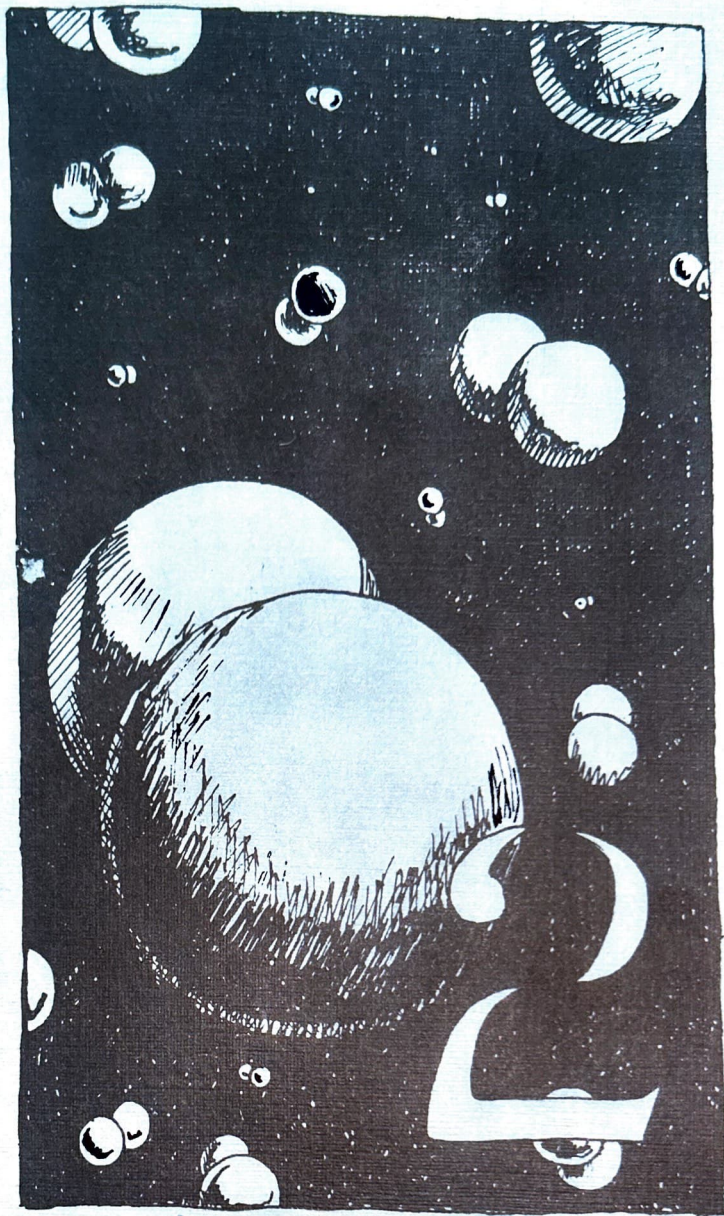


Omnificent



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Hand Squeezed Mania

Acknowledgements

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Most of the contributors are members of the Johnson State College extended family. However, there are a few exceptions: Thomas Hubbard is the 1995 Seattle Slam Champion; Pesha Gertler is a poet residing in Seattle; Jason Ross Surendranath appears courtesy of Seattle's homeless newspaper, *Real Change*; P. Allyn Harvey is a Seattle abiding eco-warrior and labor organizer; Geoff Switz is a published poet and old friend living in Boulder, CO; Maria Calvi is a High School senior. Interested folk may contact *Omnificent* c/o David True, JSC Box 965, Johnson, VT, 05656.

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 O2 is dedicated to Anne True and Earl True

Buying Fruit

Milissa DePaul-Frost

A broken down jeep.
Canvas makes a tarp
Held by two tires on the roof.

The jeep is the produce stand at the market.
So big! everyone of them.
Potatoes the size of melons,
Carrots as big as a bat.

The white-haired man laughs.
His bare, tanned belly jiggles.
His trusting grey eyes call me over.

He makes me smile.
I picture a wonderful father,
An affectionate husband.

Leaving the market with my fruit
I turn to catch on last glimpse.
The same laugh sounds cunning.
The same eyes look devious.
He calls someone else.

Ocean Initiation

Kate Riley

One lies alone with the unripe fruits. While we all sleep
naked on reed mats in bamboo huts, curled against our men,
the children together, she rests beneath feather blankets on a
bed of monkey furs, so her sweat collects and her heat is held in.
Overnight, green avocados turn brown in caves beneath her arms;
bunches of bananas thin their red-yellow skins against the curves of
her hips; in the hollow between her breasts, behind her knees, kiwis
grow soft.

Then each morning, she lays the readied fruit out in careful
patterns on fresh leaves; beneath the hot sun, flies collect. We, who
dropped ours off the night before, come by and gather to talk. And
when we go, we leave a piece, so she too has hers to eat. And on
special occasions a man stops by with a crab or the haunch of a pig.
Then after the fruit is gone, she slips into the hollowed log, filled each
day by one of us with water, fresh and clear from up the river.

So time goes. The men she knew as boys watch the way they
act in her presence. Then when she grows old they drag her away
on palm fronds, far from the ocean where most of us are set to drift.
Vultures come, and flies, and a column of large red ants, until the
bones gleam white against black earth, grow porous and splinter,
and join the litter of other bones in that bamboo thicket pricking
towards the sky.

As it happens, there is always a girl, one who still swims in the
open ocean. No other girls as old as she are left, but are off
collecting roots and fruit, while the boys her age are learning to fish
and hunt. A group of smaller children splash some distance away,
but she entertains herself, collecting pearly conchs and perfecting
her dolphin dive.

But then one day she hears between leaps a long, shrill whistle.
Looking towards shore, she sees the eldest man beckon. She
paddles in until her kicking toes and dangling breasts touch the
gravelly floor and small waves tumble sandily up over her back.
Her body is not made, she feels, to stand in the heavy air.

She hesitates, but he waits at the edge where the waves thin to
a snaky line on the sand. She stops a foot away, her eyes on his
grey-haired chest, and he points down towards the droplets dying
the broken shells between her feet pale red. She sees and wonders
where is the cut and bends to look between her thighs, but sees no
scrape, only watery blood trickling from a tendril of hair. She raises
her eyes to his jaundiced ones, and turns to see why he stares. Out
where she was swimming, a shark fin glides, cutting through the
rise and fall of the waves.

The old man is walking away; where his neck meets his back a

gaunt point sticks out, and the sun glitters on his taut grainy skin. She follows him to the house where the old woman who slept with the unripe fruits lived, where now she will live, without fathers, mothers, brothers or sisters.

This year she sits with us, while the children play and the men beat the hollow logs and sing. With us she waits until the music moves into the soles of our feet, until the rhythm penetrates our limbs, until it sprouts in our bellies, and we rise without knowing. The old man, in a shark's mask now, circles and singles her out and pushes her to the beach where they throw and roll her in the sand, then cover her with seaweed where she lies.

After the feast, we come for her and carry her away to the log of water and rinse her gently; we hold her and one another too; we put coconut oil on her cuts and feed her sweet poe.

And that night we come for her again. We unwrap the fruit from around her body, each take a piece and steal away, unpeeling bananas, undressing avocados, biting through wrinkled green breadfruit skins. But one, the youngest, younger than she, pauses to take her hand, instead of fruit, and leads her out to the starlit beach; here we gather once a month when the moon is too thin and weak to stay awake.

Watching the silver waves break, we finish our fruit, throw the skins back into the jungly night, then walk across the glowing white until the line of the waves lips up over our toes, until the crash of the surf hits the crook in our knees, until the tide clasps circles around our bellies. We let our palms rock and float and stroke the water's skin. No great light reflects off our bodies; only stars mark our stippled heads. One by one we draw our arms up, and like dolphins we curve through the air into the ocean.

The Weeded Garden

Ellen Repstad

In a paisley dream
Where snow resists the moon's blue ink
And shadows lick my imagination
I met you, singing
Staring at me with your
Steel gun gray eyes

The bridge behind you frames
Your female figure erect
And you speak—
Like water your words pool
At the bottom of my heart
Then you smile your daunting smile

You kneel to pick up a Lily
Stained with the hope of a child
You bleed tears of disillusion
As you forget the pain

He did not love you
But you loved

A rose sometimes pillages the Earth

But I am blind
To your slumbers
Here, only to remind you
That the hammer of hope
And the scythe of forgiveness
Lie there beneath the dirt