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## Aurora, 1974

Eastern Kentucky University, English Department

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AURORA

1974

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## AN EDUCATION

Kathy Venable

In just one short summer I turned 18 (spelled W-O-M-A-N!), graduated from high school, got pushed into coming to college, and finally surrendered myself to good ol' patient Charlie! (Hell, I was going to school and he was going to the service--it could have been our last chance to finish up what we started in junior high school!)

Mom and Dad only had high school educations, but they were instilled with that hard coming-up middle-class determinism that all their children would have college degrees no matter what the cost. Because I was the eldest and first to leave the nest, I was obliged to take part in a running drama produced and directed by my father: "Sally Ann goes to College." (dum da dum dum!) Every evening that summer when Susie and I were doing supper dishes we'd hear loud bellowing coming from the direction of the living room couch. (If you could see my father, you'd understand what I mean bellowing).

"Sally Ann, come here young lady!" (I'm still cursing the Knoxville News Sentinel for printing all the stories about hippies, sex, riots, and other communistic subversive activities in the evening edition--why couldn't they fill up the morning edition with that junk so that fathers would forget it by supertime?)

I'd throw in the dishtowel and march obediently to the living room where Dad would gesture toward a chair and tell me to "Sit." It went something like this: "I've seen a few things in the paper tonight that



I'd like to discuss with you." And a couple of hours later either Dad had decided I wasn't going to sell my body for pocket money or something worse, or we'd reached a violent stalemate and I was fuming in my room while he paced about downstairs.

Well, both Dad and I lived through the evening tirades and when August rolled around I found myself kissing Charlie goodbye (maybe forever) and heading for Richmond and EKV. I was excited and scared--I really didn't know what to expect, but I definitely expected big things. I knew that when you were in college, all your teachers would assign you a whole book to read every night, and have tests every day, and that you stayed up all night to study, and spent the nights in the library. Mom and Dad told me all about it.

Mother took me to school and Dad stayed home because he has high blood pressure. The minute we hit Richmond the temperature must have shot up a hundred degrees, and the traffic lights as we came through town--three. This clued me in that Richmond wasn't exactly the biggest town around--not the nice big college town I'd expected. EKV wasn't very hard to find--in fact, if the university hadn't been there, we couldn't have found Richmond. We just followed all the cars with piles of junk and frustrated parents in them. The big marble and cement "Welcome to Eastern" as we turned off the by-pass made my stomach dip. So far I hadn't seen any crumbling ivy-covered walls oozing knowledge through the chinks. Some kid passed us and yelled, "Which way to the red barn?" Boy, what a smart alec I thought he was!

We looked at the campus map the ROTC guide had given us as we came in and found Brown E. Telford Hall, where I was to be staying. It was a thirteen story architectural miracle. We went inside and looked at

my room; all tile, concrete block, and fake wood--a cross between a sterile Holiday Inn and a prison cell. Mom kept saying it'd be better when I decorated it up, but I knew she was wrong. I was really disappointed to see that there were no spacious rooms with creaky beds and hardwood floors or pipes in the ceiling to hang things from, and no mean, haggly dorm mothers lurking around the corners--our counselors were students. As if the room hadn't already depressed me enough, the windows overlooked a graveyard. I had a swell view for watching funerals!

The amount of junk a girl can collect in 18 years is amazing, and I brought all of mine! It was almost dark when Mom and I finally got all my stuff into the room. Then Mom left me alone with all the other girls running up and down the hall unpacking and talking about what a wonderful summer they had had with \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in any and all male names from a to z).

I got all my things packed away on one side of the room as I speculated about what kind of roommate I would have. As it got later and later, I began to think she wasn't coming, but she did. My worst fears were confirmed when she breezed into the room wearing dark glasses and looking extremely chic, even though the sun had long since departed. She extended me a hand covered with a leather driving glove, and very coolly said, "I'm Bah-ba-rah Montgomery."

"Uh, my name's Sally Ann Stubbins, I'm your roommate," I somehow managed to get out.

"Reauhllly, you must be kidding," she answered. "Would you like to help me unload the ferrari, Sally Ann?"

"Sure, I guess, where's your mom?"

"She was in Stockholm a month ago."

(Did I detect bitterness?)

"Oh, o.k."

We didn't talk on the way down in the elevator--just exchanged half-frozen, curious smiles, (at least they were curious on my part). I was surprised to see that the car wasn't loaded down, but what was there looked very 'classy'. She handed me two monogrammed suitcases, and she took the trunk, which was plastered with stickers from cities I'd never even heard of.

"Oh, I do hope the rest of my things will get here tomorrow. They should have been sent from Antoinette's weeks ago."

"Who's Antoinette?"

"Not who, silly, it's a finishing school in the south of France, actually it's a terrible bore."

"What time are you going to register tomorrow?"

"I'm not--not until later. You mean you're only a freshman?"

"Why, aren't you?"

"No, my dear, my credentials from Antoinette's allow me to register as a sophomore."

"Oh." (There went our last possible hope of communication).

Registration was a pain in the ass. (I don't usually talk like that, but I thought it fit the occasion). I trudged the long walk from the coliseum to Telford, getting lost at least five times--all the buildings look the same. It was so hot that all I could think of on the way back to the drom was that I sure was glad that I'd paid the extra money to live in an air-conditioned dorm. The first thing I saw was a note saying not to turn on the air-conditioners because they were broken. I wasn't surprised. I wondered if Miss Perfection was awake yet--she'd been sleeping at noon when I left. After many

futile attempts to make conversation the night before, I'd decided that my roommate was not human, or at least not a woman. I couldn't even get her to talk about the men in her life, and there must have been some. I guess I fell asleep talking about good ol' Charlie. Funny that I'd decided to write him off my list and start fresh, and now I found myself scared to death that he wouldn't write when he got to Texas.

As I walked down the hall to the room, I heard Barbara saying my name in a loud voice: "Yes, Darling, Sally Ann Stubbins-- imagine! why the poor thing nearly bored me to tears last night telling me all about herself. She's just so, (a pause) green Darling." Her thin, tinny laughter floated down the hall, and I stood breathlessly outside the door waiting to hear more. "Len, Darling, (her voice was light and nervous) what I really called about is...yes, Darling, I realize that you're busy, but...What do you mean you know what I'm going to say and you don't want to hear it?" (I could tell she was near tears.) "But Len, I'm scared-- I don't know what to do--should I go to the doctor?" (Boy, I could tell she was in a fix now, and I knew I shouldn't be listening, but I couldn't move.) "Len, I'm so glad you love me, tell me you do...yes I know you're at work, I understand--it won't be so bad if we have a baby, will it? What do you mean you'll pay for everything?" (there was a long pause and I guess he was talking, and I could hear her start to sob) "Len, don't call me stupid--I never told you I was on the pill--why did you assume that I was?" (I heard the sickening click of the receiver, and I tried to move away from the door to come down the hall again, but I didn't make it. She flew out the door right into my dumbfounded face).

"Uh, I'm sorry, Barbara, I didn't mean to overhear anything," I blundered. She just looked at me, her face ashen pale and her lips trembling, and walked away like a zombie. I wanted to stop her, but I stood rooted to the stupid tile floor, as dumb as a statue. Funny she didn't look so chic now.

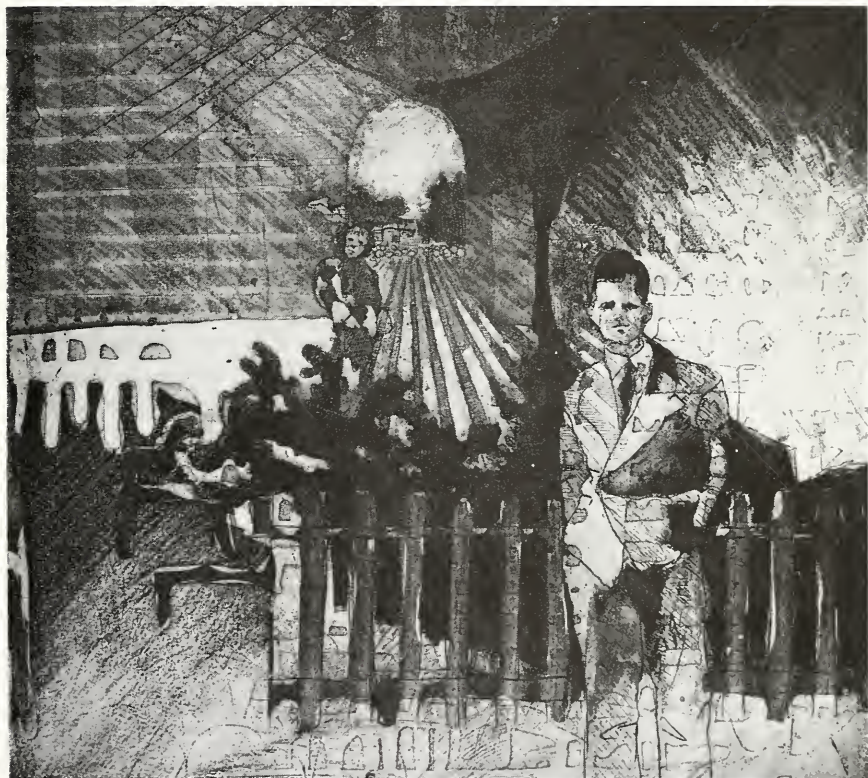
A day before I had envied her. I had always been swimming in a sea of small towns and hick people, but I'd never minded or thought them dull until I met Barbara. Look at all the opportunities she'd had and how much of life she knew--or thought she knew. I began to feel complacent and to pat myself on the back for being so well adjusted. It never occurred to me that I could be in the same predicament, or even worse off. I didn't have myself to thank that I considered myself capable of handling any situation. Miss Happy-Go-Lucky of the World.

A week passed and we hardly spoke to each other except for the necessities of life, like, "You're wanted on the phone." The tension between us got pretty bad, but somehow I never figured Barbara for the suicidal type, and besides, the sharpest thing in the room was her tongue. Well, I figured wrong. When I walked through the door, I saw a limp arm twisting grotesquely out from under the sink, clutching an empty medicine bottle. Oh, shit, my darvon. My heart was racing--I could see that she was breathing very shallowly so I somehow dragged her off the floor and downstairs into the car. Time was standing still--the red lights glared for small eternities on the way to Pattie A. Clay. I dragged her into the emergency room, where they asked me a lot of questions I couldn't answer, and took her into a room where they wouldn't let me come. I had brought along the pill bottle, so they knew what to do, and when a nurse told me that she was going to be all right, I got up to leave.

I stopped at the door--they were wheeling her out of the emergency room. She looked at me and said, "Sally Ann, you've got to help me." It was the first real words we'd ever exchanged. Then I knew we were really people.

Well, Barbara's o.k. now and moving from one 'serious' love affair to another, getting busted every time. And I'm still waiting for a letter from Charlie. What did we come here to learn?







## CONVERSATIONS WITH A FOOL

I'm here,  
inside somewhere.  
Your silver spoon is blasphemous,  
but keep it polished.  
Slide it in a little deeper.  
Dust my eyes with twinkle music,  
and let your vapors flow evenly from their  
    plains  
till they choke me.  
Then,  
with one last sip on night's glory--  
slip into that unplottable zone,  
where I can almost always find you.

### ONCE GOOD EGG

Fracture the egg!  
Let its embryonic insides dip into its dis-  
    sipated demise,  
Till the pangs of its torture swallow it up.  
    Put down your Mein Kampf  
    and raise the dead.  
Besides, you still have 101 of Bach's greatest  
    hits.

### WHAT A SHRINE

What a shrine,  
What an accomplishment of man.  
Four stoned faces  
eyes pitted against space  
Take your daggers, rush once more,  
my eminent men,  
cut the cat's tongue,  
And so, stoned faces, this is a simple (safe)  
    interrogation,  
    do your eyes see what they could have seen  
    before?

Iona Adams

## SIT DOWN, PULL YOUR CHAIR UP

sit down, pull your chair up to the purple  
sun  
and order a chocolate rainbow.  
we don't ask for no names around here  
we just believe in having fun.  
if you want to sit on top of an Oregon  
timber  
you just go right ahead, we don't mind.  
we outlawed calendars three years ago  
and watches are long time gone  
they even filled up the electric plugs  
with bits of chewing gum.  
and you won't hear nobody singing no blues  
cause happiness is been mandatory long as  
i can remember  
they done away with history books too; they  
said  
that yesterday might have something to do  
with tomorrow  
but tomorrow's got nothing to do with for-  
ever.  
they used to even pray cause it made the  
spirit stronger  
forever is a long time, but never's even  
longer.

## SAND RUNS OUT

sand runs out for us we must be  
down the hall if to see the parade  
by sunshade we catch the last dance  
of sentiment you say death is no  
farewell i say it is no hello.

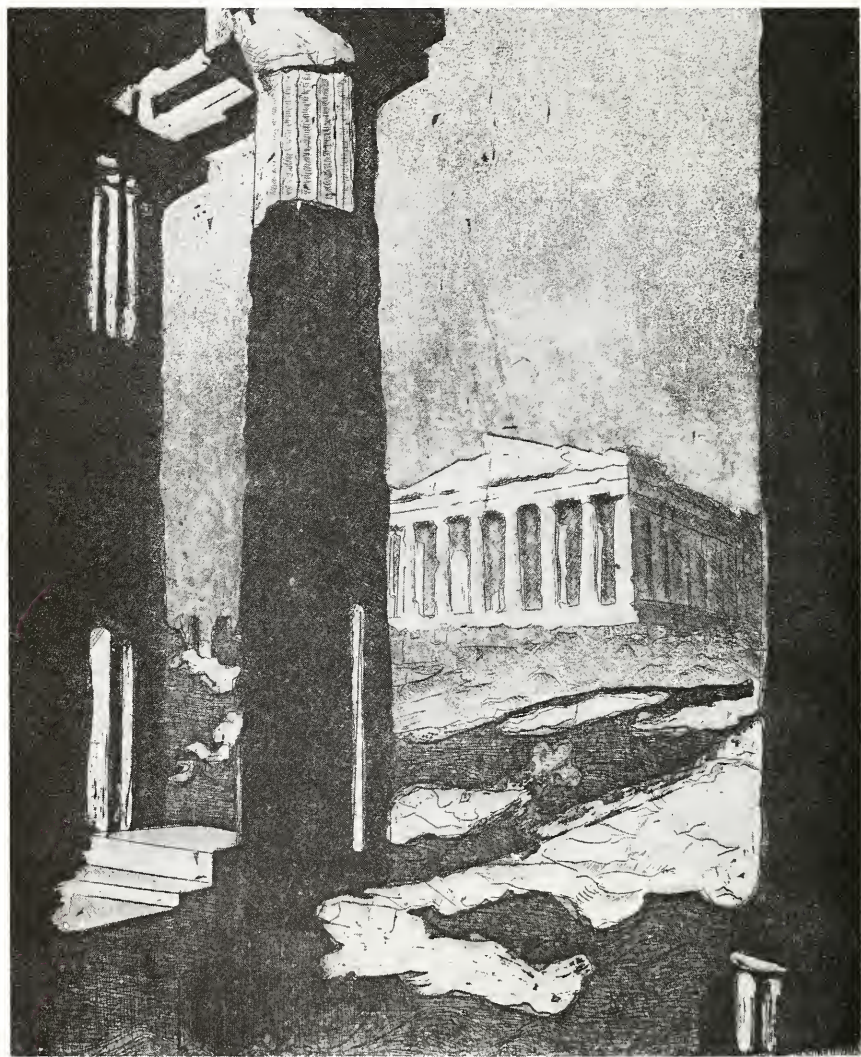
T. G. Moore

## SOLO AT MIDNIGHT

solo at midnight  
(watch the stars delight)  
the moon conducts the orchestra  
(darkness prepares the stage)  
solo at midnight  
(this is my debut)  
stand behind the rubble heap  
(i'll send a postcard to you)  
solo at midnight  
(i've practiced very much)  
definitions blur so i only see  
vague impressions of the crowd  
darkness covers the horizons at noon  
all the people disappeared  
i'm left along the roadside  
along with one or two tears  
straining to make a sound but the silence  
shuts it out like a locked door on the  
other side of a welcome mat  
textures confuse the issues  
while games just make it loud  
i can hardly see the people for  
the thickness of the crowd

T. G. Moore





## CHASING MY TAIL

John Davidson

Junk sick morning. Doing Reds and smoking hash. Trying to forget my needle's empty.

My good friend Jesse will be here soon to give me what I need. He said there'd be no problem. He'd just go see his man who never lets him down. It'll be good stuff, too. Promises.

Sitting here on my front porch drinking my second beer of the morning, I've got a good mind to go back to the hospital. Nervous, shaking, sweating,--no, I'd just walk out again. Even this is better than the hassles I get at the hospital. I'll kick the next time I run out of stuff. Not now.

Pigpen's singing the blues to me. Poor Pigpen! Died a drinker's death. None of that for me, buddy! I'm not gonna ruin my body like he did.

Hurry up Jesse! I don't want to hear your excuses this time. Just score for me and beat it on over here.

Not focusing on anything, the houses in a blur look like the fine, elegant houses they once were when this was a respectable, fashionable neighborhood. With a whiff of sweat, dying rats, and dirt, I blink my eyes and the focus returns. I see the chipped paint, dirt, trash, and other marks of near-ghetto. A junkie or a juicehead in nearly every house. The only place I feel safe.

The whore from the bar is just coming home. She must have pulled an all-nighter someplace. She used to come over for a joint and a beer, but not since she stabbed me when I wouldn't pay her. Capitalist

bitch!

Where's Jesse? Maybe if I call him I can find something out. Can't stand this not knowing.

I call Jesse's Cafe downtown, but the chick who answered said he left a couple hours ago. If I knew his contact's name I'd call him, but I guess now there's nothing to do but wait and try to stay high.

I just realized that side of the album is just beginning to play for probably about the tenth time. Time to put on more Dead. Couldn't make it without Garcia and the Dead! They're right where I am. Ah, "Wharf Rat!" Thank you!

Back on the porch, I count that this is my fourth beer. I think that I shouldn't be drinking on Reds as I take another sip.

It must really be getting late! Black Jay is stumbling down the street. That old junkie hardly ever gets out of bed. He just shoots and nods for days at a time without even getting out of bed. On rare occasions when he does get out of bed (when he's out of dope) you usually don't see him before the sun goes down. His eyes can't take the sunlight anymore.

Squinting and stumbling, he looks like an old black bear that's been shot and is trying to make it into the woods to die peacefully.

Black Jay made his way up to my porch and asked if I had any smack to sell. I told him I'd have some soon. It's on its way!

"Don't hold your breath rookie. The cops have been blitzkrieging this week. Busted so many you don't know who's in the slams and who's on the streets. It's all this federal money the city got. Hired on more narcs and they're getting tough. If you get anything, though, let me know."

That's more words than I've ever heard him say! He must be scared!

The old black bear crawled down to my house, scared the hell out of me, and then left

me there to worry about whether I'll get my stuff or not.

I call Jesse's Cafe again and ask if they've heard from him. They haven't. Jesse's smart, though. He won't get cracked.

With my fifth beer I wash down more Reds to try and stay as high as high as I can, so I won't realize how badly my body is needing more smack. It's hard to ignore the shaking and sweating, though. But that could be caused by so many downs and beer. I don't care. Just want some sweet smack.

I guess I don't have it as bad as most of the other people around here. There's some real substantial habits here. Heard the other day that old Carl down the street is shooting over \$100 a day now. There's several other guys that shoot almost as much as Carl, too. They've been at it awhile.

They've always got smack. Wish I knew where they got it! I never see anyone come or go. Smart junkies! Guess I'm lucky to get any, though. Just last week Eppers and Ottman got rolled down the district trying to score. Those blacks don't like to turn on whites to their good dope. Nobody trust anyone else.

Jesse is different. I think he likes turning me on. True, he doesn't always get the best dope in town, he's always late, never gets as much as I need, and is expensive, but at least he does come through with some dope.

Stranger walking down the street. The street knows he doesn't belong here. The whole atmosphere changes. The street's stiff and quiet. No loose, easy hangin' out, now. No movement.

He's dressed too good. Either a pimp or a narc. He's trying too hard. Must be a narc.



Hold the joint down low so he can't see. Hope for no gust of wind to take my high to his narc nose. Open eyes wider. No dead giveaways. Quickly light up a cigarette to try to justify any smoke that's hangin' around.

He nods and I nod back. Nonchalant, tight, straight, stoned, easy, nervous, both phony. He walks on by.

When he rounds the corner the street comes alive again. Nixon's economy doesn't bother anyone. The war or the rocket ships don't matter. Pollution and overpopulation aren't even discussed. Narcs, busts, and how much the bar cuts their whiskey are everyday, ever-present burdens, though. Dope is life.

I worry now. Busts, narcs, blitzkrieg, and I have no dope. Jesse's been gone for hours and still hasn't come around.

Mrs. Robinson walking down the street. Why'd I have to see her now? Her old man, Marvin, has two more years left for his seventh conviction of dealing. Stupid old junkie! Every time she walks by she gives me her standard speech about how Marvin screwed it all up and how I'm young and should quit and not blow it like Marvin.

It must be the paranoia of the day, but I'd rather not think about her and Marvin today. Please walk on by Mrs. Robinson. Don't make me feel any worse today.

Our eyes met. "Beautiful day isn't it? I'm thankful to the Lord to be alive and healthy and be able to walk down these streets in this beautiful weather. My poor, poor husband Marvin. Behind those awful bars with those awful men! He's made mistakes, but he's paying for them. In two years he'll be a free man! He's learned his lesson this time. We're moving away from here so Marvin can get a fresh start. No more of this living for the next shot for my Marvin!"

Crap, lady!

"You're so young with so many opportunities! Kick it, son. Kick it! You can, you know. Just ask the Lord for help. Look at this beautiful day. You can't enjoy it behind bars, like where my Marvin is. Clear your head out so you can live and breathe and see in this wonderful world."

Marvin this, Marvin that. Goodbye Mrs. Robinson. Dumb old lady! If she only knew Marvin's shooting about \$40 a day while he's in prison. Had to cut his habit way down, though. Smack's harder to get behind bars. When Marvin gets out, it's just a question of how long will it take him to do something stupid and catch his eighth conviction. Keep on breathing that good, clean air, Mrs. Robinson. Two more years of dreams.

The old black bear caught notice of her performance and from his porch, where he had camped out to wait on some junk, yelled after her, "Hey, Mrs. Robinson! When's Marvin get out? Tell him to hurry and get out. I got a batch cooked up just waiting for him!"

Mrs. Robinson held her head high to the clouds and walked on, acting as if she hadn't heard Black Jay.

In the middle of the fourth inning of the stickball game taking place in the street in front of my house I get a phone call. Jesse!

"Is there still a black Lincoln sitting around the corner in front of where Slim and his witch live?"

I go out and walk a ways down the block to where I can see around the corner, but I see no Lincoln. I haven't seen a Lincoln all day.

"There was one sitting there with two narcs sitting in it. I been by three, four times, but they spooked me each time. Look again. Make sure. They're narcs, I know."

I stumble out and look again, but no Lincoln.

Good! I'll be over soon. Get that cooker ready!"

Jesse's smart. No use taking chances with narcs. All of a sudden visions of the stranger strolling down the street pop into my head. I bet he's who Jesse saw. The narcs must have known something was up! Black Jay sitting out on his front porch is enough of a tip-off. But Jesse was smart! He'll be here soon, now!

I look around and check for the twentieth time to see that I got some clean works. I count my money again, too. By tens and twenties all the way up to \$700. Didn't make as much this last time. Shooting more and selling less.

Back outside, I wait. The endless wait. Seems like hours, but finally Jesse's big boat turns the corner. Getting out, he has a brown shopping bag under his arm. Every junk eye on the street knows that it's High Time.

Need some mellower music as Jesse smiles and winks. As he unloads his bag of life I search for some appropriate music. More Dead. Mellow. Ahh, "Come hear Uncle John's band..."

Now I'm ready to sample the wares. The anticipation, or the length of time since I last smelled cooking heroin, made me shake so bad that Jesse said he'd tie me off and hit a vein for me. I stood next to him, as he saw that no air bubbles remained, and eyed a chair to head for before I got off.

He hit a vein and the old familiar feeling of warmth in my veins returned. It was good stuff. Before I made it to the chair I was weaving and feeling fine.

I felt good and all I could do was smile. Jesse began his typical sales pitch about this being from Vietnam. Smuggled into the country in hollow bomb shells. He could have said anything. I wasn't gonna argue now.

Jesse rambled on, but his words grew fuzzy to me. I heard something about this being such righteous stuff that everybody in town wants some of it. Am I getting off good?

I nod. Big junk smile.

He didn't slow down for a minute. Everybody in town wants some of this action. Words whirling by me about how Jesse really had to hustle to get me some little more expensive than usual and not quite as much stuff as usual--the bite--hard to get you know--the supply and demand hard luck story of drugs.

Cellophane bag of white dust laid on the table. \$500. Swearing that's the last of all that came into town. Can't get any more. "It's so good, you can cut it and make some bucks." Got a pound of good weed, too. "\$200. Vietnamese."

I can't taste now, Damn it! Jesse does this to me all the time. Gets me high then pawns off something else on me. How can I taste that? It could be hay, I couldn't tell now.

Fine weed. Some of the best in town. Words flying by me. Confusion. "Good weed! Guaranteed super deluxe, double grade A, trip weed!" Says it's the best in town. Going for \$250 all over town, but he'll give it to me for \$200 because he couldn't get enough smack for me.

Always looking out for my best interest. That's sweet!

I nod and throw the fat roll of tens and twenties at him. He counts it out, rolls a few joints for himself, snorts a finger-full of my heroin, smiles, and leaves.

I didn't weigh anything because Jesse is always accessible and he wouldn't rip me off anyway, I try to tell myself.

I've got my stuff, a pound of weed, and

am good and high, but I feel ripped-off. I can probably make my money back if I don't shoot and smoke too much myself, but I've got the post-deal blahs. Letdown. It is good smack, though. I guess. It's been a day or two since my last fix. It could be just average junk just hitting me good. Jesse knows all this. He's smart! But it's all right. I relax, enjoy my head, and listen to Garcia.

Before long, Black Jay is at my door wanting to score some smack. Shit! I haven't had a chance to cut it. If I sell it to him without cutting it, I won't make much money back. I can't tell him to go away. He knows I've got it.

Knocking again, he pushes the door open. Dropping a small roll of bills on the table, he announces, "\$100."

I'm caught. I've got to sell the pure stuff to him. Slowly I get up and cross the room to the table. Ten spoons of my good heroin transfer into another bag. He smiles. It's enough to get him by until his man can score big for him. Before he leaves I ask him if he'd like to buy any weed. No, just smack.

What am I going to do with this weed? Rolling an unneeded joint, I decide that my friends Eppers and Ottman can move it for me. Junk is king here. Weed is too plentiful to sell for profit. I can really cut some junk to sell to them, too. They've got plenty of friends to move weed to. They'll be my money men.

Ottman's been busted. Selling weed at school. Dumb! A victim of the blitzkrieg. Cross him off my list.

Eppers just scored a pound of Guadumalan. Doesn't need any more. Doesn't know if he can move what he's got. Was hoping I'd buy some from him. Shit!

Where am I gonna sell that weed? Why'd

I buy it? I could have saved \$200 for more smack. I guess I could just keep it for my own head. Always need a good smoke. If it's good.

The stickball game is over. Little Black kids are all heading home to the tunes of mothers announcing dinners are ready. The sun has gone down and evening breezes contain mixed scents of food and heroin cooking.

All is peaceful now. I'm not shaking, sweating, or, at the moment, worrying. Black Jay is no longer on his porch. The bear must be hibernating again. I don't even see a black Lincoln.

But I do see Mrs. Robinson. And it looks like she's gonna walk right by me again. What bad luck!

"Good evening young man. Beautiful night! I've just come from church. What a wonderful Lord we have! He's saving my Marvin! He can save you, too, if you let him. All it takes is faith."

Why'd I have to see her again? She's spent her whole life loving Marvin. Marvin's spent his whole life loving heroin. She's been hurt more than he has. He can't feel anymore. A life full of shattered hopes and dreams for her. Heroin is fine for Marvin. That's all he knows. But Marvin's no good for her. If she'd only see that! But maybe that's her life. Trying to save Marvin. What a life!

I got back inside and set aside some pure smack for myself and cut the rest. Just in time, too, because a couple of people dropped by to score.

"Small spoons! This better be some good stuff!"

It's tough all over. Still might not make my money back.

I hate to rip people off! But how else

could I make back enough money to buy more next time? Maybe I should go back to the hospital to kick. No, even ripping people off is better than the hassles I get at the hospital!

Got to be careful now that I've got some quantity again. Don't want to make any stoned, silly mistakes like Marvin. Can't end up like Marvin!

What hassles! Money, narcs, rip off deals! But what nice highs!

It was easier back when I wasn't hooked. Didn't have to deal too much. Not as many rip offs, either. I could take my time and find the best deal instead of just taking what I can get. Maybe I should kick so I won't have to do so much to get high. Lower my habit. Marvin did it in prison. Maybe I could do it. They say the sickness is awful, though.

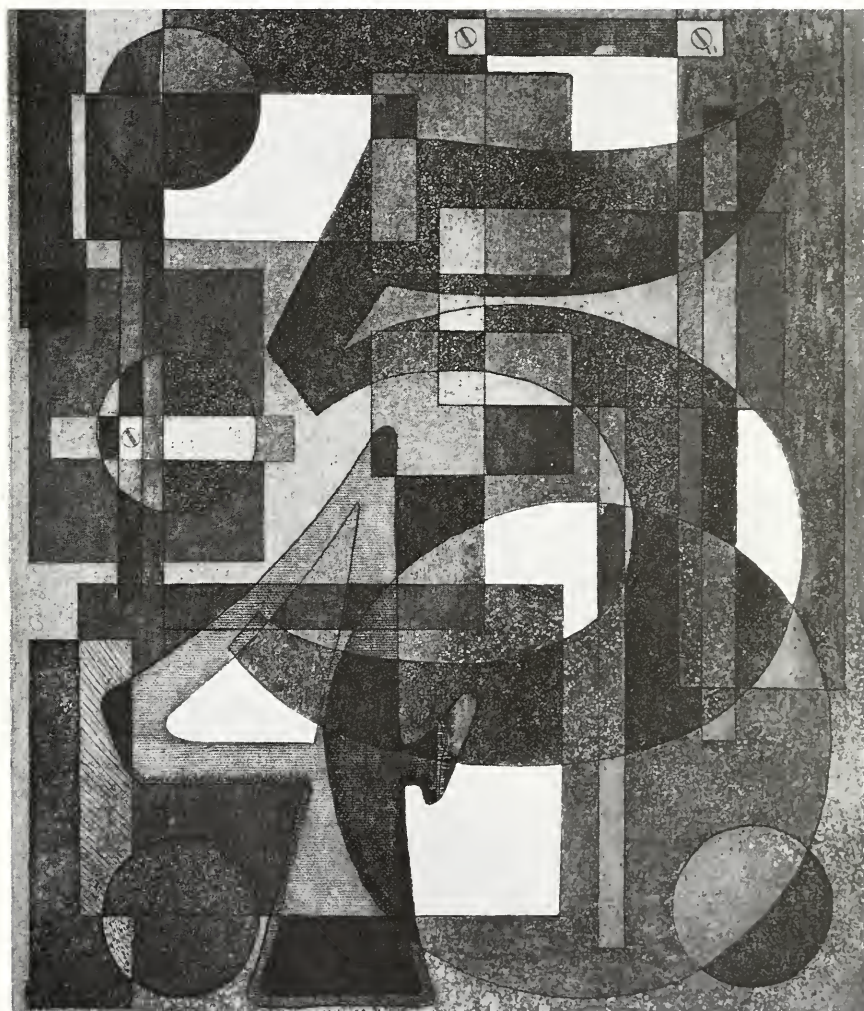
Coming down some. Time for more. Maybe I should wait for awhile. Spread the highs out some so I won't be shooting as often. Lower my habit. No, I want it now. Maybe next time I'll wait awhile.

Oh, the nice warm feeling in my veins! Rush! Good high! I don't want to kick! This is nice. The perfect high. Nothing better.

Maybe the next time I run out I'll try kicking. It might be better than the hassles of waiting on Jesse, hiding from the heat, and ripping people off. Maybe I'll just try to lower my habit. That's the thing to do. Don't want to kick! I'll try lowering my habit. Maybe.

Maybe.

Where am I gonna sell this weed? Gonna need money for more smack in a few days. Gotta sell this weed....







"Pat"

Michael Hartsch

## MEN WITHOUT HORSES

Seven mornings like midnight  
We lived with a flashlight  
Until the fog lifted  
And we drifted away

We dreamed about comforts  
And horses to ride  
But the desert king's livery  
Was so far away

I remember the seashore  
I remember the morning  
When we first saw the ship  
By that small ghost-town bay

It was sailing for places  
Where no one could follow  
And we all decided  
We'd be fools if we stayed

There once was a time  
When we stole all we wanted  
But now days it seems  
That we need all we take

The black horse of power  
Is too wild to ride  
And the white horse of knowledge  
Is too young to break

James H. Miles

EARLY MORNING DOWN

Our souls aren't real  
Our bodys are plastic.  
We know what we want  
But we still have to mask it.  
Dogs howling at night  
Know more about wrong and right.  
If there's a question  
Why not ask it?

The power shovel Jehovah trods.  
The neon Jesus nods.  
Nature's laws still hold  
Although her beauty's being sold  
For sacrifices  
To our gods.

Bill-boards by the road  
They hit my face.  
They say that love  
Is made of tooth paste  
And pop corn and chewing gum  
And potatoe chips and Ronrico Rum  
It don't matter  
Down hill r

a  
c  
e  
t  
e  
l  
e  
ph  
o  
n  
e  
goo-goo  
p  
i  
z  
z  
a  
but

## DAMN THE WINGED-THING

First time softly, then I stole  
blank/barefoot to the dawn.  
Slowly, lightly--  
The cobweb snare's so fragile,  
still glistening with it's dew.

In the snare, I held my breath,  
But the spider never noticed me.  
Naturally intent was he  
Upon the fated, winged-thing held iron-fast  
By gossamery strands of nothing and  
Then, still fascinated, I stole away.

Next time passionately, then I charged  
Upon the daybreak,  
Anticipating fascinating.  
Too late the spider saw me then--  
He and his ephemeral artistry lay mangled,  
tangled  
Inside the deep-mud imprint of a plodding  
foot.

But damn that winged-thing  
lives on.  
Rushing, pushing,  
Tenaciously grasping iron-fast  
the shattered silken strands  
of nothing.

Kathy Venable

DREAM BEGINNING (maybe)

So THIS is to be it  
the day, the time (tick--tick--tick)  
and we're waiting in  
Silence pregnant (how appropriate-inappropri-  
ate--check one)  
as pausing between breaths:  
the maids in black sombre satin (sort-of)  
Soaking  
Scorching  
Sun.

When will it begin?  
Now that it is today, why  
isn't it tomorrow?  
Uncertainty, doubt, dark foreboding--  
Whirling shades of temporary insanity,  
futile indecision  
pressing,  
pressing,  
pressing.

But still we wait because  
We know it's too late.

He comes, a Satanic stranger now,  
and I, staring, voicelessly screaming, say,  
"please go away,  
away,  
away.

But he don't  
and i can't  
SO WE DO.  
(They say it's darkest just before dawn).

Kathy Venable

## BACKYARD SLEEP

I remember  
wet grass and feathers in my face,  
the sleeping bag leaked.

and the stars hearing dog barks,  
while once in a while  
a car door creaked  
quietly shut.

and I tucked with dandelion scents  
a softness before sleep  
that caressed me.

then the stars curled to cream.  
I turned with my quixotic scheme  
a clover sleepy boy of thirteen  
to carry you away to my dreams.

Iver Standard

## ADOBE

bloody soiled hands of faceless men  
carefully piece together red bricks.  
each block painstakingly mortared into place  
with reluctant tears.  
self-inclosing walls built from the inside.  
a cage of crimson adobe:  
made from bits of flesh, blood and man's dust.  
prisoners looking out into the world  
through bars of guilt and innocence, shame and  
pride.

a prison.  
inmates.  
forgotten warriors, a forgotten war.

men.  
flesh and reason  
hammered, ground into war machines  
geared to kill.  
machines  
manufactured on a mass scale  
by panic riddled venders of human produce.

man killers  
stamped out  
forgotten.

raw grain  
harvested from a lottery crop  
milled into flour  
molded,  
thrown into clay ovens of war.  
combatants honed to a fine edge  
on a stone to hate.  
men geared in such a way  
can not function in the inescapable holocaust  
of  
man-kind.  
war tools can not be formed into plows and  
hoes.

unused they rust  
red as the bloody crops they once reaped.  
the warrior is swept  
beneath the carpet of abashment  
by those who demanded his art and life.

these stained adobe walls  
my sanctuary  
my last line of defense --

Mel Boyd



## THE MILKMAN

Peter B. Schilling

Reid sat tensely in the drivers seat of the truck. He watched the sun doing battle with the whitish mist. The white mist Reid hated. It would obscure the solid edges of those little two story houses, cling to the white divider of the road, it would hide the limbs and leaves of the strong trees so that only the bottom of the trunks would be visible. Reid could feel his insides tighten up, the bottom of his stomach knotted in cramps. He could imagine his intestines hardening and fixating themselves in strange new positions. Reid did not like that feeling. He tried to concentrate on relaxing and calming himself by following the series of mental exercises his doctor had given him.

The sun seemed to be winning, slowly burning away the mist. The blue of a clear sky was gradually emerging. He felt better and jumped down to the pavement, the sorry state of his insides nearly forgotten. The two quart milk bottles secure between the fingers of his left hand swung slightly to and fro.

At this particular house just over a month ago Mrs. Lords had met him at the door and told him she had decided she no longer wanted the milk delivered. "I thought it over and decided that I shall no longer be needing your service. I'm terribly sorry, I really am. In the past when everyone on the block had their milk delivered, well it was just what everyone did. These last few years I only kept you on because the service was so dependable and because I rarely went downtown and well, because I knew you needed the business. Oh dear. Actually I'm an old fashioned

person. I so much like to think that some day soon all will be as it once was. Then everything was so reliable, so laid out and settled. Now-a-days you have to think about every little thing. That's not what our minds are made for. No wonder there's so much sickness in our land. No one is willing to put their faith in God anymore. He has a plan for everyone of us you know. Do you still have faith in our Savior?" Reid did not speak.

"Just last Thursday Joan Beeche asked me why I still had my milk delivered and do you know, I couldn't give her any reason. She looked at me in a funny way, like there was something wrong with me. I just felt so dated and old, like everything was passing me by. Well, I made up my mind right there to tell you straight away this week."

Reid remembered how he had just stood there looking. He looked at her sagging abdomen. He looked at the plain checkered cloth that covered it. He looked right past her into the foggy warmth of her living room. He sensed other living creatures in there, slumbering and dormant in the dark recesses. He could smell them sleeping in there. And it was as if nothing had been said to him at all. He knew only that five minutes of his life had slipped away as quickly as at the very moment the warmth of the house rushed by him, out the door into the cold hungry morning.

Walking back to his truck he was conscious only of her abdomen. He was drawn to it. He hated it. It disgusted him. He wanted to grab it and make it firm and hard and willing again. He knew with certainty that her abdomen pointed blatantly to her old age and beyond that, to her death.

Two weeks later Mrs. Lords had called Reid's milk company office. She had asked

the milk company to bring the milk to her house the same as it use to. Two quart bottles of milk on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings. She had specifically requested to have the same delivery man as before. Had the receptionist who took the order cared to listen, she would have known that Mrs. Lords was weeping. Reid called his office after he heard Mrs. Lords had changed her mind. He asked if she had given any reason for deciding to resume having her milk delivered. The voice he heard said no.

This occurrence had pleased Reid very much indeed. Business was bad. He could remember how things were ten years ago when he first started in the business. Nearly every house on every street had the milk delivered in the mornings. Reid could remember the feeling of community he use to have in those days. He felt secure, as if he was of value in all those hundreds of lives, as if he was a surgeon who each morning attached that long umbilical cord from mother earth to the people of his community. He was providing a service, however small, and he had a part in all those cheerful family breakfasts, in the health and well being of his neighborhood. On those cold winter mornings ten years ago Reid would feel warm, warm like when as a child his mother would put her fleshy hand to his cheek in a gesture that said, "Yes, with us everything is possible."

These days such thought seldom came to Reid. The number of customers on his route had dwindled over the years. Now he was lucky if he had more than two customers on an entire street. Reid could not understand what caused all these people to start buying their milk in the supermarkets. He tried not to think about it. Every now and then Reid would start to weep. He would think of the rumors he had heard. Rumors that told of his milk

company's impending bankruptcy, his own unemployment that would disrupt his fighting people, people scrambling for a higher spot in some large bureaucracy. Reid would become terrified when he thought of losing his job. His mind would begin to function differently. Every simple thing he would do appeared to be terribly wrong. He would notice that his fingers were grubby and crooked in an ugly way and wonder how many other people had noticed. Reid would become overly conscious of his smile, his motives, the white skin that was his face. Nothing was genuine, all was hideous and artificial and disjointed. The nerves throughout his body would tighten up and threaten to snap. The stomach muscles churned and churned and maddening juices flowed from it down into the darker territories within his throbbing body.

It was with great relief that the days on which he experienced such things finally ended and released him to be on his way home to his wife. There Reid would eat his plain dinner, carry on polite conversation and read the daily newspaper.

As the darkness of the night set in, in it's complete form, when he could turn off all the lights and see nothing, then and only then was his wife shown into the bedroom. Sweaty beneath his flannel pajamas Reid would cling to and explore the anonymous folds of flesh and skin that was his wife's body. He would tell her to lie on him and he then could bury his head between the weight of her heavy breasts. There Reid could exist for hours and cling to the only release he knew. The damp sheets sticking to his body had a soothing effect. He felt again that things would work out, that tomorrow all would be as it

was ten years ago, that his milk route would again be prosperous.

Reid's arm moved to the lid of the milk box. His fingers touched the cold rusty aluminum and for a brief instant he hesitated. He was afraid of what might be inside that decaying box. He feared something horrible would leap out at him. For a moment he panicked, came close to slamming the two milk bottles hard against the clean sidewalk and running fast back to the truck. The panic passed. He lifted the top up, inserted the two milk bottles gently into the box. The lid closed.

Reid looked up. He sighed. The sun had burned away nearly all of the accursed white mist. A blue sky had fully emerged. Reid thought that even the blue sky did not hold the comfort that it once did. Reid forced his mind to go blank. He tried to concentrate on the idea that with his life all things were possible.

Reid got into his truck and drove on to the next street. In the back the empty milk bottles clattered against one another as if they themselves were actually alive, rattling and clanging as if possessed.





## CRESCENDO

Pink glaze tints the edge of blue,  
Creature sees a human view.  
Towering black mountains stretch to fill  
the yawning gap,  
Saint Francis dropped two hazy colors  
into God's lap.

One star pinpoints the blackness beyond  
the pale-bright hues,  
And night is quickly pushed away as  
dawn pursues.  
Mirrors of hell show God's red reflection,  
Ball of fire laughs at night's rejection.

Grey morning silhouettes the wingspread  
of a dove of peace,  
March to the CLICKS of Satan's release.  
Sunlight dances on a symphony's collection;  
Only a second to breathe in a bit of dawn's  
perfection.

Terri Takacs Branson





SITTING ON YOUR CAKE WE CHUCKLED

sitting on your cake  
we chuckled  
hands full of paper kites  
it made me wince  
    i guess i was a bit giddy,  
holding all those ripped kites you handed me  
  
but the glassy river around us  
    had me laughing like a profane  
    flower,  
    trying to pull my petals up  
after all, i had to hide from all the  
    reflections  
    & i was squinting like mad to see  
but then you plastered my river with your  
    cake  
the taste grew worse  
    like melons painted with elmer's glue  
    i took the glue  
to fix the kites  
    but the kites  
were as giddy & breakable as me

Mary Val Gerstle



BITTERSWEET

because!  
    to...why?  
is certainly sly,  
    but not  
    to a man  
    about to die

because!  
    to...why?  
is generally wry,  
    but not  
    to a child  
    about to cry

because...  
    to...why?  
is a lullaby  
    when passed  
    to a loved one  
    on a sigh

William Hays

## ELSINORE REVISITED

How does one give comfort to an incarcerated  
soul?

Counselors with adequate concern but no answers,  
Friends with truly felt smiles but no words,  
And mile after mile of forcing one foot to  
follow the other  
on a circular path,  
Are to no avail.

Chemotherapy was suggested too;  
But, I see no reason to dull pleasant memories.  
I want you for my crutch.  
If that is impossible, then give the proper  
mixture of  
potassium nitrate,  
Charcoal, and sulfur compresses into a casket  
of lead and copper.

Less than kin but more than kind friends,  
Give me your patience.  
Hours of need have blended us together;  
Do not allow my unusual gate to filter your  
love.  
Now, I need you.

Run and dream, little boy, dream and run.  
But don't let your fantasies conquer you--  
Observe my addiction and beware.  
Run, but, run towards something.  
Start with a goal line, if you like, but don't  
stop there.

Stunned by the below you your premature death,  
I am left drifting--aimlessly.  
I have often been confronted by uncertainty.  
Yet, when that thing on which I most depended  
changed,  
The drawbridge at Elsinore closed.

## SKIR-MISH

The sergeant looked us over,  
Each one,  
And the 'copter's noise almost blotted out  
his words:  
"All right, men,"  
He said,  
"As soon as we land  
Scatter like hell for the trees  
And keep yer butts low;  
I don't want no more corpses out of this  
Than we have to,  
Because I got to answer to the  
Captain  
Too."  
Then we were down  
And out  
And scared  
And running  
And fumbling  
And falling  
And dying;  
Even the  
Sarge.

John L. Robinson

## THE EDGE

I plod the deep furrowed, wounded earth of  
cornfields,  
Slip the spring slop trod of boggy boots,  
Buoyed by the aromed rebirth of dung-rich air,  
Searching for small bits of stone  
That once passed perhistoric hands,  
The edge of survival on ancient lands.  
How percariously human to search into the  
past,  
To seek in history and prehistory for  
Some monumental tie that will link  
Man to man and to earth.  
I search deep into still, kinetic soil, grave  
earth,  
To rid it of a tempered stone,  
A chip, a shard, a bead, a fishhook bone.  
Relentless, row on row for the glistening  
flint,  
Where April rains have excavated it  
From the miry mud of distant centuries.  
I hunt the tools of the hunter,  
To seek in death, a birth, a kinship  
I cannot find among dull Warriors of my kind.  
Following the bite of the steely incisor,  
unyielding edge,  
Or the prod of the plow as it gnaws  
This once sacred ground of red men long since  
dead,  
I find the broken stone and scattered bone,  
Harsh remnants of a primal quest for life  
By men with a need for an edge to survive,  
Sharp truths pierce paradox, an edge to  
understand.

David Westfall

OF SID WHO SIGHED  
AND (MOSTLY) DIED

Sid, who in the city,  
For sixty years resided,  
Retired. With what to do  
Upon to farm decided

But--

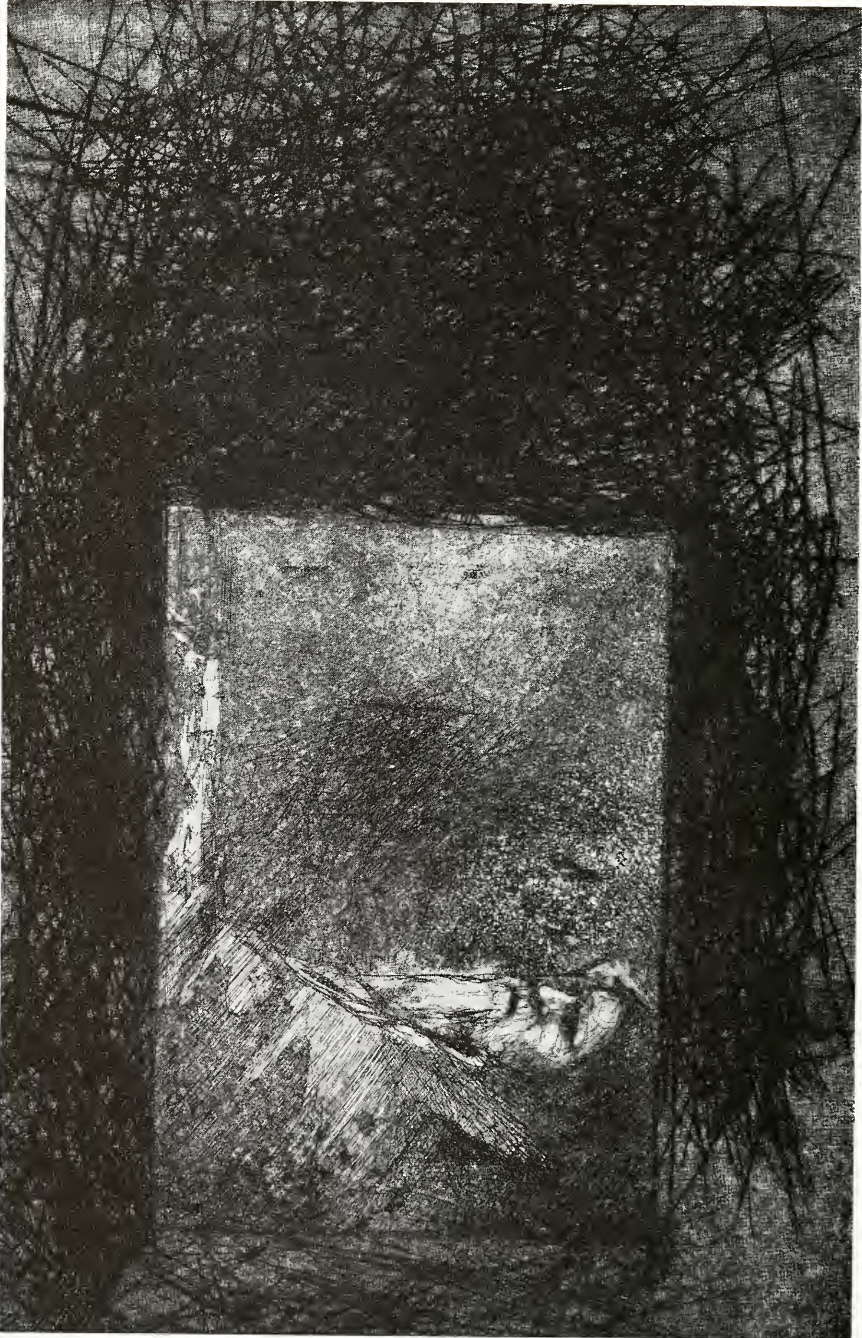
This morning cock-a-doo-dle-doo  
Won't do, said Sid excited,  
So he took a shot and slew  
Mr. Cock-a-doo-dle-doo and dew.

And--

So the sigh is sown in sleep  
Slipped to morning sleep snores Sid  
Now he's restless rooster rid,  
Dream-farming, cock-a-doo-dle-did.

David Westfall







## THE SORORITY GIRL

Ken Gullette

"Why don't you join Sigma Nu?" a friend asked me one day at the beginning of my junior year at Eastern. Gary Hardey was an active member of a fraternity and was constantly sacking sorority girls. The stories he told me the day after his dates always made me desire the luxurious life of a fraternity man. For a year he had been trying to get me to join.

"Oh, I don't know, man. I don't think I have the money," I said.

"It doesn't cost much. Only 15 a month. The guys are great and you'll have a good time."

"Listen, I've got a class in a minute. I'll think about it and give you a call."

"Well hurry up," he said. "We're having our first big party this weekend. If you want to pledge us you can come."

I walked to my class in a daze. A real fraternity party! With booze and broads and sex everywhere! Where you have to watch where you walk so you won't step on any couples writhing and moaning on the floor. And I was invited to attend, if I joined the fraternity.

It was a big decision, mainly because I wasn't sure how I would be accepted. I did not have the personality of a fraternity man. I met none of the requirements. I hated the taste of beer, I did not have a tremendous sexual rapport with girls, and I could not grow a beard. I couldn't even grow sideburns. I was positive I would be turned down if I decided to rush.

I was in my dorm that night, looking out the window of my room facing the campus, and knowing that some girl was out there searching the dark alleys for sex. What was I doing

inside? I should be out satisfying her.

The phone interrupted my meditation.

"Hey, man, did you decide?" It was Gary.

"Yes, I decided not to join, Gary. I wouldn't join a fraternity if I was tortured. Under no circumstances would I join Sigma Nu. No. Goddammit, NO!"

"But you can come to the parties."

"Well, alright."

"Great," he said. "Can you get a date?"

"Oh...uh...well hell, I think so."

Get a date? I thought that was their job.

"Call someone and get a date. Then call me back."

"What if I can't get one?"

"Then I'll see what I can do," he replied confidently.

A wave of optimism swept through me as I hung up. For the first time in my life I knew I could get a date for a specific night. If not with a girl I knew, then with a Sorority Girl. But that was too good to be true. A Sorority Girl? With me? My God, I would be outclassed.

I sat on my bed thinking of girls I could call. How many girls did I know on campus? Two. How many off campus?

So I had two girls to choose from. There was Becky, but her mind was messed up and she walked with her arms folded across her chest, a gesture which Body Language said was not very sexual.

I decided to call Vicki first.

"Hello?" she answered.

"Vicki?"

"Yes."

"This is Kenny."

"Kenny?"

"Yes."

"Kenny who?"

"Gullette."

"Well shit!"

"Wait a minute, Vicki...Hello?"

So I called Becky.

"Hello?"

"Becky?"

"Yes."

"This is Kenny Gullette."

"I'm busy," she said quickly.

"When?"

"Every night."

"How about a year from tonight?"

"I'm baby sitting."

"Oh. Well, maybe some other time."

I thought I heard her start to say something obscene just as the receiver hit the phone.

So I called Gary back.

"No luck?" he asked.

"No. I think they are both lesbians."

"Well," he sighed. "Do you want me to fix you up?"

"With a Sorority Girl?" My heart pounded in my head.

"Yeah."

"Can you really do it?" I asked. Now I would see if the Fraternity Myth was true.

"Hey Bill," Gary shouted at someone in the Sigma Nu house. "Can you fix Gullette up? Okay."

"Can he?"

"You got a pencil to take down a number?" he asked.

I knocked over the television and all my books.

"Yeah, I've got one."

"Her name is Alicia Park. Her number is 5577."

"Her name is 5577 and her number is Alicia Park."

"No man, you have it backwards."

"Oh. Hey, thanks Gary."

"Wait about five minutes before you call her so we can tell her you are going to call."

"Okay. Listen, I appreciate this."

"See you later."

After years of traumatic experience, I knew it was taboo to think about calling a girl before you called her. It created severe nervousness, especially the first time. So I made my mind a blank (an easy task) for five minutes and then dialled her number. Her phone rang three times.

"Hello?"

Was this her? A real, live, sensuous Sorority Girl? She had a friendly voice. I could picture her lying on her bed, scantily clad in a negligee, just waiting for my body. I knew I should be Super Cool. Show her who's boss. Show her how masculine I was.

"Is...uh, is this Alicia Park?"

"Yes. Is this Kenny Gullette?"

"Uhh...Yeah. It's been a long time, hasn't it?"

"It sure has," she laughed. "I haven't seen you in 19 or 20 years."

"Has it been that long?" She was easy to talk to, and I could tell she had a good sense of humor.

We talked for a while, getting information straight such as where we were from, where we lived on campus, and other small talk. We made the date for Saturday night and when I hung up I knew that the Fraternity Life was the only life for me.

So the heavy date was set and I began my usual preparations. I took out my ragged copy of The Sensuous Man and studied it until two in the morning. I would need it if I was going to take out a Sorority Girl.

"You're doing what?" the guys on the

floor asked incredulously.

"I've got a date with a Sorority Girl."

"Oh God! You may not make it back! I hear a Sorority Girl can wear out a battalion of studs!"

"Well, I have the endurance of two battalions," I bragged, and walked back to my room as they stared with awe and worship.

Saturday night finally arrived, and so did the butterflies in my stomach when I picked up Alicia at her dorm.

"I'm here," I said when I called her from the lobby.

"Who are you?" she asked.

I had made a good impression.

"Kenny."

"Oh, Kenny. I'll be right down."

She sounded great and I felt great and knew it was going to be a golden evening. I had a pint of Bacardi and a pint of bourbon in the car. Not that she would need it to thaw out. A Sorority Girl was supposed to be as hot sober as she was when blitzed. That was one of the main requirements of girls joining a sorority.

The elevator doors rumbled open and Alicia stepped out. She had brown hair cut in a shag. I love shags. I hardly ever generalize, but girls with shags are known to sink like the Bismark. Every girl with a shag loves sex.

I was home free.

"I like your hair," I told her when I recovered my speech.

"Do you" I just had it cut this afternoon."

"Yeah, I love it."

"Good. I was wondering how it looked." She smiled at me and I knew I had her in the palm of my hand. A couple more compliments and she would be taking her clothes off.

It was dark out, but it was a warm September night and my mind was focused on sex,

as it is whenever the temperature is higher than zero degrees Fahrenheit.

My mind was spinning when I tried to think of something to say. What do you say to a Sorority Girl? Something cool, something deep, witty, with overtones of sex.

"Uhh, so how's it going?" I asked.

"Fine," she smiled. One thing I was thankful to see was that she did not sit all the way across the seat.

"What are you majoring in?" I asked boldly.

"Child development."

The tires squealed as I swerved to keep from going off the road. The comment took me completely off guard. She really started early with the hints.

The Sigma Nu house had a carnival appearance to it. Shafts of light poured out into the street and cars were lined up for two blocks. We parked (the car) and walked across the street to where the sound of a rock band pulsated from the basement.

I wondered how fast I should make my move with her. I told myself to relax and play it by ear.

"Hey, man, in here!" I heard Gary's voice from inside the basement. The noise was incredible and the lights were low. We entered.

As usual, Gary was half drunk at the beginning of the party. His eyes were glazed, he had a stupid grin on his face, and he stepped up to me like a big brother and put his arm on my shoulder.

"This is Kenny Gullette," he screamed above the music, which was coming from another room in the basement. "He's pledging Sigma Nu."

People all over the crowded room looked over and nodded with approval. I felt uneasy not knowing any of them. I spotted one or



two faces I had met, but the rest were strangers.

"Hey Alicia!"

A couple of guys walked over, dodging the tables where people were drinking. While they were talking to her, Gary leaned over and said "You can use my bedroom upstairs if you want to."

"For what?" Then I remembered. I returned a wink.

"Do you want a drink?" I asked Alicia when the other guys walked away and disappeared into the crowd.

"Sure," she said.

"Do you like Bacardi or bourbon?"

"Yes."

"Right," I smiled. Sorority Girls will drink anything.

We found an empty table and fixed a couple of drinks.

"Now where is the ice?" I wondered.

"In here." She led me into a small room between the drinking room and the dancing room. So she had been there before. I grabbed some ice cubes out of a large metal ice machine and turned to see her talking to a couple more guys.

"I thought you were coming with Paul," one of them said.

"It's a long story," she answered. The ice cubes were melting in my hands.

So she had planned to come with someone else. That was a fine turn of events.

As I guided her back to the table through the crowd, almost every guy that we passed said "Hi, Alicia," or "Hey, what's happening, Alicia." And the hell of it was, she knew all their names.

Being the original Cool Guy Under Pressure, I panicked and began perspiring. Totally confused, I sat down and dumped the ice into our drinks, which had gone flat by this time. More guys, even with their dates,

stopped by the table and greeted Alicia. She introduced them all to me, and soon my brain was a jumble of names and faces.

The band in the dance room was rocking on, and Alicia gently nodded her head to the beat while I wondered how to take it all. Either she was the friendliest girl I had ever seen, and had more friends than anyone in the world, or else she was Sigma Nu's pass-around. Not that I minded being out with Sigma Nu's pass-around. I mean, any pass-around is better than no pass-around at all, but I did not know what the other people thought about it.

"Hell, he couldn't get a date so we fixed him up with Alicia," I imagined some guys saying in a corner table.

"Well at least he's going to get some on him tonight," another one would say.

"Hey, let's get her to pull the train," another would say, and they would approach her and I would have to beat hell out of ten or twelve guys with lightning fast karate moves and she would melt at my feet and beg for it right there in the middle of the drinking room.

"Why are you so tense?" she asked me.

"Who, me?"

"Yeah."

"I just, uh, feel uneasy around all these strangers."

"Relax. They are all good guys."

What did she mean by "good?"

"Yeah, but you're a stranger, too," I said.

"Let's dance."

"Alright," I moaned, not telling her that the last time I danced was in the 7th grade in 1965 at a sock-hop when I tried to do The Jerk with a girl I liked and I ended up looking like more of a jerk than the dance. I was too shy anyway, and when

the girl laughed at my dancing I fell on my face and the teachers thought I was doing The Alligator and kicked me out for being obscene. I did not want a repeat of that disaster.

But the band was good and there were enough people dancing so that Alicia and I were swallowed up and nobody could see me. It was a slow dance.

"Sorry about your feet," I apologized after the dance was over.

"They'll live," she smiled.

I liked her. She had a great personality.

Then the band broke into a hard rock song and I shrugged my shoulders, covered my eyes with my hands, and pretended to have an upright epileptic seizure.

"Hey, you dance pretty good," she said later, when we were walking back to the table. I felt like I had just run a hard 440-yard run.

"Let's have another drink," I said, and made mine a double.

For a half hour or more we sat in a corner table with a candle flickering in the middle, talking and joking and getting to know each other. I liked her more with each passing moment, and could tell we were becoming friends. Then the nervousness set in again as I looked into her green-brown eyes and wondered if she was attracted to me sexually. She seemed to like me, but would she scream or throw up if I made an advance?

Calm down, I told myself. Past experience reminded me that I think too much. Just play it by ear.

"I've got to go to the bathroom," she whispered, barely audible above the music, laughter, and talking in the basement.

"You have to go where?"

"The bathroom."

"Where?"

She grabbed my hand and led me upstairs. Had she said she had to go to "the bedroom?" We turned a corner and my spirits rose.

"I'll be right back," she said, and went into the bathroom. My spirits dropped back down.

The party continued and we drank more and danced more and talked more and drew closer. I was certain that success was ahead but did not know how to achieve it. Should I take Alicia up to Gary's bedroom? Should I wait until we get in my car? No, screwing in a car has no class. Only high school kids and horny bastards screw in cars. On second thought, maybe I should do it in the car.

And then it hit me. A hotel! We can get a room at a hotel! How simple!

Delighted, I turned to Alicia, who was finishing her eighth drink and looking as if it had been all Sprite and no rum. Then I grew nervous. The plan was perfect. Now the only thing to do was get her to agree.

Suddenly a cold chill swept through me, as I realized that this was a First Date. One never does it on the First Date! That most sacred of institutions, the most Holy of Holies, The First Date! The Bible says "Thou Shalt Not Screw On The First Dateth."

But God had never been out with a Sorority Girl.

Relieved by that unshakable logic, I drank a few more glasses of bourbon and 7-Up and suddenly the crowd began thinning out. The time had passed so quickly! Almost all the bottles on the tables were empty, and as people walked by I could tell by the severity of the staggers that the party was almost over.

But wasn't there supposed to be an orgy? I had not seen one naked body all night. I was disappointed, and I knew it

was time to go.

"Are you ready to go?" I asked Alicia in a thick voice.

"Oh, I guess so, if you are."

Did she want to shack up or not? I couldn't tell. Maybe I was supposed to take it for granted.

We clung together out of friendship and a need for balance as we walked to my car. My mind was a kaleidoscope of plans, ideas, and fantasies. What was I going to do?

I drove her back to her dorm, not wanting to, but too scared to suggest an alternative. I stopped in the Loading Zone in front of the dorm and turned off the car. She was sitting close to me and stared directly into my eyes.

"I really had a nice time," she said softly. Her mouth was slightly open, her lips moist.

"So did I. I'm glad you went with me."

"They like you. I think you'll get a bid."

"I hope so."

"And I like you too."

I kissed her, cursing the damned Loading Zone and cursing the fact that the evening was over. Then I suddenly drew forth a great reserve of drunken courage.

"Do you have to go in now? It's only four in the morning."

She looked up at the dorm and said quietly, "I don't think anyone will miss me if I don't go in now."

That was it, the response I wanted. Now I had to proceed cautiously, with great tact, careful not to offend her in any way.

"Uhhh...You wanna get a room?"

I knew from her shocked expression that I blew it.

"No," she said softly, smiling a little but with a trace of irritation in her voice. "I don't want to get a room."

But I had the "go" signal. What happened? I had insulted her.

"Damn," I said angrily. "I feel like a jerk."

"That's alright."

"I'm really sorry."

"Don't worry about it." She was smiling now.

"I just like to say what I feel, and that's what I felt like saying."

"It's alright," she laughed.

"I like you and I want to go out with you again, unless you are mad at me."

"I'm not mad, and I'd like to go out with you again."

She leaned over toward me and I kissed her.

"Awww, Alicia!" a voice outside the car said accusingly. We looked up and saw a couple of guys snickering and pointing at us. I gave up.

"Oh, no," she said, embarrassed.

"I don't believe my luck," I lamented. We both laughed and said goodnight.

I cursed my stupidity all the way back to Commonwealth Hall. She was a nice girl with a great personality. A normal girl, not a sex machine. The Sorority Myth was a lie.

The next night I was in a friend's room down the hall when all hell broke loose in the hallway. I walked out to see five Sigma Nu guys in front of my door.

"Hey Gullette, come over here. We have your bid," Gary shouted.

All of them congratulated me and slapped me on the back. I was handed a small white card.

"It's your bid," Gary said. "You can sign it now or later."

"Hey," a smaller guy spoke up. It was Paul, the guy Alicia was originally going

to the party with. "How did you do with Alicia last night?"

"I had a damn good time."

"Did you screw her?" he asked.

"No."

"Why not? Everybody else has." He laughed and I felt like punching him in the mouth. Why was he making her out to be a whore in front of everybody? Just because he took her out occasionally? To make himself look big? I checked my anger.

"Well," I laughed, "if I took out the proprietor of a cat house, she would say she had a headache."

They laughed and we talked for a few minutes, then they left to go downtown and drink.

After they left, I examined the card in my hand and slowly dialled Alicia's number.

"Hello?" she answered.

"Hi."

"Well hi, Kenny."

"Do you remember last night?" I asked.

"Sure."

"That's too bad."

"Oh, it wasn't too bad, if I remember right." She laughed and made me laugh too.

"Go with me to see a movie this Friday," I said.

"Great!"

We talked for a minute or two and then hung up. I looked at the white card in my hand, crumpled it slowly, and tossed it into the waste paper basket as I walked out into the hall.

"Hey, guess what?" I asked a guy who was standing by the elevator.

"What?"

"Guess who I have a date with Friday?"

He shook his head.

"A Sorority Girl."

"My God!" His jaw dropped open and he stared with dilated pupils as I strutted back into my room.



