



PERSPECTIVES

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perspectives

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august wind

I wandered as a wind-moved thing
And asked for causes, Life.

And for life a little pretty, vague
but true

I wandered as a wind-moved thing
Which knows not

. . . . And cares.

As does care the stricken, helpless, dying
Cold and bleeding forms of catlike
innocence.

Little death, little pain, little hope gone out;
These cause me now to wander as a wind-moved-thing.
Wander for fear, for forlorn ghosts
Of insecurity.

Sometimes I fluttered-aloft
Then played as something free,
And prayed as sometimes free.

. . . But August Wind blows not hard,
And swiftly or slowly
Do I find my path or make my
Path along the dirty pretend-like ground
of realness and
scraps of paper
and bits of dung.
I wander as a wind-moved thing.

—Gene Cannaday

never to laugh

Since birth, or before — prenatally destined —
Continual war: his nature unended,
The impulse of love, unanswered, untended,
By Ego, the Brute who murders the peacedoves.

An idiot-told tale, of sound and of fury,
The world was a terror, half loved and half not
Till one who was whole reached out to this wounded
With healing of heart and laughter unending.

The peace was but brief, the laughter not always,
they left, and the warring once more held its sway—
The blackness descended full terrible now—
And never to laugh: again, deeper wounding.

Keith A. Tandy

a. b. c.

Take international dispute "A."
Take participants "X" "Y", "Z."
Take factors 1, 2, 3.
Take proposals "a", "b", "c."
Take solutions "a1", "b1", "c1"
Take myriad facts.
Quite objective, eh?
Have the solution yet? No?
You want to know who "X" is? "Y" is? "Z" is?
Then you can decide who is "wrong" and who is "right"?
So!
"X" is _____.
"Y" is _____.
"Z" is _____.
Ah so! It all clears up for you!
I see you have come to a conclusion—
A solution to our problem. Yes!
I'm proud of you!
It's marvelous what logical, objective
thinking can accomplish!
Yea, verily!

—Reverdy Mace

naturally

there
they are, happy, satisfied, owners of
what?
it
lo
oks
like, therefore it is just about always
right.
two eyes, green leaves, mouth,
trunk, air, water, legs,
Hair, kidneys and plenty
of
all-knowing righteousness.
dotheyreallyknow?
emo
tions
thrusting ever
forwar
dlike marching troops of
hapless maybe—thinking
always thinking
someday winning
stalwartsof
nothing
ordered.
upsidedown
who—cares? But—we'll
triumph
Weirdly enough.

—Keith Fry

sierras

The green serenity below,
The virgin, unmarred span
Essential to the perfect Plan,
Recalled with sweet nostalgia so,
Memories of the place from which I go.
The bold, grey strength encircling above,
Reinforced by brave spires
Reaching upward, higher,
Wondering here what great Love
Gave this to man from the great Above.

—Carolyn Lewis

mid-march

It snowed today
Big popcorn flakes whirling in unison
Like dancers freed of gravity
Leaping higher and higher
As if they strove to reach
The heaven from whence they came
Of racing silver clouds—grand—mysterious.
And the wind was small and fierce,
Its little fingers piercing thick coats
And running through a passer's hair
Like an ungentle mother.
The earth seized the snow gratefully
To hide her frozen emptiness.
Then through my closed window I heard the song
Of the invisible bird
Rippling, cascading, sparkling,
Full of the warmth of summer days
And tenderness, and love of life.
And it was spring.

—Virginia Bailey

on becoming mature

Like a shadow being lifted from my mind—
A long, a hurtful shadow of being a child,
Suddenly I know so very much
Where once my thoughts were wild.
I understand; I comprehend
The many things I used to doubt.
With the passing of the time
The hazy clouds pass out.
Still I know not everything.
So many things allure.
It is all in the process
Of becoming mature . . . and I?
I am not so sure I like it.

—Virginia Kiernan

who am i?

Forever I shall have to bide
With the question,
Who am I?
I could oil my heart on canvass
For all the world to see
That this is me,
I could sing and dance
Subjective creativity,
For these expressions
Surely would be mine.
I could try life's mysteries
To further clarify;
Spend my life
In search of formulae.
Or could I?
Who am I?

—Roselee Jacobsen

growth

Idea knocks and enters
Uncalled
Unsought
Without question, command or
Wondering word
And becomes the single
important
needed
wordless
thought.

Thought grows and attains new life
Widening
Deepening
Reaching a new height of mind
Before release
As hope felt
quiet word
command or
needed
action.

—Kay Zurcher

continuance

The sun has fallen,
The sky is dusky gray;
A stillness everywhere salutes
The death of a day.

The moon has risen—
Nature will not mourn,
For with the passing of a day,
A night is born.

—Judy Joan Taplin

heredity

Rich, old man he was
Weren't never Happy.
Had to carry, harry,
Show all ways and point.
Grabbed each one
Could raise a thought
And shook
Till thought had died
Or turned to water or
To blood.
Guess I learned all bad I
Knew from him, was plenty.
Ain't I tired livin, in this hole
He made of all
Those pretty thoughts and Souls?
Ain't I sick a'watchin,
Scratchin, fightin to be
Lost with all you fools?

—Ronald Haddock

voice

You tired of fightin?
You just got started.
Give me weapons
Still unheard,
Give me language
Vile, profane.
Don't start quittin,
Kill again, again
Again.

You tired of Trampin
Colored Pigment?
Souls and hearts
And Spirits dark?
Keep on movin,
Noisin poison.
Your throat's yet
Clear — I hear you
Groan?

Keep those eyes shut!
Don't go peekin.
Keep that fire a'burnin
Steady.
Find the fuel,
Don't look to them.
They'd slow the battle—
Maybe stop.

They'd quit and rest
Or want to talk
But don't you listen,
Not one word.
Rabal's mutterance every sob.
Dig in deeper,
Stuff your ears.

Don't stop swingin,
Now you're winnin!
Shut your brain.
To all but hate.
Equals damned
And slaughtered brother.
Kill again, again
And more.

Kill them all, how dare these
Cringing, soul claimed,
Shameful, beaten Blacks love you.
Draw that bead and
Shatter Mothers!
Kill your soul again,
Again, again.

—Ronald Haddock

just in passing

Hello, and how are you today?
Why, yes, it is a lovely day.
What was I doing in the yard?
So, Fanny Brown sent you a card?
The flowers are doing very well.
Why, yes, that is the factory bell.
I hope I see you soon again,
I wonder what could be his name?

—Isobel Black

... and he was dying

And where was truth when he was dying?
All the rest were there: Folly, greed, selfishness
It would not wait for better time
The fullness, we are told, was near
The god Almighty will was being done,
Amen!

But he was dying,
Not death, that pretty childhood figure
Which shines when sweet prayers are sung
Not death the worthy goal of
Martyr's steps
No, not death which casts its silent shade
of sleep over age grown dim.

But death which lies within a heavy
Toil of grief and hurts, which clouds the
Man with hard despairing tears.
No, a death of pain — real
Throbbing, choking, stinging
Death of muscle, brain and soul.

Look you from here!
All of you who carve statues of him
Look you "upon" what he saw
The enemy's condescension
A scoffer's glee
A stronger's mute derision
Look you and weep if Time and Death have
Passed you by.

... And where was love when he was dying?
Asleep in meadow beds of timeless sighing?
Was it warming too frozen hands and heart
Before a lifeless flame?

Was love running swift and naked Flight,
Or dying with the other death?

Peace! He cries aloud
... Peace, and he smiles

Peace could nowhere else be found.

It was not at the Eagles Golden Dome,
Where wine and women's breathing
Had scarce dissolved War's
Specter, Fear

It was not at Sanhedrin's hall,
Where Justice had so late been raped
And left for Evil's whoredom.
Left as Faithless to be used again for
Stinking sport of Faithful men.

And he was dying

And he was dying
Not just of bone and heart betraying
Nor of the four, hot bleeding, swelling
Wounds.

But he was dying who had been Love and Peace
And Truth

And he was dying
And they were
Gone.

—Gene Cannaday

modern love

I'll love you 'til the cows come home
Or 'til the birds all fly to Rome.
I'll love you 'til eternity
Becomes a Sunkist orange tree.
I'll love you now, I'll love you then,
I'll love you 'til I don't know when.
And if need be, on love I'll live
And what the angels have to give.
So darling, sign that check from heaven,
Because the clothes stores close at seven.

—Isobel Black

I, being a dreamer

I, being a dreamer, and young, cling to life
Not with the certain blind tenacity
With which some poor rabbit
Draws his last, desperate, gasping breaths,
But with another fear
As strong and deep as instinct.
I hold to life with fingers numb from grasping
Lest I should loose my hold and lose
The sweet, painful experiences
Of life itself,
and my soul cries with regret to think of leaving them.
Yet I know them not, and have never known them.
The things I know I leave without despair—
The yellow leaves and red and velvet cattails
Where I walked along the Little Sioux
With the burly black dog crashing through the brush
Matting cockleburrs in his tail.
With no regret I leave it and the smell
of lilacs from the two bushes outside the door,
And the gentle hands who dressed me
And the dear familiar faces around the table
When I was a child—
Cool sheets, old friendships—
I could turn my back on them
And on the teacher with the curly hair
And gay laugh—the friend who talked
Of love and life with me—
And this brick building, waiting
To drown with floods of its cool water
My knowledge-thirsting brain.
Not for these do I clutch at life
Not for these do I reel with regret
To think of death.
But, I, being a young dreamer,
Feel the loss of what I have never known.

If I should die

I would miss the cool damp of a London fog
against my cheek, the sound of the bell—
solemn, mysterious, and the bridge,
and my own reflection dancing vaguely
on the black water, with the old footsteps
echoing on the time worn bridge.

Yes, I would regret it, and the child
lying still and heavy against the rise and fall
of my own breast—to see his hands
curled and pink and flawless like a shell,
and know him to be mine.

I would never miss the kiss I never felt—
The kiss of love, hard and sweet, and the strong arms
Holding me, and the fierce joy of being loved.
More than that—to love, soul and heart,
To know one face—the warmth of two eyes
And the heart and mind behind,
Known, and yet too deep to be comprehended.

I would regret the vows not taken
And the joyous pain of being two—alone.

There are other dreams, and I think
How it would be to lie, knowing
That I would never rise up and fulfill them—
Dreams of being great and good—wise,
selfless, compassionate, with genius
Burning in a pure white flame, infinite, holy.
Then I lie in the dark in my soft narrow bed,
And I know regret as sharp as a thin blade
In my bleeding heart, and death seems sweet
For dreams are made of silver.

But reality, which gleams like gem-strewed gold
Crumbles to ashes when I reach out to touch it.

—Virginia Bailey

what happened to Carl Dunn?

Julia hurried down the midway, pushing past long-legged girls in dark glasses and avoiding a lost cocker spaniel. She looked up at the blaze of color — the lights of the turning ferris wheel, neon signs over the bars and bingo games, the huge red witch on the House of Horrors.

The noisy jangle somehow soothed her nerves, as it always did. She clutched a sketch pad and colored pencils in one hand. Joe could never understand why she loved to come here on summer nights. But today, when she had said she was going to the park, he had hardly seemed to hear . . .

This was the first time of the year. The park hadn't been open long. She turned past the cotton candy stand toward the familiar booth. It was empty.

She stopped short, hoping that if she looked hard enough, the big sign would reappear above the mass of profile drawings: Carl Dunn, Artist. Portraits, \$1.00. But the streaked yellow wall remained bare. The excitement of the evening faded, the colors looked gaudy and glaring again, and the smell of stale popcorn made her feel sick. She sat down quickly on a nearby bench.

It had been nine years ago that Julie had first found Carl's booth at the park. She had spent the whole evening watching him draw, while her friends went on the rides. Afterwards she had gone home and practiced drawing in all her spare time. She had been fifteen the night he had let her take his pencils and paper and draw a portrait of her father. The evening had been complete when Carl had said she had talent.

Julie had never known much about him. He seemed to be in his fifties, and she supposed he was a bachelor. He spent his winters drawing in the French Quarter in New Orleans. He had odd hands for an artist; they looked more like those of day laborer — short, stubby fingers and gnarled hands.

Last summer, when she and Joe had been married, she had tried to explain why she kept going back to watch Carl draw. Joe had only said that if she wanted to be an artist, she should go to art school. But it wasn't that. Julie wasn't sure, herself, why she went once a week to sit and watch the likenesses of the customers grow on the paper, sometimes to sketch the strange and varied people who walked by on the midway.

The thought of Joe brought her back to the problem she had meant to escape tonight. What had been bothering him these past few days? Why was he suddenly so moody and depressed? Why couldn't she share it with him, whatever was wrong?

She had been sure, when she married Joe, that there would always

be complete understanding between them. They would share every emotion, every problem. But it hadn't been that way. There were things, like the midway, that she couldn't explain to Joe. And there were things she couldn't understand about him, like his mood this week.

A fat, dark woman waddled out behind the counter of the curio shop next to Carl's booth. Julie had seen her there often, though she had never spoken to her. On sudden impulse, Julie hurried over to the store.

"What's happened to Carl Dunn?"

The woman looked surprised. Her eyes narrowed as she sized Julie up.

"Him?" she finally spat out. "Who knows? Who cares? He ain't back this year."

"Well . . . do you know where he is?" Julie was surprised at her driving curiosity.

"Somebody heard from him, I guess. He's down in New Orleans . . . got mixed up with some young girl. Really fell for her, I hear. She walked out on him. Can't blame 'er. He probably beat her up all the time. A real snake, that one."

The woman turned her very large back and began arranging displays in another counter.

Hardly thinking what she was doing, Julie walked to the next booth. "Madame Bolini, Fortunes Told." Madame Bolini, a toothless old gypsy, was sitting outside the purple curtain.

"Tell your fortune, lady?"

"No, I was just wondering . . . can you tell me what's happened to Carl Dunn?"

The old woman cackled and rolled her eyes up. "That Carl. Always, he played the joke. Many nights, I laughed with him . . . I don't know where he is this year. He would come by here, and say, 'Rosie, have you heard . . .'" Madame Bolini's voice trailed off in weird shrieks of laughter. Julie hurried on.

Lal Barker, the owner of the skating rink, was leaning against the door of the rink and watching the midway. Julie crossed to him and asked her question.

"Lal, what's happened to Carl?"

"Hello, there, Julie. I thought you'd be around this year. Carl's still in New Orleans, I guess. I only had a postcard from him. Said he wasn't coming, something about a girl . . . I really don't know much. Poor Carl."

"Why 'poor Carl?'" Julie and Lal moved a little away from the boom of the skating rink organ.

"Age, sickness, the same things that get us all in the end. Did you know that Carl was over seventy years old? No, you wouldn't—he sure didn't look it. Those years was catching up with him, though. Had

arthritis. When he was young, they said he'd be a great artist. I guess he wasted his time, and then his fingers commenced to get stiff. Sometimes he'd say to me, 'Lal, I'm just waiting to die.'

Julie listened eagerly to every word. She was becoming fascinated with this Carl she had never known.

"There's some customers," Lal was saying. "I'll have to go. See you around."

Julie moved down the midway, to the penny arcade on the other side of Carl's booth. The shriveled, bald-headed ticket-seller was reading a paper-back mystery.

"Excuse me, can you tell me what's happened to Carl Dunn?"

The little man stared at her through yellowed, steel-rimmed spectacles.

"What you want him for?"

"I'm a friend of his."

"I dunno where he is, probably in jail. Always playing the horses. He'd make fifteen, twenty a night and spend it the next day on the ponies. Never knew him to win, much, but he'd keep playing. Don't ask me where he is, lady. Just another midway bum . . ."

Julie drove home slowly, with the windows of the car wide open. The fresh breeze and brooding silence of the night, contrasting sharply with the park's glare and jangle, seemed to clear her mind. She puzzled over the man, Carl Dunn, and what she had learned about him tonight. Where was the key to him, the simple answer to the different picture each person she'd interviewed had had of him?

Suddenly, Julie was seeing him draw, again. It was always the same. The physical features of the person would be there, on the sketch pad, and she was always sure that the portrait was perfect. But seldom did the subject or his friends agree. And when he had drawn her portrait, she had been sure it was well done, but yet she had asked, "Is that what I look like?"

Joe was watching television when she came in. He looked up and smiled, a little more warmly than he had in several days. "Hi, you're home early."

"Carl wasn't there." Julie said no more. She was afraid her adventure would dissolve if she put it into words.

—Nancy Crary

Book Reviews . . .

love of seven dolls

by Paul Gallico (Doubleday) 1954

Paul Gallico, in his career as a writer, has gone from sports analyst to war correspondent to mystic. His early fiction was mostly sports stories, and books such as *Golf is a Friendly Game*. Then, after a period as a war correspondent, he began to write in a very subjective and mystical vein. His most famous short story, "The Snow Goose," and his books, *The Abandoned*, *Snowflake*, and *Love of Seven Dolls* fit into the last category.

Love of Seven Dolls reads almost like a tale from the Grimms' collection, retold to appeal to adults and set in modern times. It has a magical quality which is not crudely supernatural but delves into the magic of the human personality.

Set in Paris, *Love of Seven Dolls* is the story of Mouche, a young woman who has left her farm home in the provinces to become an actress. She has had little success, and at the opening of the story is about to throw herself in the Seine because she has run out of money and has no one to turn to. A red-haired, elfin puppet calls to her from a small puppet theater, and there begins a deep friendship between Mouche and the seven puppets who make up the small traveling show.

A bond grows between the girl and the dolls as she begins to sing and play-act with them, to the delight of audiences. She becomes a part of the show, but the puppeteer is as cruel to Mouche as his dolls are kind. Something within his cynical nature is repelled by her essential innocence. The more beatings and harsh words she receives at his hands, the more she loves and is loved by the puppets.

Each of these dolls is a distinct individual, with faults and virtues of his own. Each is carefully drawn as a character by Gallico. So skillfully is this done that it is difficult as a reader to keep in mind the obvious fact that the dolls can have no life in themselves, and are only expressions of the mind of the man who moves them.

That a character as good as Mouche could be created without seeming a throwback to the worst of Victorian heroines is in itself surprising. She is saved by the fact that her goodness seems to be utterly unconscious. Mouche does not preach, either to the reader or

to the others in the book. She is not a prude, and not a weakling. So Mouche lives and breathes in spite of her great virtue.

It is the author's success in creating sympathy for Mouche, making us almost share her adventure, that keeps this book from being painfully moralistic. Gallico makes no attempt to hide his theme at the end, but in the relatively short preceding narrative he has built a believable preface to the theme.

The message of *Love of Seven Dolls* is simply that love is stronger than hate. No man can be totally evil; and when evil comes in contact with good, the good will win out. There is certainly nothing original about this theme when it is isolated, but in the context of the book the seven dolls express it in a highly original way. This magical, mystical story is unusual enough to make a well-worn teaching seem fresh and new.

—Nancy Crary

the vanishing hero

by Sean O'Faolain (Little, Brown) 204 pp.—1957

Every American imagination can conjure a vivid mental picture of the so-called 'fervent Twenties'—a brief, but particularly important segment of a prospering nation's history. Author Sean O'Faolain, in a series of lectures delivered at Princeton University in 1953 and in this book reprinted, chooses to deal critically with eight of the outstanding writers of this ten-year span from 1920 to 1930—only four of which I may consider with more than brief mention; James Joyce, Huxley, Faulkner, and Graham Greene.

In an exceptionally extensive introduction, considering the relative succinctness of the work, O'Faolain stresses his main thesis which is to unite the various chapters of the book. He feels, if these authors are representative, some failure of values occurred in the Twenties which forced writers to find their own truths, and to dream in isolated, personal worlds. The specific thesis is, that the Hero, the fine fellow whose side we were on and "who stood as the champion of society's code," has disappeared from fiction, and in his place is a sort of anti-hero, whom we favor, but who is at odds with society and with himself.

O'Faolain traces this type of character to a French heritage, and cites numerous convincing, although somewhat isolated examples.

Illumination, witty, and always provocative, the critic talks of Huxley's lack of intellectual discipline—claiming Huxley's limited

human sympathy prevents him from associating himself realistically with his characters (at least, sufficiently to make an intelligible, human personages of them).

Faulkner is considered a man with too much genius—too much inspiration without the perspiration that makes nonsensical sentences into coherent units. The average Faulkner reader, O'Faolain claims, cannot accept nor can he understand a type of Faulkerian incoherence. This is, in this case, the fault of the author, and O'Faolain concentrates for several pages on a rather incisive examination of the circumstances. In Faulkner the critic finds a good man without ideas, who cannot construct, cannot express, cannot control, but with a "certain gargling nobility." In his chapter on Faulkner, O'Faolain's own style launches into an enormous display of American intellectual prose, which distracts the reader and forms an incongruous contrast with the candid lucidity of the other chapters.

Graham Greene seems to be treated with somewhat undue harshness. He accuses Greene of making his characters mere "puppets subservient to his theme," and later says, "his characters . . . ran away with him."

O'Faolain places Hemingway in the classical tradition, applauds Bowen's perceptiveness, comments on Woolf's nearly complete self-absorption and remarks throughout the entire book about James Joyce's magnificent moments of vision. In the latter's work, O'Faolain finds an anomalous artistic figure, capable of fine literary deception—a master of his style. He feels Joyce's ability, the execution of his ideas, and the resultant effect on the reader is superb. Joyce writes a personal parable (as do most good authors) and he, particularly, inserts himself into every fiber of the texture of his books, but conveys an irrefutable attitude of detachment—the detachment of which Huxley is incapable.

Although Mr. O'Faolain's thesis has dubious aspects, his critical analyses of the separate authors are exciting and rare. They are extremely compelling in their creation of a desire to read and inquire personally into the opinions stated. O'Faolain is a marvelous writer, has utterly brilliant insights into style and narrative techniques, and his own style is graceful and markedly clear at all times. *The Vanishing Hero* is an intelligent, concise work providing a new and intriguing perspective from which to view the authors of the Nineteen-Twenties.

—Ed Bedell

The Circus: for Cummings

—Keith Tandy

Prologue

under
and
around
the great tent
clusteredlikeleeches
the
SUBordinates and
unartists
(all, freakish pranked)
in
anger at
isolated
excellence
'once, long ago and faraway:
and
how terrible a thing
to Believe
—and then
be told
that there were
MANY
“Greatest
showsonearth”

the side show

shelleyesque in body,
grotesque
oddities of non-
nature parade and display
their possessions,
possessed, of
u
g
l
i
n
e
s
s

and sheer
nausea—
evoking skill- fullness
i shuddered, and felt sick of
mind.

promenade

hemingway clutched, being caught
up of a moment (his maximum)
at metalious—
and i proceeded

the game of unchance

mickey led me forth—
mouse or spillane: you
pays your money and you
takes your choice—(

As if possession were the **sine qua non** of
individuality!

)But I digress

a game, to betray my
choise against
the hidden laws—
Yes! wagering sex, i
lost, and fell
to Distortion's axe, wielded by

a sadistic rodent AND
a **tough** private eye—

While "Michael" rebaptized, fled his
sinning

to Jehovah's witness

-ism, which cannot
help at last, and walt . . .
well,
walt hid
in a venerable wood
of Oscars.

promenade

hammer shot his busty blonde clean
through, leaving the ear-wiggling hole,
and aldous spiced his goddess with
insatiability, while
i proceeded

the fun house

professional amusers quickly defrayed
thoroughly as an
assistant associate instructor's coat,

being false, and generic with the photographer's
smile and /or cheese

promenade

an over-pregnant nash snickered and
thurber giggled and all two wore thin as
a specious symphony played overmuch

as i proceeded

the am. leg. aux. stand

bosomy matrons sweating beer serve too sweet
cherry pie and cold(pardon: ice cold)
noiseless pop with

half-hearted

warmth

promenade

and i proceed, leaving

elizabeth

counting on a child's fingers and toes and et cetera

her loving ways

the cotton candy stand

and here is little johnny,
come down from his
tip-toed little hill to vend

with

sticky fingers

spun sugar laboriously worked by the sober,

imminent

william

cooperatively leaving

red around my

sacharined mouth

promenade

and lord b. blusters in my swashbuckled path
as to the largest tent

i

proceed

the big top

tommy stearns whips up a
veritable

cageful

of UNusual tame and

usual vicious wildest
unlikely personages

while nearer center

PONDEROUS

wooly russian mammoths laboriously
and tediously

move all ultimate questions with

little of effort

less of directive,

monkeyed

trainers

and

luxurious greeks

wittily discourse while

juggling

twenty torches

dramatically

and

centrally

the highest

acrobat,

him

balances his chairs

repeats his axioms

kicks away his maxims

and

stands

impossibly,

proceeding

while i, far

below

catch a part of

one chair, and

dream

of joining

him

there.

my name is Sara —Rosalee Jacobson

My name is Sara and I'm nine years old. My real name is Sara Melissa Jayne Montclair, but my friends just call me Sara. I have the longest name in the class! Do you remember what it was like to be nine? My Mom and Dad say the do, but they don't. To run with my pigtails flapping in the March wind like bird's wings, to look for the first deliciously green blades of grass, to watch the clouds form dizzy faces in the sky, and to go wading in the gutters after a fresh spring rain: that's what it's like to be nine.

I've always liked school, but the last few weeks I've even been hurrying back early after the lunch hour. Miss Denning reads Tom Sawyer to our class for a few minutes each day after the bell rings. The last book she read us was about horses. I didn't like it very well, although most of the boys did. I like cows much better; they have such sad faces. Anyway I'm glad Miss Denning is reading Tom Sawyer, even though it does have mostly boys in it. If I were a boy I'd build a raft and sail around the world like a pirate.

Every Saturday I have to clean my room. That's how I earn my allowance. But the rest of the day I'm free to do what I please, as long as I'm home for supper. Julie (she's my best friend) and I usually go somewhere on our bicycles. You'd be surprised at all the interesting places in our town. This Saturday we found a ditch that's filled with water. It has something to do with drainage. The place is quiet and beautiful with its big old trees and high weeds. Instead of a raft, we put a log across the ditch for a bridge.

We've decided to form a secret club with our own secret meeting place. Julie made the flag which we tie to a tree branch when our club is meeting. I wrote our secret pledge to one another and we signed our names on it in blood. It's not really blood, only red ink. Anyway we put our secret pledge in a bottle and buried it near one of the old tree stumps. Then maybe a million years from now someone will dig it up and have a key to our past and what our life was like.

* * * * *

My name is M'liss and I'm nineteen. Actually my full name is Sara Melissa Jayne Montclair, but when I came to college I asked everyone to call me M'liss. Sara sounds so prudish and Jayne is just too plain. Do you remember what it was like to be nineteen? My Mother and Father think they do, but they couldn't. To be in love, to be concerned with metaphysical problems in class and matrimonial ones outside of class, to be cramming for that all important final exam, to be interested in next weekend's frat formal and wondering what to wear:

that's what it's like to have been living nineteen years.

Classes become a hectic habit of not being fully prepared. Your Mother becomes concerned if you don't write at least once a week. The other day I received a letter from her which went something like this:

Dear Sara,

I was glad to finally hear from you last week. Dad and I are proud that you made the Dean's Honor Roll. Keep up the good work!

P. S.

I'm enclosing some clippings from last night's paper. There's one that I thought particularly cute.

MIDWEST HAS TOM SAWYER AND HUCKLEBERRY FINN

Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn are not limited to the Hannibal, Missouri region. Yesterday several workers uncovered a bottle containing a message. The message is similar to one found in Mark Twain's book and ends with the ominous word "Blood!" No definite age can be given to the finding, but it is thought to be fairly old. The workers are part of a city hired crew, which is filling the no longer needed corporation gulch.

How silly I was at the age of nine!!

afraid of a shadow

—Wynn Goeden

It was a vague deep. It was a murky deep. It was a quiet deep. Blotfy forms of green—queer and opaque—quivered mysteriously to the force of invisible currents of subterranean flow. Tiny, minute shapes darted about between patches of seaweed—forever seeking the protection offered them in its dense interior, only to encounter larger, more sinister forms. These comprehensive forms lunged forward, absorbed the fleeing delicacies, and then settled back into their former, innate status. Once again, all was calm.

Slashing downward into the hazy green substance, streaks of sunlight divided the otherwise monotonous colour into disunited mediums. A multitudinous assortment of stringy plants and leafy, vine-like structures rose from the sandy floor, arrested the penetrating rays of sunlight, and sent them reflecting back towards the surface.

The strange serenity of domesticity in the realm of underwater magnificence was broken by the spectacle of a squirmy, worm-like intruder as it struggled violently to free itself from the shiny, silvery object drawn through it. The object, in turn, was suspended from a tiny

strand of line seemingly infinite length which guided forever upward until it broke the surface that separated the two worlds.

Below, a small figure approached the struggling lure cautiously. It appeared to be entranced by the mysterious enticement. Eyeing the bait wistfully, it quickly departed, only to return somewhat more intent on claiming its right. Suddenly a shadow lurked overhead. The small figure lunged wildly about, eyed the bait momentarily, then disappeared into a tangling, twisting array of seaweed nearby. The shadow moved on.

The strand of line continued upward into the brighter blue atmosphere where it attached itself to a length of bamboo pole that protruded from a towering wharf.

At the far end of the wharf a small boy played with an odd assortment of sea shells and multi-colored rocks. Nearby, a spotty dog looked into the vast depth below and intermittently broke the silence by a quick series of sharp, loud yelps. Quite unaware of the disturbance, a lone figure sat propped against a post a short distance away.

Bob Walden absently leaned against a wooden dock pillar and waited for a reaction from the lifeless stock of bamboo he held in his hands. At first glance, he bore the semblance of a middle-aged person. His shoulders were bent. His clothes were slightly over-sized—the color being too drab for a man in his late twenties. A closer look, however, showed the first impression to be unjust, for after a more discerning glance, his face showed signs of youth. It lost most of its significance though, as the head bowed modestly. The added feature of a pair of unusually dark glasses did little to contribute to his visible character. Even the youthful, well-proportioned body concealed its latent power as he lay loosely propped in a slumped position. To the casual passerby, the first glance sufficed.

The heavy stillness of the mid-noon air was suddenly broken by a shrill, piercing note from a passing boat. A violent quiver ran through the previously inactive form of the man propped against the dock pillar. He sank his fingernails into the soft plank to steady himself. The small boy came running up to him.

"Uncle Bob! It's the Anna Rosa!" He stood looking at his uncle for a few moments, then youthfully shrugged his shoulders and ran back to the end of the wharf. The dog playfully snapped at his heels. The boy stood at the far end of the wharf and stared admiringly at the passing boat as she glided majestically towards Linatica Island. Bob Walden stared sightlessly out into the harbor. Gripping the pole mercilessly between his hands, he sank back into his former position. A light breeze chilled the beads of sweat that formed on his forehead; a light shudder traveled along his spine. His thoughts drifted into the past . . .

The captain pulled the cord dangling before him. The whistle

shrilled violently, only to be partly drowned out by the gaiety and laughter of the pleasure-seeking group on board. Carefree passengers careened carelessly up and down passageways, meeting each other with glad and cheerful tidings. A constant flow of humanity passed between the cocktail lounge and the ship's swimming pool where sun-burned bodies dove carelessly and splashed deliberately in the clear water.

Again the ship's whistle sounded. A young, intelligent-looking man stood watching the captain in the pilot house.

The skipper he stood beside the helm,
His pipe was in his mouth,
And he watched how the veering flaw did blow
The smoke now West, now South . . .

Wordsworth . . . Longfellow . . . he didn't remember.

Bursts of laughter accompanied by the slinking of empty glasses directed the young man's attention to the sun deck where a short, squat fellow was entertaining a party with his ample knowledge of off-coloured jokes. It irritated Bob Walden. He had gotten the drift of the conversation by now, and was forming a hearty dislike for the obvious center of attention. He studied the little fellow for a short time. He could see nothing appealing in him or his humor. The little dumpy man seemed vaguely familiar. His light, tan suit was in bad need of pressing; the bright-red polka dot tie was distasteful. The young man turned away.

Shifting his gaze towards the low shelving beaches, he studied the bold promontories of the San Gabriel mountains. The boat was leaving the coast. Near the port side he could distinguish the beautiful residential district of the city of Santa Paulos which nestled itself between the smug mountains and open span of ocean. It was this sight that had drawn him to this part of the country a few years ago. He mentally enumerated the attractions—the mild Mediterranean climate, the beauty, and the charm that made the place so attractive to him. That was some time ago, however, and he had changed his opinion since then.

The Anna Rosa swerved slightly to the impact of a wave. He swore silently as he bumped against the ship's rail. He couldn't enjoy this trip any more. Each year, rain or shine, the entire office force adventured on this yearly vacation cruise to the Island, and each year, he had talked himself into coming along. He hated the trip. It only added to the boredom of many things that had been boring him for some time now. As his feelings of boredom increased, he absently shifted his attention towards the sun deck. To his surprise, the short, squat man was approaching him.

"Say buddy!" He waited until he was face to face with the younger fellow, "how about joining us in a little drink or two?" The younger fellow turned away to avoid the full force of the foul-smelling breath.

"No thanks, not right now," he replied. He looked about to see a

means of escape from an embarrassing scene.

"Now's as good a time as any," continued the squat man, "come on!" Not waiting for a reply, he placed one arm around the other's shoulder.

"You're drunk, mister! Damn drunk!" He side-stepped the heavy arm on his shoulder. As he did so, the little fat fellow slipped uncontrollably to one side. He gained his balance momentarily against the ship's railing, then plunged over the side.

Loud screams and cries accompanied the splash that followed. One man threw out a life raft and proceeded to haul the squirming, water-logged, over-board casualty in. Among frequent curses and threats, the little fellow coughed and sputtered. The younger man was too surprised to react until one of the party on the deck suggested that he leave instantly. Taking the advice literally, he whirled about and started off towards his cabin, half satisfied, and half afraid of the consequences that might develop from his launching of the short, squat man in the bright-red polka dot tie.

He was still reviewing the facts a few minutes later, as he swung boldly around a corner and stumbled headlong into an open-mouthed, blonde-haired sun bather. A small glass bottle she was carrying leaped out of her hand and smashed against the wall—its dark, oily contents spilling over the immediate area. A compact shattered into an infinite number of tiny pieces, and last of all, a large, yellow beach towel floated slowly into the lap of a very surprised and highly agitated girl. Looking directly at him, she swiftly brushed away a mop of straight blonde hair from her eyes.

"You clumsy . . . awkward . . . !"

"I agree," he said, untangling his legs from hers. He proceeded to help her up.

"Thank you, I can help myself up!" She managed to gain her balance for an instant, then slipped on the oily fluid issuing from the broken fragrances and fell towards him. He reached forward and grabbed her.

"The deck's pretty slippery," he remarked somewhat jokingly.

"Thanks to you it is," she replied.

He added, more seriously, "And the sun tan lotion."

"Oh, you're incorrigible!" She was regaining some poise.

"I'm Bob Walden."

"That doesn't sound like an apology." She brightened up a little at this mild form of introduction. She studied him casually. "I'm Kathy Neilson . . . and I still think you're rude."

"I'm really sorry; you see I don't run into people like you everyday."

"That explains it." She picked up her towel and started off towards her cabin.

Bob called after her, "When can I bump into you again?" He

caught up with her, "I hope this isn't the end of our acquaintance . . . you see, I have a good side too!"

"Well . . . I'll be meeting Dad in the cocktail lounge this evening."

"I feel thirsty already!" Before she turned to enter her cabin he added, "Am I really incorrigible?"

She smiled at him from the doorway. "I don't even know what the word means."

Bob Walden whistled softly to himself as she closed the door. He thought to himself, "Boy, this could prove to be a very interesting trip."

Hours later, a decorously dressed young man stood in the doorway of the cocktail lounge. He quickly surveyed the smoky, dimly-lit interior. Although the orchestra was playing softly, the floor was relatively empty. The crowd had congregated at the bar. Bob Walden gazed listlessly at a small table where a few of the more influential people had gathered. Striking gowns on the women and white coats stood out noticeably. As he stared at the figure of a light-haired girl at the table, she unconsciously looked up and their eyes met. She stood up. His mouth opened slowly as she made her way towards him. He noted her glance of approval.

She greeted him politely, "I hoped you would come."

"I'm glad I did." Bob studied the girl thoughtfully; unable to accept the transformation that had occurred. The very same blonde that he had run into that afternoon was standing before him. He forgot the affair with the drunk—all seemed vague—as he admired the girl smiling up at him. She was truly beautiful.

She placed her arm on his shoulder. "Care to dance?"

He drew her to him. "I won't be taking you away from your father or . . ."

"I'm afraid I missed seeing Dad. He wasn't in his cabin. The last . . ." She felt his arm grow tighter around her. Soon the two were lost to the swaying music of the small melodious orchestra.

Time flew rapidly. The couple danced by themselves. They laughed at their common experiences—all the while forgetful of the passing of time, and finally, the music stopped. The small ship's hall was empty save for the few who helped close down the bar each night. Then they too drifted away and left the couple by themselves.

Bob glanced towards her table. "Looks like your friends have all left." She placed her hands under his lapel. He lifted her head slowly. Leaning down gracefully, he kissed her full on the mouth. She didn't try to resist.

The following day passed swiftly. Bob and Kathy saw each other constantly. The sun projected more than its usual warmth on their mid-day swims; the cool evening breezes were more refreshing. Then,

the Anna Rosa swerved from her course to the Island.

"Something must be wrong, Bob, the ship is going to stop off at the Naval Station!"

"Miss Nielson! Paging Kathy Neilson!" shouted a voice behind them.

She whirled around quickly, "Over here, please! I'm Kathy Neilson!"

"Oh, Miss Neilson! Dr. Langdon wants to see you immediately. You see, he's been trying to reach you about your father . . ."

"My father! What's happened to Dad?" She clutched Bob's hand.

"I don't know, Miss, all I know is that Dr. Langdon wants to see you immediately. They're at the . . ."

Before he could finish, Kathy was hurrying towards the ship's gangway pulling Bob behind her. A tall, well-dressed man with horn-rimmed glasses greeted them.

"Miss Neilson . . ."

"Doctor Langdon! What's happened to my father?"

"Nothing serious, I'm sure," he replied, "Your father has a light attack of pneumonia. We're taking him off the boat . . ."

"Oh no . . ."

"I'm sorry you didn't hear of this sooner; I had a message delivered to your cabin last night, but I don't suppose . . ."

"I . . . I didn't . . ." she paused, looking shyly at Bob.

He was observing a couple of men carrying a stretcher coming towards them. When the group stopped, a man in the stretcher turned and glared at Bob.

Bob Walden's mouth dropped open. Looking directly at him was a familiar face. He recognized the short squat man. Only the bright-red polka dot tie was missing.

"Dad!" exclaimed Kathy. She knelt by him, realizing something was wrong.

The man attempted to rise off the stretcher. Signs of uncontrollable anger turned his pale, pudgy face a flaming red.

Bob Walden looked desperately at Kathy. She was too bewildered to comment. He turned and hurried away from the scene. The stretcher moved on.

A few days later Bob Walden was rapidly moving away from Santa Paulos and the incidents that had happened aboard the Anna Rosa. He had applied for a transfer to a branch office in the Midwest immediately upon his arrival back at the company. The sales department was only too happy to have him on the force. He was glad to get away.

A few days after reaching his destination, he returned from his job to discover a personal letter lying on his desk. He eyed it thoughtfully, tore it open, read it carefully, then dropped it into one of the desk drawers. A few moments later he was sitting at the hotel bar enjoying the pleasant taste of a whiskey mix.

The days passed slowly at first. More letters came. He put them

all in the drawer. Many remained unopened, and later, he opened none. The girls at his favorite hangout catered to him obligingly. He took notice of their casual hints. Soon he was taking them to his hotel room for a nitecap. First one, then another. The months passed swiftly by in this manner; his work suffered.

One morning the hotel clerk approached him with a special delivery letter from the home office. They were calling him back. He looked at the letter arrogantly at first. Then he tossed it into the waste paper basket near his desk, and started towards the hotel bar.

The large room was empty when he got there, save for a lonely bar tender who was absently wiping one of the glasses in front of him. The bar tender recognized Bob Walden and started to mix a drink. Bob seated himself on one of the stools near the man. He quickly looked away.

"Hurry up with that drink!"

When it was placed before him, he grabbed for it, tossed his head back and swallowed it in one easy effort. He quickly ordered another. This time he drank it more slowly. It tasted lousy. He ordered another. It tasted the same. They all tasted lousy. He pushed the glass away from him. The bartender walked over towards him.

"What's the matter, buddy? I give you a bad drink?"

"Aw, mind your da . . .", he caught himself, "no, the drink's all right. It . . . must be me."

"Sandra will be along any minute if that's what . . ." He stopped himself when he saw the glazed look in Bob Walden's eyes. He felt sorry for him, in a way; it must be tough living the way he had been.

Bob Walden laid his arms across the top of the bar and placed his face head down on them. He held this position for several minutes. Suddenly he looked at the bar tender.

"What was your dad like?" The bar tender saw the sympathetic, almost pitiful look on his face.

"Pop? Oh . . . he was all right . . . I guess."

"Did he ever run out on your Ma and you . . .?"

"Well now, not that I know of . . . then maybe . . ."

"Mine was a hell of a father!"

"Aw gee, fellow, you can't mean . . ."

"He used to come home drunk and beat up on Mom and me . . . then when he sobered up . . . he . . . he would tell me about the women he was chasing around with . . ."

The bar tender eyed him curiously.

"I . . . I know what you're thinking. I've been doing the same thing." Bob Walden thought about it for a moment. "Now I know what my father was like. I . . . I hated him!"

The bar tender put down the glass he was wiping.

"Was you just a kid then? You know . . ."

"I was old enough to take care of myself then. One day . . . he was telling me dirty stories . . . they weren't dirty, they were filthy! Then he would slap me on the back . . . and beg me to go with him . . . I hit him once . . . hard!"

The following morning he bent over the waste paper basket and retrieved the letter he had thrown there the night before. This time he read it carefully. His head ceased spinning temporarily. Then he pulled open the desk drawer and withdrew one of the letters from the disarrayed pile. It was dated back several months. Opening it he read the handwriting:

Dear Bob:

What can I say that will bring you back . . . Dad is sorry for the way he acted . . . I miss you so much . . . I'm asking you to come back because I love you . . .

He put the letter down slowly. Closing his eyes, he tried to swallow. He discovered a large lump in his throat. He finished reading the letter.

The San Gabriel mountains took on a new luster as Bob Walden embarked from the train. He checked in his luggage and strode outside the bustling station. The warm, moist air felt exceptionally good. He spotted a news stand and bought a paper. The taxi would be along shortly. He paged through the familiar sections until he came to the society section. He paused for a moment. He thought Kathy would look beautiful in any of the gowns. He tried to picture her . . . he stopped! A blonde face appeared before him. His gaze dropped to the article immediately below the picture. He paled instantly as the blood left his face. But, there was still hope . . . if he could only be there in time . . . He yelled for a taxi. Unaware of the heavy traffic, he started across the street. A horn sounded for an instant. Tires screeched. He turned to look, and everything blacked out. He felt himself twisting, tumbling . . . turning . . .

"Uncle Bob! Uncle Bob! Pull, Uncle Bob! You got a bite!" The little boy came running up to his uncle. "Pull, Uncle Bob! Hurry!"

With a slow awakening reaction, the uncle jerked the pole upward. The line left the water with a little resistance. Then a large silvery form splashed fearfully above the surface, and disappeared.

"Gosh, Uncle Bob, you let the big one get away!"

mirage

—Ed Bedell

Dawn. The sparkle of new, short-lived, moisture, reflected intermittently from the dense bluegrass. Touring clouds skudded aimlessly overhead as the electricity flashed on in the third rail of the city's commuter trains, and drowsy passengers traveled in semi-incognito behind the daily paper and business-like sunglasses.

Configured window panes losing their transient decoration, the products of a chilly eve, destroyed by a brilliance beyond control, unimaginably powerful — yet distant.

*

Waiting even a few minutes made him impatient. — How does one relax?

A whisper of cool morning air turned the corner of the house and raised the hair on his neck. The short-sleeved shirt, thrown on hastily, provided little warmth and even less fashion. Two illegitimate canines scampered over the curb, unashamed of their dubious heritage, and rolled on top of each other in the long grass. Watching, he did not actually feel any compassion or regret — but he knew he was a remarkable procrastinator. He was certain that would be an unquestionable characteristic for which he would long be remembered. — We call them dumb animals.

One heavily salivating mouth clamped firmly on the furry posterior extension of the other — but without antagonism.

—We don't play that way; now they want bloody acres and counties — enough to make an empire. A name like Genghis Khan, with miles of proof.

Moving only his eyes he scanned vaguely and focused on something indistinctly.

—When a war starts even sensible people act irrationally, and Heaven help the ones who aren't sensible in the first place! They even do it for no good reason except to prove something that nobody really cares about anyway; people that are simply glad they are able to sit at home and watch their television sets. If one must choose, and it seems the acceptable thing to do, probably paratrooping was the most sensible solution. They try to prepare for all of the emergencies, but there are some that no one can avoid, even with colored maps and foolproof plans. Flak behind the ear — and six stinking hours in the manure mud. The men are expendable, government issue. I lie in the mud for hours with a piece of metal an inch under the skin and for what? — An honorable, honorable discharge and a recuperation. The doctors, all good government issue, too, claim no permanent injury — but be careful of

any shock. Don't stand up too fast, don't run too fast, don't think too fast, for at least a year.

He opened the screen and walked inside. A short mound of magazines and clothes lay piled on the kitchen table, creating a mountainous terrain in silhouette on the wall, as the sunlight streamed over and past it. Stepping to the stairway, he listened carefully for a moment. It would be a day or two, at most; but days of fifty hours apiece, probably. He paced a little.

Seating himself in one of the severe wooden chairs, he groped in his pocket for a cigarette — an empty package with a torn tax stamp. The other pocket was more fruitful, yielding a light green book of matches, with half of one row still intact.

—Each pack with a dark blue stamp. For tax, he thought. I suppose it all goes someplace, for some kind of value. The taxes come in to buy more blue stamps, I suppose.

The minute hand on the wall clock circled painfully, the hour hand, imperceptibly; both pursuing a thin, but agile red second-hand.

Feeling, breathing, seeming for hours of minutes.

Holding the screen door open with one hand, he watched the car turn into the driveway. The tires caught a stone and squirted it sideways from beneath the tread. The fact that his own car was badly in need of new tires was the most remote thought in his mind at this moment; the doctor was here now. There were always other things which required his immediate attention — his pattern was traditional, typical to an extreme, to a revolting excess.

The paint on the physician's car was streaked with evidences of muddy emergencies and it appeared a little neglected. — Who was Hippocrates?

The professional gray suit, inconspicuous tie, and the black shoes slid from the front seat, grasped the leather and closed the door on the first catch. Brief greetings were made — the doctor was obviously in demand elsewhere. That is one thing characteristic of the profession — one relinquishes some measure of his personal privacy, becoming an expensive, cultured semi-serf at the beck and call of society.

The doctor conducted a fairly hasty, routine examination, and drove leisurely downtown. They spoke freely with him, an old friend — one in whom they had not only a professional but personal confidence. It afforded them both some measure of satisfaction and assurance to discuss it with him, a person utterly familiar with this common, yet perpetually mysterious and glorious phenomenon of nature . . . birth.

Looking through the spotty windows the usually prosaic panorama took on a new perspective. New store displays, moustaches, and post-offices with movement. The spring look in hats seemed a hideously nonsensical reversion to the primitive, a trend which was consuming the public, not only in this field, but infiltrating — establishing — ingratiat-

ing itself — and ultimately monopolizing every fiber of an impressionable and impulsive economy. A park with benches, and pigeons under a dry fountain.

—Wooden signs, all cracked and weatherbeaten, that used to say something. The typical park scene, and he had not even noticed.

—During a war one views a situation in a radically different manner, also. A week of rest in Rome where there were no guns and ammunition piles was imperative for recuperation, and he had taken full advantage of it.

Down almost any flight of stairs there were the enticing glows of red or amber lights — but only a few so that it was dark — creating some kind of false, misleading, but thrilling atmosphere that would soon be destroyed and rekindled on another evening. Cheap tables stood patiently in corners with dirty checkered cloths — although the darkness hid the dirt — and girls sat with their hands folded on top of the tables. The inevitable combo standing on a low platform looking gaunt and drugged by their own rhythms, seldom even daring to climb the precipitous stairway to the brilliance of street-level . . . they labored dutifully in chorus turns and in ensemble. Companionship was provided by a perspicacious management, to keep our spirits high and flowing freely — at hundreds of lira per bottle. Really, it was cheap, but the trial of money conversion was usually far too great an ordeal for the average customer and he came out none the wiser (but much less affluent).

The drive was not long, and the middle-morning traffic just beginning to thicken. The mere fact that they were on the way was a very comforting thought, and they relaxed a great deal as the motor soothed, droningly.—

The hospital loomed impressive and brick — a window washer industriously soaping and sponging in a broad leather belt on the third floor looked down on the doctor's dirt encrusted car, considering professional expansion.

—This might be a kind of "stretcher Mecca" for arrival and departure, he thought mildly.

The car swept past the red and yellow signs someone had placed beside the driveway, their concrete bases slightly askew, their message apparently in extreme discomfort; it turned the driveway at the rear of the hospital and parked beneath the neon sign. It had not been turned off from the night previous, and it looked pitifully innocuous with its anemic pink glow.

—In-Patient, in pink glass.

Stepping from the car, he bundled the incidentals together and backed away from the door. A magazine slipped with a soft swish from the small stack of reading material, and fell beside the rear tire, its garish cover turned half under.

He stopped, then straightened again.

A light warmth had supplanted the early morning briskness.

The doctor opened the door and stood back a step for them to enter. The weatherbeaten door squeaked a little; the small printed "PULL" over the handle nearly rubbed off by countless traffic.

They climbed a short flight of concrete stairs—unpainted and worn a little in the center, but rimmed with a protective strip of metal sunk firmly into the cement.

—Six stairs . . . landing . . . and four.

A nurse came from a room beside them and padded softly along the hall, the white of her uniform contrasting vividly with the universal here — the universal of need, of dark sickness.

Intruding harshly, a brown loudspeaker on the wall barked impersonally, and somewhere it had meaning. The speaker had a mouth of clot. Devoid of eyes, but possessing a fine mouth, for which someone else did the looking . . . and the thinking.—Insistent, it barked, persistent.

He noticed the soft air of the airconditioning fans as they collected, dehumidified, and recirculated the air, but left untouched the unmistakable scent of gauze, iodine, and ether.

They filed down the wide hall on the second floor and through a maple-stained door on which a letter and a number had been nailed. They were copper, tarnished a little, he noticed.

Two windows in the private room faced the east, shielded at the moment by a partially pulled venetian blind. The sun was higher, and the blinds caused flickering illusions of rubber bars, waving and weaving over chairs, around a night stand, and spearing finally onto a bed.

—Clean sheets, of whiteness . . . a pillow soft . . .

A fortyish registered nurse opened the blinds exposing the rest of the aperture, and moved a large screen in front of the open door. Privacy seemed logical to him, too.

Directly over the bed a thin rubber cord snaked down from the molding on the ceiling, suspending a black pushbutton.

The doctor made assignments to the nurse

—closing a medical-looking bag

—shaking of hands

—returning tomorrow

—assurances

—and a hasty departure — he had other patients in other rooms.

A short time later, a husband, realizing his superfluity, departed.

The nurses, dressed immaculately, observed closely and responded; the doctor consulted at regular intervals. The loudspeakers droned their

monotonous monologue in the reverberating marble halls; and the nauseating anesthetic persisted.

Waiting and restless.

Blue tax stamps were torn rudely, and new ones were printed—exhausting matchbooks and painting soft lungs with the sooty refuse from a fruitless, universal habit.

Time.

Eons to come.

Opportunity.

Ability.

Accomplished.

AND A SON.

* * *

Part Two

And with midday a feeling of new purpose a revitalizing or some type of energy prompting him to hurry around store to store buying as though he were instable things that he did not need the baby would not need but he was making certain that in this most glorious this most triumphal moment of his prosaic life as a servile flatterer he would be prepared

a servile flatterer with clients and he was one of them and he knew it but so were the rest of them in the office cautious to an extreme so as not to offend rather to please with the most minute thoughtfulness and treats at lunch and with infinite sickening joking and insincere socializing and he hated every one of them not for what or who they were personally rather what they stood for as a means of existence a dirty facet of society

if one could just be atypical once a little different to be what you actually are to have an opinion that you could voice without being warned of rebuke without the fear of so-called public opinion like everyone else that says you must flatter and compliment because people expect it and dislike those who do not comply who are outspoken who have an iota of difference

from these people we should shy away yes you should shy away from an insidious man who thinks since someone with ill-gotten rank perhaps will determine the complexities and the decisions will be handed down and the toadies will follow unthinkingly conforming accepting acting afraid to have to even consider an opinion of their own rather to extend the almighty gladhand that pays the grocer and destroys the integrity while smothering the pride

over and over God knows how often each day this happened and in which his wife was forced to share and must have felt too

and then night was planning and cigarettes and matches and dirty dishes until the next visit the next morning to 2-B just a few hours of sleep that was really sleeping I'll say I told them the nurses the doctor everybody that over and over I wanted only the best for her and I meant

it but there are just some things that should be done around here that will simply have to wait not to mention that rotten meeting this afternoon which of course cannot wait for an hour or two

instead I'll run myself ragged around a king arthur's table and shake their hands and nod yes at appropriate points in the conversation—smile like hell to push it through

but the big boss has no kids and if that is what it takes to be executive material I will settle for less and forget about his chair stuffed with five dollar bills and twenty five cent cigars

mounting the fading blue carpeted stairway he slept for several hours

driving to the office noticing people he thought that most of those obsequious fawns walking don't care or even particularly care to know about others but one thing is certain that if you do not trust them don't rely on every Duke or Duchess of main street on the way to the palace mute and deaf unless you are giving something away if you ignore them and return the same lack of courtesy you are less apt to suffer

it might seem impossible to be alone in the midst of so many humans but no one cares or notices but instead walks on to his palace takes the elevator to the seventh floor and sits behind his cardboard nameplate with a rubber stamp his scepter

but they rule robeless

even the leather jacket boys have their distinguished garb and two wheeled cadillacs and buddy seats with saddle bags but they are the ones that caused insurance rates to be hiked again

regardless theyll keep going faster and faster and cut down the surplus population until we get a bloody select group and the small man in the high place

when the office beckons I respond as all respectable serfs do when they know their name and that a slap on the back means a little butter and a full mouth all from meetings and coffee talks and late concessions and rotton compromises and a personal type impersonality that is business

today in the conference room I'll bow and scrape and send the office boy with my car to get my wife and boy that I cannot even take an hour off to take them home

and a long dull morning

until noon and he had his quick lunch

with other brief cases and black taut smiles in business suites with wrinkled pants and foreheads who even probably played football or baseball in school years years ago now with gross stomachs as alumni they watch my son break his arm for the alma mater and his name on the radio and television even those room at the top tritisms aren't so foolish if some twobitters can wangle elevator jobs on pull through an aunt of an executive and finally

the
meeting
at three oclock with others of the same category
the office boy takes my keys
and drives slowly with my wife and boy
through the long dryness of the meeting while an arid councilroom
parched the throats and dried crisp the temperaments until a call
came for me
they said the car was a total loss out of control with a double
blowout into a tree
the driver had scratches
BUT MY FAMILY DIED

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Part Three

A professional clip-board bearing three yellow graph sheets and a white memorandum hung at the foot of the bed in the sunlight, the words "Psychotherapeutic Ward" lettered poorly across the back in white ink.

A light evening breeze turned small eddies of dust about his feet, each a vaporous phenomenon-appearing, flourished briefly, and dissolving unaccomplished. In the leadening sky the patchwork of clouds drew together into foreboding banks of thunderheads, and a low murmuring broke the stillness of dusk. Reeds rustling in a black stagnant pool near the road drew his attention, the brown tops turning to and fro in fascinating rhythm. We watched the ripples of water as they rimmed the reeds circling larger and larger, broken only occasionally by a startled rock, and eventually fading from view.

Over a distant hill winged survivors of some nearly forgotten era veered sharply across a yellowing horizon, alighting momentarily to examine the stark, crumbling ruins and to peer through the shells of paneless windows.

The shroud of darkness fell about him and he ran . . .

Before him, concealed in limitless black, lay the nameless phantasms of a troubled society, of which he shared membership and duties and difficulties.

A moon lay cautiously half-hidden behind a billowing cloud, but a second, as if in apology, moved swiftly ahead of him. Wispy fingers of fog pointed the route, it was no longer his choice. How often must an opportunity present itself before it is drawn irrevocably from view?

The rain came. Slowly at first—but grew in intensity with each succeeding pellet, as beyond, the gliding shadows danced in weird reverie across the moon.

Confronted, he hesitated at the gaping mouth of an avenue of trees, intrigued by the faultless symmetry of the naked limbs and trunks as they marched precisely beside the path, each groping skyward in perpetual struggle for some vague, unattainable recognition. He en-

tered, and was enveloped in a pall of dismal, oppressive color. Behind him, the contending trees glided together forming an impregnable wall of black.

Voices indistinct, but pervading melted into the dense fiber of darkness, vanishing as abruptly as they appeared.

Motivation — an insatiable feeling of urgency, propelled him headlong through the driving rain, as jagged bolts of lightning formed hideous profiles against the sky. It was futile to hurry now. He was no more privileged, no more intelligent—he had indulged in a human failing, a human shortcoming common to all but a minute few—he had gambled and ultimately lost—consuming his ideals and his aspirations.

Somewhere, for a moment, a child cried.

Infinite hours.

The rain slackened and the first moon slid from behind the clouds—the second was gone. At least one had survived some atmospheric adversity; proud of accomplishment but fated as are all of its genre.

And the fantastic wood was bathed in illimitable silence — he stopped. From the darkness came the complex sounds of whisper and echo, of anger and conflict. Highpitched whistles shrieked into the night and momentous peals of thunder replied with an even fiercer violence.

From the darkness came the figures grotesquely familiar; an assailed spirit knew them as clawing, as tearing, and falling—sensations, experiences uncanny, memories repellent; the sounds and sights of jollity, destruction, and of irrevocable gloom and waste.

The fierceness of the combative sensations grew as they mingled—mounting to gargantuan proportions, a colossal rumbling, as though the earth were parting, pounded at his ears.

With unutterable horror, he saw the branches about him extending in brilliant crimson and black array, encompassing him in extravagant embrace.

Pursued by bizarre images and the incredible multiplying dissonances, he fled into the eternal night-black of resignation and limitless despair.

— — —

In the hallway the smell of ether endured — and the sightless mouths were silent.



