

1961

Exile Vol. VIIb

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Denison University

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Exile Vol. VIIb

Authors

James Kennedy, Joan Harrington, Bruce Tracy, Brenda Dean, Carolyn Colley, Sara Easton, William Weaver, Janet Tallman, Katherine Lardner, Elizabeth Surbeck, James Funaro, Barbara Purdy, Enid Larimer, Barbara Thiele, Christine Cooper, Tanya Shriver, and Catherine Thompson



The EXILE

1962

Vol. 7

Denison University
Granville, Ohio

Take thought:

I have weathered the storm
I have beaten out my exile.

—Ezra Pound

Contributors

The 1962 issue of EXILE includes the contributions of six seniors, whose post graduation plans are interestingly varied. JAMES KENNEDY will teach English in Liberia as a member of the Peace Corps. His story was awarded the EXILE-Denison Bookstore Writing Prize. Also leaving the United States will be JAMES FUNARO, who plans to study and continue his writing in Italy. He recently completed a novel for his honors project. After a summer trip to Europe, SARA CURTIS will enroll as a graduate student at Drake University. BRENDA DEAN plans to continue with her writing and will be employed in New York at the Youth House. CATHERINE THOMPSON, who contributes both poetry and art to this issue, will continue her work in art. She is a member of Alpha Rho Tau art honorary as is VIRGINIA PERSOL, who plans to attend The State University of Iowa to work toward a Master of Fine Arts degree.

Junior contributors to the Fiction Department show exciting promise for future issues of EXILE. CAROLYN COLLEY brings a fresh perspective to a campus situation; JOAN HARRINGTON shows a rare talent for humor, a welcome addition to these pages; BRUCE TRACY experiments boldly with technique and subject matter; and WILLIAM WEAVER offers a moving portrait of a family in British Honduras.

The poetry of eleven students is published in this issue. The familiar names of CATHERINE THOMPSON, JAMES FUNARO, and SARA CURTIS appear for the last time. JANET TALLMAN, a junior and a contributing editor, has been published previously in these pages, as has CHRISTINE COOPER, a sophomore. Other poets from the sophomore class, whose works appear for the first time in print, include BARBARA THIELE, BARBARA PURDY, ELIZABETH SURBECK, ENID LARIMER, and KATHERINE LARDNER, TANYA SHRIVER is a freshman.

The artists for this issue, employing such forms as woodcut, aquatint, etching, and linocut, are JOHN HAND, a junior art major, VIRGINIA PERSOL, CATHERINE THOMPSON, and ELIZABETH SURBECK.

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Any student of Denison may submit manuscripts of poems, stories and essays to the editors or deposit them in the EXILE box in Doane.

WINTERING

Most of us want to think in context. Rightly, we say that nothing is thought, but in some context. We do all our best work within these frames which expand and contract according to personal whim and environment. They could be called reality or, quickly, our lives. We constantly struggle to keep contexts from evaporating into unresponsive backgrounds, ourselves from becoming lonely, thoughtless members. We hope that no matter what action, spoken word or emotion develops, the roots of our senses will always register recognizable sensations, things we know about. Ink on the page forming E at night is terrifying if it represents D in the morning.

Beyond natural science laws of gravitation and the mysterious moments of doubting if I really am, we want to respond to build-ings, people, to sounds and touches of a finger, to hate and love and fantasy. We are all environmentalists if the term refers to adjusting to the setting our body moves through and by. We dislike the ragged edges of our own personal worlds and constantly repair and fill in, becoming in the process more sophisticated to change, sadly, more resistant to our strangeness.

Contexts are self-enclosing, from the general understanding of United States citizenship, to the illusory conceptions of self each man forms every second he exists. A contrast is not one-half or a quarter, but is real and whole for the minute, then replaced or shaded with another one. The new may be larger and more encompassing, using the old context, but usually, for most of us, it is more structured. Passionately we set down the very clear foundations of our lives in the community, in the church, in the home, at college.

The artist in any one of these situations might be the only one consciously to avoid the ritual of foundation. He could go so far as to advertise himself as anti-context, surreal.

The reality in which we work becomes solidified by the demands of others and by our own physical sensitivity, an incubator baby as much as the oxygen-tented grandfather. Once I understand my limitations, we say, I can gain a refreshing freedom. Only then, we think, can I function meaningfully. Certainly, one can not stand, head tilted back, staring at a clear evening sky for very long before he realizes the uniqueness of his lone self. The artist could call

this moment his direction, his personal truth, but the writer needs to worship a different moment, a series of spectral colored contexts, emphasized by this lone man, but acting in spite of him.

Where you and I are satisfied when we fully grasp the security of loving one man or woman, sleeping in one bed, working at one job, having this much responsibility, the writer, if he demands eagerly of himself, consciously renovates his experience so to study and suck on the decay and rebirth of the deceiving foundations of others.

Young writers are often note-book caretakers and avid journalists. They record the flagrant misuse of context by others, how it can be twisted into a thousand evil segments from one simple experience. They gaze at the security of cement and steel turned suddenly to fear and horror; they see the flab in old, wornout lives, young suicides, the strangling single context.

For students especially, the eternally strong context of life suffers from the spoken word, the intentional snub, the rejected love; it trembles when we rush about for a new something, patching up the old only if we have the time. This constant chore, the reorganization demanded by nuclear warfare or childbirth, John Glenn or Caryl Chessman, takes all our conscious and peripheral talent. Why, we ask, would anybody want a fluid foundation? A man, we say, needs a life directed, one to fulfill himself in, like the wintering caterpillar.

The writer waits impatiently for the spring husking, when his cocoon breaks again, and again each moment the birthwet wings becoming dryer, coloring with life, giving flight and death. But, writers are humans, not butterflies. Writers grow and die, yet unlike ourselves, they need to make life and death before it actually happens. In a word, they need to create.

Where we find solace in a repaired friendship, they study the limbo of feeling in a hastily torn hymen, the courage of a child learning to swim. Out of each dovetailing context, the writer draws the inches of sensitive and brute life, ponders this as a fleshed human, and acts. On paper, he invites other contexts to intrude almost overtly, while as a man he remains unsure of his next thought longer than any of us would dare. His responsibility to society bothers him before his hand moves with the pen, it presupposes his very action.

The young writer's attention is distracted more easily to the minute, but once attained, stops longer, screws down tighter and lasts in the pain. We desire only a working context in which to "live", one we can forget about yet feed on; the writer works with context, seeking to jell the mammoth slivers of his life into an understanding of all things contextual, into a position held momentarily through a story or book: a cry, a threat, a plea.

The writer aids us, pushes us into framing our lives with revolutionary ideas. His resistance to foundation is his gift to us and we must recognize in our frenzy of reconstruction the sanity he must and will offer.

Student writers have opportunities of extending their sanity in unbelievable freedom. At his desk in the library, all bodily needs taken care of, secure within foundations which are stronger and more conservative than those of a common laborer or a hack reporter, he patiently waits for moments of fantastic imagination. At college, we say, the writer hones, exercises his ability for the outside world. Getting ready, we say.

Danger is in the arrogance which surrounds the student from his precise image and trembling metaphor. He needs to activate his body, respond to the contexts of his own life outside the college, the home, the book. He must constantly fight to preserve the necessity in fluid travel and commitment. Reading newspapers does not dirty the imagination. Responsible to himself as an artist, he can not demand a gauzed compassion for the long school years. Practice is always necessary to permit the synthesis of the writer to express itself clearly, creatively. Stylists, though, degenerate if they reject the flush of context in their lives and in others for the beautifully printed word.

The student writer should fear only the hardening patterns of others, never his own involvement and responsibility. By his nature, the writer is preoccupied with himself in the face of his life as it flows. Check dams placed by concern will only aid in the understanding of human defences and might, hopefully, produce a serious direction from this man for all students, in all contexts.

-JWK



HIMSELF

By JAMES KENNEDY

As the toll road switches back sharply half way down the hill, the headlights of his pick-up run off patches of blurred grass and before straightening out again sweep over the ocean, a mile away and almost soundless. John rolls down the window and the fogwet air sharpens his senses. He goes on talking with Elaine who is sitting by the door across the leather seat, becoming impatient with her questions.

"Why should you care about what they think if I don't?"

His answer disappoints her so she changes the subject.

"Who were the guys sitting with you?"

"Friends of mine. They work my shift." His eyes close easily for a moment, only the trembling steering wheel in his two hands keeping him aware of the truck.

"Don't sleep yet." She moves closer to the middle when he turns into the camp. Down on the beach the truck moves silently over sandy earth until, for an instant, his silver colored trailer glares out from the dark when the lights pass over it. Once inside the makeshift garage beside the trailer, he puts down the clutch and the engine roars with the slowness of his foot coming off the accelerator. Elaine reaches forward and switches off the ignition. Relaxed, he pulls her toward him, but with a quick laugh she puts a palm over his face and pushes hard against the nose, forcing him back, drunk and laughing, against the side of the darkened cab.

"Elaine," he mumbles, his top lip pressed into the gum, "you have to stay a week this time. There won't be any trouble." The voice is serious, but she pokes a finger into his hard stomach.

"Ohh, cut that out," and he brings his knees up in reflex. Then he begins to recover himself with a forced glee. Pinned back against the seat, Elaine at first gives in gladly. He twists around, bumping

his legs on the floorshift as he presses his whole body over her, and his lips wet the smooth skin beneath her small right ear. She whispers, "No secrets this time." He is very mellow with work and rests on her.

"No promises, je suis comme . . ." but stops with one hand squeezed tightly in both of hers.

"You got to promise me you won't get angry anymore." She patiently arches her neck for his trailing lips then laughs softly, slides across the seat to the door, opens it and runs to the trailer.

"Hey, don't leave yet. I was just about to promise," with a meaningless smile, but she is already at the trailer and the words too soft to hear.

"Comon comon," she waves, "it's cold standing out." Getting down from the cab is easy, but lifting her small suitcase from the back of the truck makes his right shoulder hurt. He knows how silly it must look, barely limping along with the light case, yet the mere pressure on his upper arm forces him to switch it to the other hand before reaching the trailer. With his key she opens the narrow door. For three months he's pulled rough-sawed redwood posts off a chain in the mill, but his body still isn't used to the afterglow of work. It keeps him awake at night, the pain sweeping up from tender finger tips irritated by the leather gloves, comes through the bones until it makes him sit up in bed, shaking the arm.

"Hurt much?" She leans down and picks up the suitcase, pushing him toward the stove. "Shut the door," catches him rubbing his shoulder, overcome with fatigue. Elaine closes it herself. Aware of being bitchy now, she circles his chest with her arms while her chin catches the flap on his jacket pocket.

"All through talking?" and she moves up against him until she must feel his belt buckle momentarily cold through her thin cotton dress.

"Yeah, all through for now." He closes his eyes with relief, swearing down his helplessness until the peace makes his knees bend.

"Hey, hold on, sweetie." Bumping against the stove he knocks one of the pots off onto the floor. She moves him toward the bed at the other end of the trailer. She lets him kneel on the bed for a moment, then eases his body over against the wooden wall, placing the only pillow behind his head.

"You awake?" Whispering to him, she spreads a blanket over his legs, then undresses herself, putting on a warm nightgown, and lies down beside him. Elaine knows about beginnings and endings, the bed is only a hesitation for him, but she lets it come over the words and actions of her day like the sea over one smooth rock.

In the middle of Saturday morning, John reaches across the bed and pushes and pulls the lacquered canvas shade to the top of the small window. He stands beside the bed in his low shoes, laces untied, but kicks them off in order to wake her up. He has been sitting two hours in his chair, dozing as the sun came up. The light shines directly through the window, but she wakes with her eyes closed, slipping one arm out from under her side, letting it brush into his empty space. He knows the sheet will be cold to her fingers, yet even as she opens her eyes the fingers slowly smooth out the bumps with calm, undesperate moves. The bed covers a quarter of the trailer, an entire end, leaving room for a low chest of drawers next to it on one side, a stove and white icebox on the other, but hardly any space to dress or undress between. His jeans are folded over the red chair by the door.

From the doorway, partially blocked with the chair, he sucks in to button his pants, watching her find the bright areas on the pillow. Strands of black hair take on the light gently as her head moves, then the light falls into her face. The face takes it in like a pillowcase, spilling some over onto her brown neck and a moment after, the light slides between sheet covered breasts.

"Hand me a handkerchief," she asks.

"Have you ever made french toast? This one all right?"

"Yes. Want some this morning" She lifts her legs up straight from the waist and the cotton nightie begins to fall down. With an easy whip then a twist on the bed she stands right up beside the icebox.

"How about that?" and her arms sweep backward in an imitation curtsy. Her hair is loose and parts over the thin neck, falling by ears then cheeks. On the tall forehead it curls away in thin bangs. Darkly lashed black eyes turn up to him, but he avoids the kindness of a stare.

"Fine, just fine." Turning to leave, he lifts the typewriter, placed carelessly on the sideboard of the stove, back to the table behind his chair. Lifting the paper, aware of Elaine dressing and blowing her nose, he reads quickly:

This beach, parts of which hang over a cliff, entangles many dry pieces of wood into itself. Out of the river, out of the sea each tide come single shiny roots, wildly carved by the salt water, pine cones and grain opened stumps, swollen until they lumber in the current. The volume always increases before the moon's final phase, then disappears in a wash of magnetism or the tilt of the world, only to be hung up again on this same beach a tide later. A million stars flaked to provide these banks of drift-wood. (Or was it that far up a river, farther than a flat bottomed boat, a mule or a man could go, up in mountains called Siskiyou, behind a single peak known as School House, lives an Indian, Maple Creek Willie, whose skill with a thin bladed carving knife is legend, whose garbage pail and shavings pit is a sudden spring, then a creek over rocks spilling down past the Reservation and finally, pushing gravel bars aside, a tumble of whitegreen water pierced and pushed with sticks.) This river, the Klamath, flows left through arching old pilings at an abandoned salmon cannery, then slips into the ocean hard against a green shrubbed mountain.

From the cold metal rim of the trailer door his hand reaches out and up to cover the sun completely. Only a glow frames the hand. He stares at it, tracing the back of each finger with a sharply penciled eye, slowly widening the other eye, accepting more and more light until the very soft hairs on the back of the hand are easily placed in focus and just as easily dismissed.

Three gray and hang-lipped pelicans stretch across the ocean. He estimates the distance at one mile. From the trailer, through the tangles of big flood and drift wood logs, down a sand dune sloping gradually to the surf, then another half-mile; there the pelicans glide silently over a definite swell, looking directly through the water at small, cold fish.

Picking up a plastic cat-food dish, he lightly inspects the garage, noticing the front left tire on the pick-up is a little flat. After readjusting one of the tarpaulin lines, he sets out for the water at a run. The smell of leathered sweat never reaches his nose on

weekends because he doesn't wear the heavy work boots. Besides, he tells himself, the sand is probably the best shoe made.

When he reaches an old tide line marked by single strands of shrivelled sea-weed, noisier with fleas, he knows that he didn't want to come down to the sand. The cat dish was already clean. Now, standing in the middle of the beach, he looks at the strangely shaped objects of wood that rim-off the camp and thinks about the crush of reasoned events. The August sun, up for three hours, has left nothing in a shade. John feels uncomfortable in all the light and remembers the early morning chill, how it used to be to wake before dawn in the spring and put on heavy corduroy pants and a sweatshirt, go out into the last haze of the night to wait on the beach, back to the western surf, for the sun to come up over the low Coast Range. Camped below a cliff, the sun finally colors the green garage tarp after it falls on the Pacific. Lately, work at the mill, increasing toward fall, has demanded more and more rest and sitting in the red chair. "Dreamer," he says aloud, frightening away two fat gulls which have piddled up from the water. Suddenly, afraid of being humbled by the heat, sweating lightly on his upper lip, John runs back toward the trailer.

Opening the door he yells, "Why'd you close the door?" then gathers himself. "I mean," smiling to make her realize, "forgot about you just then. Don't you think it gets stuffy as hell? We probably should keep it open." He props a stick of drift wood against the door. Inside, he spreads his arms out to hug her, but they knock against things, the left almost touching Elaine on the shoulder before it hits the closet door, while the right pushes down one of the small copper frying pans from its hook above the stove. She backs in fright when the frying pan hits the floor, but laughs at his clumsiness. John sees a pan in her hands.

"Fried potatoes?" stepping up to her and as he leans forward, catches a heavy whirl of uncooked grease in the pan before he kisses her eyes. She wants to put the potatoes down, but he only holds up the other side, not quite taking it from her.

"French toast is too much trouble."

"Potatoes are all right, a little heavy though."

"Oh," she nods, "you forgot to wash. That smudge has got to come off."

"What?"

"Get your towel from the closet and wash." The pan of potatoes still hesitates between them.

John looks over her head and out through the oval window above the bed.

"See that beautiful log out there with the charcoal burned place on it?" She turns.

"Of course."

"Well," and he pauses to consider what else to say as if the first sentence had come from his eyes. "I love . . ." lifting the potatoes from her hands and setting the pan back on the stove.

"Keep these warmed up." She comes up behind him as he leans over the chipped burner, catching his shirt by the loose tails. Her fingers circle his bare skin like ice. He takes a quick breath, burning a finger with the match.

"Dammit," and turns in her complete hug, finger in his mouth. "Please?"

"I'm going." He squeezes her very hard with his hands low and pulling her up. "Tight bottomed."

Running across the patches of hard sand and dry grass to the redwood bathhouse, he hears her voice. "The better to better you with." He spins and waves the blue towel toward her then continues running.

Before one of the three washbowls, John carefully shaves the soapy whiskers under his nose; staring into the new, streaked mirror he thinks of Oscar. Usually Oscar's work as owner of the camp involves very little effort, but earlier in the summer, on the same day as the dam project was announced, he began to rebuild his property. Several large trailer parks opened on the first of May accompanied by full-page advertisements in the county paper. Offering cement stalls, grassy yards, a central formica lavatory, lots of water and electricity, plus free fishing information, they used up all the trailers, especially those just pulled a long day from San Francisco.

Oscar has replaced gravel on the rained out road, fixed the rotten stays of the large water barrel outside his house, completely torn out an underground pipe which had run down the hill to the camp and put in a new copper one. It comes on top of the grass, over the road at the boat house and drops over the slight cliff to

the back of the bathhouse. All May and June, Oscar and one of his sister's boys have worked on the bathhouse, sawing the redwood board, pouring a cement floor. Two Saturdays ago, several relatives came over the Coast Range from the Reservation to help put on the roof. Oscar had proudly distrusted the new facilities, flushing them constantly to test the metal cisterns. Late in the afternoon, finally convinced by his three new toilets, he announced, "Bring 'em all on now." His green, plywood house at the top of the road acts as a toll guard. John thinks that's where he is now, waiting for the folks to spend six dollars a night to sleep on his beach, a little too far south of the river and town. John also knows that Oscar is counting on an overflow fishing season crowd in the early fall. Since the fifth of March, John, and sometimes Elaine, have been the only campers.

Face red from a towel rubbing, John steps from the bathhouse in the still throbbings of a clean body. Edges of wet towel have cleared his eyes of crisp corners, cleaned out the ticklish sawdust from the inside rims of his ears and quickly tightened the skin across his jaw. Watching Oscar's tan station-wagon bounce over the sandy ruts at the entrance to the camp, John holds in his happiness. Oscar's nephew runs out from behind the car with an empty ash can to clean out the small building, a job John thinks petty and time wasting since it's very rarely dirty. Recently, Oscar has only worked in spurts, for the summer has passed with its excitement, and now the expectancy from the improvements has settled into a peace which sometimes is boredom, always silent, never, John believes, disturbing.

The short man sits in the front seat tediously unwrapping a new roll of toilet paper, frustrated by old bifocals and because the roll seems to have no beginning.

"Come here and do this for me, John." The voice is recognition and greeting, but none of the immediate familiarity which might have been a relief for Oscar, a gift to John. Towel over his shoulder, John quickly runs his long fingers around the roll until the beginning ravel's up and falls several feet to his bare toes.

"Glad you brought this down. We need boraxo and that dispenser is locked so you'll have to do it this time." He knows the words are too complaining. "And thanks a lot for the use of your reel. That one of mine is so tangled up it'll take all winter to fix."

"You like that reel?" Oscar's eyes, directed out toward the bril-

liant ocean light, narrow until John can see only a thin line of lash and brows run together protecting the pupil.

"Even caught some ugly fish with it yesterday," he lies. "Want it back?"

"No you keep it for awhile and try it out some more." The pause grows into the routine they have come to share in the last weeks.

"Have any reservations yet?"

"Nope. Same as last year, even with all these renovations." The word is fumbled out and brings a smile to Oscar's face. He continues staring out through the windshield. "Well, boy, let's get this paper in the slot." As he opens the door, John asks, "What if no one comes?" The man, standing up straight to John's shoulder, answers right away.

"Then I'll have been a fool for trying to get somewhere."

"A fool?"

"Sure. They're building all over town in spite of the dam business. Some say it'll kill the fish. Thing is, I could have gone back to Arizona with the money. Guess I was scared or something."

Elaine has pushed the scrambled eggs and chunks of potato on to a store plate, put it in the oven to keep warm and then, seeing that he still isn't coming, sits down in his chair. She runs fingers down the smooth, redleather arm rests, over the pleated sides to the floor. A scrap of yellow paper is partially stuck under one of the wide wooden chair legs. By changing her weight she is able to slip it out. The typing on the paper is rapid, some letters hardly printing. She feels the ribbon on his typewriter, rubbing the thin band between her thumb and forefinger. Sunlight coming through the door dulls the slight black smeared across the pads on each finger. Oscar motions John into the bathhouse, the roll of toilet paper a single white blob to her sun shaded eyes.

... spit out from the springing hand-saw, clouds of sawdust warmed close to ignition fill up her interested nose with burned airs. Plain dressed she brings his lunch. Peter strips down his suspenders, limpyyellow at his side and stretches rounding shoulders before the sandwiches. She stays to eat a pear and clean up the wax paper bags, cap the thermoses

...



Elaine looks up, but no one has come out of the bathhouse, so down from the first she reads:

... until my child would tire of finding dead lampreys on the beach and tramp slowly through the sand to our door, we'd never stop waking up to the sea, nor the mysterious baby seal cries he hears one day, nor laugh any softer at an extended challenge: run into the lungs of surf, touch a black rock and run back to me before the sand dissolves away, nor refuse to open a tired lap to the sleeper dressed boy when, with all rabbit's relations, he comes to me just before bed . . .

She warms my oatmeal mind until it bursts all over her thighs, running in hairless rivuls to the strong, rough rug our floor.

Aimless disgust makes her turn sharply from the page just before the light is cut off by his body suspended in the door frame.

"You're caught," and throws the wet towel. It covers her face in a quick wrap, upending papers and a box of paperclips on the table. Her only reaction is a surprised, muffled laugh.

"Let's eat our breakfast," he jokes, "then I shall go to town and buy things. A ribbon for you and a pipe for me." Rearranging her hair she hears but ignores the speech, while he stares simply at her uplifted arms. The fingers plying the hair halt the momentary joy in his deceptions.

"I'm going to a union meeting."

Ignorance of his way of saying things, the references which exclude her even when he's a breath from her lips, in bed, speaking with hardly a tongue, vanish into the definite form of the union. It becomes her need to make the potatoes separate from the eggs on the plate, to pour, to give out. This and the eagerness of a question when she jumps up to pull his breakfast out of the oven, make John tighten his excited body behind the nook table.

"I didn't know you were in the union?" Even with the towel as a holder, the plate is very hot and she nudges it across the wooden table, shaking her hand the instant it leaves the plate. Her grimace lasts until the pain leaves, the question forgotten or overwhelmed.

"Boy," he cries already swallowing a centersoft homefry. "Hoot oh ohhot hot," sucking in whistles of air. Milk is before him waiting for a glass, but he peels back the cap and gulps the top off.

"Whew. Here, comon, sit down and have some. Take this." She stands at the cupboard trying to remember what she has read, but when he complains again she puts down another plate and eats.

Thin enough to eat all the time, John loves to sit with others, talking with a mouthful or, like now, with a bit of egg on the top lip. In trying to slide more potatoes off his plate onto hers, he upsets the full glass of milk.

"Not so fast, not so fast," is all she says before grabbing his towel off the stove top. It colors in the cold milk, his early face combining with the turkish cloth to darken the blue.

Two gulls land on top of the trailer and begin pittering quickly up and down. The very precise sound carries through the aluminum. John hears it and begins to count the steps, his attention and excitement with the meal decline and finally, turning back to the empty plate in front of him, the sweep of eating is lost when he stares at her mouth moving on a potato.

"I'll probably eat dinner in town." For her, the sentence sets a pattern to follow, a needed guide when he refuses to entertain her. Getting up immediately to clean off the table, she feels the relaxation in his words.

"When did you join the union?"

"Last March. They gave me two weeks, then a guy came around and signed me up. Must have thought I was still in college or he would have been there the first day."

"You went to college?" She almost smiles with wonder.

"Sure, I told you before; I just got out last year."

"You didn't have any choice did you?" John doesn't know where she's going for an answer. Suddenly very eager to explain a part of her experience, her fingers play with the top button on her print dress.

"But they got you anyway, and you're stuck now because the union always holds the good ones back. My uncle works for Pacific Timber and they make him go just fast enough to fill so many stacks a day. He's always being pushed around for working overtime, too. Don't stay in. You're too smart to have to take all the stuff they hand out." She smiles because her words are strung out. Warming to her concern, John is amazed and leans forward to reply.

"You really think that's the way it is? Listen, the old guys in the union think they have the company by the balls, but it's really sitting on them, yet they continue discussing strikes and union

contracts as though they actually counted, you know, like the union made the difference."

"It is important."

"No, it's all just a huge facade."

"A what?" Her eyes widen in a jeer, the lids closing slowly.

"A cover, a false front," he pleads. "But it can't be helped now. The company gets bigger by buying out the contract loggers and all the worked over land from the smaller outfits; gets land from the government, too. Your Uncle stands the same chance as I do and it's not the union squashing him, more than likely it's himself." There is a grandiose tone in his voice as if understanding was supposed to come in a rush.

"Yes, but you can get out. You have a chance to move."

"Yeah." The argument is destroyed by his eyes when they spot different objects in the trailer while she speaks. Surplus mosquito netting, strung hammock-like over the bed, reveals a book through the web. He twists out from behind the table.

"Ever read this?" John asks before the book is even in his hand, but ignores any possible answer in the action of dumping the hammock out onto the bed. Two soiled handkerchiefs, a pouch of tobacco and three hardcover books, one much larger than the others, lie between his curled legs. Elaine's mouth opens to rehearse a memory, the slightly curved eyes stare at his typewriter, rapidly spelling the trade name with simple pride.

"Huh? Elaine? Have you ever read this?" He holds the book up for her to see the cover. She returns to attention angrily.

"No. I don't read books. I don't want to read books." He drops it into his lap and stares back at her, wanting more anger. Leaning on his crossed legs, he waits for her to speak. She feels the space of the small trailer come into his eyes, strapping her into the chair as if it was fixed for an execution. They wait out the few long minutes, the soft cushion beneath her becoming hot and the dress folds hardening, chafing her skin.

"They aren't, books aren't everything."

"If you never read any, how would you know?"

"I read a lot in high school, but it costs money." Elaine wants to hate now and brings her whole body to face him, the knees tight together, her face relaxed and listening.

"You've got extra money." It doesn't say what he wants it to and the moment jells because she doesn't turn away, but sits looking

right at him. The last sentence understood, she waits almost pre-hearing the next one, touches of anger flicking into her hands. He stands up, drawing her attention from the words though he speaks deliberately.

"You sleep around enough to make good money, spend some on books and get educated." Her face is unveiled as the words come out.

"You shit, don't talk to me about about education. A lot of good it does you." The tone and shift to understanding make him stand loosely in front of the bed as she moves back closer to the stove.

"Why the hell are you working in the mill if you're so educated? How come?" She settles into her anger, possessing the ease of action and voice to make it a consistent emotion. "Well? I'm a whore. I know what I can do. Remember, you came to me, I sure didn't ask you." Before her, he is confused by her serious entry into his game, the flow of tension beyond his control. It makes him push her hard against the stove, burners still warm, and run out through the door yelling back, "I don't listen to you. You're the one that's being taught." John reaches inside the truck door and opens it, the window frame cool to his bare arm. She hurriedly straightens the pots on the stove then follows him to the doorway. His words are very clear and she works with them.

"Want a shirt?" The skill of it relaxes her face and she steps voluntarily back into the trailer.

John sees her disappear and slams his fist into the thin metal of the door, knowing that he must slow down to get dressed, to button the shirt, slip on the socks and tie the shoes, make sure he has everything and then, and only then, in the plodding future, can he leave. He rages against his carefully planned dispute, the tumble of speech loosened for his loneliness, now works to break him up again. He runs back into the trailer.

"Get out of here," and grabs the shirt she holds hangered in her hands. It meets him half way before she understands. Pushing her out of the trailer he shouts, "Go somewhere," and points away from the camp, his fingers raised out over the ocean. She recovers her balance. "Just get out." The strength in his voice moves her back, but only in protection so things will widen out more. "Move," he cries and jerks toward her from the door. She doesn't speak, but he expects it and hesitates.

At first she walks sideways still looking at him with a bitter,

hurt stumbling, then turns her back and runs toward the bathhouse. She stops at the near corner, puts her hands together at her waist and watches the trailer rock on its brick foundation.

He hurries himself into dressing. The shirt is buttoned once at the neck, then tucked in askew and forced. He grabs a pair of dirty socks off the closet floor and, balancing for a second against the stove, pulls them on somehow correct. Instead of sitting on the bed he falls to the floor and angrily fits the ordinary brown shoes over his heels and ties them. Then, jumping up and pulling a jacket off the back of his chair, runs back outside.

Each moment closer to leaving he is more easy, less angry, yet having a fear of the place, the whole camp. She forced him to act and deny at the same time. Her body will not allow him consummate hate; he will not hit her, only moves to ruin any possibility of being inside with her, of having to slow down, of actually standing still. He must do his emotion until it ends.

Jeans are tight and the truck key comes out in a tangle of pocket, which flops white when he climbs into the cab. The engine starts easily and he gears down to pull out. Elaine has watched him carefully and wants to know how he will use the truck. The road runs down the middle of camp with the bathhouse halfway to the entrance and backed up against a cliff. She edges along the side wall, afraid now because the sun covers his windshield, blotting the interior. She squints but cannot see him. He gains speed at the end of the road and shifts for the hill, tires spinning on the turn because the dust is sandy. They regain the loose gravel when the steep incline puts more weight on the rear axle.

Elaine follows the truck, turning slowly toward the hill, then the wall of the bathhouse when he goes up the road behind her. Only the dust indicates the pick-up and even that settles or blows away. She hears him hesitate at Oscar's house, then fade off on the river road to town.

Conversations are confused, the angry demands he made at the trailer are completely lost to her straining memory. Her face repossesses its serenity in the walk back to the trailer. She can still hear her own reactions but doesn't recreate them again in order to work out the past more favorably. For awhile she moves inside the trailer, picking up, straightening and then slowly begins to clean the breakfast dishes and pans with an easing calm.

II

Out of the camp and into the saving green trees along the road, glint off the river coming in over the bridge and the town itself, these things are unfrozen by his mere presence. The promise of a union meeting humors and distracts him.

John parks the pick-up behind the newly rebuilt general store. The thick, widegrooved mud covering the lot sticks to the sides of his low shoes so he scrapes the bottoms on an edge of cement sidewalk, a sectioned strip of which runs from the bridge all the way down his side, the business side, of the highway. Three years before, in the spring rains of 1955, a sudden flood destroyed the entire town, leaving warped, uncared for skeletons of two motels and a boarding house on the other side. Next to him, the buildings are clustered together in a conformity of new paint and similar cinderblock walls. A clean sign stands out from the bar at the bridge end of the buildings. John walks toward it, noticing the spaces at the curb and beyond the sign, the empty parking lot. At the open glass doors he peers through low waving smoke to the few lone customers. A buzz of harmless florescent light momentarily fades into the beginning clicks of the juke box; the silence annoys his reaction.

"Where's everybody? I thought there was a union meeting?" The barkeep, slowly turning cloth covered hands around and into a wet beer glass, a pipe drooping slightly on his lip, faintly recognizes John from the night before.

"Don't know a thing about it. Might be one next weekend."

"That's funny," realizing the mistaken reading of a sign at the mill. "Funny thing," and leaves.

He wanted a group of people, something huge and impersonal, noise and argument which he could choose to participate in or, with equal calm, simply watch and absorb. With the whole afternoon ahead, he is afraid for himself.

The street, as he retraces it back toward the general store, lacks all the rasp and cry of Saturday noon. At the corner where a dirt road comes up from the new trailer camp by the river, the gas station stands empty with strings of spinning disks vainly catching the wind off the ocean. The rush of a car passing through echoes back from the shiny pumps, but it doesn't disturb a boy sitting on the door step of the station reading a comic book.

John passes the barbershop and sees himself in the sectioned window, mirrored but rippling from eyes to waist when he draws near to the faulty glass. The other buttons on his shirt are buttoned slowly. Only then does he come close enough to see through the glass into the small shop. Black comb tips and the chrome loops of scissor handles stick up from a mug. Behind the single metal chair, like a private bar, is a row of hair tonics, bottled oils and label stained mixtures. He notices the cardboard closed-sign propped against the window.

Standing in front of the general store once again, not sure enough yet to leave, John hears voices coming from the community center. As he crosses the street the sound recedes into a single voice. Built after the flood, the building stands alone at the north edge of town. During the week it houses the offices of the mill workers union and on Sundays the Lutherans hold an evening service there. As he puts his hand on the metal doorknob a truck, somewhere up the highway behind the redwoods, large and hurried by its sound, begins to gear down for the speed limit in town.

The lone voice from inside is sonorous and John waits until he hears another, closer to the door and less refined. Two young girls, one holding close a wicker purse, block the doorway, but John nudges past them into the meeting. Overcome with the silence, he doesn't focus on anything for a minute. The entire room is filled with people, mostly sitting on the wooden chairs in sprawling rows, while others, younger men like himself, either stand at the back or hunch down where ever there is space between the chairs. The square speaker's platform, slightly raised on one side of the rectangular room, is the only uncrowded area. Seated at the long table are two men wearing suits and ties.

John edges along the side to the back of the room and spotting a buddy from work, kneels down. Although the people listen to the man speaking, there continues on the floor level a sparse, soft laughter which protects them from the stare and direct function of the man's words. John whispers, "What is this?"

The boy, anticipating a question, glad it was asked so he can explain, pulls up the collar on his jacket. "Some guys from Sacramento come to talk about the dam, but they don't want to answer no questions about the fishing, just talk. Listen up." He motions up toward the chairs and the speaker.

"I repeat, you deserve every consideration by the Commission

and I'll personally see that your views are made known to the chairman." A tuft of white hair, straight and long, drops over his forehead as he speaks and he quickly runs his fingers into it, pushing it back. "The state government is always aware of your desires and hopes. I myself can't answer the question of cause and effect on the salmon run, but certainly the last flood should remind you all of the necessity, now only a possibility, of a flood control dam." The moderator for the afternoon, younger and with a blotched tan, smiles on the last remark, but breaks in hurriedly to keep things moving.

"Yes, all very true, but Representative Bailey has failed to answer you in correct terms." He stares out at the dark eyes of a dark face, which give emphasis to the high cheeks of the standing man. Those sitting near the back of the hall can see this man's bare lower gum slowly move over his top teeth. A tiny muscle jerks taut with each motion, moving two bushy sideburns.

"Look," he shouts, "I can get a school book from my kids to find out about the government. What about the other river up north? They need it a lot more than we do."

"Yes, certainly, but our concern today is with your problems and opinions."

"Well then give me something definite about the dam. Tell me the truth."

"You're right, and I was just about to give it to you." The moderator closes a manila sheaf in front of him. Leaning back in the folding-chair, he speaks out with a clean voice. "It will be a toss of a coin. When all the Commission reports are in, when every possible professional opinion has been recorded, after surveys of both areas have been made, and even after your petition is read, it will be a single toss. Heads or tails. And I might add, though I doubt if I need to, that the winner will take all." There is silence in the hall, but the moderator thinks he senses a tolerance.

One man nags, "What does the winner get" and several laugh.

"Well, possibly the loser in this sense, but he, I mean the area chosen, will have the flood control dam." Then an older man, independently dressed in wide flashy tie and yellow suspenders, asks politely, "What if we refuse to have the dam built on the river?" The people, solidly pleased with the elder defiance, turn toward the moderator for his reply.

"The State owns the river. It can appropriate, with compensation of course, any land for improvements it sees as necessary. Isn't it sort of funny to allow the possibility of being flooded out again to even exist? You can prevent it with the dam."

John listens closely to the speaker peck away at the lingering intelligence the town has been formulating all summer. In the manila folders, in the confident, quiet voices of their answers, they seem to be daring him to speak out. Around the room the shock of the last statement, blunt to inform, but rough enough so it confused understanding, causes some panic. This, with the notion that they already knew the answer to all the questions asked or to be asked, the futility, all brought out by the trying sympathy of the moderator's smile, make people look toward one another or maybe nod a head.

The tall Indian sits down, angered by the direct eloquence of the man, realizing he's been given an answer on his own terms. Other men, in front rows, decide that it is all settled, their silent objections rooted out and dismissed by the clarity of the moderator. They begin to straighten the coats in their laps, to put them on, to signal their kids on the floor with a nudging foot, if they have kids, if they have a wife, if they brought her. Those kneeling down beside John are still puzzled and the whispering increases. Over this movement and noise the moderator continues.

"I realize it may seem somewhat harsh. You may ask why the decision is so up in the air, but I can only beg your indulgence here. There are some areas of the project with which I am not entirely familiar and because of this, cannot answer your questions in detail. You'll just have to remember what we have said to you this afternoon and try to see the reasoning behind it. This is a difficult problem, but I'm sure it can be cleared up with your co-operation." The last words are as low and warm and succulently grand as he can make them. Immediately he stands up to leave, nodding toward the other man, but John calls to the front over the sudden flash of noise.

"Sir," and people quiet a little in the motion of turning to see who had spoken. The moderator isn't paying attention.

"Hey," John calls louder, "I wonder if I could ask one more question?" The man, his arm on the representative's suit sleeve as if ushering an elderly veteran out into the sun, looks toward the crowd. John raises his hand and waves it.

"I'd like to ask whether or not the State intends to exercise

any control at all over the reports and investigations you mentioned?" John knows he is being watched, perceives on the borders of sight and sound the focused attention. His hands begin to move with each word, emphasizing and drawing upon the moderator to watch them while keeping track of the question.

"In other words, are the facts going to speak without the usual interference of politics and special groups?" The answer is immediate and annoyed. "I already spoke to that question once before. I believe it will be a toss of the coin."

"That's a nice phrase," and having gone beyond his first personal challenge, knows his growth now, a new man among the crowd, he adds, "But it's a lie isn't it?"

The room hushes down until the silence about his jeans raises him up above the seated figures. Feeling an elation with words, he turns to catch approval from those he knows well. Seeing one, then another, both faces far apart with the same eager look as the rest, gives him power to continue. The moderator refuses to sit down when the representative resumes his seat, but stands behind the wooden chair, both hands firmly placed in the pockets of his suit coat.

"Go over that again, please? I'm not sure I heard you." A straight smile does not hide his understanding.

"We all know, or should know, that some people are going to really benefit from this dam. Guys like the contractors and the friends of the contractor are in for a lot of money, while these folks, the lumber companies and tourist traders that live off the fishing season, stand a good chance of being confused by all this coin stuff." Without looking around, already in the next sentence, he picks words from memory, not real involvement, and delivers them for maximum effect. The pleasure of speech is almost unbroken by his pause for breath.

"There's probably a group in Sacramento that's already awarded the contract to the man with the best looking wife, a guy who's never been up here to talk to anyone or even see what a flood dam would do to the fish and the river. That's what happened, and so your coming here was to deceive these people, the ones that are directly involved. Just sent up to keep things quiet until they come in with the cats and start work. Isn't that right?" The last is bitterly shouted as he becomes completely selfish. Unaware of the defensive sound running through the squatters around his legs, from the seated men and women, up until he barely feels an uneasiness; the silent

eyes of praise now retract across his stare. Hands trembling, he pulls his jacket straight in front. The representative stands up angrily, backing out of the chair, while the moderator merely looks straight out from his seat, a tight, curious smile on his face. John stiffens at the affront.

"You're here to deliberately confuse people. Where's all the consideration he talked about?" A pause and John waits for the noise, but it remains quiet. For a final creation he shouts, "You lack basic decency." Some women catch a breath and children look at one another to find out what he meant. The two men at the table also glance at each other, but don't act on the insult.

"Shut up, boy." Still half way through the door and breathing audibly above the unrest, Oscar faces John. People are recognizing Oscar. He firmly repeats himself. "Understand? You ain't got no right to come here and speak out like that. I got a right, some a them got a right, but you don't." As he speaks he unbuttons his cardigan sweater and it pulls away easily from off his belly, under-slung with a wide leather belt. As the representative sits down again, satisfied to let the argument continue, the younger men from the mill begin whispering resentment at John.

From the back of the room, John sees the whole crowd push back awkwardly placed chairs in order to watch him. No one speaks up to help, neither do they stop the new distraction.

"What do you mean? I have the same rights like anyone else. And you, you I thought would at least help me."

"You don't need help from me."

"Yes, yes I do," then slowly cruel, "Tell them about how the dead fish will ruin you. What about all the new renovations?"

"Fish'll come back." The native logic of the sentence soothes out the anxious tone of his answer. Several boys next to John stand up, stretching their cramped legs.

"But I'm trying to tell you that the whole thing is probably rigged." The plea hints at real concern and John knows this, but cannot rebel because he feels for Oscar. He is deciding to leave when the moderator claps his hands to get the attention of the noisy, shuffling crowd. Whole families are getting up now, but no one as yet puts on sweaters or scarves. The confusion is passionless, hardly striking out against itself; only old men complain about the noise to their sons and nephews.

"Could we have some order; order please."

"No, goddammit." Again John gathers as many faces as he can in one quick sweep of the room. "What's the matter with you? The woods and fish are going to be raped by this dam." Now trapped in compassion, the room is too small for his speech, for action without tripping over chairs or bumping against women. Silenced by the freeze in his imagination and the noise, he begins to move toward the door. Oscar buttons his sweater and turns in the doorway to leave.

Again the representative calls for order and the first three or four rows respond slowly. People sit sideways watching John pass by, stepping over the outstretched legs of children. In a hesitation, the moderator speaks at John.

"Young man, you owe these folks an apology for your remarks. They were degrading and, well, they sure made it seem as though you were calling them less than intelligent." The representative loosens the small knot of tie at his throat and nods his serious approval.

"Don't twist it around. I'm calling you two less than intelligent and these people . . ." his mind now unconcerned about words, "are too simple and beautiful to understand what you're doing. You could never tell them the truth because they live on lies." The slowest sentence since he began, its confused meaning tricked out by a rising fear of the place, once easily rejected by his created position, now forces his eyes closed against the passing silence.

Oscar moves quickly up behind him and hits hard with his right fist at the base of John's neck, just below the ear. Nothing, centered inside his eyes, follows him onto the women in front, off her when she slips out from under him and then onto the floor at her husband's boot. Two men move toward John.

"Don't touch him, Henry. I'm taking him back with me." Oscar runs his throbbing fist on the soft wool of his sweater. He leans down, adjusting his arms beneath the slight figure on the floor, then kneels and picks it up and onto his shoulder.

One of the little boys that had sat next to John the whole time, once recovered from the violence of the blow, turns to his teenage sister and whispers, "For sure you ain't beautiful." She doesn't hear, watching Oscar pass awkwardly out the door. Immediately the room is sounds of leaving and this time they are completed. In a few minutes the room is empty except for three union officers and a logging engineer, who begin to argue with the moderator.

* * * * *

Oscar's large hands turn the wheel of his station wagon. The river road is wide and covered with loose gravel. In spots the dust from decomposed redwoods lies over the road, especially when it pulls back from the river and curves around a low hill. John is conscious but keeps his eyes closed until he feels the sway and crunch on the road. Opening them both together he sees the small river delta, a fan half open of irregular islands, wooded and swampy. Beyond them, against a backdrop of mountains which come right to the rivers edge, the Klamath enters the sea. A long sandbar narrows the channel at the exact mouth, keeping the ocean from sweeping into the low basin.

Turning for the last time into the hills, the car climbs higher. He feels a release from his physical energy and lets the sore neck rest on a palm of one hand, his shoulders against the seat. At first, the desire to explain moves within him, but familiar green and mud colored trees, the sudden appearance of Oscar's house at the end of the road force it back. He has forgotten a lot of the last hour and faintly smiles to think of Oscar's active understanding. The sun has begun to fall down through the layers of blue sky directly out through the car window. Oscar stops at the gate across his toll road and pulls on the emergency brake.

John is passive in the sun light, memory failing to illuminate much of the noontime. His freedom is established once again; in each minute he regains a flowing happiness.

"You know what a synthesis is?" They both keep their eyes on the front window, John focusing on a black rock below the horizon, a mile out in the ocean. Answering, Oscar's voice is deep and thick.

"Nope."

"You should," John says softly, opens the door and slides off the seat. The welt on his neck hurts, but as he walks down the dirt road he feels strength returning to his legs. Just as he rounds the switchback turn, Oscar calls down to him.

"That girl of yours says I'm supposed to feel sorry for you?"

"Maybe so." John continues walking toward camp, the fear of himself denied for awhile. Hopeless joy makes him run over to the side of the road. Down below and back toward the base of the cliff, Elaine stands in the doorway of his trailer. She waves the blue towel. He yells down to her, "I'll bet he can't even spell it."

Awarded the EXILE-Denison Bookstore Writing Prize.



TWO MODELS

Virginia Piersol

SPRING SONGS

By JANET TALLMAN

I. Hill

Carry me, O Sunday wind, above dry bones of things
That crumble at the touch of fingers knowing of time's tale,
And lay me down in grasses tall and wet and hidden;
Give me wings void of all memory and let my heart sing
Secrets of the smell of clay and sound of rain.
Heap me up against this instant,
Let the darkness wrinkle round our heads
While there's still a corner of the moon;
And kiss me on the eyelids now while the lean wind
Blows through the easy rain, now, carry me away.

II. Field

I sing, I sing a longtime in a world of nine and ten
For once again the sphere-shaped smell of grass
That might have been in springs before more hidden,
Less imbedded in my brain. Today, are only dittos
Of ghosts of clouds of then that shift
Across the meadow and shade with recompense
The vestiges unhidden, piercing with a soft pain.

III. Woods

Last year she laughed. No desire denied,
She flew among tall green snap grass.
The sun rode high, soliciting no gratitude.
All with us, we thought not of before
And anticipated nothing of the coming day.

Now that child's bones lie waiting;
Half dust whips through cold brown bent loam.
There must have been some remote song
Last April: wondering mirrors morning light.

IV. Lake

Sun stains echoed on the edges of the ripples
And angled alternating, gold slanted current-wise.
Dome held from white cloud hearts poured
Day blood darker into shifting brown.

A man told him once how they make clouds,
but he never said what happens when night moves in.

A woman basked in love for him, he remembered,
There standing lakeside late.

Enough. The lake was full. The sky insisted more.

SARDO

By JOAN HARRINGTON

My mother is plagued by dry skin. This happens every summer. The first hot day, my mother lies in the sun for hours, and turns her skin to a golden color and leathery texture. She doesn't peel; she thickens and flakes. Last year she bought a large bottle of baby oil to rub on, but it didn't work. In fact, it was rather expensive because my father one night poured a large jolt of it in the dog's dinner thinking it was cod liver oil. The poor dog got violently ill on the living room rug, naturally. She had to be rushed to the Dog Doctor's, where she was diagnosed as already cured. This word of comfort cost us five dollars. Still, Audrey's feelings of trust in Daddy were not restored and she would not eat a dinner which he prepared. In her narrow, fuzzy little mind she probably considered him a Great Poisoner, much to be avoided.

"Sardo" cannot be confused with cod liver oil. It is thicker and has a violent pine smell, suitable only to be poured in the tub. Although my mother had a theory that it would work better if it were cold, we persuaded her not to keep it in the ice box with Audrey's dinner supplies; it remained in the bathroom.

The "Sardo" had been installed about a month before the day of my cousin Lynn's arrival. I was taking a slow nerve soothing shower before going to meet her at the bus. The tub wasn't draining as fast as it usually did. As a matter of fact, the water was rising to my ankles. I quickly turned off the water before the whole tub could fill up. I wrapped myself in a towel and called for Mom. She rushed up stairs, tripping over Audrey, and gave a little gasp as she realized the problem. "You weren't taking a bath?" "No, a shower." "Don't tell your father. He'll take my Sardo away from me, and it's been working so well, although I have noticed that the drain has been slowing up. We'll fix it ourselves." I had no doubt that we would try to fix it, but the idea brought back a rather sore memory of the time the sink fell down. As long as I could remember, I had been told not to put anything heavier than a toothbrush on the sink,

because when the house was built one of my uncles had installed the bathroom fixtures to save us the expense of a plumber. He did a good job on everything but the sink, which vibrated all over when the water was turned on. Two years ago, the moment of reckoning had come. In a spell of absent-mindedness one day, I sat on the edge of it to wash my feet and the whole thing leapt from the wall, carrying me with it, and in a short time filled the bathroom with water.

My mother told me that time also not to tell Daddy when he came home from work. Mundane matters have always upset him. Daddy has always said that there is something in the female mind never to be changed by any word of male advice, and which refuses to recognize the difference between a screw and a nail. Mom, after blowing a fuse and disconnecting the telephone, finally found out how to turn off the water. Then after reworking the shape of the pipes with a large, lead hammer, I shudder to admit that we nailed the sink back to the plaster. It looked solid as a rock, although a little off to the right side, and it fell off that night while my father was brushing his teeth.

I got dressed while my mother contemplated the tub problem. Fortunately, from her previous plumber's experience, she knew how to begin. She went downstairs, blew a fuse, disconnected the telephone, and turned off the water. Since things seemed to be going according to schedule, I left to meet Lynn's bus.

After my mother greeted her, I showed Lynn where she was to stay. The room is downstairs, away from all noise, and had its own bathroom which was in good shape. Then we all went upstairs to work on the tub. It was only an hour until Daddy would come home from work. Mom was not doing too well. She had stuffed a long wire down the drain and came up with a little strainer on the end, but that didn't help. Major steps were in order. She pushed down the lever to hold the water in, as if there were any chance of its getting out; we went around to my room and opened the trap door that concealed the pipes. Mom, with a large wrench, disconnected every pipe in sight. Lynn mopped up the leakage. I, in a moment of panic, ran downstairs and stood at the door, a casual and relaxed greeting committee.

We all put on a pretty good act; he didn't suspect a thing. I wasn't too sure of Lynn, but she caught on and didn't give it away. Once, during dinner, I ran up the back way for an inspection, but

everything was as we had left it. The water was still in the tub. I pulled the shower curtain across. It was lucky that Daddy always took his shower in the morning.

Shortly after midnight, Lynn went to bed. Then Daddy went up. Mom and I sat looking at each other, waiting. After a moment, we heard the shower curtain being pulled across the bar. Then the drain was released. Suddenly Lynn came tearing into the living room, laughing. Her face was wet. "I was lying in bed," she explained, "when-whoosh-water started pouring all over me." The whole bathtub was draining through the ceiling into her room. We ran in and tried to shove the bed out from under the waterfall, but we backed it over Audrey's tail. Nobody had known that she was sleeping under there, until she gave a loud yelp. "Anything wrong?" came a voice from upstairs. "Nothing at all," shouted my mother, as she threw a pile of bath towels into the flood. Audrey looked like she was getting ready to bite somebody, so Lynn put her outside to sulk. I ran to the shop and got another hammer and some nails; after all, they would surely be useful. Mom gave a happy squeal when she saw them; for her there is something comforting and solid looking about a hammer. She climbed up on the book case and started to nail a bath mat to the ceiling to help stop the water from dripping. It didn't help much, and the plaster which fell down added to the watery mess which Lynn was valiantly trying to mop up with a small oriental carpet. It was no use; the water kept pouring down. We had been beaten and we knew it. My mother looked sadly down from the fourth shelf of the bookcase and said, "Go tell your father. And the 'Sardo' was working so nicely . . ."

I bolted for the door, but stopped short as I almost ran into Daddy, who was standing and staring at us with a look of utter disbelief on his face.

He wasn't nearly as mad as the time of the sink episode. He sadly helped me to clean up the mess without asking any questions, but later, when we were all eating ice cream to regain our strength, he patiently explained that if Mom really wanted the rug on the ceiling, she should have used screws instead of nails.

DOLL HOUSE

By Bruce Tracy

Fog in the early morning Fall bundled the valley over the hills and way to mountains in the east.

Mr. Merryweather's mouth was puckered in a tight line into which a neat row of nohead nails stuck. He built with fury, always desperately, and with a sense of time finish confounding his concern with those little details about square and fit—and you knew he was slurring over the little things because of his passion for a final product, a typical doll house with fairy smoke stack, crooked like an old thumb, and fake, because it just stuck under the shingles. This man, whose arms beat wildly, maniacally above his head with the hammer and the quick things he was putting together for his daughter; the man whose nearbald head sweat blobs almost in a summer tee-shirt lemonade daylike; this man's fury.

He hammered and sawed a crooked-leaky house like the sketch on his inventory pad and had to do it, do it now by god before that scratch pad hurry would let up tension and blob out like you do when you try to tell about him. Like reverse peanuts, this man plucked one by one his noheads and smashed them through the walls so they stuck out on the other side, and then he stooped under the halfsized doorway yellow fairy-frame and beat them back against the wood. He grabbed from his hip pocket a hanky and sopped up his sweat and said with his armpit out and an elbow over his eyebrow, "whew", and stuck the hanky back in and rushed back into the fury of his habit and fear of a lost sketch. All around him, below him, stood his sons and his daughter.

This hastybuilt house for play tea parties and paper maché ducks at the stoop (muddy splattered, orange and white, never quacking; yellow-black backed toad with a long green smile), was

built by Mr. Merryweather and his family beneath a great broad oak. Before the leaves had been raked away, he set four cornerstones and four planks for a foundation, placing his foot upon each to test its strength.

Nichol saw in the next six years through times of dolls with twisted elbows, swimming tears walking dolls, his doll sister growing sad and weedy with oldtime tea-parties, mother and daddy come to visit. *Squatting he had pretended with little sister Suzy making mud pies on the tin stove, and the dog comfortable at home in miniature motherhood. Yearly the dolls stiffen, the house becomes a playhouse; the sink gets cluttered with plastic blue dishes, party cups crack, ducks stiffen in the yard.* The party is over. Bones now are stored in the weary nut-brown house, walnuts drying and forgotten, though kittens are still born and puppies pee in from the rain. But at last, as the fog rises up with the rain and drips, each elongating drop lasting a breath and gone in a puddle, the soggiess of play is crystallized with age. And it must leave.

Nichol thinks of the workshop where he must find a rope to pull the doll house out and away, must pull down to a new womb-shady oak for his brother's little girl, new and fairy waddling. Not a rope but a heavy linked chain is what we need. The house will wobble heavier than it looks, and to drag it out of there onto the road in the first place will be hard enough. Nichol closed the back door, flinging it behind him just hard enough so that it snuggled shut, careful not to wake his mother with the usual loose ker-bang. He crossed over the bricks into the workshop—home of manynails, bicycles, and rusty pliers—selecting a piece of rope, and dragging it by one end down the steps to the tennis court, through the gate to the doll house.

Ladylike sitting in the swing, Suzanne; longlegged and pushing herself with the points of her toes; Chicken the kitten brushing her leg with a proud plumed tail and tickling with her whiskers. Besides the swing also a tricky bar from which Nichol and his four brothers had swung upsidedown by their knees, whistling and sand falling from their pockets and shirts fallen over their heads. From another there used to hang a rope which the boys had climbed into the tree to get to the now mossed covered boards growing back into the tree. Suzanne hardly ever used the doll house except when she wanted to hide, or for a place to keep the pup. But she could not for-

get the teaparties and dolls and her father's first chair, and the paper ducks and the giant toad. Nichol dropped the rope and entered the house, crouching. Mysterious age in disconnected cobwebs of the rafter tombs. The smell from keeping the pup seemed to stick in the wallpaper, and one of the yellow curtains housed a cluster of caterpillars. He placed his hand on one and pulled the webs apart, opening the torn wound and exposing a chrysalis. The old mahogany chair his father had sat in as a plump child billowed now with dust when Nichol thumped the padded seat, as he pushed it out the door along with the rusting tin stove and mattress.

"Tie the rope to this corner and we'll slide her right out," yelled his father.

"Wait a minute, Daddy, we have to get this junk out and I don't think that rope'll hold anyway," said Nichol.

"Oh yes it will," said Nichol's oldest brother, Andy. Andy put his teeth out over his lower lip and squatted to attach the rope. Nichol put his hands in his pocket and looked at Suzanne who had picked up the kitten in the swing.

"Chicken!" he called, but the kitten didn't look.

Andy secured the rope against the bottom of the doll house and leaned back on it to test its strength, causing a slight movement of the house and a thump.

"Tell me when its close enough," he said to Nichol and marched out from under the tree to where his blue chevy waited beside the road.

"Glad I've got the trailer hitch," he said to himself, sliding into the seat and sweeping aside a doll (that beat doll on the seat, almost crunch) which had slipped to where his seat should sit.

"Keep her comin'," said Mr. Merryweather, wiggling his wrist. The chevy rolled over the oak leaves, twigs, unevenly, a blue-blade in the forest.

"Comin, Comin . . .," Andy's right arm stretched across the top of the front seat, his head twisted violently backward, teeth over the lip, steering ever so carefully backward, foot on the verge of the clutch.

"Comin, Comin . . . WOAHH," everyone jerked back on the reins.

"Slip it through the hitch."

Chicken scurried bravely over and tangled herself beneath the

wheels of the blue chevy. Watch her. Nichol carried the rope around the hitch in a loop and tied four square knots in a row, letting the end of the rope dangle.

"Better keep her straight with the crow bar, Nichol, so she won't slip down into the brush." Mr. Merryweather stood on his old chair and pulled the crooked yellow smoke stack from under the shingles. A glob of shingles clung to it. Then he walked over to a low branch propped up with a two-by-four.

"Take her away," he said.

Twang as the line tightens. Chicken darted out beneath the car, and sprang up into the tree, clawing wildly, her neck tightened to reach the first limb. Then the cat looked down in a tip-of-the ear grease smudge silence, crouching close to the limb. While grasping the long iron bar and placing it under the bottom of the backside of the doll house, Nichol raised it up and the house made a bump. Andy tightened his grip on the steering wheel and the car budged forward, wheels spinning in the oak leaves and dust. Nichol stooped, up wrenching his back and the crunch of rotted limbs of the doll house, sliding forward and to the side. Mr. Merryweather sweated helplessly, supporting his pole which supported the limb. As the house moved against the brush, a branch punctured a side window; everyone heard the clatter and scream of it, as Andy strained further with the rubber smell and noise of his blue chevy until it shot forward out of the opening, the rope snapping back against the yellow door of the house which stood still solid in the shade.

"Don't we have some old tire chains in the garage?" Suzanne sprinted in her levis across the court and up zoop the incline to the garage, disappearing within till a clank and out she steps with the chains pulling at the knots of her shoulder.

"That won't do any good," said Nichol.

"Whataya mean." Nichol turned to his father who was standing with his hand on the pole, and said,

"Daddy, we oughta use the Buick and that cable we got off the telephone pole."

"Right, right," said Andy, on his knees looking at his rubber tires with hands pronged up supporting him. Nichol yelled up to Suzanne,

"We don't need those." He dropped the crow bar with a clank and trotted up to the Japanese cherry tree beneath which Suzanne

had turned and re-entered the shop to hang up the chains.

Now low down in the seat of his father's big Buick station-wagon, heart thumping, Nichol guided the car into the clearing, nearly running into Andy who stood reluctant to step out of the way. The Buick gave Nichol a power of removing his brother without drawing on the understanding. Automobiles and doll houses; swings and tricky bars, broken limbs. The fender brushed Andy's hip, and he twisted to brush poof his hip, teeth over his lower lip. WOAHH. Suzanne ran back across the court and jumped into the swing, resuming ladylicity.

A new and more vigorous attempt succeeded in wrenching the doll house from beneath the tree into the dirt road that led to Andy's house. Very much dust and noise accompanied the party down the road, Chicken and Mrs. Merryweather's boxer following at a clearbreathing distance. At intervals, when larger stones caused the structure to slide toward the bank, Suzanne and Nichol would dash, straining to the rescue with the long iron bar, but their efforts were only nudges, because once on the road the main problem was over. Andy was genuinely happy when the caravan of Buick, doll house, people, and animals—Chicken had a tail to flourish but the boxer didn't—approach the house where his wife was waiting; she ran into her house and emerged seconds later holding a blond baby whose name was Mayree. Her smile was contagious, Mayree smiled when her mother did. She set the baby on the bricks outside the kitchen door. When Mayree felt herself free, she waddled to meet her father who had called the caravan to a halt by raising his arm high into the air like he was making a right turn. Mayree hugged her father's leg with both arms as he stood patting the top of her head and pointing to the doll house which was discoverable under the dust swirling about it. Mayree did not laugh any more, but held tighter to her father, who began telling her how lucky she was.

"Now you pick a place, Mayree." Mayree didn't know pick a place for what, so she felt funny and looked over at her mother who was smiling.

"Oh boy, Mayree, where shall we put the new house. We can put your new stove in it and gradiddies chair and we can have dinner at your house." The boxer trotted up to Mayree and licked at her face. The child screamed and ran to her grandfather who swung her high in the air and settled her in his arms. She put her

finger in her mouth and looked at him from the corner of her eye.

Mr. Merryweather pointed to a rubber tire hanging from the limb of an oak tree, and said to her,

"How about by the swing."

Mayree dabbed a wet fingerprint on her granddiddies eyeglasses and made them crooked on his nose.

POEM

By KATHERINE LARDNER

It is a somber evening
And I can sit at my window and see the lights of the town
for the approximate distance of a mile.
But little relevance to any purpose in writing;
Simply that kind of night and needless to say:
I've been affected by it.

I think of the large woman, beautiful
Head small in comparison with her hair cropped
close to her head.
Splendidly she sang—Odetta.

And then of the naked woman
Modelling for the class and the mother of nine
Her stomach concealed with scars—
She had asked that they be left out.

It is raining now
And I can sit at my window and see the lights of town
for the approximate distance of a mile.
I listen to hear the beat of the rain:
Needless to say it is there.

FOUR POEMS

By ELIZABETH SURBECK

Peeking in my window
beneath my halfway shade
Night
props his elbows
upon my sill
and beckons me
with midnight eyes
to join him
in a darkened room.

A call from the heart of the book
hardly adheres to an unpardoned ear
or the opaque preoccupied look,
but a wind ponders its beckoning stare
then flips the page and continues the prayer.

Flinging his black sheathed arm
in a halo of paralyzed air,
the pastor's voice circles.
Beneath the pews, legs
Wheeze with ready feet.

In mushroomed depth
of unspoken dusk,
exquisitely poised
like a lantern lit
upon a bough,
a butterfly pales,
under white veil.
Meanwhile, in flowered company
of sociable tiger lilies
and wine colored roses
a butterfly lifts
his sun-bleached wings
highward
to his white mate.

By JAMES FUNARO

INDIAN PIKE MASK

Flies beat themselves against the black skin
As it hangs drying like a gargoyle on a spike—
The head of a spear taken from the lake today.

Blue-metal cheeks are spread in angry ruffs;
Jaws gape open in a long lizard grin, baring
Sharp ripping needles; slit eyes like a snake.

Black wide open . . . now there is no finite body
To limit the craving of this voracious head;
Now it can gash the illusive net of light
And, turning, snatch up star-beads as they fall.

Impatient, I take it from its temporary mount
And hold it up to the sky. Between its jaws
I see the sun in its new blue belly. Now
I reverse the head and place it over my face.

THE WINDIGO

When the wind whips me into winter
My numbing feet follow a boyhood stream
To this place.

These rocks warmed summer hands;
Crystal knives now drop from stone ledges
To pinegreen moss.

I stand while dancing feathers burn
And start a cold run beneath my collar.
The bird has passed.

Last night the Wind Devil was an owl.
His cold eye raced through mist, smoke-gray breast
Hiding the stars.

His wings hurled storm waves crashing
On the shore of night. His black beak clicked
Against my roof.

Morning at my stream. The crazy trail
Of a hare ends here: Dim wing-beats in the snow,
A tuft of white.

And now I wait for the wind to rip
The last flake from the trembling web
Of a dead spider.



The Della Baby

By Brenda Dean

My name is Mama. I'm black and forty. And I live here downtown where there's 9,000 niggers hanging around, shooting crap all day and drinking wine all night. If you look down every street that's in our section, you'll see fifty storefront churches (held on Wednesday and Sunday nights) and above them: yellow windows. That's where I live—behind a yellow window shade, alone. But I got friends, plenty of friends. And on Saturday nights, when they're full of sneaky pete and their heads are bad, they come up and start talking.

Mama, they say, Mama, I got to tell you what I did today. And they start talking 'til I say, Honey, all them's lies. You didn't tell no white man what he could do or where he could go. Most likely, he told you. And you didn't find no diamond ring cause didn't nobody lose no diamond ring. At least, didn't nobody lose no diamond ring down here cause ain't nobody got no diamond ring down here.

Then they start crying: Mama, why you treat me so mean? You're right, mama. I didn't do nothing today, and I ran from the man.

And I say to them every Saturday night: You may not get out of this hole, but you got to live anyway.

And every Saturday night, they say, You're right, Mama. And you know what?

What, I say.

I ain't no good. I ain't never done nothing, and I ain't never going to do nothing cause I'm down, Mama. And I'll never get up.

They go on crying and crying 'til I tell them I've got to go to sleep and they've got to leave me be.

Bye, Mama, they say. Mama, I'm going to do something.

Yeah, you'll do something all right.

It don't matter who they are cause they ain't nobody in particular. Besides, I ain't studyin' remembering their names. They're too many. And they come round all the time til they ain't twenty people. They're all one.

But I do remember a few of them. One in particular—a brown little gal named Della.

The Della baby is one of those strange looking ones who got mixed up along the way. Her hair is kinky, and her skin is pinkish-brown, which don't sound too good, but that's the way it is. Anyway, her hair got mixed up and came out the color of a dirty broom. And on top of that, she has these hazel-cat eyes that say: I want you lay me. So will you? Will you? And I guess they do, cause I keep hearing about her in our section of town.

One night I had a party in my yellow shade room. Della was there and saw a man, went over to him, and whispered in his ear. (She was speaking to that guy called Frank.)

I saw him a couple of days later: What's up, cool shake? Ain't nothing shaking but the leaves on the trees. Do you know Della?

Man, you know I know Della.

Had her at my place the other day.

Yeah? Was she ok?

Sure. If you like lukewarm water.

To which I said: Buddy, you would've found something to complain about, anyway cause that's the way you're made. (See, Frank's a con man from the word go, and he has to get the things he wants right then, when he wants them. But he never wants them after he has them—just for a moment. So he would have found something wrong with her even if she had come on time and had worn him the way he's never been worn before.) But I can't tell this story about Frank. It's Della's, all the way.

She's short, and she always wants a big man. One came one day. Sean, the Third. And he wanted her hair.

Mamma, she said, I met him on a Sunday. And I want him. (I had seen this character around, and all he was good for was a party.)

So I said, Della, baby, I said, you don't want no the Third anything. Besides, what kind of nigger is named Sean? Cause he drives a big car and carries a lot of cash don't mean nothing. There ain't nothing to him but fine clothes and big cigars. Anyway, when he lays you, see, he'll make you come when you won't want to come. And that ain't hardly cool. There's no woman supposed to be pleasing that kind of man.

But Mama, she said to me, I got to have me a big man; anyway, this one's got money. So I said, if that's the way you want it, knock yourself out.

Yeah, they started making it all right. Always long and clean. At least, that's what she always told me. But one day, the Third had to go out of town. And nobody wanted her hair.

One day, Della and me, we had to go to a little joint near by and get something to eat.

See that man, she said. The one with that faded shirt and dungarees?

Yeah, What about him?

I want him, cause my big man's out of town.

Well, he hardly looks like *he* has anything. And if you do get him, he ain't gonna give you anything. He's got I-got-to-leave in the eye, and he'll never give you a thing but a hard way to go—and that'll be only when the spirit moves him to speak. So you leave that alone, Della, and save your heart some hurt. (But love—that's what they say makes the world go round, and Della's the kind that wants to make it spin.) So she strolled up to the counter. (He was the only one there.)

You got a match?

He had a match. And he lit her cigarette.

Then she said, Since you're not with anybody, come eat with us. (And I said to myself, ok, *us*.)

Mama, she said, I want you to meet Vince. Vince, this is Mama. (Lord, I said to myself, there's nobody but Della who can find somebody with a name like that.)

Hello, Vince, I said. Pleased to meet you.

Hello—?

Just call me Mama. Everybody else does.

Well, hello, Mama.

He laughed, and I said to myself, Uh huh. Easy laughter. But he looks kind of serious. Still, there's I-can't-stay-got-to-go in his eye. And Della baby is going to get hurt.

We sat around talking. Della said: What do you do?

Nothing right now.

Excuse me, I said. I've got to see a man about my horse.

Bye, Mama. See you around.

Why don't you come to my place and have a drink? (That's Della talking. She's sweet. But this time she's going to be too sweet.)

Two weeks later, and he was still there—and still having drinks. Her drinks.

She came by my room.

Mama, she said, I'm in love.

(I've heard this one before.)

No, it's true, Mama. Mama, when he lays me down in bed—Your bed.

Be quiet, Mama. When he lays me down in bed, I climb a mountain.

Yeah, ok, mountain.

But Mama—

Kid, you're on your own But when you get the blues, I'll still be here.

Thanks, Mama. But I won't get the blues.

That's what we all say. See you.

She left, and I sat there thinking. That kid, she's too hot. I mean, she gets a man interested in her, and she thinks she'll lose him. So she lets him take her. I'd tell her about herself, but she won't listen. I ain't young, and I'm fat now, but when I was young, I took care of myself. I guess I can't see good enough to tell Della how it really is when you want a man. Like, you've got to get him, and you've got to let him go, so he'll come back, or else he'll walk away soon as he's done.

Three weeks. Three weeks and she comes slouching into my room. Three weeks and two before that. Five.

Mama, she says, Mama, he's gone. And Mama, he was so good and so strong. Oh, Mama, I'm just about going to die.

Della, baby, listen here: You ain't about ready to die. You got to get up. And don't look at me with no tears in your eyes.

But Mama, I loved him. Why did he have to go?

Well, Della, I said, there's some men that always got to go, and they just can't never sit down, never, til they're ready to die and can't get up no more.

Oh, Mama, why did he have to be that way? He was so sweet. He didn't have nothing.

And he was so good.

He couldn't give you a thing.

Mama, what can I do?

Della, maintain your cool.

But, Mama, I don't have any cool. And I never will. Cause when I see a man, I want him fast and quick.

Della, baby, when you going to settle down, girl? You're twenty-two. And you don't know nothing but how to lay. Ain't you ever going to stay with a man?

But Mama, I don't want to stay with a man. And I don't want no man to stay with me.

Della, you're lying.

Oh, Mama, what am I going to do?

Kid, you got to sit down. And let me tell you. When you see a man, don't let him into your bed, and don't get into his.

But Mama, I've got to—cause that's all I am.

Well, if that's all you are, you've got to act like that *ain't* all you are. He'll never know 'til you've got him hooked and taken.

Oh, Mama, that sounds nice, but it aint easy like that. Look at me— I ain't got no money, and I ain't got no clothes. I ain't got nothing.

(Child, you're hurting.)

And what kind of man am I going to meet down here? Anybody I meet is going to want me now, this very minute, and he ain't going to wait til I make up my mind cause he can get better elsewhere.

That, baby doll, is your whole problem. You don't think much of yourself, do you?

Well, Mama, I—

Yeah. You don't think much of yourself. Just let me tell you. You're a woman. And that means there's a lot you can do for a man.

Yeah, like what?

Well, you can listen to his talk, and just walk by his side.

Mama, I ain't made that way. I got to be on the move. I can't sit down and I can't keep still. Besides, talk don't hardly move me.

Well pretend it does.

I've been twenty-two years on this earth, and I ain't never listened to nobody talk.

(Headstrong.) But if you don't want to be like them, maybe you can find one who's like you. So tell me, Della, baby, what do you like?

Well, Mama, I like things I can taste, like the things that I eat; and things I can feel, like a hand on my side, and things I can

see, like a big car on a street, like my big man used to have. Mama, he'd hold a cigar between his teeth and light it a thousand times while I said, Oh, Daddy, Oh, Daddy, oh—and that's all he wanted. At a party, Mama, at a party, he'd hold me close, Mama, so close I couldn't move and we'd rub, Mama, til I'd get hot see, so hot, Mama, and he'd laugh with some gleam in his eye or else, Mama, we'd dance far apart while the drums, Mama, the drums said, 'Move Della, Baby, move like you've never moved before' Mama, and Mama, I'd give 'em some, Mama, I'd give 'em *all* some. Then they'd crowd around me, Mama, while the room got tight, Mama, so tight I couldn't do nothing but move while all the niggers standing around doing nothing but looking at me and looking at him and they'd stare at me and I'd look back with my eyes, Mama, and I'd say with my eyes, Mama, 'I ain't yours; I'm his.' And the music would stop, Mama, and they'd all go away, slow, Mama, slow, cause they wanted me, Mama, and they couldn't have me. Then somebody would open the windows and then they would start laughing at something, we'd all be laughing, but him. Mamma, he's just look at me and I'd look at him and I'd say, man, let's get out of here, and we'd go to his place, Mama, and we'd work and work til, til—Mama, my man's coming back to town.

How do you know?

I just know, Mama. My man's coming back in town. And Mama, when he does, I'll rock that night cause my big man'll be back in town. He'll put pink shoes on my feet and a rose in my hair. Mama, everything'll be all right. But now I got to go.

So she left, and I didn't see her around for a while. Didn't bother me none. I've always got plenty to do, with people coming up talking all the time. But I expected her to come back, and she did, with her big man, who did come back to town.

One day I looked out my window and there he was coming across the street and she was with him with a smile on her face and they came up to my room and he said, How do you do to me and I said How do you do back to him and she sat there grinning and saying to me, Mama, my big man's back in town, telling me like I didn't have eyes to see with, and him—dumb ox child—he sat there too—puffing on his cigar, grinning and looking at her like she was the only female alive. But before I could ask her how'd she know he was coming and before she could say: I just knew (that's what she

would've said), Della and that man, Lord, they left, *almost* without saying excuse me.

But they did, and then I said, goodbye—have a good time. And they were gone.

She'll be back, though, and when she does, I'll still be sitting here, in my yellow-shade room.

BARBARA PURDY

QUERY

What black purpose broods in the beast
In the accentuated eyes of men?
What glow is seen in the stealth of the lynx,
Who pinched Napoleon?

A TASTE OF EDEN

Honeysuckle mingling
With a summer day's sweat
Is like a kiss' cruel beguilement
Which stings in the memory
Upon tasting garlic.

THE PASSION OF JEREMIAH

I walked through the city one orange noon
And heard the sad croon of the newspaper carrier
Moaning our nation's obituary,
Heard the fanatic who claims
We picnic in pestilence—
And I almost trembled—
Til I saw the wild eyes of the vegetable seller
Furious about turnips.

STATEMENT AND COMMENT

By ENID LARIMER

Puieeee !

I'll go envelop my head in a flowered chintz quilt.

Wrap it around my head, digging

a big soot pile for the mind

to sit in and swear.

And when I come out

dingle-dangling my earrings,

I intend to throw soap drool

and gnaw off every bit of my nail polish!

I It smells like perfume,
perfume does.

Yup.

And when dreaming that angels look like
red cocker spaniels

who sing hosannas in dissonant falsetto,

it had to have been

last night's peanut butter and sauerbraten

with the creme de menthe.

All those beatnik foreign drinks, you know.

II Regression, freudian sub-conscious,
and all that surrealism
like neon sounds
instead of normal neon
which is in signs
where it ought to be.

III Memory throbs unconscious and spontaneous
as spasms of reflection somersault
in apoplectic staccatos.
Involuntary reflexes into the past
contact towards the amber image.
Tap a keg!

VI Green is like life green
except when it's blue,
for then it is blessed
with celestial hue—
swinging on the monkey bars
of truth and form.

V Junior did the cutest thing last week:
he read in the Reader's Digest
that children in Borneo
don't have ice cream.
So he put a stamp on a fudge ripple cone,
and stuck it in the post office slot.
It's better to give than to receive.

VI The night scented,
the doves bussed olive branches.
And champagne fizz turned thick
like mushroom sauce
as the basidiocloud came near
then floated away,
threatening in cryptic curses
to return.

VII How come the two-headed people
disappear when
you look at them sideways?
Are they really that narrow?
Or maybe they're just made of
word froth.

VIII Fantasia the quad queen
speaks in just unbelievably cools,
in pear-shaped nose tones.
Fantasia absolutely adooores people.
After all, the two-headed people
made her queen,
and all she had to do
was smile twice
through her mascara:
Green mascara and two smiles.

POEM

By BARBARA THIELE

The other day we rode in the snow, the first snow.
Not gentle like the usual first,
 but fast and whirly,
 big flakes like soft powder sugar lumps
 sticking on the horses' manes.
A Russian snow I think.
So we pretended
And I was Ivan and Polly was Olga.
I was Ivan with my big fur hat.
Polly was Olga with her babushka
 (funny—babushka means grandmother in Russian.
 So Polly wore her plaid grandmother.)
We fought the blizzard to town for flour.
We needed the flour for bread.
I took off my gloves—Ivan and Olga couldn't afford gloves—
 and let my hands get sore and chapped.
My horse was the better—I was the man.
Polly's looked more Russian though—sturdy and fast
 to go with the snow.
There was only one thing wrong.
We laughed all the way to town and they were out of flour
 When we got there.

CRUEL WHITE

By CAROLYN COLLEY

As she read over her notes her hand moved to the cigarette case which was hidden underneath a pile of papers. Then she fumbled for her lighter. She looked up from her notes just long enough to avoid lighting the filter-tip end. She inhaled deeply as her eyes returned to the notebook.

The door to her room opened and closed and she heard footsteps approaching her desk.

"Hi, idiot child, how are you doing?" It was Becky, one of her suitmates.

"Well, heh, heh, there aren't many minutes till test time so I shall pretend I'm quite confident. Do *you* understand the last Taoist-type guys?" Anne queried.

"I find them most thought-provoking," Becky began to smile and then laughed in her own glee-spreading way.

"Okay, wise and mystic philosopher. Explain what you know."

"Well, uh, it's sort of a naturalistic monotheism with dualistic pantheism tendencies."

"You know what the psych prof says about college girls who talk baby talk."

"Baby talk! Well, I can see that you haven't grasped the intrinsic worth of my explanation."

They both laughed.

Becky continued. "Actually, I'm kinda clutched. I just can't remember all the names."

"Yeah, I have trouble with Lung-Chin-Wow-de-do."

"Oh, Buddha! I guess. Why don't we quit the whole world situation?"

"Ah, yes, yes," Anne said, throwing her arms up in mock despair. "To flee from the uncertainties of reality into the fine never never land of nothingness which awaits us all. Oh, tra, la, life is so very complex. Science and materialism have ruined us all. I crave the

joys of mystic enlightenment, I want to achieve coolness." Anne looked at her ash tray as if it were the answer.

"Oh boy, you really sound good," Becky said crossing her eyes. "Now I wonder if you could repeat those gems of knowingness."

"Are you kidding?" Anne chuckled. "How 'bout some gum to calm your nerves?"

"Thanks, don't mind if I do, idiot child."

"Well, I guess it's about time to close the notes and just hope."

"I'll go get my coat and we can toddle off together."

"Okay," Anne said as Becky galloped out of the room. Anne took a final puff on her cigarette and put it out slowly, watching the fire disappear into black ashes. She stood up and then attempted to put the things on her desk into some order. She glanced automatically at the big photograph of Bill and the small one of her parents. She emptied the ash tray with the fraternity crest into the wastebasket with the college pennants on the outside.

As she walked into the bedroom she tried to list the facts which she had been memorizing. "Oh, rats," she thought, "if I know it, I know it, if I don't, I don't." When a command performance of her intelligence drew this close Anne always became fatalistic.

She picked up the silly stuffed frog on her bed and plumped him down in a more ridiculous position. The frog had so many ways to express himself. She chuckled. "What a good frog you have been."

She went over to her dresser and stuck out her tongue at the image in the mirror. She combed her hair and then shut her eyes and puckered her face. It was time for the hair spray. She hated the stuff, but it was snowing outside and spray was the only savior. She held her breath and sprayed.

Then she quickly ran into the other room in order to breathe some regular air.

Becky came in from her side of the suite and pretended a gasping fit. "Phew, that junk's potent. Why don't you resort to an umbrella for snow weather?"

"Rebecca. Just because your hair is naturally curly and mine is naturally stick-like is no reason . . . well, you just can't realize the catastrophic effects snow can have on stick-like hair-type people."

"Oh, I'm sure it must be frightful."

"I don't think you really care."

"Well . . . uh . . ."

"Well, let's go, silly goose. Hurry up, please, it's time, as Eliot would say."

"Okey dokey."

They went out of the room and started down the stairs.

"Why don't we go down by way of the banister?" Anne said.

"Why not?" Becky said and hopped on.

They whizzed down two flights and just as Anne hit the ground her purse flipped out of her hand and fell to the floor, scattering the assorted contents.

"Oh, rats, this is all I need," she said laughing into her raccoon collar as she stooped over to repack the brown leather pouch.

"I keep dropping this thing everywhere I go. I mean, honestly, it's sad. It's been in more puddles, on more floors—it even topples down stairways occasionally."

"Well, it's probably made with an extra-sensitive sort of leather," Becky said. She leaned over to pick up a stray pencil.

"The really sad part is that I usually go down to the depths with it."

"Oh, now that's a different story."

"Like last week, did I tell you? I fell into the student union at the busiest hour of the day. I just opened the door and the floor was wet and I was in a hurry and I skidded and I found myself sitting between the sandwich bar and the first bridge table. I was a little embarrassed."

"Did you really? Right in the middle of the floor?"

"I did," Anne nodded affirmatively. "It was *awful*."

"Do you suppose our actions would appear childish to the outside world?" Becky said.

"Oh, I don't know. At least we ride banisters side-saddle now. This marks a certain mature dignity."

They were still laughing as they passed the mailboxes. There was a separate pigeonhole for each girl in the dormitory. It was supposed to be more private that way.

"Hey look," Anne said. "Do my eyes deceive me or is that a letter in MY box?" She reached for it greedily. The more years you spent in college the less mail you received. "Oh, great, it's from Jeffrey."

"All I got was a church bulletin," Becky said.

"I think I'll save it till after the test. It'll serve as a pick-up."

"That's your Platonic lover, isn't it? The one who's in Zurich?" Becky asked as they walked out into the snowy day.

"Yep, that's the one. He's such a far out guy I can't believe it. And each letter is a new philosophical view of life. I tell you it takes me ten readings to comprehend anything he says.

"Well, don't worry," Becky said, hoisting her books into another position. "He might be an imbecile instead of a genius."

"But . . . I don't know . . ." Anne answered. "He sort of understands me. He's a good friend. I can't explain it really. And now he's in Switzerland studying and sopping up life. Can you imagine anything much neater?"

They started walking, both of them thinking a little more seriously.

"We've got to get over there some day," Anne said. "I just want to go to Europe more than anything else."

"Oh, I *know* it. This college bit, what does it get you?"

"Nothing. Absolutely nothing. I don't know. Studying is fine but when you get right down to it what is it leading to? We all study, eat, sleep, study and on and on. What's the purpose? To get a good grade. So who cares? Nobody."

"I wish we had a cause, you know what I mean? Anything." Becky paused. "Maybe we could throw ourselves into establishing a society for the abolishment of Oriental rugs."

"How 'bout a . . . uh . . . a game-preserve For Dodo Birds Only? Well what *can* we do?"

"Act as if it mattered," Becky answered.

"You make me uncomfortable."

"It's cold, isn't it? Wish they'd install underground escalators from the dorms to the class buildings."

"It's slippery, too."

They walked along in silence, both concentrating on their feet. They stepped as though they had butterflies on the tops of their boots which would fly away at the slightest jolt.

"Bzzzt."

"What'd you say?" asked Becky.

"I said Bzzzt."

"Oh, of course."

"You see, I am a snow melter. Bzzzt."

"Oh."

"It's not working too well though. Maybe I'm a neon sign. Bzzzt."

"You cracking up?"

"No, I just sorta thought it was an expressive noise."

"Okay," said Becky. "I'll go along with your silly game. Bzzzt. Hey, that's pretty good. Bzzzt."

"Ah, I knew you'd like it once you got started."

"It has great creative possibilities," Becky said. "Ugh, don't look now. Through the voluptuous blizzard I spy the door to Hartford Hall only two feet away."

"Bzzzt."

"Bzzzt."

They walked into the building and joined the rest of their classmates who were filing into the room.

Anne finished her paper and left the room silently while the others were madly trying to formulate clever conclusions to their pages of generalizations.

She walked outside and felt refreshed. She always found deep concentration invigorating. The sun was shining now, and the brilliance of the scene thrilled her.

"Hey, come back to earth." She heard a voice through the light and turned around.

"Oh, Bill! Hello. I didn't see you standing there. I'm sorry."

"How was your test?" Bill said.

"I'm not exactly sure. I think I knew it, but I can never tell how things are going to turn out."

"You'll get an A," he said. "You always do; I don't know why you worry."

"Bill, you know I don't *always* get good grades."

Bill laughed. "You'll just have to study harder then."

"Oh, like you do, huh?"

"Sure, I study all the time. Doesn't do me any good, however."

"Cheer up. I know this semester will be better for you."

"I've been telling myself that for a pile of semesters, it hasn't worked yet."

"Mhmm. Do you have any more classes this afternoon?"

"Yep, I've got one right now."

"Well, then I better go, huh?"

"Yep, guess so," Bill said. "Want me to stop over tonight?"

"Oh, yes, . . . if you have time. Just for a little while."

"Well, you don't seem too interested," Bill said coldly. Anne was looking over his shoulder at something beyond.

"Hi, Dr. Harries," Anne said, smiling and waving.

"Hello, Anne," said the science professor as he walked past them.

"Isn't he a sweetie, Bill?" she whispered. "He's so jolly . . . and such a great mind. You must take a course from him."

"Yeah. Do you want me to come over?"

"Yes, silly goose . . . Oh, I'm sorry . . . Are you mad?"

"I just wish you'd take a little more interest in *me*, that's all," Bill said.

"Oh, Bill, I just *had* to say hello to him. Please come over."

Bill didn't answer.

"I wish you could take interest in what's important to me once in a while," Anne started again.

"I don't happen to enjoy science professors with fine minds."

"Oh, Bill, quit sulking. What's wrong with us? Everything we say ends in an argument. Will you come over? Please?"

"Okay, you win this round," he said smiling a little. "I love you."

"Shhh, someone'll hear you." Anne looked behind herself sheepishly.

"I don't care."

"But it's embarrassing."

"Uninhibit yourself, girl!"

"The heck with that kind of talk. I'll see you, Hon." She started down the steps.

She pulled her mittens on and pushed up her furry collar. She fumbled in her purse for her sunglasses and put them on. She always felt like a pseudo-movie star wearing them in the winter but her contact lenses made her eyes extra-sensitive to brightness. One of the lenses was scratching and she tried to rub her eye with her mittened hand. The whole process was awkward and she failed to ease the sandy sensation. "Oh, well," she thought, "it's probably nothing but lack of sleep." But she couldn't put the irritation out of her mind.

"Hi, Nancy," she said.

There was no response.

"Damn it," she thought, "that really makes me sick. The second snub in three days. I don't know why she's so stuck on herself all of a sudden. Oh, well."

She sniffed the crisp air and looked down at the snow-covered valley which lay beneath her "little college on the hill." It was so simple, so good. She liked to walk alone once in a while—it was the only time she really appreciated the beauty of the campus. If you trudged along with a friend it was just plain queer if you got excited about a cluster of trees or a winding path. Just plain queer. But now she was alone. She smiled at a stray snowflake which had come down through the sunshine. She skipped a little as she tried to catch it on her nose. The snowflake fluttered out of reach.

The fallen snow crunched under her boots and she kicked it playfully. Kicking snow was such a good sport. She didn't mind *how* cold it was when it got into her boots.

And the sun kept shining. "It feels so warm," she thought, "even though you can't feel warmth, really. It's funny, you just sort of know that the sun is supposed to be warm. Well, it *looks* warm and so . . . well . . . so yellow—happy. That's it. The sun isn't exactly *warm* today, it's happy. Or maybe I'm happy. Oh, everything is really quite happy!"

She began to hum as she approached the dorm. She pulled the heavy door open and entered stamping her feet. She ran up the stairs and into her room.

Marney, another suitemate, was bent over her desk.

"Hi, Marney, how are you? Isn't it a great day?"

"Magnificent."

"What are you doing?"

"I'm trying to draw something. How was your test?"

"Not bad. What's the big project?" Anne said as she threw her coat on a chair.

"I want to send a nutty picture—nothing else—to that guy I met at Christmas. That ought to shake him up a bit. Heh heh."

"Oh, that reminds me! I got a letter from Jeffrey."

"What great revelations did he startle you with this time?" Marney asked.

"I don't know yet, I haven't read it." She rummaged in her purse for the fragile air mail letter and opened the envelope. She sat down at her desk and began to read.

"Hi, idiot-children." Becky burst into the room shaking snow from her head like a wet dog.

"Hi, Becky," Anne and Marney said in unison.

"How'd you get back so fast?" Becky said turning to Anne.

"I took a snowflake. Shhh, I'm reading my letter."

"How do you draw a hand that's holding something?" Marney said.

"Don't look at me, Becky said. "I come from a long line of primitive artists. You know, anything but buffalos on cave walls is out of my realm of possibility."

"Here I thought you would help me," Marney said.

"Oh, my God," Anne shrieked.

"What are you blushing for?" Becky said.

"Listen to this. He says 'Corresponding with you is a great thing in my life. Each letter from you is like an orgasm without a guilt complex'. I mean, my God!"

"Phew. What led up to that?" Marney chortled.

"Nothing I tell you . . . oh my goodness . . . I mean . . . we . . . oh dear. Heh, I guess it's good to be able to write frankly. You'll have to admit it's a pretty poignant simile."

"I heard something sexy and I came right in." It was Eileen. "Repeat, por favor."

"What an ear for sex you've got," Marney said.

"Here, you can read it for yourself." Anne handed the letter to Eileen. "Where were you?"

"I . . . uh . . . just happened to be studying in the bedroom and, you know . . . uh . . . I couldn't help overhearing . . ."

"Yeah, uh huh, sure, Eileen," Becky said.

Eileen looked up from the letter when she had finished the passage. They all started to giggle the way that only virginal college girls giggle at sex.

"Did he say anything else interesting?" Marney said.

"Well, I think his main thesis this time is that life is futile. But I just skimmed through it," Anne answered.

"That's not exactly what I had in mind," Marney said.

"You know, life IS futile, when you get right down to it," Anne said. She glanced down at her ashtray.

"Well, sure it is, but we can't think about it. We'd all be in a nuthouse in a week," Becky said.

"The way we act in this suite, I sometimes think we're already in it," Eileen added.

"I wish somebody would help me draw this cartoon," Marney said. "Drawing is a good anti-futile weapon."

"I'll help, Marney," Anne said.

"Good! I was hoping you'd take the hint. Do the whole thing, huh, huh?" Marney jumped up from her desk and dragged Anne over.

"What do you want in it?" Anne asked.

"Oh, the usual will do. Short chubby-type boy holding college pennant and champagne glass, wearing skis and a freshman beanie."

"Wouldn't you like to throw something else in?" Eileen said. "I mean for free you might as well get the works—football, cigarette, hair on chest, book of poetry, 'Jesus Saves' button—"

"No," Marney interrupted. "This has to be kept simple. The initial shock of my straight-forward attitude must be subtle."

Anne sketched as Marney explained the cartoon's purpose.

"See," Marney said taking a drink of her cold coffee, "I'm merely sending this cartoon. Not a word, just the cartoon. He'll be flustered, astounded, but best of all he will think of me and say, 'I shall write this lunatic girl and find out what the hell she did this for.' You see, correspondence will blossom."

"How's this?" Anne said leaning back so they could see her work.

"Oh . . . that's great. Perfect! Oh boy, he won't know what to do." Marney chortled again.

"Glad you like it, Chubs. What time is it?"

"About 4:30."

"Is it really?" Becky said. "I now pronounce myself guilty of loitering to the worst degree."

"Come along fellow-procrastinator, we shall return to the confines of our cell," Eileen said.

"Back to celibate study," Becky said as she linked arms with Eileen. They marched out of the room humming an original dirge.

"Well, as for me," Marney said scratching her head, "I think I'll climb over the monastery wall and mail this letter downtown."

"Tell the people outside I said 'hello'," Anne said.

"Okay, Sister Anne. Can I get anything for you?"

"How 'bout some pumpkin seeds?"

"Oh, sure, or a baby elephant?"

"No, you'd never find one. They aren't in season."

"Okay, spook. Pumpkin seeds it is." She threw herself into her coat and was gone.

Anne yawned and rubbed her eye again. The contact was still bothering her. She waded through the books, pillows, and clothes on the floor and successfully reached the phonograph. She flipped

on the record of Bach fugues and waded back to her desk. She stared at the letter from Jeffrey. She picked it up tenderly and walked into the bedroom.

She looked at herself in the mirror—she was appalled. Her brown hair was flat and straightish. The spray hadn't worked at all. She combed her hair absently, attempting to fluff it up. She examined her face at a closer range. "Tck," she said to herself, "I think it's all my nose. It's too big. A big nose and small beady eyes just don't go together."

She opened her contact case and flicked the lenses out of her eyes and into their respective sponges. She rubbed her eyes and looked up. Things were foggy now. She always liked herself better when she couldn't really see. The haze was rather comfortable. "Myopic-type people are sort of lucky," she thought. "They can see things all blurred and softened when they want to."

Anne kicked off her loafers and plunked on her bed. She punched her pillows into shape and settled back. It felt so good to relax. She pulled the letter out of its envelope and began to reread it. Jeffrey's handwriting was scratchy and she had to squint to make some of it out. He had enclosed a few bits of poetry for her to criticize and she leafed on to that page. She pondered over the obscure verses. Bach's contrapuntal music, playing in the other room, zig-zagged across the main line of her thought. She was drowsy.

"Anne . . . Hey, Anne . . . Hey . . . uh . . . sleeping beauty? . . . it's time for dinner." It was Marney.

Anne looked up startled. "Oh, I must have fallen asleep."

"Yes, I would say that was a pretty accurate guess, kiddo." Marney went into the study room.

"Thanks for waking me, Marney."

She got out of bed and walked to the middle of the room. Her eyes welled with tears and she felt dazed. She was crying big salty tears. She just stood there and cried.

Marney came back into the bedroom. She saw Anne and hesitated. Then, slowly, she went over to her.

"Hey . . . what's wrong?" There was no answer. Marney looked at her sympathetically. "Want to tell me about it, Anne?"

Anne laughed half-heartedly. "I don't know *what's* wrong. I guess it was something I dreamed."



POEMS

CATHERINE THOMPSON

Let me tell you—
That moon is not so cool
Beaming in that Face-of-Buddah sky
A sweet and dumpy baby's lumpy ball
Of phosphorescent cheese
And icy abdomens of blinking flies.
And—wow!—conceited! See?
A tree, a house, a mailbox, and
 The Moon.
I'll squinch up one more inch
 and rip it down.
I'll dig off some fluorescence
 with my thumb
And poke my finger in its crater eye.

DRIFTING INTO A MUSEUM CASE

In the great fog there is one small thing—
The muskrat slips down in and rocks away,
Unweaving as he goes his having been.

A white boat, riding like a wall, moves in,
Slowing and stopping in every part,
(The muskrat hurrying with the water's heart).

A woman leaning on the prow stares down,
Her round face like a mirror in a hall,
Her hair spread softly where it meets the wall.

The muskrat took his lake (he made it his)
And somewhere, tilted near a glass-locked log,
The rowboat dries out in the floor of fog.

ALMOST EVERY SUNDAY

By SARA EASTON CURTIS

Almost every Sunday he went with his father to visit his grandmother. Sometimes he went during the week, too. But Sunday was the real time for the visit. On that day, he always woke up early. He could remember a time when his father awoke before him, but that had been a long time ago, almost a year. He could remember dimly that time when his father didn't wear bedroom slippers and used to slide quietly along through the grey before-sunrise on bare pale feet. It was his father's naked feet that he could recall most precisely from those mornings, not his face or his hands or what they silently ate together at the cold breakfast table. For him, his father's body seemed not to have existed at that time, only the feet, blue in some lights, and with a crumpled toe, stirred through the mist of space to his remembering eyes.

But that was over now because this last Christmas, the day his grandmother sent him his dog, his mother had given his father a pair of woolly sheep-skin slippers and his father had put them on right then, and had worn them all day. The next day the dog had found one of those slippers and had chewed it up. He wouldn't have, either, if his father had gotten up early and gone to work at his desk as usual instead of sleeping all morning. He thought that after his father would go barefoot again, but he didn't. Instead, his mother had bought his father another pair of slippers, and they had punished the dog until he learned to leave them alone.

Now only he and the dog got up early. It was better that way, too, not because he liked the dog better than his father, but because it was easier to stay quiet enough when his father was sleeping than it had been when he was working. Besides, he couldn't prefer the dog to his father because it had turned into his father's dog, not his.

It was funny, his grandmother had sent the dog to him, but it was his father that the dog followed. He could play with it, and call it and it could come to him, but it always obeyed his father first. He had told his grandmother about this and she had said that maybe

if he were the one who fed it every night that it would come to him. So he had taken the job away from his father, but the dog still didn't follow him first.

So now every morning he and the dog would get up early and go downstairs together and he would open the front door and let the dog and his mother's cat out to run. If it was nice he would go out with them. He thought it was strange that they didn't fight. People had always told him that dogs and cats were natural enemies, but their dog and cat were friends, they even worked as a team sometimes to protect each other from other animals. The only way he could think to explain this was that his father had trained them to get along.

And now it wasn't until about nine o'clock on Sundays and eight on week days when he had to go to the office all day, that his father woke up. So he always had to wait a long time before he could make any noise in the morning. Even when his father did get up, he didn't want to be disturbed much, he just wanted to sit around and drink coffee with his mother and read the paper. So he still had to stay out of the way, but it was easier to do that now than when his father had been working all the time. Besides, he knew that after lunch they would all do something together, take a walk or work in the yard or something, and knowing that made the waiting not so hard.

He could still bring to his mind a faded picture of earlier afternoons when his father used to excuse himself from the table as soon as he had finished eating, return to his desk, and remain there until it was time to go see his grandmother. He could see his mother digging in the yard and weeding, and he could remember playing beside her as she raked leaves into a pile and jumped into it with him. He didn't think about why his father didn't play with them then, and he never asked why he did now. It just was. It was like Spring. It was there, and then it wasn't there anymore because it was time for Summer, and then Summer went away and it was time for the leaves to fall, and when they fall, it got cold and it was Winter. And when Winter got as cold as it could, it started warming up and pretty soon it was Spring again.

But one thing didn't change, and that was Sunday afternoon; the late Sunday afternoons remained as they had always been as long as he could remember back. He felt that they had always been like they

were, even before he could remember, even before he had been born. Always when the afternoon began to close down, his father would say; "Well, I think I'll go see my old mother now. You coming?" And always they would leave his mother at home and start off.

They might walk the four or five blocks to his grandmother's apartment house, or they might take the car. And when they entered the building together, everybody would speak to them. Sometimes he walked in front of his father, and then people would greet him first, and he would feel important.

He always pushed the elevator buttons. It was he who called the doors to open up, and it was he who directed the car to the right floor without a stop and made the doors open again. It always made him a little angry when some old lady or somebody waiting to go up pushed the button and made the car stop. It spoiled everything, his stomach would return, the pull on his feet would disappear, everything would be normal again. And when they started up, nothing would be as strong the second time. He glared at the people who got on, hating them, wishing they'd trip because they had ruined the flight that he so anticipated.

When they reached the right floor and got off, he led the way; and it was he who got to ring the door-bell. But it was his father who always kissed his grandmother first. His father would politely kiss her left cheek and then her right and then go into the apartment. She would bend down to him, and he would do the same. He would smile at her and she would smile back. Then he would follow his father in, leaving his grandmother to close the door and put the water on for tea while he and his father settled themselves in their accustomed places.

His grandmother would bring out the tea to them, and because it was Sunday, she would bring the thick funny-paper section, neatly held under her arm, to him. She would set the tea tray down on the low table, and seat herself in the regal wing-backed chair and pour. Everything on the tray was polished by constant wear. There was the teapot, which made his face fat, and his mouth huge like a frog's and the cream pitcher for him, and the curly, three-legged sugar bowl with the chicken-leg sugar tongs; all reflecting everything wider than reality. And there was always the cutglass bottle with the silver tag that said RUM, and the dish with the sliced lemon.

His tea was full of cream and sugar. He never got to taste the rum that smelled so warm in his father's cup. But he could eat a

slice of lemon if he wished. Sometimes he took a slice with him to suck on the elevator so that he could watch anyone who got on pucker up. He liked his tea, it was thick and soft. So was his grandmother's plush couch that he always sat on to read the funnies after he had finished his tea.

He could sink way down in the couch, and pile the papers up around him so that he almost disappeared. When he read, he held himself very still to concentrate, and he held the paper up in front of his face. That way no one could tell whether he was reading or not. Sometimes he read and didn't hear anything, and sometimes he listened. They always thought that he was reading, and so they talked of anything that interested them. Often the talk was of people and things he didn't know or understand, but occasionally he heard things that little boys usually aren't told.

One afternoon he heard about a girl named Lilly who had to have an abortion, and another afternoon he heard about Mr. Perkins, who's name was Harry, and who drank and beat his wife. He listened attentively to these tales through his paper shield, and he wondered about the world of people that these grownups he knew talked about, and those that he didn't know worked in. He heard names and names of actions, and he read about things that looked similar, and always he was separate from them. The smell of printer's ink and the taste of tea and the fuzz of plush under his palm let him look at all the grown world through a screen.

That was the way things had been ever since he could remember. Only the conversation and the funny-paper plots changed. His mother never came with them to the apartment and his grandmother never came to their house. Only he and his father moved through the dividing space, back and forth, every Sunday afternoon. He never thought about why this was so; in fact, he never even realized that it was so until one particular Sunday in October.

It had been no different than any other Sunday. There had been nothing to warn him about what was going to take place. He and his father had raked leaves with his mother until the gold left the day and then they told his mother good-bye and had walked to the apartment building. Everyone smiled, he had pushed all the right buttons and no one had slowed their ascent. The hall had the same long dark melba look, the doorbell worked, his grandmother smelled of lavender as usual, and the tea tasted sweet and thick.

While they were all sitting around the table, his grandmother had shown him the bracelet that she wore and had told him the story it carried. "It had been a twenty-dollar gold piece," she had said. "Your grandfather had an old Indian smith beat it out into this shape for me, and later, when we came back home, he had two rubies set here for its eyes." He had thought it was wonderful, long and thin, winding about his arm. He had looked carefully at its intricate carvings, and had stared for a long time into its close-set ruby eyes. He could see where the Indian had even carved a sharp tongue in its half opened mouth. He had wanted to keep it for his own, but he had handed it back to his grandmother because it belonged to her.

When the tea was finished, he had taken the folded newspaper from under his grandmother's arm and had retreated to his plush and paper fortress as he did every Sunday. He had sunk into the cushions, curling himself up comfortably and had gone to work hunting for the joke page in the funny section. The conversation outside had been of Mr. Diebbel, and Mr. Snalsten, and a lawyer, and Mary somebody, and something about his father's job, and Mary again and, "You never should have married her," his grandmother's voice said in a level tone that reminded him of the tic of china against china, "she's not good to you. She can't even keep the boy clean. She's impudent and stupid and will never be anything but a detriment to your career."

He heard a shout outside five stories below, "Back her up, Joe. A little further, a little further. Whoa!" and then a small clash of metal. He heard the steam hissing through the heat pipes, rushing through their room and out into the hall. The gears in the grandfather clock across the room from him ground in a low roar through its timeless ticking. He heard grandmother's fingernails scrape across the rim of her tea cup. His father's reply came slowly through the layers of sound that surrounded him, muffled slightly, nearly indistinct. "Well, I can't change it now, so don't talk to me about it. It's finished. Besides, I rather like the way we're living."

The print of his paper loomed large then, small before his eyes. He began to chant to himself: "Mary is my mother's name, my mother's name is Mary, my mother Mary is, Mary is my mother." He concentrated on looking absorbed. He turned a page, he saw a picture of a corn-plaster. He thought of his father's blue feet.

The paper smelled of printer's ink. The ink was on his fingers, too. They were black, dirty. He put them, one after the other, in his mouth; balancing the shielding paper in his lap. He heard someone close a door a hundred times far down the hall. Then he let the paper slip so that he could look at his grandmother.

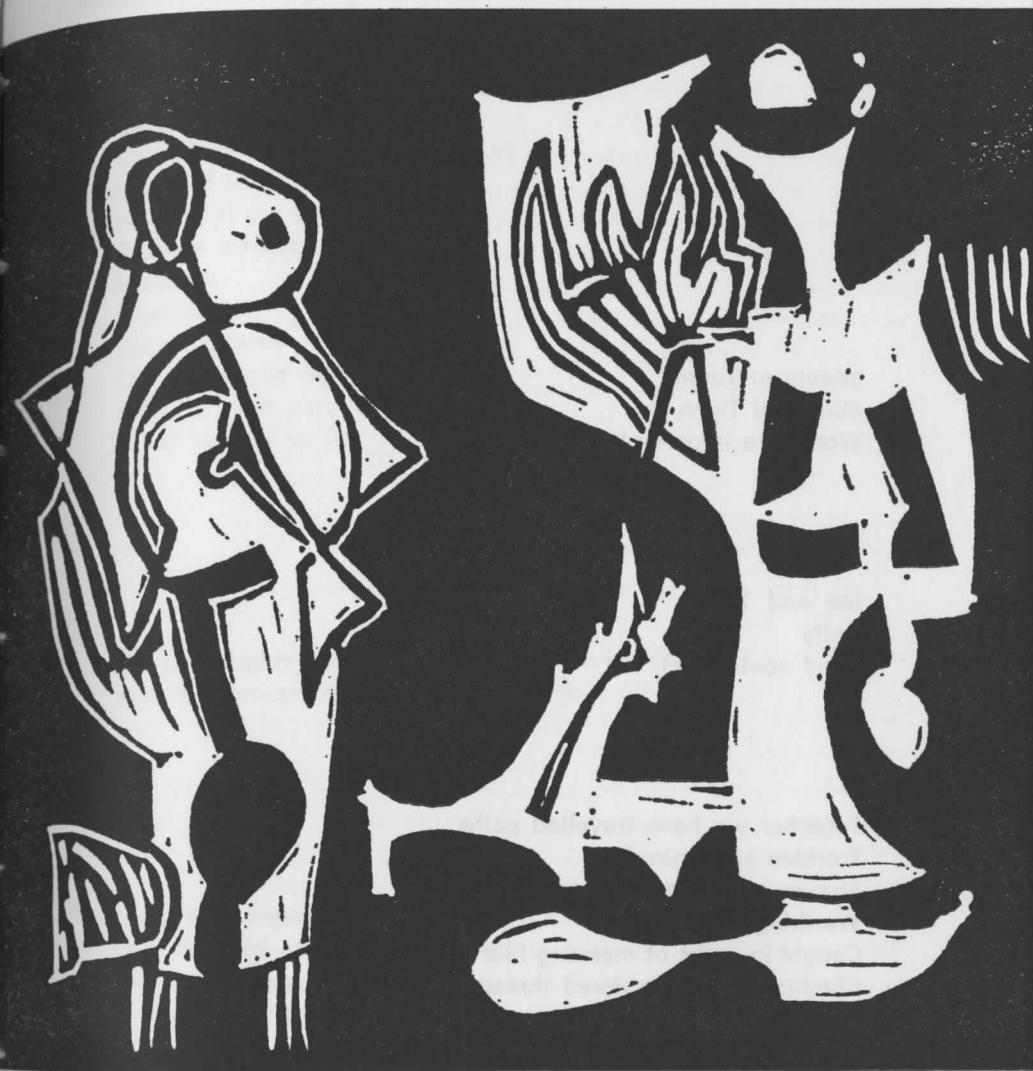
He saw two red rubies peering back at him, and a little black tongue flickering in and out. He could head the heat whiss forever away into other rooms. His father sat across from his grandmother, he had a hooked nose. When he raised his tea cup to his mouth, he crooked his little finger away from the handle delicately. His nose just cleared the rim of the cup when he drank. Tic, he put the cup back into the saucer.

His grandmother was staring intently at his father. Her eyes were yellow and her pupils were black up and down slits in her face. Hiss the steam rushed above his head, beating its way out of the room, down the hall, away out of hearing. Tic, her nails scratched across the reflecting teapot, across his father's fatly learing face, mirrored gaping mouth.

"I think it's time we went home." His father said. He arose, his head hunched out from his shoulders, his nose curving over the seated figure. "Thank you for the tea, dear." He said. Now there was only one face spread, like a hood, across the surface of the teapot. His father bent down and kissed the face up to him. His nose brushed checkered skin.

The voice of the grandmother came across to him where he sat sunken in the red plush. It had the sound of a sack being dragged through high grass. "Would you like a lemon to suck on your way home, boy?" said the voice. The grandmother got up and came toward him, a lemon slice tweezed between her outstretched fingers. He watched the hand clamped over the half-moon lemon approach his body. He saw the coiled bracelet slide down the arm toward the hand.

He reached out suddenly and snatched the lemon slice out of the approaching claw and stuffed it into his mouth whole and swallowed it. Then he stood up and brought his face quite close to the face of the grandmother. He pushed his lower jaw forward and threw his head back a little. "Hcssssssssss." He said. Then he turned and ran down the hall to the elevator. He pushed the button. CAR COMING the light flashed back at him.



John Hand

TO JUDY

By TANYA SHRIVER

(Meum et Tuum
Mine and Thine
Words are important

Me and Thee
Unity
Bond souls free)

Together we have travelled paths
Trodden and untrodden
Strewn with idea-traps
Watching others fall
Caught in webs of meaning like deluded flies
Climbing brightly-colored threads that lead to nothing
Clutching for our minds
To take with them

Swiftly we have run
The honeycombed labyrinth
Peering into darkened openings
Pushing pointed needles into blackness
Weaving on a rigid loom
Trembling as we gazed before us
Into cold and crystal caverns
Hearing at our backs
Raucous echoed voices
Babbling
Bouncing
Dusty patterns
Old and sterile cages
Building with pernicious schemes
A net to take us in

Straw thoughts beating walls of granite words
Piercing through the perforated silence

Then we jumped
Into the cold and crystal cavern
Groping in the plasma maze
We saw the truth
Grasped it
And swung from brightly-colored threads that lead to nothing

A FAMILY

By William Weaver

It was now mid-afternoon; the sun was a white disc in the sky. The tall rice grass and jungle weed stood still in the heat and only the dry sound of crickets and discontented screeching of parrots was heard from the bush. Owen bent over his work; with a short crooked stick he pushed the grass and weeds back, exposing the stems, then with the quick slash of a machete cut them off at the root. He had been working hard since early morning and only half the field was cleared. He bent a little lower on his haunches and swung the machete a little faster. His right wrist ached badly; he switched hands taking time to stand and stretch his legs. Owen looked back at the house, the heavy thatched roof and ochre mud-plaster walls. One of the screens hung loose from a window and he saw the form of his wife passing the opening, a tall straight Negro with an ageless face who walked a little flat footed and carried her large hands at her sides in a way that made her look like a young girl. Owen readjusted the khaki shorts held in the front by a safety pin. From inside the house came the sound of an American jazz station over the transistor radio. He let the machete fall to the ground and looked past the house. Thick green vines hung like a web over the tall mahogany trees and dangled in strands among the ferns that grew in their shade.

He had cleared the same area a few months ago and already the weeds were heavily tangled with small ferns and coconut sprouts. Once he had tried planting rice but the field proved too dry. Last month Boss Jackie, who owned the house, had brought him two bushels of corn seed from Belize and Owen wanted to have the field planted before Jackie returned again. He looked across the river to see if any of the children were returning from school. An old man in a dugout was making his way slowly up the river

against the current. Owen squatted down again and continued his work, the machete blade scraping the ground, cutting and tearing at the thick roots.

Inside the house, Chlorine was sweeping the floor, digging at the corners with the stiff reed broom. She pushed the last of the dust out the door and then stood holding the broom for a moment. The radio was playing her favorite song, the Tennessee Waltz, and she moved in rhythm to the music leaning lightly on the broom. From another room the baby started to cry. Chlorine left the broom standing in a corner and retuned with the little girl clinging to her bared breast. This was her first girl. She had sons, two of whom went daily to the Catholic school in Sittee; the other, Antone, was still too young. Chlorine stood at the door watching the sunlight's reflection like small fish, silver in the dark river water. Antone in his dirty Tee shirt was approaching the goat with an outstretched handful of grass, his curly head bobbing with each stiff step of his short legs. She called to him, "Antone. Come back here man." He turned his head and looked back, his arm still outstretched toward the goat. "Antone. I said come back here. Do you hear me man?" He turned his head away and continued moving toward the goat which stood with splayed feet, looking blankly at him.

Owen heard his wife call to the boy and looked up for a moment. Then he started back to work, switching hands, digging his toes into the soft earth to hold his balance. The thin-edged blade glinted with each stroke. The rhythmical swish of the machete was broken by a sharp clink. He sat on the ground and pulled a rusty file from his pocket. Two parrots fell screeching from a tree and flew circles around each other in the air over his head. He finished filing, and taking a faded green handkerchief from his back pocket, tied it around his forehead to keep the sweat from his eyes.

It was after five when he heard Chlorine call from the house. Standing up he looked back at the field. Two more days of this and I'll be finished, he thought, unless Old David's boy comes to help, then only one. Owen started toward the river, his thin back aching with labor; the machete hung loosely at his side. As he passed behind the house he saw that David and Michael had returned from school; they were filling buckets at the rain barrel, laughing and splashing each other.

At the edge of the river Owen let the machete fall to the grass, took off his shorts and waded into the water. The dark brown river was warm and he felt his feet sink in the soft mud. He tore a handful of reeds from the bank and after twisting and crushing them in his hands, scrubbed at the bug sores on his legs and forearms. The water was thick with tannic acid and felt good as he splashed his tired body. He undid the handkerchief and soaking it in the river, mopped his face and head, cleaning the dust from his eyes and ears.

Owen entered the house and turning a chair away from the table, sat down, rubbing his knees with his hands. Chlorine was working at dinner, shuffling back and forth across the floor in her slow steady manner. Antone was sitting on the floor near the wood-burning stove.

"Where's those boys?" Owen asked.

"Outside." She answered without looking up from the potatoes she was peeling. Owen pushed himself from the chair and went to the bedroom where the baby slept in a gauze-cloth hammock. He put on a clean shirt and slid his feet into a stiff pair of leather shoes. Owen rocked the baby's hammock as he left the room.

Outside it was getting dark, the night sounds had started in the bush, the soft warble of birds and the occasional cackle of a hen picking at the freshly cleared ground. Owen stood in the doorway and called, "David. David, you out there?" His voice was sharp in the still air. Two forms appeared silently walking out of the bush. "I've told you, don't be going in there, man." The two boys did not speak as they came up to him, then David answered for both of them, "Yes sir."

Inside Chlorine was slicing the bread cakes while Antone crawled about her feet. "You go sit down now, Antone," Owen came into the room with David and Michael; the two boys sat quietly on the bench by the table watching their mother move about.

"Can I be helping you?" asked David.

"No man, we're about ready to eat."

Owen scratched at his short stubble chin beard.

"David boy, why wasn't you eager to be of some help in the field this afternoon?"

David answered imitating his father's tired voice.

"We was home from school late, and besides, I've been being a tired man."

Michael laughed not looking up and Chlorine quickly said.

"David and Michael. You go get the plates and we'll be ready to eat."

Michael cleared off the table while David helped Chlorine. Owen sat in the chair with closed eyes, holding his right wrist in his left hand, slowly opening and closing the fingers as if he were identifying each small ache and pain as a particular tendon.

"Come now Owen. Your dinner is here."

Owen pushed himself up from the chair and sat down on the bench next to Michael; Chlorine and Antone sat across from them. Everyone took a potato from the bowl that sat in the middle of the table, then a piece of bread, then a glass of water. Antone had the powdered milk that the Catholic school sent home every month.

"You eat good now," said Chlorine.

"What happened to the deer meat I shot last week?"

"That hasn't dried yet. It's salted, but this is the first hot day we've had since you've been hunting." She turned to Antone. "You eat that now, child." Antone puckered his lips and a glob of potato fell from his mouth to the table.

"Don't do that boy," snapped Owen.

Chlorine reached over and wiped his mouth, then gave him a piece of bread which Antone chewed without looking up.

"That's all right, you eat this," said Chlorine.

"Did Old David come past?" asked Owen looking across to his wife.

"I can't say. I didn't see him."

"I saw him on the river today and he was to tell me if his boy was going to help in the clearing."

"He might have called up, but I didn't hear nothing."

"Was you playing that radio all afternoon?"

"Yes, I was listening to that station in Key West. They said there's to be a hurricane."

Owen got up from the table and turned on the radio. The voice started to talk when the sound of broken glass came from the table behind him. Antone started to cry looking down at the milk foam that had settled on his shirt.

"Shit man, don't do that," said Owen.

David and Michael started to laugh but were quickly still when Owen turned around.

. . . 300 miles off the east coast of
Yucatan; predicted to pass south of
Cuba not sooner than 70 hours . . .

The radio snapped off and Owen returned to his chair. Antone stopped whimpering as his mother removed the Tee shirt and dressed him in a pair of underpants.

"You don't think that hurricane will be coming down here?" Chlorine asked.

"No." Owen answered, calming himself as he sat down.

"If it did come, would that mean we'd get drowned?" Michael asked.

"I don't know that child. Don't be asking stupid questions."

Everyone sat and ate silently for a while, then Chlorine said, "Would that mean we'd be going to Sittee?"

"I don't know."

"They did in 1940, didn't they?" David asked.

"I don't know what they did in 1940, except that I kept myself here by the river. But that was before I had a woman to take care of." Said Owen looking over and smiling at Chlorine who had a way of silently blushing so that her gentle lips curled a little at the corners.

"Miss Camble said they did," said Michal.

"Who's she?" Owen asked.

Chlorine answered, "She's the new school teacher from England that brought herself over last year."

"I know that," said Owen, "I just wanted to make sure this boy did."

"Why of course he did," said Chlorine, looking puzzled.

Owen sat silently chewing the last of the potatoes.

"How the hell would she know? She probably wasn't even borned yet."

"Because she knows from books," said Michal.

"All these kids do," said Owen, "is study things in books. Do you know where Benque Vio is at?" looking at David.

"No."

"Well that is where I was borned. Its right where Guatemala becomes B.H. I learned reading too, and even some Spanish and

Indian. But that's not what taught me to clear a field or to hunt red-tigers or to take good care of a woman."

Everyone sat still for a moment, then Michal said, "It was Jackie who taught you how to hunt and it was Jackie who told you to clear the field for corn because the rice you planted never grew last year, and besides, you never have shot a red-tiger."

"Shit man, you got to be having more respect for your father or be getting whupped. Because some day you'll have to be doing the same things that I'm doing now."

"You all be still now," said Chlorine, and she stood up and started to take the plates to a bucket where they would be washed.

"Antone, boy where are you?" said Owen. There was no sound.

"Antone? Antone!"

"Gahhahahh." The sound came from outside. Owen went to the door.

"Leave that thing be child, and come on in here."

Antone was standing with his foot on a large toad. He shifted his weight and the toad belched, its legs squirming helplessly.

"Man do you want to be getting warts? Now come in here, I said."

Antone looked blankly up at the screen door and lifted his foot letting the toad hop once.

"Ghahhh."

"Now come in here man."

Antone was watching the toad, it hopped up against the side of the house. Antone moved toward the toad.

"You hear me man?"

Antone awkwardly lifted his foot and stamped lightly on the toad's back; it belched again and hopped crookedly into the grass. Owen opened the door and taking his machete, swatted Antone with the broad side of the blade. Antone fell seated to the ground, gasping, then screaming. Owen took him by the arm and opening the door with his other hand, swung him up to the feet of his mother who stood silently in the doorway. She reached down and picked Antone up, holding him and quieting his sobs. The baby started to cry from the bedroom.

"Man. Don't be swatting these boys with that thing." She spoke to Owen who was looking up at her broad face silhouetted darkly against the light inside. He stood for a moment then turned

and let the machete drop, walking around the outside of the house. He went in the back door that led to the equipment room where he lit a match and then a candle. Owen slipped the elastic band of the head-light over his forehead and tied the battery case around his waist with a leather shoelace. He then took a handful of shells and put them in his pocket. He picked up the long double barreled shotgun that stood in the corner, and went outside.

The moon was low and dark streaks of cloud moved slowly across the skies. Owen stood in the clearing in a shaft of dim light that filtered from the window. He loaded the gun and switching on the head-light, started to walk slowly out the path toward the Sittee river road.

As he walked he adjusted the head light by aiming the shotgun at the small circle of light thrown on the solid wall of jungle at either side of the path. He could hear the chirping warble of a ground owl and the rasping noise of a cricket that stopped when he approached and then started up again behind him. The mud had dried in the last few days which was unusual for the rainy season. He occasionally lowered his head looking for fresh tracks. Old David had said that there was a red-tiger seen on the Big Pine Ridge a few days ago, and Owen knew that Jackie would give him twenty dollars for a good skin. He walked for a long time seeing nothing. The sky was becoming lighter now and the bush grew thinner on the left; Owen knew that he was approaching the Sittee Road. The time had gone fast. He stopped where the road came in.

The Sittee Road was wider than the path and the bush was low on either side. He might possibly see a deer or small cat, but nothing big. The path ahead led through a low swamp land that wouldn't have any game until the dry season when the cattle would come to graze on the exposed roots and tender stems of the swamp plants. Owen was hopeful for he hadn't seen deer on the back path and this, he thought, might mean a cat was near. The moon was higher now and he could see the long shadows of mahogany trees on the Big Pine Ridge that rose a half mile or so back from the path. There was a trail that went back to the ridge but during the rainy season the bush was too thick, and he had not thought to bring the machete. The soft flutter of a ground owl rose from the side of the path.

Owen turned his head from left to right scanning the bush for tiger-eyes that would glow like fire coals in the grass. As he walked the jungle got thicker so that the path became a dark tunnel where the moonlight never reached. A light breeze felt cool on the back of his damp shirt and he worried a little, knowing that a surprised cat was unpredictable. He walked for several hours Owen thought that possibly he had guessed wrong and the red-tiger had never been on the Pine Ridge, but the silence gave him hope. He heard a rustling in the bush and saw a peccary struggle through some low vines and hide himself behind a rotting log. Owen carefully went off the path until he was behind the animal who stood frozen by the light, its heavy rasping breath the only sound. Owen moved the light and kicked the log; the animal crashed off through the brush.

The moon was higher now and beginning to filter down through the matted vines and ferns. He walked on. The batteries were becoming weak and the head lamp was growing dim. Bright filaments glistened between the leaves in the moonlight, and jewel-like spider eyes hung suspended. Shadows took shape in the dark corridor. Owen stopped in the path and rested the butt of the gun on his shoe. Up the path a set of eyes blinked and then moved quickly off into the bush: fox, he said to himself. Owen started to move again when he thought he heard something. He stopped and tried not to breathe. It came again, this time clear and distant, like the scream of a woman from far away. Owen knew that the red-tiger was up on the Big Pine Ridge. He walked on around a bend; he was nearing the house now for he could hear faintly the sound of a river flowing.

When Owen reached the edge of the clearing he saw that Chlorine had left the gas light burning in the big room. The yellow light flickered softly on the screen where the gnats and lacewings swarmed. The dried stubble of cut weed-grass broke under his step as he approached the door. He unloaded the gun and stood it in the hallway outside the bedroom door. Owen took off his shoes, and holding them in his hand, quietly pushed the door open as if going into a room not his own. The head-light swept across the sleeping forms of David, Michael, and Chlorine in her loose sack-cloth nightgown. His hand fumbled at the switch causing the light to jerk awkwardly about the room; finally he cupped his palm over the

lens and left. In the hall he took off the head-light and undressed putting on a fresh pair of shorts. He went back into the room, now dark except for the moonlight from the window. He saw the baby moving quietly and made his way over to her hammock. Owen reached down and felt the soft babyflesh move between his hands as he lifted the child to his chest. The little girl made a gurgling sound as he carried her down the hall to the window. He felt her hand grasping at his chin beard and turned the child so that she could see out the window. The moon was even higher now and they could see the Big Pine Ridge rising dark beyond the clearing. "There's a tiger up there," he whispered.

SUN ONE

By SARA EASTON CURTIS

In the heaviest part of the Indian-Summer afternoon,
The sunlight roars through leaf-encrusted air.
All movement is seduced to stillness,
But through the silence comes the smell of winter-apples,
And the continual small ticking like that of claws on stone.

The bright light glints against the bars of my lashes
As I regard you static between my flickering lids,
Your haloed head backed against the sun.
I arch my mouth and blow, soft and long,
Freeing the space between us of other tastes and shapes.
Of fermented odors wafted by the heat,
And the whispered whistle of distant flight—

Leaving a pure crystal thread hanging between our lips,
To be bending, lirting lightly with our breath.
Then, inch by inch, over the tightrope spider thread,
That quivers slightly from the force of heat,
You come to me, although you never move at all.

POEM

By CHRISTINE COOPER

I used to walk and watch my feet
squash prints in the uncut grass
or break the crippled twigs
from a long-dead tree.
I lived to swing up high
and breathe in hard,
pumping, pumping into the feather clouds.
I raced with butterflies.
Grass tickled when I rolled in it
or hung it through my toes.
Sometimes I bunched it up in blankets
for broken eggs. It kept them warm.
Glassy fairies lived in the poison mushrooms.
In the orchard I watched caterpillars
web the trees
or let them itch my fingers.
I ate the still-green cherries
and kept the seeds.
When it rained I skipped stones
in the oozy puddles
then hid in the kingly trees.
I think I was twelve when I stepped on a bird's egg.