

Literary page

# Snow White and the Indian Prince

For L., who came and went without a goodbye.

by Ky Perrau

Where are you now, my Savage friend? Do young poets still summon your strength where the hedgerows grow highest? Have you ever been able to touch a woman without hearing her shrill mother's voice? Are you still constructing theatres in working class backyards, or have you resigned yourself to an ordinary life?

If you are reading this, I am not far; I am less than a mile from the scene of the crime. And the crime, my dear, dear, L, was never yours.

I was Snow White, with stubbornly blonde hair. You were Prince Charming, suntanned and exotic. While the other children baptized their palates with the stale water of a concrete birdbath, you praised the tortured notes of my plywood violin. While the other children dutifully cast out demons with my consecrated sand, you tasted the latex banana in the gingham monkey's hand, pronouncing it palatable. There were no secrets between us. You knew that the way to a young girl's heart is through the exaltation of her arts. I knew myself to be exalted, and asked only to be lifted higher.

I knew about Nazi war crimes. I knew about prostitution and theft. I knew cruelty like the back of my hand. I knew the back of my father's hand against my buttocks. I knew the demons he found there could not be beaten away. I knew the palm of your hand in that same place, warm like a cradle and sophisticated like a kiss. I knew the innocence of that gesture. I knew that it was my command. I am sorry that my mother accused you. It was my doing.

Ah, yes, the river flows on.

The house has diminished in stature, the turquoise paint peels. The small house in the back resembles a packing crate for a kitchen appliance. The garden is grown over with weeds. There are no more Nazis hiding in the Sunflower row; there are no Sunflowers left. I quit attempting murder

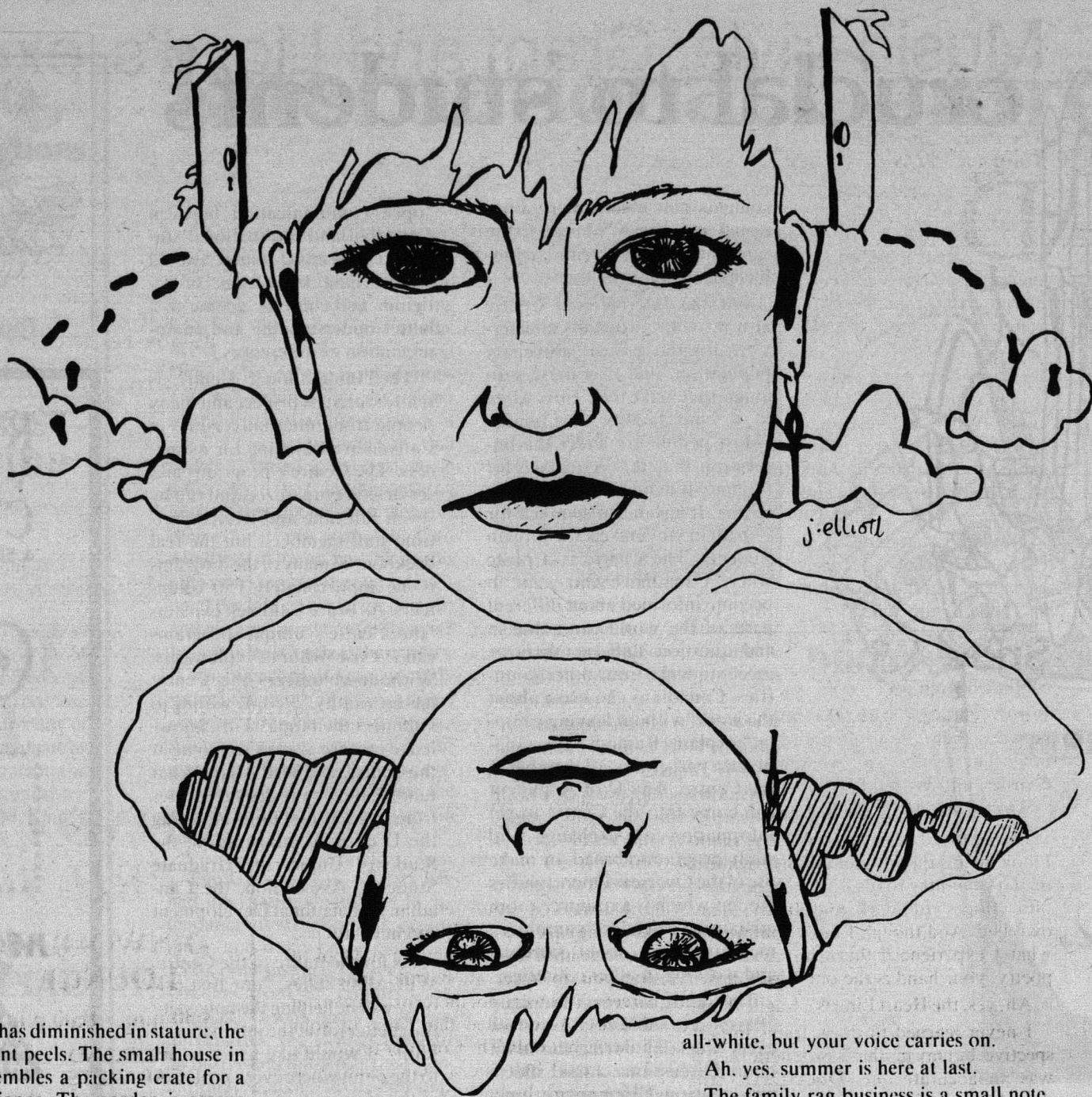
with a garden spade when the realtors took over. The neighborhood has gone

all-white, but your voice carries on.

Ah, yes, summer is here at last.

The family rag business is a small note in the margins of a leather-bound Bible. The Pentecostals did not get me. The

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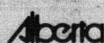
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