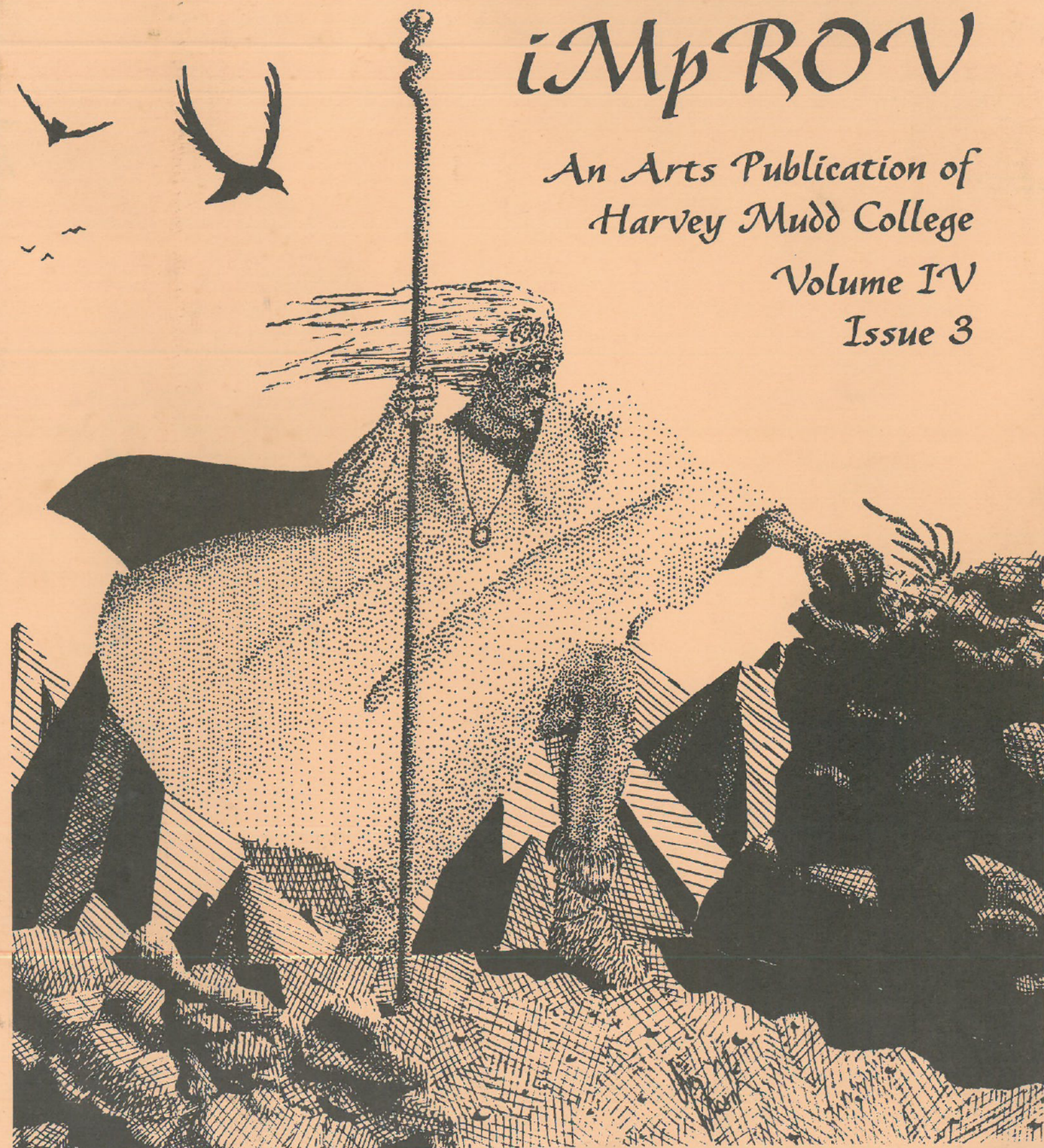


SOL iMpROV

*An Arts Publication of
Harvey Mudd College*

*Volume IV
Issue 3*



SOL iMPROV

VOL IV, ISSUE 3

AN ARTS PUBLICATION OF HMC

MARCH 1993

An Editorial

Wow. Barely two weeks pass after the previous issue of SOL iMPROV with my editorial asking for a Mudd newspaper, and the *HMC Compass* is distributed to students and faculty. I do not take credit for the paper's inception, in fact, I learned of the first issue just after delivering the second issue of SOL iMPROV to the publisher. I am encouraged that there are students who are concerned with reporting and discussing the issues of Harvey Mudd College, and I hope that the *HMC Compass* will become a lasting publication, supported by both the students and the faculty.

I had the opportunity some time ago to read the first yearbook ever put out by the students of Harvey Mudd, back in 1961. In it, there is a section explaining the significance of the HMC seal. The outermost ring is a moebius strip, representing structure, and the ellipses inside are orbits for space and exploration. The Sun is the sciences, the source of energy for Mudd, and the Earth is the humanities and civilization. Finally, there is the

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compass, or the divider. According to the yearbook, "The dividers are placed in the design to bridge the gap between the sun and the globe to symbolize the measure of energy and things scientific as well as the measure of man and his civilization." Graduates of HMC are to be knowledgeable in the sciences and prepared to apply that knowledge to the world at large, to interact with the world as a member and even as a leader. The compass, then and now, is the bond that unites science and humanities. The *HMC Compass* now serves to strengthen that bond. I strongly urge students

and faculty to invest time in continuing this publication, supporting it by contributing articles and by reading and discussing the issues that are raised. Many issues of late, the selection of Jeanne Noda as the new Dean of Students, the continued search for a Dean of Faculty and for other new faculty members, the forum on ServiceMaster, and many others all need to be made known to the Mudd community and discussed by it. The *HMC Compass* is a vehicle for this, and one that is aptly named.

This current installment of SOL iMPROV contains artwork by Brett Keating, Jeff Drummond, Melissa Aczon, Erika Kirchberger, Michael Yuan, Christopher Johnson, and others. We also have stories by Darin Grant, Rich McHugh, and Andrew Van Pernis, plus poetry by Michael Putnam and Mark Nandor.

As always, we are looking for contributors, so please drop by one of our weekly meetings in the Case Dorm Kitchen Lounge Tuesday nights at 7:00, or for more information, you can call me, Daniel, at x4862.



M e l i s s a

A c c z o n

Perhaps in the Abysmal Night

By Mark Nandor

I

perhaps in the abysmal night
my voice will cry out,
piercing the eternal ebony of my room.

the Light is turned on,
burning, peeling, stripping away my skin
and then is gone. i am alone once more;
mephistopheles dines with me.

II

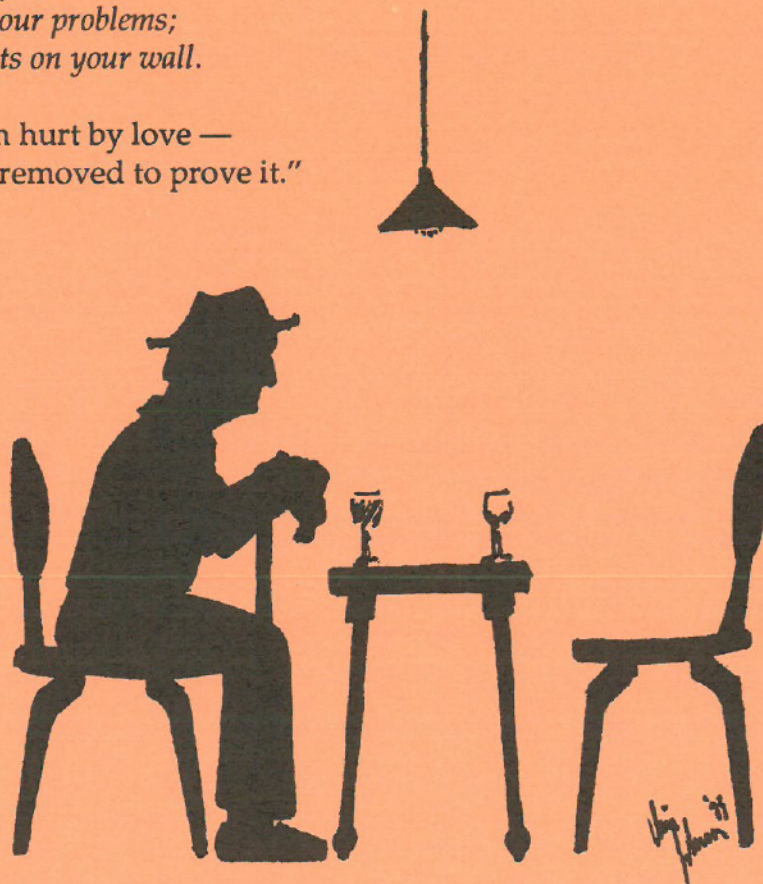
"i am not invincible,
but simply very well armored."

*perhaps today i can stumble;
perhaps today i can fall;
i weary of solving your problems;
i pound with my fists on your wall.*

"i have never been hurt by love —
i've had the scars removed to prove it."

III

an amber sun beats down
on the old man's wide brimmed
hat.
he sits, hunched over in his
chair
of gold. the tempest around him
screams at the forgotten.
the rotten apple falls from his
hand
onto the rust;
the man soon joins his fruit,
but no one hears him fall.



III

i am not alone.

trapped in the black city
or free on the brown farm,

on the way from the blue lecture hall
to the white classroom,

i am not alone.

in the green forest of dead trees,
stranded in the gray, barren wasteland,

from one shadowy step to the other,
my reason will not leave me be.

i am not alone.

i . . .

i am.

i am not.

V

the discerning of my heart
has joined the crow.
i no longer desire the ten talents:
must i also accept the five?

my back is broken, stooping
for water which i can never attain;
long after my stomach has eaten itself,
the grapes still elude my grasp.

shake me until i am stable.
feed me until all i hunger for is You.
destroy my body until i am whole.
empty my mind until i am wise.



VI

i have obtained the power
to change.
drenched with will,
drizzled with ability.

i have seen the razing
of change.
shown the close,
augered the end.

i have traded evil
for change.
forced the demon to consume my wrath,
commanded the scourge of the ages to depart.

VII

mephistopheles dines with me
and then is gone. i am alone once more,
burning, peeling, stripping away my skin.

the Light is turned on,
piercing the eternal ebony of my room.
my voice will cry out —
perhaps in the abysmal night.

The Computer's Game

by Andrew Van Pernis

Beneath the sleeve of his trench coat Special Agent *Cassius* heard his wrist radio crackle. He pushed back his sleeve in order to hear the message.

"...life-form detected in secure area."

He searched the darkness for the enemy he knew was lurking in the shadows.

"Objective has been identified within secure area. Eliminate objective."

The rain drove against the glass panes of the warehouse. Light flooded the warehouse for a brief second as lightning flooded in the sky above.

In that second *Cassius* saw the shadow of his objective. Now the question was had the objective seen his?

Across the warehouse Special Agent *Perdita's* wrist radio sputtered in a digitized voice.

"Human life-form detected in secure area."

She glanced about her, scanning the darkness for any sign of movement. There was a brief flash of lightning, but she saw nothing. Only

the pitch black of the warehouse surrounded her.

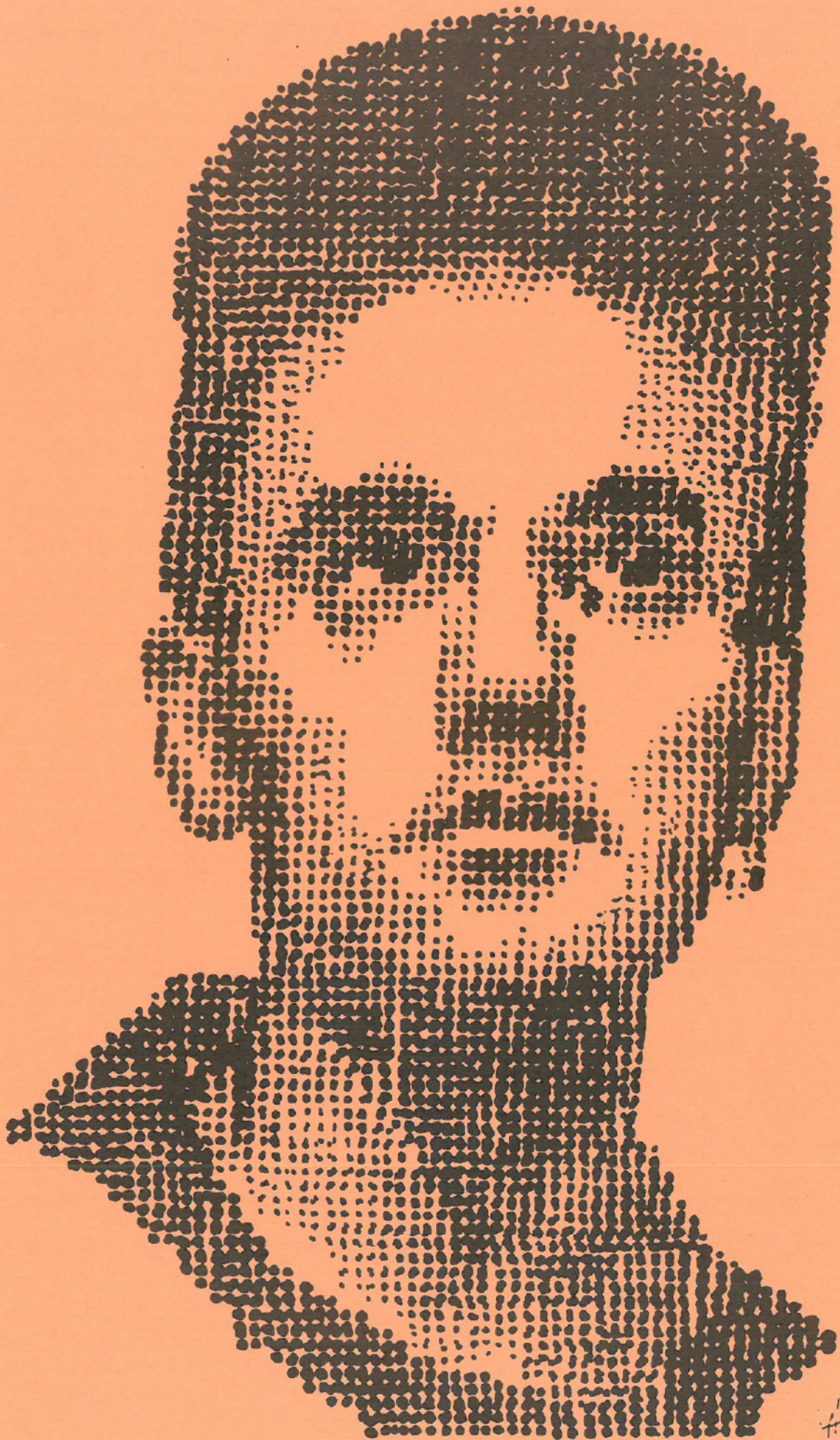
"Objective has been identified within secure area. Eliminate objective."

Another burst of lightning outside the warehouse provided her with a second of light. She saw nothing. *Perdita* slipped the infrared goggles down over her eyes, and the blackness became a world of red. Across the warehouse something moved.

Cassius pulled the G-11 submachine gun out from under his trench coat. An infrared lens slid down in front of his cybereye as he scanned the darkness for his target.

Tracers lit up the darkness of the warehouse, as bullets ripped through the crates near *Cassius*. The flash from the objective's gun gave *Cassius* a clear target. He flipped the G-11 to full auto and sprayed bullets and death into the darkness.

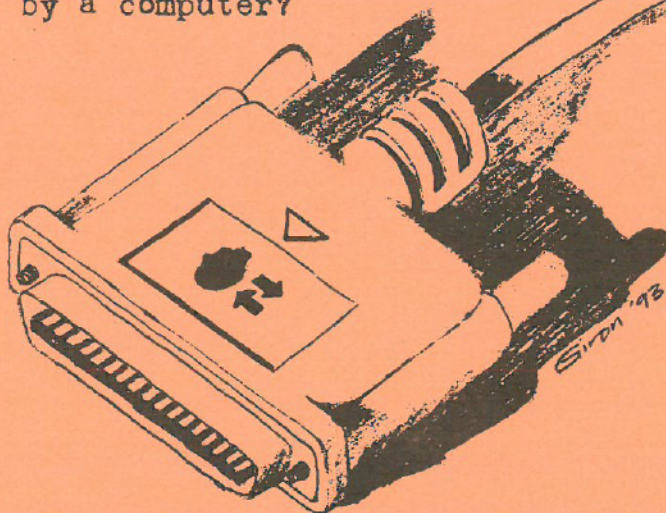
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Perdita fell backwards as the bullets tore into her abdomen; pain enveloped her as her head struck the floor; and the world faded to nothingness.

Disgusted, Perdita threw the virtual reality goggles on the floor. She was the best. How could this rookie agent win? And in a VR simulator, generated by a computer?



In another simulation room Cassius was congratulated for his expert performance. The cyborg smiled as he removed the data cable from his head; he had deceived a human. The shiny, metal data jack gleamed under the intense light of the chamber, as he placed a baseball cap on his head and left to see if he could find Special Agent Perdita.

Andrew Van Pernis is a freshman and lives in Case Dorm.

Spot Art by Jonathan Giron

continued from page 5

He gets up, throws a crumpled bill on the table, and walks toward the back door, holding Julia's hand as she excitedly follows. They leave the stuffiness of the club and return to the crisp air of the night.

No sooner does the door close behind Julia when Jonathan is upon her. With a ravenous look in his eyes, he tears into her neck sucking the life out of her body. Blood splatters against the walls, the light emanating from the dim bulb over the door abruptly flashes to red as Julia's life

hits it. There is no grace here, he is too hungry to waste time on refinements. Jonathan continues, Julia is terrified but cannot summon the strength to cry out for help. The darkness of the back alley hides the indescribable evil occurring within its walls.

He finishes his meal and cleans himself by taking a white, silk handkerchief from his pocket and staining it with blood from his lips, his face, wiping it through his hair, and finally dropping it to the floor beneath his feet. "Pathetic little girl. She thought she could just 'become' like

me. She didn't realize what it takes to be 'Jonathan.'" He turns and looks at her lifeless body sternly, "What did you think it would be like? There is no romance in endless life. I did you a favor, it would've eaten you up. Bad decision. Oh well, you certainly won't make that mistake again." And with that, he saunters back out into the streets and begins the journey home, laughing to himself the entire way.

Dairn Grant is a freshman and lives in North Dorm.

Spot Art by Christopher Johnson



After the Dark

By Darin Grant

Jonathan pulls the key out of the lock on the door to his apartment. The knob rattles back and forth in his hand as he makes sure no one else can enter. He slips the key into his pocket and puts on his leather jacket in one fluid motion as he heads for the elevator. Jonathan pushes the down button once... twice... still broken. He passes by a mirror while heading for the stairs. As he turns and

glances into it, his face goes blank for a moment, then a smile crosses his lips as he laughs at his own private joke.

"Johnny," he thinks to himself as he descends down the stairwell, "my friends would call me Johnny, if I had any friends." He opens the door of the building and is assailed by the characteristic flavor of the downtown. Johnny feels exhilarated by the night. The black on black

of the abandoned buildings in front of a moonless sky gives the city an overall Gothic quality. But his vibrance vanishes as quickly as it comes. He breathes deeply and chokes on the putrid air as it enters his lungs. "Won't make that mistake again."

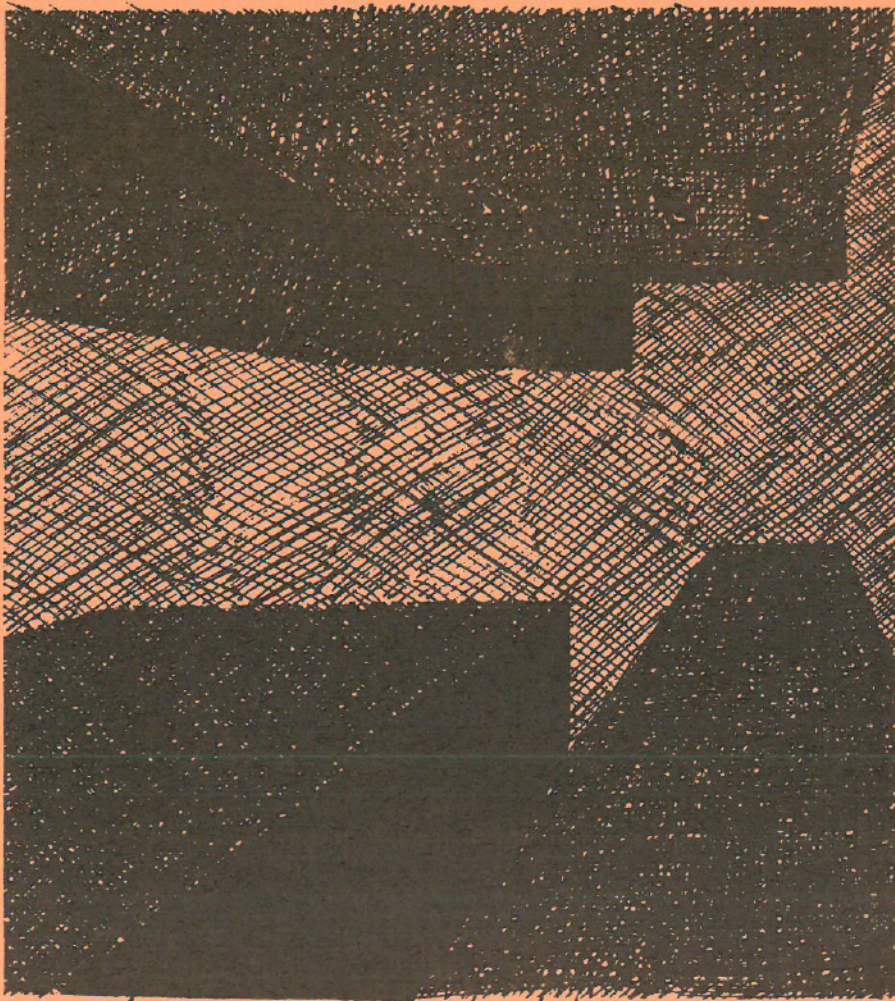
He crosses the street and walks toward the downtown area. "Taxis are for old men who have lost the will to live and for young children who haven't discovered it yet."

Jonathan looks down at the asphalt and sees noxious steam creep out of manhole covers like a killer hiding in the shadows. It edges along the street toward the sidewalk and then falls back down through the gutter. "An endless cycle of death. I won't make that mistake."

Johnny continues along the street toward the lights of the strip. He approaches an old unwashed black man who sits on the sidewalk. His bulbous weight supported only by the building he leans against. His tired head lifts to look up at Jonathan and says, "Hey brother, could you spare some cash?" followed by a toothless grin.

"I'm not your brother."

"Everyone's brothers in da eyes of da Lawd," re-



Yusuf 13
Shawn

sponds the man pointing upward.

Jonathan follows the man's finger and is blinded by the sharp light emanating from a sign in the shape of a cross that states "JESUS SAVES! Baptist Church." Jolted, Jonathan hurries away haunted by the echoing of the black man's laughter. It tears at him. "Stupid old man. He's lost his will to live and now he's begging me to support him. Ha! He called me 'brother.' I could never be his brother even if I wanted to. Living off the life of others, I won't make that mistake."

Johnny continues on, finding safe haven in the complete darkness that surrounds him between the flashes of the occasional pair of headlights that streak past. He thinks about how he got to where he is now: the hatred, the anger, the pain, the anguish, the death, his singular salvation. All the things that made him what he is. No one else could be like him, no one.

Jonathan reaches the downtown area at last. No longer protected by the isolation of the night, he feels overwhelmed by the blazing lights and the swarm of people buzzing all around him. A couple comes out of a movie theater, holding each other's hands as if their life's blood flowed through them. A businessman warily comes out of a porn shop, scanning the streets and nervously ad-

justing his tie. "Lifeless wretch, he has no soul left in his body. I'm never going to end up like him."

Suddenly, Johnny stops. He knows he's being watched by someone but as he looks around, the crowd is a mass of blurred faces. He shakes it off, "Just nerves," he thinks and then lets a cautious smile of self-reassurance break out on his normally cold face. The controlled grin turns into an ear to ear smile as he realizes that he has reached his destination. The electric blue neon light of the nightclub's familiar sign above the door creates bizarre shadows when it hits the contours of his face, making his smile look almost sinister. Johnny's home away from home, this is the "After Dark."

Jonathan weaves through the crowd in front of the door and moves by the bouncer with a wink. The nightclub has a musty smell that comforts him as he moves toward his permanently reserved table. The comfort abruptly fades as a hunger grows within him. Like a raging monster pressing to get free, it brings bile up into his mouth. He needs nourishment. "Soon," Jonathan tells himself, "calm down." He scans the dance floor. Under the black lighting, white shirts glow like fireflies dancing to their death around an open flame. He narrows his eyes and focuses in on different women, deciding

which one would be the best "catch."

A light tap on the shoulder startles him. "Aren't you Johnny?" a female voice questions from behind him.

His only response is a turn of his head and a hard stare in her direction. She's probably barely twenty-one, long, stringy, black-dyed hair, white powder makeup covers her face with the exception of heavily applied mascara and blood red lips. She has numerous earrings in both ears including a peace symbol in one and a chaos symbol in the other.

"Well," she says nervously, obviously frightened by Jonathan's foreboding glare, "my name's Julia and I've been, well, watching you for awhile."

"The spy in the streets," remembers Jonathan.

"Anyway, I know who you are and I want to, you know, be like you."

Jonathan's eyes widen, the whites of which create a fissure in the darkness that surrounds him.

"So, will you do it? Will you teach me, train me, take me, or whatever is necessary? Please?" Her forced smile begins to tremble under the weight of the tremendous fear she is experiencing.

Johnny smells her innocence and his hard glare turns soft. "Sure, let's go out back where we won't be disturbed."

continued on page 14

Paradigm

-For J.J.

By Michael Putnam

A slow unfolding of human wings takes time.
Although effortless as wind, the change is rife with pain.
We feel the ache of leaving older, slower forms—
the agony of cracking mental ribs as our minds expand
to meet the new day
We are the same sparkling well, only deeper and more clear—
laughing as time trickles over us,
washing away at the few thin masks we have left.



Art by Michael Putnam

No Regrets

by Richard K. McHugh

I look about me—I can see clearly all around for about ten feet. Beyond that is a haze, a grayish fog. It is not an absolute veil of opacity, the closer I am to something the better I can make out its form. Fog twists sometimes with light and dark patches, Yin and Yang mixing out to gray in the end. There are shades, but no colors—so much gray, a monochrome world yet alive in hue and texture from subtle contrast—infinite mixing of black and white, infinite number of shades, all called 'gray'.

Sometimes shapes suggest themselves. It's like laying on your back and looking for shapes in roily cumulus clouds. But soon a directionless wind comes and stirs the form. I barely have a chance to make it out before it is something else or nothing at all.

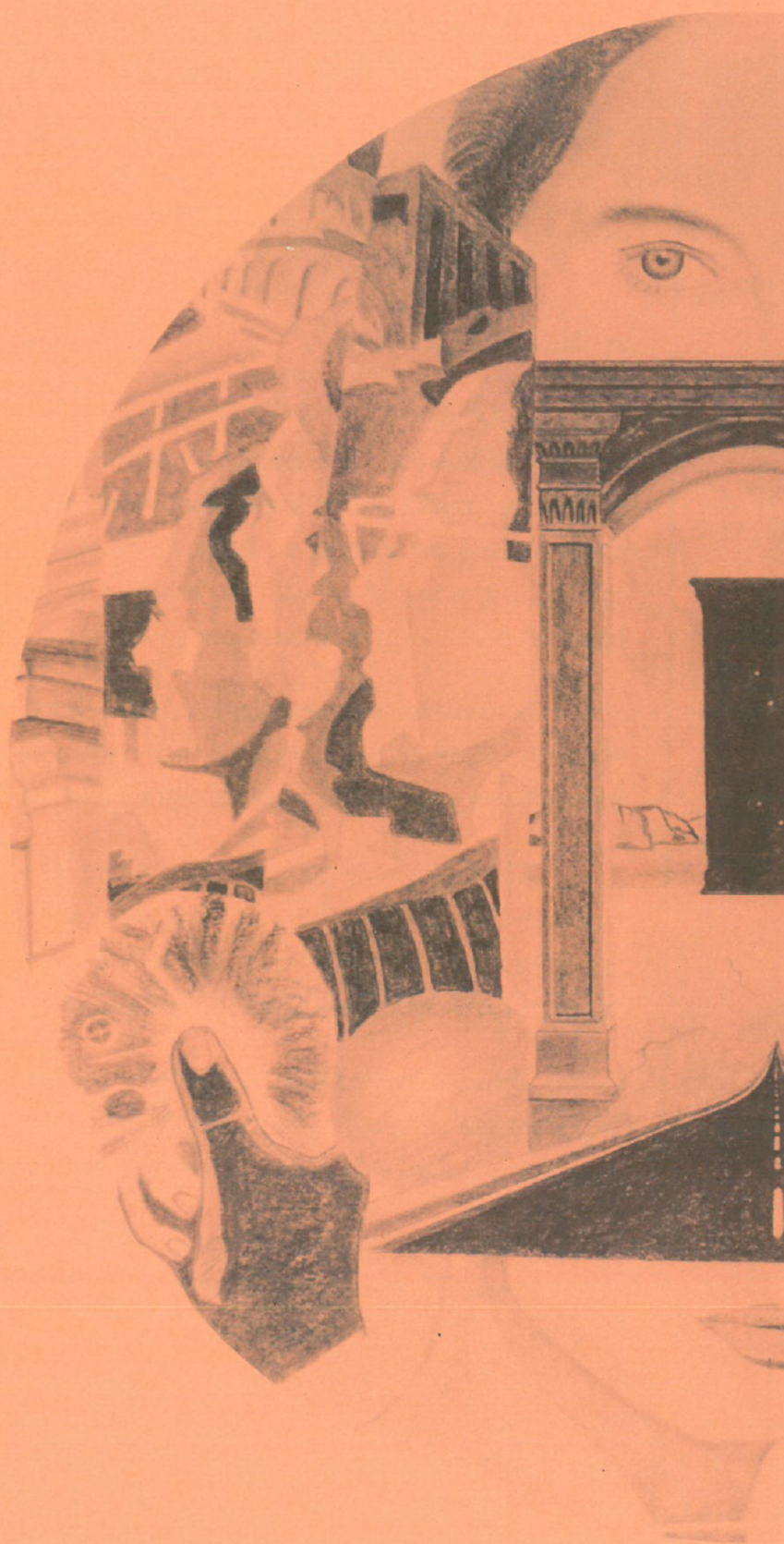
There are strange sounds in the mist, it soaks up sound in a random and insidious manner. Sometimes I hear noise or even a word, but I can't locate its source. Some sound must be absorbed by the mist, while other sound is indiscriminately reflected—what I hear from the gray is almost always jumbled and directionless.

When I move forward, the mist parts. Sometimes I can move towards a form, bringing it into my sanctuary of clarity before the mist muddles it into nothingness. But when I turn back, the mist is silently closing in behind.

Once I looked back and saw a woman. She stood with one arm outstretched, her hand open. Her mouth worked like a fish, but the mist closed about her, blocking her words so that mere whispers reached me, "But wait. Why . . . ?". I recognized her face, but in a heartbeat there only remained her shape and open, gentle hand. In another heartbeat there was only swirling grays. I leaped back toward her, but there was nothing once the mist had parted again.

Did I go back or is there only forward?

D u a l i t y



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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. We have a jarthur account (improv@jarthur) for your convenience. We appreciate your input in all its forms.



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