

SOL in pRov



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SOL iMpROV

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The Greditor Speaks

Hello, goodbye.

For those of you who are wondering how we got an issue out so fast this year, well, you overestimate me. This is, in fact, last year's fourth issue, which, for various reasons (mostly my fault), didn't quite make it on time. But we're here now, and we'll still be doing the four issues regularly scheduled for this year. Okay?

Since, traditionally, I'm required to fill up this page, let me tell you about my contribution to this issue which, if it's ever finished, will be the most extensive creation ever seen in this publication. I wanted to do a story somewhere between a comic book and an illustrated story, in a format not unlike Matt Wagner's Devil by the Deed. I'm not a writer, so for awhile I talked to other people about taking care of that end of things for me. But eventually, I decided to use a creation myth I'd written for a class several years ago, for several reasons. One, if

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I was going to be putting this much effort into something (so far, each page has taken about 20 hours), I kinda wanted it to be all my own. Also, this myth I'd written was more than just a story. In some small way, it was a statement about some things that I feel very strongly about, and if I was going to be putting this much effort into something, I wanted it to mean something to me. What appears in this issue was already

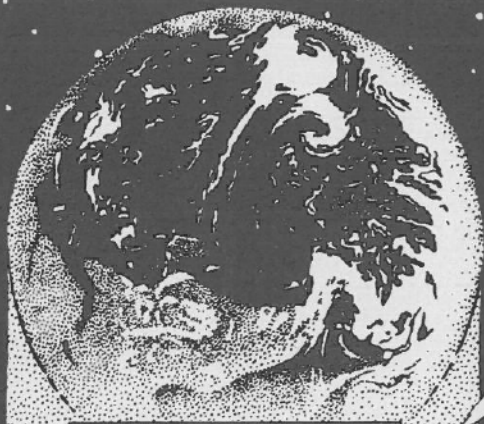
finished by the end of last year, and I'd planned to do lots more over the summer.

But something got in the way. For the first time in my life, I felt a very strong artistic need to create. My "art" has always been a technical process for me, and something I've done mostly because I could (and because it kept me awake in class). I derived some pleasure from it, but in the past, the majority of my work was produced because there was a need for it (like this publication, or a t-shirt, etc), especially here at Mudd. However, over the last year, I have become enchanted with the tv show "Beauty and the Beast," and this summer, when I should have been working on "The Blood of Eagles," all I wanted to draw, in fact, all I could draw, were Catherine and Vincent. For the first time, I felt truly compelled to create art. I've done three works so far, and they are by far my three finest creations to date.

please see page 12



THE BLOOD OF EAGLES



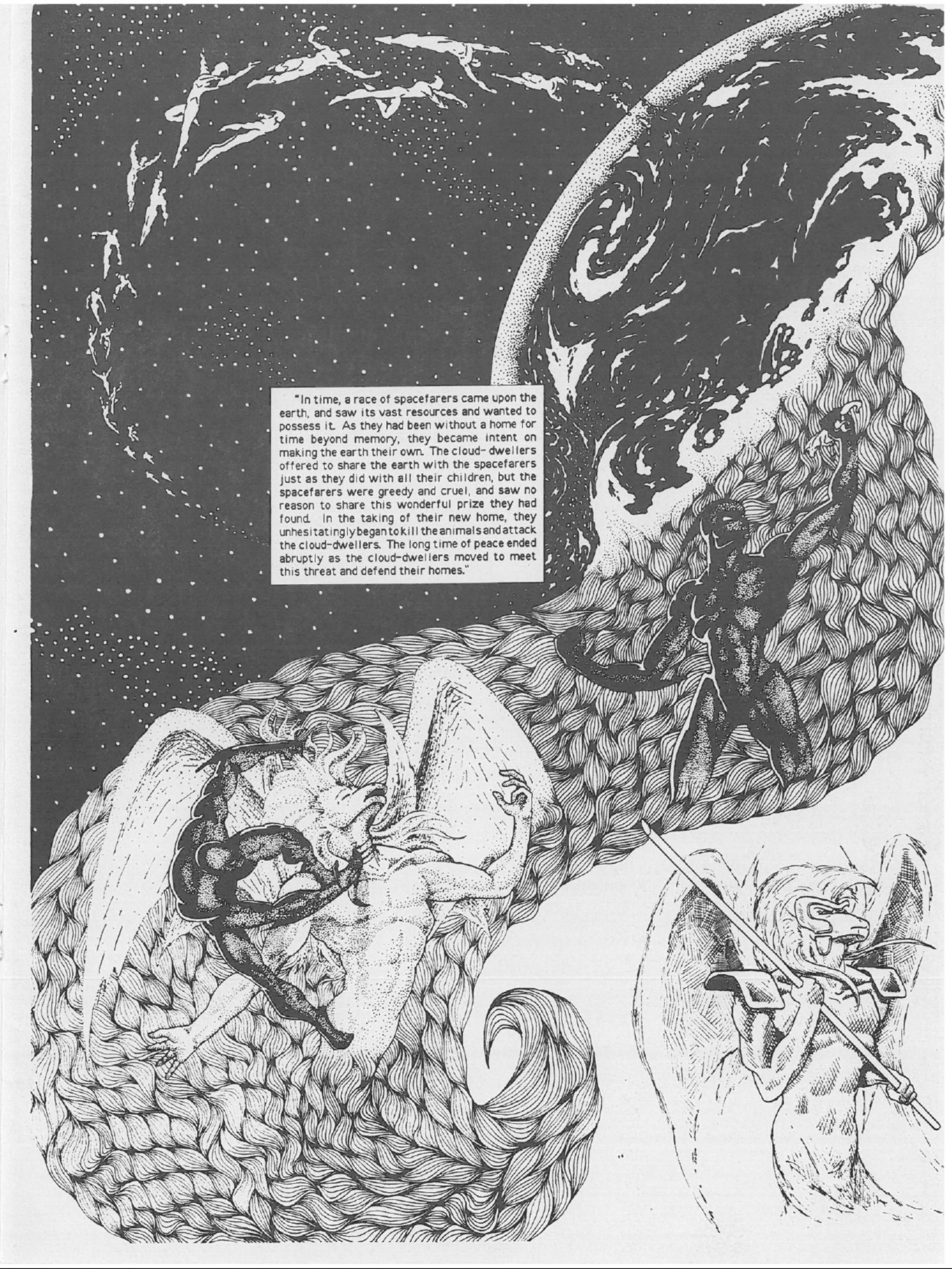
"In the days before man, when the earth was still green and pure rain fell from the sky, there was an ancient race of cloud-dwellers. They were a wise and peaceful people, and, as we understand the word, immortal."



"Once each year, however, one among their number would be chosen, and would willingly give its life in the great ceremony. There was no sadness as the chosen one approached the sacred mountain to begin the ritual that would end its earthly life. For after its painless death, the body of the cloud-dweller would fall gently to earth, and from this body would arise a new race of animals, which would collectively carry the spirit of the one who gave them life."



"So it was, over the course of many long years, that the earth came to be the home of a great number of creatures. Each new race would take its place in the kingdom of animals, while the cloud-dwellers watched over their children from above. It was a time of great peace and order."



"In time, a race of spacefarers came upon the earth, and saw its vast resources and wanted to possess it. As they had been without a home for time beyond memory, they became intent on making the earth their own. The cloud-dwellers offered to share the earth with the spacefarers just as they did with all their children, but the spacefarers were greedy and cruel, and saw no reason to share this wonderful prize they had found. In the taking of their new home, they unhesitatingly began to kill the animals and attack the cloud-dwellers. The long time of peace ended abruptly as the cloud-dwellers moved to meet this threat and defend their homes."

Not the Economic System, Futilism!

by Daniel McClelland

I reread the letter, dumbfounded. "We cordially invite you to the seventy-fifth annual Banquet of Honor in honor of the exalted Richard the Big, third of that name, on the twenty-third of this month..."

I rechecked the envelope, and my name still rested there. Of course, I should have realized that really important messages were sent by mail, and this was really important. Common mail was sent electronically, quickly and impersonally. The hand-delivered mail was meticulously and delicately handled by trained bureaucrats. This explained the obvious mistake. Why would anyone invite an ordinary commoner who slaved away in the factories to the social event of the year, attended by the Big One himself? Besides, it was

the twenty-third, the banquet was tonight, and I did not have a thing to wear—that anyone would approve of, that is.

Not that it mattered, I suppose. Richard the Big would probably consider my absence as a prick to his inflated ego, and I would be the one deflated. On the bright side, if I did attend, I could easily hold it over the rest of the slob at work that I had rubbed noses with the social elite. Katrina would be vehemently jealous, and she might even be impressed to the point of actual respect. Money was a problem, however, but I would not be admitted without proper attire.

I activated the vid-phone and called Katrina; she always has a few credits lying about.

"Sprak, what do you want, Alex?"

Her voice hit me like ice water. "Uh, I was just wondering-- well, I need to borrow a couple of credits."

"No. Goodbye."

"Wait, please! I've been invited to this party and I need--"

"A party, you?" Her laugh was incredulous. "Who'd invite you to a party?"

"Richard the Big," I replied, hoping she'd be too shocked to refuse.

"Right. What have you been smoking, Alex?" She refused to blink.

"I'm serious, though I don't believe it myself." I put the letter's seal up to the screen. She was silent for a moment.

"Only if you take me."

"Not a chance."

"You need the money."

"But not with you attached. I'll find something myself."

"Alex Keller, they'd shoot you if you came within one-hundred

steps of that party in your rags."

Katrina had a valid point. It was either death or her. Death could be quick.... "All right, I'll pick you up at seven."

Katrina transferred fifty credits to my card and hung up. I phoned in an order for a cheap synth-suit for only forty-five credits, leaving us some money for public transportation to the party.

We took Katrina's car.

* * *

The fiver was handy in shutting up the doorman, who gawked blatantly at our attempt at sophistication and gaudy attire. At that point I wanted to flee, but Katrina's death-grip on my wrist kept my wits about me.

Interior decor is not my forte, but it was stunningly apparent that the decorator of the banquet hall had a doctorate in something. Silken streamers glided from wall to wall, enhancing the romantic,

surrealistic, and baroque artwork. Crystal mountains of chandeliers illuminated the room, spreading dazzling colors dancing amongst the crowd. An impressive crowd it was, too. Important figures to the tabloids slipped about, dodging cameras and hounding the truly important. Shrubbery dotted the landscape, masking the activities of bodyguards and unguarded bodies. This was truly the social elite.

"Oh Alex, isn't this exciting?" Had I been listening, I would have enjoyed the honest excitement and pride in Katrina's voice, but another highlight had snagged my attention: Richard the Big. The floor yielded to his bountiful body, flanked on all sides by his cabinet: security, PR men, ladies, gophers, and the occasional scapegoat. Hologrid crews quickly gravitated towards his station at the head of the hall, preparing lights and microphones. Light from the network..

of harnessed electricity gave Richard's head an angelic glow, but an attentive cabinet member removed the glow dexterously with powder.

With a voice deeper than his personality he said, "Esteemed members of society, I welcome you to the seventy-fifth annual Banquet of Honor. This collage of people represents the collective genius of our great nation, established on the values and morals we practice today." A gasp of ecstasy emerged from a floral arrangement near the back. "Our society has reached a peak in the mountains of progress. We all heartily enjoy the benefits of those who worked for, excuse me, before us." A murmur of acknowledgement swept through the crowd. "Only one country dares to challenge the divine right of our nation. We are engaged in a war of nerves with this evil empire, which plots against our status as

HOLLYWOOD SALUTES

"The Ever Adorable"

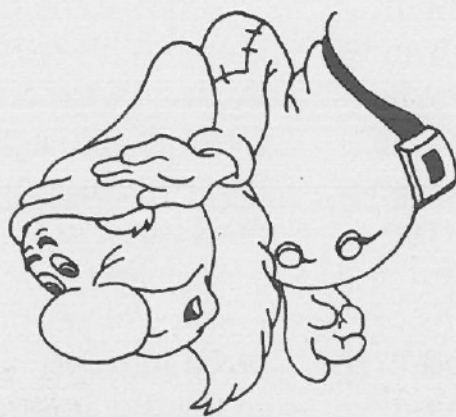
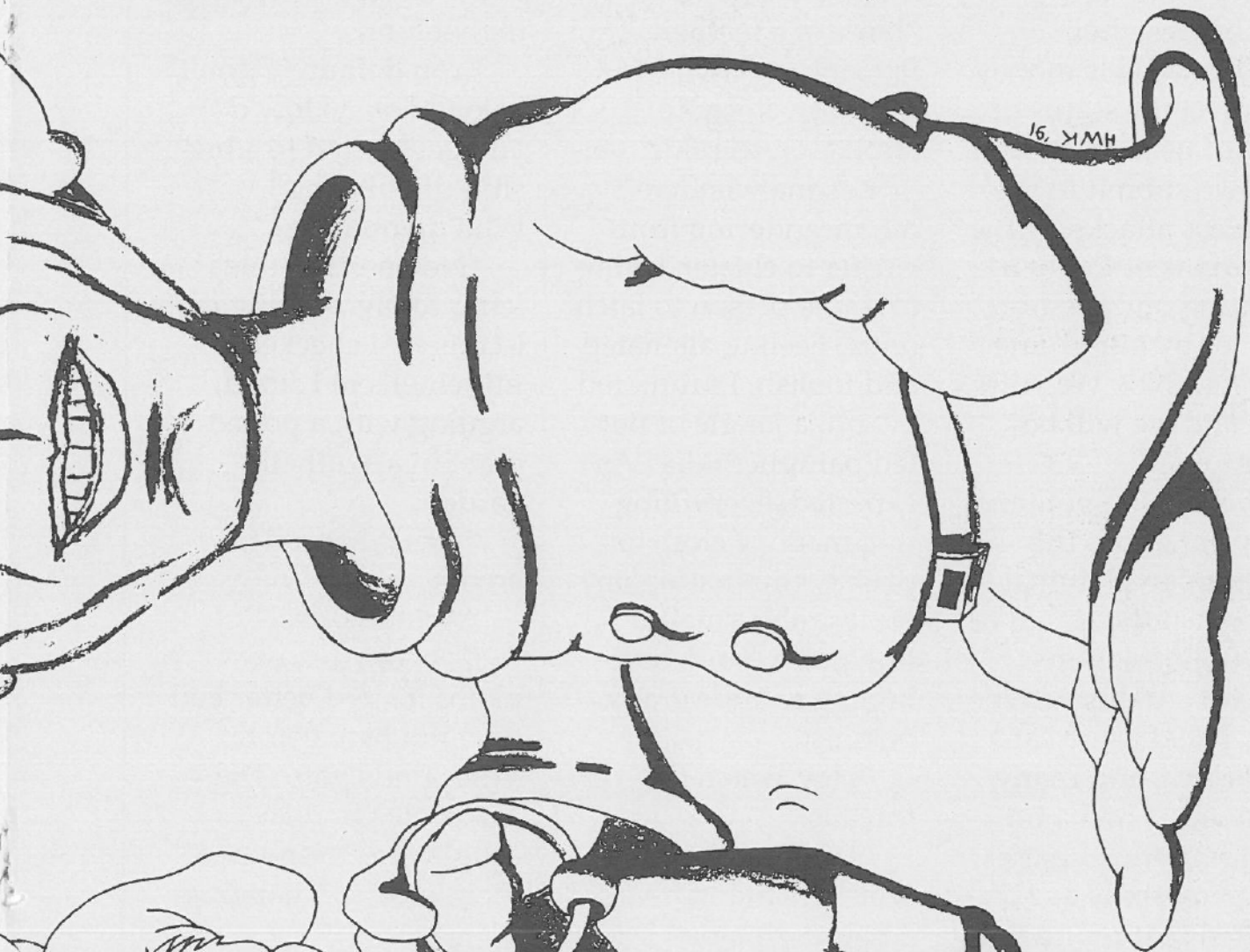
Dean

Caffeto

&

The Six
Midgets





citizens. Yet we will fight for our stature, we will fight until the last prole lies dead in the street. Daraku will not concede, though the enemy is powerful and cunning. Millions of Darakunians died in the Futility Wars, using their bodies, their blood, and their money to protect the status of those of us in this room. Dare we submit to the relentless attacks by the Barbarians of Rakuen, forfeiting our positions paid for by our young fighters? No! We will fight and we will be victorious!!"

The crowd spontaneously burst into the Darakunian National Anthem at the signal of the public relations director. An attractive model held a cue card off camera, and many hummed. I had a tingling sensation spark down my spine as I realized that millions of Darakunians were cheering along across the continent, watching our every move. I checked to see if my tie was straight.

Richard the Big mopped his forehead, mixing sweat and makeup into a proto-glycerol compound, while a band struck up a nameless tune. Groups of people clustered together, alluding to the old axiom of "birds of a feather flocking together," but in reality, closer to leeches on steroids.

Katrina wandered off, meandering from cluster to cluster, trying to find a person to latch onto. Feeling alienated and foolish, I sauntered over to a jungle of potted paraphernalia. As expected, everything was made of cloth or plastic, eliminating any undesirable smells. I fingered a dandelion, hoping to appear as a botanist.

"Hey, watch the threads!"

"Huh, what?" I whirled around, fearing a bouncer named Vince.

"You heard me, let go of my petals."

I turned back to the plant, bewildered. I thought I saw a dandelion sneering at me; it

was. "What in sprak's name are you?"

"I'm a Verbally Functional Flower designed to entertain sorry saps like you at parties where you definitely don't fit in."

I gaped. The dandelion was condescendingly blunt.

"You definitely don't belong here. How'd you get invited to a big shin-dig like this? Who'd you mug?"

"No one! I got this letter today, inviting me to this--" I checked myself. Here I stood, arguing with a potted plant in a synthetic garden.

"Was it hand-delivered?"

"Actually, yes."

"Oh, ok, that explains it. You better bail on outta here before Vince finds you. The last prole the man caught was found two days later, still hanging by his tes--"

The wall next to me exploded, creating a shock wave that showered the hall with glittering crystal and other debris. I landed be-

tween two massive pillars. As my eyes refocused, the pillars gradually became two massive legs attached to an even larger torso. Richard the Big's nickname popped into my head.

"Sprak, talk about a death grip, you practically ripped my fiber optics out of their sockets." I still held on to the dandelion.

I scrambled to my feet, apologizing profusely for disturbing his eminence's privates-- er, his party! Richard's sweaty face was covered with dust and bits of crystal from the shattered chandeliers; it resembled icebergs in an ocean of glycerine. Richard's red face suddenly paled, as he sucked his jowls into the enormous cavity of his mouth.

I slowly turned, the name Vince echoing in the back of my brain. Instead, I looked down a barrel the size of a small pachyderm.

"Nobody move, or the Big One gets it!" He gestured at my nose

with his gun. "You, move outta the way!" I obligingly stepped back, trying to ignore nature taking its course. As I did, my foot unerringly landed on the remains of a synthetic chrysanthemum. It slid forward, and I fell back finally releasing the dandelion into the would-be assassin's nose. Time seemed to slow as I collapsed and the dandelion's pot fragmented into tiny pieces, much to the dismay of the wailing dandelion. I felt the ground race towards my skull, and at the finish line the lights went out.

* * *

"Alex, are you all right?" Katrina's face loomed over me, fuzzy and rippling like water, with which I was soaked. "You just saved Richard the Big's life. You're a hero!" As if on cue (it was) the crowd encircling me cheered, much to the delight of holovid sponsors. Richard's face appeared, and I felt a

hand shaking mine violently and a distant voice thanking me for something. In the background, a whining voice complained about naked roots.

* * *

The next few weeks became a blur. I traveled from holovid station to holovid station, answering personal questions pertaining to my nonexistent love life, chemical consumption outside of water, and conversations with dead artists. Four documentaries and sixteen dramatizations followed, one of which depicted me as a sex-driven superhero who makes love to Richard's wife just minutes before I save his life by catching a bullet with my navel. In time, the ratings plateaued, and my popularity lost out to a quartet of mutated slugs armed with boomerangs, fighting a never-ending battle with the king of salted oat bran crackers.

My life was once again thrown into a

blender set on puree
when the warlord of the
Daraku Internal Security Team Of Rhetoric
Teachings— but that
would be the next chapter.
■

con't from inside cover...

Why am I telling you all
this? I don't know... Jack
always talked about art, so I
figured I'd give it one try
before I left. In any case, I'll
hopefully get "Blood" done
sometime this year. But no
promises.

And that's that. It's been
fun, and now I'm departing
to join Jack in the graveyard
of the ghosts of iMpROVs
past. Jonathan Giron will
be taking my place, so I
expect that things'll just
keep getting better.

Before I go, I'd like to
give a very special thanks
to Raul Andrade (Corin's
father), who donated the
cost of this entire issue.

GREG
LEVIN

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ISSUE HEREBY RETAIN ALL
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SOL iMpROV.

The Rose

by Eileen Tanng

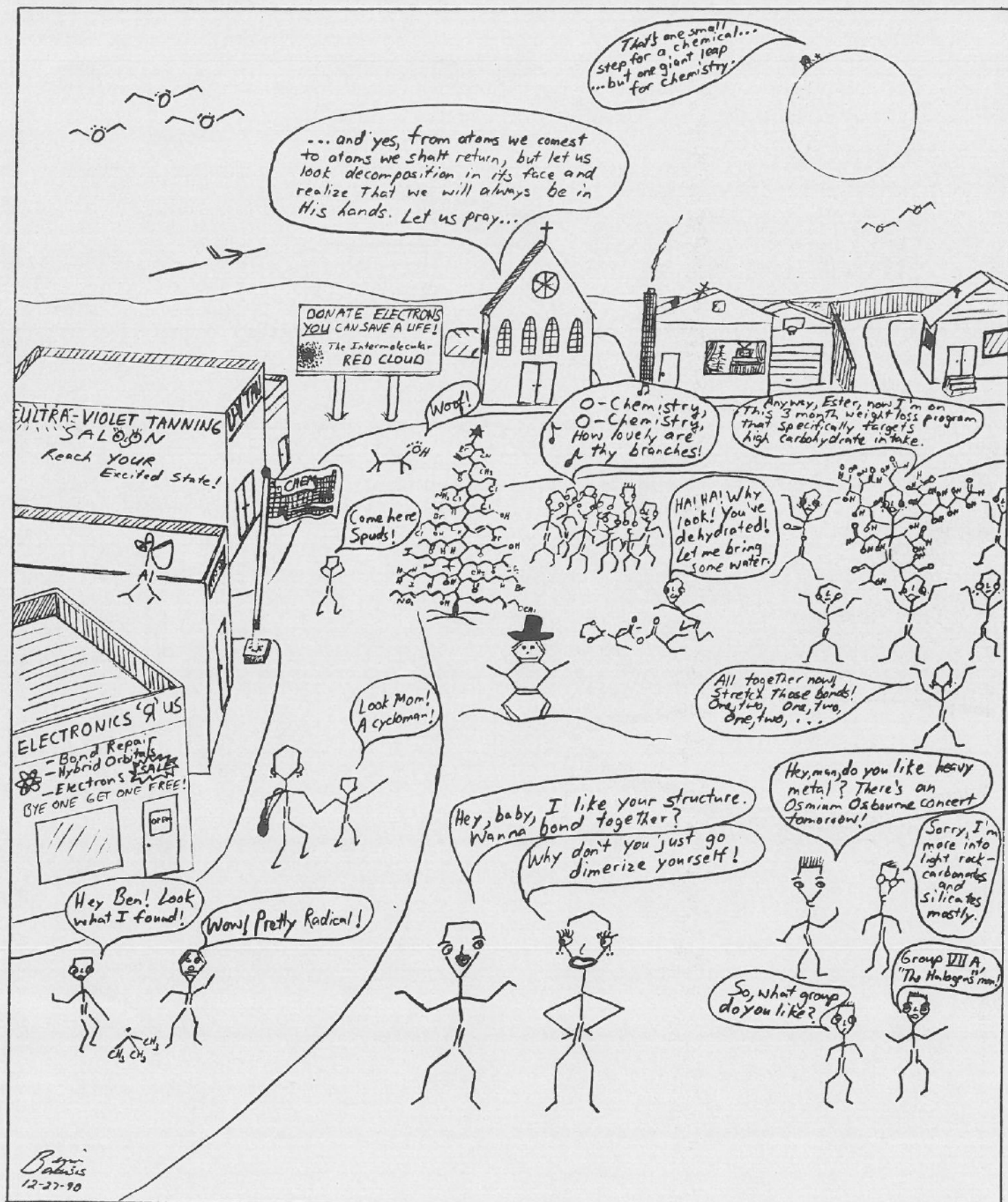
From the seed
Shoved into the mud
comes a trembling pale green stem,
with gradually uncurling leaves.
As it thickens and darkens,
It slowly emerges into a bud
Until. . .

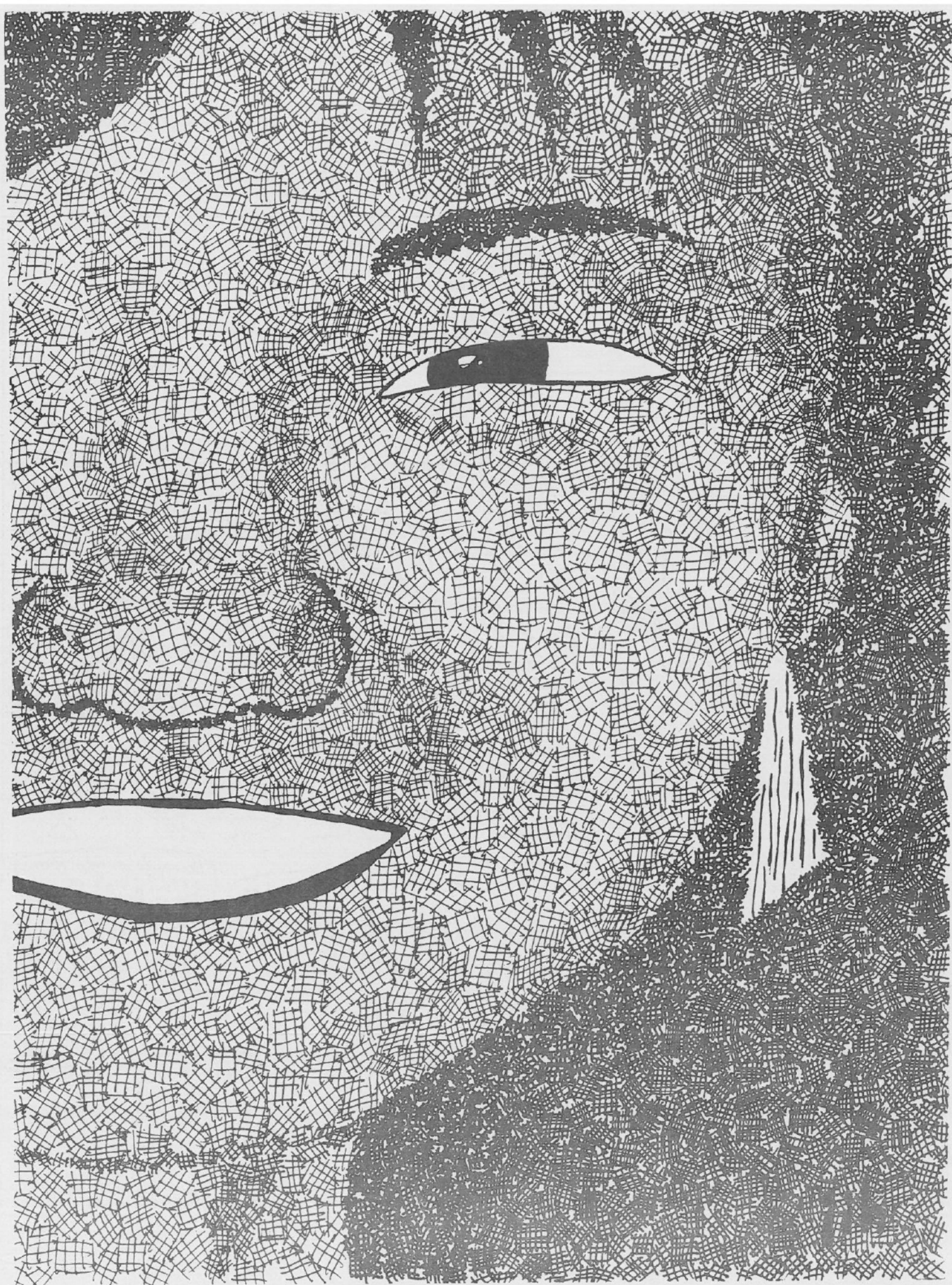
One morning
As the dew dries
It will burst open
Releasing the delicate petals
of a rose.

What It Is!

SOL iMpROV is a periodic publication that seeks to
compliment one of the main purposes of Harvey Mudd
College as stated in the Preamble of the Student Hand-
book: "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. We have an jarthur account
(improv@jarthur) for your convenience. We appreciate
your input in all its forms.

The American Chemical Society





Into The Distance

by Eileen Tannig

As I walked along the shore
Deep in my thoughts
I saw a solitary figure
Standing in the distance.
As I approached the
stranger
I saw it was a man.
He stood there quietly
And turned his face
towards me.
With a smile on his lips
And a tear in his eye
He reached out with his
hand
And touched me on the
cheek.
That familiar touch
Tugged at my heart
And the memories came
flooding back.
It was at that moment
That I recognized
My father

He was grayer now
With lines of tiredness
Showing around his eyes—
No longer that strong man
Of vigor I remembered.
Many years had passed
Since I had last seen him
But after that one touch
All those years of loneliness
Disappeared
And I was a little girl again.
I reached out and clung to
him
Unwilling to lose him a
second time
But he pushed me away
And looked at me.
No words were needed—
The guilt and torment in his
eyes
Told me I would never see
him
Again

As I stared at him
My vision began to blur
But then those tears of
sadness
Turned to tears of anger.
My heart hardened as
My mind seared
With growing
heartlessness.
My eyes filled with such
loathing
That my father backed
away,
Fear in his eyes.
I brushed away my tears
angrily
And vowed never to be
hurt again.
My heart turned to stone
As his figure disappeared
Into the distance
I struggled for inner
strength
But nothing could prevent
That last tear from
Falling

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