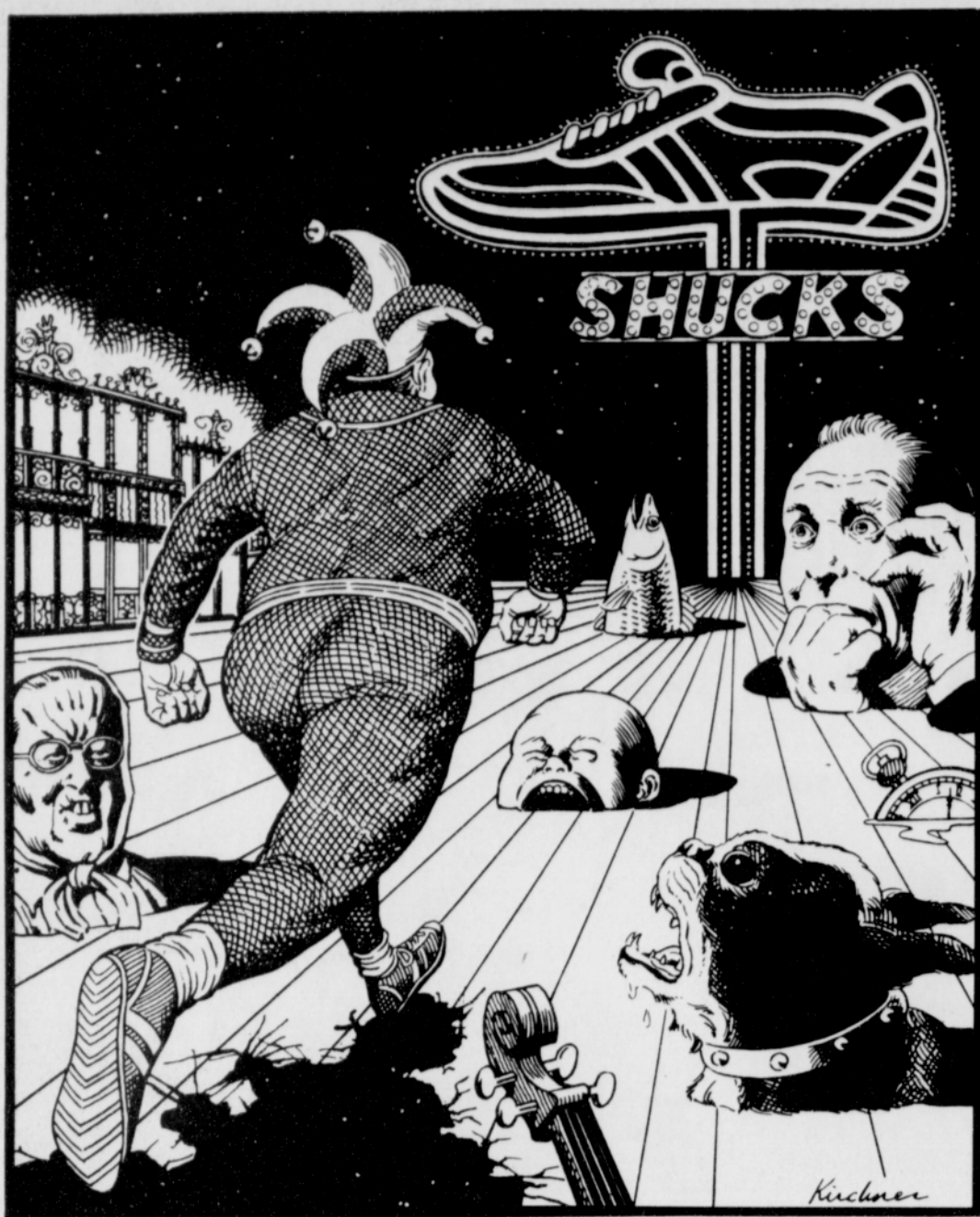




PAUL KIRCHNER

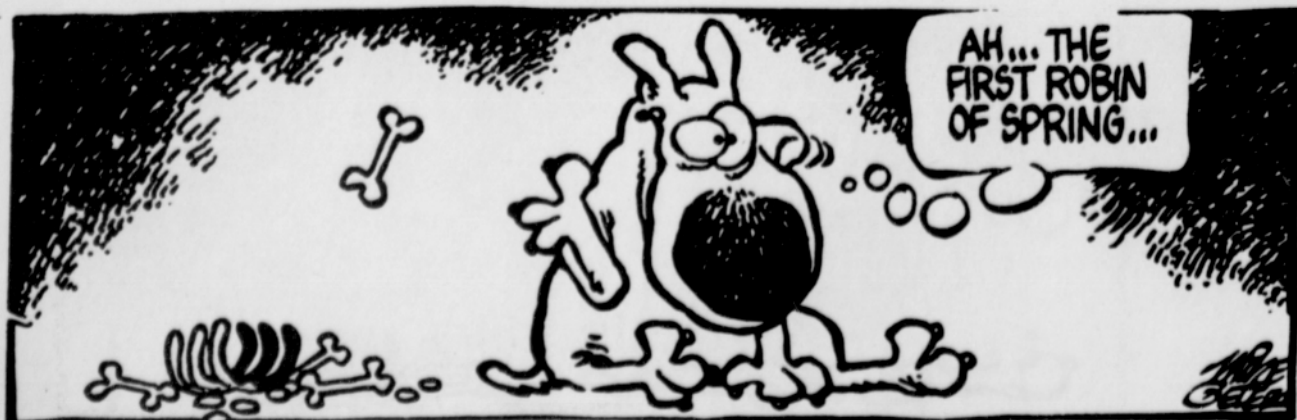
POETRY

CHIEMSEE

A man rubs his beard on a woman's breast
in a small rented room,
the red flecks of skin a cartographer's "strange beauties"
vanishing on the map of her body.
He gets up, pays her
and she goes, her hair a mess.
Her axle-voice dying away down the hall.
He can't even get this close to those
in costume skiing the Steinplatte,
the tuba's belching omm-pahs for tourists.
He follows a man with some sheep
down a steep mountain pass, the sun
through a scrim of clouds
on a small knoll stained with droppings.
He plays this game, goes where no one will know him,
to edges where the air pierces his lungs.
It's as though he were a boy again running a hand
over a globe

and when the teacher says Augusta
or Baton Rouge he stops it with a finger
and says, there, I want to live there.
It's that random. By the time he reaches
the lake below, the castle like Disney's
has its towers ashimmer in sunlight.
On the backstreet he discovers a house of puppets,
some several feet tall with bicycle devices
to propel them. They're wood, metal and papier mache
with eyes like cave openings, eyelids
like wings. Standing by an open window
a small boy says the sun is throwing out
all its little arms and legs
— what he calls the light
playing across the blue porcelain face
of a doll. He says he's a rocket
and pointing to his sister, "you're a telephone."
No, I'm an actress she says.
And the man is weeping.

RICHARD LYONS



MIKE PETERS

JESUS, IF I'D MET YOU

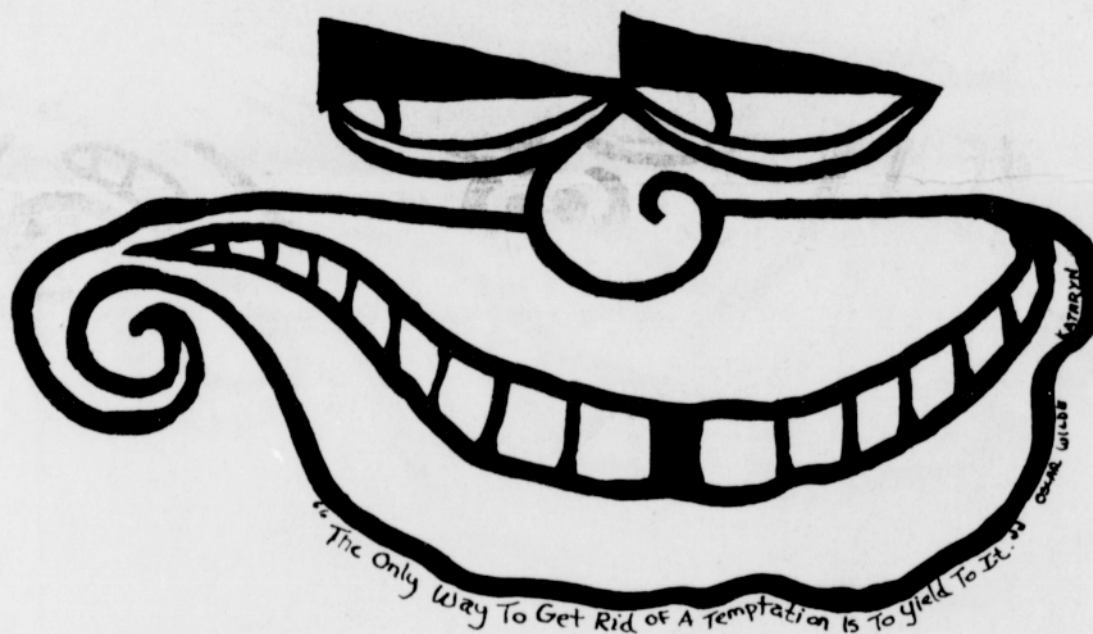
Jesus, if I'd met you on that pockmarked highway
that crawls through quiet reservation towns
where gardens wave sunflowers; tar paper roofs
signal smoke from aging Majestics; I'd have stopped,
picked you up. Tired, hungover hitchhiker.
I'd let you ride silent and sullen
past mullein and knapweed, the nodding yarrow,
until you could trust me with your story.
Beaten by police in Polson. Stoned
on cactus you'd just swallowed for a vision.
I could believe in such a wish to dream.

And if you'd come running down the Bull River valley,
from Eureka, Clyde Rector after killing a cop
out to kill you; come to my door for shelter,
I'd have harbored you, given you B vitamins and chamomile

O Jesus, when my teachers told me
I had a vocation, asked me to join them
in devotion to your memory, I prayed
and prayed, asked you simply
to pop the question in person.
But you never came. Not in my bedroom
where I confessed my sins, not in my mouth
where I took you in each morning
in that ancient ritual.

And Jesus, if you just sit dusty
and dry in that worn black book,
I guess I'll never buy your redemption
story. I've already read it, cover
to cover, over and over, until I could quote
any poetry you ever wrote. Jesus, if
you weren't dead, I might love you —
gentle brother, sensitive to the grace
of the lily. I too could kneel,
moved to weeping, as Mary Magdalene wept,
before your kindness, your mystic touch.

SUSAN WATSON



KATHRYN CHAMBERLAIN

THE KITE

The kite, windcaught, rose
along its line; the swallows
went sweeping aloft to tie sunlight
in curious bows and loops
about the paper hawk.
Ragtail and bobbin, a skein of urchins
tangled upon the beach below.
Father, in the wind unwinding string,
walked tugging at air,
his feet at bladetip but caught
in the scrimmage of children.

There were the sun in the blue and the kite,
the breezy surf rafting it,
the women laughing,
all the men huffing, the children
at play in the grass, a dog
champing at towels.

But it was the kite that loved the sun,
that went to mate with flame and was lost
in fire. The rays flared and grasped.
A child asked, "Will it burn, will it burn?"
And the answer was no

(but yes, yes it will burn, for the hawk
will fly down afire
after its adoration, come down
with its tail of rag spread out
in a huge hot shadow
to take the day into its talons and flap
off to a place where the cold stars
will hatch cold light and the kite
huddle till it is white and cratered).

LEWIS TURCO