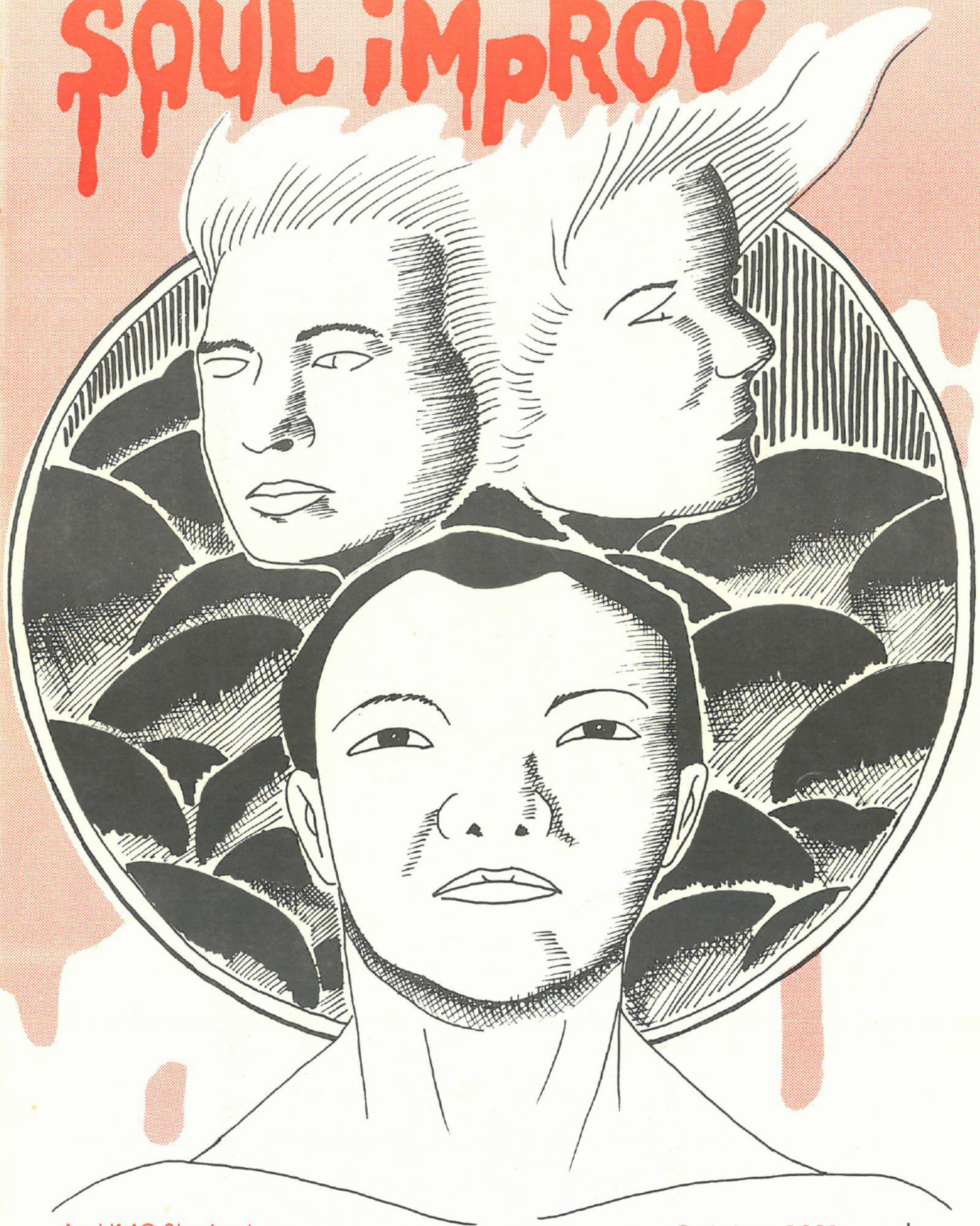


SAUL IMPROV



An HMC Student
Arts Publication

October, 1991

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SOL iMPrOV

ISSUE 1, VOL III

AN ARTS PUBLICATION OF HMC

OCTOBER 1991

Editor's Corner

Goooooooooooo morning, Harvey Mudd! It's an alleged tradition among SOL iMPrOV editors that the first issue requires an all-nighter, and I've come as close to nodding off in front of Apollo (one of the Macs in the Parsons lab), without drooling over the keyboard, as I can.

This issue marks the start of our third year as HMC's artistic and literary voice (excepting the long-awaited fourth issue of iMPrOV from the creative genius of Greg Levin). It's my hope that more of you will help us fill our pages with innovative art and writing.

You don't need to be a certified *artiste* or a literary master to be creative—all you need is a little time (yes, folks, you *can* find time) and a little inspiration! If you've read through past issues of SOL iMPrOV and said to yourself, "I could do better than that," here's your chance. All we ask is that you label your work with your name, or provide us with your name and campus extension on a separate sheet of

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paper, Post-it, or whatever.

Back to this issue. We've got two eerie stories lined up for you, just in time for Halloween, as well as our usual mix of art and poetry—some following our ghoulish theme, some not. Benis Babusis wrote about his weird experience in the Canadian wilderness, while Joelle Cowen (an HMC alum) left us with a pretty... er, interesting story of one man's strange fantasy. Melissa Aczon, Scott Hampton, Dave Nash, and Scott Sullivan gave us succinct words of expres-

sion in their poetry, and artists Amy Crook and Willam Washington provided us with some visual poetry as well.

If you have any questions, comments, or criticisms—both negative and positive—let any staff member know (we're all listed on the back cover), or call me at x4771.

As a final note, I'd like to congratulate the entire staff of SOL iMPrOV for putting their enthusiasm and interest into this issue—the fact that we've managed to meet our first deadline ever (and the pizzas that were promised us by Corey Liu) is a great accomplishment, since it seems that most Mudders tend to be too busy to do anything but study. I'd also like to thank the Ghosts of iMPrOV's past (Greg Levin and Jack Houg) for giving a clueless non-artist some guidance and advice on putting together his first issue.

Enjoy!

Jonathan



A BRUSH WITH THE

by Benis Babusis

Not long ago a friend asked me, out of curiosity, what my most terrifying experience had been. The question did not surprise me so much as the way one particular experience flashed before my eyes. In an instant it all came back to me in vivid detail. As I recollected the incident, a slight, but unmistakable shiver of fear crept up my spine.

I was 12 when it happened; I still remember the day, July 23, 1983. My parents, my older brother and I were on a camping trip to Alberta, Canada at the time. We had been traveling all day and were looking forward to stopping in Calgary at the home of Kostas Astravas, one of my father's good friends.

Kostas was a fascinating character. Although in his mid-sixties, he still had that rugged, adventuresome spirit that longed for excitement. He was complete with a pot-belly, white beard, hearty laugh, and an assortment of eccentricities. Kostas, also Lithuanian, was overjoyed to see my father again after so many years, and conversation between them naturally drifted to stories of the "good old days" when they

used to go camping together. Kostas mentioned that he had bought a cabin and several acres of forest outside Calgary. We asked him a little about it, and before long he was excitedly proposing that all of us go out there to spend the night. Seeing his enthusiasm, we could hardly say no.

We left Calgary and began following Kostas, who was driving ahead in his Jeep, deeper and deeper into the vast Canadian wilderness. The roads became narrower and fewer until we found ourselves driving slowly down a dirt road to the edge of his land. By this time the sun had already set, and the reddish glow still in the sky illuminated the trees around us eerily. We left our van on the road and carried our things about 100 yards down a dark path to the cabin.

Kostas had mentioned that the place was "primitive," but we did not exactly expect what lay before us. It was a genuine log cabin, having two rooms, no running water, no electricity, and no toilets. Nevertheless, the sky was getting quite dark so we were eager to pile in. We

sat down in one of the rooms that was dimly lit by a lantern.

Kostas started conversation by recounting some of his many experiences in this part of the country. He told us how he discovered the hard way that honking at a moose was not the best way to get it off the road. The moose had charged his Jeep, tearing off the hood and destroying the radiator with its antlers. Another time, on a hunting trip, he was followed by a grizzly bear for three days.

My parents had their own stories to tell. They recollected the time, years ago, when they stayed alone in an empty hostel not far away in Banff National Park. Around two in the morning they began hearing a heavy, deep sighing right outside their cabin window. It sounded so eerie, so human-like, that they listened for three hours without moving, until it suddenly went away. They described the sound they heard to forest rangers the next day, but they were also puzzled as to what it could have been.

Several more stories were exchanged until we all agreed that it was time to retire. I immediately

FACE OF TERROR

began to look for my toothbrush. My mother had spent years drilling into me the importance of brushing my teeth; I simply could not sleep without going through this nightly ritual. I searched and searched, but after five minutes I still had not found my toothbrush. I decided that I must have left it in the van. I really did not feel like walking all the way out to the van—because I was so tired—but it was either that or having bacteria eat away at my teeth all night long.

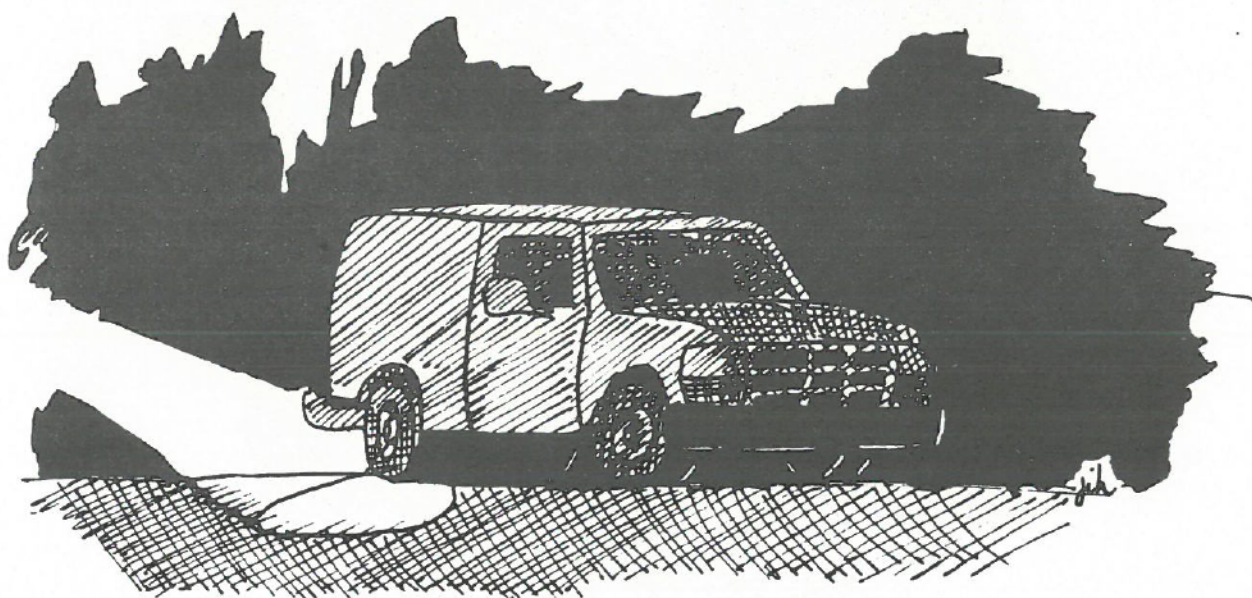
I grabbed a flashlight and walked out into the darkness of the surrounding forest. As I slowly moved along my eyes darted back and forth, closely following the flash-

light beam. The forest was so thick here that I could not see any of the sky above me. I began thinking of what it would be like to turn off the flashlight, just for a moment, to see how dark it really was. I was annoyed at these thoughts, but I just could not resist.

I stopped dead in my tracks, intently listening for some sound, any sound. I heard none—the night was completely still. Suddenly, with the flip of a switch, I was surrounded by utter blackness. I stood unmoving, as if waiting for something to happen. I am not sure why, but turning the light back on now seemed a worse prospect than turning it off. I just needed an excuse, some

reason to move, but everything remained quiet—much too quiet. My rational mind finally took over, and I suddenly clicked on the flashlight. But just as I did, I heard, or thought I heard, the sound of a twig snapping in the distance. My light probed the forest all around me, but I could see nothing but trees. I continued to the van cautiously.

When I reached the van, I shined a beam of light through the windshield and saw that the two front seats were empty. I went around to the side door, opened it, and stepped inside. I flipped a switch and the interior flooded with light; I quickly shut the door behind me. I tried to look out



through a window, but I could see nothing except my own reflection. The windows were coated with reflective plastic so that no one could see in during the day. At night, however, it became easy to see in and very difficult to see out. The windows made me feel queasy.

I turned around and fumbled through the closet in search of my toothbrush; I knew it had to be there. As I looked, I heard a noise behind me. It sounded like the door had creaked slightly, as if something were leaning against it from the outside. A shiver tingled across my skin, up

my arms to the hairs on the back of my neck. I slowly turned around, staring at the window, but I couldn't see out because of the reflective film. Straining to see something, I brought my head closer to the window. Suddenly, I saw it: a faint, but unmistakable, outline of a grotesque-looking face pressed against the window—no more than a few inches from me. Upon recognition of what I was staring at—a horrible, motionless, inhuman face—I was gripped by sheer terror. For a moment every muscle, every nerve in my body went mad. I yelled, unlike I had ever done

before, and my right hand jumped out uncontrollably, hitting the window where the face still stared blankly at me. I find it impossible to fully describe the appearance of the face, even though the image is so engraved in my mind. Words simply cannot do justice to what I saw.

Paralyzed with fear, I stood there in a daze with my mouth hanging limply open, when suddenly the door of the van swung open, and there before me stood my brother. . . who had also forgotten his toothbrush. ■



Dogs in the Night

by Scott Sullivan

The band of coyotes
scream in the night
oblivious to all but reality
As always
The domesticated dog
runs in mock haste
to the edge
And raises its
foreign and trained voice
to the moon's melody
feeling for a magnet
the ecstasy of the wild
before it returns
bravely to its porch
and back to its troubled dreams.



C. Stein
Oct. 91

Phantasm

by Dave Nash

Stalking on the edge
of your perception,
a silently brooding,
perplexing presence
approaches

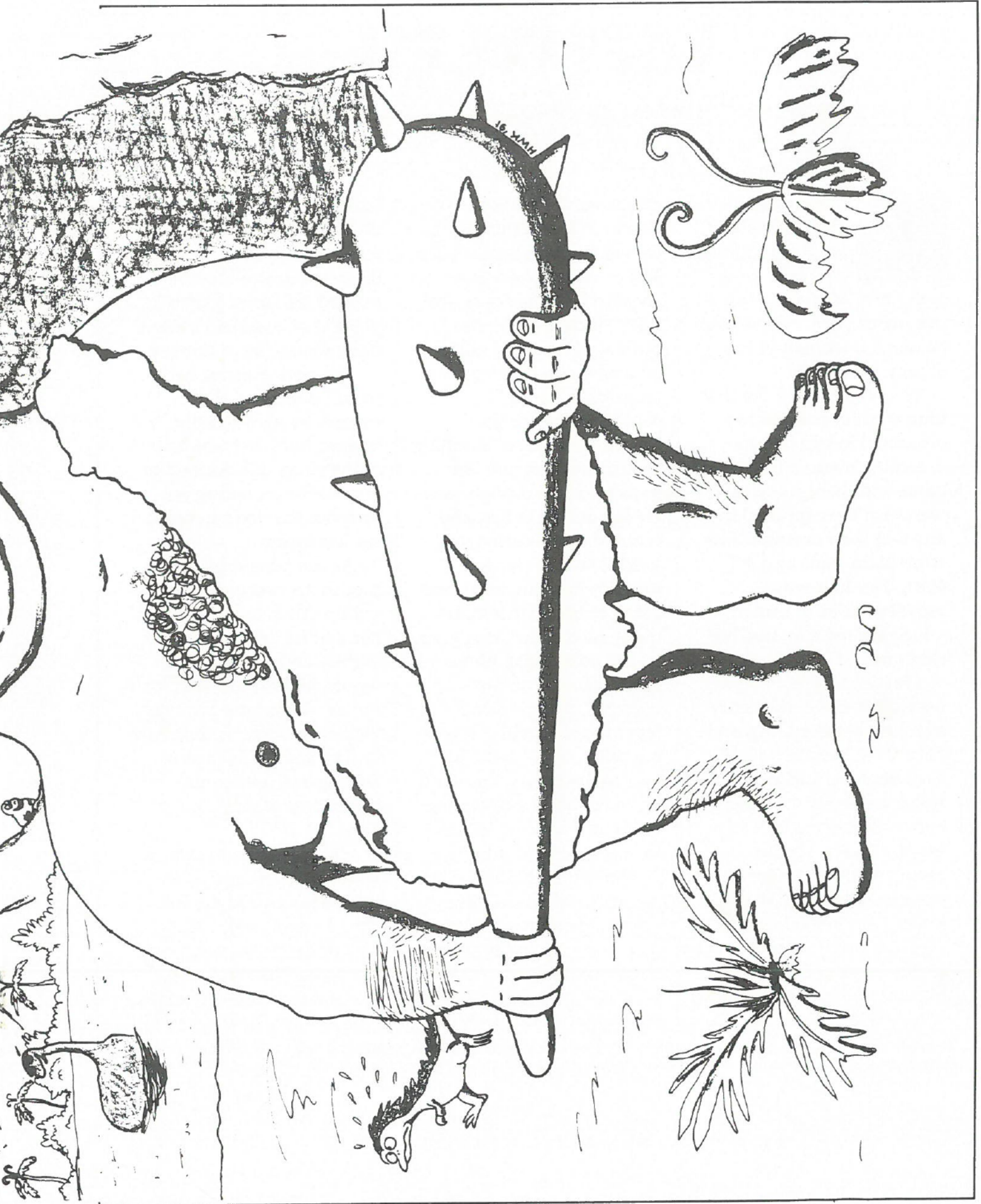
A shimmering figure,
moving in quicksilver flickers
of color — now white, now black
flecked with gold —
always to match his
environment
does he match to join,
or to hide

He sees through you
his gaze held by the spells from afar
bound by the distant peaks
his castellated cathedrals, altars for awe
and the stars
immensely ancient,
yet shy, beacons,
speaking softly across the eons.

Hoi Hon Salutes *

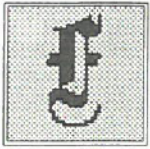
Professor Cave-man





UNTITLED

By Joelle Cowen



February 14, 1991, was the most significant day in Jason's entire life. It marked the day, three years ago, when he met the woman of his dreams—literally.

He remembered the first time she had entered his dreams. He had begun dreaming about a baseball game and there she was. She wasn't exceptional in any way, just average. She wore plain jeans and a T-shirt. Her hair was a mousey shade of brown which almost matched her skin tone.

He had only noticed her because she was suddenly standing between him and Babe Ruth, whom he had been about to strike out. He had considered winding up and releasing the ball anyway but wasn't quite certain of the rules for dreams. Although the ball might have passed right through her, he didn't want to risk hurting her. After all, he had supposed, she was now a guest in his dream and should be treated as such.

"Excuse me," he had squeaked and then cleared his throat, "Miss, could you

please move? I have him down...." But at this point, he had stopped because she had turned toward him. She had lifted her eyes and suddenly her perfectly ordinary being had taken on a new aspect. Her eyes were solid black. He couldn't even see the whites, or much of anything else, in fact, because her gaze held him thoughtless. He felt drawn to her, and reached out his arms to touch her. He stepped towards her, but, as he was going to experience every night, he couldn't reach her.

But on this day, three years ago, he had just entered Grimm's Drug Store to get a refill of sleeping pills. As he made his way to the back of the store, he gazed up and down the aisles as if he were looking for something to purchase.

She was so non-descript he probably would have never noticed her—except that, as he looked back over his shoulder at the shampooos, she glanced up and their eyes passed over each other's in that fleeting way people's sometimes do. He turned away quickly and broke out into the same cold sweat that disturbed

his sleep nightly, despite the pills. He tried to walk away, to forget, to convince himself that it wasn't her. Instead, he stood rooted in place as she walked passed him toward the pharmacy.

The clerk handed her a prescription and she turned, headed straight toward him, on her way out of the store. He decided to bow his head, letting her pass out the door, never to see her again.

As she passed by, his mouth opened of its own volition to greet her. It told her that he dreamed of her nightly and asked if she would please meet him for dinner. This time her eyes locked into his, holding him as they did in his dreams. She agreed, telling him where and when to meet her.

He understood as much about why she agreed to meet a total stranger for dinner, who was at best a dribbling idiot, at worst a homicidal lunatic, as he understood why she came home with him that night and stayed for the past three years. The only things he did know about her were her name, Susan, her age, 24, and that she

had been born in the Midwest and would rather he stopped asking her questions and get on with bedding her. He stopped questioning her bizarre behavior for fear that he would realize she was impossible. This revelation would expose the paradox and cause her to vanish in his waking life, only to haunt him again in his dreams.

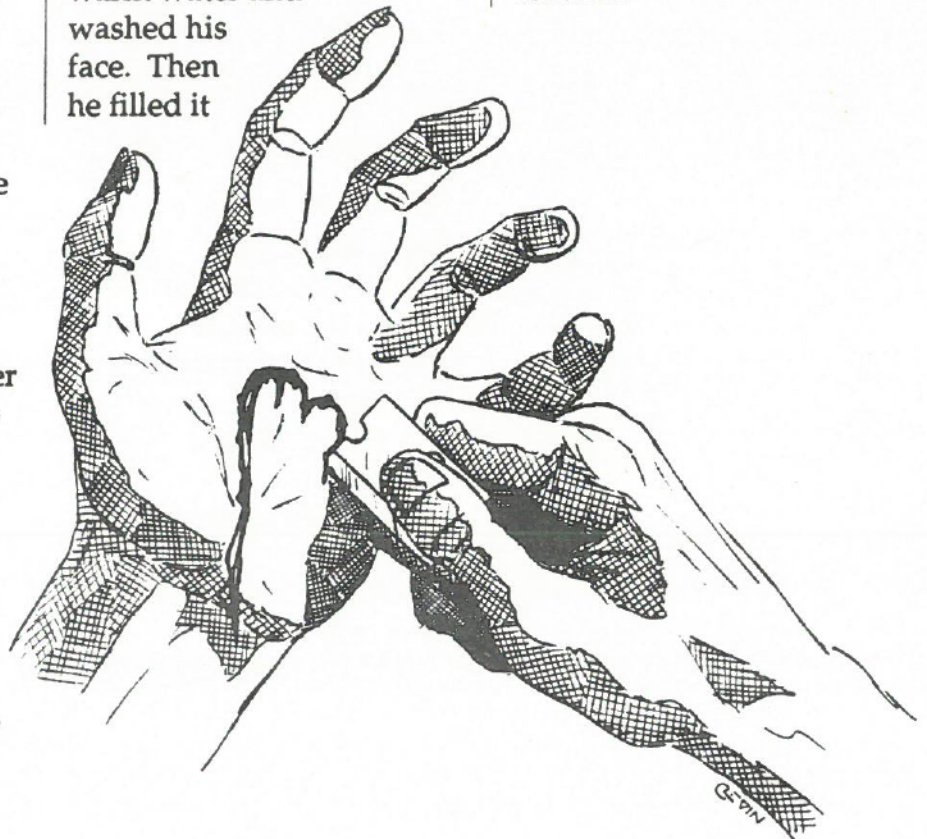
On this Valentine morning, however, she spoke to him as he got up for work. "I'll be going out today," she said. He found this news particularly baffling because in the last three years he had never seen her outside of his apartment. And he had never been in his apartment when she wasn't there. When he got up in the morning, she would stay in bed and watch him until he walked out the door. When he returned in the evening she would be standing at the door waiting for him. She never prepared dinner or cleaned up the mess in his house, but she never left her own mess, either. Come to think of it, which he'd rather not, he'd never seen her eat, drink, or even urinate. "Where are you going?" he asked. "What time will you be back?" "Nowhere, never," she replied, and those were the last words he heard from her. She picked up the

small case that he had never seen her open, and walked out the door.

He stood for a long time and then sat. He called his secretary at work and told her he was sick and wouldn't be in today. He almost crashed the plane he was flying when he realized the small speck on the horizon was her, perched on a cloud. After he finally managed to recover, he steered towards her. As he passed he leaped from the plane, but in the familiar pattern he couldn't reach her.

He woke up in a cold sweat. Slowly he pulled himself up to stand. He dragged his feet one after the other into the bathroom. He filled the sink with warm water and washed his face. Then he filled it

again with cold water and splashed it over his face. He opened the medicine cabinet and saw the bottle of sleeping pills, never opened. He reached behind it and pulled out the straight razor he had bought so many years ago, never used because he preferred an electric razor. Slowly he drew the razor across his palm in the symbol the rest of the world thought of on this day. He watched the bright red swelling from the shallow cut and for the first time in his life he felt free. He laughed and carved out the symbol of his freedom. He watched as the long straight cuts leaked his existence to the floor and knew that, at last, he was free from her forever. ■



Four

by Scott Hampton

With four minutes away from the press of this day
I would bloom a doublet
calm my mind
and think of you

With four hours away from the tides of the sea
I could still my regret
write one poem
and dream in peace

With four days far away from the stench of man
I would soar desert winds
finish these stories
and forgive myself

With four years away – untrammelled and free
I would make my new skin
discard my pens
and forget my names

Duel

by Melissa Aczon

Starlight, starbright
I fall into darkness
First star I see tonight
But in the distance
I wish I may
A flicker of light
I wish I might
Struggles to be seen
Have the wish
But only for a moment
I wish tonight.
And it's darkness once more.

The Insider's Guide to SOL iMpROV

by Mike Yuan

SOL iMpROV editor recently-turned emeritus **Greg Levin '92** recalls that he first took an interest in art by watching his cousin draw superheroes. "I decided to try it," he says, "and that's all I drew for ten years." Greg adds that he will continue the "Blood of Eagles", but "probably not this semester," and that he is always looking for fans of John Denver and Beauty and the Beast.

Cliff "Cliffie" Stein '92, plans on going into the field of computer graphics after graduation. He hails from Sacramento, California, and declares that the Kings will make it to the NBA play-offs, "eventually". The L.A. Kings? Says he, "I don't like hockey."

Our beloved founder **Jack Houg '92** credits improvement in his artistic skills to "getting involved with SOL iMpROV and knowing Greg." He encourages everybody, especially freshmen and sophomores, to be a part of and continue the publication after he retires. Also, Jack is proud that SOL iMpROV came before the 5-college arts magazine,

"whatever its name is."

Contrary to popular belief, chemistry major **Benis Babusis '92** has "never taken an art class." Plans for the future include going into medicine; in the meantime, he enjoys photography, mountain climbing, philosophy, and playing both the piano and the accordion.

Hoiwon Kim '92, co-president of Seventh and satirical centerfold artist in residence, is an engineering major planning on graduate school "wherever [he] gets into." When asked about his hobbies, he states matter-of-factly, "I was forced to give up hobbies since I came here."

Responding to a question about his inspiration for the poem "Four", **Scott Hampton '94** says that he is not sure, because he spends "anywhere from a half to two-and-a-half hours writing each day." According to Scott, other hobbies include just about everything, including blacksmithing.

In addition to singing in the Claremont Colleges Concert Choir, deeply-tanned Hawaiian **Melissa**

Aczon '93 likes to play volleyball, and may join the pro beach circuit in twenty years if she's still up to it. A math major, **Melissa** will either go to graduate school or get a job after Harvey Mudd, maybe "both at the same time."

David Nash '92 relates that he was "inspired to write 'Phantasm' after spending a beautiful night in the wildernesses of California. . . Several of my active interests include reading, astronomy, the occasional odd writing project, and general weirdness."

Tuscon, Arizona is home to **William Washington '95**, which he describes as having "beautiful sunsets, mountains, desert, and clean air." His work of art, which appears in this issue, began as an extra-credit project in high school, and continued as he became more and more involved with the detail. "It took a long time," he says.

A secondary source reports that **Amy Crook '95** is beginning to experiment with art on glass, although Frosh Chem. gives her

Please see Page 15



CONTRIBUTORS

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Melissa Ayon

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Michael Z

David Neal

GREG LEVIN

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Willy Washington
Scott Sullivan
David Levin

INSIDER: Continued from Page 13

plenty of opportunity to continue art on paper. Our nameless source, ex-editor Greg Levin, also cautions people who get close to her to "watch out. She bites."

Scott Sullivan '94 did not have the chance to contribute information about himself at press time. Friends tell that he is very much involved in theater and comes from a farm in San Diego, where he and his family raise avocados and prize pigs.

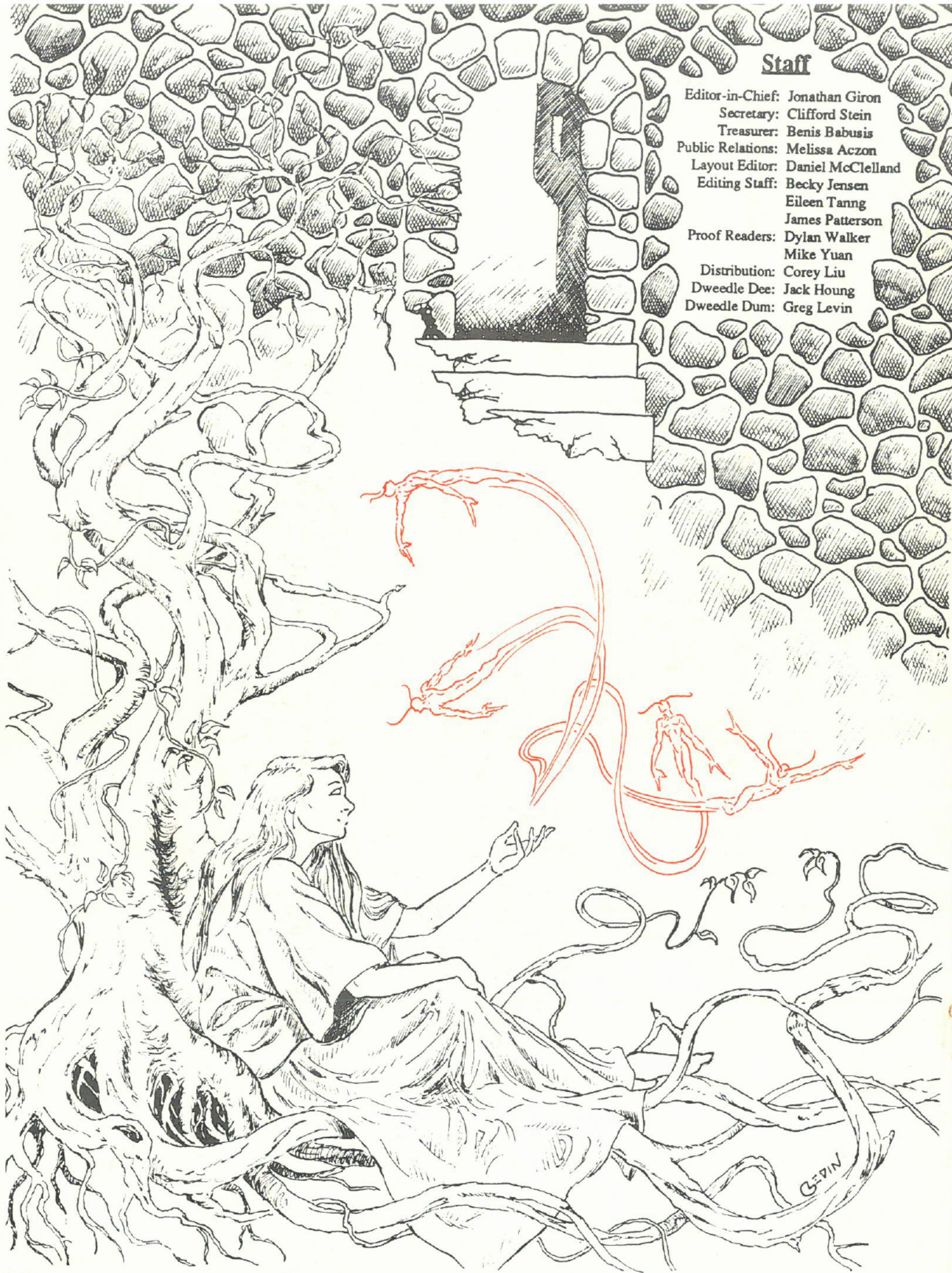
Unfortunately, Joelle Cowen '90 could not be reached for comment; rumor has it that she is in Tennessee enjoying her time away from Harvey Mudd.

What It Is!

SOL iMPROV is a periodic publication that seeks to complement one of the main purposes of Harvey Mudd College as stated in the Preamble of the Student Handbook: "to emphasize an understanding of the human purposes and aspirations their knowledge can serve." To this end, SOL iMPROV promotes the process of self-expression by providing a forum for artists, both literary and visual, in which they can explore, express, and discuss their creativity, emotions, and philosophies. SOL iMPROV is also an ongoing process, and for this reason, we depend on your input to continue our publication. If you have any creativity that you would like to see published, or if you have any suggestions, comments, or criticisms about SOL iMPROV, please don't hesitate to contact us—through Jonathan Giron at x4771 or Cliff Stein at x4744. We have a jarthur account (improv@jarthur) for your convenience, and appreciate your input in all its forms.

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GIRON