

The Sistine Chapel

by [Kathleen L. Housley](#) in the [July 11, 2006](#) issue

On the scaffold twenty meters up
tracing her head in the damp plaster,
Michelangelo knows it's going to take
more than a breath to make Adam drop
his can't-be-bothered pose, too bored
to stand even at God's charged arrival,
held aloft by a crew of hard-working cherubs
who struggle to maintain lift long enough
for contact to occur: a critical maneuver
of the right hand complicated by the added
weight of Eve on whom His left arm rests.
Drops of paint freckle his face as he wonders
how many priests will take offense
but concludes that only skin to skin will do.
Without it, Adam's forever grounded.
God's touch is first. Hers is next.