THE REST

O Helpless few in my country,
O remnant enslaved!

Artists broken against her,
A-stray, lost in the villages,
Mistrusted, spoken-against,

Lovers of beauty, starved,
Thwarted with systems,
Helpless against the control;

You who can not wear yourselves out
By persisting to successes,
You who can only speak,
Who can not steel yourselves into reiteration;

You of the finer sense,
Broken against false knowledge,
You who can know at first hand,
Hated, shut in, mistrusted:

Take thought:
I have weathered the storm,
I have beaten out my exile.
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Phyllis said to myself it’s that Smitty is an open minded guy—
I you're so close minded about the parlor?

Hat do you want blond, red head, what?

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初二

FIRST TIME

Two BL 610’s, please.

“Fine,” the voice responded, “Please follow the corridor to your right to the room marked Preparatory. Thank you. Pay upon culmination.

“Did you hear that?” I blurted as we paged down the corridor. “Pay upon culmination. Jesus Christ. Culmination of what? What’s a BL 610, anyway? The least you could do, Markham, is forewarn me a little. Give me a few details. What is a BL610?”

“Take it easy, Smitty. BL are the call letters for hair color, obviously. 610 is the model number.”

“Listen, Larry. It just doesn’t seem right. It’s degrading—

Larry, you didn’t tell me...

It’s not. Just take it easy. They’re just gonna make sure we’re clean. This is a very sterile parlor.”

“Ha-ha. Very funny.” I took off my clothes and sat on the upholstered table. I was quivering too much to notice how cold it was to my bare flesh. One of the hostesses came up, sponge in hand and a wonderful smile on her plastic face. She soaked the sponge in some medicinal smelling liquid in a nearby basin then thoroughly covered me with the fluid.

“Fine,” she enunciated each syllable slowly; precisely.

Larry glanced at me and smiled. “Two rooms, please,” he said. He kept smiling.

“I am Jeanette. Come to Jeanette.”

She enunciated each syllable slowly; precisely.

“This is it,” I demanded. “For Chrisakes, we don’t do it here do we?”

“Schmidt, please. Just take off your clothes and sit on that cushioned table.”

Larry, you didn’t tell me....

It’s not. Just take it easy. They’re just gonna make sure we’re clean. This is a very sterile parlor.”

“Ha-ha. Very funny,” I took off my clothes and sat on the upholstered table. I was quivering too much to notice how cold it was to my bare flesh. One of the hostesses came up, sponge in hand and a wonderful smile on her plastic face. She soaked the sponge in some medicinal smelling liquid in a nearby basin then thoroughly covered me with the fluid.

“Oh my God. I had no idea. Larry, Larry?”

Larry was gone as was the other preparatory girl. My cleaning lady took my hand and led me down a brightly colored carpet.

Here’s your room, Sir. It was the same fascinating, breath taking corridor.

I walked into the room wearing an involuntary, embarrassed smile, and met my 610. She was lying in horizontal grandeur upon a circular shaped bed. Hourglass proportions, lovely face. Perfect.

“Come. I am Jeanette. Come to Jeanette.”

Near her, there was nothing that my untrained eye could notice that indicated that Jeanette was not human. Her hair was silky, hanging in little girl curls along the sides of her face. Her body was warm and soft and supple. Her movements were smooth and flowing. Every physical gesture seemed human. Every area of her anatomy was flawlessly designed to appear human. Her only imperfection was, in fact, her flawlessness.
During our play, Jeanette contributed a vast amount to the mood with her soprano sighs and pants and moans. She lived up to all the expectations I didn't have time to previously form.

"Jeanette," I muttered wistfully, realizing her inability to understand, "you are one beautiful creature."

"I am capable of multiple orgasms," she smiled.

I didn't know whether that was a subtle request for more, or merely a learned response to the word 'beautiful'. I did know that one more fling would run well over the time Larry granted me.

"Can't Jeanette. Gotta go."

"Come. I am capable of multiple orgasms."

"Jeanette, tell me," I whispered. "Does this mean I'm not a virgin anymore?"

"O-oo-oo," she cried. "Once more, Handsome."

Laughing-hysterically-I skipped out the door and followed the brightly colored carpet to the preparatory room.

**IN THE MIDST OF AN ECHO**

for Trena

I move hands through slow, thick air
leaving trails and traces.
Do you watch with intent?
I long to look at you.
I long to linger over each silken vertebrae
to knead the muscles of your soft back.
I long to be strangled.
I long to try on your pants to see if they will fit.
I long to kiss your neck until I long not to repeat myself.
Do you feel the heat of suffocation?
I wait not to touch your hair and touch your hair.
I long for ends and find there are none.
I long to smooth your nose
so that we may breathe again, and
I long to leave myself for your eyes
which are black wildernesses with ebbing irises.
I long for an open mouth which is speechless.

Phil Mercurio

---

SIERRA MADRE PROSE

Sat in the back of a second class bus and watched

dusty Mexican towns with dirt streets

Women in long, multicolored skirts and shawls

Through the swinging doors,
Men sitting in saloons,
the fans, suspended from the ceiling,
moving just as slow as the drinkers

(some are singing.)

Men, with two hundred year old faces,
pulling their carts down sun hard clay streets.

Little girls selling
Little girls watching me
a little girl in the middle of the store floor, playing,
quietly, talking to herself

farther inland, the land rises

Villages full of burros and barefoot children running to meet
the bus and sell fruit, tortas, and hand-made goods, cheaply.

No clay houses, just stilt houses with thatched roofs. Some hidden by scarce desert forest.

All in twilight, tired and big
and rolling back towards
the mountains, over dry, brown hills.

I saw the mountains,
miles of shrubbery running
faster and faster and then
leaping towards the sky in
great grey mountains

surmounting the earth

a five year old senoretta lying on
my lap, shared with a friend,
that same senoretta sleepily
grab my arm, pull herself up, look into the
mountain night, nodding,
and then crawl down from the window.

and darkness coming, covering my view
and leaving me to look at
that sleeping child on my lap, clutching
my jacket as a pillow.

John Purcell
The morning glories climb the house on strings.
Closed now,
Their blossoms are as pale as skin
Stretched tight across clenched fists.
In my room
The light comes green
Through the curtains of late afternoon.
Gentle as air turning warm,
Your arms
Would draw me out.

Sue Payne

today's bleakness
made sad sounds in the air
as if a moaning cow had lost his lover
no longer does naked sunshine
erase the gray of dismal
broken fences and bent rusted nails
compete for the suicidal victory
only to deteriorate and emerge silenced and defeated.

Cathy Graff

A rock is growing in me.
Strange, how once I trusted
the certainty of its size.
But now, defying me,
it grows.
I must adapt to the expansion
I avoid water,
knowing I would sink.
I must not remain still
for I settle quickly into the earth.
I try moving
and hope that the motion
will slow the permanent growing
of the rock.
Each step is a difficult distance.
The rock increases
forcing my blood
through the surface of my body.
My legs stiffen
and refuse all living motion.
I watch my blood dry
like paint on a statue.

Sharon Singleton
We have a hinting household here.
HIDEOUS flies buzz between
winter windows
and inner windows.
They buzz insomnia at night.
And in the day they --
Fat and black --
will lick their sneers
and rub their spindled appendages.

We open screens to shoo them
when the sun is screaming summer,
but neighbors send us hurrying messages
drenched in martinis
and 'going-homes to mother.'
So we decently slam our windows shut.

And we indigest in uncomfortable
glence at dinners. Crunching
and squashing and slopping
and smacking.
Glances of suspicion pour around
like spilling milk.
And we lower our eyes
to avoid the invisible mirrored-maze
d of insistent monotone humming on windows.

Dawn Patnode

The Barn

Cobwebs laced on bulging beams
grasp bits of straw and dust.
Heavy, hot smells of animal breath
and the cool musty hay.
Horses' hoofs shuffle soundlessly under dirt floors.
We look long, very long at the birth of a calf.
the silence of life's emergence lays softly in the stall.
Her wet wisps of hair warm with the mother's blood.
Slowly in the night the crystal casing is gone
and the cow nudges to stand the delicate bones
of her new companion.

Mary Schloss
I You will be born with a big nose
and black kinky hair.
It will be all right because your parents are Jewish
because you have a strong left arm
and because your grades are high.
You will play ping-pong until you are good enough
to quote obscure rules.
You will play RISK with your friends
and you will lose.
You will play football on gravel
and you will lose even if you win.
Your friends will laugh
and point at your bloody knees.
They will call you “boogy”.
Your mother will yell at them almost as much
as she yells at you and your new name.
You will not disobey her strong right arm.
Your father will crouch and split his seams;
he will feel sorry for you.

II When you come home from school
you will do HOMEWORK
go to Hebrew school, come home again
and do more homework.
In stolen moments, with food warming in your bed
you will watch the Yankees
and old movies on t.v.
Women will make love passionately
to men in the dark
and you will idolize women.
At sixteen you will not get your learner’s permit
because driving is serious business;
and your chance to make love to women
will diminish with the upsurge of your thoughts.
You will mow the lawn
and the next day
your father will remow it.
Your thoughts burn like cigarette smoke.
They will try to divide you.
They will try to tell you
not to be divided.
They will push you further.

III You will go to teachers in school
and they will consider you strange.
You will chase girls in the halls
and ask them to marry you.
They will consider you strange.
You will read many books
and you will consider yourself strange.
You will then beat your sister
in hopes that she will understand your strangeness.
Inside your head sounds are reverberating
to your pulse.
Inside your head you will hear
a ping
It will be a quiet gentle sound.
Inside your head there is no sound.
The door to your room closes
with a hush of wind.
Your heart flutters and slows
to a murmur.
IV Hospitals, yes. And doctors.
OUR SON HAS A COLD.
Medication, yes.
HE WILL GET BETTER SOON.
Money, money, money, yes, yes
No. OUR SON IS NOT INSANE.

You will come home
and your friends will be in college.
You will play with their younger brothers
and their younger brothers' friends.
They will not call you "boogy".
They will grow up too soon.
They will no longer play RISK.
but they will scatter like leaves in the wind.
You will invite them up to your room
and show them your graduation picture,
but they will not know you.

Your friends will come back from college
and your eyes will glow.
This black glow of the pupil
will speak to them
but they will scatter like leaves in the wind.
They will no longer play RISK.
At night your bed will address itself
and your eyes will glow.
This black glow of the pupil
will speak to them
but they will scatter like leaves in the wind.

As I sit here looking out the window I see nothing except
cigars, and memories of my childhood come back to me.
If it wouldn't have been for father I probably could never
have made it through college.
Everything was fine as long as I was away at school, but
as soon as I came home for the summer things would quickly
return to normal. Father would say, "Why don't you do this,
and why don't you that, and can't you see that this needs to be
done. You're just a good time Charlie." However, when the
glass was cut, and the flowers were watered, and the car was
washed and waxed he never told us how nice it looked.
Father was never satisfied until he got all of us out of the
house so he could sit back in his chair and be king again--
the center of attention. It was almost like we had never been
here. Sometimes I think that's the only reason the old bastard
sent us to college. So we would get a good job, and wouldn't
hang around the house like a lamprey on a Lake Erie Lake
TROUT.

FATHER'S LAST PARTY

Mother called me a couple of days ago, or was it a
week ago, reminding me not to plan anything for the twenty-
third of May since that day was set aside for father's funeral
party. Even though it was a week away she insisted that I
should immediately call up the airlines and make reservations
by a flight. Her letter was sweet and encouraging as usual,
but also contained a certain amount of bitterness concerning
my lackadaisical attitude about spending time at home. This
is father's last year. You could have spent more time with
him." Thank God, I won't have to put up with this
constant nagging much longer.

"As I sit here looking out the window I see nothing except
cigars, and memories of my childhood come back to me.

Michael was a successful surgeon in Boston, and Mark
was an ecologist in South Carolina. The rest of my relatives, the
ones still alive, I really couldn't give two shits about. I could
just hear that old bitch, Aunt Edith, at father's funeral party,
"Here sweetheart, I bought you some candy, some good Italian
ones still alive, I really couldn't give two shits about. I could
just hear that old bitch, Aunt Edith, at father's funeral party,
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As I sit here looking out the window I see nothing except
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FATHER'S LAST PARTY

"As I sit here looking out the window I see nothing except
cigars, and memories of my childhood come back to me.

Phil Mercurio

Vic Coccimiglio
My father is a dreamer
and I but a thought
conceived in a night
when sleep proved fertile.

Night contains me in its womb
yet I am free as sleeper’s thoughts
contained by nothing but the edges
of the mind.

But I am cautious, silent
and my life rages in quiet
lest my father be wakened
by something cruel as morning.

Sharon Singleton

FOLKSGNER

Hey, pretty girl
half hidden by that brown felt hat.
Your carnal eyes
entice me,
Your carnal tongue
invites me.
You’re raping me
with laser beams
from cobalt eyes.
Your words are peace and freedom
but your lips shape them so sensually
it all sounds like pornography.

After the show is over
I will smash your guitar
and lay you down
under the red lights
of smoky coffee houses.
You will give in to me.
I will make you give me
everything,
you promised with your eyes.

Alison Orleans

Sweat Rebellion

My clothes drip off,
sweat replacing them;
there is no nakedness in this heat.
Dampness moves over my body,
slipping under the skin
to touch the base of my skull
and send a thrilling message of rebellion
down my spine.

S. Hunt
blackgrey

blackgrey
the colors of your world.
child of dark
grasping shadow-motion.
hold tighter to emotion
that violent inside
fireworks coloring skies.

we flew a kite together, child
and i could see it
pinned against blue.
you felt its strength against yours
and held
to understand the wind.

Laurie Wharton
They dwelt too long on independence.
Sikerly hath I ne'er before yield!
Of other sely maidens such as she.
Al of her time was spent in companionship
And sundry sciences and history.
This sely maid a virgin was I trow.
Aloof from man's gentle camaraderie.
Ne thought they of temperance;
To sing for worthy causes was her lust.
She could wield a pen when that she must.
So proud she was a woman for to be,
She hath a heart as hard as is a stone.
And such as one will find with husbands.
Was her intent, from homely bondage
And seek experience. Liberty
Was sikerly for not to be a wife.
I be not certain, as I do not know.
No man would she love, not an one;
Nor give an obeisance. She would strange solitude for to see
And seek experience. Liberty
Was for all her her nearest and dearest.
And such as one will find with husbands.
Her man would she love, not an one;
He thought she would live and sing.
So staid was she that none could deceive her.
To be alone with such companionship
No doubt she would live in her trust.
To sing on worthy causes was her lust.
As she was: To time spent in companionship.
Of other sely maidens such as she.
Sikerly hath I ne'er before yield!
For thought she had they on temperance.
They dwelt too long on independence.

Clerk ther was at Denison, also.
This young man who came to
Graft her, to live her and stay.
And all of her intent was for to play.
Much knew he of life and of pleasure:
Well could he dance and sing, eat and drink.
For shrewdly he thought not for to seek
In all the town to know of easy fortune.
And though he could, so fain he could.
With the brother of his father-in-law.
Hende Richard was this young clerk clad.
In his chamber wisdom he forgot,
And thus his hand clerk his time spent
Amid his friends in such merriment.
And with his sweetness, pleasure did he earn.
Lively and sate, show his own brow.
His lips sweet, his nose red and fair:
Yielded he to satiety and fertity.
His two brown eyes shone so liberally.
So shrewdly could this clerk be seen in class.
For all knew and loved he, a clerk
He remained the more in his stead.
As oft he spoken with a good huddle.
Come the midday, ready for dispute.
Would he be, no lumber any more.
His merry appetite for to show,
As fresh for pleasure, sorry sake.
And thus he would his time gad about.
He would not seem not for gold nor honour.
He hated to marry a maid taught.
The art of love, but no'ry he be caught,
To Verses' close website. A blissful plain.
He would have, without a wedded wif.
Thus did Richard and the fair Kate,
His of my tale far to relate.

Springtime had come as ever it will.
The fragrant flowers blooming on the hill
And all the faces making melody.
For a lovely branch of willow and many trees.
Then Richard and the fair Kate
And Denison was such a joyous sight.
To see. Such merriment did make every eye.
Did students could not help but play.
And thus in April passed it by chance.
Their should be held a gay Spring dance.
For a young man who came to.
This young clerk. He would not be a maid.
Thus did Richard and the fair Kate.
This young clerk. He would not be a maid.
What is she to you?

"A long hair I pull from my coat, let fall and disappear like lint. And you?"

"Yes, a hair; but in the pulling my coat unravels, and is soon a pile of string. I am left naked and cold."

I enter the room silent—enter to weave a hair into my coat; to weave it in, to tie the ends deep within warm cloth.

Peter Porteous
"Projects"

The old Spaniard,
sitting in bed,
passes peas from one pan to the other.

The man,
across the way,
spits on cats.

People,
standing on street corners,
wait for revelation.

Mary Mueller
GOD AND SERGEANT MAYS

Evans got it in the head when they first opened up. The bullet left only a small hole in his face but blew the entire back of his head off, splattering pieces of skull and brain all over Mays. As he dove for the ground, Mays felt a sharp pain in his groin, as if someone had hit him very hard with a fist. By the time he hit the ground and began returning fire, it had already grown numb and he knew he had been hit.

Evans was still twitching convulsively on the ground but Mays knew he was dead. Ha Klong, the montagnard point man, was laying on his back just in front of Evans with his head bent back awkwardly. He was staring directly at Mays; his eyes still showing the fear and surprise with which he had died a few moments before. Mays wanted to wipe Evans off of his face and arms, but he was too busy returning fire. It burned like hell wherever Evans had landed on him, and Mays wanted more than anything to wipe him off...No, more than anything he wanted out of there.

"Oh God! Please, God! Get me out of here, God! Please, God! I'll do anything, just get me out of here!"

* The noise was terrific and frightening. There must have been a hundred of them blasting away. Mays could hear the gook bastards yelling and laughing like kids on a playground. Their fire seemed to be coming from everywhere. The B-40 rockets made a hell of a racket coming in and then landed with a deafening "kawumpf" that shook the ground under him. The grenadier, Y-Sok, wasn't returning fire, so Mays knew he was either dead or near dead. He wondered how many of the six man team were left. He wondered if he was all alone.

"Oh God! Please, please, please, God! They'll kill me! God! Please!"

Mays tried to crawl backwards but found he couldn't move his legs. He couldn't even feel them. Rolling on his side to look at his wound, he saw his legs sprawled up under him. A dark stain was spreading over his lower abdomen and groin, and he knew he was bleeding bad.

"Oh God! Please, God! Help me, God! Please, God!"

He saw a movement to his side and rolled to fire but it was Y-San. San's fatigue was soaked with sweat as he crawled backwards, firing like a son of a bitch.

"San! Ha riet en naf! Over here!" San laboriously worked his way over to Mays, firing then crawling firing then crawling. When he reached Mays he gripped him by the legs and began dragging him back, stopping only to slam a fresh clip into his weapon. Then Mays heard someone firing an automatic rifle behind them and was afraid they had been flanked. But when he looked over his shoulder, he saw Y-Nhiem, the fourteen year old boy soldier, pouring fire toward the gooks. Y-Nhiem used his knife to cut open May's pants and inspect the wound. "Ma jackou," he muttered. It was bad. Mays looked down and got sick to his stomach. Nhiem held a bandage to the wound and applied pressure but the blood kept pumping out in steady spurts and Mays knew he had a severed artery deep in his guts.

"Oh God! Please! God! I don't want to die! Please, please, God! Not here! Not now! Please!"

"Mai, you call wop-wop, no sweat."

"No can do, Nhiem. The radio is fini."

"Fuck'n Vetnamee! Mou a breme eh, Mai."

Nhiem picked up his gun and inserted a fresh clip into it. When he had just said good-bye, Mays thought he was going to run out on him. But when he saw the hate in Nhiem's eyes, he knew what the yard was going to do.

Shouting "Y-yok ei louha!" the little guy assaulted the woodline. He got about thirty meters before the automatic weapons zeroed on him. They picked him up and shook him like a child would a rag doll, and when his body finally fell to the ground about ten meters away, Mays couldn't look.

Everything was quiet. Mays was alone now. But it was starting to get dark! If he could just hold them until it was dark, he might be able to crawl into the jungle and hide until morning and then the Brightlight team would come in and...Oh God, no! It couldn't be getting dark...it was only noon and it couldn't be getting...Mays grabbed his groin with both hands and tried to hold his blood in. But it wasn't any use. It was getting darker and colder and maybe the gooks had left, maybe Valenti and the Brightlight team were coming and they could save him, there was time and then he could hear voices and he tried to call out to Valenti but then the voices were louder and closer and they were gook voices and he was afraid to look and it was darker yet and colder yet and then he knew, "OH GOD NO!"
He entered the kitchen. "My mother says you work too hard in the yard. Says you need someone to take care of you."

"Yeh, it's a good place to study, pretty quiet."

"I've heard some stories about her, from Tony."

"She's not so bad. Reads a lot." Jeff was piqued by Ron's attitude, by his willingness to judge people he didn't even know. He knew her better than any one, probably, and he didn't know the entire story. If she were crazy, it was no more than those who judged her, the shopkeepers who gave an "oh, I see" when they learned of his address.

He stopped for a drink along the narrow hall leading to the quarts. He was ready for a good workout, ready to beat Ron and even the score.

"I don't know. I'd be scared to live down there."

"Ah, she's okay. Better than hitting the bottle all the time. Have you heard about Jerry's landlady? Always drunk, gets pretty wild at times."

"So does Jerry. They make a good pair."

"Yeh."

They ducked, slammed the door, and attacked the end wall of the stuffy-white cell. Jeff smashed the hall whenever it seemed necessary, concentrating on the sensation in his hands, rubbing them between shots to get the blood flowing. As he hit straight off the wall, taking the smacks in his padded gloves to the point of bursting. He rubbed them hard against his palms, an image interrupted his light concentration as if his mind had the four corners of the handball court and someone had hit straight off the wall, taking the smacks in his padded gloves. He was ready for a good workout, ready to beat Ron and even the score.

"I know you would."

Jeff started to say something else, but with the first flip of a page he lost the thought and walked upstairs. Grey paint broke from the walls as he walked, stepping slowly, tasting the air that seemed just an aged version of the sweaty air that had choked the handball court. The hall light that had never worked before was on now and he could clearly see the walls and the widening cracks creasing them like the crow's feet of tired eyes. The glare reminded him of the first time he had been inside the house—in early September, when the house was light and open.

Mrs. Greer had shown him the bedrooms and the front and back porches, after giving him tea and cookies. The slight nervousness he had felt on the porch, as he formulated a sentence in his mind, was quickly dissolved by her casual manner. As his visit lengthened, though, he grew increasingly informal and interested in him. He had noticed the dusty pictures of her sons and husband over the bureau and accepted her familiarity, for the moment, as part of her apparent sensibility. But the irritation stayed with him as he walked back to campus—the way she tangled his name (she didn't seem hard of hearing), the way she hovered solicitously over him. Had it not been for his aversion to the constant, blaring noise he would have willingly settled for the security of the dorms. But she was pleasant and open-minded, it seemed, and there was no better location.

Jeff continued along the hallway and into his room, thinking of the family pictures he had seen that day, recalling the relaxed afternoon weeks later when she had finally mentioned having any family at all. It had done little to ease his apprehension.

He had been on the front porch, stretched on a lawn chair struggling to fit together bits of writing from pages of forced words. He glanced up occasionally, finding solace in the trees and the relaxed afternoon weeks later when she had finally mentioned having any family at all. It had done little to ease his apprehension.

As Jeff entered the locker room he caught sight of Ron, his formidable opponent, examining his face in the mirror.

"I'm here, Ron."

"About time."

"Yeh, well. Had to finish some work." He hurriedly peeled off his jock and shorts. As he was putting on his shoes, Ron appeared and picked up the ball and gave him a pat on the shoulder.

"How's the landlady? You down there much?"

"Yeh, it's going to be a big one," Mindy said as they entered the kitchen. "My mother says you work too hard in the yard. Says you need someone to take care of you."

"Thank you... I guess I better go."

"Don't worry about me!" she shouted, raising her fist slightly, giving a short laugh.

"Hello, Gregory," Mrs. Greer called from the couch. "Have a good game?"

"Yes, won two out of three games."

"I knew you would."

"Oh, I see" when they learned of his address.

Mrs. Greer had shown him the bedrooms and the front and back porches, after giving him tea and cookies. The slight nervousness he had felt on the porch, as he formulated a sentence in his mind, was quickly dissolved by her casual manner. As his visit lengthened, though, he grew increasingly informal and interested in him. He had noticed the dusty pictures of her sons and husband over the bureau and accepted her familiarity, for the moment, as part of her apparent sensibility. But the irritation stayed with him as he walked back to campus—the way she tangled his name (she didn't seem hard of hearing), the way she hovered solicitously over him. Had it not been for his aversion to the constant, blaring noise he would have willingly settled for the security of the dorms. But she was pleasant and open-minded, it seemed, and there was no better location.

Jeff continued along the hallway and into his room, thinking of the family pictures he had seen that day, recalling the relaxed afternoon weeks later when she had finally mentioned having any family at all. It had done little to ease his apprehension.

He had been on the front porch, stretched on a lawn chair struggling to fit together bits of writing from pages of forced words. He glanced up occasionally, finding solace in the trees and the relaxed afternoon weeks later when she had finally mentioned having any family at all. It had done little to ease his apprehension.
"Yeh, that's really, that's quite something."

She laughed loudly. He smiled, added a chuckle to her continuing laughter, wanting desperately to lose himself in the papers his wet fingers held. "I was noticing the pictures on your bureau earlier. You certainly have a nice looking..."

"Yes, yes, a wonderful family we are. You should meet your father soon I think. Oh, I love this apron." She began laughing again, her voice rapidly becoming gruff, cracking into coughs as she went inside. Jeff searched the pages, listening to the cough slow to wheezing and then die away. The sound was replaced by the shuffling of pages, back and forth, back and forth. He waited until that too slowed and stopped; and then, quietly gathering his papers, he eased the door open and creased along the hall.

"Gregory, come sit down for a moment."

Jeff saw no way out, no excuse that would put her to sleep. His arm pits and crotch were hot as he sank into the green love seat recessed into the living room wall. Dark curtains hung behind him, hiding most of the sunlight. Two tall planters framed the short couch, green ivy stringing down its arms. What should be say? He felt as if he had been called upon to give a short talk on the virtues of the long life that now lay curled on the couch. So natural. Just like she was asleep. He felt underdressed, having forgotten his eulogistic collar and Bible. But she moved. She sat up and pulled her as he sank into the love seat, and brought his palms together. A

"Gregory, have you been writing a lot lately?"

"Yes. I've been working on my short story writing lately."

"I'd like to read some of your things if you'd let me."

"Sure. I have some already typed up."

"No, no, not right now. I'm too tired. Just put them on the chair sometime. I do wish your father would fix that darn TV."

"I'd better go do some studying." There was no response.

"It'll be worth it, paying double for a while. This new place won't be any hassle."

"Can't you get some back?"

"I don't want to talk to her about it. I couldn't even take it, really. She needs it more than I do."

"Well, she can probably get someone else to take your room."

"I doubt it. Not now, that's for sure. Maybe not even next semester. Not that many people move off in the middle of the year...I hope she finds someone, though."

"Yeh."

"Did you hear about her substitute teaching? I heard some old bags in Jenson's Market saying she might lose her job if there were any more complaints."

"Wow, I didn't know that. She'd really be hard pressed. As it is she has to pinch for holdings and lectures."

"Yeh, I know. Social Security isn't much."

"Maybe I can talk someone into moving in."

Tony had been upset, and had even mentioned getting out at the end of the semester, but Jeff had hardly expected him to leave now. He slept poorly for several nights, weighed down, as if Tony had displaced all responsibility to his shoulders. He had to do something. Tony was frustrated with the discussions into a single point, a single stubborn remark that placed Jeff miles away though he stood just beside her.

"I heard some complaining...I hope she finds someone, though."

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"At least keep your ears open. Say, give me a hand with this trunk. I've got to be out of here tomorrow."

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"Yeh, but more than that, just everything. It's no good. I think she needs help, I really do."

"What about your rent?"

"I'm leaving."

"What? The semester's only half over."

"I know. I got a place on Baker Street."

"But why?"

"Come on, Jeff. She's driving me nuts."

"About Cindy sleeping with you?"

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"Come on, Jeff. She's driving me nuts."

"About Cindy sleeping with you?"
But as he searched, it was none of the obvious places. He
looked under the couch, behind the stack of papers below the
TV, behind the love seat. The more he looked the more he
ran to the window and glanced down the street. She said she
was going to mail some letters and buy some things and be
right back. Maybe she stopped to talk to someone. Highly
unlikely. Where was she? It’s been fifteen minutes. He ran to
the basement, to the row of dusty black volumes along the
wall. He listened for the door. He had to do this. Sweat ran
down his side. As he pulled a volume from the row a
crookshank crawled over his hand. He dropped the book,
Goddamn, and shook his hand where the bug had dropped
and disappeared. He ran back upstairs into her room, opened
every drawer, checked the closet. Twenty minutes. He felt
along the bed, pushed the pillow aside. There it was, heavy,
loosely bound. He carefully turned the cover and the first
pages. "Carlyle Brightton." He read out loud. "From the
Shoreline." MCMXXVII, one thousand, nineteen...nineteen
pages. "Carlyle Brightton." He read out loud. "From the
listening room...Jeff walked out of the room, his face set, the
dead black look of his eyes, to the book, and back.

Her quivering glance squeezed it unconsciously, feeling the thin muscles like a
small insect under his hands. "You have no right. Damn you, give it to me!

"You have to talk to me." He swallowed and held out the
book. "Mrs. Greer." Jeff backed into the living room. "Please, sit
down."

"You stole it. You stole it, damn you."

Jeff caught her wrist as she reached for the book. He
squeezed it unconsciously, feeling the thin muscles like a
small insect under his hands. Her face was drawn, arms
more folded in her lap. He noticed her mouth twist almost to a
smile and pulled the book closer, up under her arm.

"You can have white, like the snow and I'll take black, like all
the crazy printed words I've been reading lately." He
noticed her mouth twist almost to a smile and pulled the
book out slightly, closer to the game. The snow deepened.

"This is just a book. These people don't exist. It's just
written on a jelly bean string. One evening he strung and hung hard
thread and hung it around and around the tree. Several days
later he bought the smallest tree the Jaycees had
sold. Mrs. Greer was still considering the sloppy tree. The tree sat
nearly three feet high on the table. It looked flat, like it
belonged to the wallpaper. It added neither color nor warmth.

"You know, a string of popcorn might be just what it

needs. Want to make some?...Mind if I make some?...Do you
belong to the wallpaper. It added neither color nor warmth.

"You can have white, like the snow and I'll take black lit
up with sobs. Jeff wrapped his arms around her and blinked. "It's
just fiction, understand. Understand?"

In the long silence his arm continued to shake, he con-
tinued to hold the book in front of him. Her quivering glance
jumped from his eyes, to the book, and back.

"Do you understand?"

His face still quivering, she slowly took the book in both
hands and laid it on the table. And as slowly she put her
arms around Jeff's neck, buried her face in his shoulder and
cried, softly at first then harder, until her whole body racked
with sobs. Jeff wrapped his arms around her and blinked. "It's
all right. It's all right."

Jeff looked through the frosted glass of the front window
and rubbed his hands together before knocking on Mrs.
Greer's door. The snow came down silently, softening the
sound of cars rolling by. "Mrs. Greer?" He cracked the door
slowly. He could see Mrs. Greer's door was just cracked and Jeff could see
her on the couch, apparently asleep. He tip-toed up the creaky
stairs, reaching the third one before her voice caught him.

"Gregory, come sit down for a moment."

Peter Porteous