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# PERSPECTIVES

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VOLUME XXIII

SPRING 1964

NUMBER 1

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## *Staff*

Editor ..... Terry Ford

Business Manager ..... Marie Deel

Art Consultant ..... Mr. William Zimmerman

Faculty Advisor ..... Dr. Howard Levant

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PERSPECTIVES is published by the students of  
Morningside College                      Sioux City, Iowa



# Rosey

Ronald Beanblossom

"Rosey Brown," the receptionist called.

At the mention of her name Rosey lifted her cumbersome figure from the chair and waddled into Doctor Newbalm's office. Again she made herself as comfortable as possible and waited for Doctor Newbalm to make his grand entrance. She attempted to cross her legs but the large bulge which at present distorted her normally well rounded figure made her even more uncomfortable.

"Kid's a nuisance and it's not even born yet," she thought.

She heard the door open and Doctor Newbalm came swinging into the room with his everpresent stethoscope draped around his neck and a large mirror which was on a band around his head; it looked like a huge eye.

"Good morning, Rosey," he said, trying to sound as cheerful as possible. "How are you feeling today?"

"Just ducky," she retorted without bothering to smile.

"Good," he replied. "Now if you'll come over to the table I'll examine you."

Again Rosey lifted herself from the uncomfortable chair and made her way to the examining table. With no little effort she got up on the table and lay back in comfort for the first time since she came to the office. As she lay there, Rosey looked into the large mirror on Doctor Newbalm's forehead to check her lipstick. Well, that silly mirror is good for something, she thought. Hey Doc, that tickles, she wanted to say as he ran the cool stethoscope over her body. Once she couldn't help herself and giggled.

"Well, Rosey," Doctor Newbalm said, "you're in perfect health. You should have the baby anytime now. Ha! As we doctors say, you're ripe."

Just like a watermelon, she thought.

"You should be very happy," he said, as he helped her off the table. "This should be one of the greatest and most rewarding experiences of your life. It's not everyday that a woman can feel the joy of life within her and not every woman is fortunate enough to be able to bear children."

What luck, she thought.

"I'll be expecting to hear from you soon," he said as she left the room.

As she felt the first contractions, Rosey reached for the clock beside her bed. Hmm, they aren't regular yet, she decided as she slammed the clock back on the night stand. By mid-afternoon the

pains had established a regular pattern and she called Dr. Newbalm.

"You had better have your husband take you out to the hospital right away," he said.

"But he isn't here now and there isn't any way I can reach him at work," she said, attempting to hold back the tears.

"Very well, leave him a note and I'll stop by for you myself. Goodbye."

Blasted man. Never around when I need him, she thought, as she packed her bag.

Dr. Newbalm checked her in at the hospital and she was given a light sedative to help ease the pain.

As the pain became worse, she clung to the rods at the head of her bed to keep from screaming. Wonderful experience, she thought. Never had so much fun in my life. Why, who wants to go to dances, and to parties, and bowling? Who wants to have a good figure when they can look like a blimp? Why did I have to get pregnant? I wish it were over with. Where is the doctor? Why don't they do something?

"Nurse, nurse," she screamed.

Where are they? Out for coffee?

"Well, how are you coming, Rosey?" Dr. Newbalm asked in a cheerful voice.

You ass, she thought without bothering to answer. Can't you see? Why don't you take a picture of a woman having a great experience? You should be happy. You don't have to go through this agony.

Doctor Newbalm sent for the orderlies and Rosey was wheeled into the delivery room.

"Now, Rosey, everything is going to be all right. Just relax. Follow my instructions and it will make it much easier. Now, take deep breaths. That's it. Doesn't that feel better? Now push, Rosey, push. That's it, push."

Why doesn't it come out? What's it waiting for? It would be easier to hatch eggs. I think I'm going to faint. Ah, they're wiping my head off. That feels better. Look at that doctor. He just stands there and waits. Why doesn't he do something? Oh, it hurts. Why don't they help me? He's holding its head. It's ugly. Why don't they wash it?

"Push, Rosey, push. That's it. It won't be long now. You're doing fine."

How does he know? He can't feel anything. How does he know I'm all right? Push, he says; why doesn't he pull? Why do I have to do all the work? Why are they showing that ugly



thing to me? I don't want to see it. What are they doing? They're laying it on my stomach. It's warm. They're cutting the cord. Hurry up. I can't stand any more.

"It's all right now, Rosey. It's all over with. The baby is fine."

What do they mean it's all over with? It still hurts. I'm so tired. Why don't they leave me alone. Why don't they let me sleep?

"Good morning, Rosey," said Doctor Newbalm in his usual cheerful voice. "How are you feeling today?"

Good god, don't you ever quit? How do you think I feel? I feel like I've just had a baby, she felt like saying, but managed to answer with an indifferent "O.K."

"Tomorrow, we'll have you up and around a little. Your husband was here last night, but I guess he had to back to work today. Do you want your baby brought in now?" he asked.

"Yeah, I guess so," Rosey answered.

It isn't very pretty, she thought. It doesn't have much hair.

After the nurse took the baby away, Rosey asked for her cosmetics bag and began to comb her hair. Well, at least I'm rid of that pouch, she thought, as she consoled herself.

## *Two Blooms*

Ronald Beanblossom

"Ulcer," Adam Bloom grumbled to himself as he felt the growing pains jab his stomach.

Adam looked at his watch. It'll soon be time for old faithful to come racing in here with my medicine, he thought. He prepared himself for the nurse's visit by pouring himself a glass of cold water from the green plastic container which had been placed on the stand beside his bed. Next, he pushed the remote control button which turned on the television set. Perhaps that white elephant won't pester me with that "cheer-up chatter" of hers, if I act like I'm absorbed in a T.V. program. Humm, it's time for the count down. Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one . . .

"Good morning, Mr. Bloom," chirped Nurse Pickerton, as she closed the door behind herself. "Isn't it a beautiful day? How are you feeling today?" she continued without waiting for an answer. "That looks like an interesting T.V. program. What show is it? I never watch T.V. very much." She paused and

smiled as if waiting for a reply to her barrage.

It's a lousy morning, I feel horrible, and I don't know or care what program it is, he felt like retorting, but managed to smile and respond with "Oh."

"Here is your medicine," Nurse Pickerton said, as she set the small white cup on his night stand. "I'll see you in an hour."

Adam propped himself up on his pillow, grasped the small white cup in his hand, and stared at the smooth white substance. He tried to swirl the thick liquid in the cup, but mused at the similarity between it and his colorless life.

He gulped the white liquid and quickly reached for the water to remove the chalk-like taste from his mouth. It didn't seem to help much.

After shutting off the T.V., he once again lay back in the solitude which had composed most of his life. Always the quiet one, he thought, always alone. I guess I've been that way since I was found on the steps of the orphanage in a basket. Like that time I hid in the ventilator shaft and overheard Miss Birthbea discuss my character with an applicant.

"He is extremely well mannered," she had said. "Why, he never causes a bit of trouble, never talks back, and always does what he's told. He's a quiet boy and keeps to himself most of the time. I am sure that he would fit extremely well into your family."

For some reason, no one seemed interested in a quiet, non-aggressive boy. "Always do like you're told," Miss Birthbea always said, "and you'll get along in this world just fine."

Well, I got along fine at the orphanage all right. I got along so well I never got out until I became of age. Miss Birthbea was very nice about it. She said that she didn't want any boy of hers becoming a bum. I guess that's why she got me a job and an apartment. The old bat was worried about her reputation and not my place in society. But I smiled and thanked her when she told me what she had done for me.

It sure didn't take me long to move, though. I put my belongings in a paper bag. Miss Birthbea was kind enough to show me where I lived and how to get to work from there.

"Now, if you ever need any help, don't be afraid to come to me. I am always glad to do anything I can for you," she said in a way that made me feel that she was the last person on earth I would go to for help.

As I watched her black-clad figure descend the stairs, I was relieved to know that this was the last time I would have to look at that hawk-like face and listen to that screeching voice. Even

my little cramped room seemed large and free, after living at the orphanage with six other boys in the same bedroom.

And, of course, there is my boss, Mr. Antlion—the ass! He is always willing to lend a helping hand—providing there is a profit to be made.

“Bloom, get the files for the Finnley account; Bloom, get me some coffee; Bloom, do this; Bloom, do that.”

“Yes, Mr. Antlion; right away, Mr. Antlion.” Hogwash! One of these days I’m going to tell that bald-headed slave driver to go to hell.

But, I remember Miss Birthbea’s advice—always do what you’re told and you’ll get along all right in this world. I guess that’s why Mr. Antlion has kept me on the payroll. Why, that old goat even let me have time off to come to the hospital—without pay, of course.

“Thank you, Mr. Antlion; I certainly appreciate this, sir.”

Oh, oh, here come those pains again. Adam poured himself a glass of water and turned on the television set. He looked at his watch and began the count down. Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one . . .

“Hello, Mr. Bloom,” chirped Nurse Pickerton. “How are you feeling this hour? I see you’re still watching television,” she continued without waiting for a reply. “Is there anything good on?”

Shut your mouth, he wanted to say. But he smiled and responded with “Yes, nurse.”

“Here is your medicine,” she said once again. “I’ll see you in an hour.”

Adam again propped himself up on the pillow and took the small white cup in his hand. He stared at the smooth white liquid and tried unsuccessfully to swirl the thick substance in the cup. He gulped the white liquid and quickly reached for the glass of water to wash the chalk-like taste from his mouth. It didn’t help much. He turned off the T.V. and lay back in the solitude which Nurse Pickerton had interrupted.

## *Soliloquy of A Dying Monk*

Ronald Beanblossom

God, mine has surely been a fruitful life. Since I knocked at the door of this place some twenty years, eight months, and nine days ago, I have spent my time in contemplation of Thee. It has not been an easy life, for I came to this place seeking escape from

punishment for killing my wife. It seems fitting, somehow, that I should now escape this place in the name of Death.

Why, I remember my many days in the apple orchard. The silence we keep makes the snapping of twigs seem like thunder. Those curious birds with their nimble wings sit idly by and chirp as you fill your sack. They look so free and full of life. But they can never know the fullness one achieves behind these walls.

And the fruit which grows upon those trees achieves the fullness of a young virgin's breasts. Their taste seems especially sweet in the cover of some concealing bush.

Twice a day we are called together. Ah, I shall surely miss this fellowship. Prior to both of our meals, we entered into the sanctuary where we kneeled for an hour of meditation. I can not forget the solemn ending to our ritual; it was always a pleasure to watch from the back as my brothers, in order to signify the end of the period, bowed to kiss their small wooden crucifixes three times. Then, after all had finished, I did likewise, for I remembered that there is humbleness in duration.

Next, there was the meal, where I, like the rest of my brothers, took my allotted share of beans, bread and goat's milk; I then silently passed the rest to my neighbor. It is indeed a pleasure to share when in plenty. I always anxiously awaited my return to the fields or orchards. Where could I be closer to God than in nature?

Ah yes, I can not help but recall the pleasure of arising at four each morning to begin my daily chores. The gentle watchman came each morning to the chair where I sleep and shook me until I awoke. Then came the brief freshness from the cold water in my basin. There have indeed been many pleasant hours spent sleeping in this chair where my thoughts in the night are kept in utmost purity; it is truly unfortunate that people outside the walls of this refuge do not retire to their private chambers at eight each night. This provides ample time to think more fully upon spiritual things.

They will be coming soon to provide me with my first and last opportunity to speak. I don't know what I could say. Perhaps if I—no, that wouldn't leave a good impression.

The light from my candle seems to reflect the barrenness of these four stone walls which make up my small room. I suppose that light is symbolic of God. I wish they would come soon so that I could say my last words. My robe has so many patches. I was to trade it for a new one next month. The light seems to be getting dimmer. It wasn't very bright in the beginning.

# *The Journal of John Sherwin*

Dan Bottonff

June 19, 1775: Having now only a moment to reflect upon the events which have transpired recently, I have found a secluded spot to write down my thoughts before I return to the Colonial forces. I can but briefly describe the events leading up to the bloody action at Charlestown and Breed's Hill. Since the blood-thirsty British attacked at Concord in mid-April, the alarm for support had rung in every quarter. My first desire was for my wife and so it remains. I was therefore reluctant to join the Continental forces as hastily as many. Little Johnny has only begun to handle the store, though with apparent ability as a merchant. A fortnight ago Johnny came to me with a bolt of homespun. In his eyes shone the zeal of John Hancock himself. He implored me to allow his mother to fashion a uniform which he could proudly wear in defense against the British. What father can bear to see his boy stand before him representing the noblest cause under heaven today without his own heart bursting into flame? Using all of the wits which I possess, I strove to convince him that his first duty was to his mother and to her welfare. I would join the forces immediately if he would promise to protect his mother and to take diligent care of the store. At dawn the following day we reviewed the accounts and the shelves which were well stocked. By sundown I was satisfied with his command of the merchandise. I packed a bag with a change of clothing. Carrying my musket, I bid my wife and son farewell and sought that portion of the Continental forces which were residing not far distant.

Arriving at the camp, I found it to be frightfully understocked. Due to the rapidity of events leading toward the eventual outburst at Concord, the militia could be but poorly equipped and were all but untrained save in the skill of firing their muskets. Colonel Prescott, the commanding officer, ordered no target practice, for the stock of powder and shot was so frightfully limited. We were drilled in the use of military methods so unfamiliar to men to whom guns were used only to shoot partridges and squirrels.

Moving our camp frequently throughout the area west of Boston, we heard many accounts of the tortuous British plundering colonial settlements. Numerous families had been attacked by British regulars; husbands were shot, old men were slain, and wives and children were beaten to death. Frequently wild descriptions were given concerning the molesting of young children by the red-coated devils.

On June twelfth General Gage proclaimed that all in the Continental militia who would swear allegiance to the tyrant would be pardoned. The proclamation provoked a good deal of jesting among the ranks.

Our opportunity to do battle with the grenadiers came on June seventeenth. The horror of such a battle is difficult for a sane man to bear without the burden of also depicting it in a journal. Let it suffice to say that the militia was forced to flee their entrenchments on Breed's Hill due to the exhausted ammunition supply under the third frontal attack of the British. The fallen Colonials could not be counted, but we are assured we struck the British a much severer brow than they can readily absorb.

I pray that shortly this struggle will cease and sanity will again prevail.

## *Man-at-his-Best*

Dan Bottorff

"Good morning, Mrs. Bland," I said to the old hag as I fought back a yawn. "Mary, why the 8:30 service? Just one Sunday I'd like to sleep late." This time I couldn't control the weight pulling on my jaw. "I think you are trying for a perfect attendance medal," I remarked.

"Cut it out, Joe!" she demanded, then snapped back, "you're the badge wearer in our house."

"Do you want to keep your coat?" I asked as I headed for the cloakroom. I knew she would give it to me. Its sleeves and collar were frayed. The sheepskin lining had torn and was patched back in. She didn't want people to associate the coat with her. It made me mad to see the new coats in the cloakroom. The old hags always have new coats. As much as I hate the hypocrites, at times I have to fight the desire to see my wife in a stylish new outfit that we can't afford.

When I came out of the cloakroom, Mary called from across the narthex, "Joe, over here. Avis, this is Joe, my husband. Joe, this is Avis Gurdin, the president of our Women's Society. Avis and I will be working together on the program for next month."

I thought to myself, "I'll bet it will be a big deal with such a fat ewe running it, Avis." But I said, "That's nice. It is nice to meet you, Avis."

We moved on to the next ordeal, the greeters. God, I feel sorry for those poor devils. I'd die if I had to do that. I made

Mary promise she would never get us into that spot. This Sunday's greeters were Councilman and Mrs. Walters. When I grasped her hand I got her thumb and all. It was like shaking a cold mutton chop. She bleated something, but I couldn't understand it. My collar choked me and my ears burned. The Councilman was more suave as he said, "Good morning, Joe. How are things down at the station? I hear you have four new boys on the force."

"Everything is fine, Mr. Walters. They will work out fine." I ground out the standard answer.

If we could make it to the back row off to the side. But no, we were caught by the usher with the phoney sincere smile. Most of the ushers have that embarrassed look, but this fake enjoys leading people down to the front like a Judus goat.

A phrase of the organ prelude reminded me of the "Whiffen Poof Song" played in two-four time. Our quartet should work up a parody of "sacred" music. If the preacher ever learned that I sing in the Four Parolers at the station he'd harp till I would have to join that church choir.

In the bulletin it always says "Dr." J. August Shepherd. The old goat hasn't graduated from an accredited undergraduate school besides earning a doctor's degree. His gray hair is unkept. His ears droop. His eyes are pinkish. With chin whiskers he would look just like a goat. I can't talk like this to Mary because he baptised and confirmed her and married us. I often wonder if she wouldn't rather pass away before him just so he could bury her too.

My wife slid into the pew beside an attractive girl in a black lambs wool sweater. Her makeup was thick, especially around her eyes. She looked as out of place in the church as I felt. I thanked God that this would only last an hour, unless the preacher drug out the prayer.

In the pew I found it possible to daydream myself into a more pleasant situation. I was walking down the corridor outside of the drunk tank when the officer in charge slammed the door open and yelled for help. The room was a bedlam. The drunks were still high enough to want to have some fun. They were beating the bars with anything that would make noise. The best thing was to close the door on the screaming humanity. They would wear out eventually. Anyway a little spirited noise-making was good for the constitution.

"Let all mortal flesh keep silent and with fear and trembling stand . . ." The preacher had started. In sixty minutes it would be all over. "Let us join our voices in singing hymn number two hundred-thirteen, 'My Faith Looks Up To Thee,' number

two hundred-thirteen."

I listened to the first line, "My faith looks up to The, Thou lamb of Calvary," and I couldn't take any more. The garage had to be cleaned at home and I could be planning what to do with the junk that had accumulated there. The lawn mower could be stored upstairs and the screens . . . everyone sat down and flipped pages of the hymnal. Everyone read together. Everyone sang together. Everyone, everyone, even the girl sitting by my wife followed along, although I think she was confused.

I could hardly wait for the sermon. At least then I would be able to look like I was following the service, if I could keep my eyes open. First though, old Shepherd sheared the congregational flock of its money. The choir sang an offertory number that sent me off in a wild dream. Hundreds of times I had thought of how great it would be to leap out of the pew, take bounding steps down the aisle, and summersault onto the altar. Then I would speak in eloquent phrases and by sheer force of will would convince the mob to purge the sanctuary.

I don't know why I remembered a saying in my book of Confucius. "Clever talk and a domineering manner have little to do with being man-at-his-best."

The old goat had begun to rave, "The blood of the lamb was shed for you for the remission of your sins." What does he know about blood? When had he cleaned up the human debris of an automobile wreck? When had he taken a bullet from a German on the front lines?

Nausea struck my stomach. For twenty-five minutes I watched Dr. Shepherd drive his flock through the vilest sheep dip imaginable.

"Oh God, please bring the service to an end." I was dying for the postlude. It came. The sheep followed the shepherd back through the aisle, one after another.

"Mary, I'll meet you in the cloakroom. I'm going out the side door."

## *Selah*

Phyllis Fleischauer

Enter quietly. Quite full today. Whisper, "Half-way down, fine." Take program—no, bulletin—always forget. Fake Carnation, plastic. Real ones nicer—too expensive for every Sunday. "Here, Janie." Little warm hand, sticky. Party in Sunday School today. Sit quietly. Bow head, pray. Looks good. What to think?



Dear God, help me concentrate. Amen. Mrs. Bayhead walks funny. Good organist, though

Peace. Music beginning softly. Stream, flowing, cool, summer ady. Hot in here. Take off coat, and Janie's. Moan, "Janie." Chocolate ice cream best dress. Will it clean? Leave her coat on. Gravy on John's tie yet ;stain on linen tablecloth—tea? Grease on by gray slacks. John drop them on way to work tomorrow. Never tried machine. Might ruin slacks. Louder, like waves crashing, pounding. High blue sky, gray waves, foam. Suddenly black. Ends abruptly! Left hanging . . . Mrs. Bayhead very dramatic with hands. Flourish.

Reverend Dunbury getting a little frosted at temples. Still very-good looking. Wife in hospital. Remember card and,

"Let us pray." Bow head and clasp hands. Automatic. Pick thread off first. "Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and" Betty didn't know what I had in mind yesterday. Hated her for the new car. Jealous. Bob's better job. More money. Our house is nicer, though. Just wanted to drive to Joanne's to show off the new car. Guess I would too. Wish John got a raise . . . "that we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy holy name, through Christ, our Lord. Amen."

Hymn next. "No. 312" three-twelve. Highway to Smithland. John's mother not too well. Should visit a week-end this month. Next week-end bowling tournament, two weeks Hawaii. John not expert. No chance. But better than a car and . . . Stand up. Hold, and hold, and hold chord—now to start. Janie wants to see too. Give her book. Reach for another. Three-twelve, three-twelve, here. Where . . . "Here bring your wounded hearts, he-er te-ll yo-ur anguish; Earth has no sor-row that heav-ven can-not heal" and hold, and hold, and hold. Sound croaky today. Window open too much last night. Sinus. Clear throat. Better. Hold and vibratton on high not. Adult choir sings next Sunday. Only practiced for half an hour last. Late . . . "can remove" and hold, and hold, and "Aaaaaah-menn" Ugh! never liked that hymn. Down again. Janie on floor to get our programs—bulletins. Hair getting too long. No curl. Needs permanent. Aunt Helen comes week from tomorrow. Pretty good with hair. Mine too, maybe.

"The scripture lesson for today is from Psalms Seventy-six." Trombones. "But, thou, terrible art thou! Who can stand before thee when once thy anger is roused? From the heavens thou didst utter judgment; the earth feared and was still . . ." Betty did it last. Should have her fix it for tonight. Might be mad, I'm not . . .

Cherub Choir today. Cute. Messy bows. Mrs. Dulson does them when she can. On vacation. ". . . little children come unto Him." Flat. Timmy Gatstone screeching above. Homely. Taller than others. "Amen." Flowers from the funeral yesterday. Never know. Always the same—wedding or funeral. Serve happy or sad, then church, sick people, shriveled.

Music. Money. Soft soothing. Not much melody. Swish. Clank. Jingle. Back and forth. Janie drops dime. My envelope. Dim light. Cars honking outside—distracting. Open window. Fresh air. Raining softly. Misty. Gray day. Black trees. Slippery pavement. Collecting finished. Organ still playing. A fade-out. Can't see pulpit. Orange hat on her hair. Looks like Mrs. Alexander. No. Big nose. Janie's babysitter two rows ahead. Nice girl. Not too pretty, good student. Never worry about boys at the house. "Lighten our darkness, we beseech Thee, oh Lord; and by Thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this day. Amen. In these days of worry and great insecurity, each individual needs one true strength to cling to—faith in Jesus Christ" vines. Did I water Mrs. Garth's plants yesterday? Dying. Not enough sun on north side. Too much on west. Curtains fading. Like to re-do the living room—pain and "God in His infinite mercy . . ." Hope Joanne's party goes all right. Nervous for her. Boss, mayor, doctor, Reverend Olsen. Wives. Class and money. Beautiful home. Joanne same as in college. No snob. Husband stuffy sometimes. ". . . Has brought us a faith and a challenge. The soul of man is a mirror which must reflect the image of God. What then is our reflection?" Hurried. Smearred mascara. Powdered over. Medium blue eye shadow for tonight. Almost gone. Drug store after church—eye shadow, newspaper, mouthwash, pink napkins—paper, cigarets. Janie will want candy—spoil dinner. Leave in car. Accident there last Thursday. No one hurt. ". . . Joy in his heart that speak to all his students . . ." Miss Edmond new fifth-grade teacher. Invited? Very independent. Wears bright red coat. Roses on altar . . . "But the promise was given that ultimately evil should perish and good should triumph. Yet man cannot shrink." Sanforized "from truth in the world as it is. Man himself is a free moral agent . . ." Tickets. Refund last half of John's round trip. Sixty days. "And as Peter said, 'Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality but in every nation anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him'." Hope we fit in tonight. All richer. "Amen. Let us pray together." Bow again.

"Our Father, who art in heaven," Haven Dress Shop, sale,

black velvet dress tonight, "Hallowed be Thy name." Watermelon shell for center piece, fruits, color. "Thy kingdom come," six o'clock, "Thy will be done," organization and help, "On earth as it is in heaven," Peace on earth. "Give us this day our daily bread," communion, "And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us," sniff. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom," high, "and the power," higher, "and the glory," highest, "forever, Amen."

Put on coat. Purse, here. Gloves—one on floor. Bend quick, grab, too far away. Please, "Janie, my glove." Wriggle, squirm, reach.

"Let us rise for the benediction." Scramble. Stand. Hurry, Janie, thank you. All ready now.

Raised arm, big black wing . . . "May the peace of God remain in your hearts, and the blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always, Amen."

Lights. Blurt of music, loud. People smile and stir. Action. Mill down aisle.

Funny. Peace, honest peace. Mind wandered again—try harder next. But peace . . .

## *Saltatorium Frustrated*

Phyllis Fleischauer

The long, low bellow of a foghorn came from somewhere in the dark. Mist was rolling over the river in heavy clouds, blending everything into a homogeneity. Solemnly, the dark stone bridge kept watch over the murky river below it. Occasionally a glimmer could be detected on the far bank. Stella slowly mounted the three steps to the bridge and paced with deliberation to the middle of it. Rain began. She turned up the collar of her trench coat and then smiled an almost contemptuous smile while thinking to herself, ha! Turn up my collar to keep from catching cold when I'd be dead in ten minutes anyway. Stella had been contemplating this momentous decision for over a week and finally the time had come for action.

The middle path of the bridge was worn smooth, but the side edges were rough and bits of refuse were stuck in the corner. Stella reached the highest arch of the bridge and tried to peer into the water, but the fog was so thick by this time that she couldn't even see to the bottom of the bridge. Stella had walked this far with her head uplifted, her hand thrust deeply into her

pockets bravely, like Marie Antoinette going to the guillotine, but now that she was actually here she was a little frightened. Her head began to swim and she couldn't remember what to do first. The purse? the coat? the shoes? She eased herself up onto the ledge.

At that moment she heard an unmortal sound that startled her so she slipped back onto the path of the bridge and gasped. This, in turn, so startled the old man who had wheezed that he swallowed his spittle wrong and began to cough violently. Stella was reassured by this human sound and peered intensely into the fog. All she could make out was a strange eerie white spot, which turned out to be a beard. She cautiously moved toward it to investigate and discovered a small old man sitting on one of the stone resting benches along the side of the bridge. He was bent over, leaning on his knarled walking cane, and had a battered gray hat pulled close about his head. There was a scrawny multi-colored cat arching his back against the old man's leg. Stella's footsteps alerted the old man and he looked up. They looked at each other for a moment. Stella was rather angry inside at being intruded upon. The old man saw this feeling reflecting in Stella's eyes and slowly lowered his to the cat, whose fur was becoming matted with the rain. Stella was still human enough to have some sense of pity in her and she made a meaningless gesture with her hand and after a moment said, "You better get inside somewhere. You're headin' for a case of pneumonia in this weather." The old man lifted his face, but his eyes looked like they had been crying, although one couldn't tell the tears from the rain. She turned to go.

"Wait," the old man said.

"What?" Stella turned her head.

"Oh, pardon me." Stella turned away again. A block farther down the bridge would be far enough in this fog.

"It's just . . ."

"What?" Stella knew he wanted to say something, but, she had a more important matter to attend to.

"Excuse me, could I know your name?" the old man asked.

"Sure, Stella—Stella Brown. Look, I gotta be goin' now . . . I"

"This cat's name is Tobias," the old man said hopefully.

"Well, both you and your cat better not stay out in this stuff much longer or they'll have to cart you away in the morning." Stella was sobered by her own statement.

"Oh, he doesn't belong to me. I was just here when he

came by and I . . . ”

“Honest, Pops, I gotto go now,” Stella interrupted. The faint glimmer in the old man’s eyes that had briefly appeared quickly disappeared.

Stella turned and had only gone a few steps when she felt a slimy mass against her stockingless leg. The old man’s arms were outstretched.

“Here, kitty, kitty,” the old man called with a hint of pleading in his voice. Stella picked the slimy creature from her legs and thought as long as she already had it in her hand she might as well take it back to the old man.

“Thank you, you’ve been so kind. Please, is there something I can do for you?”

“No, Pops, thanks, but it’s getting late, so . . . I’ll just say good night and be on my way.” The old man rested a little heavier on his walking stick and it chose that moment to crack in half. The old man was pitched forward and landed in a heap on the muddy stone in front of him. The cat, frightened by all this sudden action, arched his back and hissed, and would have stood its fur on end if it hadn’t been so matted down.

The old man moaned. Look, fella, Stella thought to herself, I didn’t ask you to come out here on this night. If you were stupid enough to wander out here in the middle of this you deserve whatever you get. I gotta get on with my plans. Don’t have time—ha, time! There won’t be any time for me after tonight!

The old man was trying to raise himself on one elbow so he could reach his hat that had fallen in the mud. His hair was white and wispy. His whiskers were mud-spattered. Stella tried to leave but was glued to the bridge. After several moments she went back to the old man to help him back on the bench. The wind had been knocked out of him, and although he moved his mouth for several minutes, no sound came out. He finally gave up, but Stella could see the tears and knew what he was thinking: he was a burden, always had been. Now, when he was making a friend he had gotten in the way again.

Stella watched the very first light streaks begin to break through the sky where the fog was beginning to part. The rain had stopped and the cat was straightening and cleaning his fur with rough tongue. Stella audibly sighed. Oh, well, she thought, I guess I might as well forget it for now. She slipped the old man’s arm around her neck and lifted him to his feet. They started back the way Stella had come, the old man hobbling

and the stray cat trotting along behind.

Stella began thinking about the bridge on the east side of town. That one was a little higher, and, she hoped, even less traveled than this one . . .

## *A Companion for Collins*

David L. Menke

"You stay right where you are," said Collins cheerfully. "I'll clear off the table and bring our tea into the living room." Collins picked up the dishes and headed for the kitchen. "Would you like some cookies to go with the . . . ?"

His companion sat, legs crossed, on the coffee table. She sat looking toward the dining room. She was young and attractive, and Collins had first met her at the department store where he worked. He was an accountant and she a model. "I really had quite a day," said Collins as he entered the living room "Frightening, really!" He set the small china tea service on the coffee table and took a chair opposite her. "I think you would have been proud of me though."

Collins bent over, reached down and poured a cup of tea. "Sugar?" He added two lumps. "Nothing like a good cup of hot tea when one wishes to relax, I always say," said Collins as he placed a cookie in her hand. "By the way, I saw Anne today. She asked about you. Said she missed you at work."

Collins filled the second cup, placed a few cookies along side and settled back into his chair. "I worked all morning on the Anderson account," he said. "Then met with BJ for an hour and finally finished this month's report for the directors. I know they'll like it." He took a sip of his tea and placed a small cookie in his mouth. "Actually, quite good. The cookies, I mean." Collins smiled and looked across the table. She was ravishing, he thought. Those long legs, the blue eyes, the blond hair . . . Quite exquisite, really. And personality? Well, she could talk about anything. Anything, that is, that he wanted to talk about. She wasn't one to start a conversation, but one thing was certain, she was a good listener. And a good listener was hard to find. Especially in a female.

"More tea?" he asked. He refilled his cup and smiled. This is what he enjoyed. Sitting together like this, relaxing, talking, enjoying good company. And he had so little time to himself. What with all the work he was doing and the way people were

always asking him to stop over for dinners, parties, and other activities, he sometimes wondered how he managed. He chuckled to himself as he thought about it. Parties . . . dinners . . . friends . . . work . . . he was much in demand. Why, even tonight, he had another appointment with . . . But that would have to wait. Right now he was busy.

"By the way, dear, did I tell you that BJ asked for my opinion on how we might lower our overhead? I suggested the carpenter that worked on our front porch, but BJ just stared. Obviously, he hadn't been prepared for such a quick solution. Come to think of it, he didn't even take down the man's name. I should give it to him. In fact, he might be wondering about that very same thing right now. He mentioned that he'd like to talk with me in the morning. Oh well, it can wait. BJ's busy. And he hasn't looked well lately. Seems nervous and jumpy. He looked worried when I walked in the office this morning. Asked how I'd been. Told him fine. Haven't felt better in weeks, I said. He doesn't know about you. But then, why should he? Maybe we should have him over some night. I think you'd like him. He's sharp. No dummy, as they say in the department."

Collins emptied his cup and set it on the table. "Well," he said, "I've got to run. But I should be back soon." He arose from his chair and smiled. "Thought I might go to the movies. It's Monday night, you know. Will you be OK while I'm gone?"

He walked around behind the table, bent down and kissed his companion tenderly on the cheek. "I'll be back shortly." He crossed the living room, stepped into the den and flicked on the TV.

"Should be a good show," he said as he helped the brown-eyed brunette off with her coat. She sat, legs crossed, facing the TV. Mighty good-looking woman, he thought to himself. Quiet, but nice. He took a seat beside her and reached for her hand. "Popcorn?" he asked. But the show was beginning. "I guess we'll have to wait," he said. "Sorry I'm late. But, you know how it is. What with all the parties . . . dinners . . . work . . ." And his companion sat and listened.

## *Milk for Martha*

David L. Menke

"Herbert, I think I'll have my warm milk now." Herbert Johnson sat in the big, over-stuffed armchair in front of the fire. His eyes gazed listlessly at the flames as they ate their way into the center of the logs. The logs would break, gently drop downward and a small stream of red sparks would silently drift up the chimney. "Herbert!" The name brought him back to reality. "I'd enjoy my warm milk now, please!" A note of irritation sounded in her voice. His wife sat on the couch, a copy of **Harper's Bazaar** in her lap. She enjoyed reading. Somehow, that seemed to be the only thing she ever really enjoyed. That and drinking warm milk. Warm milk! The thought of it brought a gagging sensation to his throat, and for a moment he thought he would cough and choke. But he didn't. He got up from his comfortable position and headed across the room toward the kitchen.

The Siamese only lifted its head for a second, glanced at Herbert and then placed its gray head on the black leather shoes at her feet. And the cat, thought Herbert to himself. She does like the cat. Cats, milk, and reading. Herbert sighed as he opened the refrigerator and poured some milk into a saucepan. Thirty-four years he and his wife had been married. They had been married when they were both in their late twenties and they hadn't had any children. Somehow, Mrs. Johnson thought all children were a nuisance and Herbert never really had a fond desire for children so the matter had only been mentioned once or twice.

He put the pan on the stove, turned on the gas burner, listened to the hiss and poof! as the flame ignited and then sat down at the table while the milk began to warm.

He and his wife had been happy, he thought to himself. And they were really quite fortunate. He had a good job, they owned their own home, he would retire soon and then maybe they could travel. Herbert liked traveling. Mrs. Johnson didn't. Up into the mountains, along cold rocky streams, where big speckled trout could be seen flashing their long sleek bodies in the air. To be there now, thought Johnson. He and his wife had started on one trip, but after a day on the road, Mrs. Johnson caught a cold and she insisted on coming home. Since then, he'd never been able to get her started again. She said she liked to stay home where it was comfortable and couldn't see why anyone would ever want to stand in water throwing a string at a bunch of fish. Sometimes, Herbert thought, he wondered why he didn't go alone. He guessed



it was because she needed him. And he guessed she did, because she did seem to be rather helpless when it came to chores around the house and things like that. She enjoyed reading and . . .

"Herbert! Where's my milk?" Her voice startled him and he jumped slightly.

"Coming, dear," he said. He got up from the table, took a spoon from a drawer and dipped it into the milk. He dropped a couple of drops on his wrist. Mrs. Johnson liked her milk just right. Not too warm, not too cold, but just right. He remembered once when he had forgotten to test the milk. He had just poured it into the tall glass and carried it to her on her tray. He had set the tray down on the end table by the sofa, and had gone back to his chair in front of the fire. She hadn't looked up from her magazine, but only reached over and took a small sip. Evidently it had been too hot because she let out a yell and scream and put up such a commotion that he made a mental note to always be sure and test the milk before bringing it to her again. It seemed about right, he thought to himself.

He filled the tall glass, placed it on the little silver tray and headed toward the living room. As he stepped from the linoleum onto the carpet, he noticed the latest issue of **Field and Stream** on the buffet near the door. He walked over to it. It was face down and the advertisement on the back cover met his passing glance. "When was the last time **you** were out with the boys?" the ad asked. It showed a picture of four men seated at a round table playing cards. The bartender in the background was pouring beer and a large mounted muskie hung on the wall. When was the last time, he thought to himself. Who knew? He certainly didn't. He used to go down to the bar every once in a while when they were first married. Just to relax, maybe play a little huckly-buck and have a beer or two. It had sort of been fun. It had been a long time ago. Martha didn't like him to associate with "those kind of people" and he had told himself that it was probably better if he stayed home, so he stopped going and pretty soon they stopped asking why he never came down. It would be rather nice to go down again, he thought to himself. He knew some of the old gang still went down there nights and sometimes on a Saturday morning. He wondered what might be going on tonight. Maybe . . .

"Herbert! Haven't you got my milk yet?" Do you suppose old Tootie would be there? Herbert thought to himself. Good old Tootie. Why he hadn't seen or talked with Tootie in years and Ed, Ed Feddersen, he used to be a great pool player and . . .

"Herbert!" There was impatience in her voice. What's wrong

with you?" She turned in the sofa so that she looked across the room at Mr. Johnson holding the tall glass of milk on the silver tray, while he looked at the magazine. "Bring my milk over here!" Mr. Johnson looked up from the magazine. "What is wrong with you, Herbert?"

And Jim. Why, Jim Farnsworth could tell more jokes than any . . . "Herbert!" Her voice was somewhat higher. And to think that all these years he hadn't . . .

"I think," said Mr. Johnson as he slowly set the silver tray on the buffet, "I will go have a beer."

"You'll what?" Her voice echoed shock and disbelief.

"I think," said Mr. Johnson dryly, "I will go have a beer."

"You'll what?" she said again. She turned fully around in the sofa. Her feet flipped the Siamese on his back and he looked up and yawned. "You're going to what?"

"Right," said Johnson casually to himself. "I'm going to have a beer. Or maybe even two. What would you think of that, Martha?"

"I'd think you were crazy," she said. "Bring by milk over here and sit down." Her eyes were hard now and her voice stern, like a field general just before final orders are given. "The milk, Herbert. I would like my milk."

Herbert smiled. "Thirty-four years. **Thirty-four years.** Do you realize that . . . but you wouldn't realize. You couldn't. Well, all that's going to change." Herbert's voice was becoming firm and somewhat louder. "That's all suddenly changed, Martha. I've been thinking. I've worked. I've earned money, but we really haven't lived. I mean **really** lived. And I'm not going to wait any longer. I'm going to enjoy myself. Milk . . . cats . . . magazines. Why, we can **always** do that. But you think about it. I'm going downtown. He crossed in front of the buffet and opened the door to the small closet. He reached in, pulled out his hat and placed it jauntily on his head. I'll be back shortly. Your milk is on the buffet. You can get it." He turned, opened the door to the porch, stepped out and pulled the door closed behind him.

It was cool outside. Not cold. Just cool and clean. The sky was clear. There was a full moon. Johnson took a deep breath, hurried down the steps, crossed the lawn and turned downtown. He felt like walking. In fact, he thought to himself, he might go on more walks if he felt like it. But now for that beer. What a look on Martha's face. Milk? He coughed slightly.

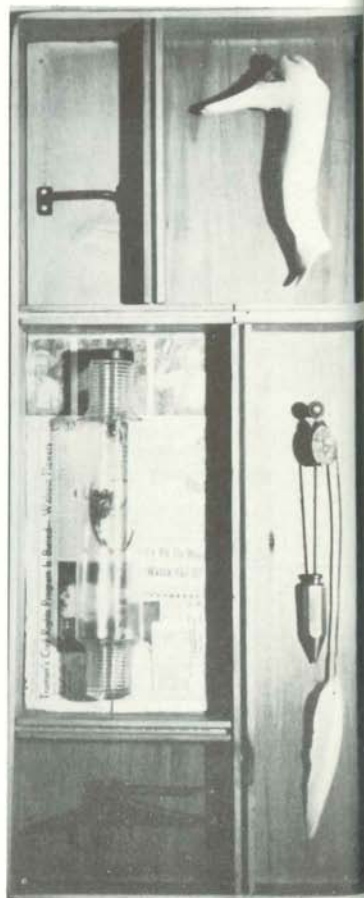




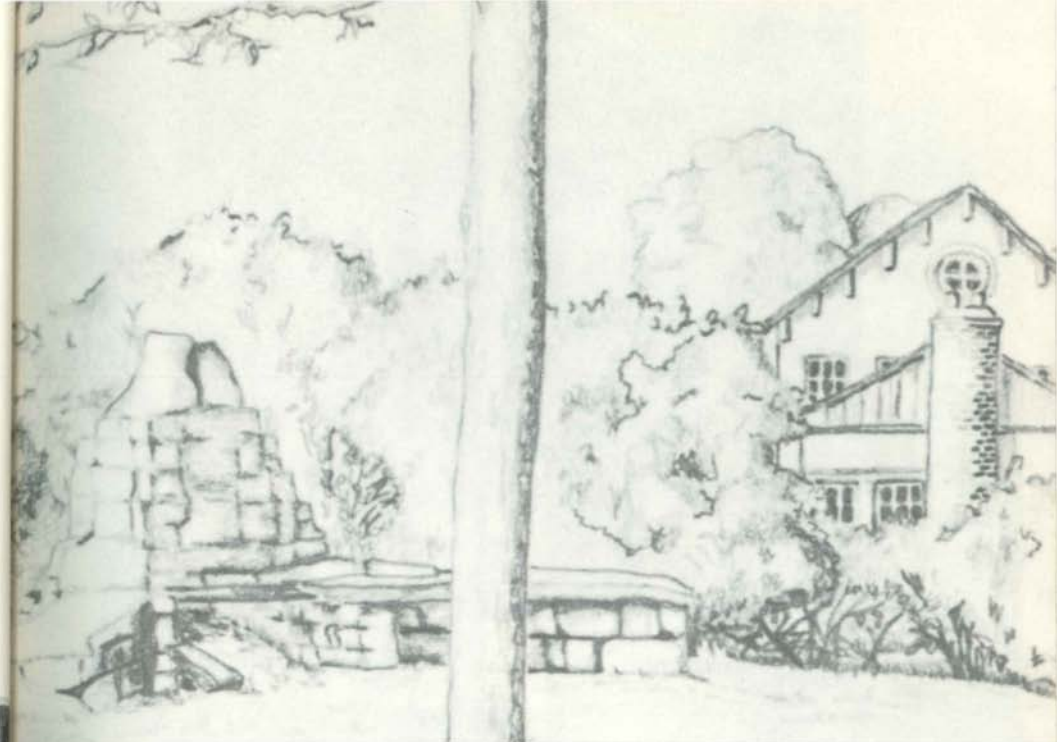
Paul Corbin, "Rich Jacobi"



Dennis Dykema, "Still Life"



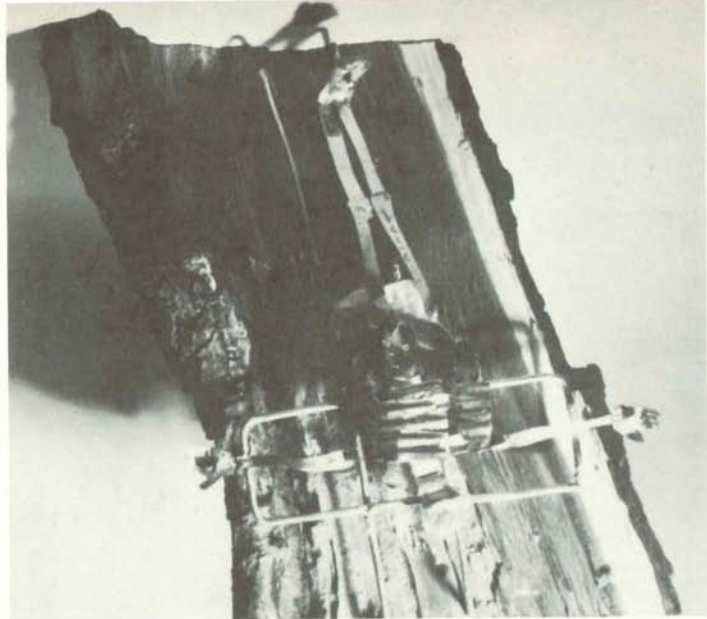
Avis Willer, "Facts and Figures  
Scientists and Other Men"



Drew Miller, "Landscape #1"



Richard Jacobi "Self Portrait"



Ron Kitterman, "The Wormwood and the Can"



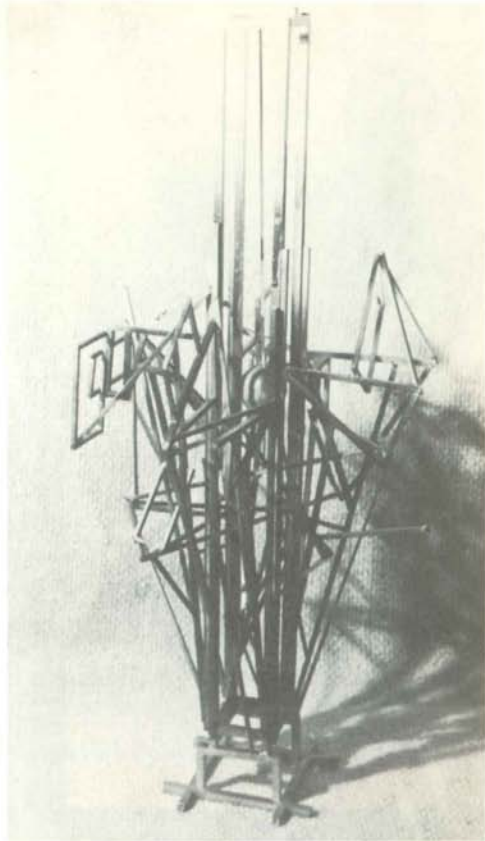
Jon Skoglund, "Mother and Child"



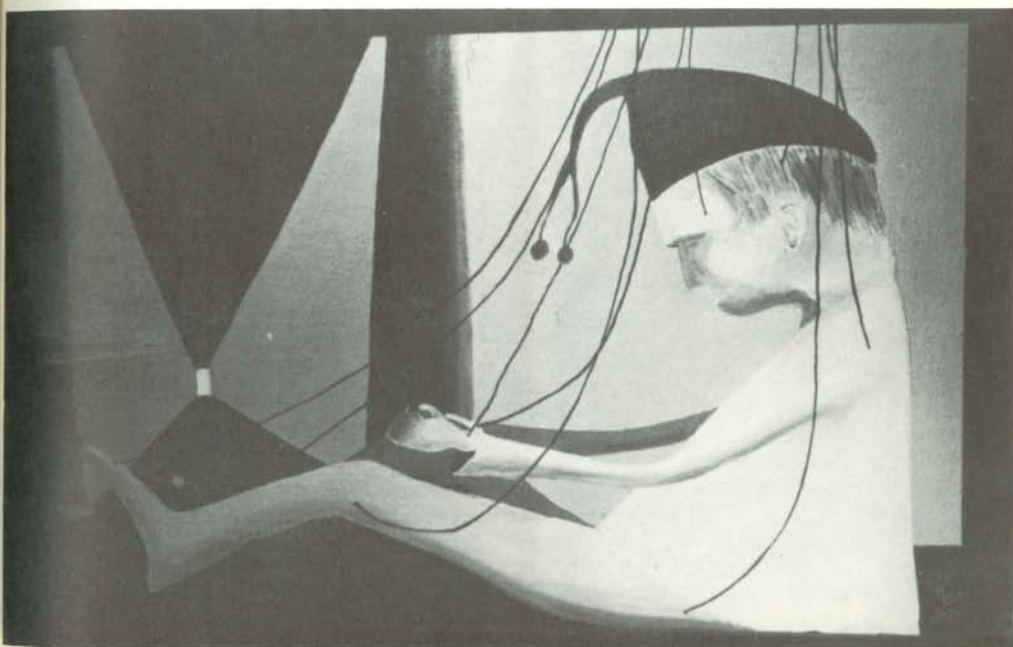
Dennis Dykema, "Fertility Machine"



Avis Willer, "Man"



Drew Miller, "Social Structure"



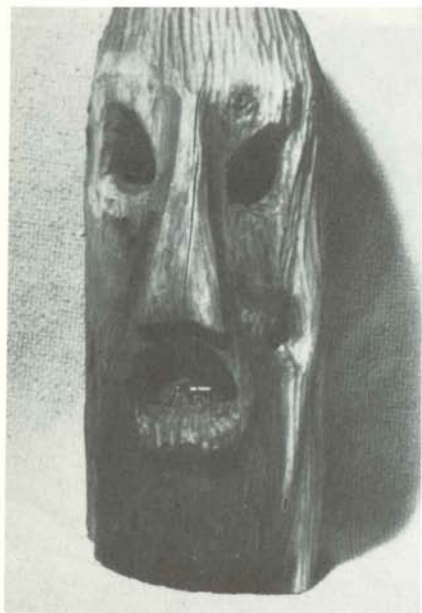
Dennis Dykema, "Man the Fool"



Joseph Meyer,  
"Karate Man"



Richard Jacobi



Dennis Dykema,  
"Social Problem #746"  
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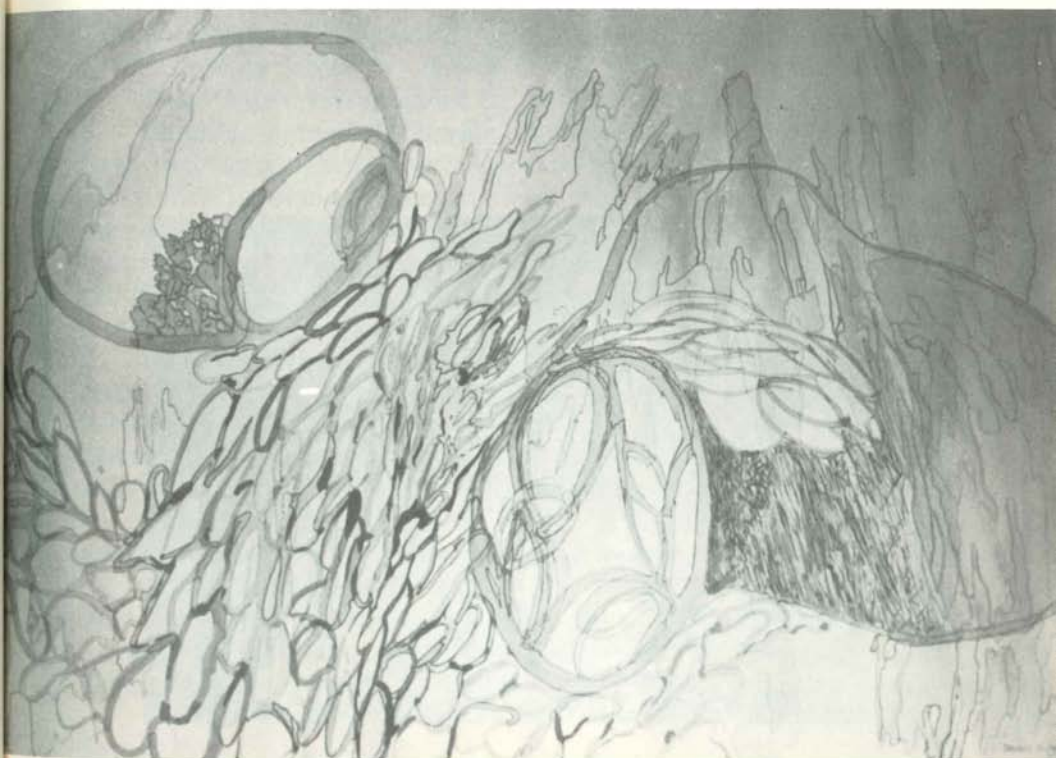


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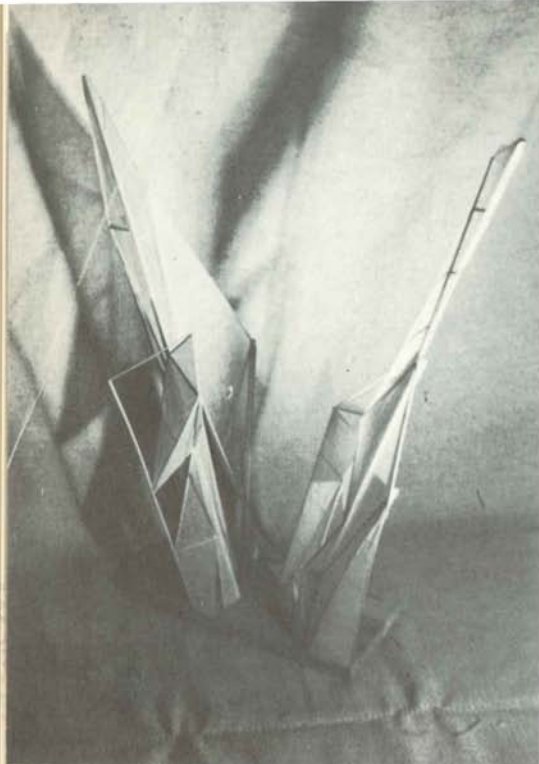




John Nelson, "Wave"



Denice Walker, "Nature Under a Microscope"



John Nelson,  
"The Valley of the Shadow of Death"



Richard Jacobi,  
"Parasite of Constant Virtue"



Sandra Smith, "What is Man That Thou Art Mindful of Him"—Psalm 8

## *Suffer the Little Children*

Joan Neiman

So this was the deep south. Bus depot sure didn't look much different. Dingier maybe. Not exactly dirty. But floors never glistened, and odors were odd, if not undesirable. Last night the lobby of the hotel had seemed fine, but this morning it looked slightly jarred. The plaster by the elevator buttons was cracked, and the wallpaper had been pulled away. And they said it was the best hotel. At least the room was spotless. She wondered if the negroes stayed there. She had not seen any except for the bell boys, so she guessed that they didn't. She wondered if she was prejudiced. It was a surprise to see the shoe shine boys when she had gotten off the bus. Not a boy, a man, on each wall of the depot. "Yessiring" and brush-brush-brushing away. All of their collars had seemed a little large. Their eyes had followed her with short jerky movement; and although she felt sorry for them, they seemed to mock her.

Of course she imagined it. Daddy always did say what an imagination she had. Maybe the dirt and decay, the internal rotting, had not really been there: Atlanta, Birmingham, Nashville. Maybe she had seen what she looked for. She hadn't really believed it when she had read it. But Tom had been there for almost a year, and he denied it. Maybe it was her. Or he just didn't see it. They hadn't talked about it.

Stepping onto the sidewalk, the green and light hit her. It sure was better than Iowa. Even in the middle of the city the difference in seasonal climate was vivid. More so in the city since the countryside was mostly fir trees. Or maybe pine? It was odd. She had expected elms and ash trees. But firs stretched for miles on the land, just as her day stretched for her until Tom got off the base at six.

Main Street lay before her. The southern army town. The color of the street appealed to her. White, wide street, with little white rubber disks nailed into the concrete to form the paths. Green strips lay between the sides of the roads. Wide green strips, as wide as each side itself. People could even cross from one strip to the other in the middle of the road. Bright clothed colored people everywhere, and once in a while a dull white one.

There were a lot of them. She hadn't expected so many. And they looked good. Not oppressed. Some of the older ones were dirty, personally sloppy and over-all repulsive. But most of those thirty or younger were clean and healthy. Wearing bright

attractive clothes of good taste. They didn't look starved at all. She felt herself being disappointed in the loss of the martyr image, and then her Christian logic took over and she felt corrupt.

It was the whites who amazed her. This fabled romantic, cultural people she had been led to expect. Where was the gentle civilization? She was the only one who wore scarf and gloves. Almost all the women tottered around on heels, and their skirts were way below the knees. Much lower than they wore them back home. She had felt very chic, coming out of the hotel, but now she felt ill at ease, like the time she had tried on a small dress. She wore her hair long, because it was unusual, but here almost all of the women had long hair. It looked unkept and dirty. They let it hang free, and many put their bangs in awful tight little rolls above their foreheads. Their faces had a white underfed look and each one looked as though she had just gotten over a very difficult pregnancy. Perhaps the contrast with the blacks gave this effect. Or perhaps it was the decay. If there was any. Most of the men seemed fine. No worse than northern men, anyway. She chuckled. In school they had told her that in a decaying religion the fertility goddess is the first to go, and then the rest collapses.

Finally locating the post office (it had no flags, no enlistment poster, defense, shelter signs, or other appearances of life), she mailed the letter. All their public buildings had either lawns baked with concrete walls or stone yards. She didn't know why. The post office had a banked lawn. Coming out the other side she saw five real 'Ole time Mammys sitting on the curb selling flowers for Easter. Two had kerchiefs tied over their hair, like Aunt Jemimah. Gunny sacks were aprons. Each mumbled at her, holding up pieces of orange wood. They were all fat, and she couldn't tell one from the other. She remembered a joke someone had told her. 'A negro cannot tell one white man from the other, their faces all look alike.' Not knowing why, she felt ashamed, and ducked her head.

A Rexall sign loomed, flashing food, and she went inside. All tense, ready, alert to all going on, not wanting to miss a movement. There was only one seat at the counter. On the very end. The counter appeared to be wall-to-wall negro babies. Five in a row, diminishing gradually, then a big hump, mother, and down to the last, the smallest of all. There were only eight stools, so they and the girl filled the counter. She was delighted with them. They looked like some kind of an ad.

The mother was about twenty-two, with Aryan features and very black skin. Giving the appearance of black-face. She would

have been a beautiful caucasian woman, but she didn't know if the negroes would consider her pretty. Probably not. The mother's white blouse was so clean it was brilliant. From the cut it was impossible to tell if she was pregnant a seventh time. The five children she could see were spotless. The small girl's hair was taken up by yellow ribbons and tied on top of their heads. The four little dresses were starched and ironed precisely. Each sweater was embroidered in matching rosebuds. The girl decided they must be a military family, but couldn't decide what had brought them out. The colored woman glared at her for the fourth time and the girl dropped her eyes guiltily. The children must have gotten their eyes from the father. The mother's stared piercingly again. There was something wrong with her eyes. They were deep brown, but looked strange, like she was drunk or wore contacts. Obviously she wasn't drunk with six kids and it was very unlikely she could afford contact lenses. But there was something there. Somehow it looked like she was ready to pass out.

The girl ordered a dinner, and their hamburgers and french fries came. The woman went through the maneuvers necessary to divide everything and get everything ready. Their manners were perfect. Only disturbed when the oldest girl wanted a straw, like the mother had given the only boy. She growled, "Shhh, I said. I said drink it. Drink it." Obediently, she drank. Bestowing a napkin on each one in his turn she said, "Don't ya all mess up now, ya hear. Don't ya all mess up."

The girl bent to the four year old boy. "What's your name? . . . Those french fries good? . . . You're an awful cute boy." No reply.

The woman noticed this and looked at her, her eyes focusing largely. "Teddie, ya all leave the lady alone, ya hear. She's not your kind. You be quiet now. Yeat ya fries."

The girl was hurt and disturbed. Why? She had tried to be nice to them. Even if they were niggers. Daddy had always been pro-negro. Until last year, anyway. He and Mom had gotten lost in Birmingham during the race riots. The riots had interfered with their vacation. Stupidly, they had taken a wrong road, and wound up in the midst of a negro gathering in the street. Surprisingly, Mother had remembered to lock all the car doors. They were forced to slow to a crawl, and black men surrounded the car, pounding and yelling. Poor Mother had been frightened to death, but Father had gotten mad. When they started taking the hub caps off Daddy had seen red, and put the car in low. He just took off, shifting so fast Mother had fallen. She was afraid he would

kill one of them, but he didn't, they got out of the way, and they got back on the main highway. He had never liked negroes since. That didn't mean that he really meant the things he said, of course. She wondered what she would really think of them if they weren't controlled.

The boy grabbed a french fry dripping with ketchup and put it in his mouth. It was a tremendous task. He was very careful. Slowly he emerged another in the thick red mass. Then he carefully balanced it and popped it into his mouth, wiping his hand on the next fry.

His hair was cut as close as possible to the scalp, but still frizzed black, row on row of minute tight waves. His bright red T shirt had white edging and his bright red sweater matched it, hanging low to his brand new jeans. He was a really little dandy.

Blood dripped down on the blue pants. One, two, three, large globs. Coagulating, then slowly soaking in, spreading. Ketchup. It dripped from his hand down his chin to the leg. He had miscalculated and caused chaos. Grabbing a napkin, the girl stopped the flow. Blotting the stream into a thin napkin was difficult since he conveyed his tension and his painful shame to her. "It's okay. I'll get it all here. You'll be as good as new. Let me see your hand." He answered, looking gratefully at her, and looking surreptitiously at his mother, "Yes. Thanks. Yes, mam."

He jerked upward straight into the air. Held by a strong pair of hands. Standing on the seat, he stared up at his mother, holding him by the seat of his pants. "Shame on you all. Shame. You go get all mess up now. Leave that lady alone." She shook him violently. "And don't say 'Yes mam.' You hear. Don't you ever say 'Yes mam' to nobody!" She cast a seething look at the girl and left, going back to the stool.

"Don't worry. You all is as good as new. Eat up."

No answer. Just a bleak stare from son to mother. The woman's eyes. They were white's eyes. That was what was wrong. Not large pupiled as the negroid eyes were. She had white features and white eyes. They looked dilated in the dark face.

Paying the bill, she gathered the herd together and led them to the door. Slipping, one of the three year old girls hit a white woman who was going in the opposite direction. She fell against the plate glass, tilting her hat, and slipping to one pudgy knee. The girls laughed childishly and beat their chests. Quickly, the mother grabbed them and they all vanished into the crowd.

A cashier rushed over to the girl, "Oh, oh, what's going on. Dear, dear. What happened? What's going to happen. Is she

hurt?"

"It's nothing unusual."

The girl made a mock courtsey as she walked past the fallen body.

"Oh, oh, dear, what's that all about?"

"I'm just paying my respects to her highness."

## *Flesh or Spirit?*

Connie Stevens

Even though I am not of legal age to go against my father's wishes, I must surrender to that spiritual power beyond myself. It is my utmost desire to make my father realize the great harmony to the spirit. I must help him to find it also. But he will not waste his precious time listening to my 'foolishness.' He insists that I continue my studies at the School of Chartres. Father says some day I will make a significant contribution to the long line of my heritage.

If only he did not own all the land this side of the Merca River. Then I would not be able to go to the School. I could be free to roam the fields like boys who are not governors' sons. I could spend my time in communion with God. I am tired of futile efforts at writing and reading the Latin prose and verse. Fulbert's literary subjects hold no interest for me any more—away with Ovid, Cicero, Horace.

However, I attend the school regularly, because I respect my father and grandfathers. I never pay attention to the grammar and rhetoric—there is nothing left to learn of the dull Roman system. Instead I sit at my table and watch the hourglass until the last grain of sand has disappeared. Then I race to Old Pella's to spend a few forbidden moments with him before going to my home. I do not know why Father dislikes him so—I dearly love the old man. Day after day he sits, legs crossed, on his ancient rug, stroking continually his long white beard. Pella is waiting for more guiding words from our powerful God and I dare not disturb him when he is meditating. He is so wise—I hope someday to be just like him.

An authentic scroll of Dionysius lies by Pella's side at all times. He reads from it every evening when I arrive. Dionysius wrote that if we lay aside all mental energies, by pure contemplation we can share in the super-light above knowledge. My friend is trying to help me find the super-light. Sometimes I feel as if I

will never find it. Other times, it is quite to the contrary. For example, one night last year I dreamt of St. Paul. With one hand he was tearing down the walls around the School. In his other hand was Old Pella with Dionysius' script in his lap. I was, of course, afraid to tell my father—he has such faith in the 'proper teachings.' So after instruction hours, I hurried to Pella's abode as usual . . .

"My friend, I have great news. I dreamt of St. Paul tearing down the School walls. **You** were seated in his free hand. And with you was the script of Dionysius! Does this not signify that at last I am reaching the great realm of the spirit?"

The old man spoke to me in the tender way only the very aged can master, "My son, you must listen intently to that which I tell you. This surely means that you truly love God and will one day become one body with Him. But you must remember—He will not allow an idiot to enter into his existence."

That was exactly one year past on this night. There have been no more such dreams—there has been nothing since that dream. I seem to be making no progress with the spirit. Will I never be delivered from the flesh? Will I never be freed from casuality?

Teach me, my father—God, receive me!

## *The Last Rose*

Joy Thompson

Dad's been gone three months now and we haven't had any news of him, not even a postcard. I'm sure Mom could have had him found in the beginning if she'd tried. It's hard to disappear now with teletypes between police stations, all the identification necessary to get a job, and car licenses so easily spotted by highway patrols. I suppose at first she thought he'd come back. I know Sandy and I did. Our folks had been fighting ever since we could remember and we tried to tell ourselves that this time was no different even though we knew deep down that it was.

One of my earliest memories is of my parents fighting. That and Mom's afternoon teas. Odd how the two memories go together, but they were in some way bound up.

Mom and Dad's worst quarrels usually came right after one of those teas. Mom was always in a good mood on one of her tea days. Instead of being quiet and bitter, she was sort of excited and she talked a lot in a fast high voice. She'd babble on about



what each one said, but after a while the glow would wear off and Mom would turn on Dad and start lashing out at him.

Sandy and I hated those afternoon teas and not only because of our parents fighting afterwards. We would come home from school and there was no use sneaking in the back door. Mom would call us in to say good afternoon to the ladies. They were all women from the neighborhood, all younger than Mom. They had slick hairdos and bright lipstick and they wore the latest style in Toreador pants. Beside them Mom look so old-fashioned in her soft flowered chiffon dresses and black pumps. Mom is a little woman, dainty-looking and she has small bones. Her hair is black and curly but she pulls it back into a French twist that makes her look even older. She would sit in the big wing chair and preside over the tea table like somebody's grandmother. Grandma's tea set would be on the table. It was English bone china, so thin you could almost see through it. It had rose sprigs all over it, dainty and delicate little pink roses. With that tea set in front of her, Mom really looked like the high society lady she wanted to be.

Sandy and I were supposed to come in and pass the plates of fancy little sandwiches. We felt gawky and awkward and we had a perfect horror of tripping over someone's slim slack-clad legs and dumping a whole plate in somebody's lap. Our big red hands and wrists stuck out of our sleeves because we always grew so fast that our clothes didn't fit. We both take after our Dad. We're big and stocky. Our sandy hair would stick out any which way no matter how much we tried to brush it smooth. By the time we would get home from school, we would be stick and rumped and we'd feel out of place in the living room with our dainty little mother and the sleek women.

It wasn't so bad after we got older. We both started working after school and we didn't get home before the teas were over. Mom would never admit that we worked because we needed the money. She used to tell her friends that I worked at the library because I'm such a bookworm. The same with Sandra's job at the five and dime. Mom was always saying that those girls just can't sit around. Between school and working and the baby-sitting we do now, we don't have time to sit around, but it isn't because we don't want to.

Mom doesn't talk like this now that Dad is gone. She never talks about what happened either, even to Sandy and me. We talk about Dad often, but not where Mom can hear us. If anyone even mentions his name, she gets that white funny look on her face that she had the day after Dad left. Mom never lets on to anyone how

things bother her. She pretends that everything is just fine. I guess that is one way she hasn't changed.

That was one of the things they fought about, Mom's pretending. For instance, there was the way she acted about the house. Our house is the oldest one in the block. In fact it is about the oldest one I've seen anywhere. It sticks out in the neighborhood like a sore thumb. It's a big Victorian monstrosity with all kinds of supolas and balconies. It doesn't look quite so funny since Dad painted it all white, but it is three stories high and the rest of the houses around are all post-war ranches so it looks sort of like a big white hen surrounded by a bunch of pastel colored chicks. Sandy and I have always been embarrassed by it, but Mom always acted as if it was a castle and she wouldn't give it up for anything. She'd inherited it from her mother, who inherited it from her mother, and I guess it probably was a pretty good house in Grandma's day. I can vaguely remember how it looked with the floors all shiny and the furniture all polished up and new. It's pretty beat up now. The drapes are old and faded and the carpet is worn through to the backing. The floors are scuffed and the paint is dingy. Mom always told the neighbors that everything in it was so valuable that she wouldn't replace it for anything. She would move the furniture around so the worst spots in the carpet didn't show and she'd mend the drapes and the chintz on the sofa and stuff. She always kept the shades pulled so the sun wouldn't fade the carpet, she said, but we knew it was to hide the way everything was already faded. The only thing in the whole house worth having was Grandma's tea set. That was one thing Mom didn't have to pretend about. She'd have traded the house off like a shot, but that tea set was the one thing she bragged about and meant it.

Another thing Mom always griped about to Dad was the store. Her family had had money and so had Dad's. Dad owned a little grocery store that had once been the best one in town. What with supermarkets and taxes and the fact that Dad was easy-going and not too ambitious, now it barely makes a profit. Mom had been used to being somebody, and now she lived in a neighborhood where everyone else was on the way up and she and Dad were on the way down. This was the kind of thing she was hiding from her friends. To them she pretended she was crazy about this house and that Dad should stay in the store as his father had done before him. At home it was a different story.

"Robert," she'd say, she always called him that even though everyone else called him Bob, "Robert, you've got to do something."

That cultured voice of Mom's would become shrill and she'd

go on and on about what Dad should do and shouldn't do. He should not give credit. He should remodel and make the store into a supermarket. He should sell out to one of the big chains. And the house. He should fix it up so it looked like something. He should sell it and buy one in the swankier part of town. He should make enough money that she and Sandy and I could have fancy clothes and join the country club and be somebody. That was her theme—we should be somebody. Hughes have always been somebody and so have Rogers, her family. Mom never forgets that her dad was a big banker. He lost all his money in the crash of twenty-nine and died shortly after. She and her mother lived here after that with her grandmother. They didn't have to go to work but they pinched pennies and after Grandma died they sold off parts of the acreage that went with the house. They sold furniture and dishes and silver, too. Finally everything that was valuable was gone except the tea set.

Mom was in the kitchen washing the tea set that last night. She always washed it right way so it wouldn't get stained or broken. Supper was always late after one of her teas. Sandy and I had lunched on some of the little sandwiches and cakes, so we didn't care, but Dad didn't like to have supper late. That night he was tired, they had been stocking shelves. He walked in and here was Mom washing her tea set and no supper even started. She was humming and she dried each cup carefully, paying no attention to Dad. Dad had to get back to the store.

He didn't yell, he just said softly, "Martha, couldn't you let that damned thing go for once and get me something to eat?"

Mom didn't even turn around. She just laughed and said, "Oh, Robert, sit down and read the paper or something. You know I've got to wash Grandma's tea set. Tea stains so badly, you know."

Dad started rummaging around in the refrigerator. About all that was in it was a bunch of little cucumber sandwiches left over from the party.

Dad said, "My God, Martha, didn't you buy anything to eat? All that food in the store and we don't even have a piece of meat in the house. Why didn't you tell me to bring home some hamburger?"

"Hamburger," Mom sniffed. We never had hamburger at our house. We might have meat loaf, or Swedish meat balls or salisbury steak, but we never had hamburger.

"Just a minute," Mom said, "I'll whip up an omelet."

"Omelet," Dad said, groaning, "my God, Martha, I'm hungry."

He grabbed the bacon and tossed a bunch of slices in the

frying pan, and then got out the eggs and beat up about a half-dozen. He tossed them in to scramble and yelled at Sandy and me to make some toast and set the table. Pretty soon the kitchen smelled great. Mom hardly ever fried anything. It smelled up the house too much, she said. Sandy had set the table in the kitchen. It seemed kind of silly to eat scrambled eggs in the dining room, I guess. Everything was just about ready to eat. I had just got out some catsup for my eggs and put it on the table when Mom turned around.

"Really, Robert, eggs in the kitchen for dinner."

Dad's face turned red and he pounded his fist on the table.

"Who do you think you are, Martha Hughes? Why didn't you marry one of the Rockefellers? I don't see that it hurts you to be what you are once. What's the difference whether we eat fancied up omelet in the dining room or plain scrambled eggs in the kitchen?"

Mom took off her frilly apron and started toward the hall. Dad grabbed her arm and said, "Come on, Martha, you're not too good to eat with us."

"I'm not hungry," she said, sort of wrinkling up her nose.

"Well, you can have a cup of coffee, and sit with us while we eat," he said, giving her a little push into a chair.

Sandy and I had been shoveling food into our mouths and trying not to look at them or even to hear them. Our folks had been fighting all our lives but we'd never got used to it.

Mom just sat in the chair, her back straight, sort of looking off into space as if she was trying to be someplace else. Dad sloshed some coffee into one of the tea set cups still sitting on the counter. Some of it slopped into the saucer. He set it down with a bang.

Mom came to life then. "Robert," she said, "that is one of Grandma's good cups. Are you trying to break it?"

She stood up and seemed to grow about three inches. She looked at Dad as if he were a worm she was going to step on. They stood there for a few minutes glaring at each other, their hands clenched at their sides. Sandy and I looked at each other and made for the back stairs. We didn't want to be around when the real fight began. We didn't hear a sound all the way upstairs, but before we got our door shut, they started yelling. We could hear them even with the door closed. We sat on the bed, not wanting to listen, but not able to keep from it. They were really screaming now, Mom's voice high and shrill, Dad's low and grating.

"You're no good, Robert Hughes, you've never been anybody

and you never will be."

"That's all right with me, I don't pretend to be something I'm not anyhow."

"What do you mean, something I'm not? I'll thank you to remember that I'm a Rogers. My grandfather once owned half this town."

"Yes, and your old man gambled it all away, and shot himself when he lost his money and the rest of the town's, too."

"Robert, that's a terrible thing to say. Papa couldn't help it if the bank closed. All the banks closed."

"Yeah, but not because the banker had absconded with the money of all the little people and played the stock market with it."

Mom shrieked like a banshee at that. Sandy and I held our hands over our ears, but pretty soon we took them away. We had to know what happened, no matter how bad it was.

We heard a slap, whose we couldn't tell. Then there was a long silence. We held our breaths listening for some sound. When it came it was so odd we didn't recognize it at first. It was a tinkling little noise, something like wind bells. Then came another, a little louder. We could hear Mom sort of moaning, "Oh no Robert no Robert no." And then another shattering noise.

All of a sudden Sandy clapped her hand over her mouth. She began to cry softly. "Oh, Kathy," she said, "it's Grandma's tea set." She flopped face down on the bed and began to wail, echoing Mom with "no, oh no, oh no."

I listened and now I could tell too that the crashes were those of china smashing. We winced at each crash. Mom didn't seem to be trying to stop him, we could still hear her moaning quietly. We shivered each time a crash came, almost counting out the twelve cups and twelve saucers, twelve luncheon plates, and then the creamer and sugar bowl. There was a long pause and we waited, hardly breathing. Then it came, one horribly loud crash and then another.

"The tea pot," I said.

"The tray," Sandy said.

For a few minutes after that the silence was deafening. Then we heard Dad's footsteps on the stairs. We cowered on the bed, watching the door, but his heavy footsteps went on. He began slamming things around in his bedroom and for a little while we thought he was breaking something else. Then the sounds made a pattern. The drawers slammed open and shut. The closet door banged back against the wall. A large tinkling noise came as he swept the silver-backed brushes off the dresser. He stomped into

the bathroom and glass clattered. At last came the bang of the lid of his suitcase and the snap of the locks. Now his footsteps were slower, heavier and quiet as he stepped on the carpet of the front stairs. At the head of the stairs, he called back softly, "Good-bye girls."

We didn't answer or open the door. So many times since we've asked ourselves why. Why didn't we try to stop him? Our brains seemed to have shattered along with Grandma's tea set and we just sat there. The front door slammed and the car started up with a whine. The gravel in the driveway rattled as the car backed out, braked and then took off with a roar. We sat there as the roar died away in the distance. Finally we got up, not even looking at each other and started to get ready for bed. We moved mechanically, undressing, brushing our teeth, pulling our beds down. As I reached over to turn out the light, I glanced at Sandy. Then I shut off the light quickly and we crawled under the covers and put our heads under the pillows and bawled like babies.

When we came shrinking down for breakfast the next morning, Mom greeted us coolly. The kitchen was cleaned up: the dishes done and nothing out of place. We went into the dining room for breakfast as we did every day of our lives. The room seemed bare. It looked dingy and battered in the morning sunlight. The dining room table was dull and scarred, the rug scuffed and worn. There was a bare, shiny, oval spot in the middle of the buffet where the tray from the tea set had stood for so many years. The house seemed shabby, lifeless. It wasn't Dad's being gone. He might come back. There was a hopelessness, as if a sudden decay had set in overnight.

We ate without talking. Neither of us said anything to Mom. She had a white set look as if she was trying very hard to hold herself together. She looked as if she might fly to pieces herself if anyone touched her. As we went out the back door to school, a little piece of china with one perfect rose on it was lying beside the trash can. We knew that the rest of the pieces must be inside, but neither of us lifted the lid. I bent down and picked up that little piece and put it in my pocket.

We've never heard a word from Dad since he's been gone. Mom works in the store now. She stands at the counter and sells things to the neighbors without batting an eyelash. I don't know what she told people. I only know that she never talks about Dad or the tea set. She doesn't talk about being a Rogers, either, or how wonderful it is to live in a historical mansion. She's even talking about taking in roomers. She looks tired and worn but she

never complains. Sandy and I work as we always did and we do baby-sitting. The neighbors don't ask questions. I wish Dad would come back and see how Mom's changed. We eat hamburger lots of times now and sit at the kitchen table. There's a big bouquet of artificial roses on the buffet now. Sandy brought them home from the dime store. They're just plain ten cent store fake flowers, but Mom took them in the dining room and put them right on the buffet. I wish Dad could see them.

## *No Place to Hide*

Joy Thompson

When Alex awoke that morning, the heat covered him like a blanket. He kicked as if he could push it away. He felt terribly sad; his eyes ached as if he were going to cry. At first he thought he must have had a nightmare, and he sat up slowly trying to remember it. Then his mother called to him from the foot of the stairs, "Alex, time for breakfast," and he knew that the nightmare had been real.

He stood at the head of the stairs, his thin pajamas sticking to him. He was pale and thin; damp, dark curls stuck to his forehead. His eyes were dark and smudgy and circled by black eyelashes. He looked drawn and he shifted restlessly from one bare foot to the other. Below him in the hall, his parents stood looking up at him. His mother too was pale and dark. Her face, below the dark cloudy hair, looked as if the heat had taken all her strength away. Behind her, his big, rangy father stood carefully apart.

He smiled wearily at Alex.

"Good morning, Alex. Did you sleep well?"

Alex nodded.

He waved briefly, "I'll see you tonight."

He turned to the dark woman and his smile ebbed.

"Try to get him out today, Marion. Take him to the pool, why don't you?"

She shrugged and looked away.

He looked up at Alex pleadingly, "Good-bye, son. Find yourself something to do, okay?"

Alex nodded gravely, "So long, Dad."

Alex started down the stairs, but he stopped as his mother suddenly turned.

"If you get home early for a change, Stan, we could all go

swimming.”

The man sighed. “If I can, Marion. I’ll try, but you know we’re always short-handed during vacation time.”

She shrugged again and turned toward the kitchen. The screen door banged as Alex’s father went out.

Alex sat down on the steps. He wished he had had a nightmare. That would be gone now. He felt sick at his stomach. He didn’t think he could eat any breakfast. He choked down a sob, thinking of his parents’ bitter words last night. They had thought he was asleep and they had not tried to hold their voices down. His mother had shrilly accused his father of staying at the office because he didn’t want to come home. His father had told her harshly that she should leave home once in a while. He said she shut herself and Alex off in their own private little world. He said he couldn’t always be there to act as a shield.

All through that long hot summer Stan and Marion had wrangled. Little arguments had grown into big ones. Tempers had flared as the heat had grown more intense. The last few weeks the violent bickering had alternated with an uneasy armed truce. Between the heated encounters a tense silence had prevailed. Had it not been for Alex, they might not have spoken at all.

Each tried separately to make friends with Alex. Stan was bluff and hearty as he tried to get close to his son. He joked with him heavily, but he secretly worried about Alex’s tenseness, his thinness, and his solitude. Marion sometimes hovered over Alex. She spent long hours trying to be companionable. At other times she retreated behind some wall, thinking her own thoughts. She jumped when he came in sometimes, as if she had forgotten him completely.

He watched her now as she sat across the table from her. She sipped her coffee and stared into space. Now and then she pushed a tendril of hair back from her face. She looked at him questioningly, but she did not speak as he pushed his cereal bowl back and got up. Alex was glad to escape upstairs to dress. His mother was still sitting at the table when he slipped down the stairs and out the door.

Alex’s bare feet tingled as he walked through the cool, damp grass to his private place in the yard. It was behind a big lilac bush at the corner of the white picket fence that surrounded the yard. Here he could not be seen from the house, nor from outside the yard. He could peek out from between the slats and watch people go by. He lay on his back in the shade from the lilac bush, trying to keep still enough to stay cool. He talked to the dark



green leaves above his head. What am I doing that is so bad? There must be something. Mom and Dad look at me as if they'd like to pull me apart. That's the way I feel, pulled apart. When I'm with Dad, I want to tell him not to call be Pal or Buddy, and not to talk so loud and smile so much. Why can't I do like he wants and play ball and run around and yell with the other kids? But that's what Mom doesn't like. She always tells me to be quiet, not to run, that I might get hurt. She likes it best when I just sit where she can see me and she doesn't have to go out of the yard to call me. That's what makes Dad so mad. He doesn't like for Mom to stay home all the time. He says it's like being in prison. It isn't though. It's being safe. That's how Mom feels. I know because I feel that way too unless Dad's with me. If I could just be the way they both want me to then maybe they wouldn't fight.

Alex bit his thumbnail until it hurt. He thrust his hands behind him, ashamed of this babyish habit. He was ashamed too of the tears that rose behind his eyelids. He rubbed his eyes and walked slowly to the gate. He sat crouched inside the fence, waiting for his father to come home. He thought that maybe his Dad would come early enough to take them swimming. Alex didn't like swimming much; he was afraid of the water, afraid that someone would push him down. But it would mean that for a while his folks wouldn't be fighting.

The shadows grew long. The sun was bright red behind the trees. Alex sat and listened to mothers calling their children in for supper. It was breathlessly hot and so still that not a leaf moved. The whole world seemed to be hushed and waiting.

The sun had almost gone down when Alex's mother called him in. His Dad hadn't come yet. In a way Alex was thankful because now they could have supper peacefully. His mother didn't eat. She sat with a glass of iced tea, fanning herself slowly. Little beads of sweat beaded her upper lip.

After supper they sat on the porch watching fireflies. Heat lightning flickered in the dark sky. Alex could barely see his mother's pale face, but he could tell that it was becoming more and more hurt-looking. Little lines came around her lips as if she ached. Her mouth turned down. She sat nervously, restlessly swatting at mosquitoes. Finally she rose stiffly, her white dress looming up in the dark.

Her voice was soft but harsh as she said, "Alex, you'd better go to bed."

Alex said softly, "Good-night, Mom." He wanted to pat her shoulder, but she looked so jumpy and held in that he didn't dare.

She was pacing up and down the porch when he looked back from the stairs.

He lay as still as he could, waiting for the night to cool off. He felt guilty that he had been almost glad that his Dad hadn't come home. Even though loneliness was better than listening to his folks fight, he didn't think it was right to wish for it.

It seemed very late when he awoke. A bright flash lit the sky outside his window. At first he sleepily thought that it was lightning. Then he smelled the acrid smoke. He leaped out of bed and stumbled to the window. Below him in the yard he could see a bright fire burning. He could see his father; he looked small beside the leaping flames. He had an ax in his hand. Alex could see its bright blade flash down on something white. He pushed against the screen to see what it was. His father bent, picked up something and threw it in the fire. As the fire blazed up, Alex could see that it was the fence that was burning. He looked around at the yard. It looked open, naked without the fence. As the flames leaped higher, Alex watched his father chop out the posts holding the section of fence around the lilac bush. He cut it up into pieces and threw them into the fire.

Alex looked for his mother. By pushing the screen out and leaning out the window, he could see her white dress on the porch. She was crouched on the steps, holding herself with her arms as if she were trying to hide. She rocked back and forth as if she were crying.

Tears welled up in Alex's eyes. He didn't understand, but he knew that his parents had been fighting again. To see the yard without the fence reminded him of his father pushing him out into a gang of kids, not letting Alex hide behind him. He was making their house open to the world.

A cool breeze sprang up and blew on Alex and he shivered. He felt naked. He dashed blindly back to his bed and buried himself beneath the covers. His teeth were chattering and he felt cold all the way through.

## Communion

Doris Wood

"See, Grandpa," Sara directed, "down there, and over just a little bit. That's my secret place," she said conspiratorially. "There's a creek and trees and a flat place with big, big rocks. Maybe I'll take you there tomorrow. Only you can't tell anyone. Especially my mother."

The shrunken, frail old man squinted to see where his granddaughter had pointed. "Oh yes." He couldn't make out the place she was referring to. "My, that looks like a good place."

They stood on the hill against the rugged terrain, beneath the wispy summer sky. They were warmed by the bright sun.

Sara turned away and ran up the hill. Her grandfather was used to flat lands and he panted as he struggled up the incline.

Sara traveled with eyes down, looking for treasures. Suddenly she stopped and squatted down on her haunches. She pried a stone from the dirt. It had a bright red streak through the middle. She daintily rubbed off the dirt and soberly inspected her find. The smell of the earth still clung to the stone and holding the cool jewel in her hand she inhaled the odor of the fragrant earth. She had a close affinity for the vital earth.

She stood up and turned to her grandfather, who had now caught up with her. "Look, Grandpa, what I found!" She held up the stone for his inspection.

He took the stone and pretended to study it carefully, trying to regain his breath. "My," he finally said, "that's a pretty one."

Pocketing the stone Sara looked around for a treasure for her grandfather. Something off the path caught her eye. She stooped down and claimed it from the earth. She ran back and presented him with a tiny violet flower. "Here Grandpa . . . you don't have to keep it if you don't want to. It's just a tiny one," she apologized. "Big ones don't grow up here."

He accepted the flower, pleased. "It's a beautiful flower. Thank you." He brought the flower up to smell, a mindless gesture for his senses were dimmed in his old age.

"Look, Grandpa, behind you. You can see the whole world from here." Sara pointed to the city below them. "That's Duluth."

The two stood looking out at the city below them, a gleaming and peaceful vision in the sun. Sara stole a sidelong glance at her grandfather to see his reaction. His interest mustn't lag. She searched the scene to find something of special interest. A ship was moving in the harbor. "Look, Grandpa, over there," she

pointed, "do you see the ship?"

He dutifully followed the line she had pointed out. He had great difficulty making out things at a distance. "Well!"

"I've been on a ship!" she stated importantly, looking up to get his reaction. He crinkled up his face in feigned astonishment and smiled down at her.

They had not known each other until two days ago. He didn't talk much, but there had been a silent communication between them.

Sara looked down at her dress. It was her favorite, with tiny forget-me-nots on a pale yellow background. Her mother hadn't wanted Sara to wear it for a walk, it was her 'Sunday best'. But Sara had put all of her considerable will to the task and had won out. She smoothed down the skirt, a sensual gesture suggesting a potential voluptuary. Sara wondered if her grandfather liked the dress. She wanted to ask but was intuitive enough to know that asking would destroy the illusion.

A warm breeze caught her dress and fluttered it around her like wings. Engulfed in a joyful exuberance, she capriciously scrambled off up the hill, singing "catch me if you can, Grandpa." She was the eternal coquette, running from the captor, hoping for the capture.

"Don't run, child," he called weakly. "You'll stumble and fall."

Sara's vanity was offended—to think that she was that childish and clumsy! She ran faster, laughing triumphantly. A stone cropped up where none had been and caught the toe of her shoe. She went sprawling on her knees. The pain of the skinned knees brought tears to her eyes. She fought them back. She felt an animosity for the earth that had spilled her in such an undignified fashion. She kicked it.

Her grandfather caught up to her, heaving from his exertion. "Let me see that," he soothed. He made a motion to look at her skinned knees.

She was embarrassed, humiliated by her spill, and she quickly drew up her knees and covered them with her dress. "No! It doesn't even hurt." She desired to conceal the source of her pain from him.

"Aren't you going to let Grandpa see it?" He sat down helplessly next to her huddled figure and cautiously put his arm around her.

Sara shook her head emphatically. "No." He withdrew his arm self-consciously. Her rebuff was painful to him.

She wanted to change the subject. "You know, this is my hill. Hardly anyone ever comes here." Her knees hurt—she wanted to look at the damage but restrained herself.

"Oh?" He recognized her gesture of conciliation. "I like this very much."

Sara leaped to her feet and started up the hill again. Her grandfather pushed himself up with great effort. He was exhausted from the climb and the heat of the mid-day sun. But yet he followed his grandchild. She was his link with life. What she had to show him he desired to see. He struggled to catch up. Her agile figure darted before him, lithe and beautiful. The sun caught her blonde head.

She stopped and turned, hands on hips. "Grandpa, why are you so slow!" she reprimanded, in mock exasperation. Watching him struggling after her filled her with a sense of power. She was huge—on top of the world—more grown up than a grown-up. She laughed at him, struggling below. "Hurry up! We won't get there before **doom's** day," she yelled against the breeze.

The old man pushed on. He must please this child. He couldn't lose this. He feared her exasperation, her displeasure, her rejection. He stumbled.

Looking down at him he was incredibly shriveled beneath the broad expanse of land and sky. Sara remembered her mother's words, "Now don't take him too far. He's old and not very well. You mustn't tire him out too much."

Sara ran down to him and put her smooth hand in his gnarled one. "Grandpa, are you tired?" She looked fearfully and anxiously up. He gave her an inarticulate nod, too fatigued for speech.

"Grandpa, let's sit down here and look."

"We can go on," he gasped, trying to smile. He didn't want to disappoint her, to hold her back.

Sara helped him down. "No. I'm tired too. Let's rest here. We can sit here and look down." They sat on the grassy hill. Sara solicitously patted the old man's hand.

"Are you okay, Grandpa?"

"Yes, little one. I'm okay. I'm happy."

"You're not to get too tired," she fussed—like a nurse or mother, she thought.

They sat in silence except for the old man's heavy breathing. There was a rapport between them.

Sara struggled to overcome her natural reticence. She felt it important that there be no mistake as to her feelings. The

evidence of his weakness made her less concerned with her own vulnerability. "Grandpa, I love you."

Happiness overwhelmed him. "Yes. And I love you, Granddaughter." He found her small hand and squeezed it. The smoothness of her young flesh amazed him anew.

Sara felt the satisfaction of requited love.

Minutes passed. They soaked in the earth smells about them. They felt the warmth of the sun. A bee droned in a nearby patch of clover. They reviewed the city scene below them.

"Just think, Grandpa, we're kings of the whole world up here."

## *Underwater Affair*

Joy Thompson

I will meet you at twilight at the bottom of the sea,  
And we'll stroll along the sandy ocean floor.  
Side by side and hand in hand, we will frolic in the sand;  
Far from curious eyes, we'll turn to love once more.  
With no one around to ogle but the silent goggling fish,  
Submerged in subterranean solitude,  
We'll sit on a mossy rock, and secluded there we'll talk;  
In our emerald cave, no problems can intrude.  
In the current's swelling flood, I'll come surging up to you,  
Swaying close in rhythmic, undulating tide.  
Fin to fin and gill to gill, we'll float happily until  
We have quite forgot the prying world outside.  
Like Alpheus and Arethusa, I'll pursue you down the deeps,  
Till we meet in a sparkling fountain once again.  
I will gather pearls for you and a starfish, maybe two;  
You'll be mine and I'll be yours, ever Amen.  
I will meet you at twilight at the bottom of the sea  
And among the coral reefs, we'll glide along.  
We will leave our cares behind us, and the world will never find us;  
Totally immersed, to ocean we'll belong.

# *The End*

David Stead

The tattered windmill slows the  
Constant pump of fluid, and the  
Aging clock begins its final toll.  
An image seeks the needed  
Repetition, but glassy windows  
Feel the shades being drawn.  
The microphone is scarcely heard  
Through ragged wires, and the  
Radar no longer finds the vibrating  
Echo. The band has played  
Its final number as the musicians  
Close their eyes and depart. The final  
Page is written and the ear-marked  
Book is all but complete. The publisher  
Reviews the author's work and passes judgement  
On the success of his toil. The actors enter  
Slowly for the final curtain call while  
Lights that brightly burn begin to  
Fade until the power fails.

## *The Desert*

Suzanne Siemon

The silent, burning desert has allured  
Curious men beginning to explore  
The mysterious secrets that are blurred  
And vaguely hidden on the sandy floor  
Of the vast, uninhabited waste land.  
These intense desires cause men to ignore  
Countless hazards that we must understand.  
The desert abandons to solitude—  
Dismal and oppressive—that will withstand  
Curious probing of man's fortitude.  
The grim desert may lie—lifeless, voiceless—  
Never to impart to the multitude  
Why it has remained barren and pathless  
Throughout unnumbered ages that have passed.  
It will persistently conquer unless  
Man reveals the solemn secret it hides  
Encompassed in sand lying desolate.  
Advancing through sand, the desert misguides  
Man to believe he has reached the summit  
When he has actually only started,  
And the minutest ropes remain uncut.







