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PREFACE

The word **Aurora** has rosy and perhaps romantic connotations, but do not be deceived. The writers represented in these pages do not show us **pretty** worlds. Nor do they opt for the superficially ugly and sensational. Rather, they are honest—a not so easy thing in this day of causes.

You will recognize many of the situations here: a classroom, a brief love affair, an ROTC hike, a visit to a vet's office, a student-townee fight, a degenerating love affair.

But more important to these writers is what is happening **beneath** the easily read surface in each of these situations: whether it is the understated euphoria of a boy discovering a man's world . . . or a young couple trapped in the frenzy of lust substituting for love . . . or the unexpected viciousness of a routine ROTC maneuver . . . or the wry deflation of academic promises . . . or even a redneck passionately and grotesquely caught in his own logic. In each case you will find something startlingly true if you read thoughtfully.

Dan Bullard

A U R O R A

Vol. 3 — No. 1

S T A F F

Dan Bullard

Beth Cocanougher

Betty Jo Brown

Robert Ruh

Robert Pollock

Toby Walton

Rosemary Gray

Roger Click

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Richmond, Kentucky 40475

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CREOLE LESSON, Dan Bullard	4
"I Come and Share," Bonnie Tinsley	11
CARLOTTA, Bonnie Tinsley	12
"Late Mariana," Audrey Morrison	16
STAN, WHEREVER YOU ARE, Toby Walton	17
"When Empty Rooms Beckon," Audrey Morrison	21
TO KNOW A MAN WELL, Robert Ruh	22
"Cycle: Four Haiku," Audrey Morrison	26
"Ahab," Robert Pollock	27
STAND-STILL TIME, Robert Sanders	28
"Dissection," Gerald Herrin	34
"Windmill Quiet," Roger Click	34
"A Patch of Green," Toby Walton	35
BOWLING ALLEY, Don Tegt	36

"Black Girl," Becky Seldon	39
THE CONCERT, Rosemary Gray	40
"Icarus Descending," Robert Pollock	41
"Appalachian Burial Requiem," Robert Pollock	42
SHE SAID SHE UNDERSTOOD, Joe Edwards	44
"October Night," Rosemary Gray	47
"Life Studies," Robert Pollock	48
"Night Song," Audrey Morrison	49
THE TRIP, Thomas Harney	50
"Harley," A. Michael Fey	54
"Churches," Rosemary Gray	55
"Sad and Dusty Things," Audrey Morrison	55
FIRST SUMMER OUT, Betty Jo Brown	56
"Out of the Temple," Audrey Morrison	62
"To the Unappreciative Reader," Audrey Morrison	63
"The Tangle," Rosemary Gray	63

CREOLE LESSON

—Dan Bullard

The crunch of the gravel under the heavy tractor sounded muffled as the tractor chugged along the misty road leading to field number six. Spanish moss hung like long gray drapes from the oaks which stretched out over the road. An occasional magnolia sprayed the land with its sweet fragrance. The weeds and tangled catbriars glistened with dew—a dew that probably wouldn't dry off until ten or eleven. The quiet was broken by the rattling, jarring, metal conveyor wagon which paced doggedly behind my tractor. For two days now, I had been hauling cotton from field number six.

As I turned from the main road to the service lane, up the steep, red-clay bank, I spotted a beautiful, banded pheasant foraging in a chickapin bush. It strutted and clucked, then flew toward the rising sun into a patch of pine and scrub oak which rimmed the east end of the field. Just inside the gate, I switched the ignition key over and the tractor rumbled to a halt. In the stillness my surroundings seemed to press in upon me, forcing me to soak in all that I heard, smelled, and saw. From somewhere in the back of my mind came the realization that my vacation would soon come to an end and I must grasp all of Mississippi that I could. In a couple of weeks, I would be going home, away from here, away from everything that had become so familiar to me. As I climbed down from the tractor, a strong smell of gas stifled me. Tightening the settling-bulb seemed to stop the leak.

"I got to open the conveyor gate," I said, thinking how funny it was to be talking to myself. I took a wrench from the tool box under the tractor seat and leaned thoughtfully against the big, wet tire, breathing in the cool, misty morning air. Did we ever have mornings like this in Kentucky? Almost three months had passed since I had come to Mississippi to work for Jim Morton, my mother's half-brother. When school ended in June, Mom had sent me to Uncle Jim's to make a little money for my freshman year in college. I didn't mind, at least it wouldn't be another summer of watching my snotty-nosed brother and listening to Mom and Dad nagging me to be "more sociable." The work had been hard and hot, but I had some money of my own. Money I had earned by my own hands, I thought as I clanked the wrench against a greasy lug nut on the wheel.

In the distance I heard another tractor coming toward field number six. The tractor sounded like one of the diesels. Frank Lloyd, Uncle Jim's pressing-man, had taught me how to tell the difference between the high pitched ping-ping of the gasoline engine and the dull thumping of the diesel. Frank had taught me a lot this summer. I remembered how Frank had strained to lift a cotton bale back into the baler when I failed to fasten the restraining straps properly. He had only said, "Dan, you ain't just foolin' with an overgrown cotton ball. That thing weighs a ton." Frank had been the first to show me around and to answer the million questions that I asked. Sometimes when Frank and I rode fence to check for breaks, we laughed, joked, and talked about just about everything. Frank was sort of the big brother that I had never had. I had learned a lot this summer and I already longed for next summer.

Elmo Deacon, a Negro tenant, and his five children pulled in just ahead of the big Ford 6000 diesel. Elmo's old Dodge pickup rattled and burped as it bounced along the unlevel plowing ruts at this end of the field. The door of the old Dodge creaked open and I heard Elmo shouting orders to his kids.

"Good morning, Elmo," I yelled as he walked over to my wagon. "Going to be another hot day?"

Elmo took a dirty handkerchief from his back pocket and wiped the drops of sweat from his wrinkled forehead. His broad, flat nose seemed to sniff the air in anticipation of some sign of the oncoming weather. He often did that to make everybody think he was some sort of weather prophet. He pushed his old gray hat back on his head and smiled as he answered.

"Shore looks like it, Dan. You're out kinda early, ain't ya?"

I nodded and turned to watch his kids as they scampered around to unload the long, dirty picking sacks from the back of the pickup.

"Well," Elmo said as he readjusted his hat, "Me and my younguns better get to stuffin'. This is a mighty heavy dew."

As I loosened the nut holding the catch gate, the wrench slipped from the wet nut and I rapped my knuckles against the brace bar of the conveyor gear. I wrapped my handkerchief around my bleeding knuckles and cursed. Uncle Jim drove in, stirring up a cloud of dust.

The truck stopped short of the wagon and Uncle Jim stepped from the truck and struck a match on his thigh to light his pipe. He walked over to the wagon with a serious look which turned to a warm, taunting smile. "What the hell did you do?"

"I just tore the crud out of my hand," I said, trying to hide my embarrassment. "If I'd had a boxed-end wrench I wouldn't have done it."

He drew heavily on his pipe. "Did your Aunt Mildred tell you that Southern States was sending its portable gin out today?"

"She said it would take two or three days to get the part for your gin," I said. "How come it takes so long for a part to come just from Biloxi?"

"Continental Cotton makes its parts in Illinois and they have to be shipped by way of Nashville and Birmingham." He fumbled in his shirt pocket for a match. "I don't think there'll be much of a back-up today. From the looks of things, Elmo and his gang aren't going to pick much cotton anyway until this dew dries off some, and if people keep beating hell out of the machinery with their bare knuckles we won't be able to haul cotton," he said, walking toward the diesel and smiling.

"You'd better get in my truck and go to the house and have Mildred put something on those knuckles."

"Okay," I said. "You still want me to help Frank take those press cakes to Meridian?"

"Yeah, Southern States said it would take all we could produce." He started the tractor. The empty wagon rumbled and thundered over the ruts as it disappeared over the ridge.

The sun was well above the tallest pine at the east end of number six. A breeze turned the leaves of the oak so that the silvery underside glistened in the sun; a sure sign of rain. Maybe Elmo was right, maybe it would rain. In the distance came the "tree-chee, tree-chee" of an awakening bird.

The goose-grass was still wet as I waded through it to the truck. I readjusted the limply hanging handkerchief around my knuckles and slid into the truck. "Damn that seat is hot," I said to myself.

I turned the key in the ignition and the truck engine whined. I jammed the gear shift into reverse and backed around Elmo's old Dodge. It's not going to be as hot today as it was yesterday, I thought, as the truck nosed down into the shaded, rutted service road. It was an old road, probably one of the original plantation service roads. The kudzu grew right down into the road, embracing every stem and leaf. Its big purple flowers had a sickening smell up close, but mixed with a lot of Mississippi air they didn't smell bad. An occasional honeysuckle brushed against the mirror, sending a warm fragrant shower of dew spraying into the cab. I had heard of a lazy southern day and this was surely it. Uncle Jim's warm smile and fatherly concern for my knuckles made me feel a little sorry for his not having kids of his own; I could tell he'd kind of taken to me. Home and Kentucky seemed so far away; I'd miss Uncle Jim, this work, and my freedom, but most of all I'd miss Mississippi; it was so warm and friendly, kind of "sociable."

The shade disappeared as I rounded the curve. The sun glistened warmly on the chrome of the hood. Just to the right, about a hundred yards ahead, stood the presshouse and ginning house. The new ranch-style house stood on a small, grassy rise. A neatly trimmed boxwood-lined drive led up to it. The truck rolled smoothly

on the pavement and I almost failed to stop at the patio wall. The brakes cried and the truck ground to a halt just short of the wall. I opened the truck door and climbed out. As I slammed the door, three wild canary birds flew from the bird bath by the back door.

"Hey, Aunt Mildred."

"Yes, Dan," she said as she came out of her rose garden by the side of the house. "Kind of a warm day," she said, pushing her sandy brown hair from her eyes.

"You got any iodine? I skinned my knuckles."

"Let me see. No, go wash your hands and I'll get some medicine." She hurried into the house.

I followed her in. As I stood at the kitchen sink washing my hands, a warm breeze pushed through the open window. From the window I could see the Angus grazing in the field down by the two black hay barns. Up the lane stood the dull gray ginning house and Elmo's neat little white house with the two swings on the front porch. "When you get a good man like Elmo, you got to give him a good place to live," Uncle Jim had said. Elmo was a fine man. His children worshipped him. Every Saturday night they had watermelon and laughed and ran around while Elmo and Uncle Jim sat on the front porch and drank beer, talked politics, crops, and those "damn bureaucrats in Jackson."

I finished washing and sat down at the big oak table. Aunt Mildred came in with an armload of bottles. She pushed her hair from her eyes again and sat down with a quick, determined grace. Examining my hand, she swabbed and daubed, firmly but gently, first alcohol then iodine until my knuckles were covered with a scarlet stain that spread to my wrist.

"There now, that should do it," she said with a smile. "How about somethin' to eat?"

"Sure!"

"I can give ya some pound cake and tea." She opened the cabinet drawer to take out a knife.

Apparently she had just baked the cake, because it was still warm. I finished the cake and tea. Staring at my badge of red, I imagined myself a Civil War soldier being bandaged and boarded. Well, the situations have changed, but the surroundings seemed the same. I longed for the older days when everything was unhurried and freer.

"Me and Frank are going to take a load of press cakes to Meridian. Do you want anything?" I asked.

"No, I guess not," Aunt Mildred said, placing the teacrock back in the refrigerator.

The screen door slammed behind me and I heard Aunt Mildred humming some lively little song. The smell of wisteria wafted through the open window as I pulled the truck door closed. I backed the truck around and headed down the drive to the press-house.

Nearing the loading chute, I could hear the diesel engine as it idled between pressings. I wondered where Frank was. I braked the truck a little past the loading chute and Frank came out to adjust and open the chute. I sat in the truck watching Frank in the side-view mirror as he labored to lower the portable chute. I guessed Frank to be part Creole since he had black hair and a slight accent. Uncle Jim said Frank had come from around New Orleans where many Creoles still lived. Frank wasn't old but his face had a worn look and his greasy, black hair was slightly gray around his ears. His big arms glistened with sweat and his thick, black brows wrinkled as he stepped out into the sunlight. He moved toward the truck with a quick step and a wide, welcoming smile.

"Hi there, Frank," I said. "Kind of a hot day isn't it?"

"Hotter'n a bride in August. You going to Meridian with me?" he questioned with that sly smile that seemed to suggest a sort of mischief.

"Sure," I said.

Frank put his thickly veined hand on the door handle and opened the door.

"Come on in. Let's have a beer while the truck is loadin'."

We went inside. Frank started the conveyor and walked to the cooler. The presshouse was cool and had a pleasant smell of cotton oil. Frank took two Carlings out of the cooler and popped the tops. If my parents could have seen that, man—would they have thrown a bitch-fit. Frank talked about one of his girls in Lauderdale. Bobby Su was her name. He had been going with her almost all summer. He said he was taking Eloise Walker to a dance tonight. He said she was an old girlfriend. We talked about Uncle Jim's soybean crop and the prospects of getting a good press-cake price.

The conveyor clicked off and the diesel whirred to a halt.

Frank threw his empty can in a barrel. "Well, we'd better get goin', it's already eleven. By the time we get to Meridian, get unloaded, and get back it'll be four-thirty or five. I got to get back early if I'm goin' to that dance."

I threw my nearly empty can into the barrel and hurried to get into the truck ahead of Frank. Frank eased the truck off of the loading platform and down to the paved road. The truck rolled smoothly on newly paved Highway 45. I gazed out the window at the cattle that grazed up to the white plank fences, bordering the right-of-way. Cotton fields stretched out on every side of the road, some defoliated and some not.

"Sure is pretty land round here, ain't it," Frank said, slapping a mosquito from his bare arm.

"Yes," I answered.

I sank back in the seat and dreamed. The warm sunshine pouring through the windshield felt good. Someday I'd have a big farm with cattle, cotton. As we neared Meridian, the road narrowed and

grew bumpier. Just to the right of the first stop-light in South Meridian stood a big school. A school—soon I'd be going back home, back to school.

"Meridian is a pretty big town," said Frank, shaking his head. "It's big but you see nothin' but poor trash. More'n half of the damn town is pimps and whore houses."

"Yeah, I heard that," I lied.

We began to move into heavier traffic. Some old lady in a green Chrysler eased over into Frank's lane and he started giving her hell.

"Damned old fool. Don't know how to drive. She should a stopped drivin' forty years ago!"

The next stop-light was green and Frank turned right and drove directly into the big Southern States Processing Plant. Frank drove into the entrance marked "Tandems Only" and stopped the truck. He grinned slyly.

"Come on, let's get out. I got to talk to the operator," Frank said, hopping from the truck.

By the time I had gotten out of the truck, Frank had already disappeared between two semis. I stood around and listened to five men who were talking in the shade of the platform. I wondered if half of the love affairs, fights, knife swapping and carousing stories were true. As I listened, my life seemed kind of dull. "Did you hear about Paul Cook's daughter locking her husband out of their motel room on their wedding night?" one man questioned. "Sure did, I'd probably locked that big, hairy bastard out too if I'd been her." Occasionally someone would look at me for a comment and I'd put in a "Well, I'll be damned" or "Yeah." With nothing really important to add to the conversation, I decided to get a coke and a candy bar and wait for Frank in the truck. When I returned from the coke machine, the operator was just pulling the truck from the unloading platform. I climbed inside to eat my Hershey bar. The first sip of coke started my stomach churning. The coke, beer, and candy didn't make me feel very comfortable. The shade looked inviting, but as I raised up to get out, I saw Frank coming around the corner of the plant carrying a brown paper sack. He was smiling from ear to ear. He climbed into the truck and drove recklessly off the platform. The truck roared down the narrow entrance lane and out into the traffic, back toward home.

As Meridian grew smaller in the side-view mirror, I began to feel more at ease and more confident. Maybe I wasn't "sociable," maybe I was shy, a loner, but I only knew I loved the wide open Mississippi country with its friendly people, warm climate and slow unhurried pace.

"What do you have in the sack, Frank?" I said.

"Oh just a fifth of good whiskey and a few other little things a man has got to have to have a good time," he said with a devilish grin. "Me and Eloise are goin' to have a little party after the dance."

Hey, how'd you like to come with us? Eloise has a sister, not bad lookin'. About eighteen or nineteen, I think. I hear she puts out." He slapped the wheel and winked at me.

I guessed I looked shocked with that last comment. Trying not to show it, I looked out the window, trying to think of something to say. I knew Frank was looking at me and enjoying every minute of my embarrassment.

"Awh, hell, Dan. I won't let no girl bother my little friend." He slapped his thigh and bellowed with laughter.

"I guess I may as well go out and have a good time before I have to go back home," I said. I paused for a moment. "I guess I can take care of Eloise's sister . . . and Eloise too," I added finally.

Frank's eyebrows shot up in surprise. Then he laughed louder than ever.

We talked about the girls and before I knew it we were heading down the shaded lane leading to the house. Rounding a curve, we met Elmo and his pickup full of kids. They waved and smiled like a bunch of banana-fed monkeys.

As I put on my suit that evening, fumbling with my buttons, I thought—this is the first time I've worn this suit except to church! I combed my hair nervously and splashed on too much after-shave lotion. Although I had rushed, Frank was dressed and waiting at the end of the walk. Reeking with Jade East and still struggling with a bungled tie-knot, I clamored down the steps.

Aunt Mildred was waiting at the bottom of the stairs to inspect my rapid dressing. She reached out to straighten my shirt collar and to press a five-dollar bill into my hand.

"My, you look fine. So you're goin' to the dance with Eloise's sister?" she questioned. "Frank said that she is a right pretty girl."

"Yes," I answered meekly.

"Well, you have a good time now, ya hear?" She nudged me toward the door.

A good time . . . Oh, I planned to have a good time; I had been promising myself this kind of a time all my life; Aunt Mildred, I'm going to town tonight—man, am I going to town.

I ran down the flagstone walk and bounded into Frank's car like an athlete.

The old Chevy strained to pick up speed and Frank whistled some unknown song. The song was lost in the rustle of a paper bag as Frank handed me a bottle.

"Here, have a little snort," he said.

I drank a mouthful; it burned. "God," I said. I didn't know exactly where I was going, back to the city I guessed. I really didn't care where we were headed. Whiskey, girls, dances—man, if my parents could see me now would they ever throw a bitch-fit.



I COME AND SHARE

I come and share the sand with wriggling things,
Burrowing homes in wake of waves,
Cool cubicles, and what have we here?
One is forever being found out by beaks.

A private place is a part-time thing.
Some even envy the cockle fish his shell.
For myself, I find this bar about as satisfying
As one can be without TV.

After a day of haggling and hunching
Over some tomorrow-to-be-forgotten scrap of paper,
Random sampling of pouting wife
And kids that will not let a man be but a father,
This isle, though soon to be washed under,

Looks pretty damn good.
It was my boss who said, as bosses have a way,
"Time waits for no man." He meant, of course,
The tireless tick-tick-tick of the time clocking,
Which I acknowledged with half-bend forward

And a Sure, I know what you mean, "Right, Sir."
Now here, by the sea, such things seem
Just a lot of clutter, in the steady go-out-
Come-in, back and forth, give and take.

But then again, if I could be sure of another,
I'd get out of Pompeii altogether.

—*Bonnie Tinsley*

CARLOTTA

—Bonnie Tinsley

The summer we inherited Carlotta we were living in Iowa City in one of those tin-roofed barracks the Institution called "married-student housing." I always wondered about "single-student housing." From the outside at least the dorms appeared much less reminiscent of World War II, or was it I? I imagined them furnished with the matching army green metal desk and bed, and especially neat even if a bit aseptic. Our hut contained the typical University rejects, chairs with large flat wood arms thick with layers of varnish and seat and back upholstered in brown plastic. I should probably mention the rainy-day gray walls too, the screen door latch that kept the refrigerator door closed, and the couch that must have been in Grant Wood's studio—to give you the effect of the place.

The other barracks had quite a bit more charm, embellished with pieces borrowed from this uncle or that grandmother in Davenport or Sioux City. I noticed it at the first Saturday morning coffee welcoming the new wives to North Park. Now *there* was an experience. Just imagine fifteen unfamiliar women in an eight-by-nine room all dressed in basic black, smiling chumily and asking you where you're from, what you're doing here, and how many children you have. I'm from a warmer climate for one thing; and I'm in this God-awful place trying to get my husband out of the professional art student category by daily sorting and capping little armies of toothpaste tubes; and yes, I have no children. It was sorority rush all over again down to the dainty pink frosted cakes that settled with a bit of clatter at the bottom of my stomach. Those Vassarites hadn't just hung out five loads of sheets, men's underwear and plaster encrusted levis, scrubbed down a shower stall hastily renovated by the former tenants, and stretched a \$5.00 a week food budget to include "minimum daily requirements."

The topic of conversation drifted into husband's field.

"And what does your husband study?"

"Sculpture."

"What does he sculpt?"

"You name it."

"I mean does he make busts and that kind of thing? We were thinking of having someone do the children."

"Really, Virginia," the hostess with a studied Emily Post composure interrupted her intimate tete-a-tete with another to interject,

"Hadn't you heard that his work is what they call 'abstract?'" She said "abstract" in a way that must have brought something terribly funny to everyone else's mind. After the general titter during which I smiled with as much condescension as I could muster, the chick on the Queen Anne focused on me through slits as if she were having trouble with her contact lenses.

"Your husband must be the one I see refinishing furniture in the front yard. My, but he's industrious."

"Isn't he. We have all that done out. Saves on the wear and tear to the front yard."

"Appearances, too."

"Yes, the equipment required for that kind of job is a bit messy."

"Attracts flies, too."

"George tried it last year. He got one of those do-it-yourself kits, you know. Decided his time was better spent in computer science. But that kind of thing is more in keeping with your husband's field, isn't it?" she said to me. By this time I was feeling like one of those flies dodging 15 swatters. It was all I could do to quiet the rising animosity much less retaliate.

I was obviously being thoroughly scrutinized by the regular members and my holey tennis sneakers and sweat shirt must not have passed inspection. When the invitation to the next such event appeared in the mailbox, it was unmistakably an afterthought. Besides I got the feeling that my number would eventually turn up, and the odds were fifteen to one that together they wouldn't be comfortable on Grant Wood's studio couch. I had taken to making yellow paper daisies to brighten the surroundings, too, and hadn't as yet really perfected the art. They drooped. So it was either the ladies or the daisies, and I preferred the daisies.

Don't get the idea that we were friendless. Satisfied to be on the fringe of things, the art people were what you would call clannish, especially the sculptors. They preferred the society of those who, even if they didn't agree about the best way to make an A-frame hoist, were at least in the right profession to learn. Our parties were pretty intimate, not just because of the pot, but because we thought we had the exclusive monopoly on student suffering and physical deprivation. There was a certain pride in being poor, misunderstood and unloved. The women in the group had their hang-ups as well. At first I made the usual effort to talk feminist professionalism or, failing at that, dedicated housewifery, but any way you looked at it, assembly line work was hardly a calling and I was still waging battle with the mice and ants in my kitchen cupboard. Besides, they had less interest in my conversation than in observing the other husbands or in observing the other women observing their husbands.

The gatherings were usually spontaneous. Eli Rubin had a studio off-campus in the basement of Ernie's Blue Room and we could hear the music from upstairs gratis. When things began to move we

didn't mind that the plaster and metal scraps were never swept up, and the cold cement floor lost some of its bite. The place was complete with psychedelic lights, a fiberglass nude reclining in one of those old claw-footed bathtubs, and a plastic fetus floating in formaldehyde in a Ball jar. All sorts of other grotesques peered at us from the walls and tables in various states of semi-completion. The talk was as free as the sculpture, and Eli could articulate on anything from Aristotle's *Poetics* to Yeats's *Vision*. At one time he had an article published in *Playboy* and the conversation never failed to include something Eli had said in *Playboy*.

Let me say here that I had my own suspicions about "artists" in general. I had been having some real trouble making a distinction between what was honest with them and what was not. I probably wouldn't have given a damn had I not been married to one. At the same time, those little remarks about abstract art might have been truly amusing. And I shouldn't have minded that artists weren't sufficiently appreciated, that in comparison to, let's say, computer scientists their value was negligible. It wouldn't have occurred to me to disagree that artists were good for little more than refinishing furniture, that is if I hadn't chosen to marry one.

About the time our food shortage was getting serious, and the park situation more than a little annoying, Eli asked if we would mind boarding Carlotta. He was spending the summer in Newport and needed a place for his cat. Carlotta looked like she belonged to a visionary. She was a black and white alley variety with a spooky way of running close down to the ground, so that she always appeared longer and lower than she was. Whenever you attempted to pet her, she would dip her mid section ever so carefully, as if she were going under a low barbed wire fence, so that you would get only a tickle from the ends of her stubbly head and tail. She didn't cry like normal cats either; she didn't make any noise at all, so that you would never know she was around. She would sneak in out of nowhere when she was hungry and then disappear just as fast.

Even though most of the doors to the barracks were kept burglar-proof tight, many of the flaps weren't protected by screens. Carlotta had learned to manipulate the flaps open with her nose so that she could come and go at will. She took a particular interest in the Harrington's aquarium, to which she paid daily visits. I knew this because one day I was asked to keep an eye out for the repairman from University Housing who was coming to place screens in their double doors. When the screens curtailed her passage to the aquarium, Carlotta retaliated by mistaking the Harrington's carefully nurtured chives for grass and chewed every tiny shoot down to its roots. It would certainly be an exaggeration to say that Carlotta had become a weapon of revenge in the hands of a vindictive woman. I mean there wasn't much I could do about the nuisance she

was making of herself in the park. She was definitely her own master, and they would simply have to endure it.

We had been boarding Carlotta for a couple of weeks, when, on one of her early a.m. vigils with the bottle, our neighbor next door found Carlotta stretched out in her path between the hut and the "No Parking" sign. The first thing Sunday morning with the **Des Moines Register's** last word on corn, world politics and fashion, we found Linda's garbled note to the effect that Carlotta was behind the house in a box out of the way of the sun, and wasn't it too bad, and what did we intend doing about it. While my eyes were still criss-crossing the note, one of the odd couple across the way opened the door to retrieve his paper and looked up with a grin of recognition, as if he knew what was brewing the strange chemistry in my stomach. And then all at once it seemed like the whole park was awake to it all and out on their porches with the pretense of getting the morning paper. I stuffed the note down in the "Parade" section and backed casually into the hut. It was in the backing that it came to me that this was just the kind of thing they would do.

I was thinking with considerably more cool by the time I called the local vet. It might be expensive, but I felt that I needed proof of something.

"Are there any marks on the body?" he asked.

"Not that I can tell."

"Might have been something she ate."

"She seemed normal enough just a few hours before."

"I'm not saying she's been poisoned or anything like that, but it's pretty hard to tell you anything over the telephone."

"How much do you charge for an examination?"

"You mean an autopsy?"

"Well, alright."

"Depends on how fresh it is. When did you say you noticed the cat?"

"About six or so this morning."

"How's five dollars?"

A vet's office is pretty quiet on Sunday morning. Barry finished the paper while I scanned the wall of photographs of pedigreed poodles all neatly clipped in various styles of coiffure. There was the continental look for the poodle who goes everywhere, the tailored look for at-home entertaining and the close-cropped look for the dog in a hurry. When I had sufficiently appreciated each pose and stance, I was drawn to the catfish in the tank who was fairly eating me up with his bulging eyes, puckered lips and twitching whiskers. I suggested to Barry that what we needed was a fish tank since we didn't have a T.V. He shifted his attention momentarily to the hungry catfish, said "Uh-huh," and then went back to the paper. Presently the vet came in wiping between his fingers

with a brownish rag. It was a particularly tricky operation because her lungs were filled with the blood she had strangled on. Some sort of congenital defect in the aorta was at the crux of it all, and that'll be five dollars.

"Are you sure, I mean about the cat?" I couldn't believe it.

"Do you want to take a look?"

I snatched up my purse and gave the man his five dollars. I was tempted to say that he really hadn't earned it. After all how much education does it take to cut up a man's pet? How did I know; he may have gotten a C in Diagnosis. Those people were devious enough to program some formula on their computer that would fool any C grade vet. And how could he know that they hadn't suffocated her or something? Barry gathered up the newspaper and suggested that he feed his catfish.

Iowa City felt especially cool on the back of the Bridgestone that morning, cool and clean, and its inhabitants were more remote than usual. There wasn't even anyone's dog out to harass the wheels and bark at our ankles. I noticed that old man Yokum's place had a fresh coat of paint, at least on the side facing the main street, and that shredded mink skin was still hanging outside the door over the used stoves and refrigerators. The only indication of any student activity was the "Make Love Not War" sign flapping from the third floor of Burge Hall. It was the kind of time you feel like letting your arms and legs go and balancing on the seat of your bike through stop signs and red lights and defying anyone to come out of his tight little room and make something of it.



LATE MARIANA

Only motionless hours and dust on precious things
saw when an end came to the unwanted years.
Along with the usual curled photographs and
the inevitable cracked figurines,
someone found a diary.

Dusk by weary dusk a frail shadow,
the solitary witness,
had been led to the desk
where on every waiting page
an existence had been recorded:
No one came.

—Audrey Morrison

STAN, WHEREVER YOU ARE!

—Toby Walton

December 25, 1969
Redneck, Kentucky

Dear Stan,

I hope this catches up to you wherever you're fighting over there. Of course we wouldn't know if you told us. The only names we get back here are My Lay or whatever and who the hell knows where *that* is? Top Secret and all, so I guess there's no reason we *should* know. But at least it sounds better than good old Redneck and the Dog and Suds and Grover's where all you ever get is Bonnie May and the same old rags hanging out. At least you've got some *action!* What is it about that Saigon stuff anyway? Is it really *slanted* like we used to joke? We were all out to the Saratoga the other night and putting on old Moose about that and almost had him believing it. You know Moose! But Herm who is up to Eastern nights now said that a prof said that there *are* racial differences, *brainpan* and all. He didn't say *beaver* right out in class, but Herm said it could be so. It makes you wonder about those guys who keep saying everyone's all *equal!* It got us all to thinking real serious.

Which is really why I'm writing you this. I've done a lot of thinking lately and made a big decision. It's got a lot to do with you too. And how *some* of us back here in the States have been trying to help you out over there. And how we're going to do *even more!*

Anyway, it all started when L. J.'s body was shipped back last week. Moose and Herm and Peepers and me all went over to Paint Lick for the funeral. Just seeing L. J.'s old man and old lady all wrinkled up and everything was something! I mean this was *death!* They had an American flag on the coffin all covered with pretty ribbons and stuff and some of the old geezers from the VFW Lodge all decked out. I mean it was really religious! And when Brother Loss Lobie got to that *dust-to-dust* business even old Moose was turning his head away and pretending like he had a frog in his throat or something. But what *really* got me was when L. J.'s old lady bent down and took a piece of that pretty ribbon and kissed it and tucked it down her dress! She must be about a hundred years old, all wrinkled and everything. I mean it *got* to me. I just get a *feeling* when I see the flag! And I don't think it's being flit to admit it. I was so mad and angry and everything I wanted to *smack* something, just smack the s--- out of something! I just couldn't get out of my mind L. J. *stretched* out there and all the good times we'd

had cruising nights and hustling those Winchester guys after games. And here was L. J. *dead!* Peepers had been drinking Old Yellowstone all day and almost got sick at the funeral which I thought was in bad taste. And kind of queer too because he and L. J. had been as close as any of us.

Anyway, I think we were all kind of sick. Maybe sicker than we knew when we got to the Saratoga. I mean we were just sitting around quietly drinking and stuff, when Peepers started getting into it with this group of students. You know the type, beads and metal glasses and all that goddamn hair. There were about six of them and they had been going on in that flitty kind of way with loose wrists and "Hey, guy" and "You *are* beautiful!" when this one with a scraggly beard suddenly started arguing with the rest of them about *military butchering* or something. I mean he must have been all of seventy pounds, most of it acne, and I hadn't been listening too close because mainly I was looking at their moccasins and headbands and stuff. And the nigger girl with them! Right in the Saratoga! Anyway, I didn't even hear what Peepers said that made this acne faced one swing around and say, "I suppose you're *proud* to be an imperialist." It seemed just funny as all hell to the others in his group, so Peepers started right in on the nigger girl, telling her he knew a spot and all. She just sat there though, fancy as the rest of them, trying to act like a princess. A goddamn African princess. Haw! Then acne-face says, "Our biggest war is within," and with that the whole group just picked up and left.

And that got me! The way they could pick up and leave with those fancy words. The same kind of group of snot-asses out to the Gabbard Show at the Colonel's that day we took Herm out and made them look at his amputation right while the show was on the air. All of them so cocky and full of fancy s-- words. I mean it just didn't *sit* too well after seeing L. J.'s parents and all.

So it kind of started with our tailing them into town. Nothing serious, you know, more like that midnight stuff through Shantytown with firecrackers we used to do in high school. And what really got us going was what they were driving—one of those foreign busses. Nazi VW! You know they do it just to say "Up yours, America!" And you know what they *do* in there, don't you? *Gang-bang and daisy-chain!* Herm said he saw one guy *kissing* another once up at Eastern. Just seeing those monkeys made me believe it. So anyway, Peepers starts riding his GTO up on them a little, kind of lunging, you know, nothing serious. But it didn't seem to bother them. Then Peepers whipped alongside, making the pipes spit a little. And acne face just looks out and yawns! He was right in the middle of a play-it-cool yawn when Peepers cut in front of him and hit the brakes. God, you should have *seen* that bus stand on its nose coming to a stop! Man!

And before those monkeys even knew it we were out of the car and around the front of their bus. Peepers had a tire iron, but other than that it was just man to man. Peepers rapped the window to

get the driver to open up but that little squirrel wasn't going to roll it down. You should have seen him, his beads and iron glasses going a mile a minute, all seventy pounds of filthy acne. I mean he was squirming, and then Peepers rapped a good one on the window and said if he didn't roll it down there wouldn't be anything to roll down!

I mean none of us was really jerked yet. I even think Peepers would have settled for an apology. Just a little something after all that high and mighty stuff at the Saratoga. I mean what they didn't realize was that here was a guy who had just seen a buddy stretched out *dead*. You've got to *feel* it to know it. Like when I saw Herm's pink stump the first time. It *gets* you! But the first thing acne-face does when he rolls down the window is shout, "Get out of our way, *hillbilly!*" He kind of screeched it in a strained voice the way fairies do when they're scared peeless. And it was his mistake too! Peepers had him by the beads and dragged right out through the window before anyone knew what was happening.

"What was that, queer?" Peepers says.

"I said let me go," the scarecrow whispers.

"That's not what you said," Peepers says.

"I said you've got no right to block us."

"That's still not what you said."

"What I said you didn't hear and what I didn't say you listened to," the little frog pipes back. That's just what they always do—*double* talk you! But it was no sooner out of his mouth than Peepers had his arm twisted in back of him and his body stretched out over the hood of the GTO. And I mean *s-t-r-e-t-c-h-e-d!*

"I want you to say what you were saying about the war," Peepers says. "I want to hear again how we're murdering those commie bastards!" God, that little muther was squirming like a bug on his back. His beads were broken and he'd lost one of his moccasins it all happened so fast. I mean I hardly had time to *think* myself. Inside the bus those other monkeys were really kicking up a rumpus, screaming and braying, but old Moose was holding the door shut on them, though they weren't trying *too* hard to get out.

"Say what you said about American murderers," Peepers says again to the bug. "*Say* it!"

But acne face was too busy bawling, hysterical, you know the way they get. Finally he managed to scream, "You, *hillbilly!*" And then Peepers let him have a good one right in the *belly*. I mean you could almost feel it the same way we used to *get* those library book spines. And the little muther rolled his head back and puked all over the windshield. Man! I *felt* what I had wanted to do all day in that blow, ever since seeing L. J. stretched out. And I wished *then* that some of the other guys in the bus *would* get out to try and help. That they didn't made me even madder. Here they wouldn't even get out to help a buddy, those same guys who could play so hot snot with words. That's what *really* got me. I mean I've gotten my ass kicked for helping a buddy, but at least I stood up like

a man!

And then the *craziest* thing happened. One of the bitches *did* manage to break out. She came squawking out of that bus and fell kneeling on the pavement with her hands stretched up *in prayer!* You should have seen it! She had on one of those indian head-dresses and beads and an American flag all cut up. And she just kneeled there screeching like she was praying! I mean the screeching was one thing. But what really got me was that little slut in a *cut up* American flag with draft-dodgers and queers praying for some acne face who had just slobbered all over the hood of Peepers' GTO! All that when not four hours before we'd heard Brother Loss Lobie saying that *dust-to-dust* business for L. J. and his old lady kissing that little piece of ribbon. I got that *feeling* about the flag again. And here was this slut *mocking* it! *Laughing* at L. J. who had given his goddamn *life* so she could be hunkering around with faggots. It drove me wild! You just can't explain it unless you'd ever seen L. J. and Peepers and Herm playing basketball together in high school. You know, working that three-man-weave down to the state tournaments. God, that was beautiful! And Moose must have felt it too for the next thing he planted his boot right in the middle of that bitch's back and sent her sprawling across the road shoulder like a sack of grain. She must have gone *ten* feet! I'd never seen Moose do anything to a woman before and it amazed me. But I would have done the same thing! Screeching like that in a head-dress and American flag and still all lathered up from whatever she'd been doing in that bus. Mocking the flag and religion and L. J. and L. J.'s mother—*everything!* Squaw or whatever! She just wasn't a woman at all! She was hideous!

And you know, Stan, I think Judge Schmally saw it that way a little too. Of course the little peckers squealed plenty when they got back to Eastern. And the police knew right off who Moose was. They jerked me off the gas pumps first thing the next morning, and read us all holy hell in the Judge's office. I mean they were furious at first! Herm's old man was there and one time I thought he was actually going to slug Herm, leg or *no* leg. But after they had shouted themselves down a little and it came out about L.J.'s funeral and all, they seemed to simmer. Schmally finally got real serious and started talking man to man about patriotism and honor and morals . . . *but then* too about beating a dead horse and going off half cocked and using too big a load. I mean I think he could see what was what. Of course he had to do something to us—probation and paying for some clothes, mostly just beads though—but as we were going out I saw him punch Peepers lightly on the shoulder. You know? Well, it got me to *really* thinking after it was over. *Patriotism* and all. I mean I could see what he was getting at. We had been dumb. Kind of like shooting at the wrong target, you know. After all, what can you expect from perverts and indians? They can't help being queer any more than a rabbit. Well, it made

me *think* plenty. And what I decided is what I'm really writing to tell you about—

I'm going to join up!

And so are Peepers and Moose! We're going down tomorrow to fill out the forms. And *then* we're going to come over there and help you get those dirty muthers *first-hand!* Now how is that? You and me and Peepers and Moose, like in the old days! So what I'm saying is, *Save some for us!* I'm getting my first one for L. J.!

Your good buddy,

Loope



WHEN EMPTY ROOMS BECKON

Weak faded pictures—her heavy stale life—
People and places that all smelled of age;
(Here was someone's brother; that must be his wife)
As ever, she smiled with each slowly-turned page.

She never grew tired of long-ago times—
Outside her house there was nothing at all:
Her world was mad clocks with incorrect chimes;
They lied, yellow-faced, from every room's wall.

She touched the last page and stared at the faces;
She tried in vain to recall just one name—
People forgotten, forgot, too, the places,
And ever and always she stayed the same.

Loneliness, old age, empty rooms beckoned:
She closed the first book; she opened the second.

—Audrey Morrison

TO KNOW A MAN WELL

—Robert Ruh

What was that playwright's name? It must have been several years since I had heard it. I had seen his play, though. First theater-of-the-absurd play ever produced there—in the round at that. Funny how such an irrelevant detail could be so upsetting. What was his name?

In the final act, the long-awaited orator entered, dressed magnificently in black. With pomp and composure he mounted the lectern to pronounce the secret of life as discovered by the old and dying couple. With gloved hands he made an all-encompassing sweep through the air, a gesture reserved for preachers and nineteenth-century elocutionists. And then a long, low wail, like a moonstruck imbecile keening close-throated through deep space, issued from his canine mouth and crescendoed in a blast of garbled vowels and consonants. He bowed his head and made one last utterance, like an ancient priest over a bier, and the dimmed stage-lights died.

I had expected him to give me some clear-cut answers. I sat in the audience, a confused student, majoring in Life, as I told myself. I felt sure the orator could arrange all my jumbled thoughts, mold them into a logical unit, because he knew the secret of life. But when I heard his insane babbling, I became horrified that he might be sounding the truth. I didn't really want to believe in the crazy, meaningless world of the orator. I hoped that somewhere there was a kinder answer.

I sat in the empty classroom and observed the empty chairs around me. **The Chairs**, by Ibsen? No, well, I would think of it later—probably in the middle of a conversation. Soon the classroom would be full, awaiting the secret of life. Some wizened professor would creep in, and before long, the dimmed stagelights would die. Shakespeare seemed an unlikely place for such a revelation, but Shakespeare must have been a man at one time, before he became a class.

I opened my small, brown notebook and began to doodle—

H K S E R

S A E P A E. I closed my eyes and tried to duplicate the script. When I opened them, I found before me the highly amused face of a girl who walked to the rear of my aisle. I could feel

her gaze exploring my naked nape. Bending over my notebook, I traced out the characters—SHAKESPEARE, as if by returning to the conventional form, I had probated her sentence. I doubted if she even knew the Shakespearean definition of a fool. And besides that, people who sit in the back are usually dull or incorrigibly introverted.

A trickle of students strolled through the doorway, mostly by twos. Couples seemed to populate the campus. I examined each, but managed not to appear rude by resting my chin on the bridgework of my fingers, and gazing wistfully at the pencil sharpener. Bell-bottoms and boots, culottes, no hose, back to the immaculately parted locks of stylized hippy, as the pair sat down together in adjacent, front-row seats. A large, straight-haired and -faced girl loped in, her text books protruding through her crooked arm, and took the seat in front of me. I noted a residue, gummed splotches of gray which remained in rectangles on her books, and checked to see how carefully I had removed the 'used' beacon from my own.

It perturbed me to see the same sticky mottle on my own books. There is a silent fellowship of people across the world who have residue on their books. That we should share that bond seemed ridiculous. The girl, no doubt, was a charter member. I was sure she had seen my books and taken a sense of security from them. A false sense, I thought, as I picked at the indelible blotches.

"You know anything about 'im?" asked the husky voice before me. She allowed a slight smile around her lips, but her forehead wrinkled into her eyebrows to punctuate the gravity or urgency of her question. I supposed the smile meant we were in the same boat.

"Who?"

"The prof in here. I think his name is Linton or Liston or something like that," she urged, paging through her schedule book. "Ever had 'im before?"

"No. I hope he's good though," I added, not wanting to seem too abrupt.

With that I had completely won her confidence, and was included in the hushed arc of her voice.

"I hear he never smiles."

"Really?" I asked incredulously.

"Yea, and beside that, he cusses right in class."

I gave her my aw-go-on-you-can't-really-mean-it look, which she took the wrong way.

It wasn't Ferlinghetti, either.

It surprised me when he finally entered. He was not even middle-aged. But slender and purposeful, like the stark, chalk letters tommy-gunned into the blackboard telling his name, office number and hours, and nothing more.

I castigated myself for thinking that he had a chiseled face. Every man in every novel who taught college had a chiseled face; but, his recessed eyes and mountie chin bisected by one deft stroke left me without a better image. A thin pallor spread itself over his

gaunt face, contrasting the purplish circlets beneath his cast-iron eyes—a young, pale priest of Shakespeare.

His fascinating voice overshadowed each of his spinally features, movements. The voice articulated each word, but with a soft grating, like each word must climb over his rocky adams apple to freedom. By varying his dynamic level he was able to stress and mark in a conversational tone, and demanded one strain to hear his dirge. His fascinating voice overshadowed each of his spinally features and his tapered sideburns formed closed parentheses around his face as if he was grammatically complete without it.

“This course is an introduction to the works of William Shakespeare, of whom some of you may have heard.”

An obligatory titter ran through the rows.

“This course is not structured for the scholar or for any extensive research into scholarly matters, but for a general reading acquaintance with a man who many say is not only the greatest writer but the most inventive, prolific, and profound author who ever lived, and with those I cannot disagree. I tell you this only so you will know the correct answer when I ask it on your first hourly examination, and anyone who misses it is going to have one hell of a hard time in here.”

On the word *hell* my cohort shot me a glance of disbelief that we were actually a part of that worldliness.

“This course may be a steppingstone for some of you, or a bridge-over-the-river-Thames to exciting scholarly pursuit. At present I am engaged in tracing the ostensible incongruities in spelling in several of the folios, and hope to find a key which will truly account for those differences. Some say that no orthodoxy of spelling had yet been established in Elizabethan England, but I feel that I will soon be able to show conclusively that there are several indications that Shakespeare spelled individual words differently for a host of reasons.”

The voice droned on. I gazed at his sunken eyes and imagined him pouring over his manuscripts in his study. It was a rather small study, walled on three sides by stuffed bookshelves of darkgrained wood which loomed from the ceiling. A small window yawned politely in the very center of the fourth wall, allowing shafts of light, which did not quite reach the edge of his desk. There he was sitting crosslegged as he hunched over one pile of papers and then another, comparing and recomparing. He sat there completely naked, rooting fiercely at the materials which engorged his desk, and drooling onto the orgy of words before him.

The drone ceased and I noticed I was still looking into those cast iron eyes. I smiled to myself as I focused on the black suit of the instructor.

“Perhaps,” he began again, “It would serve our interest to discuss briefly the evolution of the play. The play began . . .

"Yes," I thought, "the play." Who was it that wrote that blasted play? Jesus, it made me mad when I couldn't remember something like that, especially when it had been so important to me. I had gotten all excited about existentialism. Impressed by the word, depressed by what Jean Sartre had written about it. I read nearly everything I could get my hands on dealing with the subject. Nietzsche and Camus had their own brands and I nearly flunked ancient philosophy that semester savoring the differences.

That play had prompted me to do independent study. For the first time in my college years, I had experienced what my profs called a "zeal for learning." And now I couldn't even remember the damned author. Well, I knew it would come to me—in a flash. That's the way those things worked.

"... and to conclude this session," the instructor broke in from somewhere, "a word from **Hamlet**, Hamlet speaking, 'but to know a man well were to know himself'. Dwell on that ladies and gentleman," he said, bowing his head theatrically. "There is food there for hungry young minds. See you next time," he said, walking quickly through the door.

If you knew a man well, you could know yourself. That sort of made sense. People have spent their whole lives learning about Jesus, and then talking about the Light, and a new way of life. There were disciples of Plato, Aquinas, and Marx, all equally devout. Why else would the living bother to read biographies if there were not some sense in that line? I wondered if it mattered which man you chose to know. Or which woman.

The lines did make sense, but it bothered me the way he bowed his head after quoting them. 'A poem by Henry Gibson' type of bow. As if he were mocking the wisdom of the quotation. The long-awaited orator had also bowed at the end of his speech. I hoped the messages had not been the same.

The room emptied slowly. The languorous couples talked casually about this and that with little consciousness of the past hour. I was putting my jacket on or gathering-up my books when I noticed that everyone had left except me and **THE GIRL**.

"Could you believe that guy?" she asked as if someone had pinched her on the no-no.

"Yea, he was kind of weird," I said, for lack of a better response.

"It's ridiculous that we have to take a course like this," she said. I didn't care for her use of the plural pronoun.

"I have half-a-mind to protest to whoever you protest this sort of thing to."

"It probably wouldn't do any good," I said with resignation.

"No, I guess that's just the way these things are. But I like Modern Lit better, don't you?" she asked intimately.

"Yea, it seems to be more relevant," I said, and then became angry because I had said such a thing. Every young liberal in the

land was using that word 'relevant'.

"It's sort of rough sometimes, but I don't really mind that," she offered as if we had just opened our first bottle of champagne.

"No, it's not too bad."

"You ever read *Desire Under the Elms*?" she lowered her eyelids.

"I can't remember. Who wrote it?"

"Eugene somebody."

"Eu-gene," I said thoughtfully, and then almost burst into song. "That's it. That's who wrote my play. Eugene Ionesco. *Eugene Ionesco*," I laughed. "What did you say? *Eugene somebody*?" I laughed again, very loudly.

I loved that girl; she had helped me to remember. It's really a great feeling to be able to say off-handedly, "Oh, *The Chairs?* Eugene Ionesco wrote that," and then go on talking in even tones.

I loved that girl. I *did* know a lot about him, and other existentialists besides, but I felt secure and certain the rest of the day. I almost got that crazy Shakespeare teacher out of my mind.



CYCLE: FOUR HAIKU

Pointed buds on lithe
new limbs, jarred awake by spring's
mad, outrageous whims

Thick heavy leaves tilt
in summer's breath and do not
hear it whisper death

The half-clothed tree bends
to see her dear, severed leaves
caught in autumn winds

By magic, frozen
mirrors hold inverted trees
without motion, cold

—Audrey Morrison

AHAB

Buzzards Bay's salt maw still plucks the town's bowels
blue of breath, raw to paunch a lean Atlantic;
the vitals Promethean—pulsing
pizzicato when the brined jaws thrum
them taut: New Bedford's bones
picked clean of clippers and the rumsoak
whalers' guffaw and randy gab.

For it is nineteen hundred and seventy. The blabber
of tourists stuffs Woods Hole when once only
cormorants hung out for cod
and bluefish. And where the sea's
breath embraced the Pequod's shrouds
and drove that deathship East
of Eden into hell, now chartered
yawls towards Nantucket
slide on the bilge of a tanker's slick;

their helmsmen are bankers—sea-legged in
Boston between a Popular Boating subscription's
covers. Sundays with their sailor
suits they don an attitude
toward lubbers
The bay is baited with the whalers'
folly. The weekend sailors
bite vacuously at the rich, salt air.
The sea has swilled their conscience clean.

The years nose forward, pincerd
for the kill. We are undone in our voyaging
for nothing by the nothing that is.
It is hell's season—
thick with lobster pots, plumped red and snapping;
red—the blue that lapped up
lives guts its spoil in tidal
pools and scrapes it smooth.
And when a bone-pegged shank
would plug the white whale's spout
A blue plume sprouts
and splays our breath like scales of fishes.

—Robert Pollock

STAND-STILL TIME

—Robert Sanders

This was supposed to be the easiest of all times together. Lying in bed trying to stay absorbed in the calm of the moment, words were supposed to be meaningless and unnecessary; one did not have to talk now. John tried hard to make the most of the stand-still time. He lightly closed his eyes and his face tightened into a very satisfied expression. Slowly he shifted to his side and stroked Lynda's nude body. With his hand he traced a wide arc from the base of her spine, around the soft flesh of her buttocks, down the inside of her firm, well-developed legs, and stopped at the sensitive area back of her knees. He made light, gentle circles around the tender area and wondered if it could still arouse her. Then he stopped circling and felt the soft, pulpy, pale blue vein that interrupted the otherwise baby-smooth skin. He slowly poked at the flimsy vein, then quickly dragged a single finger up her leg and along her spine to the middle of her back. He lifted his hand, open-palmed, hesitated, then patted her twice and left his arm draped limply across her.

He lay watching her, thinking that he would know her . . . would know her by the slightest touch of any part of her body—even if he were blind. He thought he could still catch the faintest lingering of Lynda's perfume, so light that when he tried to smell it he couldn't. He touched his lips to the curve of her neck, half to kiss her, half to be sure that he hadn't imagined the sweet perfume facade. Her skin was still moist with perspiration; when the slight saltiness registered, his eyes opened in a sort of surprise as they might had he been startled by an unexpected sound. John had almost returned to normal breathing; he closed his eyes again and relaxed to dreamily keep the world turned off.

Lynda, seemingly satisfied, had been lying quite still. She moved now for the first time, rolled her hips slightly to one side and curled her legs closer to her body. She mumbled something incoherent and John made only an equally meaningless sound in return. She moved again, this time to brush away part of her hair which had fallen into her face and was irritating her. Her arm fell to rest almost where it had started and stillness moved back as unnoticed as water freezing to ice.

John and Lynda, they used to be so proud to be recognized as a "couple" back at Western City High School. But that was seven

years ago, and seven years is such a long time. They dated a few times, usually to dances in the school gymnasium or to sit in the leather-seated booths at "Bell's," the traditional hang-out for W.C.H.S. kids.

They would sit in the booths and talk about the "important" things: the football game with Fort Taylor, Western City's biggest rival; who was going together or "just dating" at school; and occasionally they might talk about how many children they'd each like to have someday. But they both knew that "some day" was a long time off, so they really couldn't be too serious about that.

Then there was the day, in front of Lynda's locker after study hall, John asked her to wear his football sweater and that was that. She looked lost in it, but everyone knew they were "steadies" and that was the way things were supposed to be.

A year and a half passed; there was the prom, the Senior Dance, then graduation. The summer after graduation, John and Lynda saw each other nearly every day. John had a summer job at the bottling plant in Chesterville, but he usually got home in time to pick Lynda up and get to the swimming pool for a few hours before it got too dark. Sometimes, on extremely hot days, Lynda would go to the pool early and wait for John to meet her there. But, although he never objected to her going alone, she usually waited at home for him—to let him know that she wasn't interested in any of the other guys at the Swim Club. After the pool closed, they usually found the gang down at Bell's and listened to romantic records on the jukebox.

It was a good summer for John and Lyn. They planned all summer to slip away to one of the little rural counties in the state where some of the kids from school said you could get married without your father's having to sign a paper or anything, but they never did.

Sometimes they thought the summer had passed too quickly; sometimes they thought it had crawled slower than a slug on August concrete. But anyway, it was over. The leaves were beginning to turn; the wind was blowing up little tornadoes of dust; the air had begun to smell like football season to John and like "party weather" to Lynda.

Lynda started classes at the Western City Extension of the state university before John left for his freshman year of college. He enrolled at Wayne University, a typically conservative school, complete with ivy covered buildings, penny loafers, and button-down shirts. Wayne, or WU, as the sweat shirts read, had been located in the small town of Crampton for over a hundred and thirty years.

The mainspring of time now had been completely unwound. Hours might have passed or perhaps only seconds. John realized, almost with a start, that there were voices of children playing just outside the open bedroom windows. The light pouring in seemed suddenly bright; he had somehow expected the total darkness that would have been more appropriate at such an intimate moment.

John knew that the beautiful escape was nearly over and that the real world was swiftly returning. Lynda moved again and John wondered if she too was regaining awareness.

John lay looking up at the shaft of light cutting through the open window, watching the dust threads suspended in the still air or drifting lazily through the bright beam. Cautiously, he tested the silence, "Lynda, you awake?"

Without the slightest stirring, Lynda's voice came back "Of course I'm awake; I'm just never going to open my eyes again. I feel great!"

"Man, I'm beat," he said as he pulled her closer to him. "Now I know why the guy's supposed to go to sleep right away."

Lynda laughed, rolled over onto John, and began trying to push him out of bed. John accepted the challenge and the tumbling, laughing foray which knocked the alarm clock off the night table, saw a poorly aimed pillow land on top of the small steel bookshelf by the hall door, and left the mattress half off the bed, was climaxed by John's submission and both of them sprawled laughing and out of breath on the floor.

"Damn, Lyn... what was that all about?" He playfully nipped the tender swell of her breast pressed out by the floor. She quickly rolled over as though seriously angered and said, "You're not going to sleep and leave me staring at the walls! I only get up here to see you four or five times a year, so while I'm here I don't want to waste a second or miss a thing!" She poked him in the side with her elbow and feigned a W. C. Fields' accent: "My little chick-a-dee."

"You silly, s...!"

They were both still out of breath; with one arm under her head and the other under her legs, back of her knees: John lay his head on Lynda's still bare stomach and they both rested. The linoleum floor was cool and felt good against their hot bodies. They remained quite still; the only sound at all was the slowly subsiding cadence of their heavy breathing.

John was somehow restless and uneasy. At the same time he felt guilty for thinking that he'd rather be somewhere else—maybe out walking alone, or talking to some of his co-workers from the Student Government office. He was frustrated—thinking that he **should** be content where he was, but nonetheless wanting to be out by himself. His legs felt tight and full of energy. He would liked to have gone outside and just started running, not to any place in particular, but just running and running... but he knew Lynda wouldn't understand, so he tried to look as happy as possible where he was.

He lay listening to her heavy heartbeat, looking at the cerise curve of her cheek visible over the pyramid-shapes of her breasts, wondering what was wrong with himself. Without moving, he said, "Lyn... there's some things we ought to talk about..." The words

sounded awkward and strange as though they had no place in the still air.

She raised to one side and with her hand under his chin, pulled him up a bit to look directly face to face. His gaze fixed onto her deep, child-like blue eyes. She broke the momentary silence first, "Well . . . what's so important, Johnnie?" She still had the jester's tone in her voice as though she was amused by his sudden seriousness.

He said nothing at first, then swallowed—his adam's apple moved visibly up, then down like a poorly lubricated trumpet valve, "Just when in the hell are you going to give in and marry me?"

She broke into a smile, slapped him good-naturedly, and pulled away. "When am I going to give in! What a joke that is! I've done everything but pay you off to get you married quicker."

"Quicker?" He was trying to sound hurt. "Damn, now you don't even know my name!" He hated himself at times like these.

"Just what is that supposed to mean, Johnnie?" she said with mock indignation as she threw her head back and imagined sparks in her eyes.

He turned away from her and spoke to the floor, "Don't call me that! You sound like some mother talking to a kid when you call me that. What are we going to do for the next few hours before you have to start for home?" He had come close to losing his temper.

Lynda had stood up and was retrieving her clothes from the little careless piles they'd been dropped in on the floor. "Why don't we go up to campus so I can meet some of those people you're always talking about, John?"

He recoiled inwardly, as though she had just asked to go along when he went out drinking "with the guys." She wouldn't fit, he was sure. It wasn't as though he didn't want to be seen with her, of course; she was attractive enough to be proud of in any crowd. It was just that she might not like the people he associated with on the Wayne Campus. She, after all, was used to the people at the smaller extension school. At the extension there was no talk of rioting, or anarchy, or "student power." No one she knew, he thought, talked about drugs or Civil Rights, and he could *never* imagine her discussing things like Thomistic Philosophy, the Transcendental influence on Existentialism, or world power struggles. She just wouldn't enjoy herself, he thought. He knew he had probably convinced her that his school friends were almost science fiction superheroes. If she didn't like them or wasn't impressed with them, he'd be in a bad position.

Besides, it could turn out the other way: she might be too impressed with them and sit mooning in wide-eyed astonishment at every profound word. That wouldn't go over too well with the campus group—they'd think her shallow. Either way, with so little time she couldn't understand them and they couldn't understand or ap-

preciate her. He had said nothing nor made any gesture to affirm that he'd even heard her question while he pondered a reply. He was still lying on the floor staring thoughtfully at the ceiling when he said, "Naw, Lyn." He paused to moisten his lips with a slop wipe of his tongue, "I doubt if we could find too many of them on Sunday afternoon, anyway. Why don't we drive out to the country instead? Maybe we can get out someplace and take a walk."

"I'm easy to please," she said with no argument.

That was part of the trouble, she really was. He wondered if she was ever unsure or uneasy about him as he was about her. What if she were being "easy to please" to avoid a scene. She couldn't be, though. He had always been careful to say and do whatever would please her, of that he was sure. He was afraid, for some reason, of her finding out that something was bothering him. He sensed, though, that if he could just *talk* to her, *really* talk to her, he could resolve the problem without her ever suspecting that anything was wrong.

John slowly sat up, crossed his legs yoga-style with his elbows on his knees, and rested his forehead on his tightly clenched fists.

He wasn't sure why he was afraid for her to find out; after all, he had been trying to tell her himself. For that matter, he wasn't even sure what it was that he felt such an urgent need to talk to her about. Perhaps he was afraid of losing her, but it wasn't that—he didn't even think he could lose her if he wanted to. He was afraid of hurting her, sure, but it wasn't really that, either. He thought that if he just knew *what* to say . . .

He had gotten up and was dressing. He was fastening his belt and checking the mirror to be sure everything was right, still trying to figure out how to talk — really talk to her.

"Hey, Lyn, remember the first time I wore that beat-up leather jacket I use to have down to your house and your mother knocked me about it? She said it made me look like a punk! We hadn't been goin' together too long then . . ." He spoke without turning around. He leaned against the dresser and stared thoughtfully into the mirror, searching, but not looking for anything. He toyed with a bottle of aftershave on the dresser, sliding it around the smooth veneer top in broad circles, waiting for some reply.

"What did you say? Wait a minute, I want to brush my teeth." She went to the bathroom and started the water running nearly full-force.

John was left still fumbling with the aftershave bottle, slowly shaking his head and trying to think of another way to lead into a serious conversation.

Above the water, he heard Lynda shout, "Now, what's that you said before?"

He walked just inside the bathroom door and half shouted back, "I *said*, remember how mad your old lady got that time I wore my leather jacket down to your house!? She called me a punk and we

had a big argument about it!"

Her brushing sounded like someone scrubbing a basement floor with a wet broom. She didn't stop brushing, but garbled through the toothpaste, "Yea, we *were* pretty childish . . . and besides, my mother never said anything, really."

"Listen," he kicked the doorsill—much less hard than he would have liked to, "she did, too! And what's so childish about it anyway? We hardly ever talk anymore!"

She whisked the toothbrush under the faucet, tossed it onto the shelf above the commode, and smiled into the mirror above the sink. Suddenly, she turned around, her mouth open in shock as though someone had just thrown cold water on her. "Talk!" she shouted, "What's *talk* got to do with anything!"

John thought that, at the moment, the toothpaste still running down her chin made her look like a rabid dog. He'd never seen a rabid dog, really, but the thought still went through his mind.

Linda rinsed her mouth, wiped it with a towel, and walked past him into the living room. She found her purse and started brushing on fresh make-up.

"What, you really want to talk like we used to?" she said, "Okay. I really think Fabian's keen. Oh, did you hear the news? Freddy Fastback just got a new chrome sparkplug for his rod." She stared intently into the mirror of her compact and started swiping on her make-up with unnaturally harsh strokes. She continued, "It's really cool. He put primer spots all over it and has S.T.P. stickers in the windows."

John was trying hard to control his temper, "Dammit, don't make fun of me!"

She went back into the bedroom and sat on the side of the bed. John was still in the bathroom. He picked up a bottle of rubbing alcohol and stared at the warning on the label:

IF TAKEN INTERNALLY, SERIOUS
GASTRIC DISTURBANCES WILL RESULT

Right, he thought, I know all about "gastric disturbances!" He tightened his grip on the bottle, then squeezed it violently—almost hoping that it would break in his hand.

"Listen, Hon'," Lynda called, "It's already after four and I have to leave at six-thirty. Why don't we just forget the ride and stay here!"

He banged the bottle back down on the sink and spoke, it seemed like, to the wall: "Yea, sure. What do you want to do?" The strained, but controlled tone of his voice made his words hang in the air momentarily—like the visible waves of vapor from a gasoline pump on an exceptionally hot day.

"I'll bet I can get undressed and be in bed before you!" Lynda cried from the bedroom.

"Lynn . . ." He dropped his chin to his chest and stared at the water spots on the tile floor.

Her voice came from the bedroom again, "What's the matter tiger, can't ya take it? Come on Big Time!"

John scrambled. Before he had even cleared the bathroom floor he had his trousers off and was tearing at his shirt. Suddenly it didn't matter who the winner was. John sighed and shivered, his breath quickening. He thought, next time...next time we'll talk. Then all the clocks stopped again, all the world stood still, and beautifully lost...time didn't matter...nor talk...nor even reality.



DISSECTION

Like dissection
love is a murder
with words
with cliches as the scapel.
the concealed hate
is the poison
the fear
is the preservative
You come to me white-robed and masked

—Gerald Herrin

WINDMILL QUIET

Windmill quiet sunrise
Liquid stained glass windows
baptized in mist

Windmill turning shadowless
Scintillating brightness
vibration of life

Windmill quiet dusk
Marble pastel
locked in memory.

—Roger Click

A PATCH OF GREEN

winding down the side
of clefted country hills
hot with dusted smoke of summer winds,
beneath the muted stare
of mountains hunched and dark,
passing through the sentineled lane
 between the firs and furred
 beneath the sweeping throne room
where lord
and master
 is the turkey buzzard gaze of gardens as they were.
on elbows and chin
resting close
to the moss-slick shallow stream,
 watching
creepy-crawly spiders
busy-body ants
the ballet
 of water slipping over moss-stained rocks,
 the confused rank and file of minnows,
 and metamorphic salamanders
 competing
with brown-shirted crayfish
(Kentucky Lobster Nuremburg).
the patient socratic dialogue,
with nervous water bugs
and sagely nodding flowers,
 continues,
unheeding carbureted men;
reflecting in the stream
and destroying these with pebbles,
big enough for david
and sharp enough for abraham,
 back and back and back
to lilit.

—Toby Walton

BOWLING ALLEY

—Don Tegt

I kicked the R. C. can off the blacktop road. The can, being half empty, hurt my toe despite my Converse cutoffs but at the time if someone had asked I would not have admitted to the hurting. I was hard, tough, and thirteen years old. I was at the height of my glory and knew a great deal more than all the other kids. For had I not played quarterback for the freshman team, although I was only in the eighth grade? Had I not played shortstop during the spring, and guard during the basketball season, not to even consider straight A's in all my subjects?

Soon the sun would be gone for the day and I hastened my pace so that I would not be late at the bowling alley. The aroma of sweet, fresh cut grass in the evening air brought nostalgic memories of how long ago I had played wearing only B.V.D.'s in my fenced in yard. But that had been when I was a child and now I had put childish ways behind me. Everywhere I looked it seemed there were flowers blooming and the music that spring always brings was constantly in the back of my mind. It had been a good school year for me and the coming summer promised even more. I was very much at peace with the world.

The sky was a dark, ink blue now, and I pressed even harder for I knew my friends would all be awaiting my arrival. I broke into a run, dodging and darting in between my imaginary would-be tacklers, running for the winning touchdown and as always, they did not touch me. I slowed, catching my breath as I would do in a huddle, thinking of the fun that awaited me. Not mother's type of fun, but my kind of fun. She did not like me going to the alley to associate with the local boys and girls. What did she know about it? She was only a woman. Lacking a dad I figured I was old enough to run with whom I pleased.

The stars began to come out and I began to make out the lights of the bowling alley ahead of me. My excitement grew and I stopped to gasp air and gaze at the place where so many times I had joked and laughed. By this time my enthusiasm was at such a magnificent height that it was uncontrollable and I could not remove my eyes from the looming edifice that seemed to engulf me. It was not a proud structure and I guessed I came to this assump-

tion because the Alley was not tall, but short and very long. It reminded me of a dumpy little girl I had known in the second grade.

Snapping out of my trance I focused my attention to the entrance. Here was the crowd of kids I knew would be there. My friends that liked and looked up to me. I paused once more to take in the full meaning of the moment, then trotted on down to where the gang was. In just a few more seconds I would be having a good time, enjoying what I had been looking forward to all day. I thought to myself how wonderful it is to be so in love with life and to be as carefree as a happy tramp. I began to hear the chatter and laughter of voices and was dismayed at the possibility of having missed a good joke.

The first face I recognized was Jim's. Jim was a good sized guy and had started on the football team with me. He was, however, a follower and not a leader and somehow I had always sensed he had had a resentment towards me and I could never understand why. I nodded to speak and got no nod in return. I looked him straight in the eyes and received a cold stare in return. It had suddenly grown very quiet and I immediately looked around at everyone. There was Johnny, Bob, Pat, Donna, and all my other friends just standing and staring at me. I was bewildered. What had I done to deserve this treatment.

Presently my eyes rested on a stranger in the bunch. He had a partial beard and curly hair that needed cutting last January. He was wearing a dirty tee shirt, dirty dungarees, and big black pointed toed boots with a silver buckle on each side.

"Your name Newt?" He spat it out like it was a dirty word.

"Yeah," I replied, not really knowing what was going on.

"I'm gonna stomp your ass, boy."

"Why?"

"Cause I don't like your looks and I say you're chicken."

My face shot towards the faces of the others and I saw mass hate for me, and my good friends of a moment ago were all enjoying themselves at my expense. What's happening? Is this a nightmare. I thought to myself. It was like a pack of starved wolves had found a lonely deer and they were ready to spring for the kill.

"Go ahead, Bill, beat him up," was a reply I heard from one of the girls that was supposed to have been a bosom buddy.

"What's going on here," I yelled. "I haven't done anything to you." My voice was getting shaky and a tightness in my throat made it hard for me to talk. The roughneck took a couple of steps toward me. I felt like a wild animal caught in a hunter's snare. I backed up not really knowing what to do or say.

"I don't want any trouble from you." I managed to choke the words out somehow. With the crowd at his back and the uneasiness in my voice he seemed to gain boldness.

"Well, you're going to get it whether you like it or not." Rushing

forward he threw the first punch and caught me directly behind the ear. I was in a daze. I backed up only to catch a fist squarely on my nose. The blood gushed out and tasted thick and warm, fear struck me completely. I lunged at him with my hands low like I was going to tackle him, but instead of getting a sure hold all I got was that huge black pointed boot in my stomach. My guts felt as if they were on fire. I went face down on the pavement only to feel the weight of his body on my back, the blows coming rapidly one after another. I could hear some of the kids yelling hit him, hit him, hit him.

With all of my strength I turned over violently. Not expecting any resistance he was thrown off of me. I stumbled to my feet, one eye was almost completely swollen and the other one was so clogged with blood that it seemed as if I was in a cave. My whole body seemed on fire.

"What's wrong, big man," yelled Jim. Their laughter rang in my ears and brain until I thought my head was going to explode. I could barely see my ex-girl friend grinning like she was at a three ring circus watching the main attraction. I kept thinking I don't understand, I don't understand, I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

"What's going on here?" came a voice from the entrance way. During the excitement none of the kids had noticed Mr. Austin, the alley manager, come out of the big glass doors. Sizing up in one glance what was going on, his temper flared. "Get out of this parking lot, this isn't the back alley of some pool hall, this is a clean public place." The boy that had seemed so tough to me had long since vanished from Mr. Austin's sight. The crowd silently broke up, some going inside, others to cars in the parking lot. I imagined they would all be discussing the little funtime they had all encountered this evening. All that was left was me standing there by myself staring blankly at the ground.

"You alright son?" Mr. Austin said as he came walking towards me. I heard the words but my mind failed to comprehend their meaning. "Son, you O.K.?" again the sound reached my ears.

"Yeah, I'm fine." The words sounded as if they had come from a hair lip, my mouth being fat and torn in spots.

"Looks like you've took a real beating. Just what in the hell happened? Was there more than one of them?"

Yes, that was it. There had been more than one of them. After all, it had been me against the whole gang. There hadn't been the least chance of me winning out over those overwhelming odds. No one could have done that. With these thoughts whirling in my head I turned and began running. How long I ran I do not know and it was not until I blindly hit a clothes line that I fell to the ground.

I lay there for a long time. Not crying but wanting to. My stomach was torn so that I felt I would vomit any second. My mouth was so dry that I could not swallow. I made one effort to get up,

but by now the stiffness had set in and I only got up on one knee. Falling back down I found myself mumbling, "This can't be happening to me, not me. I'm still number one aren't I, I'm still top dog, well aren't I? Then the tears came freely.



BLACK GIRL

Black girl
got the shaft
"community colleges
provide equal opportunities"
unequally

How do you fail
the same three subjects
twice
when you got passing grades?

Someone suggested it could have
it could have been a
computer error
repeating itself—
f-f-f ***!

Funny
she was studying
Data Processing

Her sister sent her
bus-fare to New York

"now, Mama, it will just be a visit . . . "

Why come back
to process white man's
data.

Good god.

Do you think people like to be
r-r-repeated errors?

—Becky Seldon

THE CONCERT

—Rosemary Gray

We heard the music long before we were anywhere near the English Garden. It was an insistent throbbing which wormed sinuously into our unconscious hearing until it startled our awareness.

“Where should this music be? In th’ air of th’ earth?” I quoted.

Lydia smiled. “It shouldn’t be hard to find the concert.”

But we didn’t need to try. The music was magic, drawing us to the edge of some fairy tale wood and along a path soft and thick with dust. Inside the wood the path was the only light, glowing gray like a twilight sky. People appeared for a second out of darkness as they passed us and people walking ahead of us went two-dimensional—then disappeared. And all the while in the fuzzy blackness there was only the music, drawing us to it as irresistibly as Gollum was drawn to the Ring of Power.

The woods opened suddenly into gray light and across the clearing we could see the source—a witches’ Sabbath, priests officiating at pagan rites. Robed figures moved in a nucleus of music and colored light.

We joined the worshippers sitting on the dewy grass. So close to the source, we reflected the Christmas tree glow of the lights, red, blue, yellow, green; lights which stained the hands, hair, and robes of the musicians.

The Underground was playing the music of the Doors. The music was dangerous at any range, but so close . . . it took my heart-beat and left only its rhythm. The music was like flood water or fire or something in which one could lose being.

The music crashed over us like a wave and we sat on the floor of a transparent sea while the organ notes rolled and rippled invisibly above us. The singer lit sticks of incense and long fingery tendrils of fragrance drifted in and out of the crowd. It was warm sandalwood that came creeping through the reek of cigarette smoke and beer.

An emaciated Christ with guitar stood saffron-robed with his disciples ranged behind him. The singer moved in frenzied dance. I glanced at Lydia; she, too, was caught. She swayed, eyes closed, half hypnotized.

The melodies intertwined, complex as Bach’s tapestried works but they seemed to be the view of the wrong side of the tapestry.

As we left the concert, the singer began to play a flute—clear, solitary, rain-pure notes. And the not so solemn mass continued, harlequin-colored, in the clearing. Lydia and I turned at the edge of the wood to look back. No one spoke. I felt an emptiness which the thought of home could not help. The music clutched at us like a hand, unwilling to let us go.

Emptiness lined deserted streets to see us pass and darkness stared from high windows at our parade. The meaning of the concert was hidden in a sigh. I thought I could still see the man in the brocade robe and could still hear him playing in imitation of Pan, piping some nameless tune which followed us down many streets.



ICARUS DESCENDING

And rising of his own accord,
And of waxen plumage rising,
Crete below become but a word
Dear once, a place once been, some thing

Unreal, as shadow reminds one
Of daylight and not of daylight's
Sphere: a remainder of the sun
And vision common to those heights;

And what plowman or fisherman
At his lines, being caught up with
His labor, should chance towards the sun
A glance and, glancing, witness myth?

What man would have, having only
Labor darkness reckons and brings
To an end, common as the sea,
As the gulls occasionally
Descending there, would have as things
His own suns, and notions of wings?

—Robert Pollock

APPALACHIAN BURIAL REQUIEM

*He setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection:
The stones of darkness, and the shadow of death. Job 28: 3.*

I

A sunken element of Jehoshaphat;—
The judgment breaking black into the fields broke
All breath below, the miners' backs by the black-
Out weighted when heaven of a sudden spoke
Through the void in its falling to the coalsack
Of Apollyon's arms. The spoils of the land's fat
Belch and foam to light at the mouth of the pits;
Grave portent, foul borne of the hole that emits
But the violent ghosts of light from the crawl
Of its corruption: the shafts choked and raw
With ash. Theirs was half the luck of Jonas: spat
Out not of the deeps, the hollows of the Lord's
Leviathan, sea-legged upon the strand, but
As the shapeless reminders of Will the gut
Of decay rotted to itself. It affords
Them no quarter of repentance, for the beast
Without favor ever to its black lung hoards
The breath Appalachia offers in the East.

II

Into the Stygian sore and vengeance of the great
God, lower than the shuttles go and the heaving to
Of the nightmare timbers, after the blasphemous grate,
The thorned renunciation of the picks silenced through
The sanctum, they are delivered still clutching the blue-
Beard of the darkness; the chthonian wastes around them,
The eruptive retch of the pits their only anthem.
Had exile been a penitent matter, frightened out
Of faith towards Tarshish, windheeled into spite away with
The lumbering wrath hot after to be cast gospel
Back in the sickness of the whale, then theirs to the spout
And salty lot would have hared. But the way of a myth
Is one lost to them whose lives are swallowed down to Hell;
Boiling in the entrails of the eastern mountains. Death
Below—*momento mori*: the ash that once was breath.

III

For their men and the loss of men the widows mourn:
In counties wooing the western virgin, though
The blood is faithless and darkening in her thighs,
Recoiling when the miners enter on a thorn
Of light into her side. To an Orphean end
The miners enter, for mines in ransomed truth lend
No life back to light; in truth, a crone plucking eyes
For her ravished eye. The widows of the mines go
By the cenotaph of Appalachia where
No stones cross but below to mock the upper air.
Is it poverty of heart's light hurts men into
Darkness and their women into black, or is faith
Such as makes them blind as moles to a rising wrath?
The loss is bottomless when to death and her stone's
Web that blackest of widows takes as her own few
But the best, the blessed of us; taunting from their bones
All breath to devour. These deaths are token of our
Indifference to their lives. Let the world's back weight
Humbled with their light until those dead beyond fate
Rise and dead lie the beast whose belly marked their hour.

IV

In the bile of ascension, towards heaven the Lord
Shall cause them to be cast. They shall be summoned as
Out of the innards of a fish grown ill of them,
Headlong for land and riddance in the grace of phlegm.
Load upon load, Lazarus risen at the word,
That faith shall accompany the mountains that once
In shadows held them, they shall spume in the grievance
Of the pits up, mining all the luck of Jonas.

—Robert Pollock

SHE SAID SHE UNDERSTOOD

—Joe Edwards

The house was run-down, just as my Sigma Pi brothers had said. The wooden shack was small, very small, and its dirty shade of green needed painting badly.

I got out of my Volkswagon, purchased less than a month ago, and almost simultaneously the heavens brightened and what had been a light mist vanished. I noticed the left side of the white car was caked with mud, erasing a fifty-cent Roto-Matic car wash from the night before.

A sign with the word "CONDEMNED" in bold capital letters stood haltingly in the grassless front yard. As I walked toward the house, Rainbow bread wrappers and a Country Club butter box blew across the muddy yard and piled against a rickety wooden fence.

I stepped onto the dusty front porch, knocked the mud off my shoes, took a breath, and tapped lightly on the door. Five seconds later, she appeared.

"Hello, Mrs. Cavindish," I said and forced a smile. "Kind of a bad day to be repairing a house."

"H'lo," she replied rather nervously as she let me in the door. "God must of made it rain for the farmers," she continued, apparently forgetting that most of the crops had been ruined by recent downpours. "But like I always say, the Lord will provide, just like you're gonna fix my place up."

She was an extremely large, steam-roller type woman, pounding the scales at about 240 pounds which were layered solidly over her 5-9 frame. Her face was covered with wrinkled skin which formed patterns almost like a waffle iron. Her cheeks were crater-like, which seemed to echo her few weak words. Her entire face was a coffin, draped in the lifeless pallor of her poverty.

She occasionally smiled weakly and carried a soiled handkerchief in her large right hand. I noticed her nervously rub her nose with her left hand and flip her ear lobe with her forefinger. She also often gnawed on her lower lip with her yellowed upper teeth.

I couldn't help from noticing the interior of her house as she rattled on unstoppably and rather boringly about the "unfriendly" building inspector named Foster, Pleasant Manor Rest Home where her sister-in-law Helen had spent her last days afflicted with "that ter'ble cancer," and about her nine cats, all of which were crowded

in the corner of the room.

The room, only slightly larger than a bedroom at the Pi house, included a kitchen sink and a sofa with ripped gray covering which she apparently used for a bed.

Three antique glasses had been placed on the floor of the room and were nearly filled with water which had leaked through the roof. The glasses caught my collector's eyes and I priced each of them at about \$10.

"How old are those glasses?" I asked when she paused after a remark about her youngest cat.

"Can't really say," she said as she hobbled to the nearest glass and bent over ungracefully and picked it up, spilling some of the water in it. "They were my mother's." Must be close to 100 years old, I thought, and priced them again, this time at \$15 each.

I looked around the room again, at the coal on two sheets of old newspaper and with cat droppings throughout. There was one drab-looking gray chair, a small table, a refrigerator which she called the "ice box," and a tiny stove with the name Sunray nearly wore off. There was no television, floor rug, or drapes for the unwashed window.

She was 67 years old, I heard her remark, but she looked more like 80. Her husband, Alfred, had been killed 30 years ago in a construction cave-in, the newspaper had said.

Well, I said, suppose we take a look at your backyard. Maybe I shouldn't try to fix your roof since it is wet out and the roof most likely is very slippery.

"Okay," she said, and slipped on a dusty old pair of houseslip-pers and led me out the front door, the only door to the house.

We went around the left side of the house, following a path which the old woman had made to her outhouse in the backyard. The ground was very soft, like foam rubber, and the mud oozed to the top of my penny-loafers and nearly slopped inside them.

"You're so nice to help me," she said, and added that she was sure the work I had volunteered my fraternity to do for her would meet the standards of "unfriendly Mr. Foster."

I said nothing, noticing that there was more work to be done than I had imagined, and I wasn't sure my fraternity had the money, time, or ability to make the repairs.

As we approached the backyard, the woman's neighbor came out of the rear of his house, the door slamming behind him as he stumbled down four rickety steps. He ignored the woman's presence but motioned for me to go to his yard.

"Don't pay no 'tension to him," the woman said.

The man came up to me and his body odor made we walk a little faster to avoid him as much as possible. He mumbled something about could I help him fix his place up.

I said that I was sorry but it looked like I would be busy here for several Saturdays.

The woman and I got to the middle of her backyard and stopped. She was out of breath.

I couldn't imagine how anyone's yard could get in such poor shape. There was no grass, just mud. Trash was spread over nearly all the yard. A wire fence tottered at the back boundary, serving no purpose. The entire site depressed me.

I looked over the yard for several seconds, examined the ominous sky and also noticed the woman's neighbor sitting inquisitively on his back steps. There was plenty of work to be done, I thought, plenty of Saturday afternoons which could occupy our eager pledges until frigid weather arrived. Next Saturday, though, there was a football game.

"It's been a while since the yard has been cleaned," she said, adding that she couldn't get around as well as she used to because she slipped on the ice last winter and her leg still hurts occasionally when she walks.

I decided that I should clean the trash from her backyard and asked if I could borrow her rake and basket.

She said that she had no place to store them and wouldn't have been able to use them, anyway. But, she said, her neighbor had both.

The wind whipped truculently through the backyard and jumped down my throat. It was cold as a nun's crotch, as they say at the fraternity house.

I asked her the deadline the building inspector had set for repairs on her house. She said that her roof was supposed to be fixed within a month or, Mr. Foster had told her, her house would have to be torn down and the county would have to send her to a rest home.

I told her that it was impossible to begin work on the roof for two weeks due to the current wet weather and previous commitments next Saturday.

"Well," she said, "I do want you to know I'm happy that you can help me."

"We do want to help you," I said. "We'll do our best, even though we may not be very good carpenters and house repairmen."

She asked if I thought we could finish the repairs in a month.

"Well, as far as I know we might have two Saturdays to work, if the weather's okay," I told her, realizing I'd have to check the home football schedule for the rest of the month to see how many free Saturdays were left after next week.

I told her, too, that when we read about her situation in the paper without seeing her house, we didn't realize how much work there was at her place to be done.

I asked her what, besides the roof and the yard, had Mr. Foster said should be repaired, and I took from my shirt pocket a small spiral notebook and began taking notes.

She said that the steps and the other side of the house needed repairing, "but the roof first."

After a few more minutes, clouds rolled overhead, darkening the sky as the wind gusted angrily, hurling trash across the yard.

"Won't you come in again before it rains?" she asked.

I told her that I really should be going because my friends were expecting me back before too long.

For a moment she was quiet, unmoving. Then she said she understood and led me back to the front of the house and thanked me again for the work my fraternity had offered to do.

"I sure would like to take another look at those antique glasses sometime," I told her.

"You and your friends can come anytime, not only Saturdays," she said quietly.

I assured her again that we would try our best to help her any way we could, even if it meant asking other groups to help us.

The old woman smiled, thanked me again, and hobbled up the broken wooden steps.

I scurried to the little car, knocked the mud off my shoes, and got in the car just as the rain pelted down, uneasily starting the engine.



OCTOBER NIGHT

October night
with wind and rain,
the night sorrows
and the rain rings distant lights
with misty haloes,
while the wind wanders
from room to room
like the ghost of some dead spring,
touching things.
Tonight I would ask only
for your silent presence
to shield me from
the loneliness of all things.

—Rosemary Gray

LIFE STUDIES

Lancaster Avenue's resident
spinster still weathers winter in Victorian
splendor. Her hermitage
sprawls in walls and shingled spires
within her snowy woods.
Its heights spear the icy
heavens; prod them up
to keep them off her head.
Her wits are not squandered by dotage.

Behind her barns balloon-
cheeked Negroes spade her cattle's dung
into steaming heaps the smack
of late winter's white blasts
packs;—as a cold smoke,
the blacks' breath imprints
the frozen weather. At
breakfast she telephones
her supper's lobster in from Maine.
Her dogs lay for strangers in the woods.

The University's multiple-
storied Babylon of brick and mortar faces
her front gates; it is
an academic confrontation:—
they would buy her up—fell
her privacy with her trees.
She does not sell
for all her breath's worth.
The administration bides her death
in blueprints. The street
shudders on edge between

In Biological Lab I split
the fetal swine's bloodless flesh from throat
to middle; picked its dead brain,
marked its ducts and tubes
with needles, mauled its organs;
answered all the questions;—
then swilled its entrails
sweet with brown solution

Wednesdays at four I sack
its lifeless pulp in plastic. Wired airtight
in its synthetic womb, it
neither is nor seems to be.
Sprawled on a pinpocked dissection
tray it lies at loose ends—dumb
for shame and science.
Within this formulated building's
bowels I wallow, flanked
by display windows:
a stuffed zoo, poised at nothing.

Nothing's here;—
only winter, doused in a straw sun's
orange slivers. Through
rusty rays a pale snow
settles along the avenue:—
like salt on a bared nerve's quick.

—*Robert Pollock*

NIGHT SONG

I have heard
the chanted refrain,
borne along on the night wind,
exquisite, funereal.
Under a cold and hollow moon
stands the vagabond last of the
pale, dolorous knights,
lamenting not that the shining walls
are insurmountable, but that
they are no more.

—*Audrey Morrison*

THE TRIP

—Thomas Harney

The cold wind beat its way into our pre-dawn formation in front of the rifle range. A mat of grey clouds hung low overhead, and brief periods of rain doused the guys standing in small groups. It was a bitch of a day for infantry training in tactical field problems. The common label for it is FTX. I just wanted to be back in bed.

Stone-faced sergeants with belching voices passed among the guys checking equipment.

“Jump up and down!”

I did.

“Well, you don’t rattle. Tighten your ammo belt a notch.”

It was the first day of November; the day designated for the twenty-two mile FTX. Hell, it was bad enough to march that far in good weather, much less on a day when it would be rainy and cold. Some of the other guys stood around and joked about it.

“Yeah, you get shot about forty-eleven times, but you can always say ‘screw you’ and shoot them back.”

That was Bates, an Industrial Arts major; he was always good for a cornball remark. I thought about that remark. It would be just funny as hell when we marched back in covered with mud, legs and arms aching with blue-black abrasions, feet swollen tight and covered with bleeding blisters that stuck to our socks. I’d always wondered about being in the hospital with a whole company of MP’s.

Al, my best friend, a Law Enforcement major, was quiet. He just leaned against the wall and cat-eyed everyone. I guess the same thoughts ran through his mind. We all just wanted to get the damned thing over with.

At 06:30 we all stood in a crude green file outside the armory to get our weapons. Suddenly all I could hear was the light breathing and the soft shuffle of boots on the tile floor. Then the line began to move and the amber glow of the armory room grew more intense until we were inside.

“Stay in line!”

“Keep your mouth shut.”

“Carry that weapon at port arms, dumb ass!”

I was glad when we got back outside again.

My M-1 was beautiful, heavy and sleek. It states in the ROTCM

145-30 that it can kill someone at 1000 yards. Some s---, I thought; I wondered what the range was with blanks. Unconsciously my fingers memorized every inch of the cold barrel and receiver group.

When we were regrouped the captain ordered us to check our weapons for malfunctions. All around I could hear the slam of metal as tense springs were released, and the sharp snap of firing pins as triggers pulled.

At 07:00 'fall in' sounded. Everyone shuffled their way into squads. I fell into my position and stood at attention, listening to final orders. I tried to get it all straight in my head. Then we began to move out.

Marching down the by-pass we all counted cadence. Every few minutes we would sing one of the marching songs. Cold rain blew in my face and began to soak my clothing, but along the way we passed a group of girls who waved. We all yelled "good morning" in harmony. That made me feel good.

Soon we found ourselves marching off onto a small country road. We counted cadence and sang a song about a tanker's girl friend. The sergeant darted in and out of the files to check the men over.

At 07:45, the captain called a rest. We'd only marched about two or three miles but enough to work up a sweat. We all sat in the ditch, and the water soaked our asses. I sat there smoking a Marlboro and crunched a discarded beer can. Some of the other guys went into a field to take a nervous leak. Others just sat there. Thoughts of the coming day passed before me.

The mission for November 1, 1969: Search out and secure Silver Creek Valley. Previously a position of The Enemy. Now deserted. Reports of Friendlies in the area have come in. When found, take them to your CO. They will probably have Important Information about the mission and know Enemy Strength present.

Search Crow Valley for enemy emplacements and supplies. This is supposedly a friendly area. Recon at 11:45 hours in Crow. Food drop zone will be designated. Regroup and begin return march.

Soon we were on our feet again. We marched down the road in mud and water. My feet began to get hot. My muscles were out of shape and cramped up once in a while. My gloved hands were cold. Blue stain from the gloves made them look corpse-like.

Then we entered the hills. Rock ridges drifted over the road, appearing as huge grey waves. Along their ragged faces hung thick green moss. Vines with brownish-black stems and heavy leaves clung to the rocks and choked the life from all the other greenery. Even the trees were lifeless. Nothing grew on them except for a few weather-beaten leaves. Their bent and broken limbs hovered over our route like an omen.

In the heavy grey mist behind me I could hear low voices and the regular rise and fall of boots. I had a nervous feeling in my

guts, the kind you get when you know something is about to happen.

We finally reached Silver Creek and were issued ammo and assigned positions for the tactical part of the march. In all, I figured we were about six miles east of Richmond. The farms around were ancient looking. Wild bushes and tall grass grew everywhere.

The CO delivered a small speech on Safety Factors and The Enemy we could expect to meet. The NCO's helped some of the guys load up.

"Let's go. Move out."

We began to move ahead cautiously. Staying close to the ditch made me feel more secure. The only sounds were my feet touching the pavement and water gurgling in the ditch. I had walked about four hundred yards when I saw a slight movement. It was about thirty yards away. In a group of cedars.

"Ambush. Hit it," I yelled.

Then all hell broke loose. Fire from the blanks flashed out of barrels. Brass sprayed into the air and rang down over the slope. I rolled over a bank. Sharp rocks hit my skin. Mud washed over me. Before I could reason, my weapon was on my shoulder and a blast roared in my head. The enemy seemed to be all over the place. Fire came from everywhere, front, sides, but I couldn't spot the Aggressors. I inched my way into a clump of bushes to be hidden from view.

It was all over in a couple of minutes. The Aggressors could be heard as they drove off wildly down the road. My right hand had a good scrape which covered most of the back side. I couldn't feel it. Too damned cold. The blood had already clotted.

I looked behind me. There was Al, secondary point man. He cracked a grin and said, "All the way, man. All the way."

As we set out again I thought about what he'd said. It didn't make much sense. Really, it didn't mean a damn thing at all. It was becoming difficult to walk now. The weapon was heavy and my clothes were soaked. God, my feet burned. I came to a concrete bridge, a small one-laner. I called for the engineer squad to check it. The squad was headed by Sgt. Kawaja, a short stocky guy with a low voice.

He eased down under the bridge and mumbled to himself. After a minute he came up.

"It's okay. No charges."

It began pouring rain just as we crossed over. At every step mud clung to my boots and water gushed in around my socks. I thought to myself, "Boy, this is one hellava way to prove yourself Number One." My right hand was stinging now. Sweat had gotten into the cut and a small trickle of blood ran through my fingers.

When we reached the bottom of the valley a break was called. I stepped off the road and slumped down and uncapped my canteen. The warm water flowed over my cracked lips. I felt as if I

could sleep forever. I began seeing visions of myself lying in a clean warm bed and having a date that night. Faces of familiar girls floated through my mind.

"What's your Serial Number, boy?"

It was the CO. His steel cold eyes searched me over. Streaks of muddy sweat ran down his stubbled cheeks. His face was rock ridges, grey and ugly.

"Sir, 5867956, sir." I could barely drag the words out.

"Good. Watch yourself up ahead. We got one more Ambush before chow. Just watch yourself."

"Yes, sir." I felt like telling him to kiss my ass. After all, I'd marched twelve miles, been killed once, and was already exhausted. Now, there was to be another attack before chow.

Once again we headed out. But now my fatigue was turning into a stubborn meanness. Mud stuck to me, bushes slowed my progress, the water and wind were giving me chills. I needed to unload. Destroy something, somebody, anything!

"Watch the rock ledge. They're gonna be up there." It was Al.

My strained eyes scanned the ledge. Towering trees, framed in black, flowed by in a blue haze. The scrubs and tall grass swirled in a brown wave. I couldn't move. I just stood there listening to the charges. I heard the brass fall and saw the smoke rise. Then I realized that by all rights I was supposed to be dead, dead as a nail. I hadn't even seen the guy with the M-16.

I raised my M-1, aimed, and pulled the trigger. Nothing! The thing wouldn't fire. I pulled the receiver. It was jammed.

"Goddamn," I screamed. I threw my weapon down. Blood surged through my head. All I could see was the Aggressor, his ugly face. I began to run at him. He kept firing. He yelled. But hell couldn't stop me. With everything left in me I lunged through the air at him.

"Damn you." My fist hit him in the face. He tried to fend off my blows. I kept hitting. I smashed my fists into his gut. Then there was a sharp blow to my right cheek and blue-red streaks of pain ran through my head.

When I opened my eyes I was still dazed. A warm substance ran through my teeth and over my lips. I gagged. My eyelid was swollen tight and I couldn't see much.

A firm hand squeezed my shoulder. It was Al. "Lost your screwed-up mind or something, man?"

It was 19:00 when we finally reached the drop zone. I sat with a small group of guys. Al, Jim, with Rex and Bill on the sides. My weapon lay in my lap and a C-ration box between my legs. No one spoke, just stared ahead wearily. I fumbled the food into my mouth. Cold chills ran through my body. I ached all over. My head throbbed from the busted eye and my right hand was aflame.

I finished my ration and pulled myself up to the fire where the boxes were being burned. It was a peaceful fire. The flames moved with the breeze in a slow, deliberate manner. They rose and filled my eyes with smoke. I felt something; funny, I didn't know just what.



HARLEY

Pretty eyes
And pretty stare . . .
Too bad
They're hard to catch
While she's
Riding on her Harley.

Soft, moist lips
That give and share . . .
Too bad
They're always missed
While she's
Riding on her Harley.

Tender neck,
So soft and warm . . .
Too bad
It's never kissed
While she's
Riding on her Harley.

Gentle voice —
Sincere and kind . . .
It's barely heard
While she's
Riding on her Harley.

Maturing mind
With more to learn . . .
Too bad
She's wasting time
While she's
Riding on her Harley.

—A. Michael Fey

CHURCHES

Churches,

stone steps worn smooth on the lips
by the kiss of feet,
and the altar track
deep and shining in the finely filtered sunlight;
the vault and arches—the inverted hull of an ark
out of which the creatures fled
long ago;
Vacant-eyed saints remain, holding peace in their hands,
offering it blindly.
No sound disturbs the sleepy saints.
And not even the Wind of Heaven
can stir their stony robes.

—*Rosemary Gray*

SAD AND DUSTY THINGS

I once crossed

a swinging bridge that used to sing,
bent over a creek that ran with spring.

In autumn

now the stream stands still,
the bridge a sad and dusty thing.

In unkind winds

the bridge still swings
over trapped brown pools where dead leaves fade,
to a cadence tired and rusty and old,
not the careless music that spring once made.

I wished again the headlong stream,
again to hear what I once heard sung
when the bridge and I and wonder were young,
so I waited and listened and willed it spring—
but woke to nothing more than

Only

A sad and dusty thing.

—*Audrey Morrison*

FIRST SUMMER OUT

—Betty Jo Brown

I entered the summer on a wave of confidence, security, and ambition. I hadn't really wanted to spend the summer in a factory, it was true, but I realized that it was a thing I must do, not being excessively wealthy to say the least, and I resigned myself to it and decided to make the most of the situation.

I fully expected to be bored to death with the job, but finally I hit upon a plan to make it interesting. It was beautiful. I could use this summer like a research period. The people I would work with would be an entirely new brand from anyone I had ever known. They would be lower class, vulgar people and probably a bit disgusting. But I wanted to write and I knew good stories and fiction could be found everywhere if one just looked. So I sharpened up my observation powers, arranged my mind in pad and pencil order, and generally prepared to observe, study, analyze, and file for future reference these "common" people.

The first night at work I noted with a smug little smile that I had been right. My fellow workers were just as I had assumed they would be. And later I went home and put the first entry in my shiny new notebook which I had bought especially for that purpose.

"June 9th," I wrote, "There were the expected types at the plant. The women—widows and divorcees, looking for another husband, a few young girls, giggly, heavily made-up high school drop-outs, and two or three unhappy but devoted wives, too insecure to sue for a divorce and try life on their own. And the men—young men in their early twenties with strings of broken marriages behind them, middle-aged men whose only consolation in life was the regular drunken parties they attended, and old men, bent, tired, resigned, performing their tasks silently, with unsteady hands, the bleak, vacant expression of wasted years in their eyes."

"The painted tired faces of the women," I continued, "half-heartedly vie for the attentions of the leering, grinning men, who, as often as not, pinch them as they walk by. The gaudy, tight clothing and cheap jewelry of the women label them as distinctly as if it said Swift's mayonnaise. There is no doubt about it. The people here are every bit as crude and distasteful as I had anticipated."

At that I stopped and read over my comments. "Very good," I

thought. "A very good beginning."

And it *was* a fairly good beginning. My project continued for about three or four weeks, was coming along just fine, and then something happened. Somehow I gradually lost interest in it, wrote less and less frequently, and finally stopped altogether. That book had been the one thing I had really hoped to salvage from the summer and it was unreasonable of me to give it up after such a good beginning. The only event that I can think of which might coincide with the loss of interest in my book was my meeting Cindy and Eddie.

It must have been about my third or fourth week on the job when I was sent down to their table and that was where I spent the remainder of the summer. I cannot say that I was not happy there. But for some reason I was always confused. I came to know Cindy and I liked her natural, easy laughter and friendly, outspoken manner. And Eddie intrigued me right from the start. With his masculine good looks he could have easily been king of the plant, but he held himself aloof from candid smiles and flirty eyes. And I felt that he and Cindy were different, better than the other people here, but that they should have been the same. This disturbed me and at last I boiled it down to the fact that they were, or at least appeared to be, satisfied, happy in whatever they happened to be doing, while the others seemed to hate it, but not to have enough strength to get away from it.

Up until I met them I had, for the most part, held myself apart from the other workers, a mere spectator, although I, too, performed the same menial tasks as they. That was the way I wanted it—up until I met Cindy and Eddie.

Cindy and I became friends immediately, talking continuously. And I came to feel that I knew everything about her. I knew about her family, her school, her roommate, her cousins, her horse, and the guys she had dated—and all of it was so exciting that I almost felt it had happened to me, or at least that I had been there. I never doubted a word she said. That may have been the reason she confided in me so much.

One of her stories became my favorite and I questioned her about it over and over. It was about a particularly notorious guy she had dated.

"He was constantly getting in fights and I was scared to death," she told me. "Once when we were on a hayride he knocked a guy into some barbed wire. But that wasn't enough. He became wilder and wilder, cruelly shoving him again and again into the wire, until someone finally pulled him off." She paused. "But that was just the way he was," she stated matter-of-factly. His father was killed by a state trooper when Joe was young and his mother bitterly bought guns for the five boys and told them to be sure no one bullied them. And no one does." Cindy laughed. "More aptly, they bully everyone else now," she said. She went on to describe roadblocks, shootouts,

drunken brawls, and brutal beatings, while I listened and wondered.

"But how do they get away with it? Don't they get put in jail?"

"Oh, sure they do," she said, "but someone always bails them out."

"But who would pay their bail?" I asked. She sounded as if she approved of this, as if it amused her. I liked Cindy and I liked her story, but this was the wrong ending. I didn't want it whereas she seemed to like it very much.

"Oh, my dad does if no one else will," she said nonchalantly. "He likes the boys and feels sorry for them without a father." She laughed again, her most contagious laugh. "It's really funny," she said.

I didn't think it was funny in the least, but it was fascinating, so I said nothing. Instead, I forced a short laugh, too. Cindy was the one friend here at work that I really enjoyed and I wasn't going to cause an argument over this. Besides, I admired her for saying what she thought. There was a certain reckless freedom about Cindy that I knew I could never have. I envied her for it. And somehow I admired her.

And Eddie—Eddie worked at this table too, unloading the hundreds of raw rubber rings into the hot presses to come out finished piston rings, gaskets, and all sorts of parts for airplane motors and defense equipment. Eddie was obviously not one of the "pinchers" like so many of the other men at the plant and for that I was thankful. I was a little weary of slapping grinning faces. But in a way he was worse. He was obviously not even the slightest bit interested in me. He did not even seem to think that I was particularly different from any of the other girls here. He simply said *hello* to me and then went right on with his work, accepting me in the same way he accepted the presses and the rings.

But I knew I was different, and his complete lack of interest provoked me. He was by far the most attractive man I had worked with and he didn't gawk or stare or even raise his eyebrows at me as I had come to expect. He simply rhythmically, loaded and unloaded the presses and the even rippling of the muscles in his back never faltered as he shoved and pulled the heavy molds in and out, in and out. He never seemed to work fast or hard and never rushed me to keep the loaders loaded, and it appeared easy for him to turn out a maximum of finished rings.

When and if Eddie did talk to me or take notice of me in any way whatsoever, he always remained coolly remote, almost aloof. I wondered at this for he was very friendly to Cindy and I wondered if and why he did not like me. I felt that it should not matter to me, but it did. I could not stop it. This bore on my mind more and more and I noticed quite often that Eddie's hand found excuses to rest on Cindy's arm, and many times when they were working at one

end of the table and I at the other, their conversations were obviously private.

I began to try to talk to Eddie, asking him questions about anything and everything I could think of. But still he was distant. After trying everything I knew, and almost giving up in frustration, Eddie finally opened up a little. Sometimes he would seem to forget himself and would give me glimpses into his past by telling me tales about his Army days, or of the time his car broke down and he was without both money and a job. And once when no one was looking, he opened his shirt and showed me a long jagged knife cut that reached from just below his throat, almost to his waist. He had gotten it in a fight the night before, he told me, and I knew, with vague regret, that it was the kind of fight which I would never witness.

Thinking back on it later, I felt disgust that I had been thrilled, not disgusted at that exposure. It had been just another one of Eddie's fleeting confidences, one that made me feel that he, with his slow manner of moving and thinking and talking, had known the whole world, and I nothing, and I felt inexplicably that he could reveal it to me in a few short sentences if he only would. So I kept trying to learn more about him, for the principle of the thing, I told myself. He was certainly different from anyone else I knew. His life was evidently like those of the other people here, a sad plight with no way out, except he seemed to like it that way. I thought of how unbearable it would have been for me to have had to work here if I had not known it would be over in three month's time. I could not understand. Eddie seemed to have chosen this way of life and to be quite happy in it.

One night after the supper break Eddie came in with a coke. He took a long drink, then handed the can to Cindy. She drank, then returned the can. Eddie looked over at me and grinned.

"Do you want a drink?" he asked.

"No thanks," I said. He only asked because I was standing there watching, I was sure. It was like inviting your best friend to a party, then as an afterthought inviting the girl she is talking to at the time the invitation is extended.

Eddie and Cindy exchanged glances and laughed. "I didn't think you would," Eddie said, and laughed again.

"He thinks I'm a snob," I decided. "Yes, I do want a drink," I said. "I changed my mind."

"You sure?" he said. He acted as though he couldn't believe me. "Yes."

"O.K.," he said and handed me the coke with a knowing smile. But he acted as if he didn't believe I would drink from it.

I raised the can to my lips and tilted it. It was not until then that I became aware of the strong alcoholic odor. The memory of my mother refusing an uncle to store his beer in her refrigerator swept over me. I slowly lowered the coke can. It was too late to pretend I had known. Surprise and embarrassment had already regis-

tered on my face.

"That's not coke," I said accusingly, turning to anger as my only defense. Eddie grinned. Why hadn't he told me? And Cindy. Why hadn't she? "They are ridiculing me," I thought. I felt a widening gulf between us and I hated them for causing it.

But then I didn't *want* to blame them. They had just misjudged me, I told myself. They had thought I had known, had thought me less stupid than I really was. And now I was angry with myself. Where had I been all my life anyway? I should have known better than to take everything for face value by now. But I knew the answer to that, too. I had been at home in my gossipy little community, at home with my mother who always said, "What will the neighbors think?" and would allow no beer in her refrigerator. And now I was angry at her. She did this to me. If I had been exposed to these things before I might have been prepared for them. But no, she couldn't run the risk of me making my own choice, my own decision about alcohol or anything else. She had had to make it for me. And now here I was, a nineteen year old independent dependent. I knew it would have pleased her that I had not actually tasted the beverage, but I found myself both glad and sorry.

After that I was always suspicious of Eddie and I read double meanings into everything he said—and the more uneasy I became, the more he enjoyed teasing me. And somehow I was even more fascinated by him than before. The situation was both easier and harder for me now. At times his joking seemed a little less sarcastic than before and at those times I at least felt that I knew why I was being teased. But at other times it seemed that he was deliberately ridiculing me, an act which upset me more than his previous silences.

Cindy still confided in me and I wanted to explain to her about the coke can and why, that it really wasn't my fault, but I never did. I would always remember one or another of her stories like the one of her old boyfriend, and then I couldn't find the words to explain it so she would understand.

One night on our break Cindy drew me aside. "Did you know that Eddie is married?" she whispered.

I couldn't believe it. "Yes," she said, "but they're separated . . . and guess what! He wants me to go out with him . . . do you think I should?"

I didn't answer for a minute while the shock of it was sinking into my mind. These people had a way of surprising me every time. First, the idea of Eddie's being married. Why, the way he acted would have never suggested such a thing. And he never wore a wedding band. Second, that he had asked Cindy out. Now I remembered Eddie's hand on Cindy's arm, their private conversations, and I saw them in a newer, more significant light. And third, that Cindy, my dear and trusted friend, was actually considering the offer seriously. I was confused—shocked, disgusted, thrilled, all at the same time.

Cindy stood waiting for my opinion. Not that it would make that much difference, I thought, but I had to say something. She probably already had her mind made up. I remembered, too, the coke incident, and I was determined not to make a fool of myself before her again. I knew I should tell her *no*, but for some reason I wanted her to go and I could think of no correct and suitable answer.

"If I were you, I think I would go," I said at last, and immediately hated myself for it. I told myself that it was true and I liked the ring of a spoken truth, but I knew this was deviously contrived. It was only a cheap trick to sidestep the real issue.

"I wish I could," Cindy answered, "but someone would be sure to tell my parents."

A day or two later Eddie leaned across the table in his most conspiratorial manner, capturing my interest in a minute.

"You want me to tell you a joke?" he said.

"Is it dirty?"

"No."

"I don't believe you," I said. "No, don't tell me."

His black eyes were probing mine now and my curiosity was thoroughly aroused. I wanted to know what he was thinking. And I must have hesitated for just a fraction of a second too long before I repeated, "No, don't tell me."

I started to turn and walk off, but his hand shot out and the strong fingers caught my wrist in a vise-like grip—but I think I could have wrenched free had it not been for his eyes. They held mine so that I could not move.

"You really want to hear it," he said. "Do you know what a virgin is?"

"Let me go!" I said, "I don't want to hear your joke." And this time I think I meant it.

His eyes, cool and half smiling, still held mine. His lips curled slightly in a contemptuous little smile. "I thought you might have grown up a little by now," he said.

"You *let me go!*" I repeated emphatically.

"It's the ugliest girl in the fourth grade," he said, and released me.

For a minute I hated him. "Why does he have to pick on me?" I thought. "He's really a nice guy, and terribly good-looking. Why can't he treat me respectably?" And I remembered the secret thought of what would I do if Eddie asked me out. What would I say? I thought of the little song we used to sing as children skipping rope—yes—no—maybe so. Would I "skip" that turn or would I "miss?" I wasn't sure. Yes—no—maybe so. And as I thought about all this, I suddenly saw the humor of Eddie's joke. It was, even if exaggerated, like so many other things Eddie said, a true, apt, and witty statement. And then I found myself laughing, almost uncontrollably, and Eddie was laughing too. And as I worked on down the line, Eddie kept looking down and smiling at me in the way two

people smile when they share a very private joke—and I smiled back in quite the same way.

When it was time to go home that morning Eddie came over to me. "I'll see you tonight," he said. For a minute my heart pounded, but then I realized that when you leave work at 7 a.m. and return at 11 p.m., it is all in the same day.

"O.K.," I said and gave him my brightest smile. After that, every morning Eddie would say, "I'll see you tonight."

At the end of the summer I felt good, knowing that I had earned a nice little lump of savings in the bank, feeling that I was ready to go back to school, promising myself to derive the utmost from the coming year.

But on the way home that last morning the air felt unusually chilly and I hugged my sweater tighter around me and unconsciously took out my compact and gazed into the mirror at my own face.

And back in a college class that fall I read over and over one line—"I am a part of that I have met"—and as I walked across the campus, thin-shouldered, long-haired boys in bell bottoms opened doors for strange girls, and my mind's eye raced back, always reflecting on the flowing muscles in Eddie's rhythmically pushing and pulling the heavy molds in and out.



OUT OF THE TEMPLE

Out of the temple
of the god of waste places
it came dancing.
Open-armed and summoning,
it hearkened back to old night
those atavistic ones
who could make their steps match its own.

Strange to hear
what you have named that mad dancer
and unyoung tarantella,
for they are but a moonlight piece
and not real at all.

—Audrey Morrison

TO THE UNAPPRECIATIVE READER

I cannot for my life suppose
Just why my brilliant verse and prose
Has not become the current fad
After all, it's rather sad
To think that in this world of greats
No one knows or appreciates
The obvious fact that I'm a great poet
(If the whole world doesn't, at least I know it).

I've never liked Tennyson, Hopkins or Keats;
I've never read Dante, Milton or Yeats.
But that's no reflection at all on my skill—
I could sit down and dash off epics at will.
But my work is disparaged—it's my merits they're blind to—
I could write anything, if I had a mind to.

—*Audrey Morrison*

THE TANGLE

Oh, the tangle!
The woof and warp are twisted.
There is a knot in the weave
that the fingers of the well-meaning
can not unravel;
that can not, can never
be untangled by gentle intentions.
A sole solution I see.
Atropos, the scissors,
the scissors!

—*Rosemary Gray*

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Betty Jo Brown is a sophomore English major from Brodhead, Kentucky. As a freshman Betty Jo won the Roy B. Clark Award for her short story **Bunny**.

Dan Bullard is the General Editor of the **Aurora** this year. Dan's hometown is Waddy, Kentucky, and he is a senior English major.

Roger Click is a pro-sex senior from Louisville, Kentucky. As an English major, Roger has been busy with personal letter-writing campaigns to local newspapers on behalf of various causes.

Joe Edwards is a senior Journalism major and current editor of the **Eastern Progress**. Joe's hometown is Crawfordsville, Indiana, and he has worked as a newspaper reporter for the **Cincinnati Enquirer** and the **Crawfordsville Journal Review**.

A. Michael Fey is a junior Art major from Ft. Thomas, Kentucky. Mike says, "If it does any good, it works."

Rosemary Gray, a senior majoring in German and English, is from East Point, Kentucky. Rosemary's poems have appeared in previous editions of the **Aurora**.

Thomas Harney is an Electronic Data Processing major. A freshman from Paris, Kentucky, Tom "enjoys life to the fullest," and says, "It's the best thing going."

Gerald Herrin is a junior who is majoring in History. Gerald, who has been published in **Aurora** previously, says, "Perhaps I'm lucky not to have to pay to be published."

Audrey Morrison is a Woodrow Wilson Designate. From Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, Audrey has majored in English and German. Prose and poetry by Audrey have appeared in **Aurora**, 1968 and 1969.

Robert Pollock is a sophomore English major from Richmond, Kentucky. Robert has been a contributor to **Aurora** for the past two years and has won the Grise Award for Poetry and the Roy B. Clark Award for his writings of 1969.

Robert Ruh is a senior English major from Park Hills, Kentucky. Robert's poetry has been published in the **Creative Scribes**. Robert allegedly speaks broken Sanskrit with a Bronx accent.

Robert Sanders, from Covington, Kentucky, is a 1969 graduate of Eastern. Bob is now studying law at the University of Cincinnati.

Becky Seldon is a graduate student in English from Charlotte, North Carolina. Becky received her A.B. from the University of North Carolina.

Donald Tegt, from Jeffersonville, Kentucky, is a freshman majoring in Political Science.

Bonnie Tinsley is a graduate English student from Arlington, Virginia. In the spring of 1968, Bonnie won a window fan as 3rd prize for a poem submitted to the Proctor & Gamble Safety Week Contest.

Toby Walton, a senior majoring in French, says, "The fact that I'm being published in **Aurora** undoubtedly shows the worth of my endeavors and the clear-sighted, far-ranging, never-ending quest for truth, justice, the American way and feeling that this country/school was established of the people, for the people, and against all intelligent forms of life—if you call this living."

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