch the bus if you’d like

I don’t wear the most expensive clothes
Got this shirt from the thrift store
My pants are kinda faded
One day, I’ll get some more

I’m not the most popular guy
I’m not down with the in crowd
Not the star quarterback
But I always make my moma proud

I’m just an average man
Trying to maintain
Who loves to read books
And stare out the window when it rains

Don’t have many material possessions
May never have fortune or fame
All I have is life’s lessons
And my grandaddy’s last name

But what I do have is love
And my word to remain true
And if you’ll accept
I’d like to share my life with you

The Hills Wriggle Like Round Bodies
Shelly Barger

The hills wriggle like round bodies
under patch work covers
of grass and trees.
The earth opens her legs
into valleys that beckon
the sun
to feed
her fertility
his green
giving light.

Hills are like the rounds of woman’s body.
Slowly, she moves with the rain.
She flows
in pale shades of layered canyon
out by deepening rivers.
Rivers that carry her ever present flavor
to the ocean.
KC Stout

KC Stout doesn’t think her art has a theme, but she works with the idea of absurdity.

“I like to juxtapose things and take things out of context,” she says. “It’s very intuitive. I don’t think about what I’m painting until afterwards.”

What all her works share, she says, are tight painting lines coupled with a manic explosion that almost rejects the process.

“I refer to that as tension and release. I think that’s the main theme of my life.” It’s something she has noticed in nature, music, sexuality and machinery. It’s a contrast that gives things a life of their own.

She insists that her paintings are not precious.

“I don’t care that the piece is well constructed or going to last,” she says. Much to the dismay of some of her teachers, KC reuses old canvases, painting over earlier work. “I’m not afraid to discard something that I spent a lot of time on.”

These two paintings started in a cafe, when KC used coffee to make marks on index cards. Intrigued by the stains, she incorporated the cards into her canvases.

“Making stains is like leaving evidence that we’ve been here,” she says. “We can’t live and not leave stains.”

Because she wanted to focus her energy on the act of painting, and not on creating precious works of art, KC didn’t bother to carefully attach her canvas to the stretchers. When she submitted the paintings to Collage, the corners flapped and some threatened to come loose from the frame. After acceptance in the magazine, the paintings were taken to Chromatix, a photo lab in Nashville, to have slides made. Amusingly, before taking the photos someone at the lab carefully folded the canvas edges to the back and stapled everything tight.

—Interview by Nathalie Mornu

What’s the most significant event of your life?
“I can’t remember anything in particular except silly things. But those are important to me.”

Who would you most like to meet?
“I’m afraid I’d be totally disappointed if I met someone I really admire.”

What’s your first memory?
“When I was really little, I remember being in my crib and hearing sirens outside. Someone had been in a bike accident, and my mom and I went outside to watch. I think we lived in Virginia.”

Do you have any bad habits?
“Consumerism in general. I’d like to cut back.” An army brat, she moved frequently as a child, and still keeps her possessions pared down. Everything she owns will fit into her car. “I buy a lot of clothes, but those are really easy to get rid of.” She smokes, but says she can quit.

What did you dream last night?
“I dreamt that I bought a really nice motorcycle for $200 and it was really cool. Although she doesn’t know how to operate a motorcycle, she drove it in the dream.”

Stain = Us Forever | oil on canvas

Stain = Us | oil on canvas
Final Glimpses
Lara Rooker

I hear only the sound of my wheezing breath, irregular and slow. Alas, it is not loud enough to shut out the sound of my thoughts, which reverberate through my soul.

On the brink of death, you cannot escape yourself. I am too weak to hide. I have lived my life according to my own morals and ideas of goodness. Lying on this deathbed, inhaling disease and decay, I alone am left to answer for my actions. All my things, my books, which used to be a great comfort, now only taunt me from their places on the shelves. They mean nothing; they are nothing to me. How I long for the touch of a hand that knows me. My friends have been wonderful coming to sit with me, but they know of me only what I have allowed them to see. I have never let them truly see me.

Life, it seems, has been composed of a string of decisions based on my own limited perspective, a perspective that has often been skewed. I see that parts of me have died many times over the course of my life, yet they have been reborn through the love of others or the love I have for myself. I smile at the ignorance, the shallowness of many choices, and cringe at the decisions that wrung and hurt others and myself. So many times have I lost confidence, hope, and belief in myself. In hindsight, I see that fear, like a serpent closely wound up in my heart, killed so many desires and dreams. They are now mere skeletons that litter the bottom of my soul. Ironically, what I face at present is the fear of eternal sleeplessness of youth. Life, I used to be scared of; life, at this moment, is my greatest wish. Fear will never vanish from one’s soul, they merely change as one grows older. When one fears to conquer or conquerors, we are faced with another, often greater fear. Life is hard, I was always told, but I laughed at that statement. “Life,” I said, “is as easy as you make it.” What a pompous, silly fool I was. Life is hard, however, some people become more adept than others at shutting their eyes to or running away from obstacles and challenges. I always walked around any barrier that happened upon my path. Was that the best way?

As I wait for the final darkness, I find that all I have are my regrets and my memories. What pallid, grotesque phantoms and shadows are these! But to these apparitions alone can I cling. With love, pain, and regret, I lay down my heavy heart. Oh, that I be released from this.
Jonathon Trundle
friglit in trippery continued

Amie LeeKing | Situations | oil, stencils, computer print-out on wood
The Celebration of PLUR

Jennifer Bardoner

The vibration of the low bass makes the ground tremble like a small earthquake. The music can be heard from the line that zigzags around the corner in complete disarray. A wide variety of people fill the long line waiting to get into a recent Nashville rave. A boy wearing large baggy blue jeans and a yellow Cheeroos T-shirt walks by a girl wearing heels and a slinky black dress. They smile warmly at each other. Under other circumstances these two might not have noticed each other, but tonight the air is filled with the happiness and friendliness that comes with the expectancy of a good time.

Rave movement started in England in the late 1980s. It grew in popularity and was eventually exported to the United States in the early 1990s. The rave scene born in America was one of complete legality. Spaces were not rented, they were broken into. A few hundred kids would show up at an abandoned warehouse, set up their speakers and dance until the cops came. As the scene continued to grow and develop, however, it became a legally monitored and commercialized process. Now partygoers pay up to 20 dollars for a ticket and endure frisking by police after waiting in line to get into a rented venue equipped with extensive lighting and sound systems.

Kids crowd into every corner of the club. Despite the chilly temperature outside, the body heat raises the temperature inside to what feels like 90 degrees. Girls wear tube tops and skimpy tanks even though the forecast calls for snow this week.

The air is filled with smoke. The smell of it is overpowering. It creates a haze like a swamp fog that settles over the entire area, saturating everything it touches.

The club is dimly lit with as much light as a single candle gives off in a large, open room. The only light comes from a door that is left ajar. People need the light to keep track of each other walking in the door, and faces are clearly visible.

The dance floor, however, is shrouded in darkness broken only by the multi-colored lasers that shoot into the crowd and the glow of the swirling lights that kids have brought to amuse themselves, is alive with the movement of hundreds of bodies moving in time with the music.

In this sense, raves can be likened to spiritual and mystical events, many of which use music and drugs to induce heightened emotional states.

One college student traces its roots back to ancient times in a term paper, noting that, "The actual concept of a rave is not as old as it seems itself. At the base, it is very old. Raves are very comparable to American Indian ceremonies, where music is the key towards pulling oneself into a unique emotional and psychological state."*

The visions seen by Native American wise men were also often brought about by the use of mind-altering substances such as peyote.

Methylenedioxy-methylamphetamine (MDMA), commonly known as "ecstasy," has often referred to as the raver's drug of choice. Although many religious traditions typically denounce drug use, there are still some who believe in its spiritual power. Nicholas Saunders describes four people in his article, "The Agony and Ecstasy of God's Path."

"Besides the Benedictine (monk)," he reports, "I also interviewed a rabbi, a Sufi, and a Zen priest, all of whom feel that the drug is a valid tool for teaching and mystical experience. All four have written religious works, three teach their religion and two are also engaged in the drug culture."

The rabbi in the article presented a positive view of youth drug use: "Traditional religions have lost the ability to provide their followers with mystical experiences," he said. "Instead, young people are far more likely to have such experiences while on LSD or ecstasy."

The bass drums out the beat. Thump, thump, thump, constant and rhythmic like the beating of a heart. Amidst a conglomeration of electronic sounds reminiscent of those heard while playing video arcade games, a strong male voice can be heard.

"Keep on thumping, everybody jumping," it commands over the incessant beat. Josh, a 23-year-old construction worker, has been coming to raves for the past four years. He finds the music and the people interesting.

"It's like the feeling you get when the sun shines on you, warming every part of your body and makes you feel golden," he says. "Or like when you're driving with the windows down on a warm, sunny afternoon and your favorite song comes on the radio. And you turn it up and sing along with your lungs, filled with the joy and beauty of life."

His girlfriend Laurn, a 19-year-old college student, experienced her first rave with Josh about a year and a half ago. She is no less adamant about the music's spiritual and uplifting qualities.

"Everything breathes in union," she says. "Everything is inextricably connected by the constant beat of the music. The floor trembles with it, creating a vibration that snakes its way to your feet, where it collects in little pools, tickling the soles of your feet before it moves through the rest of your body. The beat vibrates within you, giving you those little butterflies in your stomach. You feel the energy racing through you. You get warm and notice that your head is moving, your foot is tapping to the same song."

Eventually, your heartbeat falls into time with the rhythm. Everyone in the club is sharing the same heart beats, the same force. All the barriers are broken: you are one throbbing mass. And then you just go with it, and you dance and dance and dance with your brothers and sisters."

Ecstasy is usually associated with the sense of spirituality and unity that many partygoers allude to. PLUR - Peace, Love, Unity and Respect - is the tagline at the top of the rave movement and has lately become something of a catchphrase and motto for the developing rave scene. Many claim that ecstasy helps achieve these ideals.

"I think ecstasy is the key to world peace," Josh says. "It breaks down all the barriers. It starts with butterflies in your stomach and then your whole body starts tingling. You feel light and surreal. You're filled with a joy of life and an openness to share it. You just want everyone to be as happy as you are."

"And this euphoria is the apparent cause of all the touching that goes on at raves. It is not uncommon to see kids seated in a circle on the floor giving each other back rubs."

"I would say that the touching stems from several things," Laura says. "First of all is the most obvious reason. Everybody's out there jumping and dancing around all night. After a while, you can get kind of sore, and back rubs are the perfect cure for sore muscles. Second of all, ecstasy heightens all of your senses. Touching becomes a very pleasurable experience, sometimes even sen- sual. Also, ecstasy makes people feel so good that they want to make someone else feel good too. Most people like back rubs, and when your tactile senses are heightened, most people love back rubs. The human touch is the most basic form of bonding. When someone is rolling (high on ecstasy) they feel a connection to those around them, and with their natural inhibitions removed, they are able to act on this feeling, which is probably another reason for all the touching. In short, it just feels good."

That seems to be the catch-all phrase for the rave scene. It's fun, and it feels good.

The couple wildly dances the rest of the dwindling night away amidst the thronging crowd. Everyone in the room has a distinct style, a different way that the music touches them and tells them to move. One girl stands with her eyes closed and her face upturned, swaying with the beat while another girl jumps around her, swinging her arms wildly.

"That's what's great about music," Laura says. "It's different for everyone, but it also brings people together. And that's what this scene is all about."

The crowd starts to thin around 4 a.m. Finally, at 4:00 AM the music stops, the lights are turned on and kids are pushed toward the door. "It's always such a disappointment when the party has to end," Josh says. "You would think six hours would go by really slowly, but I guess it's true what they say: time flies when you're having fun."

As the coupe steps outside, they immediately squat and shield their eyes, trying to block out the dim rays of dawn.

A party is such a shock," Laura says. "It's like a big slap in the face. All night long, you've been in another world. You dance and dance with only neon lights and lasers to light the room. And then all of a sudden you wake up at dawn and realize what was waiting for you at sunrise, your house, your job, your family. And then the real world is right in front of you again."

"You find a piece of the joy you felt the night before, but it slides off of you like a thin veil as all your responsibilities flood back to you. So you pick up the fliers and find the next party."
Changing Seasons
Denny McBride

Snowflakes feather down, gray frozen land a paler shade of winter sky.

Crisped leaves cascade, blanketting sleepy ground with motley red, gold, brown.

Silver raindrops slash, sun-drenched sky, lamb-ion winds waken vernal earth.

Molten sunbeams bathe, hammering all with heat while heavy eyelids droop.

Blue Bathed Goddess
Shelly Barger

Blue bathed goddess cracked her ribs open to sing her guts out. I wanna be like her.

Power voice punches out my belly, birthing dance, spreading fertile her golden eyes.

Blue bathed goddess make me ache to that deep-beat song. Sing, lift my dreams on blue bathed wings.

Blue crests on her mouth corner, cavernous knowing, groan erupting her mouth red opens the portal to a time before the ancestors.

Sons of Liberty
Lindsey Turner

They sit in dirty white skin, smoking pine-scented grass, watching animated violence, dreaming of a revolution while strumming battered guitars that never carry a tune.
Blue Raider with the $600 boobs

Rachel Parish

"She said, '50. But I only paid for her boobs.'"

Blue Margarita, she goes to MTSU—
that's the only reason why she makes so much money.

Women, stars crowd—
together the dazzling blonde on center stage dressed as a little girl, complete with pink tap shoes.

"I thought about getting a regular job, but I am sure it would be just as stressful."

Knee socks and a large candy sucker. There is no doubt that tonight's audience is the obvious crowd favorite.

She unties her pink ribbon, letting her hair cascade over her shoulder. A waved-up dollar bill starts flying toward the stage. One almost pegs her in the eye. She glances at the money and makes a better stick with his day job because he'd go broke in the NBA. The man replies they'd rather go broke than win. Dana looks back at his 

Dana puts back on her pink and white little girl outfit and begins to count the dollars she made while performing. It proves to be quite a challenging task, as she says that the people at the tip rail applaud in lust and fascination.

At the light dim, signaling the end of her performance, she turns and says, "Thank you!" in a voice as sweet and innocent as her costume. She smiles one more time before exiting the stage.

"God damn it!" exclaims Dana, bursting through the dressing room door with a snarl on her face and a look of anger.

She is described as having green eyes. She points to The Blonde.

"Hmph! If I had $6000 boobs I'd be on the cover of Sports Illustrated," she declares.

"Shut up, dingdong," laughs Nikki, a curiously thin girl with a pouty face and body that is illustrated more like this! The girls laugh at Nikki's teasing.

Obvioulsy to the cutting remarks, the girl onstage removes her pink and white top and drops in the audience.
Deja Vu.

I have a female customer who comes in every Saturday night and she always wants to talk and drink her whiskey...a little odd, I know, but she's really cool. She comes to the dancers home, and I mean, I love a pretty girl as much as the next man, but there's no way I would sleep with a custom-made male or female.

She says a lot of the dancers get caught up in the glamorous lifestyle and turn to other kinds of comforts when the money isn't right.

"Lemme tell you something," she says leaning close, "everything you ever heard about strippers is probably true. They're drunk, they do coke all the time, and they have problems like you wouldn't believe," she freely admits.

"Most of the girls at the Vu don't even have high school diplomas, let alone a college degree," Dana says she realizes that she's not perfect, but there's no way she'd get involved with hard drugs.

"I smoke marijuana before I go to work," she confides, "but that's not anything like popping a Valium or an 'X' (the drug ecstasy). I feel sorry for the girls that do that stuff, but at the same time I'm disgusted.

"I think that most of the girls at work hate me because I go to school," she sighs. "Sometimes they try and hurt my feelings by saying rude things about what I do in my lift...but screw 'em. It used to get me down until I realized that I don't go to work to make friends, I go to work to make money."

She is the first to admit that changing her appearance helped boost not only her self-confidence but her income as well.

"Strippping is very superficial," she says bluntly, "Guys like big tits and blonde hair. Always have, always will.

Like a talking calculator, she gives the math. Naturally a brunette, Dana went from being a 3AA making $850 a month to a 38D blonde with a monthly income of $4000.

"And I wouldn't change back for anything in the world," she says steely.

With all the late hours the club keeps, Dana had an enormous hard time trying to keep up with her schoolwork until she found a way to manage both.

"I work two day shifts, 11-7, and a double on Saturday. And I only take about nine or 10 class hours at a time," she says, "the many times she would fall asleep in class.

Dana's manager Keith says he respects the fact that she is going to school.

"I think it's phenomenal that she's trying to get her education, so we let her work those odd shifts. Plus, she has a really cute butt," he winks as Dana shaves at him.

"See why I love my job so much," she says and laughs.