

5-1-1956

## Belles Lettres, 1956

Eastern Kentucky University, The Canterbury Club

Follow this and additional works at: [http://encompass.eku.edu/upubs\\_belleslettres](http://encompass.eku.edu/upubs_belleslettres)

---

### Recommended Citation

Eastern Kentucky University, The Canterbury Club, "Belles Lettres, 1956" (1956). *Belles Lettres*. Paper 25.  
[http://encompass.eku.edu/upubs\\_belleslettres/25](http://encompass.eku.edu/upubs_belleslettres/25)

This Newsletter is brought to you for free and open access by the Literary Magazines at Encompass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Belles Lettres by an authorized administrator of Encompass. For more information, please contact [Linda.Sizemore@eku.edu](mailto:Linda.Sizemore@eku.edu).

# Belles Lettres

*Eastern Kentucky  
State College*

RICHMOND, KENTUCKY

1955-1956



# Belles Lettres

An annual anthology of student writing sponsored and published by the  
Canterbury Club of Eastern Kentucky State College  
at Richmond, Kentucky

## STAFF

*Editor*.....DIANA MILLER  
*Business Manager*.....THOM McELFRESH  
*Circulation Manager*.....JERRY TAYLOR  
*Faculty Sponsor*.....P. M. GRISE, PH.D.

---

Volume Twenty-two

1955-56

Number One

---

## CONTENTS

SUNSET AT SEA.....	GEORGE WOLFFORD	3
HIS PRAYER.....	MITZI MUELLER	3
REHEARSAL FOR LIVING.....	JERRY TAYLOR	4
STOP THE STORM.....	WILLIAM J. WILKINS	4
WHEN YOU STAND ALONE.....	CHARLES GARY GRIGSBY	4
OSCAR.....	GEORGE WOLFFORD	5
CON AMOR.....	JERRY TAYLOR	6
I AM YOUR LOVE.....	ANNE SUE BARNES	7
TO DEATH.....	CHARLES GARY GRIGSBY	7
TIME LONGING.....	CHARLENE MULLINS	8
MY PART.....	RAY E. WILLIAMS	8
COKES AND CORSAGES.....	JERRY TAYLOR	9
FOR NO REASON.....	M. WILSON	10
MRS. DEATHRIDGE AND WILLIAM OF ORANGE	THOM McELFRESH	11
FUTILITY OF LOVE.....	JACK K. RODGERS	14
CULLY.....	SHARON BROWN	15
WORDS.....	JERRY TAYLOR	16
LOVE.....	MITZI MUELLER	16
MORNING MIST.....	DAVID F. SENN	16
THE DELAY.....	BETTY SEXTON	17
BUDDING BIOLOGIST.....	MITZI MUELLER	18
INNOCENCE.....	RAY E. WILLIAMS	18
INTOXICATION.....	SHARON BROWN	18
JIRO.....	MICHIKO KANNO	19
SWIMMING IN THE OCEAN.....	NANCY LEE ROSS	20
APRIL FOOL.....	MITZI MUELLER	20
POME.....	THOM McELFRESH	21
DEATH.....	SHARON BROWN	21
WHERE ANGELS FEAR.....	HAROLD E. SMITH	22
THERE IN THAT APRIL LAND.....	THOM McELFRESH	23
AN AUTUMN AFTERNOON.....	BARBARA E. WHITE	24
REASONS.....	JERRY TAYLOR	24
FIVE MINUTES MORE.....	PATRICIA BARKLEY	25
NATAL DAY.....	SHARON BROWN	25
THE STRANGER.....	BERT BACH	26
HEAVEN IS A SPHERICAL PLACE.....	DORIS ROSE COX	27

## FOREWORD

This 1956 volume of BELLES LETTRES has been prepared with three aims in mind: to include as many different kinds of writings as possible, to include the writings of as many students as possible, and at the same time to maintain as high a literary standard as possible.

The editor and the staff of BELLES LETTRES wish to present this twenty-second volume with an expression of gratitude to its readers and to its contributors, who make this publication possible, and with a hope that it has achieved its aims and that it merits the continued interest of the public.

## SUNSET AT SEA

GEORGE WOLFFORD

The sky moves above us like fuzzy  
wads of cotton hanging on invisible  
threads.  
Behind us they are white and orderly  
and infinite.  
Ahead, the sun plays tricks and the  
same clouds are both white and gold.  
Mine eyes are drawn along the silvery  
ocean trail and into the golden  
gleaming orb as it disappears into  
the mist, the aura of mystery that  
covers the whole western rim of my  
world.  
At once, the clouds begin to darken in  
the sky.

In seconds, our light is gone. The  
clouds and the sea grow darker and  
begin to look angry.  
Waves that seemed small in the comforting  
sunshine now loom in the  
night like white-feathered Indians.  
The air grows cool and the wind whips  
into a man's bones.

The sun is gone from the sea.

At the hour of his passing, millions  
of stars come to cuckold him, but  
their weak lights are a mockery.  
Sailors and fishermen, those men of  
the sea, abide with the night as  
though she were an unwanted mistress.  
They steer by the stars and have  
thoughts of beauty toward the  
way the moon turns the sea to  
solid silver, but they long for  
morning, when the red fog in the  
east gives birth to that warm friend.

## HIS PRAYER

MITZI MUELLER

He said goodnight and he slipped into bed,  
And remembered prayers had been left unsaid.  
But the day had been long,  
And as his eyes shut tight,  
He whispered, "God, please excuse me tonight."  
And somewhere above him his Father smiled  
And glanced at the Throne where in front were piled  
The records of deeds he had done that day there—  
Kind, good ones quite worthy to offer in Prayer.  
"Sleep tight, little servant;  
Well done, faithful one."  
And the Lord blessed the sleep  
Of His tired little son.

## REHEARSAL FOR LIVING

JERRY TAYLOR

This life we live is a strange thing—  
I call it only a dream—  
But some like to think of life as a  
truth—where things *are* what they seem.

This life we live is a short thing—  
It lasts but for a day—  
Then, as the sun gives way to night,  
We, too, to death give sway.

I know not why I'm living—if  
I can call it that—  
For life to me is warm champagne—  
Stale and gone quite flat!

So, I cannot help but think, when my  
Life I muse in giving—  
That there must be something better than  
This—and life is merely a rehearsal for living.

## STOP THE STORM

WILLIAM J. WILKINS

It is dusk. Clouds are gathering on the horizon and unless the wind changes we are sure to have a storm. Some people, however, act as though they were unaware of anything unusual. Perhaps storms are not unnatural. Some people act as though they must hurry to accomplish all before the storm begins. Others refuse to be troubled and continue their day to day existence, unmindful of forces over which they have no control. These people will be like the woman who gets caught in the rain while she is taking her clothes off of the line.

If you will look at the clouds you will see that this is going to be the worst storm of all. This storm will leave scars that will take a long time to heal. It is not surprising that some people react strangely to the approaching clouds. It gives you a strange feeling to be able to see the approaching destroyer and still be able to do nothing to stop it. Somehow you feel that someone or something must know the secret of how to stop the storm and yet it rolls on, ever nearer. When the clouds are off in the distance like that you can not tell how fast they are moving so you do not know how long you have. Someone stop the storm. Move the clouds away and let the sun shine just once in our lifetime, if only for an instant.

## WHEN YOU STAND ALONE

CHARLES GARY GRIGSBY

There comes a time in each man's life  
When he comes to the place in the road  
Where his wagon's too broad for the narrowing path  
And he's compelled to pack his load.  
Then it mattereth not, how, in the wagon strong,  
He stood staunch, however drone,  
But how he stands with his feet on the ground;  
How he stands, when he stands alone.

# OSCAR

GEORGE WOLFFORD

Every year around the first of spring, I get an urge to do my part in helping nature. I mean I like animals and flowers and children and things like that, being as I am just an old country boy at heart. Things just aren't like they were when I was younger back on the farm and kindly had hopes of marrying one of Si Hotchkin's six daughters and raising me a big family. I came from a big family: me and Eddie and Sol and the four girls. I courted every one of the Hotchkins' girls even though there was 20 years difference between Sadie, the oldest, and Mary Sue, the baby of the lot.

I reckon that I have spent a third of my lifetime evenings down there on Si's front porch. I sat there on the swing with Sadie and Ida Belle and for a while with Annie Lou. (Annie Lou was the biggest of Si's young'uns, bigger even than her brother Lute, and old Lute could lift a six-months old calf.) I sat on the swing with Annie Lou, and she really liked to swing, excepting when she had gentlemen company. I found out why, too. Once while we was sittin' there, the hooks pulled out of the ceilin' and when we hit the floor that swing busted into kindlin' wood. Si never would fix up that swing, so Annie Lou and I finished up our sittin' and courtin' on the front steps.

You know, now, I courted every one of them girls, and every one of them went and got married except Lulie May. I always kindly thought that Lulie May and me got along better than the rest, mostly 'cause we was more alike than the rest. However, I had to quit courtin' Lulie May when her daddy had her sent off for a while. Now don't get me wrong: Lulie May wasn't tetched or anything, but she was kindly slow to learn, so her paw sent her off to a school that is for slow people.

I don't know as I ever really loved any of them girls but I always figured a feller ought to get him a woman and settle down and raise a few kids. I always thought I might have married me one of them if I hadn't come up here and gone into business. What I mean is, I should have waited around just a little bit longer for one of them.

What I mean about going into business: things never were too good for making money around Pactolus, so Maw and Paw was always onto me to go off somewhere and get a job. They really thought it was something when Paw's rich brother came down from his automobile business in Detroit and offered me a job with him. Ike ain't really what you'd call a rich uncle, but he went up to Detroit and put up a used car lot and make a whole scud of money selling cars to people from home that had gone up to Detroit to work. He came down and told Paw that business was so good he couldn't handle the lot all by himself, being as he was getting old and all. What he really wanted was just somebody to do all the hard work around the place. Paw thought it would be a good job for me being as I was young (36) and could learn the automobile business from the ground up. Well, I went home with Ike and went to shining cars and other such work, but it wasn't no time till I got moved up to salesman. It wasn't that I was such a good salesman, but Uncle Ike got so he stayed drunk all the time and couldn't manage the lot. He drank all the time and that is the main reason why I've finally decided to leave him and go back to Pactolus.

Now I'm a kind of an easy going guy with a few old fashioned ideas. When I first came to Detroit, I wanted to bring Old Shep and a few of the chickens, just to keep me company and help out so's we wouldn't have to buy eggs. I had them all ready to go, and then Ike wouldn't let me take them. He said that there wasn't any place to keep them. Now, that didn't bother me too bad, but after I'd stayed in that apartment with Ike that first winter, I really needed a pet. I got me some pigeons and kept them in a hutch up on the roof. The landlady didn't like the pigeons but she didn't say much because Uncle Ike was her star boarder. She didn't say anything, I mean, until I brought in a little green snake that I caught in the park. That thing wouldn't bother anyone and wouldn't even have gone out of the room except that Uncle Ike got drunk and came in and Sammy (the snake)

crawled up on Ike's hat and coiled around the brim. Ike saw him and only thought his D.T.'s were getting worse. I saw Sammy, but I just thought it was another one of his loud hat-bands. Sammy did look nice there on that hat. Well, the landlady saw that snake and she went into conniptions. When she came down from off the chandelier, she told me that if I ever brought another animal in that house she'd have me lawed.

I went for two more springs and didn't even have as much as a tumblebug for a pet. Ike got so he'd stay drunk just about all the time and he wasn't very much company when he was sober. One night he took me out to dinner with some feller he said was an important client. We went down to a real nice place called Joe's Bar and Grill. Ike and his friend went over in one corner and left me at the bar. I was sitting there drinking a beer and a man came up to me, and he really did look downhearted. He had a big tear in his eye as he told me his story. He said that he had been a sailor and that in one of his three trips around the world he had come upon a true friend, who had stayed with him for life. This long-time friend was Oscar the Oyster from Galveston, Texas. The sad part of this sailor's story was that he had taken a job with the Anderson Alkali Company of Death Valley, California, and that there wasn't enough water there to keep Oscar alive. This gentleman's story touched my heart, and I then became the owner of Oscar, the pride of my life.

Oscar moved in with me and Ike and became a real solid guy. We made a home for him in a saucer and he seemed to love his home and his meals. He liked oyster crackers and 7-up more than any other food. Our oyster stayed with us for quite a few years and was really good company for me. Every spring when I got homesick I would go over and talk to Oscar. He must have understood how I felt, because he would lay there and look at me real mournful like and kind of ooze as if to try to talk back to me. His crowning glory, though, came the day he presented me with a pearl. I sold the pearl and bought a '46 Dodge from Uncle Ike with the money. I used to take Oscar for rides on Sunday. He liked to drive down by the lake because it always reminded him of home.

Now, you know that I have left that place. Here is the facts behind it. I'll never go back around there after my heart-breaking experience. I came in the apartment last Tuesday after work and couldn't find Oscar anywhere around. When I really saw what had happened, I like to have died. My uncle was laying asleep on the bed and beside him on a night table was the mute evidence of a slaughter: A split oyster shell and an empty tomato juice can. My drunk, gluttonous uncle had swallowed my only friend whole.

## CON AMOR

JERRY TAYLOR

My life had meant nothing  
    Until yesterday.  
Even everyday events have brought  
me new joy  
    Since yesterday.  
I feel as though I were only dreaming—  
In my most fanciful fantasies—  
My imagination never ran so  
far afield.  
    For I had lost you long ago,  
    But yesterday,  
We met again  
    And fell in love!!

# I AM YOUR LOVE

ANNA SUE BARNES

I am your love.  
I may be the most conscious factor of your life;  
Then, too, I may be hidden within the deepest depths of you.

I am your hidden courage  
Your faith  
Your life.  
I am always near you when doubts and fears and emptiness  
Begin to fill your mind.

I am your relief.  
I lift your burdens and make each day as beautiful and  
Golden as the closing sunset:  
Embers of gold  
Slowly fading away,  
Promising the future  
A more golden tomorrow.

I am to you as the twilight—  
So peaceful and clear.  
I lift you as the sun  
Rising in the morn brings the dawn:  
New, Pure and Glorious.

I am your hidden desires,  
Your dreams.  
Of these, I help you build each moment  
For I am your inspiration and hope.

You turn to me for wisdom and understanding;  
I share and am your past  
But most of all  
I am your destiny.

Within me lie your fervent desires—  
The hope of tomorrow.  
I  
Only I  
Know of your passion.  
Passion?  
Or Love?  
Either,  
For I am these.

# TO DEATH

CHARLES GARY GRIGSBY

Wasted lands are as far as I can see,  
With shifting sands and misery.  
Pseudo-cities of sorcery  
With obscure springs—non-entity.  
Scorched throat and glassy eyes—  
Burning sun and prodigious skies—  
“All hope is gone,” my poor heart cries,  
To Death my soul I now devise.

## TIME LONGING

CHARLENE MULLINS

Time ticking away  
Night into day.  
Hearts throbbing and pulses  
    rapidly beating.  
Sounds, they keep repeating  
While time is hurriedly fleeting  
For some heavenly meeting  
That seems to send its greeting.  
Humanity, its pleasures and  
    countless treasures seeking:  
Looking, searching but never  
    finding  
Only to be satisfied at reminding,  
Reminding me of constant longing  
But never satisfied at belonging.  
Time just keeps going,  
As I hear the steeple bell  
    dong, dong, donging.  
This heartless, non-pulsating,  
    yet thronging  
Whispering sound, ringing through  
    the air with a thronging  
    that forever keeps bong,  
    bong, bonging.  
This is farewell to a longing.

## MY PART

RAY E. WILLIAMS

I am a particle of dust,  
A bit of American soil  
Known throughout the world  
As bold, confident—sure of myself.

I lay in the ditch beside the road  
To watch the British pass;  
As their blood and America's flowed,  
I drifted out to sea.

The red blood of Grave Men  
was spilled on me in the East;  
On horses hooves and wagon wheels  
I made my way out West.

I clung to the steel  
To watch America grow;  
I, a speck of dust,  
A bit of American soil.

## COKES AND CORSAGES

JERRY TAYLOR

"Hold still. I can't fix this hoop if you don't hold still."

Ann gingerly held up her formal and cringed from the verbal onslaught. "Don't holler at Ann," she whispered. "Ann'll be good—Ann promises."

At the sound of the familiar baby-talk, the heavy girl on the floor looked up and began to laugh. "Well, for Pete's sake, hold still. You're more trouble than you're worth—you know that, don't you?"

In answer, Ann shook her black head and winked.

"Well, thar' ye be. I finally got it right. Now be careful—if you knock it out of shape, you'll fix it yourself."

As Ann whirled out of the room and danced up the hall back to her own domain, Chub pushed herself up off the floor and reached for her coke.

"Hey, Roomie, can you fix this strap? I can't get it to stay pinned."

Chub held out her hand and her fingers caressed the cool faille of Roomie's formal. She set down her coke and sat down at the sewing machine. As she slid the material under the presser foot of the Necchi, its loud whirr drowned out the whiney voice telling all about "Brother Baker's Bargain Store" over the local radio station.

"Here, now at least you won't fall apart *at* the dance. Afterwards maybe—but not *at* the dance!!"

"Thanks, Roomie. I'll do the same for you sometime."

"Yeah," Chub laughed bitterly. "Four or five times a week!"

Pat's blonde "light 'n bright" head bent over the slide fastener in her dress. She struggled valiantly with the stubborn zipper and finally succeeded in zipping it to the top—along with a good-sized hunk of scarce flesh. She looked up and glanced at the clock. "7:30!! Yipes. Hey, Roomie, is that clock right?"

"Not if it's like everything else in this room."

Suddenly the loud, insistent grind of the buzzer, like the ominous drone of a dentist's drill, bored into the hurried silence.

"That can't be Randy—not at 7:30—he's never been on time in his life—much less early! It's probably the flowers and I can't possibly go and get 'em. I'm not nearly ready. Roomie, you go for me—please!!"

"O.K."

Minutes later Chub returned, bearing a white box in loving fingers. "Here they are."

"What kind are they?"

"I dunno. Didn't open 'em. They are *yours*, you know. Randy doesn't go around sending *me* flowers."

Pat opened the box and looked inside. She turned up her nose disdainfully. Carnations! Cheapskate!! She slung the box over her shoulder in the general direction of her desk. Luckily, it landed on her bed—wrong side up. Chub picked up her coke.

At eight, Ann came down for inspection and some minor repairs to her home-made hoop. Chub and Pat "oohed" and "aahhed" over her newly-borrowed formal and the two huge gardenias Dave had sent her. When Ann had left to await the arrival of her knight in shining armor and bow tie, Chub settled down with a romance magazine. She had just started down the road with a girl hobo who was running away from fourteen brothers and sisters and a drunkard father who had killed their mother, when the buzzer droned again. She looked up at her roommate. Pat looked darling—as usual—but standing there by the door in her pink formal, pinning on her flowers, she looked unusually innocent. "And that," reflected Chub, "is tough for my roommate to do!"

"Well, what's the verdict?"

"You'll do. At least you don't look any *worse* than usual."

Roomie floated off down the hall in her birthday-cake-pink dress and rounded the corner to the steps. Chub turned back toward the room and surveyed the wreckage. Roomie's clothes were just where she had taken

them off—all over the room. Chub tossed her magazine on the bed and began to pick up clothes. As she reached into her closet for a hanger, her hand grazed a slick, soft surface and she look unseeingly at the clip-hanger where her formal hung. She ran her hand down over the smooth taffeta bodice and over the prickly net skirt, wishing—longing. Through the blur of her forming tears she could see the faded orange and green of the price tags swinging haughtily back and forth. The last thing she thought of before the tears fell was how horrible the orange and green looked next to the dusky, burnished, once birthday-cake-pink of the formal she had never worn.

## FOR NO REASON

M. WILSON

It shouldn't 'a happened. But it don't make no difference now.

See, we was walking through 58th Street park to school and everybody was throwin' snowballs and goofin' off. So what happens? This little squirrel was sittin' there on a tree just mindin' his own business and some guy up and clobbers him with a snowball. For no reason. It hit him hard, right in the head, and knocked him on the ground.

He was a young one and when he got in that snow his footwork wasn't too good.

I knew what would happen then. All them guys started hollerin' and yellin' like crazy and throwin' at that squirrel. They was excited and throwin' wild so not more'n a couple hit him. But that squirrel looked around and knew he wasn't ever gonna get away.

He got real shook and made for the next tree over instead of the one he was in. He didn't get nowhere with them hippty-hop jumps. That stretch must'a looked like a thousand miles.

I got a funny feeling in my stomach and I knew he had it too. Him just a little brown speck and them guys wanted blood.

This one guy ran up and stomped him right in the middle. Then they was all around screamin' and hollerin' like idiots.

I couldn't take it; I slugged that guy right behind the ear. He was real surprised. He didn't know anybody was there that would stand up and fight. Them other guys crowded around 'cause they wanted to put me down.

He gets up and sez, real sly like, "What is it with you?"

I didn't say nothing.

He sez, "You think you can take us all?"

Then this other guy mocks me and sez, "He's buckin' for a striped sun-tan like his big brother."

They all laughed like the rats they was. Everybody knows my brother never got a fair shake. Then somebody said sumpin' about I was crazy or sumpin' and they left. That broke it up for right then, but I knew there'd be another time.

I've hated before, but I hate them guys the worst. They thought they'd get me but I had an ace. At home, under my pillow, I had a gun. They wasn't gonna get me. I knew I'd win.

Well, I scraped some snow up over the squirrel and patted it down with my foot. It made a little mound and I knew I could find it again.

About a hour ago I got that guy in an alley up by school and I shot him. I fixed him and his wise mouth.

I told him and he cried and then I shot him. I stomped on him, too, he wasn't gonna get away with that. It had to be done else he would'a got me.

I thought I'd come in and tell you guys. It don't make no difference now. When I run back to the park to tell my friend, he wasn't there. A damn cat dug him up and et him. When I saw them little pieces of fur laying around, I quit!

# MRS. DEATHRIDGE AND WILLIAM OF ORANGE

TOM MCELFRISH

It was a big sprawling old house on North Renfro Street. It had seen far too many better days and hadn't heard the sound of paint brush or repairing hammer for twenty years. We loved it.

We had painted the rooms in scandalous colors and hung erotic pictures indiscriminately. The landlady let us keep her refrigerator stocked with beer, and there were no neighbors near to disturb with our all-night record sessions and philosophy discussions.

The third floor, like the second, had four square high-ceilinged rooms and a bath. The first floor was Mrs. Deathridge's apartment. She, like the house and her whole fine middle-class family, had seen too many better days.

She rented her Victorian mansion out to college men, lived on the pittance of rent she charged us and smoked Russian cigarets in an anti-macassar heaven with lace curtains.

Occasionally she had three or four ladies in for tea and bridge and gossip. Even more occasionally she treated herself to a western movie at the local bijou. That was her social life.

She ranted at us for burning cigaret marris into her floors, and embraced the graduates who were leaving her home forever.

She made no pretense of cleaning the upper reaches of the house. She said that since we seemed to prefer filth to order she would let us have our way. That was that. The beer cans and the old sports magazines and the socialist newspapers collected in the hallways and remained.

We rather liked the atmosphere of the place. The windows were dirty and the beds unmade. The dangling center lights were canted out of place with mazes of electrical wire to coffee pots and shavers. Books were strewn everywhere.

My room—Jack's and mine—was on the front corner of the third floor. The west windows looked down Renfro Street toward the campus and the countryside beyond. The windows in front stared across the street at the Pi Psi House—a local sorority. The girls never pulled down a shade and neither did we. The townspeople were gratified, because, they said, they had known about those wild college students all along.

Tuesday morning I said to Jack, "Jack, this situation is intolerable. He has lived over there for two weeks and hasn't said a word." Jack didn't say anything. He never does.

"Phil is pining away to a slob on the second floor. Do you suppose we could get silent-boy over there to trade with Phil? That would about complete the menage up here. And Phil would be among friends. Agreed?"

"Agreed!" he said.

The friends I spoke of were seven of the eight of us on floor three. Phil was a fashion-design student and a little strange around the edged, but we didn't mind, for while we lacked his particular strangeness, the rest of us were a fairly mal-adjusted lot, too.

Jack was perhaps the steadiest of the lot. He was an accountant-to-be, but he liked wild friends and wild parties.

Across the hall in front two music majors lived in quiet disorder. One played cello at all hours and the other accompanied him on a bent French Horn. They also collected jazz records.

Behind us lived Ray Blackburn. He was pleasant, if stupid. He had come to college on a football scholarship, as the regents liked to call it, anachronous as the words are. He broke both legs in the first game, but he held the college to its contract to support him for four years. He was dragging sixteen hours of history, as I recall. His roommate had money. That's enough to remember about him.

In the other corner next to the bathroom lived Brit Campbell who was passing sixteen hours of history. He was an expert even then on the French revolution. It was his roommate of whom I spoke to Jack.

And me, well, I was a frustrated actor. Still am.

"Jack," I said that Tuesday morning, "Let us ask him if he will trade off with Phil."

I went down to get Phil and Jack brought Brit's roomie over. Over the way back I collected Dick and Avery—the two music majors—and we held a council of war in the bathroom.

Brit's poor silent roomie didn't have a chance. By noon he was gone away below stairs and Phil was enthroned on the third floor. I was prompted to make a large sign which said simply "Us" and put it at the head of the stairs under a "No Parking" sign we had borrowed from the city.

Tuesday night we had a house warming. We brought Mrs. Deathridge up with the beer and toasted her as queen of the May or something. We blended our thin drawling baritones in Auld Lang Syne and a couple of party songs that every college man learns eventually.

Mrs. Deathridge wasn't at all shocked at us. She seemed pleased that we could rouse ourselves to such high spirits out of our usual lethargy. She didn't stay long, but she left her warmth after her as she went away. Jack and I even had a short period of remorse and cleaned the room a little. At midnight we took a pile of newspapers out and burned them in the incinerator.

My head ached a little from the beer and smoke, but it cleared as we watched the flame leap up from the rusty barrel and watched the smoke thin out in column to the sky.

We sat on the back steps of that old house on North Renfro Street; he thought about the girl he was going to marry at home and I enacted little cuttings from *Twelfth Night*—standing as Malvolio on the slanting cellar door.

Back upstairs the house warming was getting a little loud. Maury Vance, the boy with money, was bragging about his father's used car agency. We didn't mind really. He was a boor at times, but at least he was a positive person. He knew what he wanted. We could usually shut him up before he made a fool of himself. That night we sent him out for food at the all-night diner and he was sufficiently sober to be quiet when he came back.

That was Tuesday. On Thursday William arrived. He was from Orange, New Jersey, and his revolution on North Renfro Street was bloodless if bitter.

He was a second cousin to one of Mrs. Deathridge's bridge partners. He didn't sweep her off her feet. A woman of forty-two doesn't easily sweep, but she did weaken and none too gradually to his brilliantine charm. Society accepted her as a widow of long standing. She had known passion but long ago, and William awakened in her things she hadn't thought about in years.

He took her to dinner the following Monday and to a movie on Tuesday. He had money, she told us, and was retiring from business in time to enjoy it.

Our dirty, weather-beaten, old home seemed to attract him as much as did Mrs. Deathridge. The next Saturday while she was dressing for dinner he came up the stairs to look at the house and at us.

Jack and I were playing gin when he looked in the door and spoke to us. We knew who he was and welcomed him as a rival for the lady's affection. While we talked we became aware that it would only be a matter of time until there would be a new and permanent tenant on the first floor.

There was no more Stoic group than we as we watched them off to Lexington to be married a week or so later. The battle for our happy home was on.

I got the first indication of it the following week. I was showering when William walked in. We never locked and seldom closed a door. He was wearing a coverall and had a bucket and scrub brush with him. I finished my shower and fled.

After classes that afternoon, I found the bathroom unrecognizable. It had been scrubbed into ship-shape condition; the mound of empty shave creme and tooth paste tubes was gone and the venetian blind no longer sagged.

The pile of trash was gone from the hall and our sign "Us" had been removed.

William was a handy man. He had retired from business to become a putterer, and putter he did. All over the house he puttered. Mrs. Deathridge—we still called her that and at the moment I cannot remember William's last name—stood on the shaggy lawn and watched men from town paint and repair the exterior of the house. William put a dust cap on her and sent her around to every window to swab away the beloved dirt.

After that we locked our doors.

Phil drew up a color cartoon of William complete with paint brush and mop, which hung for a week on our bathroom door and which I still have somewhere. William took no notice of it, or at least, registered no reaction. We finally took it away and gave up on the bathroom. It stayed clean. It even smelled clean.

For a week nothing happened. Either it was the calm before the storm or William had grown tired of the do-it-yourself kick. We hoped for a return of the old disorder, but we prepared for a new onslaught of soap.

On a Friday afternoon Mrs. Deathridge appeared in my doorway. Jack was gone for the weekend. The others were away for the day or a date or something.

The floor was dusty. The beds were unmade. Tennis rackets, shoes, socks, luggage spilled out of the closet. The center of the room was dominated by an ancient round dining table. It was piled high in dog-eared play scripts, books, dirty coffee cups, a pair of white buck shoes that Jack had been cleaning, my typewriter and more, mostly junk.

It was pleasant and cheerful. The orange of the last sun glow gilded the room and the pleasant looking landlady standing in the door.

"Come in and chat," I said.

"I can't," she said, "William and I are re-arranging the cellar. He's going to burn some trash. He just wondered if you had anything you wanted out of the way."

"Mrs. Deathridge, my dear, this room is cheerful. It is also dirty and we equate our dirt and disorder with our happiness. We don't have anything to be burned."

She did something I had never seen her do before. She turned up her nose a little, squinting it up at some imagined odor. "But you really should do something about all this mess. I don't see how you stand it."

"Mrs. Deathridge, I am shocked and saddened. What is this attitude you take toward us and our happy, carefree, college ways?" I put on my best shocked and saddened face, but she had seen me act too often. She turned up her nose a little higher and disappeared down the steps.

The lines were stretched. The eight of us resisted as best we could. We dirtied the bathroom. We stacked paper in the hall. We distributed more erotica.

The second floor fell long before we did. We saw new brooms in the hall and a new runner on the hall floor. William painted the walls and the doors and the inhabitants on 2 put neat little cards with their names and home addresses on the doors.

We reacted in character to the encroaching cleanliness. Dick and Avery started doing their laundry in the bathtub and dried it on lines in the hall. Ray brought home fragrant socks from the gym and stacked them in the corners. Phil splattered paint and Brit scattered papers. Jack and I started a collection of Coke bottles and beer cans which we collected from anywhere and ricked up in the hall.

The spring wore on and William's smiling face was with us always. He didn't seem to realize that we were spoiling his efforts to have a clean, well-ordered rooming house.

Eventually our long-loved Mrs. Deathridge grew like him. She aired their apartment, stopped smoking and looked shocked if we answered the phone in our shorts.

It was a pretty even match we thought. There were eight of us. We thought we could make far more work than he could clean up; we were wrong.

In May when school was almost over for me, Elissa appeared. Elissa was 45, colored, and had a decided aversion to dirt. The third floor was her sole responsibility. For two weeks we fought, like gentlemen of course, but desperately. Our happy and carefree and dirty days were gone.

Mrs. Deathridge hung blue drapes in our room; William sanded the floors; Elissa made our beds and hung up our shirts and arranged our desks. I have somewhere a script for a very beautiful historical play which a friend of mine wrote; I haven't seen it since the first day she cleaned.

So we came clean. We sweated and swept under our beds. We stacked the records neatly in the corner and threw the beer cans and trash out the window into a rambling rose bush.

Term ended with May that year. Jack and I graduated and left forever Mrs. Deathridge's house on North Renfro Street. Dick and Avery were transferring to Columbia for Senior year. Maury Vance was staying on. Phil had had enough; he went to live in a cave, I think. Brit and Ray were staying on too. They engaged our old room with the view of the Pi Psi House.

Mrs. Deathridge met Jack and me in the hall as we were carting out the last of my luggage. Jack's girl was there, so Mrs. D. was restrained with him, but she hugged me and wished me luck.

I looked at her, holding her at arms length. I could see Elissa on the steps. William, dressed as usual in a coverall, was leaning on a new band saw. "Mrs. Deathridge," I said, "Fanny, yours was the tragedy. And you never knew. He killed your individual soul and made you think he was doing you a favor. Farewell. Remember the lot of us once in a while. Remember that while we weren't the brightest men who lived here, we were the dirtiest."

## FUTILITY OF LOVE

JACK K. RODGERS

I once beheld a silver star  
set fast in an ebony sky,  
And, as with you, I came  
to love  
That star as nights went by.

Its lustre was of diamonds  
which I find, dear, in your  
eyes,  
With radiance so pure and  
sweet,  
I pray it never dies.

The tranquil beauty of it all, it  
made my heart to sing,  
And 'neath the force of  
such a love,  
I feared no mortal being.

I strove, in vain, to seek a way  
to make this treasure mine.  
But alas, to stand alone  
awe-struck,  
Myself, I must resign.

Now, at night, in solitude I  
stand with reverent gaze  
on high,  
Asking myself o'er and o'er  
again,  
The answerless question, "Why?"

# CULLY

SHARON BROWN

I had told Cully to go away, but the vision of her remained—wearing red toreador pants with white laces and scuffed bucks. The vision glided toward me, and I could feel the pressure of Cully's arm on my warm neck and hear the softness of her breathing. "Laura," I said, but as I spoke I realized that my voice was harsh and loud. The voice did not frighten the vision. Cully beckoned.

Only the priest seem undisturbed at my outcry. His voice merely grew in volume for a moment, and then it slid back to its usual mumble. The people turned and stared. The old man across the aisle looked toward me with faded green eyes and then began again to lip the words silently as he followed the service.

The kneeling bench was hard against my knees; I moved slightly to let the warm, pounding blood flow through my shins. I let hot lids drop over my burning eyes to cover the scene of Cully, but she was there on the backs of the lids—smiling, gliding, laughing, dancing. I shuddered; my eyes remained closed. I spoke silently to myself and said Laura's name again and again.

The people stood. I tried to stand with them, but she kept flitting back and forth among the slim backs. The kneeling bench was hard against my knees.

The words grew louder. She was there in the words.

"Laura!"

The people turned. I left abruptly.

Outside the sunbeams struck my uncovered head; my coat was heavy on my shoulders. The air was warm and soft, as it had been that day. I breathed heavily and felt my body move as I inhaled the air. I walked and the sidewalk was hot beneath my feet. I turned into the park and walked gingerly on the grass. I heard her silent step—she was beside me pressing her cool hand in mine as I knew she would. Suddenly I was glad that my weakness had let me come. We did not speak.

We sat on the moist bank of the pond and smelled the sultry odor of the hot sun and stagnant water. The bark of the tree was rough against my back. Once I stirred to remove my jacket. My eyes met Cully's warm stare. I smiled.

"How are you?"

Her lips trembled with anticipation as she spoke. "Daddy, it's been so long since Sunday, and you said you'd never come back. You said it couldn't be real, and I waited for you today, but you were late. I knew you'd come though, Daddy, I just knew you would."

I squeezed her hand. "Are they good to you?" I whispered.

She shrugged her shoulders. "It's like at school," she said indifferently.

"That's strange," I said, "I thought it would be different."

She shrugged again. "It's not bad."

I was seized with the thought that had tortured me. A chill ran slowly—oh, so slowly—up my spine and the sensation reached my arms.

"Cully," I said, "Cully, do you think it was my fault?"

Her arm was against my warm neck and I longed to hear her soft breathing.

"No, Daddy," she whispered huskily, "No, it wasn't your fault."

I stood and pulled her to her feet beside me. She looked at me and her face revealed her still alert mind. I kissed her cold forehead, and hated to part with her.

I left her by the pond. Once I turned and saw her wave a pale hand. The next time I looked only the blur of the red toreador pants was visible.

My feet touched the sidewalk. I began to hurry home. The sun beat down upon me. I could still feel her presence. This Sunday had been like all Sundays for the past four months—the place the same, the words the same, the reassurance the same and still unlasting. I hurried away from the pond.

My tread was almost silent as I walked across the porch. I heard voices and paused at the doorway.  
The voice was that of Laura, my wife. "I'm so worried about Bruce. He somehow hasn't been the same since Cully died."

## WORDS

JERRY TAYLOR

Words flow freely from a new dipt pen  
Words of beauty, love and bliss—  
As easily they flow—and quiet—  
As did my love when first we kis't

Yes, words flow freely—as arrows fly—  
And cut and pierce like new-honed  
blades.

I would that the wounds your words  
have left  
Would heal half so quickly as the  
arrow's mark.

## LOVE

MITZI MUELLER

I sometimes think it isn't wise  
to fall in love so young;  
So many dreams left dormant,  
so many songs unsung.  
And legion other duties,  
neglected and denied,  
With youthful romance threatening  
to turn all else aside.  
But Love respects no person, and  
it happens everywhere.  
In spite of all I say, I'm caught—  
But somehow, I don't care!

## MORNING MIST

DAVID F. SENN

Morning mist and dew are here;  
The sun has not awakened though;  
The sounds are few and far between;  
Soon the world will wake I know.

Before the day of turmoil starts,  
I want to ask your guidance Lord;  
Much to do, and time is short;  
Truest of maps, Thy Holy Word.

Silence has broken, day is here;  
The sweet nothingness is gone.  
The world's awake, or soon will be—  
Then time, and love, and all moves on.

## THE DELAY

BETTY SEXTON

"Confound it! These cigars get worse every day." He placed the cigar in his mouth, then took a couple of long drags. The exhaled smoke shot forth like the air from a great bellows. "Will you p-l-e-a-s-e stop twirling that glass in your hands or whatever you're doing?"

"Sorry."

"Dammit! Why can't these trains run on schedule?" He shoved his martini to one side and grabbed hold of the table. "I'd like to give that engineer a piece of my mind. None of 'em are any good . . . got no efficiency—that's it. Just plain stubborn carelessness."

"Try to relax. That kind of talk won't do any good."

"You don't think so, huh? Wait till I get back to Chicago. I'll let the president of this here confounded railroad know what I think of his trains. I'll ask him how he'd like to sit stranded in the wilderness for five hours."

"It's just three and a half hours, to be exact. If you'll wait a little while, it might be five hours. Maybe ten. Who knows?"

"Oh, you just don't understand. You don't have any worries. You don't have to be at the most important business conference of the year."

"No, . . . I guess not."

"I've got work to do. Why in heaven's name can't they get this thing moving? Who ever heard of taking hours to shove a little snow off the tracks?"

The man twirling the glass stopped and wiped the window with his hand. He gazed thoughtfully at the tiny white specks hammering against the window. "I wouldn't exactly call four feet of drifted snow "a little," especially since it seems to be drifted even deeper farther up the tracks."

"No matter—I should think they could do *something*. Waiter! Here! Bring me another drink. A martini. Anything for you?"

"No, thanks."

"Shouldn't drink so much, but a man's got to do something. Here comes the conductor. Conductor, when in heaven's name will this thing get moving?"

"Wish I knew," the conductor answered. Without stopping for further comment, he walked over to the waiter, who was carrying a tray of drinks. "Listen, has that man asked for another drink?"

"Yes, sir."

"Serve him this one but no more. If he doesn't stop drinking he'll cause us trouble, and Lord knows we've got enough of that already. I think it would be best to close the clubroom as soon as some of these people clear out. Understand?"

The waiter nodded and walked over to the table to serve the man his drink. "Will that be all, sir?" The man fumbled in his pockets for a dollar bill.

"Keep the change."

"Thank you, sir," The waiter smiled. He picked up the empty glass on the table and moved to another table near by to serve the rest of the drinks.

"These waiters sure know how to get their tips. 'Yes, sir, No, sir. Thank you, sir.' That's all they say. Darn good thing, too. Keep these colored people in their place is what I say. If you give them an inch, they take a mile." The man with the cigar lifted the glass to his mouth and emptied the contents in one tremendous gulp. "Everybody's moving around this darn place, but nobody seems to be getting anything done. Just moving back and forth but not doing a darn thing, eh? Say you don't talk very much, do you?"

"What's there to talk about?"

"Well, if you had my worries and responsibilities, you'd talk. Heck, you'd be in a terrible sweat. Since you don't talk much you must be the type that thinks a lot. Is that true?"

"Maybe. At least that's what my wife used to tell me."

"Your wife? You been married?"

"I *am* married."

"Well, you said 'use to.' Me? I've been a bachelor all my life—don't think I could stand married life. All women want is money, money, and more money. And they nag you to death. No, sir. No married life for me. No offense now. I guess your wife is different. What's she doing now—keeping the home fires burning till you get home? Ha! Guess she's wondering what's keeping you so long. All women are the same when the old man is a couple of hours late."

"Maybe, but I doubt if my wife realizes now that I'm a couple of hours late."

"Why? What's the matter?"

"She's not at home . . . she's in the hospital."

"The hospital, you say? Is she sick or something? How is she?"

"I don't know exactly. When the hospital in Detroit called me last night, they said she might live until morning. I thought I'd get there by 9:30 this morning in time to be with her before she . . ." He put his head down on the table and covered it with his hands. The movement knocked the glass off the table, and it rolled on the floor until it was halted by the legs of the table.

"This morning! It's almost noon now . . . she's probably . . . I mean to say. . . . Why in heaven's name don't somebody get this train moving! . . . This man's wife is dying, and I've got an important business conference to attend."

## BUDDING BIOLOGIST

MITZI MUELLER

I must not smile;  
For pride, in one so young is wounded easily.  
I must remember all the while  
That praise is wealth to lasses such as she.  
(In memory, short years ago I dial,  
And see myself proud owner of a bug menagerie!)

## INNOCENCE

RAY E. WILLIAMS

Out side my window on the trees  
Not long ago each leaf was born,  
And gaily danced and sang in the breeze.  
It was not for them to know  
That they should die when born.

## intoxication

SHARON BROWN

one brief leer at you my pet  
before the curfew sounds  
one small whiskey kiss  
while still i see your lips  
and then miss alcohol prevails  
and candide smiles are thought my own

# JIRO

MICHIKO KANNO

One rainy night towards the end of November, I was dozing off at my desk with a history book left open, when I heard a feeble cry of a puppy around the front door. "It must be an abandoned dog," I thought. "How cold it is out of doors tonight." I wished to go out and bring that puppy into a warm house. Then, I remembered what my mother always says: "Dogs and cats are so pretty and I like them to be members of my family. Yet I cannot see them suffer and die."

Early last fall, Jiro died. Certainly he was a strange dog. Even a most unfriendly dog would wag his tail when he saw his master's families. But Jiro did not. He not only did not wag his tail but he seldom barked.

"He may be dumb."

"Oh, no, he couldn't be."

"Last night I heard a dog bark in the garden."

"That cry might have been Jiro's."

After supper, we often talked of things like these.

One day Jiro was in the garden and when he caught sight of my father walking out into the veranda, he suddenly barked, barked once, only once, "B-ow-wow." He had such a good voice!

"Jiro barked."

"Jiro barked."

All of the families were so excited. It was proved that Jiro was not dumb. But all through his life we did not hear him bark again.

Jiro was a so-called "maned" dog, that is, he had a long, bushy hair from head to back just like that of a horse. He was all white. When he was eleven months old, our uncle in the country brought him to us. Not to wag his tail, nor to bark—such a strange dog was to live with us together as the indispensable member of our family.

A couple of years had passed. It was a warm Sunday afternoon in spring. A friend of my father's—a Mr. Yamada—at last brought us a pure Akita dog. I remember father was in a jumper and was playing with Jiro out in the garden. He stood up and went away to the front door, leaving Jiro there and without looking back to him. I felt Jiro was watching after him.

Our new dog was a fine-looking, bushy brown-haired dog and seemed to weigh twice as much as Jiro—nearly 75 pounds, I thought. His name was Aka. When father came to the garden again with Aka, Jiro was on the point of jumping against the new-comer.

"Jiro! You mustn't!" Father scolded him.

"Never fight against Aka."

Suddenly Jiro drooped and crawled away. Whenever we talk over the remembrances of Jiro, father tells us that he is sorry to think how sad Jiro was that time.—"On hearing that Aka was brought, my master neglected me and went to that new-comer. Moreover, he glared fiercely at me not to fight. I thought my master would have known how faithful I was to him." Jiro might have felt this way if ever a dog had feeling. I cannot forget that sad-looking Jiro leaving my father's side.

Unlike Jiro, Aka was indeed friendly—and sweet, too. He seemed that he was always willing to do something for us.

"Isn't he smart?" we often said.

Naturally Aka was now a favorite of the whole family. Jiro was neglected and lonely. Sometimes, Jiro was about to fight against Aka, but at such times he was scolded and even struck. Jiro hated Aka.

But soon, he came to show no hostility to Aka. He did not eat half of the food we gave him. He away from all of us. He would lie under the plum-tree and watch my father going out every morning, while Aka, with triumphant look, saw him off at the gate.

About a month later, we found out that Jiro had disappeared. Several days passed.

"Has Jiro come back yet?"

"I am sure he will be back in a day or two."

We repeated such conversation several times, but Jiro did not come home. Where did he go? Jiro was never to be seen.

Summer came. We were to remove to our cottage by the sea as usual. It was about 50 miles from Tokyo. We went by train and Aka was on the truck with furniture. While walking along the country road of a small sea-side village, we stood surprised. Jiro welcomed us there. He knew the place, having spent two summers with us before. "Jiro!"

Father held him in his arms. He was so thin and his eyes were sunken. He had been there quite alone, with all the sliding doors of the cottage nailed and no one living in it.

Sitting on the lawn with his legs crossed, Father put Jiro on his lap and repeated, "Why did you ever come to such a far place alone? We were all so anxious about you, Jiro."

"You must have been very lonely, Jiro." We said, and our eyes were filled with tears.

Then father said again, "Jiro hates Aka. Surely he does. If two have to live here together again, they may fight. I will return to Tokyo with Jiro and after a few days, leaving Jiro there, I will be back."

We bought meat and gave it only to Jiro. Father and Jiro went back to Tokyo on the truck. I stood in front of the door for a long time even after the truck turned the distant corner.

In September, when leaves were beginning to fall, Jiro died. We buried him under a cherry-tree at the corner of our garden. Spring came and cherry-blossoms bloomed. I thought they were prettier than they had ever been before.

Now Aka is no more with us, either. He became ill and followed Jiro in less than a year. Fresh green replaced the pink-white cherry blossoms. At night, when it is all quiet, a barking of a dog in the distance always reminds me of Jiro and Aka. Still hearing an appealing cry of a little dog in the rain, I fell asleep. In a dream, I saw Jiro and Aka playing together.

## SWIMMING IN THE OCEAN —AN IRONY—

NANCY LEE ROSS

I went swimming in the ocean:  
I looked, I saw, I grabbed!  
A billfold, by dab!  
In the ocean? What a notion!  
But t'was true; what to do?  
Sneaked a peak—flabbergasted:  
The billfold in the brine;  
It was mine!!

## APRIL FOOL

MITZI MUELLER

A rainbow stretched across the sky,  
And dared me cross its zenith high.  
So, bold, determined, I set out,  
And ranged the tall cliffs thereabout  
To gain a ladder, thence to climb;  
But found, in wasting precious time,  
It disappeared, to leave in glee  
The raindrops making fun of me!

## POME

TOM McELFRESH

April eyes,  
Vaulted skies—  
Spring has come a dancing.

Shining earth,  
Time of birth—  
Spring has come.

Soft, sweet rain,  
Sunny lane—  
Spring is here.

She told me then,  
But not again,  
That I was sweet  
But not discreet.

She tells me now  
(We've had a row.)  
That I am sweet  
But that I cheat.

Silly eyes,  
Slate gray skies—  
Spring is still a dancing.

Stinking earth,  
Messy birth—  
Spring has come.

Shivery rain,  
No sun again—  
Spring is here.

## DEATH

SHARON BROWN

Death in a dinner jacket  
white beaming his collar  
by the door stands  
expectantly.

Death smiling broadly  
white gleaming his teeth  
by the door stands  
beckoning.

Death grinning proudly  
white steaming his lancer  
by the door stands  
patiently.

Come in, Death.



Why do I sit,  
    seek,  
    question?  
For truth? "What is truth?"  
Mankind thru a jesting Pilate asked . . .  
    and waited not for an answer.  
And now a crease lines a Tantalus brow,  
But does not a thorn hurt worse?  
Is this evasive something anything,  
    everything,  
    a falseness in itself,  
    created by . . . Man?

A something beyond  
    words,  
    thoughts,  
    sense.

If it's beyond, why ask?

"Ask no more,  
Seek no more,  
Think no more,  
Stop!" I say,  
"Just BE."

BUT I CAN'T!

What do I seek? Do I really want to know  
    Or is the seeking the reason for  
    Living and not the answer?

Too many questions . . .  
The lamp glows softly.  
The bed invites . . . to sleep?

I am.  
    but . . . . .  
        is GOD?

## THERE IN THAT APRIL LAND

TOM McELFRESH

As April pillaged the fallow earth with edged winds  
And the great cities of the north turned to their paths of destruction  
As Appomattox fell  
And south and north came to amnesty  
As slaves were freed, and slaved again with bonds of custom  
As binding as the bonds of legality  
As Union stood  
And chivalry fell  
As ragged soldiers came home to die or live  
As dead men  
As a once ragged man fell to death in Washington  
As men stood or fell with the land, the warm earth, the mother earth  
As time turned carnage into history  
As war and peace merged into the bright place of freedom—now for all—  
As men died

There in that April land  
Where Appomattox stood or fell  
There in the warm and razed land  
There stood peace

As living and dead wept and praised, cursed and said they cared not

# AN AUTUMN AFTERNOON

BARBARA E. WHITE

One golden afternoon last October, when a friend and I drove from Richmond to Campton by the way of Irvine and Beattyville, we saw Nature at her best. It was a peak week for color, and we soon found ourselves surrounded with beauty. The roadbed was a dappled carpet of leaves and sunshine, and we rode like royalty, under a canopy of gold, crimson and magenta.

Road stands were gay with polished, scarlet apples, bags of pearly onions, and mounds of squash and big yellow pumpkins. Shining glass jars of cider were nut-brown and topaz in the sun. Stock horses browsed and fat cattle roamed the fields leisurely. Smoke from bonfires rose like incense. Occasionally the delicious fragrance of cedar or pine would scent the air. Sometimes we would glimpse a flash of gray velvet as a squirrel raced up and down a tree trunk.

In the cool of the early evening, we stopped to eat our picnic lunch beside a pool. The sun flung a sequin scarf across the water, while a young maple tree looked at her reflection and, seemingly, liked what she saw. Near by, a willow wept enviously; leaves floated on the pool like fairy-boats with sails of crimson and gold. The hills spread all around us in their exotic, Van Gogh splotches of bright orange, henna and scarlet. A fence-row, blood-red, marched up one hill and down another. Soon frogs began to croak; their noises sounding loud and harsh in the stillness, as if they were scolding us for disturbing their solitude. A mosquito buzzed about our ears and whispered, "Are you my friends?" Katy-dids began to argue, and in the distance, whip-poor-wills called. The eerie cry of nightbirds floated down from the trees on the mountain side.

The sunset was glorious on one side of the road, but a lime-green moon showed herself above the horizon on the other. As the sun set slowly, it seemed as if Mother Nature said to the trees and creatures for which she was responsible, "You have been showing off, my dears. Tomorrow is another day"; then lovingly, as mothers do, she tucked a soft gray blanket about them all and crept silently away.

We sat quietly, speaking in whispers, if speaking at all, for the scene before us was an awe-inspiring one. It soothed our weary hearts and minds and gave us strength for the work of the evening ahead.

## REASONS

JERRY TAYLOR

Did you ever climb a hillside, in  
the early morn  
And hear a meadow lark a-singing—  
thanking God that it was born?

Did you ever hike, or ramble,  
through a wood or forest green  
And find a small wild flower  
just waiting to be seen?

Or wake up on a morning bright  
and wet with dew  
And know that somewhere, waiting,  
is a new day's task for you?

Then you know the reasons birds are  
singing and why the flowers grow  
and whether God is there or not—  
and that He knows you know.

## FIVE MINUTES MORE

PATRICIA BARKLEY

In the early peace of morning, that appears particularly early to a wife, the sound of a small alarm clock jingled. Ann buried her head deeper under the pillow and tried hard to convince herself that it was just another dream, but the dream became real life with a slight nudge in the ribs delivered by her husband Frank.

"Stink! Hey, Stink! Better get up and start breakfast."

"Nag! Nag! Nag! Get up and fix your own breakfast. Remember all the flowery promises you made before I would even consider marrying you? Well, let's see them materialize. Promises, and all I have to show are promises."

Ann, still half asleep, started feeling around for her housecoat and then placed her ridiculously small feet in her genuine Indian moccasins that she had used for house slippers ever since her college days. It wasn't that she really minded getting up. Frank knew that. Why she had told him herself how many people she had slugged, including her father and roommate, who had tried waking her in the morning. Poor Ann just didn't realize what she said or did in those first bad minutes of successfully clearing an already-empty head.

"Frank, how many eggs this morning?" Ann mumbled with half a tube of green tooth paste running down her chin.

"Two should last me 'til noon, Honey," was the reply, trying to be heard above the hum of Frank's electric razor.

Then as if a new day had finally started, they met in the hall. Ann's eyes were as shiny as the new pennies that they had saved for this life while still in college, and Frank's arm was circling her waist in a tender way that almost made her cry. Yes, this was a good life!

All of a sudden, a cold splash of water hit Ann's face awakening her, not to Frank's loving smile, but a face that must have come from 20,000 leagues beneath the sea.

"Crawl outa that rack! What ya gonna do, sleep all day?"

Some how that girl always awakened Ann just five minutes before Frank gave her a kiss at the door on his way to work.

"I hope you swallow a germ or something today. You've done it again. How will I ever find out what his good morning kisses are like if you keep waking me up?"

"You should be glad. He probably has a weak stomach and would pass out after planting a smooch on that mug of yours. Come on! You'll be late for class."

## NATAL DAY

SHARON BROWN

What thinkst thou, newborn babe,  
Of this world thy God hath made?  
What thinkst thou of thy little bed  
With feathered pillows underhead?  
What thinkst thou of that shining light  
That grows so dim when it is night?  
What thinkst thou of thy mother's breast  
Against thy head to give thee rest?  
What thinkst thou of thy father—tall?  
Baby, dost thou think at all?

# THE STRANGER

BERT BACH

It was one of those typical August days; the sun's radiating from the sidewalks and the lack of shade made the heat almost unbearable. The city had always been a mystery to me: the dark masses of people after working hours, the screaming newspaper boys, and the brightly flashing neon signs had always filled me with a sense of suffocation. I walked down Clark Street, ambled up the long flight of stairs, and walked through the long arcade into the railroad terminal. It was then that I realized how utterly alone I was in this large mass of people. I had nowhere to go—I knew no one. The public address system announced incoming and outgoing trains; and, with each announcement, I became increasingly aware of my extreme distance from everyone I knew and loved.

I walked over to a bench and sat down. I had not slept for days, and I felt that tense weariness relax as I leaned back onto the headrest. My head dropped and I became less and less aware of the steady drone of noises around me. I was only faintly aware of a conversation going on beside me. There were two old men, apparently in their later years, who were discussing the situation of the world today. I do not know why, but my mind became completely aware of the trend of their conversation.

"You know," Mr. Black, "it's not goin' to be in our lifetime, but sometime, they goin' to build a bomb that'll blow the whole U. S. right off the map."

I listened now—completely alert—as the two old codgers continued their conversation.

"The Hell, 'sometime,' they done built that bomb. I was talkin' to my boy the other day, and he said this new cobalt bomb would compare to the atom bomb like the atom bomb would compare to striking a match."

"I believe it's comin'," Black, "the Good Book says it'll come by fire, and it also says the Jews'll head back to the Holy Land when it comes. They may not be back there in the next thousand years, but they comin', they comin', and I don't believe no A-rabs ner nobody else is gonna keep em out."

"That's trouble with the U. S. today," Jim; "they gettin' that Titanic attitude—specially the young folks. They think nothin' can't ever happen here jist cause hit ain't happened before."

"I'm afraid they'll see someday; we ain't invincible—not by a long shot. One bomb in the East would blow Hell out of ever bit of industry and war material we got."

I listened to the two men and thought what my views had been toward this two years earlier. I had been in the service when it seemed as if war was inevitable, and I remember thinking that if it would just wait until I got out I didn't give a hang what happened. I realized now that I did care. Everytime I looked at a newspaper, everytime I heard a plane overhead, everytime I looked at the home and people I loved so well, I began to think, and now I wanted to tell these men what I thought. I sat up suddenly and turned to speak. There was no one there. The sweat was beading on my forehead; and, as I looked at the clock, I realized I must have been sleeping for hours.

As I looked at the people around me, I wondered if anything could ever happen to all of this.

I walked, hearing nothing but the drone of the people in my ear; and, as I walked onto the steps, I looked up at the darkening sky. The air suddenly felt cleaner, the sounds seemed friendly, and it was then that I realized I was not alone in this mass of strangers. There was Someone bigger than we—and somewhere in that darkening vastness He was looking down upon me. He had to be. I walked on down the steps, turned, and walked swiftly on the warm sidewalk.

# HEAVEN IS A SPHERICAL PLACE

DORIS ROSE COX

Today Frank was tired. He was tired because he had slept something under three hours last night. He knew how long he had slept because he had heard the town clock strike every hour except the second and third. The rest of the time he had spent rolling from one side to the other and turning the pillow over and over to feel the cooler side.

Frank Ripley was a serious young man about thirty, who seemed to hide behind his huge, horn-rimmed glasses. He was a mathematician for Mount Oreb Research Laboratory, and most of the time he enjoyed his work but lately he was restless and discontented. The trouble, he knew, was Russ. When he'd married Joyce two months ago, he understood that having a small stepson would have its problems, but he had never anticipated the present situation.

It wasn't that Russ was troublesome; it was just the other way. He was so quiet and reserved that he got on Frank's nerves. Sometimes Frank thought the boy could see right through him. More than once lately he had caught the child's eyes on him and had felt strange and uncomfortable in his presence. At first, Frank had tried to dismiss the feeling but the more constant his efforts the more disturbed were his thoughts.

Russ made him nervous, to put it mildly. A bachelor until thirty, Frank knew little about the psychology of children and, although he loved Russ, he hadn't been able to promote a father-and-son relationship. The idea plagued him and peculiar things were happening. For instance, a tick had developed in his right thumb.

Frank had frequently reminded himself that he couldn't actually blame the child. Ever since his father had died, Russ had lived with his mother at his grandparents' home; and Frank knew that he shouldn't expect to get close to him immediately, but he fretted constantly for not being able to approach Russ.

Several afternoons lately, Frank had sat at his desk drawing bits of three dimensional pictures while he planned the particular approach he would use that day, but his ideas always followed the same pattern and he imagined a boisterous entrance and a happy rough and tumble with Russ upon his arrival home. However, he usually reached the house just in time for supper, only to find Russ in the living room absorbed in comics or lessons.

Each day at work Frank mustered a fresh supply of courage to meet Russ and each day on the way home it began to ebb. Each day as he grasped the front door knob he imagined that he felt the last of that day's courage pour into the knob, and he always glared at it spitefully before going on in to greet Russ with the usual, "Hiya, Russ!"

Sometimes Frank wished that Russ would do something, anything, to give him an excuse to shout at him or make quick conversation, but Russ was always the same. His shy little smile spread between his dimples when Frank came in. He had large, brown eyes which made Frank's heart ache because he couldn't take him on his knee and talk to him while he tousled his curly hair. At supper, Joyce always kept a cheerful conversation going and so covered for Frank's awkwardness toward Russ. After supper, Frank preferred helping Joyce with the dishes to avoid being alone with Russ because one look at those big brown eyes always stopped Frank's rehearsed conversation before it could leave his mouth.

Russ called Joyce "Mom." He had never called Frank "Dad." In fact, he had never called him anything. Before they were married Frank had planned how he would tell Russ of the coming marriage. He would use that line he'd read somewhere, "Now, son, you can call me Dad if you want to, or just Frank if it suits you." But it turned out that Joyce broke the news to Russ, and Frank never got the opportunity to bring up the subject again.

So time passed, and the situation was now, if anything, worse. Twice Frank had considered consulting Joyce about the problem and he had gone into the bathroom when he was sure no one was close enough to hear him,

and stood in front of the mirror to practice explaining the problem to her. Both times he had looked himself in the eye, bit off a piece of skin from his lower lip and spit it out to get started. And both times that was as far as he got. Frank realized that it was no use. He didn't know how to begin.

Russ's school was only two blocks away, which prevented Frank from driving him there. The one time it had rained, Mrs. Matlock from down the street had stopped by for Russ as she took Jimmy to school. Frank had felt like yelling at her that he was capable of taking his own kid to school, but he had simply smiled when Joyce said how nice it was of her. From time to time during that day Frank could picture Mrs. Matlock sitting in her blue Ford, and he would recall his own unspoken remark, "I'm capable of taking my own kid to school!" with a surge of disgust for not having said it. Still, he thought, he might have been overstepping his bounds with Russ by calling him "his kid."

Then last night he hadn't slept. As he tossed, thoughts of that front door knob kept recurring. It annoyed him that it wasn't a perfect sphere and in his half-asleep mind he kept trying to drum up ways to alter it. A few times it occurred to him to squeeze it in a vise, but that would only make it a square.

Frank got out of bed at five o'clock instead of the usual seven-thirty. He stumbled into the bathroom mirror and studied the blue-gray semi-circles under his eyes before dashing some cold water on his face. He took a long bath which made him feel some better. After dressing he put a high shine on his dark brown shoes and put them on over his newest pair of brown and yellow argyles. Before going out to the front step for the paper he put coffee and water in the electric percolater and plugged it in. He was still reading the front page when Joyce stuck her head around the door. "You up already?" she asked before going on into the kitchen. "Yep—I couldn't sleep," Frank answered. "I've got the coffee on," he added from behind the paper. He finished the front page and turned to the comics, relaxing a little as the smell of coffee reached him.

Frank went to work early intending to finish a problem he was on, but he slept most of the morning with his head propped up on his books.

After lunch, Frank, still sleepy, gave up all hope of getting any work done and spent most of the afternoon looking at the new Mathematics Journal and talking with Stan Jones, another fellow in the office.

Still groggy on the drive home, Frank almost ran a red light and screeched to a stop inches from a passing car. Suddenly he was wide awake and pretty irritated with himself for having loafed all day. No, he wasn't mad at himself; he was mad at Russ. How could fifty pounds of anything give anybody such a trying time?

Coming into the yard he forced a smile for Joyce, who was in back bringing in the clothes. As he stepped into the living room, he slipped on a stray marble, skidded, and landed flat on the floor, his hat in his lap. Laughter, loud and gleeful, rang in his ear. It was Russ. The little boy was standing across the room doubled with laughter and pointing one stubby finger at the funny sight. This was the end of Frank's patience.

"What's so darned funny?" he yelled, his pitch rising to soprano. "Leave marbles out for anybody to fall on and then laugh. Do I have to fall and break my neck to get a laugh out of you?" The soprano rose to falsetto—"Well, do I?"

The child's laughter stopped, but the smile remained and he answered timidly, "You're so funny, Daddy, I never saw you mad before."

All of a sudden Frank felt very silly sitting there on the floor. It was that word—"Daddy!" He began to laugh giddily as his arms flew out to catch that little body. "Hiya, Russ!" he said, as they scrambled happily on the floor.