

# dead letter: uni magazine of the arts

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Volume 1  
Issue 1 *dead letter*

Article 25


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1987

## a death [poem]

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### Recommended Citation

Swanson, Michael (1987) "a death [poem]," *dead letter: uni magazine of the arts*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 25. Available at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/deadletter/vol1/iss1/25>

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## a death

"The messenger there arous'd, the fire, the sweet hell within  
The unknown want, the destiny of me."

— whitman

first gasp of death  
rolling rolling PUSHED rolling  
warm wet red secure rolling  
PUSHED ahhhh PUSHED ahh PUSHED ahhhahhh ah ah

Gone. Realized from pain

cut off

gurgling sounds lost sounds. My god left behind.  
alone sounds.

Aware of me

soul not conscious of the body I would be.  
Cold. So cold. Where is my world  
why was I forced

Mother.

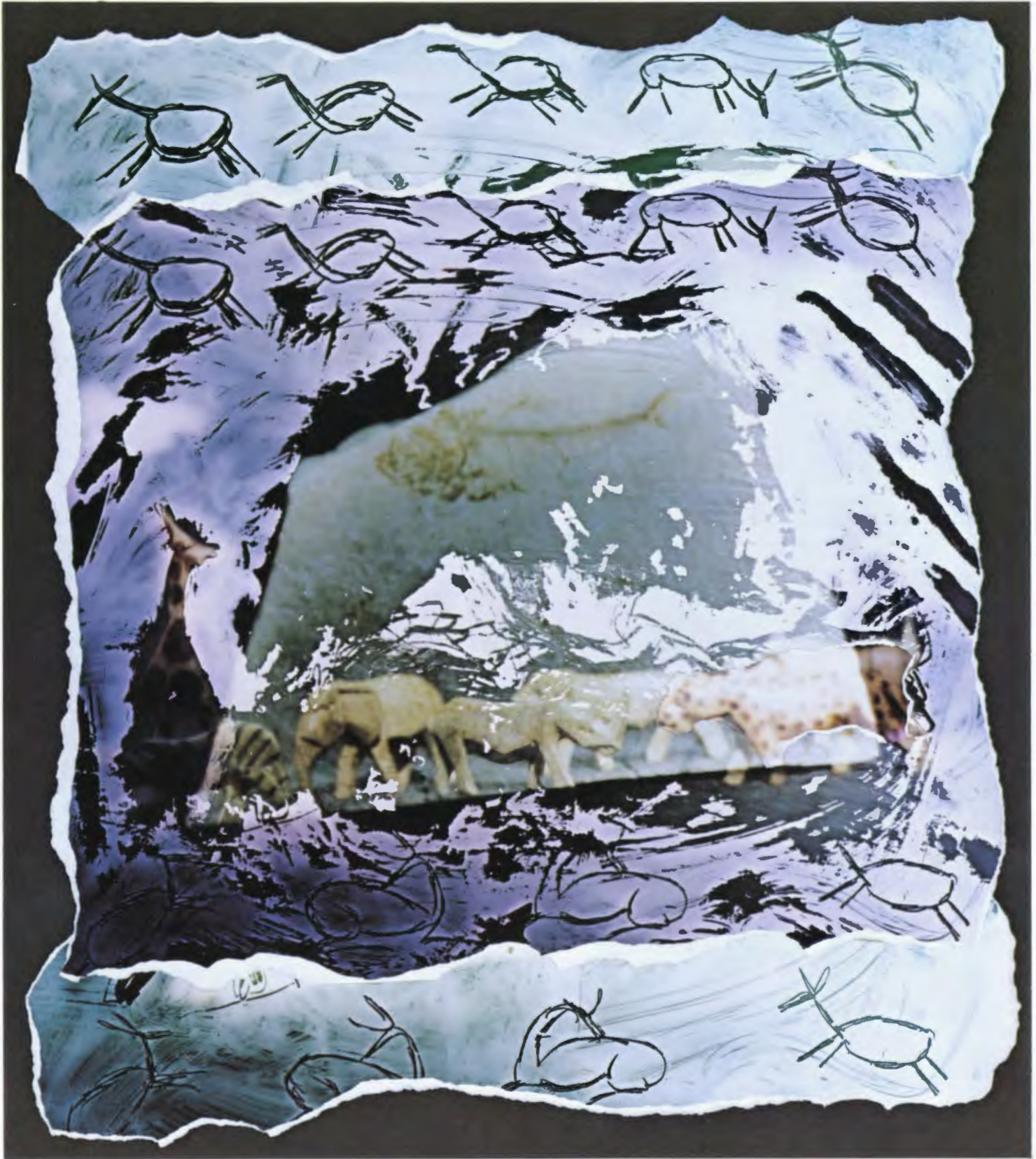
Such a short life.

A picture on the wall.

Letters and cards in a box.

Vinyl photograph albums in a trunk  
protecting faded Kodak paper.

Laurel was a small town in central Iowa. Most of the two-hundred and fifty people who lived there worked in Marshalltown at Fisher's. The family lived a mile or so south. The mother and father were still together. They were young, only married for six years. They had two children, a girl and a boy. Happy children. They didn't know their parent's marriage would not work from the minute they walked out of the church.



Extinction, by Cheryl Roth

I play in the ditch  
 becoming Davy Crockett.  
 I hate my sister and I like to play  
 Alone.  
 never knew my body before  
 shot lying in the grass of the ditch dead.  
 listening to grasshoppers bees katydids  
 oh  
 other bugs flying and  
 making noise and landing on me.  
 But.  
 It was that snake biting me  
 I knew my body then  
 it cried and felt  
 rolling rolling PUSHED rolling  
 warm wet red secure rolling  
 Such a short life.

Oelwein was a larger town in northeast Iowa. Most of the eight thousand people who lived there worked in Waterloo at John Deere's. The mother and father had split up after fourteen years of being brave. The girl and boy had not been aware of such bravery and were called from their lives to be told that their mother had gone insane. Their father would take care of them.

Eventually, their father acquired a woman friend and was never in Oelwein. Never at home. The girl took care of her brother. The boy became aware of his sister.

cold shadows across my sister's face.  
 tears warm steam rising  
 from her cheek.  
 blond the color of her hair.  
 matted twisted  
 her hands cry.

I love her. Get up. Walk out.  
 Open front door. Close eyes.  
 Close front door. Open eyes.  
 Something to hit. Close eyes.  
 Deep breathe. Open eyes.  
 The car. Father's car.  
 Clench fists Walk closer.  
 Close in. Fuck 'em.  
 Close enough. Punch...

Gone. Realized from pain. cutoff  
 left behind.  
 rolling rolling PUSHED rolling  
 warm wet red secure rolling  
 Mother. Why such a short life.

Mister Sandman, I'm so alone.  
 I don't have anyone to call my own.

Cedar Falls was a larger town. Most of the thirty-two thousand people who lived their either worked at John Deere's or went to school at the university. The girl and boy were nine years older. Their lives together ended.

The girl married and moved to Phoenix. She gave birth to a happy little girl — her way of forgetting love lost.

The boy wandered. Trying to forget. Until . . .

orange clouds  
of rabbit fur  
gnaw gentle on the air.  
nibble heat  
swallow life.  
run RUN to the burrows full and stupid.  
A snake.  
Grey from saturation  
Constricts.  
rolling rolling PUSHED rolling  
frost clear crisp phase  
of an unanswered question.  
it rises to warm darkness  
above  
orange and yellow daisies in a field.  
a strange death of toadstool roots.  
rolling rolling like marshmallows  
in a cup of cocoa.  
a finger caresses away  
away and down  
up over the earth  
mosquitoes mayflies  
die deep  
rolling rolling PUSHED rolling  
born of heat and anguish  
Emotion's growth was steady.  
And.  
Alone.  
deep in the womb of blood and mucus  
a feeling kicked like an idea  
with eyes of hazelwood roots  
in  
shallow sands by the river  
sticks  
flow  
down below the bridge.  
moss bricks and snot  
covered stones swell tears.  
A kick. Remember. Solid and swift.  
rolling rolling PUSHED rolling  
warm wet red secure  
rolling  
. . . he died. Leaving an epitaph.

Praised the mold which formed my body.  
I gave nothing for a dream. Dreams  
Should be ours without restraint  
Remember the tree waiting for us  
In Greenwood.  
I have died. Not remembered.  
For a life of searching is not  
The answer in these times. *One  
Must be absolutely modern — it  
Seems Death is modern.*

— michael swanson



*Elisabeth Wheeler*