

# attention!!

*Editor's note: This week's attention!! column features a fictional story by Michael J. Freeman, a freshman General Studies major.*

"Put out your hand," I told her with a knowing smirk. "I've got something to give you." She presented her open hand to me as I reached into my jacket pocket. I drew my hand back out and moved it to hers. There was nothing tangible in my hand, but I made a pantomime of passing something from mine to hers.

"Take very good care of this," I said with a deadly serious look. "It's very valuable and terribly fragile." I closed her hand into a fist about what I had given her.

"Okay," she said nervously, undoubtedly very worried about my sanity. "I'll just keep it right here," she said, shoving her fist into her pocket; she was obviously just trying to humor me. Don't! I cried to myself, please don't not understand!

"Don't laugh," I philosophized to mask my panic. "You'll destroy it as surely as — as grinding it beneath your foot." I knew as soon as I had said it just how bad it sounded. But how else could I say it? Honesty and directness were impossible in a circumstance such as this.

The stare her beautiful eyes gave showed that she believed me crazy. "Why don't you keep it yourself?" she suggested as if to an irrational child, and extended her fist toward me. It was the obvious answer to an impossible situation; at least from her perspective.

From mine it was the ultimate slap in the face.

"I can never take it back," I replied.

She, to my horror, still did not understand. "Oh well, then," she mocked me. "I guess I'll have to keep it." Her fist was rammed back into the pocket.

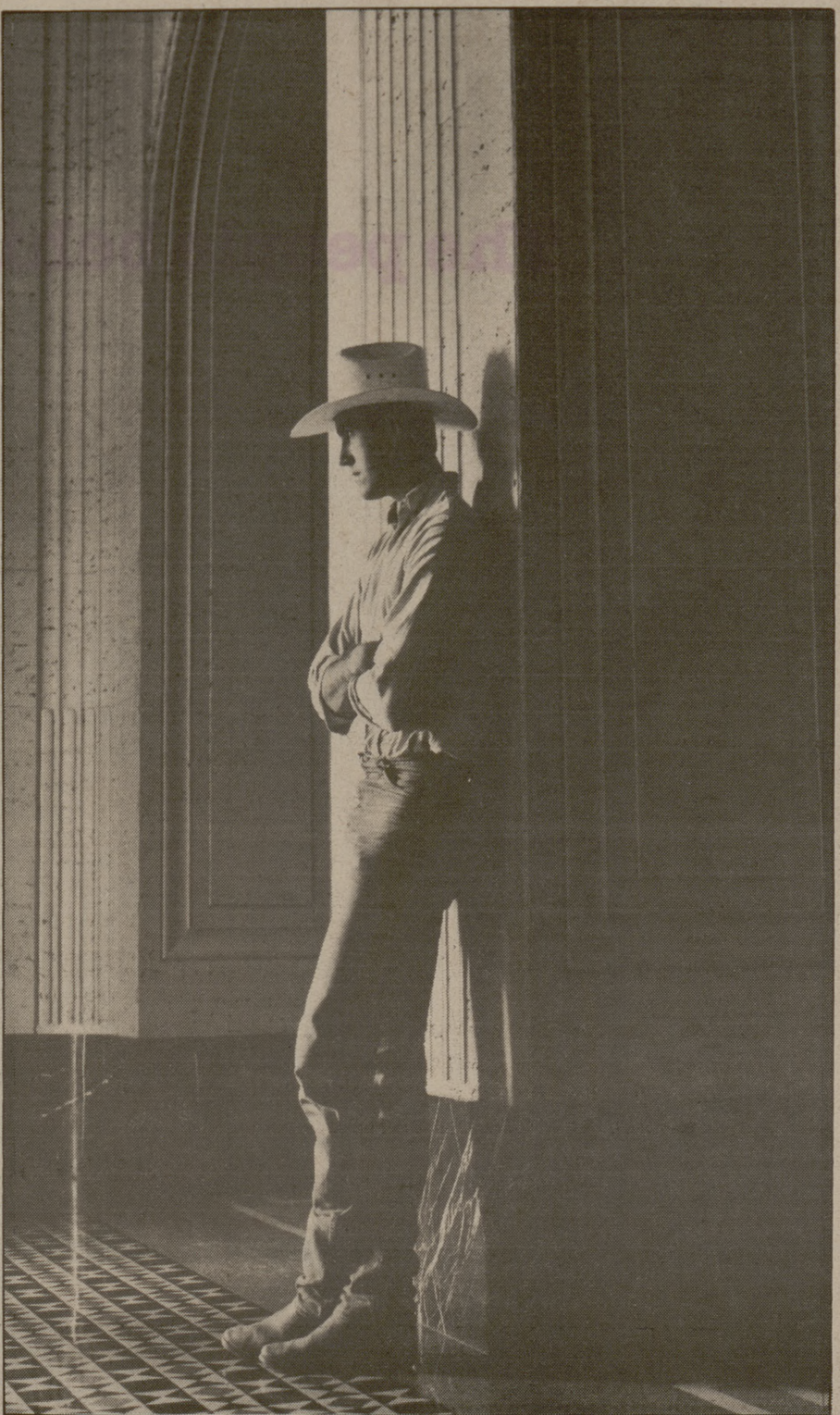
The pain caused by her miscomprehension was burning all the way to my soul as she said, "See ya' later," and left.

"Yeah, good-bye," I replied, hiding my pain. I couldn't dump it on her — it wasn't her fault. I hadn't ever explained to her what I actually meant. But then again, how could I have risked the pain I would have felt, had she known the truth and rejected me anyway? Maybe I had just tried too hard to be romantic and demure. Anyway, for whatever reason, it had not worked.

As I watched her walk away, I felt like dying. She had not directly affronted me — but she'd treated my gift like an indiscernible lump of clay made by some child or insane man. Then again, I guess maybe what I had given her was about as important and understandable, to her, under the circumstances. It had only been my heart.

I started off to my next class, trying to let the mundane concerns of my life blot away my pain and my feelings. Loneliness isn't all that bad; I've lived with it before by following a simple rule: just don't think about it. And while classes and such were there to occupy me, I should be OK.

But what shall I do when I'm alone once more tonight?



**This weeks attention!! photo was taken by senior environmental design major Darrell Pearson.**

*Editor's Note: This attention!! page will be used each week as a forum for you, our readers. We encourage you to submit any original work that would be suitable for publication in At Ease.*

*Pictures should be black-and-white shots that are unique either in content, angle or technique. Columns, essays or poems should be no longer than 500 words. Please don't send us your gripes, complaints, or sermons on heavy-duty issues — send those to the Battalion's Opinion Page.*

*Don't forget to put your name and phone number on anything you send us. Then just drop it off at the Battalion, Room 216 of the Reed McDonald Building. Be sure to specify that it is for At Ease.*