

# String Money

*by* Mark Reep

The day I got out I saw Randy on the Commons. He'd set up on the east side, in the sun. I said hey man, how you doin'? He looked up and nodded but his shades flashed and I couldn't see his eyes. He was trying batteries in the Pignose, sorting through a baggie of double A's. That bunny's done, he said. The done pile grew. When he found enough that worked he opened his case, strapped on a battered Paul. Plugged in, played a riff I remembered. What was that? I said. He shrugged. Just tunin' up. Two girls had stopped. I said I had a bus to catch, it was good to see him. You too, he said. The Pignose cut out and he knelt and opened it. They hadn't emptied my wallet this time so I dropped a twenty in the case. Thanks brother, he said. I didn't think he'd seen me. String money, I said. He said yeah, they're flat. Nobody could ever hear the shit that bothered him. I wanted to say man, you're wasting it here. But I didn't have any room to talk, and I could hear the bus coming down the hill.

