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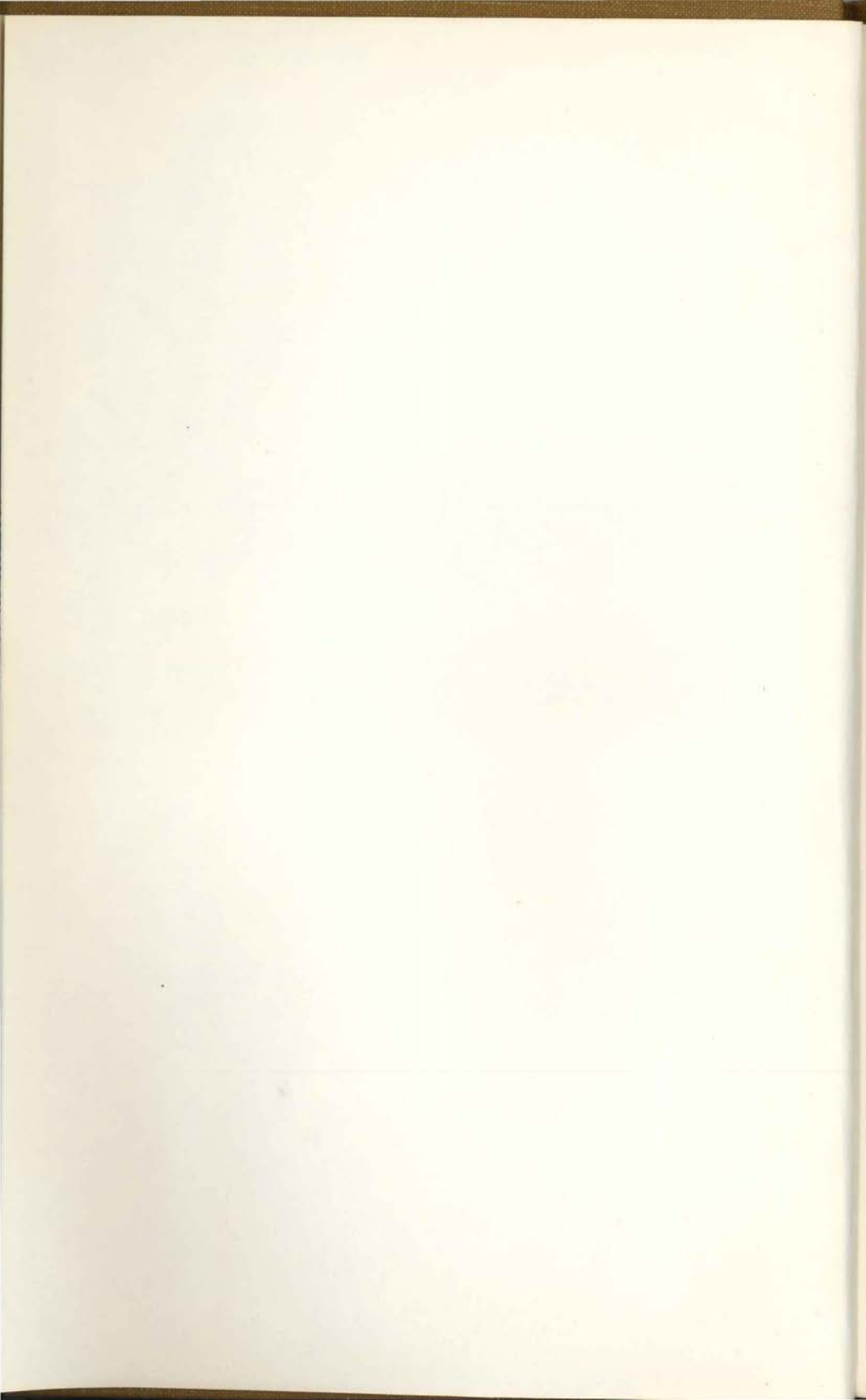
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# PERSPECTIVES

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The *PERSPECTIVES* prize in poetry:

To LINDA ZIMMERMAN

The *PERSPECTIVES* prize in fiction:

To VIRGINIA KIERNAN

The *PERSPECTIVES* prize in painting:

To RICHARD JACOBI

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## Haze

Carolyn Benne

A large Picasso painting loomed in the background. Slithy women swooned about in the fog-colored, smoke-hazed room. Straight black sheaths hugged their bodies. Necklaces glittered. There were green legs, and blue legs and long, pointed, black toes. Narrow, steel heels made indentations in the spongy carpet. A garter made a small bump on her leg.

Pat J. Rift squirmed. He noticed a bit of lint on his trousers. Glancing quickly around, he gave it a swift brush. The lint remained. P. J. Rift was picking at the soft, white fuzz when the hostess, Donita Pondre, greeted him.

Donita Pondre, a pomp of golden hair and coral lips, took P. J.'s hand in her own.

"Pat, I adore the painting! It was lovely of you to come tonight."

A red glow began to crawl up P. J.'s neck. He cleared his throat. Remembering the small, white hand in his own, he shook it gently.

"Eh, thank you, Mrs. Pondre. I'm sure. A fine collection. Yes, you have a fine collection." God, I forgot to brush my teeth.

"Do join my husband at our table, Pat. Your wife, Gloria, is speaking with Mr. Dray now."

P. J. followed Donita through the warm, close crowd. He had to squeeze by a table. His body touched the woman with the garter bump on her leg.

"Well, Pat Rift! How are you? How's things at the school, Pat? Sit down."

Donita's husband nodded as his wife touched his shoulder. Her black form vanished in the crowd.

"Well, Pat, nice to see you! You know I look forward to the Company's party for a whole year. Seems like it never gets here and when it does it's over so fast, I really don't get to enjoy it as much as I like." A guttural laugh, a sly wink, and "You know what I mean, don't you, Pat, old boy?"

Pat arranged and rearranged himself in the chair. "Eh, yes, yes, of course - -"

"You know, Rift, the company budget could never have made the Picasso. Your wife's generous contribution brought the painting right into our lap. That's what I call spreading culture, ol' boy! We'll make millions off those who come to see the thing. We plan to hang it in the lobby of our down-town store. Yes, sir, that's quite a wife you've got, P. J."

"The painting is part of Picasso's outlook which sees change itself as the only aspect of form." Pat Rift stared at the painting.

"I never could understand art. This—'Woman in an Armchair'—This tops the cake! You need a real woman, with hot, thick blood running through her veins, to really enjoy her, I always say. Wouldn't you say so, P. J.? How's about a little drink? I think I'll go on over and get myself one. Nice talking to you, P. J."

Rift sat alone at the hostess' table. He gazed about the room.

Gloria's talking with the Company's President, Dray. She's laughing—got a champagne glass in her hand. Dray's looking at the small, brown growth

on her neck, ugly. Why haven't I noticed it before? Just tonight when I zipped the back of her dress. Neck was soft and cool. Why hadn't I seen it before? Green legs and blue legs - -"

"Everything is A-OK, right, Mr. Rift!" A shining, young floor manager swished by the table. A bright-eyed, orange-lipped girl smiled.

## Pots

David Evans

Jack Townly could do anything. Every day in the Spring after school was out there would be ten or twelve boys in Jack Townly's back yard lagging for marbles. They always played "pots" at Jack's house. That's the only marble game he would play and they had to play what he wanted, because, as he would often say, "This is my yard and you got to play what I want to play." Nobody argued with Jack Townly.

"Pots" was a game in which there were three holes dug in the ground, side by side, about three inches deep and five inches wide. Fifteen feet away from the pots there was a line scratched in the dirt about five feet long. The "lagger" stood behind this line and lobbed his marble at the pots. The side holes counted five points each, the middle one counted twenty-five. The first player to reach one hundred won the game and took away "the pot," the middle hole's marbles which were the "anny."

Jack Townly usually won. He was the champion and very few beat him in his own back yard. It was almost like a spell when you played Jack in his yard. When you did win you felt as though you had pierced the spell, and you always knew he was looking at you with fierce eyes. You didn't even want to win the next game. You wanted to see him win. Most of the boys just came to see Jack Townly win.

He used to stand there with his steely (only he was allowed to use a steely) balanced on his huge fingers, and when he let it go he could almost guide it as if some invisible string linked it to his hand. When his steely stopped at the edge of the pot sometimes he would hold the game up and wait there for it to drop in. We couldn't shoot until Jack Townly was satisfied. If it didn't drop in he would curse and give it a kick and send it flying into the bushes. We would all have to look for it then while he cursed and scuffed the ground with his gib shoes.

Jack Townly usually won. When he had won the pot he would giggle and strut to the middle hole and scoop up the marbles greedily with his huge paws and let them drop one by one into the leather pouch that hung from his studded belt. Sometimes when it got late and we wanted to go home he would make us stay for just one more game. He would usually let us win that game and then say, "Aw come on, just one more, fellas, double or nothin', OK?" The pot would then have a double anny of about thirty or forty marbles and he always won it. He never missed that game. We didn't really mind, we just came to see Jack Townly win.

It wasn't just marbles, though. Jack could do anything. Sometimes when we were playing football at the lot he would come over and show us how to kick and pass. He never played with us because he was too big and

too old. Once when we did let him play he hurt Jimmy Hawkins when Jimmy tried to tackle him. After that we would never let him play. He would just watch us and sometimes he would show us how to kick and pass. He could kick bare-footed as far as any of the high-school boys. Once when Harry Perkins was showing off about his kicking Jack Townly came over to the field, and with his shoe off he put a football into the creek. Nobody could even come close to the creek.

When anybody ever wanted something repaired they would take it to Jack. He had marvelous hands. His fingers hung from his palms like swelled bologna, and when he grasped things you could just see his crushing strength. Once when Johnny Avery shot a pigeon with his bebe gun he took it to Jack because it wasn't dead and Jack took hold of its head and pulled it off just as if it had been made of clay. Then Johnny started crying and Jack just stood there laughing at him.

He had a way of patting you on the head when he talked to you and sometimes he would run his thick fingers through your hair or pinch your cheek. One of his favorite jokes he played on you was to pinch your chest and then he would laugh and ask you how you liked the "purple heart."

He had a pair of eyes that were two small beads of blueness, and when he looked at you they made you feel uneasy and awkward. When they fell upon you you were almost embarrassed. He had a way of shifting them back and forth and you stayed away from their path. You couldn't help it. You just avoided the eyes of Jack.

He had only gone to the eighth grade in school. He had had to quit and help support his mother. His father had died of a stroke when he was only a boy and he had lived with his mother most of his life. His mother worked at a creamery just outside the city and Jack worked for Jim Grogan at his garage. Jim had taught him everything he knew about cars and Jack was so dependable and proficient that Jim would let him take over the garage by himself for weeks at a time. He could take a motor apart blindfolded. He could do anything with a car. Jim Grogan had taught him everything.

He would go home from the garage at 4:30 and we would be playing pots in his yard. One night we were lagging and Jess Larker came over with his little sister. When it began to get dark we decided to play one more game and go home. But Jack begged us to stay: "Come on, you guys, one more game, just one more and I got to go get something to eat." We played a couple more and told him we had to go home. "OK, go ahead and go, I'll walk Jimmy and his sister home, that all right, Jimmy?"

"No, you don't have to do that, Jack," he said, "we ain't got far to go, besides, we ain't scared anyway."

"Well, I'll just walk you part way, OK?" Jack said. The rest of us left and it wasn't until three days later that Jack Townly was found. He was picked up by the police four miles out of the city hitch-hiking. Jess Larker's sister was found dead out in the country. Jack had beat her and strangled her with his big studded belt. When they were taking Jack to the station he confessed everything. One of the policemen was related to the Larker family and when he got a hold of Jack Townly he beat him with his club and kicked his face and knocked him down the stairs at the station. Frank Lowrey was there and he said if there had been one more floor in the station, Jack Townly would have confessed almost anything in that elevator.



We all liked Jack Townly though. We liked to see him win. Nobody could beat him in his own back yard. He was a real champion and we all knew it.

## *Sophomore Year*

*David Evans*

My sophomore year was the best. In college I mean. I stayed in the dorm that year. That was a couple of years back. The time really goes, I don't know where to. We had a lot of fun that year though.

My roommates were both jocks like me, only they played on the line. I was too small for the line. I only weighed about 170 pounds then, but I was pretty fast. I remember in my freshman year the first day we went out for football practice. I even out-ran Hank Clausen and he was supposed to be the fastest in the conference in the 60 yard indoor. I couldn't take him until about 70 or 80 yards or so, but then I could really stretch out and beat him. If I really wanted to I mean. I used to lag behind the others sometimes just for kicks I guess. Sometimes old Foxy, that's the coach, he'd get mad and holler at me when I finished behind in the wind-sprints. He'd say with that hoarse voice of his, "Becker, you better get toeing or I'm going to give you five laps." Then the very next race we ran I'd be right out in front, and boy, then it really felt good to stretch out and pump those legs. I never played much that year though because I was always banging up my knee or something. It seems like I was always waiting for the next year to come along, the right year I mean, and it never did. Bob Jimmason started at left half in my place and he scored five or six times that season. Foxy said I really could have had a field day in some of those games if it wasn't for that bum leg.

Football wasn't the only thing though. We used to have quite a time in the dorm. A guy named Bullant was one of my roommates. The other one was named Hollan and he was a real bum. He flunked out in his junior year and told everybody he was drafted. I knew different though, because I saw his grades one night laying on his dresser. You wouldn't think a guy could be so stupid. He couldn't even get by dumb head English, that's for guys that can't get the regular English and have to take this simple stuff first. Anybody can pass it. Most of the jocks had to take it, but I didn't have to. Anyway all they do is have some English major go through the basic stuff. You know, verbs and nouns and that sort of thing. Hollan used to come back to the dorm after that class some nights and ask me to explain it to him. I learned all that stuff back in fourth or fifth grade, whatever it was in grade school. It just wouldn't stick with Hollan, I mean he just couldn't get it into his fat head. I remember one day he came back to the dorm and told me he flunked a biology test. He said that the prof only gave him two day's notice and he didn't have time to study for it. That's just how Hollan was. Always making up excuses. He could look right at you and lie, and you knew he was lying.

Bullant was the one I liked. He was easy going, and never made excuses like Hollan did. Bullant was a good ball player too. He stood about 6-3 and weighed I think 230. At least 225 I know. He was a big blond-headed guy

who didn't really like to play football. He was just like the rest of us, most of us I mean. We didn't like it. We just played for the aid. Foxy was always getting on somebody anyway. One day Hal got chewed out for a lousy block or something and in the locker room I could hear him muttering in that low voice of his. He'd pout for a while but next day he'd be all right again.

We called him Hal, his real name was Jim, but I don't know how he ever got that name. Anyway he was real easy going and easy to get along with. But just get him mad and see what happens. Like one time Dave Lockly down the hall put shaving cream on his bed. Dave was always pulling some practical joke, like fixing your bed sheets so you couldn't get your feet in. He was the guy for practical jokes. Well anyway, one night he put this shaving cream all over Hal's bed. I wasn't around there when Hal found out. I was down the hall playing cards in Jim Lawry's room. Then I heard some commotion down the hall and got up and looked out. The next thing I saw was Lockly stretched out in the air above Hal's head and then Hal let him go against the wall of the hallway. He really hit that wall, and he lay there for a while like he was really hurt. I thought he was really racked up, I really did. Then Hal just walked back into his room. He had sort of a red face and I knew he was mad because I knew him better than anybody. Old Lockly never messed around with Hal after that, you can bet.

Bullant was like that. You get him mad and then look out. One time at practice Al Branson threw an elbow and got him right in the kidneys. He took that Branson out on the next play over tackle just as pretty as a picture. You should have seen his face. He really hit him, and Branson was a hard-nosed ball player.

Hal liked me though. I guess he kind of respected me because I was pretty good in my subjects and all that. I used to give him advice on how to stay in shape over the winter and he really ate that up. One time I showed him how to do a one-handed push-up, and he thought that was just about the greatest thing he ever saw. He didn't say so, but I could tell. That's how he was. One night I came back to the dorm and Steve, he roomed next door, said that Hal was in our room near killing himself with those one-handed push-ups. I went into our room and there he was on the floor grunting like a bear with a face redder than a fire hydrant.

He liked me a lot. I used to write his themes for him and afterward he would be so embarrassed when I wouldn't take any money for it. At first I took a dollar or so but after a while I never took any. I was always pretty good at themes and those type of things. I guess I got it from my uncle Ben. I stayed with him and aunt Edna. He's a brilliant man. He was always reading or typing. He used to read guys like Mencken, Huxley, and Mark Twain. But he liked others too. I bet he knows more than most of them profs at Alton, in English and History I mean. He wrote a lot of articles for magazines. He only had an eighth grade education and he could quote Shakespeare for hours at a time. He didn't read this stuff you get in those cheap little book stores. He could quote any of them big writers. He used to act in the little theater they used to have in Coray when he was my age. He gave that up though. He used to do lots of things like that. He was even a bowler at one time. You could never tell by him though. He never told you. He was just an all-round athlete I guess you could say, but he gave it all up. That's the way he did things. Edna used to get mad at him when he just

sat around reading Mencken or somebody like that. He always used to quote Mencken, like he was just about the greatest thing since Shakespeare. I remember one time when Edna was mad for some reason and he made up with a saying from Mencken and she broke in with "Oh nuts to Mencken," and that shut Ben up right there.

In my sophomore year I remember I used to go to the library sometimes at night. I usually didn't read my assignment like I should of but I used to read about Mencken and those other writers that my uncle Ben used to talk about so much. I remember one time when I got hold of something by Clarence Darrow and I really liked it. I could read him for hours. I also read some things by Ingersoll. They say he was an atheist and I can believe it. I read *This Simian World* by Clarence Day too. I was even going to ask my Biology prof if he had read it but I thought he might be embarrassed or something if he hadn't and I had a hunch he hadn't, since he was pretty religious I thought.

I think Wolfe was the best though. I remember once when I read "The Lost Boy" and actually sort of started to get tears in my eyes, and anybody that can do that must be a good writer. You can just see that colored guy in "Child by Tiger" coming right out of the book. He could really write.

After my sophomore year I went home to Corey, my hometown in Iowa. I stayed for a month with my best friend Dick before I went down to South Carolina with my aunt and uncle. Uncle Ben got a new job down there selling cars. He could sell anything. Well, anyway back in Corey it seemed like all my old buddies were gone to the service or something and there was nothing to do. Besides, Dick was working all day on the highway and he didn't like to play ball like he used to. I remember one day when Bill, that's Dick's dad, took down the old bank board on the garage where we used to play basketball so much. We used to spend most of our days there and we never got tired of it. It seemed so funny that it wasn't there anymore. Then Bill said that a few little kids had been there at the garage a little while before and were just bouncing a basketball against the garage, where the bank board used to be. I sort of felt a little funny when he said that and I think Dick did too, but I really couldn't tell.

Well, the next year at school I sort of settled down and started studying a little harder, although I still played a little football. That sophomore year was the most fun, in college I mean.

## *Domestic Animal*

Terry Ford

The cold, dirty buildings rose eternally from the litter-strewn sidewalks. Joseph Jackson studied a gum wrapping that lay in the gutter without really seeing it. He flipped a dime to the little, ragged news boy.

"Thank you," the news boy uttered, tonelessly.

"Yeah," Joseph automatically responded. He slipped the paper under his arm and crossed the street to his bus stop. When it came, he boarded it as he had every week day for four years. He walked to the single seat on the right. Halfway back. He always sat there because the constant opening and closing

of doors didn't bring a constant draft to that spot. The horrible smell of bus exhaust was less strong there than it was in the back. That smell always made Joe think of the carbon monoxide mixed with it and how the blood cells in his lungs were being murdered. He unfolded the paper and glanced at the front page. He read the story of new disarmament proposals with hope. The headline describing American troops supporting the tottering government of a Latin American country that he had never heard of before filled him with pride; as the story of a supermarket robbery filled him with interest; as did the article on the third page that explained the economic theory for the recent fall in the price of grain. He wished that he could smoke, but the driver glared at him when he took out his fresh package of filtered cigarettes. He replaced it. About once a week he needed a smoke so badly that he defied the driver's scolding and lit one to enjoy a few puffs before he had to put it out. But not today, he didn't feel like being scolded, and the bus had an unusually large crowd. He noticed a small group of particularly good looking shoppers standing near him. Should he offer his seat to that cute blonde? Joe was tired and didn't feel like swinging from a bar all the way to his stop. He read the funnies.

It was only a few blocks from the bus stop to his home, but Joe's feet were nearly frozen. He could look for no sympathy from June. She would chide him for not wearing his rubbers. She would never be able to understand that you just didn't wear rubbers to the office. He paused a moment on the porch. His home was painted pastel blue, but, aside from that, it was not different from any of the others on his block. The huge picture window, the pine trim of the eaves, even the small, winter-dead bush beside the porch was the same at each house on the block. Joe finished wiping his feet (he had not stepped off the sidewalk, but habit demanded that he wipe his feet in the winter, clean or not), and he went in. Hanging his overcoat in the hall closet, and rubbing his hands vigorously, he shouted, "June, I'm home."

"Hello, darling," came a voice from the kitchen. "Dinner's almost ready."

The warm, inside air burned his ears and stung his cheeks as he walked across the expensive carpet and turned on the TV. Cartoons. Impatiently, then in anger, he switched from station to station. Not even a western. Joe flopped down in the easy chair on the other side of the room and settled for Popeye as the least of several evils. He smiled. Even he didn't know if he was smiling at the insipid antics of the fantastic creatures in the blue tube, or if it was the rocking chair that sat beside the TV that inspired his mirth. June had insisted that they get a rocking chair—everyone has one now—and he had given in and spent half a month's salary to get it (wholesale), and now no one sat in the thing.

"Where's Kathy tonight?" he shouted over his shoulder.

"She's staying overnight with her friend, Sally," came the voice from the kitchen.

"Isn't she a little young to be starting that?" Joe shouted back.

"Sally lives less than a block away. It isn't as if she were very far away. She'll be all right."

"Yeah," Joe conceded. How could June carry on these conversations from room to room? His throat hurt if he shouted too much. He was coming down with a sore throat.

"Wash your hands. The food's on the table," came the voice again. He shuffled into the bath room to wash his hands. The clean blue fixtures and shiny metal always reminded him of what the interior of a space ship would be like. The faucet still dripped. He would fix it some weekend. How long had he been promising June that he would get at it?

He walked into the kitchen and sat down at the table. Spare ribs. Not one of his favorites, but it was good.

"Well?" came June's voice, filled with that expectant tone. He looked up. He swallowed some stilted praise of the mediocre spare ribs when he saw June. She had had her hair fixed. It was some puffy thing that reminded Joe of a lion's mane.

"You got your hair fixed," he dully commented.

"Is that all you can say? How do you like it?"

"Fine, just fine," Joe lied. It was better to lie a little than to go through the whole scene of explaining that he liked her fine the way she had been and that a beauty parlor was a waste of time and he wasn't earning the kind of money that could support a wife, a child, himself, and a lion-style hair-do.

June sat down, hurt because he did not praise her. She was so pretty when she pouted. She managed to keep her youth; her face was scarcely wrinkled, and at times he knew her temper was that of a spoiled child. He ate mechanically.

"Pass the potatoes," June pouted. He passed them. They chewed on in silence. After the second helping the air was again clear.

"Joe, honey?"

"What?" he snapped.

"What are we doing Sunday night?"

"I don't know." He wiped his mouth with his paper napkin (the kind that's advertised with a little man on the floor picking up other napkins, but there's really no little man). They had no plans for Sunday night and June knew it. He wanted to lie around the house and watch TV. The programs were good, and he could see the little man who picks up the napkins.

"If we're not too busy, George and Fedora have asked us over to a barbeque. George just had one built in their back yard. They want us to share their first barbequed meal with them. Isn't that nice?"

"Yeah." He'd goofed on the hair-do. If he told her that George was a stuffed shirt and that Fedora belonged in a Wagnerian opera and he wanted to relax on Sunday, it would be the last straw—and he didn't like the couch. Next time he would make *her* sleep on the couch. A man's house and castle and king and all that—"What time do they us to arrive?"

"Six or six-thirtyish."

"Ish? Fine, we can get the six o'clock bus."

"Bus? O, Joseph! Can't we take a cab? It is so stupid to be going to dinner in a bus. Really, it is."

"I suppose it is. Well, we can afford it this once, I guess. I'm gonna watch television."

He flopped once more into the easy chair and stared across the room at the news. There was a farmer's organization in town, meeting to discuss falling grain prices. It was going to snow. His high school lost a basketball game. He heard the dishes rattle in the kitchen.

"Fedora says George always helps her with the dishes,"

"Good for George," Joe barked. He'd sooner break them all than wash even one of those things. Dish washing was woman's work. He wished he had not shouted so loudly; his throat was getting sore.

Joseph lit a cigarette. June, finished with the dishes, came into the living room, where the TV loudly proclaimed the foulness of underarm odor and advocated the improvement of the human race through the use of some sticky mess that sewed up pores. She sat in the other easy chair.

They sat, a yard from each other, entranced by the magic glow of the TV. Joe looked at his wife's face as she was hypnotized by the show. She had such a pretty nose. Should he tell her so? No. She would miss some of the show if he spoke. But didn't he see this show last week, or the week before? Yes, and he would be seeing this show all the rest of his life. June felt his stare. She turned her head and leaned over with an ash tray. He noticed how long his ashes had gotten. June was such a good housekeeper. He flicked off the ashes.

He wished Kathy were home. He missed her, sitting on the floor, watching television with them. He was lonely. Even when Kathy was here he was lonely, though.

"June, the firm has a new contract and they want us to draft blue prints of a whole new building. A shopping center. That is going to keep us hopping for quite a while."

"Oh. That's nice." June answered without taking her eyes off the set.

"If I do a good job there is a slight chance that I might get that raise; then we can get a new car and we won't have to take the bus all over town," Joseph spoke without expression.

"Yeah," she wasn't even listening to him.

Joe rose and walked to the kitchen where he took a bottle of beer from the refrigerator. He fumbled in the dark and found an opener in the drawer. As he opened the bottle the cap fell on the floor, and a little of the foul smelling liquid slopped over onto his hand. He stooped and groped in the dark but could not find the bottle cap. He licked the beer from his hand and walked back into the living room. His hand was cold where the bottle touched it, and he wanted to pour the beer into a glass, but it was not worth it to go way back to the kitchen.

"Want a sip?" he asked.

"No, thanks," June answered, scarcely taking her eyes from the set.

"Let's go to a movie, tonight," Joe suggested out of a clear blue sky.

"But what if Kathy should call and find no one home? Besides, we can't afford a taxi to town and back this week. We have payments to make on the carpet. Be sensible, Joe, honey."

So Joe sat down and finished his beer.

## *One Wild Orgy*

*Edwin Hull*

"Marge, where are my cuff links?"

"In the top bureau drawer, dear."

"I don't see them." Can't find anything in this mess. If she'd quit partying around and start doing some housecleaning, it would help.

"Here they are."

"Weren't there when I looked. Here, fix them for me, will you? Do we have to go tonight?"

"Yes, dear. I promised Ellen and Bob we'd be there."

"Well, I wish you'd ask me first. I'm tired. I was looking forward to staying home, with a nice blazing fire in the fireplace, watching TV."

"Better hurry, dear."

"Be ready in a second." Let her stew awhile. Do her good. Dejectedly Scott fumbled through the drawers, looking for a handkerchief. Old Chromedome is going to be there, so I'd better look my best. He can't stand his salesmen looking slouchy. Hope the old man's wife doesn't make it—no such luck. The old bag. Why doesn't she get J.B. to fire Helen if she's so worried about his catting around? Always pumping the hired hands. One of these days I'm going to tell her where to go. Battleaxe.

"Are you coming?"

Scott slipped on his coat, looked at the shambles of their bedroom, and shut the door.

"That a new dress?" Sure is tight enough.

"Yes, do you like it?"

"Sure, it's real becoming." Bet it cost a pretty penny.

"What did it cost?"

"Only \$39.95."

Only \$39.95. She acts like it's peanuts. I'm going to have to get another job, the way she spends money. Following her to the car, he watched her swaying figure. Not bad. Sure doesn't look thirty-five. Hasn't changed since back at college days. Sure her hair has some gray but Maurice takes care of that. Weekly appointments at the beauty shop—\$3.50 a throw. Spends twice as much on her hair as I do.

He fumbled with his keys. The engine sputtered feebly, finally turned over. Marge's perfume filled the car. Smells like she spilled the whole bottle on herself. Whew, sure is strong enough.

"Suppose we leave early tonight?" Gad, I'm beat. That bed's going to feel mighty good. Never did sleep good on a hotel mattress. With all the convention hoopla last night, bet I didn't get five hours sleep all told. Crazy fools, get away from their wives twice a year, and they raise the roof.

"We'll see."

A car swerved out ahead of them. Slamming on the brake, Scott shouted, "That fool's going to get himself killed."

"Really, Scott, do you have to yell so?"

"I'm sorry." She can consider herself lucky I didn't say something else. Wonder where the cops are. Never around when they should be. That kid driving didn't look old enough to be dry behind his ears. What were his folks thinking about when they let him have the car? At that age, my two feet got me around. That's the trouble with the youth of today. Have to have the car to go to the corner drug store.

Bob and Ellen's house loomed ahead. Lots of cars. Where can I park our car? "There's the Hansen's car, so they must have made it too." Must have got it washed today. Old Lizzie could stand a wash job. Maybe tomorrow I'll be able to get to it.

"There's a parking spot, Scott."

"Looks might small." Cranking the wheel, he finally squeezed in. Next car is going to have power steering.

Ellen and Bob met them at the door.

"Hi there. Come on in. Party's going strong. Thought maybe you weren't going to make it."

"Oh, Scott couldn't find his cuff links. Sorry we're late."

Why can't she keep her mouth shut? "I was beginning to think we weren't going to make it too. Some fool kids about ran us down."

"I'll take your wraps. Go right in. Think you know everyone. I'll be there in a second."

Seeing the fellows across the room, Scott headed for them. There's the battleaxe. If I act like I don't see her, maybe she will go into her ulcer. Why doesn't Marge rescue me? Guess I asked for it. Here comes Marge. Thank heavens.

There's George. He's looking chipper tonight. "Hi, George."

"Hello, Scott. Come here, we were just discussing the changeover in the office. What do you think of it?"

"To tell you the truth, George, I don't know much about it." And I wouldn't tell you if I did. "Been on the road all week. Will find out about it Monday, I suppose."

"I was just telling the guys here . . ." There goes George running his mouth again. Quite a crowd tonight. There's Helen with J.B. hovering over her. But the battleaxe is really snorting. He'll get blazes when they get home. Don't blame him really. I'd hate to have to look at Fern's face all day. Here comes Steve. What was it I wanted to ask him about? "Hello, Steve. How's the world treating you?"

"Fine, Scott, just fine. Saw your wife before. She's really the gal. I'm invited for dinner tomorrow."

"I keep telling you, Steve, you ought to get married." Why did Marge invite him for dinner? There goes my sleeping late. One day to relax on, and we've got to have company.

"Well, Scott, you find me a carbon copy of Marge, and I won't hesitate."

"Did you see Helen? You'd better get over to her before Fern takes J.B. to task. I would, but I don't want Marge on my neck. So seeing as you're the only bachelor here, the job falls to you. Second thought, it might be worth Marge's wrath. I'll come along."

"Fine with me. Let's go."

"Good evening, Helen. Hello, J.B."

"Hi, boys. Are you enjoying the party?"

Man, it's hot in here. Only 10:00. Another hour and maybe we can leave. Wish I could loosen this necktie, but that would never do. "You're looking lovely tonight, Helen." What a shape. If I weren't married, I'd give her a chase.

"Why, thank you, Scott. Your're looking mighty handsome yourself. Did you bring Marge? I haven't seen her yet this evening."

"Oh, she's around." Right over there glaring at me, matter of fact. Some reason she just doesn't like Helen. Probably because she's young, pretty, and not married. "Steve, you're being awfully quiet."

"Can't get a word in edgewise."



Who's playing the piano? Not bad playing. Helen hummed along with the melody. Carries a pretty good tune. *Stardust*. It was Marge's favorite song in college. Never grows old. All the jazz nowadays. Song doesn't last a week, and it's forgotten.

Here comes Steve with J.B. in tow. "Has Scott been keeping you entertained, Helen?" If J.B. doesn't quit staring so hard, his eyes are going to bulge out of his head, the old goat. Looks like he's got a snootful. Bet he'll regret it tomorrow. On second thought, that's the best way to be when Fern is around.

Eleven o'clock. Now if I can find Marge, we'll get out of here. Where could she have gone to? The kitchen. No, she wouldn't be out there the way she gets along with ours. There she is, all the way across the room.

"Oops, excuse me, m'am." Where did she come from? It sure is crowded. If I can get past Ellen now. Guess she's busy.

"Marge, about ready to go?"

"I guess. Where's Ellen and Bob?"

"I just passed Ellen; I don't know where Bob is. Oh, there he is, talking to Helen over in the corner."

I wish she'd hurry up, my feet are killing me. Well, just two lies, and we'll be gone. He didn't even hear Marge talking to Ellen. I'd sure hate to clean this place after this ordeal.

"Sorry you're leaving so early, Scott."

"We'd like to stay, Ellen, but I'm beat. It was an awfully nice party though. Good night." Why do I lie like that? I was bored stiff.

"Leaving already, Scott?"

"Yes, Bob, I'm bushed, and I've got a lot to do tomorrow. Next job I get is going to be a soft office job like yours, be home in the evenings, and don't have to kill yourself over weekends. Give you a call tomorrow. Good night."

"Good night, Marge, Scott."

What a relief to get out in the fresh air. I wonder if Marge would drive home? She doesn't look up to it, guess I'll have to. That bed is going to feel good tonight. The dash lights seem awful dim. Better get the battery checked tomorrow. The lights along the river drive are pretty tonight. Seems as though I hit all the lights red on the way down, but I'm luckier coming back. I hope Marge is as tired tonight as I am. Wonder why she's sitting so close tonight. She's probably cold, poor thing, with her bare legs hanging out. Guess I'd be cold too.

"Want to stop and get a bite to eat?"

"Not unless you do."

I sure don't want to. All I want is a nice clean soft bed. Don't know when I've been this tired. There's our house. Looks mighty good tonight. Must have left a light on. Might as well let Marge out at the door.

"Hop out, honey, I'll put the car away."

Garage looks pretty good since I cleaned it last week. Wonder how long it will stay this way. Now for a nice soft bed.

"Marge, how come you invited Steve for dinner tomorrow? I was counting on a peaceful day by ourselves tomorrow."

"Why, Scott, I thought you enjoyed Steve's company!"

Sure, but not seven days a week. Who said a man's home was his castle?

"Check to see if the door is locked before you come to bed, will you, Scott?"

"Sure." It's locked. What a mess. Off with the light and to bed with me.

"Where are my pajamas?"

"I didn't have time to pick up the laundry yesterday, Scott." Why not, for Pete's sake? What does she do with her time?

"Oh, forget it." She knows I like clean pajamas after sleeping out all week. One of these days I'm going to put my foot down. All she needs is a system.

Bed feels good. Wasn't too bad a party tonight. Maybe we shouldn't have left early. Wonder if J.B. is still on his feet. Probably dead to the world.

"Scott, are you asleep?"

Now what. "About."

"What did Helen have to say tonight?"

"Nothing."

"Wasn't that dress of hers disgraceful?"

I thought it was pretty nice. "Maybe a little low."

"A little! She had half the men ogling her."

"Oh, I didn't notice."

"Well, I did."

I'll just bet you did. Why doesn't she pipe down so I can go to sleep?

"Scott, will you open the window a crack?"

"Yes, dear." Why doesn't she do it herself. "Ow!"

"Did you bump yourself?"

"Really cracked my shin."

Back to bed. "Goodnight, dear."

"Good night."

Peace and quiet finally. Wonder how long it will last. Got to get up early in the morning. So tired. So very tired...

## *Lilacs Are Mean*

*Virginia Kiernan*

She was old and each year the ugliness gnawed at her feet more as she and the young grandson watched the trains fly past. Delivering the *Methodist Monthly* to the invalids on Church Street, the boy would run ahead of her, singing wry songs that he made up to suit his childish tempers. He was not always so unkind.

In back of Margaret's house (Margaret was the daughter) there was a sort of vineyard. It was a small one, built around a sort of fencework; there were little wicker benches inside. They sat there sometimes, the boy George, and herself. She told him fine stories of her own little childhood, the mother dead, the day she got her piano. Nice stories. She could repeat them a thousand times over, and they were still warm tales to the youngster's ears.

When he cried, it was she who would comfort him. "There, there, little fellow, I doubt that it's that bad." Sometimes, the boy would think to himself, it is.

In short, she loved the boy for all the wild atrocities of his youth and babyhood; and he was fond of her stories and her gentle ways. She could have hated him for this easily; he was spoiled and nasty. Often he begged strangers for pennies. Still, still so, he was her grandson, a distant part of her, and they were quite alike in thought and feeling. She only restrained herself.

It seemed every day she grew older, more wrinkled. The years screamed at her in her head; she wanted to shout back and couldn't. She even seemed to grow smaller in stature and thoughtfulness. Once, when they were all gone for the day, she even took the largest apple in the cut-glass bowl, laughing about it because it was secret. Later there were deep feelings of guilt and remorse at her selfishness.

When the boy was five, he went to school. He came rushing, at first, to tell her of all the wonderful things he found there. He was intelligent; he loved his school. She listened with eagerness. It was not long, though, that she began to resent this. She was the storyteller. How unfair of the boy to cast his old grandmother aside after all the wonderful days they had spent in each other's thoughts. She was cross with him. Soon, he stopped coming to her room or to the vineyard. There were other fat boys he had to see; there were games to be played. She was often lonely.

Walking down Church Street, it was all different, quieter, I suppose. She decided to stop delivering the *Methodist Monthly*. "I am too old," she said. "I am almost an invalid myself." Saying this, she found slight justification for her heinous act. Even the trains seemed annoying; besides, what glory, when you watch life fleeing and there is no one to help you watch? "None," she said. "There is no enjoyment."

She took to sewing, but George wouldn't wear the mittens she knitted. She burned them in the fireplace the same day he refused them. That night, when she put on her long, yellow nightgown, she broke a fingernail off. Though she had never been concerned with fingernails before, she broke down and cried a full half hour. Then she went to sleep.

The final blow came on a Wednesday morning in May. The boy was seven years old, in the second year of school. That day, with the flowers almost ready to perform and the world warm and mindful of good times, she went for a walk. It seems that on this day, too, the boy and his class were on an excursion to the town library, on the same street. The meeting was tragic.

The teacher, Miss Verdant (the name fitted her well), stopped the procession and addressed the old woman. How old is she now, thought the teacher. I wonder if she is senile. They talked about the weather, the death of Mrs. Warren. The grandmother tried not to look for the boy, but her eyes worshipped him yet, and so they searched for the fat youngster with the red cheeks and the big, blue eyes. When they found him, he was not looking at her. The teacher turned, smiling.

"Class," she said in her guest's voice, "this is George's grandmother! Isn't that nice?"

"Golly, George," said one of the pretty girls, "my grandma is not as old as . . . as all that. You sure have an old grandmother."

Two other girls snickered.

"Diana," said the teacher. "Diana, I am shocked."

"She's not my grandmother," George shouted. "She's not *my* grandmother!" All of a sudden his mouth became a huge cavern and his blue eyes disappeared and were covered up by two fat hands and he howled; the whole group looked shocked and the teacher, highly embarrassed, did not know who to console, and so she went to the boy and the grandmother was left alone. Her face was flushed, and the day was screaming again in her ears and finally she turned and walked on, but she was shaking inside and ill.

When she got home, she went to her room and undressed. "I am a little bit sick," she said to Margaret. "I'm going to bed." My God, thought Margaret, what am I in for now?

In less than twenty minutes she found out what she was in for. Miss Verdant brought George home and told her the story. Margaret looked at George helplessly. "George," she said. "Shame on you, George, for treating your lovely grandmother that way!"

"She's not lovely, she's old," he said, and his eyes clouded over again.

"She is a very dear grandmother and she has always been good to you. I thought you loved your dear grandmother. Oh dear, why are you such a nasty boy."

Later that afternoon, she went to grandmother's room. "Mother, let me come in a minute, please."

After minutes, the key was turned in the door and she was admitted.

"Mother, I know what happened today. It mustn't upset you. He's just a little boy and he doesn't know any better. You know that he loves you, don't you, mother? Why, you've been so good to him all these years. We couldn't have gotten along without you." She took the old woman's hand and she patted her back. It was not good enough.

Inside the month, the old woman died. It was a heart failure, they said. It happened in the vineyard and Margaret found her there. They all cried deeply except George, who seemed to be indifferent, relieved, and angry all at the same time. They kept him from attending the funeral. Too young, they said. George said nothing at all.

Sitting at the supper table the day after the funeral, they all talked. "Well, at least we know she is happier now," said George's father. He was George too, but they all called him "Ham" for that was his nickname.

"I don't know about that either," said Margaret. "I don't know how I'll get along. Weren't the lilacs beautiful, Ham? Oh, I'm so glad she had lilacs. I know she loved them always . . ." Margaret, who already had red marks beneath her eyes, started to cry again. She got up and ran into the kitchen.

George sat at the table, toying with his food. "Eat your food, Georgie," said papa. Margaret came back to her chair. "Yes, eat your food, Georgie," she echoed.

George slid from his chair and walked out, slamming the back door. "I hate you!" he cried. "I hate everybody!" He walked into the vineyard and flopped on one of the wicker benches. "I didn't mean to, grandmother," he blubbered. "I love you and I'm sorry and it's too late, but I didn't mean to."

His nose was running, and he wiped it on the sleeve of his red plaid shirt. "I love you, grandma, and I hate everybody else. I want to hear about the piano and the day you ran the store." He curled up in a fat ball on the

bench, crying softly. "Lilacs are mean," he said to himself. "Lilacs are nasty and mean and hateful and so am I."

Looking down at the ground and the ants, he discovered through tears an old yellow marble with brown in it. He reached down and closed his hands around it. It was lovely. After a while he took it with him upstairs and put it in a special box.

## *Holy Is the Heart*

*Virginia Kiernan*

"Holy is the heart in this heathen wind that knows no God and howls at my window." — K. Raghavendra Rao

### ONE

It was a small tavern. They called it the Checkerboard. No one played checkers. They came there to drink. And after a while they all looked like a checkerboard. It was the way they acted more than anything else. They all came there and writhed in reds and blacks. They held conversations:

"Harry is good people, right?"

"Right!"

"Right!"

In repulsion, I was drawn in. My mind is on a negative charge always. Therefore, while I was out of position, I belonged there. At least I thought so.

I drank there. After a while, I began to talk with them. They liked me because I was 'different'. I was a flower and they knew they could pluck me and kill me if they wanted to. Nobody ever likes or not likes somebody unless they know that the one in question can be killed or is dying. Then there is justification in it.

Some of the sadists thought they could make me like them. I mean, they thought I could change—to be one of the checkers too, but the game was so intricate that I shied away at my moves. My most intimate sexual contacts had been with my doctor when he removed my appendix; so for the most part, I sat with my spiral notebook and pulled out the bits of paper that were caught inside.

One person who also frequented the Checkerboard called me the "sweet lemon." He said that I really wanted to belong. I said, "I want to be alone," simply because everyone wouldn't have anything to do with me. This psychologist turned out to be a two-bit accountant for some fishery in town. You could have guessed it if you looked at him. His eyes bulged out and his lips were moist and sensual. I guess fish are sensual. I have never made bold studies of them. They are too unhappy for my own watching. They are too much like people.

Well, one night in the winter, something happened at the Checkerboard. I was sitting there all alone talking to Forrest, the bartender, when in came this young boy. He looked rotten. I mean his eyes were all bloodshot, and he was thin and sick looking. He had a red beard and no overcoat. His face was very narrow and he had no eyebrows, no lashes. His lips were thin, and his actions strained.

When he ordered a drink, I noticed that he had an accent, but I could not tell whether it was German, French, English or Spanish. He spoke softly, in a begging sort of way. I can remember that he wore khakis and a big, bulky-knit sweater. There was snow on it still and he looked cold. I almost expected to look at his feet and see him barefooted, so I refused to look. I am afraid of pain, especially in somebody else. It doesn't matter about me, because I have known it for bloods and bloods.

He stood there and took his drink in one gulp, then ordered another. Then he leaned over to Forrest and said something. Forrest nodded his head and the boy walked over to the piano and sat down. He began playing very fine classical stuff — Rachmaninoff, Bach, real good stuff. Then he moved into some light jazz, and he could really play.

After a while, I picked up my drink, lit a Camel, and walked over to the piano, so I could hear him better. I get a real charge out of watching the hands when someone plays anyway. So I just stood there and watched him, and I could feel myself glow inside with the tremendous beauty of it. All of a sudden, he looked up at me and said, "Is there something you'd like to hear?"

"No," I said. "No, I just like to hear you. It is as if it is myself. In this moment, you are me. I just want to hear."

He must have played for a full hour. When he was through, there were about eight of the checkers sitting around with sneers on their faces. I went back to the bar and ordered another drink. The kid followed me.

"What's your name," he said.

"Ellsbeth."

"What are you going to do with your life?"

"I don't know. It doesn't make much difference, does it?"

"No," he sighed, "It doesn't make much difference."

"What will you do," I asked him.

"Oh," he seemed to be ready to laugh. "I think I will weave what destruction I can, and then . . ."

"Then?"

"It doesn't make much difference, does it?"

"No."

We were getting nowhere. Finally I said it, "We're getting nowhere."

"That's because we're the same person. You can't get anywhere with yourself."

"No," I said. That was the truth. "I guess I better be going," I said. "It's getting late."

"Where will you go? What are you running after?"

"Myself. That's why I sleep. Basically, I don't need sleep. I just do it, so I can forget for a few hours. An escape mechanism, you know?"

"Yes, I know."

I called a taxi, and left the Checkerboard without saying goodbye to anyone. I tipped the taxi driver, who makes probably three times as much as myself in a week, a quarter and went into the house. Since my parents are very conservative and unaware of evil, I tiptoed up to my room and slipped into bed. I always do this with my clothes on — then if there is no noise, I undress. If they come to see if I'm home, I pretend I have been sleeping and act real disturbed. Anyway, this night there was no sound, so I got all ready for bed and fell in and was asleep.

No sooner than I had fallen into a deep, wandering slumber, then I heard my mother calling me.

"Ellsbeth! Are you home?"

"Yes, I'm home."

"Can you come to the phone. It's a young man. He says it's important."

"I guess so." I pulled on my robe and made my way downstairs. My mother stood there without her teeth, looking very fat and stupid. "It's a fine hour for getting calls," she snarled.

I said, "Oh really," and picked up the phone.

"Hello."

"Hello, Ellsbeth."

"Who is this?"

"William."

"William who?"

"William, the piano player."

"Oh, well what do you want?"

"Nothing. I just wanted to tell you goodnight."

"Well where did you get my number? You woke up my folks and they're pretty mad."

"Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know you lived with your parents. One of the bartenders gave me your name. I just wanted to tell you goodnight."

"Goodnight," I said, and hung up the phone with a bang. "It was nothing," I said to my mother who stood gawking at me in her yellow flannel nightgown. "Goodnight."

I was shaking with a fury when I got back upstairs. I don't like to be disturbed. I don't like people, and I hate telephone calls. Besides I had to warm my feet up all over again.

## TWO

The next day was a Wednesday, and as always on Wednesdays, I go to work. As a matter of fact, I go to work every day except Sunday, and in the summers, I sometimes have to work then. I'm real funny about my job. I take no calls from anyone during the day; and nobody comes around to meet me for lunch or anything. Work is work, and I don't mix it with the trivial people that I associate with at other times. It is sort of a sacred place, because I never thought I was capable of holding a job and I don't want to lose it. It's not that I'm unintelligent; it's just a fear that I have.

Anyway, I had been there about an hour, when I heard a face looking at me. I looked up and here was the red head. My face was crimson. I got up and walked up to the counter in the front. "What do you want?" My voice was like ice and so was the rest of me.

"I came to say good morning," he said.

"Look," I answered him. "I don't like this. I don't like it at all. Now go away and leave me alone. I'm working."

"It's my beard, isn't it? You don't like me because of my beard, because it makes me different."

"No," I said. "It's not the beard."

"Oh." He stood there looking at me, begging for sympathy. "Oh," he said again. "I was hoping it was the beard. I wear it because whenever anybody rejects me I can blame it on the beard. I would shave it off for you."

"Don't bother," I said. "Just leave me alone. I don't want your company."

"Well, I want yours," he said. "I want yours and I guess I'll have to fight for it. You don't like me because you see yourself. That's all. You hate me because we're alike only you don't have a beard for an excuse."

"Go away, please," I turned away from him.

"Not unless you say you'll see me again."

"O.K., I'll see you again."

"When?"

"I don't know. I've been pretty busy."

"When?"

"Tuesday night at seven at my home. But don't come to the door. I'll watch for you and come out."

"I don't have a car."

"Tough."

"Could we walk somewhere?"

"O.K."

"O.K."

"Goodbye, William."

"Goodbye."

I walked back to my desk; I was suddenly tired. I worked badly all day, and was glad to leave when the bells tolled five.

### THREE

Tuesday came around too quickly. I waited for it with anticipation. The kind you feel before you go to the psychiatrist. You know you're going to get tripped up if you open your mouth or if you don't. You know that everything you say or don't say is going to prove that you're a masochist or that your father didn't give you enough love after you were seven, or that you're suffering because you lost one of your toes swimming (the castration fear or something like it). But the day came, and I sweated it out every night beforehand.

He was two hours late. I sat and strummed on my guitar in the darkness; I kept looking out the window, hoping it would be soon. Finally, a dirty yellow cab pulled up in front of the house and he got out. I ran down the stairs like sixty. "I'm going for a walk," I shouted, "I'll be back in an hour or two." I wanted to add, "If I'm not back, call the police," but I had to restrain myself. I met him on the steps.

"Hi, William," I said.

"Hello, I didn't think you'd be here."

"Oh, I'm here. I said I'd be, didn't I?"

"Yes, but I'm surprised that you are."

"You're late."

"Yes, I'm sorry." He looked up at the sky. "It's awfully cold out. What shall we do?"

"I know a place where we can walk to," I answered. I started walking ahead of him.

"Wait for me," he cried.

"You can come or not. I think you're old enough to keep up."

He ran to where I was walking, out of breath. "I'm thirty-three," he lied.



"Oh, that's nice. How well you preserve your age. And what do you work at? Are you a scientist?"

"Sort of. I'm a chemist." I was shocked that anyone could be so stupid as to think I was so stupid. I was more like stunned.

"How nice," I repeated "and I suppose you've done other work too."

"Yes, I was an interpreter for some years. I speak several languages."

"Good! You ought to write books."

"Oh yes," he said. "I do write books. Well, only two have been published, but of course I don't need to use my own name."

I started to laugh and he looked at me kind of funny. Then he laughed too. It was all so simple and so almost reasonable, the lies. It made a good basis for a warm relationship . . . especially, for two people who were quite alike.

William and I walked about a mile and finally stopped at a little coffee house on University Avenue to have some coffee. We sat in the booth shivering. I was listening to some real warm music (Kenton or something) and was drumming my fingers on the table. Suddenly, he grabbed hold of my arm and said, "Ellsbeth, I strangled a kitten once. It was all soft and furry and small, so I strangled it."

A wave of something washed over me. I think it might have been some animal fear for myself. It was deep and uncertain. "Why?" I asked. Was he trying to forewarn me of something? Sometimes, I say strange things, and later they turn out to be warnings, premonitions of something to come.

"I don't know, I don't know," William shook his head. "I hate myself, but I love it and I don't know."

I shrugged it off.

"Did you ever read Nietzsche?"

"Who hasn't?" He grinned at me and let go of my arm.

"Nietzsche had a pretty powerful idea," I continued.

William laughed. "Yes, he had a powerful idea, but power doesn't make a thing true, necessarily." He began rattling off some German that I couldn't understand. I only knew that it was the kind of German that they use (the Germans) so I listened to the music some more. Then he grabbed hold of my other arm and said, "Once I got a girl pregnant. Do you know what she did? She took quinine. I wanted to marry her, but she wouldn't have me. She took quinine. And when I went to the hospital to see her, she screamed and hollered and made me get out. Then the doctor took me into the lab and held up the fetus and said, "This is what would have been your baby. You should have married that girl. You should have married her, but you forced her to this." William let go of my other arm and slumped back. He wasn't looking at me.

"I don't want to hear any more of your sadness," I said. "I don't like all the sadness." I finished my coffee and stood up. "Let's go home. Let's go back." He helped me into my coat and we paid for the coffee. I mean I paid for the coffee. Then we walked back home.

We stopped in front of the house. William hadn't said anything, but now he spoke.

"What's it like in your house," he said pointing.

"Oh, I guess it's like all houses. A group of people who hate each other. Nobody listens and you all hate each other secretly."

He smiled. "That's how it is at my house, Ellsbeth."

I stood looking at my Home, hating it yet hating him more. "I can't explain it," I said, "but I have to go in there. Once, there was a murder in the neighborhood. I used to dream about it, that the murderer would get me. That he would climb up on the roof and come in my window, and I started to leave the door of my room open so I could get out if he came. And then I started to dream that my brother was going to attack me when my room was open. So it was a terrible decision, whether to close the door and let my murderer get me, or open the door and let my brother attack me. It was so terrible, and finally, I closed the door, because I made a decision."

The memory was true and I felt like screaming, but it had all happened years ago and no one would understand it.

"I'm sorry," said Bill. "Can I see you again. I think I want to marry you."

"No," I said. "No more. I don't want to see you." I ran to the house and closed the door. The lock snapped on when it shut. "I'm home," I called to my mother. "I went to the coffee house." Then I went upstairs and to bed.

#### FOUR

My life became my own again. I worked; I started staying home more. I wrote poems and letters and I got a lot of dreamless sleep. Then about four weeks later, I got a phone call. It was William.

"Hello."

"This is William. I know you don't want to see me, but you didn't say I couldn't call. I guess I've missed you."

"Oh, well it's all right, William, I guess I've missed you too."

"Really?" His voice was like a child's and I felt a small spasm of guilt.

"Then can I see you?"

"Well, no, I don't think we should, really. There's nothing to say to you, so I guess I don't want to see you."

"I shaved off my beard."

"Oh, so you're telling the truth this week."

"Yes."

"Gee, William, I have been so busy."

"Running again, huh?"

"No, I'm not running."

"Yes you are. You're like me. From one place to another. Running, running, running. And it won't do any good. It won't help, because you can't stop and you won't ever find it. You won't ever find it."

All of a sudden, I could feel the sound of my feet hitting the pavement again and I knew he was right.

"You make me run, William, you chase me." My voice was contempt.

"But I *am* you. You said that yourself."

"Well, I was wrong. I'm not you. You're not me. I was wrong."

"Please let me see you. Please . . ."

"O.K., William, once more. Only the only free night I have is on Saturday."

"Saturday," he said, "Well, I have to babysit for my woman on Saturday. She's in the hospital and I have to take care of the baby. Could you come up to the apartment?"

"Yes, I suppose so. Where does she live?" He gave the address on the crummy part of town and directed me to an upstairs apartment on which the door would be marked, "No Parking," I wrote it all down, put it in my purse, and said goodnight to William. I vowed that after this time I would never, under any circumstances, see him again.

## FIVE

The apartment William's lover kept was a mess. They must have had a fine time there, because they certainly didn't do any work. It also turned out that his lover had six children under eight. They had all been put to bed.

I sat down in an overstuffed chair and lit a cigarette. William was in ecstasy. He acted as if it were completely natural that I should be there. He talked about the weather, his job, and his recent illness. Then he pulled out a piece of paper and handed it to me.

"What does this mean to you?" he said.

I studied the picture. There were two doors and a window in between. One of the doors was partly open. I didn't get the connection. "It looks like some dirty apartment house," I said.

"What else?" William was sitting nervously on the edge of his chair.

"Well, it looks like this room is having a party," I said pointing to the closed door, and this room, where the door is open, there is a person all alone. She has opened her door so she can hear everything that is going on inside. She is very lonely. She would like to be a part of the next door's games."

"And the window," urged William.

Suddenly, I realized, and I threw the paper from me in revulsion. "You tricked me," I cried, "you tricked me." I reached for my coat and I started to cry. "You pig," I bawled, "you dirty pig." I ran from the place, crying and infuriated. It was insane and vulgar, and everything smelled.

## SIX

I was down at the Checkerboard one night. It was summer. While I was sitting there, brooding, I suddenly felt a hand on my shoulder. It was William. He had called me about a thousand times and I always hung up on him. "Hello, Ellsbeth," he said.

"William!"

"Are you still mad at me?" I noticed that he had grown his beard again.

"No, William. I'm not mad anymore. Nothing matters to be mad about anymore."

"Oh. I got married in May, you know."

"No, I didn't know."

Ya, I married Ruth."

"You don't sound too enthused."

"No, I'm not. I hate her. We have only one thing in common. Besides that, I hate her."

"But you married her?"

"Yes, I married her." His voice was full of bitterness and pain.

"Bring me another drink," I called out to Forrest. I looked at him. "I'm sorry you got married, William."

"Yes, yes, so am I."

I lit up a cigarette. Then, as an afterthought, I offered him one. He took it, and I lit him up. "Do you want a drink, William?"

"Yes, I'd like that. I can't pay back, though. I can't pay back."

We sat there, drinking, and talking. We even laughed a bit. Then all of a sudden, William put his head down on the bar and started to cry. I didn't know what to do, but instinctively, I reached out and touched him. "Help me," he cried, "help me."

"I can't," I gasped, "I can't help you. I don't know how to help myself."

"Help me, help me, help me," he cried. He was oblivious to all I said. "Oh Ellsbeth, help me." Then he stood up, wavered, and fell on his face on the floor.

"Help me!" I shouted out at the checkers. "Help me!" I leaned over him and tried to do something. And everybody stood and gaped at me like I was some kind of a nut. Then, William got up, pushed me away, and walked out of the Checkerboard.

### SEVEN

It is winter again. Today I was reading the paper. I had a cake in the oven, so I was sitting in the kitchen reading. All of a sudden I looked at the headlines, and there in bold type it said "Family Dies in Fire." William Duhamel, his wife, and his seven children all died in a fire.

I read the article over and over again. When I was finished, there was a stinking odor in the kitchen. The cake I had been baking was burned and black and ugly. I had to throw it away.

Then I went upstairs to my room and lay on the bed. I got a volume of Nietzsche down from my bookcase and read about the superman. It was a powerful idea, but it wasn't necessarily true.

How does a person feel when he is dead. He still sees; he still thinks. I do anyway. Maybe the person just dodders through time with the rest of the objects. Maybe he talks and laughs and drinks himself to forgetfulness. I don't know what to do.

I think I will go down to the Checkerboard pretty soon. Maybe they'll like me today. I might even be crowned king; I might capture all the red men or the black men or . . .

First I'll have a drink. Then I will let myself down on the board, slowly. God is nothing. I am too holy myself to have a God. I think I'll go down and eat burned cake with the rest of the animals.





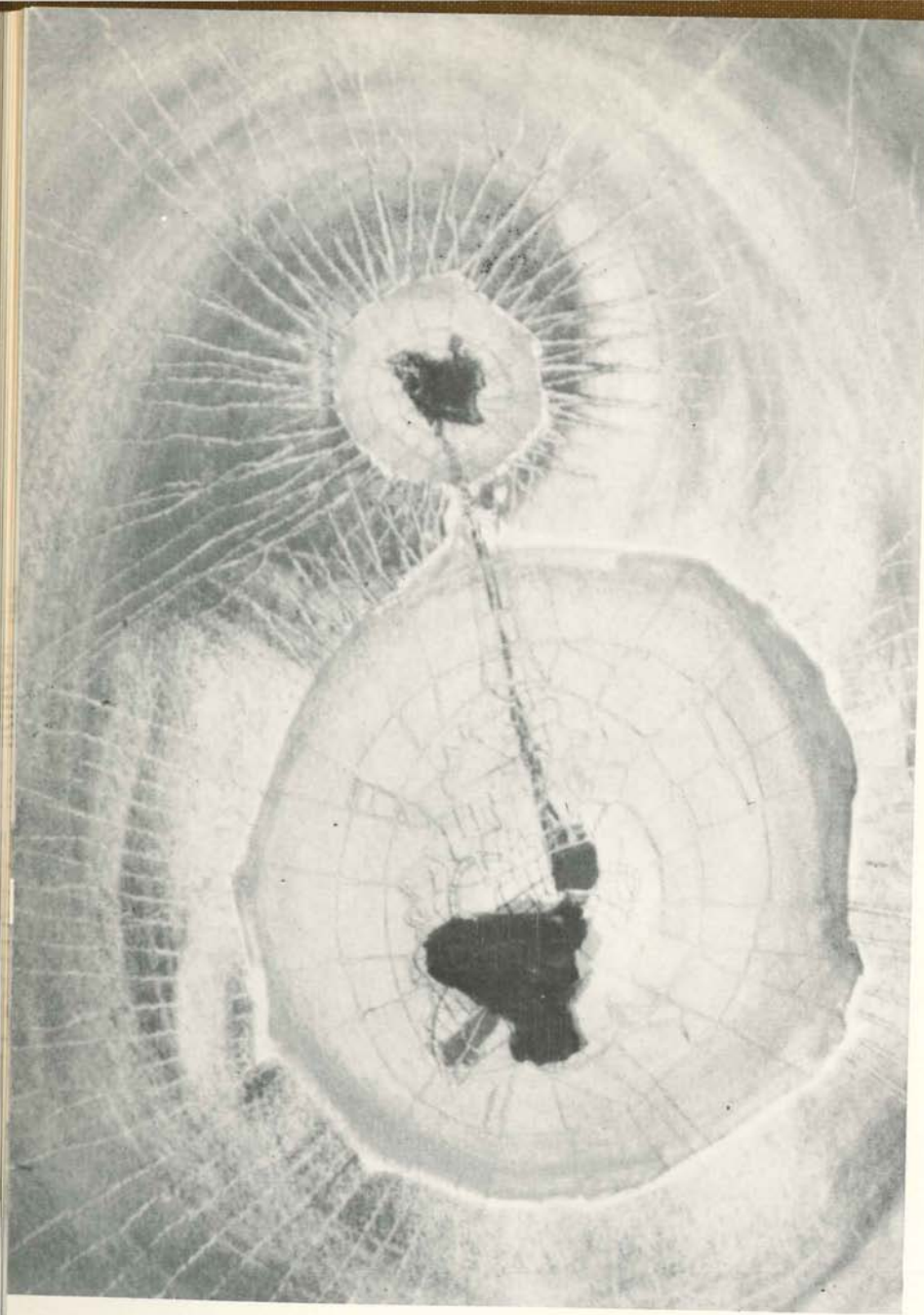
"IVY" *Paul Corbin*

"CATHEDRAL" *Vara Bones*

"RIVER OF FIRE" *Celia Bird*





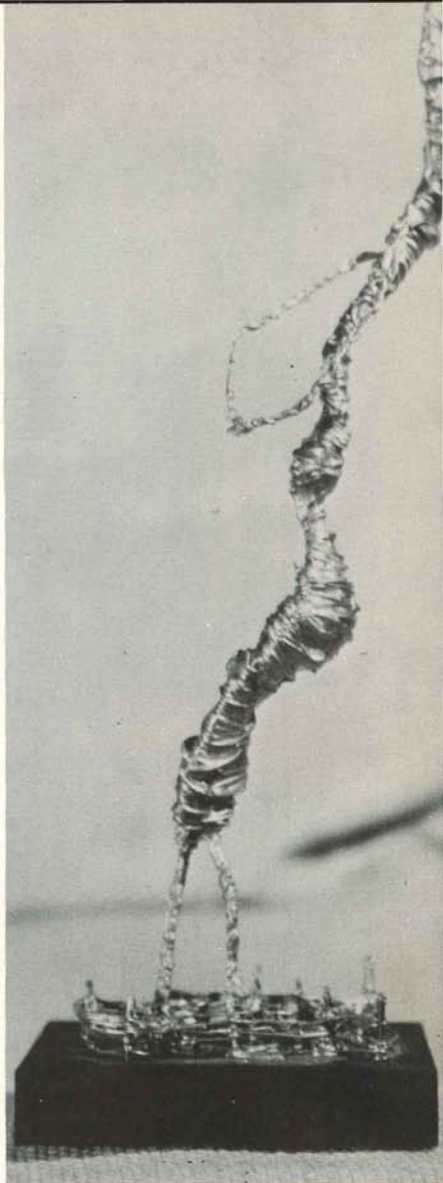


"MAPLE MITOSIS" *Richard Jacobi*





"HAND" *Pat Rooney*



"UNTITLED" *Doris Wood*

"NEVITABLE AFTERMATH"

*Joanne Volga*





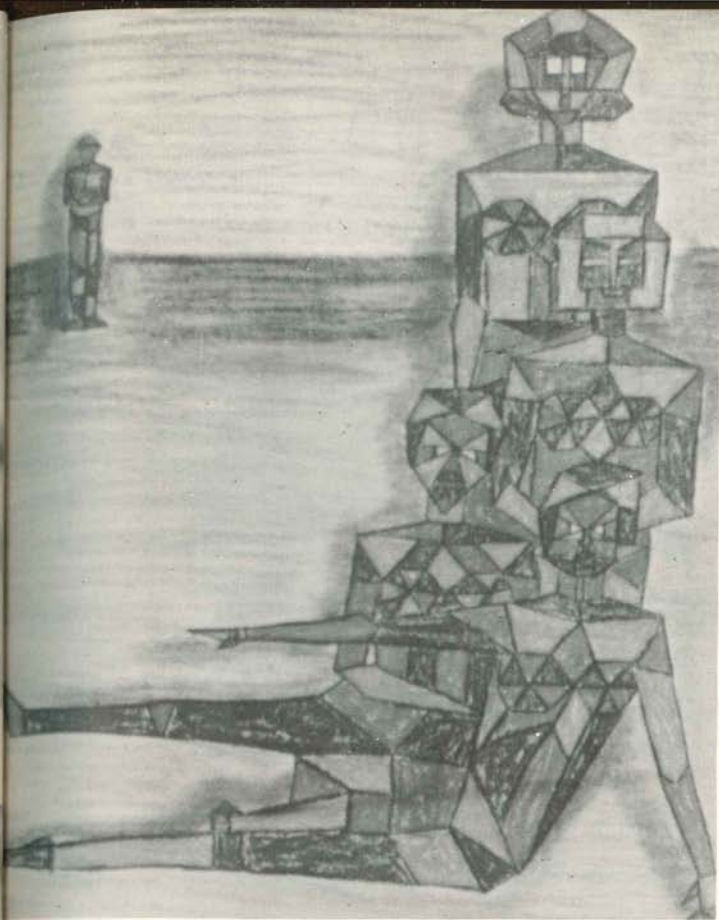
"ID AND SUPER-EGO" *Celia Bird Bean*



"UNTITLED" *Steve Kammerer*

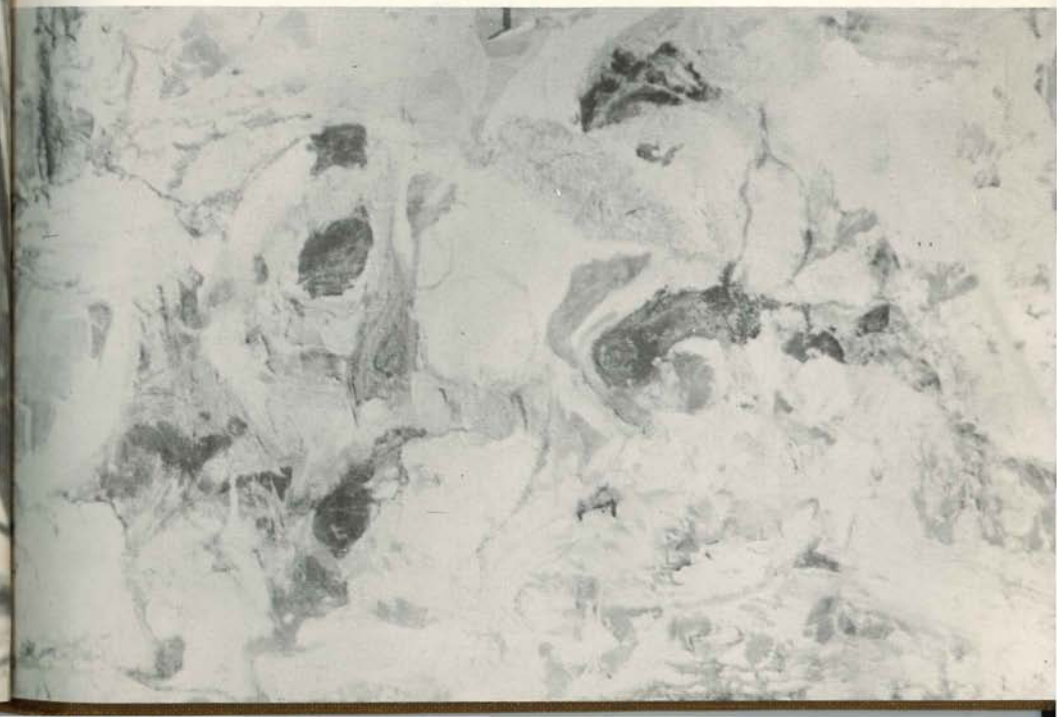
"MOMENT IN CREATIVE EVOLUTION" *Jane Spaulding*

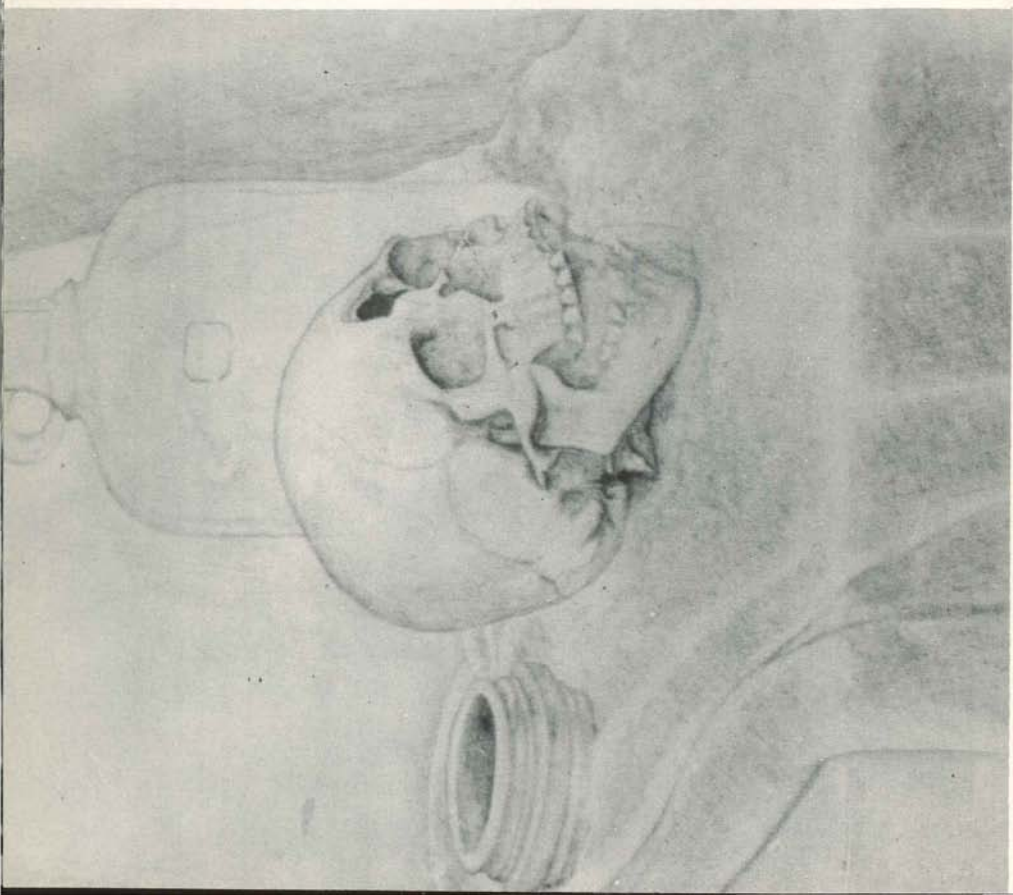




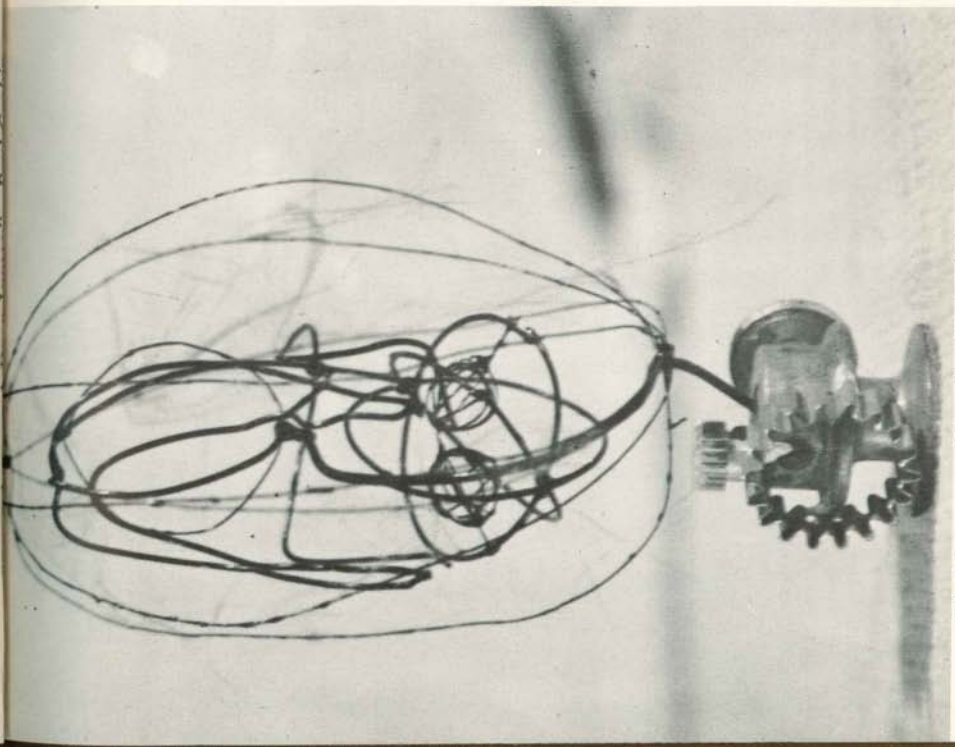
"THE GREATEST SEX"  
*Noel Mickelson*

"VAN DISH GARDEN" *Paul Corbin*

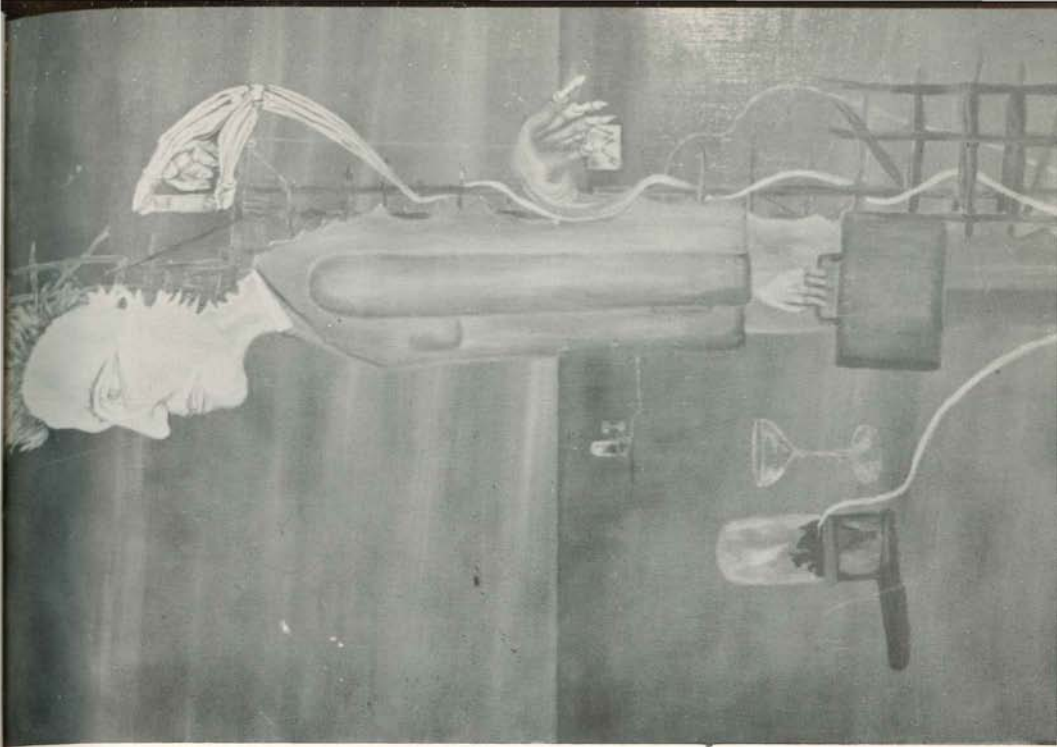




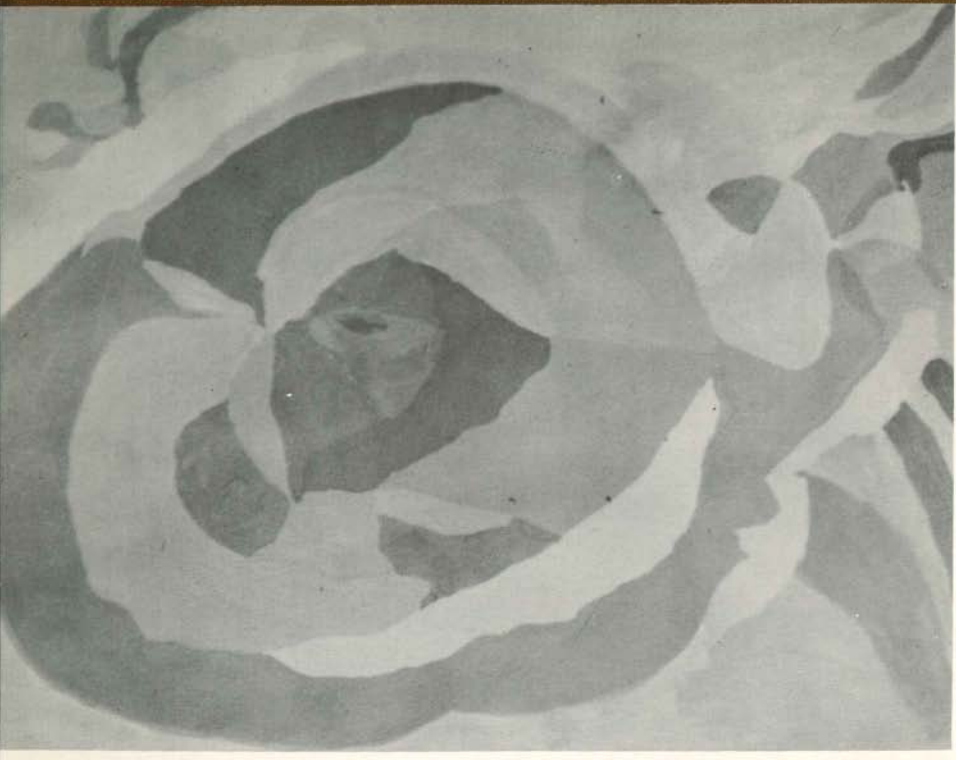
*"REVELATION" Bill Henaman*



"A MACHINE IS BORN" Richard Jacobi



"ORGANIZATION MAN" James Brown



"ROSE STUDY" April Nourse

## Three Wishes

Martin Sutherland

Milo Boden sat at the kitchen table, looking out into his flower filled backyard. He chewed each mouthful of his breakfast slowly and savored it as if he had never eaten bacon and eggs before. Indeed, during the past week, the little food he had eaten had seemed tasteless. He had slept little, and his work had suffered. A usually complacent and aloof man, he had snapped irritably at surprised employees, wife, and children. This morning, though he had slept little the night before, he observed life again with all his senses. His eyes moved lovingly over the carpetlike dark green grass and the kaleidoscopic flowers. In May the early bloomers filled the yard with frolicsome color. Blue iris, yellow daffodils and jonquils, pink and white peonies, and purple and red tulips were spaced evenly in artistic plots throughout the yard. No portion of the garden was without color, and Milo took great care in arranging his plants so that when one group of flowers stopped blooming, another blossomed beside it. The sadness of the passing of the present blooms was soothed by the later budding of poppies, pansies, gladiolus, moss rose, and others, which were all anticipated anxiously and granted the joy of meeting an old friend after a year's absence. The flower plots were bordered neatly with multi-colored stones, that Milo had collected diligently over many years and from every section of the United States. Slender-limbed fruit trees were spotted tastefully in the yard. The thick velvety Kentucky blue grass felt as if it were foam rubber under the feet. Not one blade dared to be longer than the next, nor could a single dandelion or leaf of crabgrass be found in the lush greenery. The scene of the radiant flowers, the dark rich earth, and luxuriant lawn filled Milo with bliss. A light warm breeze carried the sensuous fragrance to him, which seemed to enter and caress his skin and tasted sweet in his mouth. This morning, again all was right with the world.

After a fitful night of tossing and half consciousness, he arose with mixed emotions when the sky was still gray. He drew on only the Bermuda shorts he wore in the garden and placed his black massive rimmed glasses on his abundant nose, the prominent feature on his small head. Milo was anxious to go out into the yard in hopes of what he might find; but because of what he might not find, he hesitated. He fixed a cup of instant coffee and smoked a cigarette. The coffee was brackish and the stale cigarette contrasted sharply with his thick, stubby, paddlelike hands. He put both aside with a wry grimace and exhaled a sigh; like a man about to unburden a confession of a small misdemeanor, he stood up and walked with a growing tightness in his fleshy chest into the yard. He shivered a little in the early morning air although his body was covered with fine, downy hairs so profuse one would think they would provide warmth. His feet were too small for his thick squat frame, and caused him to waddle; and his short neck gave him the appearance of a child's bobbing toy with sand in the bottom. He started checking the traps, which were placed in strategic positions. There were nine. One was placed on each of the four compass points on the circumference ridge of the circle. One was placed midway on each of the radius ridges going northeast, southeast, southwest, and northwest, and the last was placed directly in the center. Milo had figured the center must

be the entrance to the burrow although it was not open. Milo checked each trap with a sinking heart. He had missed the varmint again. Milo noticed new ridges within the circle, which if they could be observed from above formed two bisecting triangles, and an imaginative person might take them to be the beginnings of an intricate star pattern. He walked to the last trap in the center thoroughly despondent, and hardly glanced at it upon turning back to the house. But wait! Glory be, the plunger had been down. The hair on the back of his neck was standing up and goose flesh was on his arms. He got on hands and knees and peered closely. Sure enough, the trap had been sprung. He swayed back on his haunches, clapping his thighs ecstatically, and chuckled gleefully. At last the little monster had been caught. But maybe something else had sprung it. No, that couldn't be possible; a premonition told him he had the pest. His prayers had been answered. Suddenly Milo was hungry. Good, he'd go have a large breakfast and enjoy his victory. As he almost skipped to the house, he hoped the creature wasn't dead and would suffer until he was good and ready to finish him off.

The mole heard and felt Milo's diminishing footsteps. He was probably going to get a shovel or eat breakfast. Barbarian! His mother had told him fur-raising tales of the savageness of humans, and his own experiences had taught him much. But his present thoughts had been mostly of food. Only a few beetles had stumbled into his reach since he had been caught. He thought hungrily of juicy earthworms, the different flavors of the different colored ants, and tender, plump slugs. He had been in the trap several hours now. He had been skewered in the buttocks. The wounds weren't particularly painful but they were mortifying and he had lost blood. He could not feel the blood seeping now and knew it had coagulated around the spikes, but he knew he was going to die. The blood he had lost was too much. He would die soon of blood poisoning, loss of blood, or because he couldn't reach food. He had been able to observe the traps before with amusement and disgust. They reminded him of medieval torture devices. They were simple, efficient, made of bright shiny steel. Two prongs held the device firmly in place. Smooth, slim, sharp spears slipped down, pressured by a powerful spring, on anyone who was stupid enough to touch the trigger. He wasn't. He merely made a deeper byway around them, that wouldn't show on the surface. It only took a few minutes, and he was always aware of when Milo changed locations.

The mole reflected on the other snares Milo had used. He had been in the yard only a week but he was certain Milo had used everything from haphazard, spur-of-the-moment ideas to hardware store merchandise. The first day he had been working on the circle ridge and had backed off to eat a morsel when something had been jammed viciously into the point where he had just been burrowing. It was thrust in again and again. The mole was not credulous, but he was certain the instrument had been a cavalry saber of the Civil War period. A good one, too, Toledo steel; a fitting weapon to die upon. But he was not ready yet. He took a nap. The next day he was working on one of the surface radius ridges when the ground was thwacked soundly above him. He was stunned slightly but he was in the process of somersaulting the earth behind him, and his backsides absorbed most of the blow. He drew back, and suddenly light streamed into his burrow. There was a profane exclamation, and then a hand probed around the opening. He



knew that game. Milo was in the yard the rest of the day. He set up a floodlight after dark. He had a spade to pound the ridge and a shotgun to shoot the stunned mole when he uncovered him. The mole had worked on the deep thoroughfares leading to his hunting ground until Milo gave up. On the third day the mole was having brunch when he smelled smoke. Fire, he thought, my home is burning! Sometimes the mole pretended he was people, joking with himself. He realized that Milo had put a den smoker in his burrow. The mole went down to a headquarters tunnel where he had plenty of room to roll around. He laughed wildly until tears ran down his cheeks. The next day an item was used that was a gross insult. The mole had poked his head out of a ridge to get a sense of its design from above ground. There before his eyes was a wire gopher trap. A gopher trap! He, King of the Burrowers, was hunted by a lowly gopher trap! That night he ate some iris and gladiola bulbs out of spite. He had come upon a game trap in a tunnel that was big enough to stop a moose. He wasn't even remotely large enough to spring the trigger. He found in many spots of his surface tunnels what appeared to be greasy bacon saturated with poison. Milo had cluttered up his hunting grounds with a ridiculous conglomeration. But the mole didn't really mind. He had not had so much fun and excitement since the time he had poked his head up right in front of a lady transplanting pansies.

But now the mole was being bothered by the dry air of the surface tunnel as well as loss of blood and hunger. He moved a little and a spasm of pain shot through him. He cursed Milo for his silly trap and wondered why God had bestowed such a fate upon him. Ahead there was the carcass of another mole. He had heard him enter his tunnels about five a. m. They had fought tooth and claw over the tunnels. He had tried to lure the other into one of Milo's traps but couldn't. The other mole was larger and was forcing him backward through the tunnels when he sprung the trap. The realization of his plight gave him additional anger, or adrenalin, and he had killed his rushing enemy. He would die soon too. He was a young mole and enjoyed life, but he accepted death philosophically as the gateway to something better. He knew also that in his place there would soon be other life. He had met and courted a lady mole in the spring, and their children would be born soon. Possibly they might even enter the world as he was passing out, he thought romantically. Then he felt the approaching footsteps.

Milo had finished breakfast, enjoyed a second cup of coffee, and had been in the garage to select a tool to uncover his prey. He had disregarded the smaller hand tools in favor of the longest handled tool in the place. He had put on a pair of gloves. He came smugly out to the trap. He wondered what the little devil looked like.

Milo dug a wide rectangle around the trap, and carefully started removing earth. He was working towards the plunger, as cautiously as though he were an archaeologist removing a new found artifact, but his hand unexpectedly touched the fur body. He jerked his hand away and tasted bile in his mouth.

"I wondered when you were coming to deliver the killing thrust," said the mole. He shook the remaining dirt off to see better although it pained him. He did not let Milo see his agony.

Milo observed the mole. He was about six inches long. Awfully small, he thought, to do such damage, but the claws on the front paws were im-

pressive. The eyes were so tiny they could hardly be seen, and no ears were visible. The ratlike tail and long nose were naked and shone pinkly. A musky odor filled the air.

"Are you dying?" said Milo.

"Yes, I will be dead soon."

"Ech, you're ugly," said Milo.

"That is a bit like the pot calling the kettle bellied."

Milo threw a handful of dirt at the mole. "I knew I'd outsmart you," he said.

The mole thought it beneath his position to make excuses and wished to maintain the dignity of a gentleman. "Yes, it has been good sport."

"Good sport!" exclaimed Milo. "You call it good sport to ruin countless plants and to tear up my lawn? You've cost me a lot of money and a lot of hard work, not to mention lack of sleep and peace of mind. You and your unsightly mounds."

The mole kept calm and hoped that his example would calm Milo. He wished his last moments to be free from quarreling. "My ridges are not unsightly. They are carefully executed, thoughtfully worked out, intricate geometrical designs."

"Phooey," said Milo. "Why did you pick on me?"

"Two reasons," said the mole, "for art's sake and my stomach's sake. Your elegant lawn merited only the work of a master mole. I am a master mole. And plants that were destroyed were for art's sake. That should be ample compensation. Secondly, a fertile soil like yours made digging easier; and consequently, it would be easier for me to acquire food."

Milo understood such reasoning and calmed down. "Don't you hate living underground?"

"It is a better world than yours."

"Do you have any children?" said Milo.

The mole was alert to any subterfuge and would protect his offspring, and he wasn't lying. "No," he said.

"Do moles go to heaven when they die?"

"Yes," the mole said, "and so do little puppy dogs." He had guessed the next question.

Milo wondered how the mole knew he would ask that. He had been worried about his dog. He wondered how you would get rid of moles in heaven when they were already dead. "You sure made a mess of my lawn," he said, surveying the damage. The ridges looked like grave mounds placed end to end and grown over with grass. Flower stalks were pushed askew, and some of the smaller shoots were lying on the ground. As Milo was assessing the damage, a fragment of an almost forgotten child's fable flashed through his mind. He looked back at the mole, excited.

"Say, can you grant three wishes to me if I save your life?"

The mole was completely taken aback. "Grant wishes! Where did you ever get such a ridicu-"

Milo brought the shovel down edge first as hard as he could on the mole's skull. He wiped the blood off the blade and laid it neatly beside the trap. Well, if he didn't hurry, he would be late for work.

## *Some Cream In the Coffee*

*Martin Sutherland*

"Lilly, would you like to go out with me tomorrow night?" As soon as the words were out of his mouth, he wished he hadn't spoken them. Maybe she'd say no. Nothing was in focus around him except Lilly. She hadn't said anything but her eyes had widened in one swift moment after he asked the question. Her silence urged him to say something else. "We could see a movie if you'd like and have something to eat afterwards."

"Well, I don't know." Lilly wiped the red linoleum counter with her apron, not looking at Loren. "Let me think about it, and I'll tell you later, okay?"

"Sure, you know where I'll be." Loren laughed at his own joke but her eyes didn't even crinkle. He walked swiftly past the canned goods and bakery department to the cool comfort of his fruit and vegetable section. He even forgot to take a piece of cheese from the leggy Dairy Maid. A shiver trembled through him when he bent to straighten some frozen food packages, and he realized that he had been sweating a little. The thermostat must be set too high. Maybe she really would say no.

He was busy the rest of the day. A lot of fresh stock came in. Loren had to keep the displays looking tantalizing, untouched, and moving steadily from the coolers to the counters. Many of the customers were doing their big shopping for the week. A complete thought of Lilly didn't pass through his head until quitting time. He was pulling bad heads of lettuce out of the pyramid. Half turning, he saw Lilly standing silently by him. She had her coat on.

"I'll go out with you tomorrow, Loren."

"Oh, good!" He thought his pleasure sounded forced and too false. "If you'll wait a moment, I'll get my coat and drive you home."

"No, that's all right. I only live over on Twenty-eighth street. Good night."

Loren went to the bar where he usually stopped before going home. He greeted the familiar faces, drank a glass of beer quickly, filled the glass again, and lit a cigarette. The odor of the supermarket still filled his nostrils. His date clicked into his consciousness like a slide in a projector. Why had he let his sympathy get the better of him? Maybe he had been too idle lately. He should work harder and get out more. He felt again the apprehensions he had felt when he first started to date girls. He'd walk down the busiest street of town with his clothes on backwards to get out of this one. But it was too late now, he had committed himself. Well, he'd just make it an average type date as if he'd taken her out several times before. He wouldn't try to impress her. It would only last a few hours, and it would be over forever. He saw his reflection looking back at him mournfully. Ray was wiping the bar by him.

"Pretty quiet tonight, Loren."

"Just thinking," Loren said to the bartender.

"Woman problems?" Ray winked at a blubberish, middle-aged woman two stools away.

"No," said Loren, "give me another beer."

He didn't have a chance to talk to Lilly before work the next morning. Usually the employees chatted in the back room for a few minutes before getting ready for the customers. Lilly came in only in time to get her cash drawer sorted out as the doors were opened. Loren watched her check-out counter during the morning but she was too busy to be able to talk to him. He saw her leave for coffee and followed her to the fountain counter.

"Morning, Lilly, busy day."

"It's normal for Saturday."

"Yes, I guess you're right." The waitress brought Loren's coffee. He usually had a roll but he didn't want to eat in front of Lilly. The waitress gave him his change. "You didn't take out for her coffee," he said.

"She paid for hers."

"My treat," said Loren and pushed a dime towards Lilly.

"No, I paid for mine already," Lilly said and pushed the money back.

"Go on, take it," he said and pushed it halfway between them. "My special on broccoli is moving pretty good. I priced it two cents lower than the A & P."

"People are buying a lot of apples too," said Lilly.

"Do you get many old coins making change?" asked Loren.

"Not like I used to," said Lilly. "I used to get a kick out of watching for them but not so much anymore." She was cleaning her fingernails with her fingernails.

"How will eight-thirty be tonight?"

"Good," said Lilly.

"Want to meet here at the fountain for lunch?"

"I bring my own lunch; I don't like restaurant food," said Lilly. "I have to go now."

"Okay, I'll pick you up tonight then." Loren got up with her. The dime was still on the counter but he had to leave it behind. That hurt. He didn't want the cruddy waitress to get something for nothing.

Late in the afternoon, Jerry from the meat department came over to Loren as he was uncrating oranges.

"Let's go out and hit a few spots tonight. I think I know where we can meet some live ones."

"I've got a date for tonight," said Loren.

"Oho, I saw you working on that Dairy Maid with the cheese samples."

"It's not with her," said Loren. He didn't have anything to hide. He didn't have to be ashamed of what he was doing. "It's with Lilly."

"With Scurvy Lilly?"

"Yes, with Lilly," said Loren. Red blotches appeared on his cheeks.

"Oh, the depths," said Jerry. He sighed grandly and walked away shaking his head with exaggeration.

Scurvy Lilly, some people felt no empathy for others, thought Loren. So she only washed on national holidays and brushed her teeth before her semi-annual visits to her dentist. Sure she got ripe but she wore a lot of perfume and deodorant and chewed gum most of the time. The hair on her legs wasn't too noticeable because she seldom wore nylons. Her hair had always looked like a rat's nest but she was fortunate now, for it seemed to be the fashion. He felt better about what he was doing. Let them snicker in the backroom.

She didn't even have the porch light turned on but she met him at the door ready to leave. She didn't look attractive. A balding young man beginning to turn to flesh and a young woman whose dark hair on her legs didn't show through her nylons in the shadowy artificial light. Loren bought two boxes of popcorn. Lilly left her coat on. The movie was restricted to adults only. Loren was uncomfortable. With a girl he knew, he would have liked to comment on parts of it, but he felt in the bolder scenes Lilly was embarrassed. They had chicken salad sandwiches after the movie.

"Did you like the movie?" Loren asked.

"I didn't understand it."

"Yes, it didn't seem to have any plot to it," said Loren. "The photography was good though."

"I read somewhere that in that type of movie so much is left out that was in the book that much of the meaning is lost. They don't dare put all of what was in the book in the movie anyway," said Lilly.

"At least it was in technicolor," Loren said. "I enjoy color films more than black and white whether they are good or not."

Loren was squirming all during the drive home. He couldn't make up his mind if he would kiss her good night or not. As he stopped in front of her house, he decided he would. Lilly climbed out of the car and walked to the door of the house without pausing. Loren had hardly caught up with her when she had her hand on the door knob and turned towards him. She was starting to say something when he bent towards her and was not expecting his intentions. Their teeth jarred together. It was sloppy. She hadn't even brushed her teeth; they were greasy and crooked. Loren straightened up quickly. Lilly frowned at him and entered the house.

Loren was awakened at eight-thirty by the ringing of his phone. A cheerful voice pommeled in his skull.

"Morning, I took the chance that you might be an early riser. Are you?"

"Yes, I just finished breakfast and was reading the paper."

"I figured you were going to call me so I took the initiative while my hair was drying."

"I'm glad you did," said Loren. He felt his voice straining some. He didn't know who he was talking to. It didn't sound like any of the girls he knew.

"I forgot to tell you I enjoyed myself last night."

"Oh-Oh, I'm glad you did, Lilly."

"It sure is a beautiful day. What do you usually do on Sunday?"

"Ah, I wash my underwear and socks at the laundromat and read and watch television the rest of the day," said Loren.

"You can bring your things over here; I have a washing machine."

"No, no thanks, Lilly. I kind of enjoy going to the laundry. I meet another fella there, we play blackjack while the machines are going."

"Do you go out for dinner?" said Lilly.

"No, I bring some TV dinners home from the store. They are nourishing enough."

"I don't know what I'll fix today," said Lilly. "I don't have many groceries in the house."

"The IGA is open until six o'clock," Loren said.

"That's right. I forgot about that." There was a long period of silence. "Wasn't that plane crash awful. Seventy-nine people killed!"

"When was that?" said Loren.

"Why, late last night," said Lilly. "It was the headline. Do you read the funnies first?"

"Ummph, yes, that's the top section. I have to see what Peanuts is doing," said Loren.

"Well, I'd better let you go." Loren didn't say anything. "You'd better think about bringing your washing over. Bye."

"Bye, Lilly."

Loren watched his breakfast food become limp. He could feel the sensation of those slick teeth yet on his mouth. As the day progressed he began to feel ill. There weren't any particular symptoms that he could pin down to any special disease. His stomach was queasy, and he couldn't concentrate. Lilly called again in the evening right in the middle of *Bonanza*, which was one of Loren's favorites. She talked about adultery and philosophy. Loren brushed his teeth extra well before going to bed. He had been feeling listless all evening, but thoughts jerked through his head like the action in an old time movie; they kept him awake past three o'clock.

Loren lay in bed long after the alarm went off. A melancholic depression had come over him. It felt as if there wasn't any flesh on his bones. He wanted to vomit but couldn't. Loren called the store and told them he wouldn't come to work. He dressed but lay on his bed most of the day. He was tired but restlessly awake—the way he used to think a dead person felt in a coffin. Moldy teeth were before his eyes, and he shivered. Guilt harrassed him for not going to work. It was as if he were a small child again and did his job in his pants and was afraid to tell his mother. What was he avoiding now, though? He didn't know.

Lilly called as soon as she got home from work.

"You should try what I do for a cold, Loren."

"What is that?"

"First I take a couple of shots of whiskey and soak in a good hot tub. Then some more whiskey and so to sleep for two or three hours. When I get up, I take a couple of more shots and lots of Ex-Lax. It helps to clean yourself out. I usually feel better in the morning then.

"The hangover must be as bad as the cold," said Loren.

"Oh, Loren," said Lilly.

The next day at work Loren was taking off his apron to go to morning coffee when Lilly came into the back room.

"Are you going to coffee now?" she said.

"Yes."

"Fine, we can go together."

Lilly sat down at the fountain counter just as Loren was ordering lunch. She met him again for coffee in the afternoon. That night on the phone she talked about classical music and platonic love.

Wednesday morning about coffee time Loren worked with the celery near the front. When he saw Lilly preparing to go to coffee, he went back to the toilet. It was a long fifteen minutes. When he came out, Lilly was standing by the swinging door.

"Ready?" she said. "I saw you were busy so I let another girl take my place." Neither one spoke until the coffee came. "Do you have a date Saturday?"

"My mother is fixing a dinner for me," Loren said.

"I guess I'll just watch TV; the late movie looks good," said Lilly. "Maybe I'll pop some popcorn too."

After lunch Loren was polishing apples when Jerry came over.

"Well, I see you and Scurvy Lilly have got a real affair going. Have you proposed yet? I won't refer to her anymore as scurvy if it hurts you."

"I'm in trouble, Jerry, She's getting out of hand. I don't know what I'm going to do."

"Yes, I've been watching. What ever possessed you in the first place? You can do better than her."

"Oh, I had some silly notion that I felt sorry for her. I knew that she never went out. I had a romantic idea she might blossom if I took her out once. I didn't think her life should be entirely bleak. Everyone should have a little cream in their coffee now and then."

"Some always prefer it black," said Jerry. "You better give her the heave-ho before it gets any stickier."

The talk with Jerry convinced Loren that he had better take action. He would do it at coffee. But the waitress stood right by them all the time, and Loren didn't want anyone around when he split with Lilly. He thought about calling her on the phone but it wouldn't be good manners. He let his telephone ring. Finally he drove over to her house.

"Goodness, there you are. I've been trying to reach you on the telephone. Come in."

"No. Lilly, I don't want to take you out anymore, or go to coffee with you, or to lunch with you. I don't want to see you any more. I only wanted to take you out once because you were lonely. I just wanted to cheer you up. You've got to quit chasing me around the store and calling me up. I don't want to hurt . . ."

"Stop!" she shouted. Her eyes squinted, and her breath came in gasps. "You butinsky, who asked you to come nosing around my life? Huh, I should have known better. I wasn't going to let myself get wrapped up in some school girl emotion. I should have known better." She was screeching now.

Loren looked towards the neighbors' houses. "Lilly, I . . ."

"Shut up, I said. Lonely, sure I was lonely but I've gotten used to it, and you came busybodying around. What do you think you are, a boy scout? Get away from my house!" She shoved the storm door at him with all her strength. It caught him squarely on his nose. Loren stumbled down the steps, hurting so badly that he could hardly see.

"I hope I broke it, you dunghill!" Phaa, she spit towards him.

Loren tore away with one hand on the steering wheel, and the other trying to stop the flow of blood. She's crazy, he thought, crazy.

# Long Grass

Katherine Wilson

Ah, could I lay me down in this long grass  
And close my eyes

Hanna threw her pencil down, reached over to where her cigarettes lay, pulled one out, struck a match, lit it, and leaned back in her chair. What was the sense in it? She glanced at the clock; seven thirty-one. If one could watch every second go by, would time seem longer? Her eyes followed the long, stemmed point as it moved smoothly around the face of the clock.

She closed her eyes and inhaled deeply through the cigarette; then secured it in the notch of the ash tray. The noise of the street mingled with the announcer's words coming over the radio.

What was it that was making her so restless and ill at ease in her own apartment? Fragments from poems read in the past ran through her mind.

'Life must go on;  
I forget just why.'

Maybe if she sat quietly enough and long enough, all the wisdom and answers of life would come to her. She smiled a little.

God, if someone was tuned into her thoughts they'd wonder if she was sane. That was a thought; she dwelled on the idea of someone questioning her sanity.

What did she know for sure? She pinched her arm; as far as she knew this was real. That she had been conceived in a mother's womb seemed plausible enough.

She decided to be intellectual. Wordsworth wrote of pain and pleasure. Pain is experienced both mentally and physically as is pleasure. In a womb of conception there is no pain or pleasure; only enlargement of a body. Why must there be a body? If one could come into a world without a physical body, there would be utter freedom. There would be no pain and pleasure, for how could one feel anything. You couldn't. A world without bodies seemed almost inconceivable. She would take it up with God when she had the time.

Time again. She examined the clock, seven-fifty. What a waste! Twenty minutes of visualizing a world without bodies. No wonder someone could question her sanity!

"Time to get to work." She wished she hadn't said that to herself. She detested hearing anyone say those same words.

Ah, could I lay me down in this long grass  
And close my eyes, and let the quiet wind  
Blow over me

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—this is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

"Good thinking, Keats," she told herself. I wonder what it would be like to love such a man. How demanding would his physical needs be? She



hoped he wasn't subject to sinus trouble. She could just see them lying in bed. He would be caressing her body as he hacked up a glob of mucus while clearing his throat.

What *was* the matter with her! Here she was, perched on the chair with legs crossed, scratching enthusiastically, and wondering if Keats had been bothered with sinus.

She got up, yawned, and with arms reaching far above her head, stretched the length of her body. She glanced at the mirror, decided her hair needed combing, and reached for the brush. Hair was an odd thing. Her's was coarse almost like straw. She nodded at her image reflected by the mirror, and began to examine her face. Bone structure good; mouth tended to be large, but it was molded well. Nose straight, thank God, and not pudgy. Eyes mediocre but thanks to modern science and *laissez-faire*, the cosmetic companies were making a fortune on incidentals like eye make-up.

She laughed out loud. A girl can make herself up so people would swear she was beautiful; not only in the face but the body, too. What fools they were or was she the fool? Most of the guys she knew cherished an image of a good-looking face and an hour glass figure.

"Somewhere," she asked herself, "isn't there a man who cares nothing for physical loveliness, and could love a horribly deformed and spastic body for what it contained?" The thought of whether she could love such a man struck her.

How phony she was! She looked disgustedly at the mirror. Who was she trying to impress, herself? She certainly wasn't impressing God.

Suddenly she sank to her knees. She searched for words that wouldn't come to her. What was she trying to say? If she could only grasp with her mind some truth, some truth she could hold without question. The desire to cry rushed over her. Maybe if she prayed, "Oh Lord, God, heavenly father," . . . . . words, always words.

She rose to her feet, walked back to the desk, and sat down. Drawing the chair closer, she sat silently for a moment; then reached into the drawer and pulled out a blank sheet of paper.

She glanced at herself in the mirror once more: then began to write.

Ah, could I lay me down in this long grass  
And close my eyes, and let the quiet wind  
Blow over me—I am so tired, so very tired.

## *Some Get Lost*

*Linda Zimmerman*

New York City. All my hopes and dreams were here. What happened? What happened to everything? to me? I'm only thirty. The same job, the same people, the same place every day. The first year here was a new pleasure; the cleanliness, the quiet, the independence, getting pretty things that belonged to no one else but me. But this phase of delight gradually paled. Then there was entertaining my friends. But that was a Cinderella family that disappeared at midnight. Look at the couch, pale rose and luxurious. It converts

into a double bed with a single pillow at the headboard. It's less a sign of luxury than a marker of defeat. Love has never been what I wanted it to be. All the years have passed as one, divided only by the seasons and the names of semi-annual lovers. Around me is quiet, loneliness, and within, a rage of color and life that struggles to get out. This life erupts in dreams that are forgotten in the morning.

Every morning I ride the Lexington Avenue bus and read the paper, I eat lunch in the restaurant in the office building, and stop on my way home at the grocery to pick up something for supper. On Saturdays I clean even though nothing gets really dirty. On Sunday morning I close up the convertible bed and Sunday nights it is opened again, seldom seen by anyone during the day. But I burn inside. How shall I say it?

The kitchen of this apartment was so small before I put on the scenery paper. It's a view from a small balcony of a beach and varicolored sea of anywhere in the world that is romantic and beautiful. In the distance there are misty purple mountains and closer up white, modern beach houses along a curve of pale sand. To complete the illusion of space and air, I hired a carpenter to make a shelf jutting inward from the printed railing, as if it were a little table on the balcony, and I can sit at this table and dine by the sea.

But this was a beach without people. Of course, it's easy enough to imagine that at breakfast it is too early for anyone to be there yet and at night it's too late. I wouldn't be lonely here because there would be tourists that would speak to me because they're as lonely as I am. And there would be ardent lovers in this new land. With the ceiling light off and one lamp on in the living room behind me, I can gaze down at the beach and sea all silvery in the moonlight.

There is a couple that comes to the beach often at night. They arrive separately at a designated place below. They meet furtively and stay for not more than an hour. The woman is well-dressed and lovely, and the man is tall and strong, and their encounters are passionate. I wonder if it's right to watch something so personal. Is there something obscene, both pathetic and vile about a peeping Tom? But what about exhibitionists? If people parade their passions on the beach, they should not expect privacy, even in the moonlight. Tonight, they seem to be arguing, standing face to face and shouting at each other. Now the woman has turned away and is beginning to run, and the man is following her, and stopping her with both his arms. She's twisted away and struck him and he's - - - he's - - - strangling her! He's laying her down on the sand as if she were a sleeping child. Now he's gone into the darkness. I wonder if the tide will wash her body out to sea?

The terror of that night is gone now, only one week later, and it's pleasant to eat here on the balcony again. I wonder if the woman had children of her own or if it was her lover that was married? Well, now there's a man walking down there on the beach, slowly with his head lowered. He's stopping where the body had lain. He has thrown himself down on the sand there. But he is smaller than the other man. So there were two men! This must have been her husband. Two policemen in khaki uniforms are walking up to him - - - handcuffing him. It isn't fair. First the affair and then this. But on the other hand, it seems very fair that life should be so unjust, that the wrong person should suffer for the wrong crime. I should be ashamed

of myself. It isn't life that is unfeeling, it's people. I'm as much to blame as the next one. I witnessed the crime and I should speak up. But how? A slip of paper to hand from the balcony. A slip of paper. There. "The lover did it." On the balcony railing so it faces the beach.

Oh! It's too late. The policemen have already left, dragging the poor man with them. But the sign is there. It's there for them to see later. I must go about my work.

That nap did me good. Now I'll fix some supper and watch TV. The sign looks silly now taped to the wallpaper. But I can't take it down. I'll use the blank side for a grocery list. It's twilight now, the true moment when the day is divided in two. Noon and midnight are only hours on the clock, but twilight separates the lonely from the loved.

The beach is empty now. No. A tall man is walking along the edge of the sea. He's stopping by the place where the woman was killed. He's looking up this way. He's the lover, the murderer. One arm embraces a rifle in a curve so unfamiliar and graceless that one knows it's a weapon of the hunted instead of the companion of the hunter. I feel sorry for him because he is as much a sacrifice as the murdered woman and the man wrongly accused of the crime. He must be looking at the sign on my balcony condemning him. The look on his face is one of horror now. There's no reason to be afraid. He's so little, so tiny. And the rifle is the size of a toothpick. Why, he's raising it to his shoulder now. Is he actually going to . . . .

# *Attempt At Explaining A Concrete Universal*

*Charlene Cain*

In a 'Concrete Universal'  
(Which I hardly understand),  
A peaceful state of mind can be compared  
To snowflakes falling on a hand.

Yet the question, too, arises—  
This is just a metaphor.  
I'll make an effort to explain to you.  
It's a moral form, still—there's more.

For example: snowflakes do drift.  
This is a part of their form,  
And in a peaceful state of mind one is  
Drifting, too, like after a storm.

Nature contains moral universals  
Used for man's 'abstractive reflection';  
But nature is also within itself concrete.  
Man 'senses' parallels—no dissection.

'Concrete Universal' is then  
Nature's own story of itself  
Plus man's description ironically seen  
Obvious, yet, seems to be pelf.

Perhaps Ransom could help explain  
Phenomena of nature  
Such as tumbling, falling waterfalls  
When there hasn't been any rain?

## *A Crow*

*Terry Ford*

Raspy throated black spot on the skyline,  
Growing larger with every "whoomp" of wings,  
How the dying sun makes your feathers shine!

Unlike the lesser birds you do not sing  
To fill Man's greedy ear with sounds of glee.  
Your fate is not to be a servile thing.

You scream above the barren empty tree.  
You circle low, contemptuous of man.  
Cocky now, but when I've my gun you flee.

You laugh at all the times that men would ban  
You from their fields with manikins and shot  
That does not disturb your dark feathered fan.

Harsh, ugly, defiant bird! Not  
Content with fetid flesh, you feed on corn.  
Yellow beak and beady eyes that burn hot

With fierce flyer's passion that's mixed with scorn,  
Betray the greed that lies within your soul.  
But even so you soar above the thorn.

You fly above our earthly strife and dole,  
Blue black and green black, oil on water black,  
Night black, free black! Yes, wings as black as coal.

## *Ishtar, A Motorcycle*

*Terry Ford*

She was purring, roaring music,  
She was lithe and agile beauty.  
And yet, controlled, she knew her duty.

She was married to the Highway  
But she loved the dark streets also,  
And her headlight would shine yellow  
Where no street light would show the way.

For she had a yen to wander,  
She'd not be in one place for long.  
"Wayfarrin' Stranger" was her song.  
No, she'd never stop to ponder.

Crime and grease was on her motor.  
Her one perfume was gasoline;  
And on the road that bike was queen.  
Heaven held the man who rode her.

Paradise was close to his grasp.  
Ishtar would toss his hair with pleasure,  
And her speed would be his treasure.  
God's voice—her muffler's hollow rasp.

## *Limbo*

*Terry Ford*

The room was small and close. The air was dry  
And laden with the smell of coffee grounds.  
One sensed the room was hidden from the sky,  
Buried beneath a church, outside God's bounds.  
The ear heard only muted, whispered sounds  
That drifted from the lips of earnest souls  
Half seen, half sensed, in the dim light, like trolls.

I heard them speak, and saw a sincere face,  
New-bearded, stare unseeing at the wall,  
On which a score of colors led a chase  
Across each other's trail, to leap and fall  
Like wing-borne embers circling through the hall.  
This abstract chaos whirled around the room,  
Its bright color a wild portent of doom.

The burlap bags on the low ceiling drooped,  
As if they were fatigued and wished to drop.  
A chair scraped harshly as a shadow stooped  
To retrieve a bishop that had gone "plop"  
With a funny noise that had made him stop  
To see the stalemate that was coming on.

He laughed a mirthless laugh and moved a pawn.  
A fish net, far from its native seaside,  
Hung near a bookcase filled with ancient tomes  
Reduced to paperbacks, the scholar's pride.  
A deep red carpet, lush and soft like foams  
Padded the stairway that led up to homes  
Where chaos was disguised with phony names,  
Where chessplayers played vaster, sillier games.

# *Impressions of Air Travel*

*Diane Huntsinger*

## I.

Darkness lifts from the concrete,  
Dissolves in the startling blue  
Of ever-clearing dawn.  
From tinted windows  
Lights blink, miles away,  
And an immense expanse of unobstructed space  
Amazes the city viewer.

## II.

The call  
A rush  
Quick goodbye;  
Swallowed whole  
Into smallness  
From vastness.

## III.

Roar of engines  
Like sitting on a furnace,  
Revving.  
Signs flick—  
'No smoking please.'  
A pleasant voice:  
The destination,  
The time.  
That is all.

## IV.

Sound is everywhere  
Filling the eardrums.  
There is no respite—  
One could go mad!!!  
Look down—divert attention.  
Old photographs—  
Brown, black, white—  
Rolling flatness.  
A sometime speck  
Red or orange  
Of barns.  
Too little, insignificant,  
Winter flight is drabness—  
Coldness— isolation.  
Too objective from air.



V.

Passengers: business men.  
Destination: Chicagoland.  
Thoughts of arrival,  
Not the present.  
Big Plans to be made—  
Deals to swing.  
Goal: security.  
Then why fly?  
"It's quick"—  
"The  
Faster  
Done  
The  
Better."  
Home to the duplex,  
Wife, kids.  
Okay.

VI.

Floating, weightlessness.  
Surrounded by lonely vacuum.  
Immense space above.  
Frightening, but there—  
As earth—  
Hard dirt—  
Beneath.  
And beneath that?  
More space.  
Terrifying.

VII.

11:15: Arrival! !  
Joyous smile,  
Hurtling bodies,  
Love embrace.  
"How was the trip?"  
"Glorious!" (When someone's waiting!)

## *Little David*

*Diane Huntsinger*

Little David  
Play your harp.  
Soothe our Saul,  
Calm our souls.

Little David  
Play your harp.  
Anoint twelve tribes,  
Send them out.

Little David  
Play your harp  
While the living  
Wander, earth-bound.

Little David  
Play your harp.  
Announce the Christ,  
Messiah cometh.

Little David  
Keep on playing . . . .  
No

    one  
    listens

No  
    one  
    knows.

Little David  
Stop your playing.  
It's too late.  
He's  
    come  
    and  
    gone.

## Dream

Marybelle Jepson

Last night I dreamed that I was dead.  
I saw myself within a box,  
The lilies lying on my chest like rocks,  
A concrete pillow dented in my head.  
My arms, my feet, my hips were lead.  
I wondered if a coffin locks,  
If so much make-up was a paradox.  
I thought it odd to wear a dress to bed.  
Could this be why the faces peered at me?  
I heard their voices as they stared,  
Whispered about my peaceful look.  
The children hurried by, their faces scared.  
I felt my skin was gone, my bones were bared.  
St. Peter and Satan leafed through my record book.

## People?

Richard Landis

The masses,  
Armies of locusts  
Sweeping across the plains,  
Across the plains of decency.

They rip and tear.  
They destroy.  
They rock the very foundation  
Of every faith left them

By the few,  
Who forgot themselves  
And sacrificed their lives  
To rebuild the fallen plain.

So it was—  
Even as it is today—  
So it will be forever—  
The masses marching across the crops.

# *Ocean*

*Frank Schweiter*

In a lurching mass of tangled line  
Three men struggle to stay afloat.  
Trying to make repairs in time  
For the second threat upon their boat.  
The first storm spewed the briny boil  
Across the deck, against the bulkhead.  
It cracked the mast with a hollow note.  
Quite abruptly the storm quieted  
Only to circle slowly and return uninhibited.

The return storm struck with ruinous rage.  
Pitifully lost, the boat capsized.  
The storm continued in full rampage  
Until it finally localized,  
And the menace slowly minimized.  
A dead calm followed the mighty storm,  
With wreckage floating disorganized.  
No life left in this vast forlorn,  
Where three men lost a battle to the ocean's scorn.

## *A Silence Echoes Evenly*

*Jane Spaulding*

A silence echoes evenly  
In paths of radio waves  
Like foghorns' low drones.  
Communication routes are empty.

No static reaches the earphones,  
No lumbering bathtub water falls,  
No creaking carpeted hall intrudes,  
Nor any neighbor's whispers touch the silence.

He, lone radio operator  
Of that deserted verge, enerves  
The wiry spark connecting men  
From shiny isle to dimming shore.

The paralyzing weight of peace  
Slips stealthily along the wires  
Around it waves, throughout it weaves,  
The corpse connects, hews apt: "I cease."

With radio dead he finds strange rest  
That is pregnant with booming mysteries.  
Drunkenly sings he, explores missed worlds,  
Then he asks, "Are silent waves the best?"

A peace bereft of intrusion:  
Energies canned, shrewdly used:  
The scientist's machine redeems,  
As cold devices create his diversion.

Bright voices from nights on shiny isles  
Played back on tape recorders,  
Dreamers' songs from dimming shores  
Grind out from warped record aisles.

How deadly is the hollow screech,  
How endlessly recite the sounds.  
Juice the wires! Rejoice, then radio!  
Quiescence done, bright shores he'll reach.

## *Hurricane*

*Linda Zimmerman*

At first a terrible stillness  
cradled the thin hoop of sun  
back in the lap of the bay.

The sea's long mirror tilted:  
night poured in with a rush,  
blotting the pier and the Cape's lip.

The ocean lurched. The wind hit.  
Last thing I saw was a little sail  
dancing in the rain's mad cone.

All pennants and flags were down;  
papers, wires folded on tree trunks  
bare as poles in the loud chaos.

I watched the sail sing toward us.  
This was the last of summer,  
crashing like plates in my ears.

## *Seawards*

*Linda Zimmerman*

Life, measured now by searching the still sea,  
By counting stars, is you and I after  
Love trembles us a birth of light.  
The wind on my face is like your body,  
Warm magic, beckoning me tender.  
The way your hair cascades a pillow is the night  
Surrounding me, darkly with blossom smells,  
Rich as the offshore breeze from dead ahead.  
I see you, feel you everywhere:

Because the moon drags anchor, the need of you  
Wells up to desperation. A bobbing red  
Smudges the horizon, scatters the black cause  
Of night. Soon our several lives begin.  
Harbor lights checker the darkness, signal us in.

## *Shadows*

*Linda Zimmerman*

When shadows stretch their paws before the sun  
Blinking in lazy solemnness, their cool  
Gray pattern, tiger mottled, sets a jewel  
Of light as clear as leopard's eyes. Their dun  
Intensifies the heat of day. They run  
On noiseless pads to stalk a shifting pool  
Of light, playful as children let from school  
To scuffle where the leaves turn cinnamon.  
They skirmish over Autumn's maddened hues:  
Then by itself each little shadow plays,  
Lurking and pouncing with a kitten's ruse,  
Trying to catch these mote-filled rays  
That slant and dodge, attempting to confuse,  
Until the cat of midnight blots their blaze.

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