Contents:

Flame Dies Slowly - Agnes Regan 2
Delusion - Fifi 5
Rat - Jane Jeffers 6
London Bridge is Falling Down - Helen McDonald 9
Plato and Moby Dick - Jim Boyack 10
Meatless Tuesday - Fifi 12
Trilogy - Nancy Brechbill 13
Night Train Whistle - Marjorie Powell 14
Four Poems - John Moore 15
Hear Those Darkies Sing - Anonymous 19
Sienna Sky - Helen McDonald 25
Homesickness!! - Miriam Weiner 26
Error - Mary Ellen Fifer 28
Poem - Eileen Plumb 29
The First Rung - Betty Cutts 30

Staff:

Editor: Virginia Perkins
Business Manager: Jean Gordon
Production Manager: Elaine Hausted
Circulation Manager: Margaret Duncan
Faculty Adviser: Baxter Hathaway


Published at Montana State University, Missoula, Montana
FLAME DIES SLOWLY

Agnes Regan

In February, 1942, the army sent two companies of Negro soldiers into a Western town of 15,000 to guard the tunnels and other vital points on the Northern Pacific Railroad near there. In the two months or less that these soldiers were in the town, the people of the town were more disturbed by race prejudice than they had been for generations. Although there was no actual violence, many citizens became so worked up by the problem that a demonstration similar to the Harlem and Detroit riots on a minor scale seemed possible.

There has always been a Negro population there—not a large group but a big enough percentage so that the politicians considered it wise to keep Logan Smith, an aging parking-lot man, in the city employ to insure the colored vote. They are a highly respected people, well-educated, hard-working, and likable.

The Fords are probably the leading family in the colored society. Mr. Ford was for years coachman for the Power family and is now caretaker in their big house and yard. Sadie Ford does fine catering for parties of a few old friends—for she is considered a friend and not a servant in their houses. Their children are both college graduates and have good jobs in New York. Their grandson was well-liked when he went to high school.

Many of the younger Negroes have been popular in school. The five Harell boys were among the best athletes ever to go through high school. When I was a freshman, Connie Harell was the star basketball player, the vice-president of the student council, and one of my brother's best friends; the boys of his age not only accepted him as a companion, they sought after his company. His sister Carry was a good-looking girl and was well-liked. Mrs. Christian, an elderly widow with a large family of her own, adopted Junior Stovall after his parents died. When the wife of a prominent doctor carelessly ran into the Christian's car and injured Junior, who was in my class, the indignation of the other students ran high and when they learned that the cause of the accident had been hushed up to keep adverse publicity from affecting her husband's practice, the young people protested until the Christian boys asked them to forget it.

One of the most intelligent Negroes, a part-Indian, takes care of the public library building and in his spare time reads prodigiously. Though he is mostly self-educated, he helped more than half of our class through second-year Latin.

Even Julian Anderson, bar-man for fifty years at the Montana club, is known and admired for his accomplishments. Of course there are other colored people who hang around the South Main saloons and contribute nothing to the town, but they never cause noticeable
trouble. Most are good average citizens, some outstanding in the community.

In February two years ago there were suddenly several hundred new Negroes in town, these in uniform. Fort Harrison at that time was only a veteran's hospital and had no place to keep the men, so they were stationed in the Civic Center Ballroom where a company of white soldiers had previously been housed.

At first they were a novelty. Curious people walked past the building to stare at the guards posted at the entrances. Wherever people gathered the subject of the soldiers came up and as the idea became more familiar they developed pronounced opinions.

The reaction was immediate. All the eating places lined up on one side or the other. One of the better restaurants opened its doors to the Negroes and passed out bulletins announcing, "This is a war to do away with Hitler's ideas of race prejudice. We must practice tolerance at home." Another placed a sign in the window, "Welcome, Men of the United States Army."

The people also took sides, those who had lived in the South leading the movement to restrict the soldiers. They wanted "Jim Crow" segregation in all public places. Other people, particularly the boys and girls who had grown up with the Harrells and the Soles and the Christians, resented this attitude a great deal.

One boy who was interested in music became acquainted with two of the swing artists in the company and helped them to buy newer recordings which the record shops put away for choice customers. When he tried to get them steaks and was refused in several restaurants, he took them home for dinner.

Some of the young people deliberately tried to make trouble for the anti-Negro eating places. They would walk into a cafe and order; then suddenly one would point to the "Restricted Patronage" sign above the counter. "Does that mean you won't serve Negroes?" he would ask. "Then you don't need to serve us either," and they would march out abruptly. Often other customers would indignantly glare at the sign, throw down their napkins, and stalk out after the boys.

All public places made a decision one way or the other. In the movie houses, which were all owned by the same man, Negroes were allowed to sit anywhere in the theater even when some of the patrons complained at being seated next to a soldier. At Community Concerts they were invited, but seated in reserved sections.

The problem even affected the community service clubs. The Kiwanis organization received a letter from a Negro storekeeper in California asking if he could join the club when he moved to town. Some members were violently opposed, threatening to resign if he were admitted, while others attacked their attitude as narrow-minded and threatened to resign if he were not accepted immediately.
ately. The level-headed members proposed that they wait and look him over as they would any one else applying for membership. That met with opposition from both sides. The argument was halted when a second letter came saying that he had changed his plans. Not until recently did one of the members dare admit that the whole communication had been a practical joke carried on with the aid of a friend in California.

The Elks club invited a chorus from the company to sing spirituals at a meeting and the problem of whether or not to feed them almost brought the members to blows.

In the Parent Teacher Association there were long arguments about letting girls walk home from evening club meetings. Rumors of rape and attacks spread over the city.

In school the teachers discussed in class the problem of the soldiers. Our sociology teacher who had grown up in South Carolina spoke strongly against treating the soldiers as the local Negroes had always been treated. "Niggers from the South are different and expect to be considered inferior," she said. Our American history teacher was from Minnesota and had once toured the West as a pianist in a Negro dance band. He tried to arrange an assembly program where the musicians in the group would entertain, but the principal, who was afraid of causing comment from the parents, discouraged the idea.

The Women's Volunteer Service faced the problem of continuing the small canteen which they had started for the white soldiers. Contributions fell off. Finally Effie Baker, the best Negro cook in town, volunteered to manage a club room for them and enlisted the aid of all the other colored people. All of them did their best but they were too few to care for the number of soldiers.

Then, just as suddenly as they came, they were sent out. The next day only the handful of colored people who had always lived in town remained. The restaurants took down the signs and the city had the ballroom floor sanded. Mrs. Baker closed the canteen.

But the prejudice remained. Men who had never noticed Louis Christian now changed seats when he sat near them at a ball game. When Mr. Soles died, a great many people who had never known him turned out for his funeral to show that they believed in equality. When Ed Soles was chosen the first Negro from Montana to enter officer's candidate school half the people were extremely proud of him and the other half declared contemptuously that "no Negro will ever make a good officer."

The soldiers left the town nearly two years ago, yet the effects have not entirely worn off. The Negro citizens have had a harder time since then. It was mostly caused by the Southerners and the older people who have had the idea fixed in their
minds since childhood. If it takes that long for race prejudice
to die out in a Western town where it had never before been noticeable, how long will the effects of the riots in the larger
cities of the East and South remain? It seems that it will
take a long time, perhaps several generations, and can only
be accomplished by intelligent education in the schools.

DELUSION

You speak
"You're eyes are especially blue, and dark and deep like a
forest pool."
And I clutch your arm, and hold on tight,
And you press my hand in response.
But pushed way back in my mind is a thought that haunts;
and so I sigh, and you think it is deeply stirringly emoted;
And for the world, I wouldn't tell you and have your
confidence corroded---
So I'll let you think it is my deep devotion,
and it does serve the simplest solution:
You are, my dear, so easily elated,
But the honest truth is I would really walk alone
and unaided
If I just hadn't gone to the oculist and had my eyes dilated.

-Fifi
"Barbie," yelled Carole from the hall, "Phone."
"Coming," I said and put down my book.
"It's a man," she whispered, her hand over the mouthpiece.
"Thanks," I said and took the phone. "Hello?"
"Hello, Barbie. This is Johnny."

Blood thumped in my ears and I sat down suddenly.

"Oh, Hello, Johnny," I said. My voice sounded weak and I put my hand over the mouthpiece and cleared my throat. "How are you?"
"Fine, thanks. How are you?"
"Great," I said, "What's up?"
"Nothing much."
"How long will you be in town?"
"I'm leaving tomorrow."
"Oh, so soon?" I said.
"I thought maybe you'd like to go out to The Place or are you dated up?"
"Well," I said. Then, "It can be fixed up though."
"Oh, no," he said, "I don't want you to break your date."
"Oh, I insist," I said gayly. "It's not every night I get to date a near-lieutenant."
"Well," he said, "Will seven-thirty be okay? I'll pick you up at the House."
"Fine," I said, "I'll be waiting."
"Okay, then. See you."
"Okay, b'bye," I said.

"It was Johnny," I said. Judy looked up and took off her glasses.
"Johnny," she said flatly, "The rat."

"We're going out tonight," I said.

"You had a date with George," she said.

"I can tell him something," I said, "That one of the fellows from my hometown was going through or something."

"You're a fool, Barbie," said Judy. "How long has it been since Johnny's written you?"

"About a month," I said resentfully, then added, honestly, "Or so."

"Yes," she said.

I went to the closet and took out my blue wool. After dinner I put it on and was ready to go by seven-fifteen. I knew he would not be there till quarter to eight. I took off my best wool and put on a tweed skirt and my red sweater. With heels and pearls it looked dressy enough.

At twenty to eight the doorbell rang. I went down carrying my coat. When I opened the door he stood there looking self-confident and helped me with my coat.

"How's everything?" he said loudly.

"Just great," I said, "How's the army?"

"Can't get along without me," he said and we both laughed. We crossed the street and stood waiting for the bus. We were both silent then he said, "Seems funny to see all the frat houses closed up."

"Yes," I said, "It took me a long time to get used to it."

"How long are you going to be here?" I said after a pause, then remembered miserably that I had asked that over the phone.

"Taking the noon train tomorrow," he said and we got on the bus. There didn't seem to be anything more to say.

At The Place we ordered drinks and tried to make conversation.

"When will you graduate?" I said.

"February," he said.

"I suppose you don't have any idea where you'll be sent?" I said.
"Shall we dance?" he said.

He still danced beautifully. I kept remembering the times he had tipped the barmaid to forget to turn on the lights on the dance floor. This is not time to reminisce, I told myself fiercely.

We went back to our table and ordered more drinks and danced again. He looked at his watch. "We could still make the main feature," he said. "Shall we go?"

"I'd love it," I said. He knew I hated movies.

We followed the usher down the aisle and found seats. I took off my gloves. He took my hand with the same air as one who leans on the chair arm. It's there so you might as well use it.

"It's nearly 12:00", he said when we were outside again. It was clear and cold and starry. Our breath misted in the frosty air.

"Yes," I said looking at my watch, too. I wondered if we'd take a bus or walk back as we used to.

He looked up and down the street.

"It should be here," he said, frowning at his watch again.

"Yes," I said and shivered inside my coat.

"Cold?", he asked.

"No," I said.

We got off the bus at the corner. It was only five after twelve. We could have made it walking.

"Gee, Barb," he said at the door. "It's been swell seeing you again."

"Yes," I said, "It's been swell."

"I'll look you up again if I'm ever through town."

"Yes," I said, "Do."

"Well--", he said.

"Well, good luck," I said.

"Thanks," he said. "Don't study too hard." We both laughed.

"No," I said. He backed off down the walk. "Well," he said, "Bye."

"Bye." I said and he walked away.
I sat on the bed taking my gloves off. I was crying. Judy came in noisily with a load of books. She dropped them on the desk and stood looking at me. I didn't look up. She looked at me for a long time, then went out quietly and closed the door.

*****

"london bridge is falling down"

"london bridge is falling down
falling down, falling down . . ."
do they realize the truth that's in
the tuneless little song they sing?
"london bridge is falling down,
my fair lady,"

my fair lady.

and the leaders descend,
clapsed hands around the child,
holding her secure on either side
with close-pressed arms.

the question is presented:
"which do you prefer?
all the gold and silver in the world?
or your mama and daddy?"

there is significance in what they ask.
how would you like to be put to the task
of answering? the dogma of doctrine today
is one that invokes universal dismay.

standards, ethics, perspective
are not easy gifts to give
in this world of cannon and bomb;
but the child remains calm.

"my mama and daddy."

a future is still in store
for the race of homo sapiens...
humanity worth fighting and dying for...
when children take silver and gold
let man turn to the tree that told
the end of judas.

Helen McDonald
"Herman, my friend," says Plato in effect, "let us start with God." Melville bows his head as if in reverence so that Plato's twinkling eyes fail to catch his troubled look. "God creates. He creates the ideal universe. And that universe is made up of the ideal, single, final form of everything. And every conception. These glasses, then, from which we are drinking Coca Cola are not real."

Melville reflectively feels of his glass. "It's cold though."

"But not real, Herman. It is the ideal form of 'glass-ness' that is real. These glasses of ours, even if they are cold, are but imitations of the idea of 'glass', you see. Don't you?"

"No."

"Herman! You do too. A college freshman can see that--well, he should. It follows that he who makes the glass is an imitator. See?"

"Well, so what? What's that to do with Moby Dick?"

"I'll get to that. Let's take fate. It's the same thing as a glass." Melville's eyebrows rise. He examines his glass intently. "Herman! Don't misunderstand me. In the realm of ideal forms there is the single idea of fate, like everything else. And the invisible, clutching, Frankenstein hands of fate, one of which grasps your life, and one mine, and others the lives of those co-eds over there, those are but imitations of the idea of fate."

"Oh."

"And you and I, Herman, who by our acts build our fates, are but building an imitation of the idea of fate. Even as he who built these glasses in imitation of an idea. We are but imitators."

"And the co-eds?"

"The same."

"But tell me, what do our 'imitation' fates have to do with Moby Dick?"

"I'm getting to that, Herman. First let me ask, do you have a clear idea of fate?"

"Well--not always."

"Exactly. Neither do I. And I'll wager those co-eds at the
next table never think about it. So you see, because the fate each
of us builds is but an imitation of the real idea of fate, our
notions of it are a bit more fuzzy than as if it were the real,
constant idea of fate with which we were in contact."

"Sounds logical--I guess."

"Of course. Now, Herman, finish that 'coke' and give me your
attention. When you wrote Moby Dick what were you doing?"

"Sweating blood."

"I mean, were you not writing about men who were building their
fate which represented, that is re-presented the idea of fate?"

"Well, strictly speaking, I suppose so."

"In other words, Herman, you were imitating the actions of men,
which actions were in turn imitating the ultimate idea of fate.
And instead of presenting truth you were presenting an imitation of
an imitation of truth!"

"Well, call me Ishmael!"

"Now, if you and I are fuzzy about the truth of real fate,
because in our lives we are but imitating the idea of fate, then
how much more fuzzy must you be when you are but imitating at third
hand we who are actually experiencing at second hand the reality
which only God experiences at first hand!"

"Here, you'd better have another 'coke'."

"Thanks. So you see, actually you are a long way from the
truth."

"Yes. My critics say the same thing."

"Herman, you know better. That's a minor point. Your critics
say that you are far from the truth because they can't take it.
You've given them a picture of mankind driven on to a doom made in-
volatile by the force of passion--by hate and revenge. And in their
sweet and innocent blindness they think that a false imitation of
man's fate. But they neither know the subject you are imitating,
which is life itself, nor the means you have employed, which is a
literary form they aren't used to, and therefore who are they to
judge whether you imitation is a good one or a bad one!"

"Yes, and I'll wager a shipful of sperm oil that if they could
see this modern holocaust of war they still wouldn't see it."

"You're quite right, Herman, I dare say. But don't change the
subject. You see my main point, do you not? An artist by merit
of being an artist is perforce a long way 'off the beam' of truth,
as they say hereabouts."
"That may be, Plato. But permit me one objection before we have to make way for the Air Corps boys."

"By all means."

"Back there in the Republic did you not at one time allow poetry a place if she could prove her value to the state?"

"Yes, I certainly did."

"Then let me speak for her now. If, in Moby Dick, even though I give expression to all the passions of mankind at their wildest, I yet succeed in making them see the inevitable doom that awaits them if they persist in hate and anger and revenge, is not that something of value? Have I not given them a vision of how to attain the truth and goodness which you would have them seek? Can you then, deny poetry a place in your Republic?"

"Now, by Socrates, Herman, you have a point there. But come, it is time for the boys, and I must think further, or you will have the best of me yet."

---

MEATLESS TUESDAY

My nasty, bird-stalking, tired of milk puss I locked up in the pantry where he can't get loose. You see, I heard a birdie at my lattice, And the reason I'm protecting birdie from my cat is That after I've fed him unrationed, easy to get Bread crumbs to make him fatter-- I'll have him served up on my beautiful, given to me by my Grandmother Hortense, exquisitely hand painted blue and White platter.

--Fifi
TRILOGY

Nancy Brechbill

I
The elder,
Strong in past
And faded in present
Walks slowly with full measure of life
And love and knowledge,
A pillar of the Church
Of family and of nation,
Respectable and proven.
His work well done,
He waits in patience
For death and reunion
With the past.

II
The soldier's head,
Outlined by youth,
Tilts questioning toward the sun.
He thinks of life,
Of loves not known
And wonders of his destiny.
He ponders on the living,
Forgetting age and care,
Delighting in today
And strength for one moment,
Before he marches on.

III
Listening to the sounds of living,
The man-child counts his beads—
One for each year—seven.
Tomorrow he'll know the eight,
A scratch on mahogany
Polished by ages.
So much to see,
So short existence,
Yet his eager eyes
Search every horizon.
Longing to know but never quite grasping
The meaning of life.
NIGHT TRAIN WHISTLE

Marjorie Powell

Sound shivers freely through the black,
For a moment satisfies
My yearning,
Pulsing with the ringing track,

Until the song, the streaming strain
Unbound is gone
Without me,
Trembling with an unknown pain.

I ache to keep it live within me,
Grasp at echoes,
Nourish them,
Feeding fleeting ecstasy.

Yet even echoes fade at last,
Leaving lonely
As before
Empty nights through which they passed.
SEASONS

John Moore

What seasons put their solemn scar in this our earth
No man measures lest in numbered days counted,
On the fingers told, by sun-slant on the south
Where now snow goes but doubtfully: or how,
It may be, the black of night a house may cast
Even in sun, this nourished shade to eat through
Cricket-noise and heat where no cricket calls.

Some by stars can pencil down the thing, this change,
And mark the tissue in the bone, how centers man
In this great wheel of night, where overhead
All movement deliberate is, a cautious creep of light
That only darkens down the space between
Where no light is or was or, think now, shall ever be.

But how a hill
May crumble down and waters move by courses,
Freeze, unfreeze, torrent hold, and seep at last
To root and leaf until in green all growing things
Make green and very light that tangled is
In bough and bower.

And flame (we call it autumn here):
How bleeds a whole earth, sap and fruit,
Ungarnered air even. Only sky we cast our hope on,
Changing not by other signs, but rather be,
For hope, for wish, immutable; lest counting now
By sun, by star, we find no place to cast our mark upon,
No unchanged season on our earth.
Stands one in aspen shade to ease his mind
Of timber gathered there, to tally down each cull
And build against his will what joinery now lasts
To keep out wind, memory wall out.

And sees, when wills to see
The wreckage of no longer dreamed-of things, peoples
From his single need each stump for league on league
And rears to skyward pine and spruce, each hill matted,
Holding sky a far way over earth where even winds
Find but a shadow sound swept through these trees.
And under foot where sand grows hot in sickly shade
The creeping things made much of little light let down
Each noon by sun no moss, no fern, knew shape of.

He can line horizons now, azimuth of naked hill
Gone naked more by aspen groth and one shot pine,
Accusatory symbol, so he thinks, to bring down wrath
He knows will never come.

Unadmitted, finds it good
To thus piece out on every side the draws, the cedar brakes,
The gutted hills; finds ready plotted all his sins
And all his father's failures here gone riverward like logs
In spring riding the water rise, the thaw.

And whips his mind
With empty thought to weep the past and know this place
As ever his for reckonings he finds no little pride in.

But hawk moves here and tree grows
And the fruit of no man's sowing.
THE ISLAND

John Moore

Roundness of the sea against our shore
Reveals what sea has done when tide
Ebbs and moon comes, neap and spring, flood
Of alien things dropped here, star-fish
Flung, gill and fin, what sea-weed holds
To fold us in upon ourselves.

Drive of sea wind
Forces back the margined trees that might,
For all we know, be but another sea-held wall
To count dimensions, drop, hour by hour, the leaf-fall
On our native grass; until by time withheld
Clockwise the round of island wind comes round
To where the sea makes misery on sand.

No hurt the sea
Of our undoing makes but heals and pardon craves
For being salt, for being current followed fast
Under wind, the south-east trades, the gull marking,
Making wide the channel to where our hope lies.
No harm in looking, surely, in sea eyes cast
Seaward, gull-followed toward that place
Not boundary, not a wind held figure of a land.
No hurt in questioning who have no question
For the mute unlovely sea that heaps our shore
With ikons of the dead.

What other shore may touching lie in ambush
By the line of cloud horizon-held,
Divide and cellular become the nightmare
Of another being?

Or consider spent and spoiled
The mother-sucking of the sea; one cocoanut
Drifted here, a skull to breed and rattle down
Unending skulls for sea-road, wind-road,
Until once knit by gut of tree the sky green,
All growing things of land, not sea,
Of hills, the generation bred to land
That no more fallow lies nor waits
The consummation by the sea where each by each
We once called out a naked name
And heard the wind.
SALT MARSH

John Moore

What binds a man in so,
By tide-flats lifted now
To view on every swivel look
This earth that only partly earth is?
The scope of eyes encompasses
No break but sea far off
Or rises, loud now, the geese,
Flash and sudden go against
This watered hay field.

Land-end and sea-end, doubtful now
As who shall have the say of things,
Come compromising here to make a place
A man may call not land, not sea,
Rather a kind of elemental flux
Where doubt of land dissolves each tide
To doubt of water.

Here it would be well for man to know
What harvest he would make
Of what is water-bred and what is land,
Lest this that fails of being boundary
To a continent becomes for him
Boundary enough to bind him up
In doubtful breath and sigh that fetters mind
Like tidal wash upon these flats,
Leaving, when the sea is down,
Demented scribblings, print of gull-walk
On the living earth.
Anonymous

Hear Those Darkies Sing

Usually after school in the afternoon I'd sneak off to an old weather-beaten skeleton of a house next to where Mom and I stayed that winter in Florida. Sometimes Joey, who wasn't much older than I was, would come over too and find me there wearing my pants out and getting slivers in my behind sliding along the wall braces and almost breaking my neck walking the two by sixes that ought to have been the ceiling. Because the house wasn't finished. I guess whoever it was started it got sick of all the racket the trains made right across his back lot or maybe his wife did or something.

Anyway there it was and right smack beyond it was the railroad track. Some days I'd be over there all alone straddling one of those two by sixes thinking to myself how I was way up on some high foremost weaving around with a whole spread of Lake Michigan under me and way off there'd be some island. You see, that's where we came from, Michigan, Mom and me, and I used to get lonesome for it.

Or maybe I'd be bringing a handsome ship around a breakwater in a high gale with all the people watching and holding their breaths and the girls all panicky. Then, all of a sudden, I'd hear the Tampa Special whistle way off in the north end of town and even the rails there by that old house would seem to shake and get all set for her. I'd have to forget about that tall ship then. I'd hang on and watch the curve where the train would come. They'd whistle again, nearer this time, and the echo would roll around through the orange groves and the live oaks and dim off and come back and dim off until it wasn't there any more. By that time the engine would come banking around the curve with the steam shooting first out one side and then the other, only so fast that it seemed like one thing. Then, all in a blur, she'd be gone, and all there'd be was a swirl of leaves and papers and candy wrappers rising up and hopping around in the air like they had felt the same thing I had.

It was a homesick feeling, with that train tearing right through so you couldn't catch it anyhow, even if it was going to Tampa and not back home. But I couldn't catch it any more than I could bring that tall ship in through the breakwater. It seems like I almost did, but something always broke in, like that Tampa Special, or Joey. That day it was both. After the train went through there was Joey down on the floor of the old house, looking up at me.

"Yay," he said. "Whatya doin'?"

"Nothin'," I said. "Come on up."

So pretty soon there we were, Joey and me, sitting on that two by six. Joey was squirming around trying to find a splinter
he had just picked up where he sat down.

"Know what?" Joey said.

"Nope," I said. "What?"

"They's a big shin-dig tonight. Parade an' all."

"I know that," I said, real smart. I did know it though. Mom had told me all about it. The college always had it in March.

"They's floats and dancin' and stuff to eat and all that," Joey said. "You goin'?"

"I dunno," I said. I guess I was lying then because I sure was going, only I didn't want Joey to think I wanted to.

We sat there for a while, Joey moving around and cussing the hard two by six. Then we started climbing around, following each other all over the high places where we'd been every day and probably could have climbeded in the dark like alley cats.

Joey stopped and I figured he had an idea of some kind chewing at him the way he looked around.

"Know what?" he said, the way he always started something. "We could have fun tonight all right."

Then he waited, so I had to say "What?" to get him going again.

"Hey, let's go with the niggers. You know, up on the box cars."

Joey always said "niggers" even though he was a Northerner like me.

"You mean sit up there on those box cars and watch the parade and the dancing and stuff along with the niggers?" I had to say "niggers" too, even if Mom didn't like it.

"Sure," Joey said. "Why not?"

"Well," I said, trying to think of something, "Maybe those niggers wouldn't like it."

"They couldn't do nothing if they didn't," Joey said. "Besides, I got the idea right here."

And he pulled out a big wad of newspaper from his pocket and unwrapped it.

"See," he said. "Charcoal. All we gotta do is rub it on our faces and hands and who's gonna know the difference in the dark?"
That sounded good to me. I always had wanted to be closer to those niggers than my Mom would let me. So I said, "Sure," and that was that...

It was just about dark when Joey and I started out from our house. Mom had to help with something or other over at the college, so there wasn't much trouble getting away.

"You got that charcoal?" I said to Joey.

"Sure thing," he said, pulling it out. "You got your old clothes on?"

"Sure thing," I said.

We went off down the railroad tracks toward town. Soon we could hear a band tooting and drumming away over to the college and we could see the big glow of light in the sky where the main street was all lit up for the parade.

"Maybe we oughta put that stuff on now," I said.

We ducked behind a box car on the siding and Joey got out the charcoal. First he tried to smear some on his face, but I got to laughing at him because he missed so many spots, and then we took turns putting it on each other. It wasn't any easy job either. That charcoal was sharp on the corners and Joey jabbed me up plenty. We figured that we were good enough; then we remembered that if we scratched our necks any it would show white underneath, so we had to peel our shirts down and go to it again. Then we rolled up our sleeves and smeared the charcoal way up so's we wouldn't show there either. Joey figured we ought to put some on our legs in case our pants got caught climbing around on the box cars, but we didn't do it.

We did a good job, all right, because when we came out under a street-light we had a good look at ourselves.

"Well, my, my, my, ya ole niggah, you," Joey said, trying to get his voice right.

We both stood there a bit and yammered at each other in our nigger speech. Then we saw some of the real ones coming, so we beat it on down the tracks.

I was a little scared at first when we got there. It was lighter than I figured it would be, but Joey said, "Come on," and we did. There were about five box cars set off on the siding and already the tops of them had quite a few niggers up there, walking around and finding places near the edge and hollering back and forth and laughing soft and easy. But what got me was that there seemed to be too much light up there. It seemed to shine right in
their faces from the other side. But Joey pulled ahead and we climbed real slow up the last box car, the one that didn't have many niggers on it yet. We went up the far side too, but it was some time before I came out on the top.

On the other side, toward Main street, was a park all sprinkled with white folks wandering around under the Japanese lanterns hung up in the live oaks and palmettos. They had the street all roped off and lit up bright as day with booths along the sides and a platform and crowds of people.

Well, then the band started up and I guess that's what got me up there, because pretty soon there we were, Joey and me, sitting big as any nigger boys with our feet hanging over the edge watching the whole nigger show.

"Boy now, ain't this all right?" Joey whispered to me.

"It sure is," I whispered back. "I don't guess anybody knows us at all."

"Naw," Joey said, "How could they?"

Well, that settled it. I felt easier. And besides, the parade was coming. The band was loud now, playing "Dixie" for all they were worth, and soon the drum major came down the street with his back all bowed out of shape like any minute he'd go clean over.

"Maybe a banana peel would do it," I whispered to Joey, and he darned near laughed out loud. But he caught himself in time and kind of scowled at me for making him want to laugh. So then we didn't say anything much for awhile. We just sat there and watched the parade and felt the niggers all around us, more coming every minute until I could smell them, thick as flies.

It was a good parade all right. They had floats, and people on horses, and along in the middle another band playing "The Stars and Stripes Forever." Those floats were pretty enough, I guess, with all the flowers draped around so's you'd hardly know they had a car underneath. And they had some pretty girls, all dressed up in robes that flowed out like window curtains. When they came in sight Joey nudged me in the ribs and I most fell off the box car. We grinned and I was all set to give one of those special whistles when Joey banged me on the shin and whispered at me, "Don't, ya crazy lug. Don't ya know niggers don't whistle at white gals?"

I figured I'd better keep pretty quiet from then on.

For a while after the parade there wasn't much to it, only people milling around down there and guys shouting from the booths like at a carnival, and now and then you could hear the clickety-
clickety of one of those wheels that they whirl around and if it stops on your number you get a baby doll, only it never does.

So while this was going on we looked around the top of the box car and, sure enough, nobody seemed to pay any attention to us. Right beside us was a great big old mammy, like you see in the movies, and her man too, small, half-hid by this big old gal. But what I got was the noise that seemed to flow up and down the line there on the box car. I couldn't hear what they said, not clear, but it was a soft, slow noise like maybe the wind might make through the Spanish moss that drips down from the live oaks. And now and then some thin old nigger would laugh, real high up and almost squeaky only it wasn't hard on the ears. Then maybe some deeper voice would laugh and all down the line would go a great swell of laughing and catch you up until you wanted to laugh too. I almost tried, but I was scared.

Over on the street they started dancing. Up on a platform over against the bank they had an orchestra and after they scraped their chairs around and blew notes all up and down the scale on the saxophones and loud blats on the horns, they settled down to it. It was mostly fox-trots they played there for a while, sometimes real fast ones like "Alexander's Rag-Time Band." For a time it was fun to see all those people bouncing around down there like they was having fun. Only every now and then we'd look along the line of faces there on the box car and see a shiny gleam and eyes all jogging up and down in time with the music.

Then, maybe because all those dancers were tired out, they played some slow ones. The guy with the trumpet got up and pretty soon everybody was quiet, so the notes came clear and sweet with just a faint drum beat back of them and just a little rattle from the banjo. First off he played a blues song. I don't know what they called it, but anybody could tell it was blues. It came slow and sad like he meant every bit of it. And when that was finished they worked into some more of them, slow and sad like you wanted something real bad and couldn't get it.

Once when they were playing Joey looked over at me and smiled and I had to almost hold on to know enough to smile back. It was that sad, all that slow playing down there. But most of it was nearer. When I looked around at the niggers I could see how it was. Real easy they were clapping their hands together, soft and gentle so you got a sound most like waves on a sandy beach. Most of them were right together with the music, but some of them were working some mighty different little slaps into the music. And then all up and down the line there was a humming sound, and it worked around and through the soft clapping and the trumpet down there on the platform and I guess between them there were about all the notes anybody ever heard of, and all in the right places too.

They must have played a long time, but I didn't notice it.
First thing I did know they had all stopped and the guys in the orchestra down there were scraping their chairs around and packing up their instruments. They began whirling the wheels again and shouting around the booths, but I guess most everybody figured that was about all there was to it. I guess it was kind of late because there through the trees was the moon just coming up, a kind of half-filled-out moon that looked like it belonged strung up in the trees with the rest of the lanterns.

"Maybe we better get out of here," I whispered to Joey. "I gotta get home."

"Naw," he whispered back. "Stick around. Nobody else is leaving, 'cept the white folks."

He sounded like he was one of the niggers, and the funny thing is that I didn't notice it at all. So we just sat there. And it started all over again, coming from way down the line where some nigger with a sweet voice just rose up there in the night and let loose. Only he didn't exactly do that. He slipped off into singing like he had to, like he couldn't any more help it than that old moon could help pushing on up through the trees, making the Spanish moss look wet and drippy.

I guess it must have been the niggers' turn now. Leastways, things had turned around. Some of the people down in the park and the street drifted off, but a whole gang just stuck around, more and more sitting down under the trees, some watching the moon coming up and some just watching that row of black faces and white teeth up on our box cars. Joey and I didn't mind.

Now all up and down the line there was that swaying back and forth, slow and gentle, only like it could break down all the walls there was if it had a mind to. And this young nigger way down the line would sing out a bit while the rest hummed low and sweet like a big organ only better. And then they'd all slip into the song together and the music would swell way up like even the stars could hear. And when it settled down again I could hear the frogs over at the college ponds piping away, and farther off I thought I could hear a train whistle, going home somewhere in the night.

Sometimes that music seemed almost like a smell that came like the orange groves when they blossom out all along a road that cuts right through the middle of them. Now they weren't singing the blues; not exactly. But they were almost the same thing. It was like everybody wanted to go home somewhere way off and there wasn't any train to take them, or a boat, or anything. They just sat there, high up like me on that old house, and sang and sang. There weren't any words, words that mattered, that is. They seemed to sing something about a river, and getting over to the other side, and all that. But mostly there was Joey and me and the whole top of those box cars swaying like we could move right off in the dark, and this great sound reaching all through the night like maybe
out there could hear sure enough and come and take us all home. It was like that Tampa Special going through town. It was like that ship I figured I had to get around the break-water only I never did.

Then it got farther away and farther away until Joey and I were just about the only ones left there. Way off up the tracks the niggers moved, still singing far off and soft. And there was the moon high in the trees and over the way the street all empty except for the booths that stuck out in the streetlights and a heap of papers and confetti littered up in the gutters.

Then we climbed down from the box car, stiff and awkward. And we bumped right smack into a big nigger. Joey started to say something, but the nigger laughed a little.

"'Bout time for white boys to be gettin' long home," he said. Then he laughed.

We ran as fast as we could go, up the tracks. And pretty soon I was way ahead of Joey. But I didn't wait. I ran faster and faster, until I felt the wind against my face. And still I could hear the laughter, and over that, far off through the trees, the lonesome singing. I didn't even look at that old skeleton of a house as I ran by and stumbled up the steps at our house.

*******

SIENNA SKY

The burnt sienna sky has spread itself over the lake
Until there are two heavens contrasting with the two hells
I hold in my mind. I look in vain for the theme of twilight.
If only the mountains would point with their pinnacled tips
The ultimate goal—if only gulls could sketch its pattern
In the sky. Why must my eyes lock my soul under my feet
Because they cannot read the meaning of sunset? If it said:
"We live to die," I have read and comprehended. But the gulls
Screech "No!" and the wind and water "No!" and the trees
And cliffs deny. But I have gone too long without reading—
The burnt sienna sky has turned gray and the message escaped me,

Helen McDonald
"Do you miss New York?" That question came crashing into the
recesses of my brain from the mouth of a curious dinner partner.
I started to give the answer I had been giving for the past two
months, but my throat tightened as a great wave of homesickness
swept into my soul. I couldn't say, "No, I don't. I love it here."

I do love it in Montana. Queer chills run up and down my
spine when I gaze up at the strong, stolid mountains. I go into
eccasies of delight when a blazing sunset catches my eye. I still
can hardly get over the surprise I first felt when I saw that frost
had formed on each separate blade of grass. Peace, quiet and beauty
reign in the land of Missoula, but-----

I want to ride on the 8th Avenue Subway again, to feel myself
being hurtled through the earth, under water, under living and
walking people--to sit in quiet contemplation with the roar of the
express in my ears while I make a character analysis of the people
opposite me--to push my way off at the Fifth Avenue Station and
come out blinking in the afternoon sunlight. I want to make my way
up 53rd Street to the white marble building marked "Musuem of Modern
Art." I want to amble slowly in and out of the carpeted corridors,
up and down the four floors--to stand in the front of Picasso's
works and wonder and marvel as I used to. Then I want to relax in
the garden outside, at the cozy tables, under the trees and gay
umbrellas.

I want to go roller skating on the Mall in Central Park again.
I'd like to go whipping past those statues--one of Shakespeare, who
is posed as gracefully as a dancer might be, one of Robert Burns,
and one of Sir Walter Scott. Then I want to climb down those im­
pressive looking flights of stairs to the terrace that borders the
lake. I'd like to go rowing in Central Park again. It always
amused me to find that 50% of those engaged in the art of rowing
were sailors.

I have such a desire to get lost again in Macy's furniture de­
partment--to catch a nap in one of the soft display armchairs while
the salesclerk has his back turned. I want to be carried up six
floors by the escalators--to listen to the recordings in the music
department--to thumb through luscious dresses in the debutante
department on the third floor, and, when the conglomeration of
noise, colors, and people have wearied me, I'd like to buy a small
container of chocolate milk for six cents from Bessie the Cow. And
then I'd like to get lost again in the eager crowds on the main
floor. I'd let them sweep me along, whither they want to, and as
I move past the perfume counter, I'd like to spray myself with some
spicy, odorous toilet water--that is, if the clerks are not watch­
ing.
I'd like a quick glimpse of the Great White Way, with its moving throng of demanding, uncourteous, loud people. Broadway always fascinated and frightened me—more of the former than the latter, however. I'd like to start my walk at 49th Street and work my way down to 42nd Street. I know what I'll see by heart—peddlers selling gardenias and orchids; soldiers and sailors from every nation; heavily made-up girls, clinging to the arms of their bald sugar daddies; chorus girls, laden down with false eyelashes, dashing out for a coke between acts; school girls, in a group, attempting to "pick up" those five good-looking English sailors; tourists gazing around at the confusion with happy bewilderment in their eyes; the Fanny Arcade jammed with people of every kind, testing their skills; befurred girls standing on the steps of the Hotel Astor, supposedly waiting for a "friend"; the long line of impatient jitterbugs, waiting to get into the Paramount so they can bounce in their seats to the strains of Cab Calloway's music, and here and there, mounted policemen, watching over these hungry humans. I'd like to be a part of that scene for just an hour. Then perhaps I'd be content.

I want to see it rain in New York, for when it rains in New York, the asphalt paving on Fifth Avenue gleams like a shiny black satin ribbon. Those wisps of steam straying up out of the manhole covers stand out like white plumes, and traffic cops wear black rubber wimples to keep them dry behind the ears. Looking down from the 30th floor of a skyscraper, the tops of the colored umbrellas and taxicabs look like ants scurrying around in search of a meal or a mate. The benches in Madison Square have a sad dejected look, because the people go sloshing by them, instead of sitting and gossipping. New York is a unique place in the rain.

I miss not being able to eat my favorite meal, cooked in my favorite way. How I loved going to Caruso's Spaghetti House, for dinner and a chat. The hot smelly atmosphere always did something for my tongue—I talked more glibly. And I miss not being able to go into a store and ask the clerk for a Hershey without having him look at me as if I were stark raving mad, and then give me a "don't you know there's a war on" look. New York is plentiful with chocolate.

I miss those Sunday drives my favorite boy-friend and I used to take along the beautiful, smoothly-paved Belt Parkway. Long Island, though it does not boast of mountains, is resplendent with trees, flowers, and grass, also. Nature was good to New York, contrary to the opinion of Western people.

I want to see New York's skyline from the Staten Island Ferry, while the daylight softly fades into night. It gives me a sense of power and strength to look at those massive, man-made structures.

I'm lonesome for Alicia Markova, Ezio Pinza, Paul Muni and numerous other stars appearing on glittering Broadway, and winter won't seem like winter without ice skating at the rink at Rockefeller Plaza.

Yes, I miss New York.
Mary Ellen Fifer

I stood on the far end of the dock, hair and skirt whirling in the breeze, entertaining myself by tossing small pebbles into the lake. The sky, usually blue and sunny, was overcast with black clouds today and a chill wind blew from the east.

"Wind from the east is good for neither man nor beast," I chanted, throwing a handful of pebbles into the water as a gesture of despair. I was not swimming today. The water and the weather were too cold.

No one was in sight as I gazed down the beach.

"Lonely day," I said aloud. But even as I spoke, someone came along, walking slowly as if swift movement were out of place on such a day. From where I stood Val Johnson looked like anybody's nineteen-year-old son trudging across the sands. He was tall and a trifle lanky, yet carried himself well in spite of the rough going caused by the wet sand. He was wearing, as usual, bright yellow bathing trunks and strode along unmindful of the fury of the wind. He was not a bad-looking lad, I noticed now. But certainly he was not a friendly lad. I had noticed this undesirable trait before. For the past two weeks I had lived next door, yet had not spoken one word with him. Val was somewhat of a mystery. He was the elusive type. Every new day found him sauntering carelessly along the beach. I didn't know what he did with his time. He didn't read; he didn't dance or come to weenie roasts or in any way enter into the gay resort life that the rest of us led.

I looked down again at the rough planks on which I was standing. The waves were now pounding furiously against the posts as though seeking to push the dock back onto the shore. I jumped away hurriedly as one washed over the toe of my pump. On the surface of the lake, white-caps rose fightingly against one another, but after a brief struggle disappeared, their places taken by others. A shudder ran through me. "It's so cold." Instinctively I turned from the water and stared along the sands, pausing for a moment in surprise beside a blue beach towel and a pair of children's shoes.

"Was there, then, someone in swimming? Who had dared to go in today?"

My eyes swept out over the waves and in a second I saw what I had feared I would see, a flash of red bathing cap amid the white of the breakers. But the red bathing cap pulled steadily toward shore and my heart relaxed. In the next instant I saw the red bathing cap flounder. Only a moment later a faint cry, barely perceptible above the noise of the storm, was carried to me.
I ran toward Val. He had stopped and was now facing the water with rigid attention, scanning the waves for the owner of the voice; but he made no move.

"Val," I cried, "to your right! Look!" Oh, what was wrong with that boy? He wasn't even looking in the right direction.

After another second of hesitation he plunged into the water and I shivered for him as I thought how icy cold it must be. In the next minute my pity was gone, and my patience, also. Why, Val wasn't half trying. "Val, you're swimming the wrong way!" I screamed, flinging off my high-heeled shoes and running knee deep into the lake. "Val, can't you see you must go farther to the right?" Val treaded water for a split second while raising his head from the water as if trying to regain his bearings, then struck out toward the child. "Oh, why does he hesitate so?" I almost sobbed to the wind as he progressed slowly toward the struggling form. Val stopped once more before grasping the small figure and turning again to shore.

By the time he neared the beach a small crowd of people had assembled. Someone rushed out, took the child from his arms and immediately administered first aid. I was left alone facing a shivering and wet Val. He was almost blue from cold. No one had thought to throw a blanket around him. "You're a coward, Val," I flung at him. "You wouldn't have saved that child had you been alone." He said nothing, but a slow flush crept over his cheeks. Turning quickly, he walked away.

Next morning's papers carried the story. Headlines flashed "DARING RESCUE." And underneath, "Guided by the voice of an onlooker, Val Johnson, blinded last autumn in a freak auto accident, yesterday swam to the aid of....."

I dropped the paper and ran to the porch. I was too late. Across the way Val's father slammed the door and the car disappeared up the roadway.

********

The cold and kindly fog
Embraced me--held me tight--
And cried with me as I walked
Silently alone that night.

--Eileen Flumb
THE FIRST RUNG

Betty Cutts

I followed the great man into his studio. I thought how long it had been since the first time I had seen him.

It had been a wonderful concert. The Great Schneider, one of the finest cellists in the world, had been the last of the Community Concert series. At the request of my teacher, I had gone backstage afterwards. I remember that I stood gazing at the short, chubby, little man with amazement and awe. He was surrounded by admiring fans, autograph hounds, and plutocrats, all vying for his attention. His cello was lying in its case a little to his left. I made my way there and was admiring its beautiful workmanship, when I heard the voice of my teacher behind me. "Mr. Schneider, I'd like to present my pupil."

I turned. There, facing me, was a man who had captivated audiences in all parts of the world. He was bowing slightly from the waist, and his compelling dark eyes smiled his "how-do-you-do." I think I murmured the right thing, I couldn't be sure. My trance wasn't broken until he took my left hand in his and felt the ends of my fingers, palm-side up. I was startled and rather embarrassed as he dropped my hand, shook his head, and said, "Oh, no!" He held out his hand, showing me the heavy, black callouses on the ends of his fingers. "That is what happens," he said, "when I play the cello." Hah! To think I had been proud of a microscopic callous on the end of my little finger.

We had a marvelous discussion of cello-playing then. "The spaces in your bridge must be close in order to effect a beautiful tone... Sevcik is good for violin, but for cello, no!... Bach, Merck, Haydn, Mozart, fine... "Andante and Allegro" is difficult... Double stops are provoking, but sound fine if well-played." We must have talked for hours in the back of that musty old theatre. As he excitedly explained some particular point, he'd pick up his cello and illustrate it. My teacher and I had another concert all to ourselves. It was such a rare occurrence that I know I pinched myself to be sure it was really happening.

When we finally realized the lateness of the hour, he took my hand, gazed at me with brilliant orbs, and said, "My dear, you are a charming young lady. I am glad to have met you, and I should like to hear you play sometime."

Contrary to the ordinary belief, his words were not just form. When I reached Washington just a few days ago, I called him on the telephone. He remembered me and invited me to his house. When I arrived, he led me to his studio. After a few remarks, he motioned for me to unpack my cello, then turned and stood looking out of the window. Suddenly he turned to me, sitting with my cello between my knees. "All right. Play for me!"
I took a deep breath. Blood raced to my head; my pulse began to throb; perspiration broke out in my hands; I couldn't breathe deeply enough. The silence was oppressive. I raised my bow. In that fraction of a second, a picture of my father flashed into my mind. He was saying, "Take it easy, girl. You're going to play well. Just calm down." That helped. The panic which had been rising began to subside.

I began, with shaking fingers, the beautiful strains of a Tschaikowsky melody. As I progressed, confidence came back, slowly, then more rapidly, until I was drunk with the beauty of my own playing. Quietly at first, then louder, with more excitement, his voice came crashing through my consciousness.

"Bring it up---bring it up---make more of it---swell---now---Oh, stop!"

Startled, I dropped my bow with a clatter. "Oh, I'm sorry." I could hear my voice murmuring something", hand slipped ..", could feel the blood surging to my face, hear his voice shouting at me, "...more movement...accelerando...the music talks to you..."--all these things in a moment of utter confusion.

My eyes must have showed my bewilderment, for his voice softened.

"I frightened you, didn't I? I'm sorry, my dear. I forget sometimes that others are not like me. I will be more careful. Here, let me show you."

He picked up his cello and bent over it reverently. As he drew his bow effortlessly across the strings, melody poured forth. Not just music, but the stirring within that wants something more, an indefinable longing, a tear at the heart. It was a moment of exquisite pain. He stopped playing, but the music didn't stop. It continued to sing in our heads. We sat there, drinking our fill. I roused slightly and stole a look at him. He was leaning on his cello, his body relaxed, one hand dangling over the neck of the cello, the other supporting the bow, which was barely touching the floor.

I dared to breathe. That was enough to bring him back to reality. He straightened, his eyes flashed, and he leaned forward.

"Do you see now?"

I nodded and waited expectantly as he began to speak.

"You have a great talent. It is not everyone that I stop. You must go on with your work. You must come to me every other day for a lesson. I shall expect you day after tomorrow at the same time. You will be here?"

I could have fainted for sheer joy. I wanted to fling my
arms around his neck. I had worked hard for so long. Now my dreams were to be realized. My face lit up.

"Oh, Mr. Schneider, I don't know how to thank you."

"Yes, yes. Well, I shall see you." He strode out of the room. I picked up my cello. Someday, perhaps, I---. I sighed and followed the great man out of his studio.

After forty-eight hours of alternate dread at having to play for him, and joy at being able to play for him, it was, finally, the day after tomorrow.

I dashed madly up the steps and down the hall to the great man's studio. My mind was in a turmoil. What's he going to do today? Will I have to start all over again? Oh, that "Swan," I know I'll miss the C if I have to play it. What book will he use? Oh, dear, if I don't stop fussing, I'll not be able to play a note.

I turned the corner, stood in front of his door, and breathed deeply. As I was diligently expanding and contracting my chest, the door opened. I stopped right in the middle of a long inhale. Mr. Schneider bowed slightly. "Good day, mademoiselle." I expelled my breath with a rush. "Hello, Mr. Schneider." I giggled. "I was trying to compose myself before I came in. I hurried to get here." I smiled a sickly smile.

"Yes, go in. Unpack your cello and sit down. I shall be back in a moment."

When he returned, he sat down beside me. "Let me hear the Merck."

We arranged the music, and I began. My bow trembled a bit, but I struggled through it. I rather enjoyed playing studies. When played well, they gave me a certain amount of satisfaction. I tore into them, played several before I was stopped.

"Let us skip to the double stops."

I groaned inwardly. My pet aversion was double stops. Invariably at least one of the notes was out of tune. I sighed and lifted my bow.

Noting my sigh, Schneider laughed. "Don't you like the double stops?"

"No, I don't, and they don't like me, either."

"Hah, my dear, I have a confession to make; I don't like them, either."

Encouraged, I began to play. Somehow or other, they weren't
so bad. I concentrated hard on them. So did Mr. Schneider, for in a moment, he had his cello out, and we were both playing them. As two people who love their work may do, we were soon lost in a world of runs, trills, double stops, sustained tones, bowings, spiccato, staccato. We spoke very little. Once he stopped me to ask about my bow.

"How is that bow for you? It's rather heavy, is it not?"

"A little, yes, but I've become used to it."

"Here! Use mine for a moment." He handed me his bow, I gave him mine, and we began again.

Hours later, it seemed, we stopped. I turned my head and smiled shyly. He looked at me, and with a gentle smile, said softly, "I wasn't mistaken." We looked at each other for a long, peaceful moment, and I felt as though my heart would burst with pride and hope and a fearful longing that I might succeed, if only to justify this man's faith in me.

He put his cello away, then took mine and laid it down. "We are going to discuss your future. In the first place, you are, of course, heading for the top rung of the ladder of fame. You may be nervous and you may wonder some days if you are getting anywhere at all, but I can assure you it will be worth the effort." He went to his cabinet, began to rummage around. "You must learn symphonies, concertos, overtures, everything. You must have a well-rounded education. Someday, perhaps, you will be glad you had the opportunity to learn these things. Here are three parts. I want you to memorize them, learn them perfectly. However, first, let us sight-read. Come, pick up your cello. I will play with you."

The months went by. And there was music—music everywhere, practicing, recitals, lectures, concerts, and studying. Mr. Schneider said at a lesson one day, "My dear, an artist not only plays an instrument, he also knows what he is playing. You must study the rudiments and fundamentals of music itself. You must be not only a cellist, but also a musician. There are too many players today who do not know music. They can perform, yes, but they cannot write music, or analyze it. You must learn, work, and study." I read, wrote, and worked. I absorbed music in every pore. On top of all that, I took lessons.

One day, about eight months later, I hurried into his studio. I had two minutes in which to unpack my cello, resin my bow, and settle myself for a lesson. The room was dark. He wasn't here. I decided he must be in another room, or else, that he had been held up unexpectedly. I pulled the case off my cello, tightened my bow, resined it well, and laid it down. I walked around the room, looking at all his pictures and photographs, a couple of magazines, and finally reached the conclusion that I might as well practice. There was a particular passage in the Concerto that didn't come very easily
I sat down, picked up my cello, and began to work on the passage. My practice was rather half-hearted; I expected him to come at any moment and didn't want to be surprised in the midst of my efforts. I glanced at my watch. It was only five minutes later than the moment when I'd arrived. Oh, why did I always get so nervous and wrought-up when I was to take a lesson? You'd think that after eight months of him, I'd be used to his behavior. I wasn't, though. Perhaps my heart didn't pound quite so hard as it had the first time, but it pounded, nevertheless.

Why doesn't he hurry? If there's anything I hate to do, it's wait for someone, especially when I have to do something. I nervously tapped the floor with my bow. This was rather silly, being tense and excited over a mere lesson. You'd think something were going to happen, or something. I might as well calm down. Perhaps, if I play something sweet or sentimental, anything that doesn't pertain to my lesson, I'll forget this. I lifted my bow and began Ravel's "Habanera." It was slow, modern, and dreamy, one of my favorites. I bent, swayed, and swooped with my cello and the music, lost myself in its melodious strains. I became so absorbed that when a familiar voice said, "There! Now you know," I was startled, completely. I hadn't heard the door open, hadn't been conscious of anyone's presence. I looked around. In the doorway stood Mr. Schneider with another man, a swarthy, little fellow with a paunch and flowing hair. He must be a musician, I thought—long hair, nervous gestures—he's worse than the great one himself. What's he doing here? I hope he isn't going to visit my lesson. Mr. Schneider has threatened it several times. He can't! I'll go all to pieces. My mind was in a turmoil at the very idea of his being present at one of the great slashings which my teacher presented with each lesson. Wait a minute! What was he saying?

"You want her there at ten Saturday morning? Very well. She shall be there. I personally will see to it. Good-day. Thank you, Signor." He bowed him out. Then, with that quick, nervous stride of his, he came to the chair at my side. He sat on the very edge, looked at me with his brilliant eyes, and said, excitedly, "My dear girl, you've no idea what has happened. Truly, it is a miracle. It happens only once in a lifetime."

My face was blank. What was he talking about? He was certainly excited. I was filled with apprehension and he was tense with the so-far withheld miracle. Together, we charged the air with a current of electricity. Would he get to the point? What was so wonderful?

"That, child, was Signor Barberini, the first cellist of the National Symphony. He interviews all applicants for positions. You are to be the next fifth cellist. I have decided." He grasped my arm so hard in his strong fingers that he bruised it. "There has been a vacancy in the section. I happened to hear of it. I spoke to the Signor. I want you to realize that this is no little thing. Very few step into fifth chair, and fewer
women do so." He leaned forward, thrust his face into mine. "Do you understand, my dear? Fifth chair in the National Symphony."

I couldn't believe my ears. This was an unheard-of opportunity. There were professionals of long standing who would give their eye teeth for such a position. I was a mere twenty, a girl, and not a professional—and I was to be the fifth cellist. It didn't make sense.

Mr. Schneider began to stride around the room, clasping and unclasping his hands. He passed before me twice, each time a little faster. Finally, he came over, bent down, and in a vibrant whisper, shouted in my face, "Do you understand? Fifth chair—the National Symphony—YCU!"

Gradually I began to comprehend. I had been shocked into a daze. Joy surged upward. He was talking to me! I was going to be fifth cellist in the National Symphony—not anyone else—me! I was going to play overtures, and symphonies with other cellists, wonderful cellists, marvelous players. Oh, no! I couldn't do it. Fear clutched at my heart. "Oh, no, Mr. Schneider, I couldn't. I can't play well enough. Those men—accomplished players—that hard music—oh, Mr. Schneider, I—"

He pounced on me. "You can. You can! You are a promising cellist. Someday you will be great. Wait and see." He became confidential, leaning forward, taking my hand. His eyebrows rose, his voice became calm, a deadly calm, the calm that precedes the storm. "You will learn much. You will be with the men who play the best music. You will built your repertoire. You can do it, my dear! You can do it." He was shouting now. "Never before have I brought Barberini to hear one of my pupils. You should be proud—proud that you can uphold my honor. You will, you'll see."

I was hypnotized. If he said I could do it, I could. I would become great. I would learn much. I must practice—work—practice—work—oh, dear God! Everything went black.

What was I doing on the floor? I wanted to weep. I think I did. My head hurt. I felt ill and very dizzy. Someone was talking.

"Here, drink this. You will be all right."

With an effort, I raised my eyes. They were so heavy. I felt so queer. There was Mr. Schneider kneeling above me, telling me to drink something in a glass. Obediently, I opened my mouth. The fiery liquid poured down my throat. It stimulated me. I shook my head and struggled to a sitting position. "Did I faint?" I asked weakly.

His arm was supporting me. It was a strong arm, like his
hands, strong and powerful. "Yes, my dear. I'm sorry. I didn't realize that I had worked you up to such a high pitch. Come over here and lie down for a moment. I shall keep myself calm this time." He half-carried me to the couch. I lay down and he sat beside me, deliberately folding his hands in his lap. He cleared his throat. "Can you comprehend what I am about to say to you?" I nodded. "You are to appear before Signor Barberini and the Maestro, Bruner, Saturday morning at ten o'clock. I will go with you. There you will play a little, do a little sight-reading, such as I have been having you do, and sign the papers. Do you understand?" I nodded again. "That's fine. We shall work between now and then. I have some more parts for you to read, Beethoven, Liszt, and several others. You will do well, my dear." He patted my hand, gently.

I bit my lip. "I'm sorry I fainted, Mr. Schneider. I--it was very silly, I'm sure. But, oh, Mr. Schneider, you don't know how thrilled I am. If you have faith in me, I know I can do it. I'll try, anyway." I sat up, put my feet on the floor. "I feel better now, sir. Could we get to work, please?"

I thought Saturday would never come and yet, I dreaded it. Some people have all the confidence in the world. Why can't I be that way? I know I can play, but I become so frightened.

Saturday morning at eight forty-five, I was at Mr. Schneider's studio, dressed in my best cello-playing dress, with my cello all dusted and shiny. I must give the right impression, I thought, as I waited for Mr. Schneider.

"Are you ready?" The great man came into his studio. "My car is waiting outside." I followed him to the car. We stepped in and whirled away through the traffic. Eventually, we arrived at the Opera House. The rehearsals were held there.

We walked up the steps, in through the front door, and into the large, barn-like structure with scrolls and painting on the walls, huge glass chandeliers, magnificent boxes, and rows and rows of seats. I looked up on the stage and received a surprise. There were men walking with instruments in their hands. I hadn't noticed especially before, but they were tuning up. This must be the Symphony. Were they holding a rehearsal? How could they if I were having an audition? Perhaps they were just doing a bit of individual practicing. A horrible though struck me! They wouldn't listen to my audition, would they? Oh, no! My teeth were chattering; my knees were getting weaker by the minute; my hands were wringing; and I was freezing. I can't play. I just can't. I'll die right there on the stage, I know I will. I stood in the back of the theatre, watching the men seat themselves. It must be a rehearsal. They're all coming. The bedlam was terrific. An oboe practicing a solo passage, a trumpet blaring his message forth, a bass zooming away, and a violin screeching an Ab. It was enough to drive anyone to distraction.
Just then, Mr. Schneider came back to me. Mr. Barberini and Mr. Bruner were ready. I could unpack and prepare to begin. I had to have a drink of water; I wanted to lie down; Nature was calling; I thought surely I'd not be able to control my limbs, they were shaking so hard. I finally made it to the stage, and my worst fears were confirmed. I had to play before the whole orchestra.

I sat down, adjusted my skirt, wiped my hands, smiled bravely at Mr. Schneider, and began to play the Boellman Variations. I played two measures, and the whole world righted itself. I forgot the musicians, I forgot the place, I was playing for the music and myself alone. Confidence welled up inside of me. My fingers were dry and nimble; my arms were relaxed; I was inspired. I played as I had never played before.

When I finished, someone applauded. Soon the auditorium was reverberating with applause. I looked at the men and grinned, shyly. They loved it. I played again and sight-read. My fears were gone. I was at home. I had found my place. I looked at Mr. Schneider and smiled. He knew and smiled back. I'd never be sick again--I'd never faint again--not from fear, anyway. I had begun. The first rung of the ladder was behind me. I could climb on up, now. I could and would become great. I had it in me. My metamorphosis was complete. I was an artist--only a fledgling, perhaps, but I would grow. The world of music lay at my feet. I looked at that great man again. His compelling dark eyes were smiling and warm. And to think it all began that day--that wonderful day--when I had followed him into his studio.

******

DEITY

I saw the feet marching down wide roads in Nebraska,
I saw the parades on Fifth Avenue.
I heard them speak of Argonne and Chateau Thierry,
I learned of Christ in Sunday School.

This is not New York nor a road in Nebraska,
My knees are not bent on a prayer bench.
A pagan parakeet is cursing in the treetops,
We have little to divide us.

I am the new world; to build I must destroy,
God is the steel beneath my fingers.

Jean Gordon