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THE GARRET

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

prose

Barrett Briggs	THE GAP	3
Paula Nesbitt	SKY CHILD	9
Jean Atthowe	SLIGHT FUZZ OF GREEN	26
Tom Winkel	LEATHER INSOMNIA	39
Tim Nettles	AN UNTITLED STORY	51
Jim Warburton	WAYSIDE BROTHERS	68
Barrett Briggs	LET ME IN I WON'T GO AWAY	81
Jon Jackson	A SEASON OF GLUTTONY	91
Edmund R. Apffel	MORNING	107

poetry

Scott Franzen	KAMIKAZE	1
Richard Hugo	PLANS FOR ALTERING THE RIVER	2
Elizabeth Libbey	ORIGINS	6
Elizabeth Libbey	NOVEMBER 2ND	7
Elizabeth Libbey	LETTER WRITTEN LATE	8
Edward Harkness	THE PRESERVER	21
Edward Harkness	SEVEN DAYS	22
Michael Poage	KANSAS	23
Dan Graveley	THIS ISN'T A HOMESTEAD MY BROTHER	24
Dan Graveley	THE GOOD MORNING	25
Niles Choper	POEM FOR THE MUSE	37
Niles Choper	GOOD MORNING	38
John Holbrook	WEDNESDAY'S TWO O'CLOCK ASSEMBLY AT OPHEIM HIGH	46
Shelley Collins	SUDDENLY DEEP	47
Scott Franzen	WHITE BEAR	48
Frank Cady	NEBULAE M42	49
Frank Cady	LANDLOCKED IN MISSOULA	50
Alan Naslund	SECOND SPRING or BRIDGE OVER CLARK'S FORK	54
Pat Caffrey	DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR	55
Linwood Laughy	UNTITLED POEM	63
S. R. Smith	THE FALL	64
Robert Bingham	CALLEY SPEAKS	65
Bill Burriss	AS I WATCH HER GO	66

Steven Bridenbaugh	MY BAD LUCK	67
Malinda Finney	THE VIOLIN	74
Barrett Briggs	ON	75
Linda Swanberg	THE REFUSAL	76
Jan Fuglevand	DEATH OF THE GRANDFATHER	77
Paul S. Zeigler	DAVID'S CABIN	78
A. D. Zeigler	ROCK PAINTING FOR A PEOPLE WITHOUT DREAMS	79
Paul S. Zeigler	ROAD EAST	80
George Manner	AARDVARK	84
Steven Thomas	NOW TO THOSE QUESTIONS ON PREGNANCY	85
Steven Thomas	WHERE WE WERE	86
J. D. Hawley	STALKING THE WILD ASPARAGUS	87
Michele Birch	BURLINGTON NORTHERN FIRST CLASS	89
Michele Birch	CHESTER--OPHEIM CIRCUIT	90
James Hatley	WET DREAM	96
P. D. Nesbitt	CITYSNOW	97
P. D. Nesbitt	UNCOVERING	98
George Ford	HAWKING	99
Thomas Winkel	LETHAL	100
Paula Petrik	RUNNING THE MADISON	101
Paula Petrik	THE BIRTHDAY POEM	102
Madeline DeFrees	THE WAKE	103
Madeline DeFrees	REPLY TO AN IRREMOVABLE PASTOR TWENTY YEARS TOO LATE	104
Madeline DeFrees	OUR MAN IN MINDINAO REPORTS ON THE TASADAY	105
Roberta Hill	RODEO	119
Roberta Hill	BEGINNING THE YEAR AT ROSEBUD, S. D.	120
CONTRIBUTOR NOTES		121





KAMIKAZE

The wind of gods is rising, riding
over water. A final coast
drives past below -- the homeland hiding
dim through plexiglass. A ghost
reflects, dark eyes that ponder dark eyes
in the hum of cockpit lights.
The cryptic scarf his mother made
ties wild blood in, binds out wide night.

Small boats appear on the hazed horizon,
sticks drift past the singing air
of children throwing stones. The rising
sun screams twenty thousand years
forever. A driving, flashing cross
out of the sun, the zero sings
eruption. Silk and steel wring out
the wind, send tight echoes whining.

Feathers float on ripples, pulsing
memories of white silk prayers.
Dark eyes, and a child's hand passing
through the pond distort the mirror,
the feathers cling to rocks. Yesterday
this ocean echoed a shrieking
falcon, fed and riding away.
The deep mud hides a broken wing.

Scott Franzen

PLANS FOR ALTERING THE RIVER

Those who favor our plan to alter the river
raise your hand. Thank you for your vote.
Last week, you'll recall, I spoke about how water
never complains. How it runs where you tell it,
seemingly at home, flooding grain or pinched
by geometric banks like those in this graphic
depiction of our plan. We ask for power:
a river boils or falls to turn our turbines.
The river approves our plans to alter the river.

Due to a shipwreck downstream, I'm sad to report
our project is not on schedule. The boat
was carrying cement for our concrete rip rap
balustrade that will force the river to run
east of the factory site through the state-owned
grove of cedar. Then, the uncooperative
carpenters union went on strike. When we get
that settled, and the concrete, given good weather
we can go ahead with our plan to alter the river.

We have the injunction. We silenced the opposition.
The workers are back. The materials arrived
and everything's humming. I thank you
for this award, this handsome plaque I'll keep
forever above my mantle, and I'll read
the inscription often aloud to remind me
how with your courageous backing I fought
our battle and won. I'll always remember
this banquet this day we started to alter the river.

Flowers on the bank? A park on Forgotten Island?
Return of cedar and salmon? Who are these men?
These Johnnys-come-lately with plans to alter the river?
What's this wild festival in May
celebrating the runoff, display floats on fire
at night and a forest dance under the stars?
Children sing through my locked door, 'Old stranger,
we're going to alter, to alter, alter the river.'
Just when the water was settled and at home.

Richard Hugo

THE GAP

by Barrett Briggs

We should throw the bodies in first said one, a dwarf on the edge of the crowd. His ideas provoked an opposite reaction from us of the inner circle who decide for action. We can't throw the bodies in--our silent look reinforced the dwarf's antithetical ways. The others on the other side of the gap would see us, take our gesture as concession to their passive ways. Throw in the furniture--we agreed. Throw in the tools, the skills. Save the weapons. The dwarf on the edge of the crowd shouted Throw in the weapons, throw in the weapons. We had to silence him. We decided we might throw in the bodies. The gap would serve us. We saw that if the gap were to be filled, it should be filled with substance to support our weight. We could investigate those on the other side, to understand why they take no action to fill the gap in the interest of us all. The elder Woz offered his feet and hands. He affirmed his wisdom. We drew back at the thought of him leading us without hands or feet. Some of us were hungry, could not ask for the efforts to stop so we could eat. We had to keep working until the gap was full. We all knew the bodies had to be carried across. The sky was green, the clouds full of gentle violence. If the gap filled with rushing water nothing we could throw in would stay. The dwarf now silent could offer us no opposite. Rain. We drug the bodies back to the village. Those on the other side of the gap were yet standing silent as we lost sight of them. In the village we met in the central meeting hall where shouts of--Throw in the.....roared against the heavy walls beneath the high domed ceiling. We would need silence. The elder Woz so demonstrated by remaining silent. The shouting quit. The dwarf unable to speak stood in the doorway. Woz spoke: The gap has been ours, among us for time we cannot remember. Its emptiness has come inside us. We no longer feel ourselves full while the gap's emptiness hollows us. To signs we must turn our eyes. The dwarf in the doorway holds up a sign--Throw in the bodies. We ignore him. The elder Woz having confirmed his wisdom leads us to the central well. Us the inner circle. We surround the well. We urinate. The well throbs. We will sleep strong tonight. Tomorrow the gap will be filled. We sleep. The droning of those on the other side of the gap calms us, we know the drone will fill our ears when we wake. The dwarf does not sleep with us. He takes his sign to the gap. By light of the fires of those on the other side of the gap he writes with a stick in the earth--Throw the bodies in. We wake with first light, still hungry, yet have no time to eat. No time to do other than consider how the gap is to be

filled. We are weaker. We will be weaker. Today is the short day. The gap must be filled before long. Our emptiness becomes murder, theft. No one is safe, no one defends himself. We are alone with our needs, we recognize the reason for the needs of those who must steal, kill. We kill, steal but no one can find the dwarf or think of the right thing to throw into the gap. We gather, we return to the gap taking our emptiness which we begin to cherish. We hold our vision to those on the other side of the gap whose fires went out. We hold our vision to those on the other side of the gap until one of us sees the writing on the ground. Throw the bodies in. One remembers the rain of yesterday. The gap is dry. The gap is always full of water when rain comes except today it is dry. Woz offers to sacrifice his ears, his nose, we know his way. Our thirst, forgotten since yesterday, returns. We wish the gap was full of water. On the other side of the gap they drink from gleaming urns. The drink ashes from their fires of their night. They are sustained by the ashes, we feel a sadness for their odd ways. Woz asks for counsel, we suggest things to be thrown into the gap. Furniture, tools, skills, the dwarfs silent suggestion to throw the bodies in. Yesterday we failed. Today we know we cannot repeat yesterday's failure--although we fail today. I have said nothing of our clothes, we have none. Maybe Woz is not so wise but wiser than we think when he offers himself to fill the gap. We do not tire of this, our life rests on the edge of noble illusion. We have our village, meeting hall, well, path to the gap. The path back to the village we walk less proudly than the path to the gap. We have those on the other side. We are not sure why they stand silent. Woz has told me they are just there, since it is as yet impossible to cross the gap we need not let their presence trouble us. Illusion? We are not sure we fool ourselves, we can wonder what those on the other side think of us. They know, they must know we are trying to throw something into the gap so we can cross, do they think we want something of them. Woz once said the dwarf knows tales of those on the other side. That is why he was allowed to urge us to throw the bodies into the gap for so long. Now at midday we have done nothing to fill the gap. The dwarf sits with his stick scratching the earth. The stick moves, his hand follows but no one wants to know what it is writing because we heard all we wanted to hear from the dwarf while he could speak, the appearance of the self guided stick we recognize as a shout to throw the bodies in. The bodies, we forgot to bring the bodies. Woz has said nothing of them so it is all right. If the bodies were necessary today we would have brought them. As we look around, see the dwarf drag in the bodies, we are no more amazed. Although we have no firm basis for belief he comes dragging in the bodies. He does not sweat. We are relieved because the dwarf is dragging in the bodies. We feel the eyes. If it is recognition it is half ours. Half our, half those that see it in our eyes. The bodies in, the dwarf drags up all the sticks that look like the one he used to scratch in the earth. If it is a fire he intends

we will not look. We cannot warm ourselves at his fire. The gap must be filled, we are no less able to see it through the dwarf and his interlude. We are a lonely people determined to fill the gap. Here is our meeting hall, our paths, the sour saccharine smell of our beds we are anxious to find at night, to leave in the morning. In the light on the edge of the gap we see still visions of those on the other side of the gap. Something new would help to entertain us. We wonder why Woz is silent. And he does not and does not speak.

ORIGINS

--for my brother

When the wind came we listened because
it was our god and filled us
with its distance. And because we set
candles at the windows that face the sea,
hoarding their fire till our palms
grew black, we survived. We
survived everything: the sea, our hunger
for ships, for perfect shells unbroken
by the storms, the ones that bring us
new, worse weather than clouds can: fear.
The face of fear knowing can't end.

We're taken out of love from our beds,
sweating into the dark while the pipes
screech. Perhaps you know better than I,
what beats at the door. The roof's
collapsing and the glass is out, nothing
cuts the cold. I want to go inland along
the dark highway, taking what things are
left to me. I want the wind not to matter.
I'm no fisherman, I don't love the sea.

Surely, winds leave and trees go back
to their roots. Like you, I've settled in
to wait. Gulls return in hundreds
by March, begging food for their secrets.
I give them everything, how can I refuse?
And can I say at last, the sea entered us
and didn't make us new, though we waited
though we wait red-faced and foolish
and give ourselves to all that rolling and
gathering-in, all that returning
nothing for nothing the sea does.

Elizabeth Libbey

NOVEMBER 2ND

I've wanted to speak with you
of doom, of shadows that are black
roses growing up the walls, and of
the thinness of the light at five
pm, that makes it hard to breathe.

Its November 2nd and leaves
are curling down the Iowa River.
I've wanted to use them, to
tell you of them, but there's no
image that can make the mind snap
back, the heart shoot out

beyond the cage, rattling. I
resent that cry, it wakes me
too easily from sleep that's
tough to come by. I look out the
window but can't see trees against

the sky, there are no planes--lights
floating--no trucktires along
Interstate 80, there are
no stars or cries, only the slow
hum of heat rising in the pipes.

The blood presses to get out, the eyes
pull for shapes that fit, I want
to speak with you caught in your
long sheet no doubt, as I am
in mine. I want to tell you its better
here than it has ever been.

Elizabeth Libbey

LETTER WRITTEN LATE

There are rumors of you gun-heavy, dark and hulking
in front of kitchen windows waiting for the right
targets to come by. You buy time that way, the way
we all do. I wish we had talked more of guns, of
anything that might satisfy the fever you
put all your heart on until it collapsed, cold
excuses on the bed and could they have been
a child, the one we lose each time
we say the money's short? The world is

tentative, the neighborhood not right. I tell
myself surely I've left hatred and my self-
love of you behind in the western town half
the world likes to call home. I can't help
asking as if I expect you from some
piece of furniture somewhere to answer my
question, where are you, I'm here sitting
here, we can wake up now, travel, laugh like
a good couple. Acquire indivisible properties.

All those who like to know for their sakes, for
yours and mine, say you're out there, you're a
warning, wild and looking for me, crazy
to kill. I must not speak too much yet but
for myself, I'm sure you're seated at
the window, arms folded over the gun in your
lap, staring. I'm miles from you, I am here
starting back and dear murderer, the gun's
at my head too, I don't know who it's for.

Elizabeth Libbey

SKY CHILD

by Paula Nesbitt

"Mum and I are going to split."

I stare into Poppy's face. His dark eyes are sorry but firm in their tough-luck gaze. His face is flushed crimson with his turtle-neck and damp against its collar, like the tidewater fill of clamholes. The wet chill of his words seeps into me.

I am folded into his lap like a stillborn flower. A petal reaches up, grips his shoulder with all its palm, shudders, and nuzzles its face in his bushy, black beard. His arm brushes the nape of my neck to comfort me, then returns to its orbit. I want to cry but have no tears.

The room is silent. He stares at the opposite wall, tracing the tinsil flickers from the sun and clouds' hide-and-seek chase. The window is open, wafting in the dewy, sweet odor of apple blossoms. It mingles with the air inside and settles on the inflated pillow of red, blue and green paisley. The pillow, covering the entire floor, is the only furniture in the room. Nothing else is needed. To skip, sit, or creep over the airy pillow is to float through some distant sky. Poppy and I travelling together.

His attention is still fixed on the wall and he doesn't notice me crawl out of his lap. I lie down beside him on my back and study the ceiling, gazing up at Saturn's multicolor rings.

When I was born, Poppy had painted the room into a planetarium. He wanted us three--he, Mum and I--to live in space. He and Mum said love needs dimension. They made me from this expanse, timing my birth astrologically to the conjunction of the inner seven planets, in the Geminian decanate of Aquarius. Poppy gave me night black hair, Mum, my hazel eyes--all colors in one, changing hue with the passing light. They blended my skin a buttercream tone, lineage of the Milky Way; they wanted me to grow up a child of the sky.

Poppy and I are alone now with the pulsating stars overhead that roar the silence of unexploded tension surrounding us. I spot the Big Dipper, and follow its handle down to Arcturus, the fading orange giant. My gaze continues down to the floor, intersecting it at a point where a makeshift Easter Basket sits. The plastic grass tufting over its top is riddled with candy eggs, wisps of tinfoil, and a grotesque chocolate rabbit glaring at me from icing-white eyes, grinning menacingly behind marshmallow whiskers. Pinned to its lapel is a note: "Don't let him egg you on."

The Basket is a peace-offering from Poppy, even though he knows I'm not a "sweets kid." He and Mum have always fed me on Liederkrantz, Schweizerkäse, curry and burgandy--leftovers from their Lanczo meals. They never let me develop a taste for candy. Sugar rots us, they claimed, and we'd treat ourselves on honey, dates, and fresh purple figs.

Lanczo is the group Poppy and Mum belong with. Some of the Lanczos live in this house--sleeping by day, thinking in dusk, drinking or smoking at night, and creating the dawn. Mum, Elmar and Dorothy write, Poppy paints, Sigrid and Razul play music. But often they lie with each other day and night, creating only occasional bursts of energy.

Poppy and Mum are the only Lanczos that have always been together. Sigrid and Elmar were in love for a couple weeks, then Sigrid was with Razul, then Vic--a Lanczo who lives in the park.

Dorothy loves too, but only girls. Mum told me it's because she used to love Leo, an ex-Lanczo who had ulcers. They were going to have a child, a playmate for me. But Dorothy became sick one afternoon, crawled into the bathroom as something burst inside her. A baby came out months before it could live. Mum and Sigrid found her in the shower, bleeding against the chalky tile. They cleaned her up, put her to bed, got a doctor. The remains were flushed down the toilet, where they clogged the plumbing. Nobody, not even Razul who had a plumber's snake, could clear the pipe either by sloughing it down or plunging it up. It just laid inside for days, decaying, smelling the bathroom, a stench even worse than the remnant of welfare beans.

The odor eventually died, but nobody could say exactly when. Each day the smell made Dorothy sicker, until one morning she tried to kill herself. With ice cream. Mum found her bloated and unconscious after downing a gallon and a half with a scooper. Three more half-gallons, tutti frutti, royal cherry and double dutch, waited unopened, melting in the shaded room. A tablet lay askew on her matress, scribbled with the verse,

Death is sweetest twofold
when the cream of ice
spreads drowning bliss
painless, against the frost.

She wasn't dead yet, but terribly cold. Her blue-black hair had lost its luster, her green eyes were jaded. Mum quickly rounded

up Elmar and they rushed her to the hospital. There, her stomach was pumped and she was heaved into a heated room. When she was well enough to come home, she swore-off Leo with his ulcers and anyone else capable of making her sick again. She didn't like children anymore either, but told me that I didn't really count, that I wasn't a child.

Poppy and Mum don't believe I am either. They taught me to think and talk adult, which seems odd to my kindergarten teacher and the kids in class. Before I learned how to pretend for them, I finger-painted the zodiac. Miss Gliss became upset and sent for the school psychiatrist. He asked me several questions about the Lanczos and gave me pictures to puzzle over. He didn't like the stories I wove, because I overheard him warn Miss Gliss that I might be developing "prepsychotic fantasy withdrawal." Me, a crazy. I promised the two of them I wouldn't paint again and they were happy. At school, while the kids would play house, I'd play child. All our contentment spun on schedule.

I pretend when I'm at our Lanczo home, but in a different way. Mum told me that the Lanczos have decided to let me join them as soon as I'm big enough to create. None of them realize it, but I'm practicing already. To be an actress. Someday, before they're aware, I will be a total one. Mimicking shells of people is not enough. I plan to climb into them, be everybody at once. Not only will I then be able to sing and draw and dance and write their tales, but I'll know everything anyone has ever known.

"Ara."

I look over to Poppy. He speaks to me without shifting his eyes from the wall.

"You are already showing good promise of being a Lanczo. We were all pleased with your zodiac painting, and have decided to grant you a special Lanczo privilege. You will have this room for your own. You and the chocolate rabbit, alone, together, will guard the sky. I'll be staying at Sigrid's, Mum's going to help out Dorothy. You must, however, come warn us when a star explodes. We'll want to share the creation."

I lie still, muscles tensed, looking away from Poppy, up at the ceiling. But his face blooms in both my eyes.

"Why Sigrid?" I ask.

"Why not? Six years is a long time with the same woman. The change will help my painting. You want to see Poppy do better pictures don't you?"

The chocolate rabbit grins from his corner perch, while on the wall, the clouds win the sun. I jump up, not knowing how to answer him, bounce across the room and through the door. The narrow, gray hallway outside flows in a circle, bordering all the rooms on their inside rim. I follow its passage clockwise, railing my hands along the textured walls, travelling alone this time.

As I lose the planetarium, I catch ear of a melancholy tune, Sibelius' "Waltz Triste" I think. I float toward its source, coming to Razul's English Horn. A crack of bamboo light slips from under his door. I widen the crack, flood into the room. The walls and floor are opaque with tatami mats, giving the room the off-ochre calmness of a swamp of reeds. A maze of ropes hangs from the ceiling, moving at the whim of the open window's breeze. Their frayed ends sway in jungle ballet to the Sibelius. Not wanting to disturb the melody, I walk easy over the mats, avoiding the rivulets flowing between them.

Razul is sitting crosslegged with his back to the door and doesn't see me enter. He knows I'm here though, for his melody becomes very soft, comforting me. He finishes the piece and lets the slender reed rest between his lips a moment, ensuring death of the final notes.

"Pour us some tea, Ara," he speaks without turning around. "Jasmine in the green pot, Pekoe in the black."

I do as I'm told. Pour him Jasmine, myself Pekoe. I return to my spot and take a sip, studying the narrow bony humps strung vertically down his back. He wears no clothes because he feels they hinder him. His hair's braided into three long strands. Trinitas. He seldom speaks, but is willing to listen to all I say. I want to talk now, but words stick in my throat like an egg of cotton candy, going neither up or down.

"It's Poppy," I stammer. A twitch squirrels across his spine.

"He's leaving me. I guess I make him draw bad pictures. Mum's going to help Dorothy. Dorothy must need her. I need her too. Guess she doesn't know it."

"Poppy and Mum are leaves blowing of different winds. They are fading green, will yellow within the month."

He pauses, takes a sip of tea. "But you, child, are fresh, you'll green with the passing day. Worry makes wrinkles on the palm. You are alone, yet not lonely, for we come from the same tree."

He stares at the veins on the back of his hands, watching their flow. Together we feel the silence of the room. "Listen to the spreading pitch, Ara."

Razul bows his head, having said more than I'd ever heard from him before. I watch the ropes' undulating movement, casting a mesh of shadow across the wall. I stand up and move slowly through them, losing myself yet avoiding their heavy swings. Razul resumes the Sibelius. The notes from his Horn sound harsher than before, showering the air with tiny splinters.

"Bad reed," he comments, taking the Horn from his lips. "No cane left for another. Crops fail and there's no more song."

Razul continues to finger the tune against the instrument's keys, but does not play again. The ropes nod in silent applause, twisting the faint echo of "Ara, come. Come."

Mum's voice. Razul doesn't notice me move to the open window, climb out onto a thick branch that bruises the side of the house. I coil myself down the limb, down the massive trunk, and drop to the grass. Mum is standing on the curved, front porch, watching for me to come from the ash grove where I usually play. Instead I creep round the rim of the house, tiptoe under the porch railing, and jump thunder a hairbreath behind her. She explodes.

"You see Poppy?" she asks when she comes down.

"Yeah. Will Sigrid really make his pictures prettier? How come?"

"Hah," she laughs, "Sigrid with the auburn coils cascading to her nose. She and her pinko, perfume stinko."

"But she's a Lanczo," I interrupt.

"Oh, she creates enough. Her words are musical progressions, scaling every side of flattery. She laughs a calliope--fancy duet to the celeste she plays."

"I heard it this morning, before Poppy changed the tune. I've never gone to watch her because I'm afraid of the smile that syrups her face. It might choke me."

"Stay with the sky, Ara. Her room's shaped in harpsichord, enclosed with foam. Neon pink ceiling, walls and floor. The foam is getting thicker each day, the room smaller. She, softer."

"I once found her eating something out of a cellophane box. When I asked her what was in it, she told me I was a nice little girl and to try some of its Divinity, Bonbons or Kisses. I wouldn't touch them. She giggled at me angrily, and said they'd sweeten my disposition."

"Rot. She'll ruin Poppy's mouth. And when they get tired of each other, it'll spread to all the Lanczos."

"Funny Poppy, he gave me an Easter basket today. He's told me himself that candy's wrong. Even his paintings have been done in Roquefort. Blue moons on a marble sky. He said its dank coldness is healthier."

"He took me for a twilight walk once, insisting that we go east where it was already growing dark. I wanted to go the other way so we could watch the horizon flare. But Poppy said he hated sunset, and sunrise too."

"He'll get plenty of that now. God, I don't know, Ara. We'd been planning to split for a while. We're both strangers to each other, to you too. Love is cancer, threading from person to person, often touching only a part of them. To make love total, it must consume everywhere."

"Do you love Poppy?"

"I love humanity, mankind! I used to say I loved only Poppy, but that was selfish. Share and share alike. Dorothy needs me now. She wants to suicide again. But her poems are too good and I must

stop her until she writes enough to become famous. Her fame will then be my fame, Poppy's fame, your fame."

"Sigrid's?"

Mum gives me a threatening look.

"What about me," I continue. "Don't I need you? I'm not even as big as Dorothy."

"We'll all watch over you, six parents. You, the perfect child, ideal embodiment of creative art. What more could you want?"

"A Mum and Poppy."

"Sh, Ara. You're acting like a weed in the Lanczo arrangement. You must be a true, budding member. Broaden your community spirit. You belong to all of us. We, to each other. You were born adult, we've treated you as such. Don't disappoint us by becoming a child.

Biting the tissue inside my lip, I nod solemnly, passive to the disappointment I feel inside.

"Run along to the sky, watch for exploding stars. I have to go and keep Dorothy alive."

She disappears as quickly as I had come. I'm alone now, protected by the overhang of the circular porch. The clouds that had won the sun are now bursting rain that tunnels between the eaves, cascading a horseshoe in front of me. Silver droplets catch on light and weave miniature rainbows throughout the fresh, thin mist. I wish Poppy were with me, painting it for a souvenir.

The damp air mingles with the smell of steaming chicken, reminding me that it's late, past time to check the planetarium clocks. I don't dare let the sidereal hours slip to solar, or else the epheremis time of the future will be in danger. As I turn to go inside, the boards squeal under my feet. Someday they will give way, and I'll go I don't know where.

Entering the room, I see that Poppy has already left. One of his paintings is sitting in the center. A Poppy picture, but something's wrong. I stare, horrified. The canvas is an ink and ochre mottle of the moon's sheen on night passing clouds, yet in the middle is a crack of burning rose. The crack flows starshape in all directions, like the indiscreet molt of Pompeii.

The chocolate rabbit grins unfeelingly from his basket perch. I grab the painting by its pink and hurl it to the basket, slashing the animal to pieces. Chocolate rolls in beads everywhere across the paisley pillow floor. Two icing eyes come to rest at my feet. The whiskers remain intact on the plastic grass, partly camouflaging their Cheshire grin.

I glare up at the stars. They are moved, though ever so slightly, by the events of the room. Their owl-light flickers a patient reflection of the destruction below, a calmness easing away my anger.

The constellations register me at one minute to dinnertime, urging me to keep promise with Elmar, not be late for his meal. He

can have blood in his temper when he is upset, screaming the deaths he's known, raving their darkness. But when his fury moves to affection, he embraces me and tells me stories of Hungary.

I timidly push his door open. He rushes at me, picks me up in his arms, twirls me round in circles.

"Dinner ready?" I greet him.

He carries me across the room, plumps me down on a cushion next to the already set table. He pours me a glass of wine and we feast on the chicken. Elmar keeps kosher, which is why I like to eat with him. The meat is so tender it can't be chewed. Poppy had told me that Elmar was a refugee. Two years ago he fled the revolt by hiding in an oil drum for three days, while a truck carried him over miles and miles of chuckholes. He was half dead when he arrived in Vienna where his uncle, who had fled years before, lent him enough money to get to Le Havre. At the French port he stowed away on a freighter returning to the States. After four days a deckhand caught him hiding under storm tarps piled against the railing. For a minute Elmar was sure the sailor would kick him overboard. But he took a close look at Elmar, then grinned, reached down and clasped his arm, and addressed him in Yiddish. Elmar joyfully replied. The deckhand had been a Polish Jew who had escaped during the early war years. The underground in Amsterdam had found him a spot on a Swedish freighter serving an African trade route.

From that moment, Elmar was smuggled tablescraps, a tablet, a tattered shirt. When the freighter landed in New York, he was given the name of a Mr. Jan DeVries in Seattle, who had been important in the underground and would help him get situated. When Elmar came to the Lanczos, he still was fear-eyed, his black hair shaggy, and he would often yell throughout the night.

As we eat, I glance around the room. It is evenly divided into two strips, red and black. We're sitting in the red, the side where he writes his stories of communist and fascist wars. Everything--the walls, ceiling, rug, book, his tablet--is stained. On his desk is a Star of David he claims was carved from his grandfather's skull. Its back is etched with "Dachau '43."

"Which was worse," I ask, knowing little of either war.

He looks slowly up from his plate, stares at me with bottomless eyes. "They both hate the Jews."

"I was little, like you, during the first war. We had to be animals, live in caves to keep from being hauled away in cattle cars to slaughterhouses. My brother got the fever. Grandfather went to the village to scrounge for medicine. He was caught on the road and taken away."

"The rest of us were lucky enough to see another war. This time I left. My parents were murdered when my disappearance was discovered. Relatives were told it was because I had escaped. But my parents were gunned down at Synagog."

"Jews have God. They don't make good communists, especially hungry Jews."

Elmar is often hungry because he has no money. All of the Lanczos are poor. Poppy reasons that money inhibits creativity, but he is somehow glad when he sells his paintings, and then buys us great food for a party. Elmar writes blood for a living, but his stories aren't popular right now. Several editors have told him they are good, but to wait--people are happy. Elmar is starving on their joy.

When both of us have finished, he leads me to the black side of the room. We sit atop his bed. It's warmer over here, everything is dark, comforting.

"Ara, before the wars we had a different land. April was the best month, full of surprises. You'd never know what to expect. The Danube might crack open and flood its banks or melt peacefully into May. Trees would blossom along its edges and the family would take Sabbath walks. In the evening we could hear the gypsies dancing wild over the countryside. Vivid greens, reds and purples would wind like serpents through the night. The pulsing rhythm of their music made your blood run fast. When I was very little I had been told that if you get too close, the music will spin you into its circles and you'd be gypsy forever."

"Did you ever listen to it?"

"Not until I fled home. Communists have rhythm--the beat of tanks against the pavement, the monotone pop pop b-b-b-b-b-b-b of machine guns, the smooth percussion sssshhhh of the bayonet. But there is no melody, especially for Jews. The old man who drove the truck I hid in was a violinist. In the evenings he'd stop the truck, take out his violin, sit against a roadside snag and play for an hour or two. The Communists thought he was a harmless Christian peasant and let him pass.

"I still hear his music. It will never stop. It grows louder inside my head each day until I am afraid I'm going deaf. So loud sometimes I can't write. Where it will end, I don't know."

We stare together into the silence, my fingers lapped around his, each of us floating in our own thoughts. Elmar makes exciting tales, frightful because they are him. I shudder in the power of their hatred, but with each word he tells, a piece of him flows away, the bitter part. Bitterness hangs stale in the room, then gusts out into the hallway as the door opens. Poppy bursts in.

"Ara, What have you done to your rabbit? And why are you not in your room watching for novae?"

"Oh, oh Poppy, tell me first what did you do to your painting?"

"What's wrong with it?" Elmar injects.

"Burning with pinks," I answer. "Mum told me Sigrid's foam would enfold him."

"Your painting is going well," Elmar examines Poppy. "You're selling. You know you're a blues painter, Sigrid can't change you, only ruin you."

"And what about Ara. She's not grown up yet, no matter how much you want her to be. Yes, I agreed to give her the Lanczo privilege because she's quite capable of timing the stars. But don't you think she might want to share it with you? You're not a Jew, why are you going into hiding?"

"You're a fine one," he retorts. "Look what you did to your own parents."

Elmar jumps up from the bed, rushes to the door, lunges fingers at Poppy. "Out!"

Poppy glares in rebuttal. He reaches for my wrist and drags me off the bed. "Ara, you shouldn't be here."

"The child stays."

"She's not a child," Poppy glares at Elmar.

I break loose of Poppy's grip, run from both of them, standing a line between the red and black of the room.

"Poppy, look at what you painted. You destroyed all that you created. Listen to Elmar's stories sometime, because he creates out of what's been destroyed. Which is better, the chicken or the egg? All the chicken can say is cluck and scratch the ground with his forked toes.

"Candy eggs are bad for you, Poppy, Poppy. You wanted Sigrid so your paintings could bleed a little. Sacred Heart, phoney wound. Think I didn't know?" I laugh. "I look like a child, but you and Mum took good care to make me adult. You taught me to say the grown up words, perceive you with grown up eyes. But see, see, I'm neither. I stand here in the red and black, claiming neither yet touched by both.

"Dorothy's baby was pure when it burst out, but Mum and Sigrid quickly flushed it down the toilet with the other Lanczo impurities. It fooled you and wouldn't go down or up. Made you smell your own garbage."

Both of them stare at me, dumbfounded, mouths open, saying nothing. I return their gape, then run through the open door into the hallway's limbo. Behind me I hear the echo of Poppy's words, "little bitch, I thought she was a sweet child, nice, filled with equanimity."

"She's your creation, child of the sky."

Child, child, I ask myself, they keep telling me I'm not a child. What am I then?

The sky is dark outside, making the inside air all the blacker. The stars wink from their sockets, flickering bright-dim-bright-dim-dimmer-bright-off-on-again. The planets hang like colorful bulbs--acne Mars, marble-glazed Jupiter, Saturn and its ethereal rings. Galaxies are spiraling, fires being consumed into others, stars pushed together. Blue giants burn to white, then yellow to orange, now cooler, fuel consumed, collapse. They ignite and explode in red tides coating outer space. Someday they will condense into white dwarves barely a

fraction of their earlier size. Deceptive, they still burn the fingers. Someday they will cremate themselves and leave only bare hulks of cinder rock haunting their former orbits.

I've sealed off the door and window of the planetarium now, the sky has no interruptions. I am alone. I watch the stars glide with precision, awaiting their apocalypse. By the hour that Orion now appears, I know that it is Fall. Outside the room leaves are being dyed to red. I can hear the other Lanczos move about the house. Occasionally they knock at my door, but I never answer.

Somewhere within the house I hear the echo of Mum, "she did it, did it. And I wasn't home. She could have finished--her poem first."

I listen unworried. I'd been afraid of Dorothy. She hated sunlight, moonlight, starlight. Said it drained her creative spirit. When she wrote she kept the room totally black, the fluorescent glow of her pen giving her enough light to jot down her words. She didn't need to read them because she never rewrote what she'd written. Hated repetition. Her poems were beautiful, but they haunted me long after I'd heard them. Every night before going to sleep I would shudder at the echo of

Gold snakes coil my sleep,
they rattle warnings to a Creator's love.

And I could never be a Christian after she read me "Jesus the Kidnapper." Afterward, when my room was dark and I lay watching the sky, I would feel someone's gaze piercing into me. I'd roll toward the window and glance up into the face of a man staring in from the outside. His hair would be long and curly, a full beard, exactly like the pictures of Jesus I'd seen, except that his face would twist into silent contortions, slowly moving, never stopping, a kaleidoscope in constant motion, eyes rolling like random marbles inside their sockets. I'd want to close my eyes, make him go away, but my gaze would be transfixed. I was afraid that I'd be pulled out the window, into him, but the planetarium kept me safe, would not let me lose myself until I'd want to. Each night the face would come, then gradually dissolve when I'd decide to remain here and guard the sky.

A knock at my door. "Ara, let me in. She's dead. And it was all so bloody. A knife up the abdomen, one down the throat, catching herself either way, nothing could slip by. It's such a disappointment.

I keep calm at Mum's distress. Dorothy had had to do it.

"And Elmar," she continues. My hair peaks up.

"He found her after I did. Saw the knives and baptized himself in her blood. He's gone stark-raving mad. And his eyes shout a wild song from a depth I can't see."

My chest tightens up, then loosens again as I try to imagine his song.

"Let me take care of you, my child. You need me."

I don't answer. The door vibrates with the beat of her fists, but it will never break open. The pounding eventually stops and her footsteps paddle away in the direction of Sigrid's room. They beat softly through the round corridor, counting seconds with the Earth's rotation, not stopping once through the day or night. I can sense the trough they wear in the carpet, a slough waits for its pendulum tide. Sidereal years carry us as a part of the sun, a star moving toward Vega, speeding twelve miles a second, shirling to the outside of the galaxy, unspiraling from the universal core.

Mum's footbeats stop at Sigrid's door. I hear its hinge creak open and know what she will find. The stars have told me that Sigrid has become her celeste, crystal, and the heavy wind from outside plays on her keys.

A chair thuds against the foam floor. Mum must have tried to pull the window down to stop the noise, but the fresh air will clear out the smell of opium. It won't get rid of the carmine stain on the rug. That must remain. It has a black, bushy center, like a flower with its petals turned back.

"Poppy, Poppy," Mum bursts into tears. A muffled cry, but it's the first I ever heard her make. She escapes the foam, wet faced, in search of the Sibelius from Razul's English Horn, the tune I had found. Her steps fade into the hallway. There are no other sounds. Ages pass. The Earth wobbles drunken like an unsteady billiard shot, the Arctic moving away from the North star Polaris, into the house of Cepheus. For nine thousand years it will be carried toward the swan, Cygnus. Next Vega, then the tail of Draco, the stellar dragon coiled around the Ecliptic pole. Polaris again, twenty-six thousand years later.

"Mum's gone."

I whirl around. Razul is sitting near me.

"How did you get in?" I stammer.

"Mum's gone," he repeats. "She moved too close to the ropes. I gave her music but she missed her step, fell against one of them. The venom was quick, she didn't feel."

I manage to keep my face steady, but I twinge inside. Razul has the teapots with him and he silently pours me a cup. Jasmine this time. We sit together on the pillow and sip the fragrant and comforting brew. The starlight hits the pillow in oblique angles, flooding the room with a spectral show of film color.

"How did you come?" I repeat. "There's no way to enter anymore."

"We fell from the same tree. I've been here as long as you have."

I look up.

"The others are here too, but we can't see or hear them yet. Elmar will join us soon. He has only to shed his angry clothes."

Tomorrow, perhaps. You can feel him in the air, in the tea, inside you. And the others too, farther behind.

"You Ara, were created by the Lanczo union, but you were also its creator. You will be a total actress. I know because I am you. Don't hurry, there's time yet. Leaves move only when the wind wishes to carry them.

I mull his words into the tea and stare, waiting, into the cup. When they are fully steeped, I smile in rosette. We sip a second cup and smell the wild poetry of poppies and mums, fertilized in blood, photosynthesizing pgal, a natural sugar. We watch the sky change as a measure of light, our light, echoes to some distant galaxy, back again, pulsating endlessly through space.

THE PRESERVER

There are no mirages.
There is a distance
where no one dies
where the apples fall on time.

Exiled
you count blizzards
you explain winter's defeat
by staring into your palms.

Everything is easy.
The finches return.
The orchard prepares for its agony
while your last words

beg for their lives.
You bury them here
among the dead leaves
believing nothing.

Edward Harkness

SEVEN DAYS

for my grandfather
Edward W. Houston
d. Dec. 7, 1968

- 1 Seven days
our hands journey.
- 2 Seven days
we on a grass road.
- 3 Seven days
past the river's long elbow.
- 4 Seven days
the sky of tongues wanting.
- 5 I follow
but you're beyond everything.
- 6 Seven days
down among pearls.
- 7 Seven days
widening
into the blank tunnel of light
with a flag I cannot fold
with tatoos
buried in rain.

Edward Harkness

KANSAS

Thirty-thousand feet
over Salina the
man dressed in

black, sitting beside
me, asked for the
Mongolian Gentleman's

Quarterly. The stewardess
smiled, suggested
another, smiled

and moved on
like a ward
nurse before

bedtime. No word
from the girl
on my left:

The only noise, the
creeping conspiracy
between nylons

and blue skirt
crushed. We
circled Peoria

for fifteen minutes
and then over
Rockford for

twenty. Waiting
our turn. Waiting
for our slice of

air, of time, some
assurance of
our position.

Michael Poage

THIS ISN'T A HOMESTEAD MY BROTHER

This isn't a homestead my brother.
The house we lived in sags with packrats
And belongs to the dead like Jack Danens
Who built it and plumbed it for two hundred dollars;
To Spider who fished off the dock with an Indian's eye;
To Ted Bosworth who logged in the valley
Before there were roads; and to Major Martin,
A gentleman soldier, until he was treed by a grizzly.
But we have no home. Five summers and three cold winters
Sent us to college. Now we're as strange and exotic
As the new cars that flash on the highway
Heading toward Glacier--as printers of postcards
Or out-of-state loggers rutting the hillsides.

The dock ruined by ice, the flooded boathouse,
Campfire tourists and muskrats swimming in moonlight
Do not make us native. The town five miles south
Does not love us. No one remembers two boys
With their thumbs on the highway.
Pine, tamarack, and fir did not seed us
When we chainsawed their snags in the valley.
You went to Detroit to make money and I moved south
And survived as a teacher. But nothing remains
Of two children who rode an orange bus into Bigfork.

I hear you came back last summer,
Rented a string of packhorses and climbed
The trail up to Trinkus to hunt and fish
With some strangers. Were you lured by a dream
Of your boyhood--a girl you never could marry?
We both know the business of cities
But this is a place we'll never inherit.
Lost in a maze of dead branches,
We stumble on needles and pine cones
And peer from bewildering boulders.
Can you bargain with black bears for berries?
Can I teach school to the trout in the rivers?

Dan Graveley

THE GOOD MORNING

Let me crawl under the eyelid of this morning
Into the electrical storm of the brain,
Inside the calcium skull
And into that veritable dark cell
Where lightning strikes.

And I will be that new man
Who lives in the eye of a storm.
I'll take a bath in the rain
And dry in a field of weeds
Where ants and crickets thrive.

The sands of sleep.
The dunes of dreams.
The dromedary's slow walk
In the terrible heat.
My dreams were gasps for breath,
Tight leather knots in the hands of the dead.

But only the glistening claws of the sun
Could pry open my somnambulant eyes
To the free fall of this day
As it slides on its back
Through the slippery stones of the air.

And only this world spun round in its light
Makes me feel so suddenly free
As I pour into this day
Like a swarm of bees after a rain
Or like a child bursting through the doors of a school.

Dan Graveley

SLIGHT FUZZ OF GREEN

by Jean Atthowe

Margaret and Emerson only went to Sara Hanson's cocktail party because it was a fund raiser. No-host cocktails for the victims of the Biafran civil war. It was at an inconvenient time. Four to seven on Saturday afternoon, and afterwards no place to go except back home.

Margaret was trying out a bright-colored outfit, just on the outer edge of fashion, so after Emerson purchased their drinks at the bar in Sara's family room she, feeling conspicuous, stayed in the back-ground on the patio. Sara was standing by a row of fiery red azaleas with a martini cupped in one hand and berating the chairman of the County Democratic Central Committee for what some Nigerian military governor--he was in charge of quelling the rebellion and rebuilding the province--said in the paper. "We will manage, he said," she said. "Imagine. He said that nature had a way of putting things right, would you believe. Thinks he's already making good progress."

Two men at the center of the group on the patio, one tall and greying, the other shorter and wiry, were trying to come to terms on Isreal's six-day war with Egypt. "It's a holy war," the short one argued. "It's different."

A lot of the guests Margaret didn't recognize. People who had for one reason come together like the many bits of glass in a child's kaleidoscope symmetrically arranged on the patio around the problem. One slight turn of perspective and tomorrow an entirely new arrangement would appear.

She found Emerson inside with a group seated around Sara's coffee table. Mrs. Alonzo Bass sat on the sofa next to him. "Birth control," she said. "Without it Nigeria and Biafra can never settle their differences and will go on with this slaughter." Across from her, Father O'Donohue shook his head vigorously. Mrs. Bass pressed on. "I understand that economic conditions have forced the men to give up polygamy. They can only support one wife. Before, each wife slept alone until her child was at least two. Now, with one wife, she's pregnant all the time and everyone's in poor health and overcrowded."

Polygamy, a form of birth control? Margaret moved with her bright colors out from the mantel and sat down next to Father O'Donohue. He was expressing incredulity at the symbol on one drug company's label of Andromache breaking her chains. "Why," he asked whirling on Margaret with a fierce stare. "What chains?" She was transfixed. He rolled his highball glass between two flattened palms and ruminated mysteriously about evidence gathered in countless confessionals proving

a widespread misuse of sex in marriage. Then, pulling up short, remembering where he was, he leaned back and folding his big arms across his chest he shook his head. "These Nigerians. I don't know. It's a puzzle, this lapse of men into something less than your standard go-getter." Then, leaning forward with a brightening face, he tapped Emerson's knee with a stubby forefinger. "Now you take the natives around Lake Titicaca." And Margaret learned by his own confession that Father O'Donohue had been helpless among them. Reversing the downward drift of that Inca remnant was an assignment that for two years completely stymied him. That Father O'Donohue was ineffectual, considering his six feet plus and chest which, under a strong face and energetic black eyes, stretched the fibres of his black broadcloth to their tensile limit, required some acknowledgment on his part for Margaret to believe.

"Finally," he said, "we got to thinking that the best solution was to march a battalion of U.S. Marines through their villages."

"What would that do?" Emerson said. He twisted the napkin tighter around his highball glass. Mrs. Bass had already registered her disapproval by leaving. Father O'Donohue looked embarrassed. That was when Margaret suddenly remembered Terry O'Keefe. Like a cartoon character's thoughts, he floated in a puff of steam which seemed to have forced its way out through the remote vents of a long inactive volcano somewhere back of her eyes.

Father O'Donohue crossed his knees with such vigor that Margaret expected to hear his clerical skirts strain at the seams. "These are the descendants of the fabulous Incas, we used to say. And theirs was a culture that perhaps exceeded all Europe's at the time of the Spanish conquests. Have you seen their city of the sun?" Emerson shook his head. "Marvelous," said Father O'Donohue. He drained his scotch and water and set it down meticulously on Sara Hanson's leather-topped coffee table. "What in God's name happened to them. The terracing for crops, the sophisticated road systems are in ruins and the people barely subsist and watch the local administrators divert U.S. funds into their own pockets. We simply could not build a spark of get-up-and-go in them. The answer then, you've got to admit--he seemed both coy and serious--is new blood."

Yes. Terry would do. She pictured him now, straining in the high thin air creeping, as subtly as green grass captures ruins, over the girls, knitting together the broken genes as calcium knits bone.

Again he lay sprawled in a lawn chair with little beads of perspiration beginning to collect between the dark hairs on his chest. She recognized the blue, Celtic simplicity in his eyes clearly as if a dozen years had not intervened since she last thought of him. A glint there as of clear water running over stones betrayed with a fresh immediacy the lightness of tongue of . . . Or perhaps it was not the tongue so much as it was the wrists, the eyelids. And her wondering was an old wondering, vividly restored as if time were a curtain whose cord one had only

to touch to cancel it and let in the sharpness of morning. Why did her mind unwillingly dredge up Joe Mercer and Teddy Hennes torturing the turtle they brought up from the mud flats and laid out in its blood on the sidewalk where she was playing. Joe sniggered as he carried it by a stick shoved up its anus. The heavy body, its shell eighteen inches long, bore in silence the aimless cruelty and Margaret her revulsion until Mr. Hayworth, waving his rake and breathing hard, crossed the street. He stood in his old man's sweater buttoned up to the V over his breastbone and shouted everything she wished she had said, but now she couldn't remember the words or what happened next. Since that scene returned she had tried to grope beyond the revulsion. Having failed, since she could not put down the memory, whenever she felt herself slipping into that vortex of maggots and blood pocketed like an oil deposit beneath the surface tension, she tried the old method of casting for agreeable thoughts.

Emerson had not liked Terry, had made no attempt to know him. "I don't know Margaret why you spend your waking hours out there on that balcony with him. What could you possibly be doing." Margaret protested that she was lonely and Terry was a lot of fun. "Fun. What's fun about sitting all day out there with him," Emerson would say, packing his briefcase to leave. What was fun about it. She thought of summers spent on the beach, between sand-heat and sun-heat, enveloped in music from the Hit Parade. It was difficult to say. And October nights, not ready to go home after the movie, walking with some boy along the cold sidewalks, over wet leaves, and ending up in the diner with fingers too cold to undo the coat buttons. What was fun exactly. Or spring evenings slouched in a group in front of Mort's drugstore after being ejected again for reading the comic books and not spending money--putting off going home to finish your homework, counting the cars that went by with only one headlight burning. The pleasure wasn't pinpointable like the coda in the second movement of the symphony you heard last night. It was in not doing anything exactly. But Emerson was suspicious.

Margaret met Terry in Wiesbaden after a long and harsh winter had finally relinquished the land and spring hung heavy in the air. The winter she and Emerson had spent quietly in a bucolic English village in Berkshire occasionally sharing a bottle of Guinness stout in Billy Akenside's kitchen and sometimes losing several pounds sterling to the terrifying Lady Cogswell in a game of bridge at Ayleford Brakes. But mostly Margaret remained alone, a camp follower after a brief plunge into married life, while Emerson pursued an occupation that consisted of being away from home and lost down the rabbit warrens of major U.S. military installations in search of clues to improving efficiency. The problem appeared to entail a search for a dyspeptic Minotaur somewhere deep under the pile of flotsam which made up those installations. It was a futile task, Margaret suspected, but he was young and buoyant with his new degree and his fresh appointment

to the obscure office of some abstruse subcommittee of a congressional commission on government spending.

Sometimes Margaret noted his presence that winter, and later in their small quarters in Wiesbaden, under stacks of black and navy blue bound books citing improved practices in double entry bookkeeping. Emerson would look up during these sightings from reams of red and blue grated papers and exhibit distinct exasperation. So she fought the remoteness of Britons and their villages and later Wiesbaden's noise and confusion alone with books on eastern philosophies. That the eternal principle of life works silently and seemingly without effort just as spring comes around every year seemed reasonable to her. Finding that repose in a muddy world was as simple as lying still long enough for it to become clear so tantalized her that she returned with renewed nervous energy to making gallons of applesauce from the yield by her English cottage door. How to liberate herself from a worry-cluttered mind consumed her mental energies. Where to begin? And every day at four p.m. precisely, through long shadows that contested the weak winter sun and fingered the lanes of Waltham St. Lawrence, watching Mrs. Odby's ladies amble back to their barn freighting their day's achievement, she wondered. In the fingers? Mornings at eight Glendora Poor drove past in a two wheeled pony cart, the last in Berkshire, Billy Akenside said. "Feeble-minded," he said. Her parents owned The Bell. But, according to Billy, local opinion held that Mr. Odby was the father. Or the toes?

It was a puzzle, this lapse of man into something less than your average go-getter. Father O'Donohue seemed to think it wasn't even natural. "The gardener," Mrs. Ives had said the previous autumn, "you simply cannot rely on. He's an independent sort and sometimes surly. All we can get these days."

"And you've no idea," puffed Mrs. Neville Whitehall as she put down her cup at the Ives's Sunday afternoon tea, "what socialism is creeping into our village. Just the other day, while my maid was dressing my hair, she was going on about that fellow from Slough. What is his name? The one who is forever agitating. Working men's rights. Classless society. Simpkins? Mortimer Simpkins. A dreary man." She closed her eyes as she swallowed hard and raised her eyebrows up to her hennaed hairline. "Now, if you can imagine, she's talking about guaranteed annual incomes for the poor and free nurseries for the children of working mothers." She brushed a crumb from her purple lap. "Of course, I didn't say what I thought. Would you? To the maid? But you can imagine what I thought."

"It's all nonsense," said Margaret's future landlady as she dropped a sugar cube into Margaret's tea. Emerson sat on the edge of his chair with a pigmy tea sandwich and a standard butter knife on his plate hoping he would not soon have to decide what to do with them. "You will keep the daily?" Mrs. Ives said. She handed Margaret the refilled tea cup. Her tentative renters nodded. Of course, Margaret

thought. How simple. "A house can become a frightful mess in six months," she said. "And I detest coming back to mud coating the scullery and a cinder pocked set of fire irons. It took me the better part of summer to clear up after last winter's tenant. A dreadful man. An artist. You may have use of the china or I can have it locked away, but I really must insist that you keep the daily on." Emerson cut his minute sandwich neatly in halves with the knife. So, the daily is not the London Times. Mrs. Whitehall turned to her mold-colored son, a Harley Street physician. "And so you were at Ascot, Charles?" Mrs. Ives watched Emerson dividing his sandwich. "She's a reliable woman, Mrs. Hester. But she has such a litter of children. Eleven, I think. Her husband is not much, but he never comes around. She's a bit of a fool, but dependable. Knows our routine. The brass and the fire irons must be polished every morning." Margaret made a mental note to coat them with vaseline and store them away. "Her last child is still in a pram, but that shouldn't bother. She never brings the nuisance in." "Indeed, she does not," Mr. Ives roused himself to say. He removed his pipe from between his soft, Halloween cooky lips and pressed his fingertips together as if he would soon say yassah and tap a toe in the benches. "She parks it in the service yard under the kitchen window." "My horse came in, Mother," Charles Whitehall said, "but the day was not nearly so rare as the Epsom Downs affair last week when we went to view the horses before race time and Lady Otteline was kicked in the paddock in the leg."

They were reaching agreement as to the keeping of the daily, the use of the dishes, and the duration of the lease, when Lady Cogswell, Mrs. Ives' mother, arrived in a September gust which she ushered into the drawing room along with her Welsh corgi--not a Cardigan but a Pembroke Welsh corgi with a short tail, according to Billy Akensides. Same breed as the Queen's. The corgi worked his way over the delicate martini carpet--it was Owen Glendower marching into the very throne-room of Britain--and among the antique legs, sentient and otherwise, scattered around the sitting room with such possessiveness in his springy, vindictive body that Margaret feared he would leave some boundary markers along the way. Emerson extended a new tenant's ingratiating hand and received for his pains a sharp nip on the little finger.

With the supplementation of Lady Cogswell, the conversation turned completely to the upcoming races at Newmarket, leaving Emerson to fold the injured pinky under his larger, comforting fingers and lock his jaws in a smile. Through the bow window of the sitting room dahlias blazed and roses unfolded, peace roses in gold-pinks and Frau Druski's in serene whites, with an all-pervading blandness as if heads had never rolled at the Tower, as if Runnymede had never been anything but a lush green meadow, as if V2 rockets were still airy elements in a mad brain. As if...

It was a puzzle, this mysterious lapse. You could see it in Charles Whitehall's veiled eyes, his spiritless body leaning for support against the white molding of the chimney piece at his mother's cocktail party. Holding a tepid martini in his unsupported hand, he chatted desultorily, even dilatorily, with Lofton Buxton, whose acquaintance he had just made and whose occupation involved service with the British diplomatic corps.

His home base was Whitehall, the physician and Margaret learned as Mr. Harley addressed the ceiling and then his cocktail and occasionally one of them when he leveled a detached, looking-beyond-them glance. The two had discovered a mutual interest in racing and the British thoroughbred horse. Whitehall had shaken his gloomy head when Buxton mourned the drain of good stock to the Americans. "It is ghastly," he said, "when one thinks of American money buying off all our best blood lines." He riffled a toothpicked olive through his drink with a disinterested thumb and index finger and looked out over the sea of cocktails and velvet with the wintry eyes of an Inca remnant.

"Just the other day I was having lunch at my club with a fellow I know from my old regiment. He's just finished a thousand page treatise on the British thoroughbred. You've no idea, he said, what a tradition we are losing with the passage of our best horses into American hands. The situation, he assured me, is tenuous. He had a time trying to think of a title for his book until he finished reading Winston Churchill's history of England and then it came to him. Why not The History of the British Thoroughbred? A rousing title." "I'd say," said Whitehall. "But what will happen to those magnificent beasts in the United States. All those centuries of breeding?" Buxton sipped his martini delicately. "I should imagine," he said in a lacklustre voice, "that they will end up padded and helmeted and looking as much like creatures from Mars as do their football players in some new and brutal contest of sheer force and dimension in Madison Square Garden." The men, one looking at the ceiling, the other the floor, faded into silence.

Buxton absently traced his salt and pepper eyebrows with his little finger and Whitehall fussed with the knot in his tie. "He was a classmate of mine at Harrow and later he served with me in Egypt. Started his work on the British thoroughbred there," Buxton said. "Egypt? You were stationed there also?" They served in the same regiment, they discovered. Not quite during overlapping years. "I was near Alexandria," Buxton said. He rolled his eyes upward. "Beastly hot." "Yes. Debilitating," said Whitehall. "And the people." "Yes. And the flies," said the other, sighing. "They were a dirty lot. You could see them sitting in the gutter in the hot afternoons so lazy they didn't even brush the flies away from their eyes." "You noticed that, too?" said Whitehall with a lassitude that threatened to erupt into a yawn. "It's a puzzle."

"Of course I talk to the gardener sometimes," Mrs. Whitehall said leaning against an antique prayer chair by the hall door. She handed Lt. Colonel Whitly of Bear's Copse one of her Queen Elizabeth roses, an errant November guest. "Heaven knows, my blood is blue, but I'll take tea out to him in the garden and chat about things, don't you know." However, Billy Akensides said, when he brought Margaret another peck of Gravenstein apples, "People round abouts don't know much about Mrs. Whitehall." He leaned against the kitchen sink. "She came here ten years ago with her husband. He was a barrister with offices in London. Dead now, but Mrs. Prine at The Bell says the Mrs. used to be an actress. That sort. Of course, she'll never say." And, of course she never did. Considering Father O'Donohue's theory, Margaret wondered now why such a crossing of blood, hers and the barrister's, had not generated a livelier son.

But then--after a bleak Berkshire winter--Wiesbaden. A char-treuse opacity tinting the bare linden trees. Bratwurst and mustard smells. Along the residential streets forsythia hazing the bombed out severity of stately shells with a vacuity that rivalled their inner emptinesses. Houseless cellars choking under ten-year-old rubble, disappearing under the same expanding, catholic green that was confidently settled around the seven-story, starfish shaped building where Margaret and Emerson were to stay. It dominated the Wiesbaden landscape. Home to bachelor officers of the United States' peacekeeping force.

Below the windows the cafeteria rattled, delivery trucks clanked and the thump of swinging doors which served the peacekeepers faithfully around the clock reverberated up through the floor. Parties of the foot stomping, dormitory variety referred pain throughout the gigantic starfish from one Saturday night to the next and infinitely beyond, registering nerve damage within certain of its cells. In Margaret's gray and overstuffed room with the books she brought from England the thought that one who finds peace must be strong of body, clear of mind and sharp of sight and hearing set her pacing. That he does not clutter up his mind with worries and is flexible in his adjustment to external conditions sent her out of the room and fumbling through the entrails of the racked monster. Through a door--now she couldn't remember where--she burst out or was it in upon silence. A balcony stretched across many windows between two remote tentacles. Below it, acres of green surrounded young saplings springing with sanguine energy away from their supporting poles. Windows, jewelled by sunlight, reflected none of the hypertension that afflicted the monster.

From the farthest corner of the otherwise empty terrace--in the sunniest, most sheltered spot--Terry waved from his lawn chair. Waved and whistled when she returned in shorts with the ceremonial towels to the warmth of sand-heat and sun-heat and the Hit Parade. Offered her his beach chair but she took the floor, brushing aside the fine dusting of pollen that had filtered into that remote corner. And it was quiet except for a kinesthetic knowledge of the swell and stretch of spring up there and out there.

And what was fun about the five days each week they spent on that secluded terrace when Terry was free to join the celebration, hopping with his suntan lotion through the window of his privileged rooms onto the terrace to lie belly up, a spent lion sunning on the African veldt. Nights he turned into an air force captain and disappeared into the labyrinth of military operations to tinker with his government's peacekeeping or war making machine. Whichever it was was not Terry's concern. Spinning fuzz into thin lines of procedure and spools of cause and effect would interrupt his daylight celebrations of the five major and the many minor senses.

"And what in God's name do you do out there," Emerson shouted. Out along the cold sidewalks, shuffling through the wet leaves. It was difficult to say.

Then there was this hurricane that blew in from Galveston when I was stationed in Texas. We battened everything we could down for the big blow and then we waited it out. It didn't quit for three days. That's a lot of beer. The worst night the storm took the corrugated sidings off quonset huts. Sent them whistling sideways, waist high. Could have sliced a man in two. I was in one of the huts with a bunch of guys. The wind blew so hard that it pushed a big heavy safe that stood against one end wall inches out into the room. We'd all get in front and push it back. We figured it was the only thing that was holding up the whole building. About the twentieth time we were pushing, one fellow, a tall guy from Louisiana--used to this kind of thing--looks up and drawls out kind of slow, "I don't know why we're bustin' our guts on this thing when the roof's clean off." We all looked up. It was.

More suntan lotion on the knees, on the bridge of the nose, counting the cars go by with one headlight burning.

Ethiopia. A godforsaken piece of nowhere was what it was. We had nothing but warm beer, a landing strip and then desert that stretched from here to Boston. And the women. . . Adjusting the body to match perfectly the angle of the spring sunlight. They got better looking though, the longer you stayed. But you couldn't touch 'em. No ma'am. It was bad enough--the heat and living with a lot of sex-starved guys. But even worse was the flies. We could always tell the guys who had been a year. Didn't bother to brush the flies from their eyes.

He never talked much about the air force. His burdens as a career officer he bore as lightly, however loyally, as he might a fly on his nose in the face of his more serious responsibilities. On the terrace, under the steady sun, the Stars and Stripes bloomed in black and white. Forever is omitted from the masthead, only spring vying successfully for that title, forever winging seeds, catholic in its choice of furrows, absorbing old blood stains in a green forgetfulness. Terry pondered Steve Canyon's latest involvement. Worried that Steve might get hooked, because marriage. . . well, girls. Terry couldn't stay away from it. Every time he was with a girl it was so great, right away he'd start

thinking about the next time. Said with neither boast nor embarrassment. Only wonderingly that his zest was such a windfall.

Rarely was he morose. A few times when he had to take Saturday night duty for someone who was sick and he had to miss out on a bierstube run. "Tough," Margaret would say. "You're just not your own man in the Air Force." "I don't know about that. It's the breaks," he would say, checking the sun's angle.

Through the window of his special quarters--he knew the housing officer--one day, he brought the results of a strafing expedition. "Heard of a new bierstube to check out next Saturday," he said one day. The Schwarzeschiff by the river in the Lowenstrasse. It has one of those heavy German omm-pah-pah bands that everyone has to goose step to . . . but the strafing's supposed to be good. A lot of German girls--secretaries and all for the Air Force--are supposed to hang out there." She was a quiet girl with a slight limp and classic features which, when she looked at Margaret, revealed that she resented her--as if Margaret's presence turned the BOQ into enemy territory and her into a spoil of war. Terry she seemed to like with a certain hopelessness and while he was solicitous--offering her the lawn chair, suntan oil, some potato chips he'd brought out--his gaze sometimes drifted out over the lawn with its saplings, over the distant buildings, his nose tilted up, catching the wind.

"She was a nice girl. I think she liked you," Margaret said. "Who, Lotte? Well I liked her." Adjusting the legs of the chair. Straightening the towel. Scratching his bare chest, the closest he came to squirming when he wanted to duck a subject. "She's a funny girl. Can't figure her out. She even wanted me to lay my mother's picture flat. Your mother, she said. Wondered if it didn't bother me, too." Throwing out his hands. I mean, I love my mother, but who thinks about her at times like that.

"My mother tells everyone that I call her my best girl. She never says it in front of me and she doesn't know that I know she says it. I just leave it at that." Shrugging his brown shoulders. "I think my father used to say it about his mother and now that he's gone, it comforts her and it doesn't hurt." He only pretended to think his mother was maudlin, Margaret thought, secretly he loved her for it. In his dresser drawer he had put away a rosary blessed by the Pope. A friend picked it up for him in Rome in February, and he was saving it for a surprise to give her when she flew to Wiesbaden in the summer. He had already sent her the tickets. One for her and one for his youngest sister, Mary. He talked about Mary between accounts of summers as a busboy on Martha's Vineyard and the Red Sox' home field when he **was in school**. But, **his sister** wouldn't be coming in the summer. She had a job in an ice cream parlor in Boston after school and during summer vacation. So he was going to give the cashmere sweater set he picked up for her to his mother to take back and be content remembering

the time he took the two of them, when Mary was twelve, to New York and he couldn't keep her in nickels for the Automat.

On several days when the mid-afternoon sun blazed with a summer intensity, Terry raised his head suddenly. "Say why don't we take a run down to the Lowenstrasse. I'll buy you a beer and you can check out that bierstube." "No. That leads to all kinds of complications." "Oh," he said and he dropped his head back against the beach chair. "Anyway, I'd love to have taken you." "Thanks, I know you would." "Oh, well," and he sighed. "That's the breaks."

"What can you possibly be doing all day out there in the sun," Emerson said and slammed his briefcase shut. But as spring grew greener, he talked less to Margaret and, hauling his briefcase to the door, would say goodbye and ask casually if she were going to add a little more to her tan. So Margaret went only once with Terry away from the terrace and that was to help his friend try out a new system at the roulette tables in the Wiesbaden casino. Each of the three were to watch what numbers came up at a certain table, but Terry grew restless, made frequent trips to the bar, lounged from table to table assessing the women patrons like a customer flipping through magazines at a newsstand.

When Margaret said goodbye to Terry in June, he broke out the last bottle of beer left from a recent Munich weekend. He was still laughing about the return trip along the autobahn when he and his friend Dave kept passing and repassing a girl driving a Jaguar convertible. Finally, they stopped in Baden Baden and bought a dozen red roses. After that, every time they passed her, Terry leaned out his window and tossed a rose into her lap. They all ended up having dinner in Darmstadt together. The beer was rich and sparkled gold in the glasses Terry brought out. The sides were sweating in the heat. Next week Terry's mother was due. Margaret shook his hand. "It's been fun, Terry." In the diner with fingers so cold you couldn't unbutton your coat. "Sharing this private Riviera with you." "As I keep saying, I wish it could have been more. I still would like to take you out to the Schwarzeschiff for a beer." "I know you would. We'll make it in some other life."

She had been tempted. It was as if he had just been born at dawn--sprung from Hera's head--fully grown. Seeing the world with him and through his eyes would have been seeing for the first time, as if all time and being had just happened and there were no eons past and no wounds, only teeming beginnings. Everything Terry said or thought was a first occurrence on the new earth and if ever he ceased to be--if he ever thought of it--then, of course, everything would cease, having lost its reason for being. "Goodbye Terry. And good luck." Keep your nose to the wind, she wanted to add. Instead, she said, "And don't forget to brush the flies from your eyes."

Father O'Donohue excused himself as he got up to find the hostess. He had to rush off to an awards banquet for the St. Ignatius

High School basketball team. "They're celebrating a sixteen and O season." He left Emerson still laughing at some of Father O'Donohue's stories about his days as a history teacher at a boys school in Alamo-gordo, New Mexico. As for his Titicaca solution, Margaret was finally suspicious, really. Spring had fuzzed the stark lines of the winter-gnawed, barren branches, the spun-out, fine-lined twigs of reason-honed understanding of cause and effect within the hopeless Father O'Donohue with the buoyant, bland, and catholic green of new vegetation. The shot of a new generation, directly into the vein, heals old infections and the persistent wounds that help us remember old failures.

Mrs. Bass helped Father O'Donohue find his coat in the hall closet, but she was obviously finding it difficult to be pleasant. Margaret wondered where Terry was now. If he wasn't perhaps remodelling a garage here in the Santa Clara valley, too, into a family room. Fire-place, extra closets for skis, basketball equipment. All that. He probably could have adjusted--of course he could have--to the number of offspring he must certainly have fathered. Sending off the yearly photo of the children in front of their Christmas stockings to his mother in Boston along with a new, pop-up toaster with the electronic device that lowers the bread automatically. Still, like Father O'Donohue, she would like him best forever young and in the air force, stationed at a place like Lake Titicaca, and sniffing the wind.

Father O'Donohue left with the short, wiry man. He waved to Emerson as he opened the door and Margaret distinctly remembered that as they drove out of Wiesbaden, headed for a summer of burrowing through the warrens of other installations, lindens lined streets kept cool by the mature leaves of summer. Behind them, almost hidden by leaves, rows of town houses edged the avenues with graceful facades scrolled and grilled with a baroque energy. Often they passed a house still boarded up and bomb blackened, but they were difficult to see through the trees.

Sara Hanson was jubilant. She was counting the money while Mrs. Bass patrolled the front door thanking the guests who were leaving. It looked like the committee had made a hundred and fifty dollars clear. Protein was what the kids needed. Some should be flown back to the states for plastic surgery and so on.

On the way out of Wiesbaden fat children and ducks waddled in the parks across green lawns and under luxuriant chestnuts. Later on, summer dust would screen the shiny leaves with a fine, dulling layer and the green blades would be singed by the sun and lawn mowers. But, while they were there, Wiesbaden was beautiful--fresh and new--and Margaret almost forgot, too.

POEM FOR THE MUSE

I said "In sewers and steampipes",
but you said "No!"
so we went off to the Botanical Gardens
and the museums.
You bought postcards of Rubens and Titian
then we went back to your place,
spent the evening drinking pink ladies.
When you left to take a leak,
I listened to the delicate water,
from where I sat. I listened
as it trickled, fell
and was spirited away.
This poem is for my muse,
waters moving.

Niles Choper

GOOD MORNING

or waking up in your own room
beside a woman who looks just great
only she's someone's wife
and you can't remember her name
but there you are and it's raining outside.
She's not awake yet and looking around
you see empty glasses,
bottles you left open and Hey!
there's cigarettes on the floor.
She turns in her sleep,
but you can't even reach a cigarette
and you feel oh, almost sick this morning
or maybe just hung over.
When she wakes the first thing she will say
is something about roaches.

Niles Choper

LEATHER INSOMNIA

by Tom Winkel

I drift to the warning track, set my body for the long throw home and casually basket-catch. Peanut shells crack from the boxseats to the bleachers. I imagine showering, my hair hanging down my back, reaching the wet tile. I've finally convinced myself that curves break away at the last moment. My throw is wide of the plate. Boys slap fists into the worn image of Al Rosen.

I've complained but still they pay me with silver dollars. My arms ache from lugging the heavy sachel. Thoreau encourages me to quit. "Games are a matter of common sense," he tells me. He would rather hear me snore.

I would enjoy watching a rabbit hop across my backyard. If a blond boy were to kill it with a stone I would yell: shitface. I'd eat roast rabbit if someone would prepare it. Thoreau encourages me to go on welfare. I want to but I imagine Miss Snotch checking: has my wife saved every green stamp? why do I waste the taxpayers' money on those records? Hanging on the end of her pointed finger, chewing the nail, is a Siamese cat I have not seen before.

Fingers Sutton touches his knee, the brim of his cap, his knee again. I no longer agree with his notion of teamwork. Grover Williams leads off first expecting a bunt. But I am a line driver, a pull hitter and I run as if my life were slow motion.

I would enjoy living in a hut by a pond. I would learn that electricity is a lie. I would sit at a wooden table where neither steaming meat nor thick brown gravy arouses the appetite. Thoreau believes man's original sin was cannibalism. He tells me man's common sense resorted to cows, hogs, sheep. "Now is the time," he says, "for us to eat no meat, human or otherwise."

I bloop a texas-leaguer to shallow right, Grover Williams hustles to third, Fingers Sutton stares at me. Disabled vets from the wars listen, say: Thataway to go Bobby. Ruth calls me Bobby to annoy me.

Thoreau began his journal to cope with insomnia, to help pass the time. He suggests I do likewise. I imagine my daughter with me crouched behind a fallen oak watching waxwings eat dried mulberries. At night I could write: 'that waxwings return north in late autumn, that they arrive on a gray morning forewarning snow, awakens in us our own slumbering autumn, saving us from the slow dissent into snow, teaching

us of the vibrancy waiting within . . . waiting for the quick dart of the waxwing.' The wood shakes on the roof would clack and rattle in the wind. I would gaze at the candle and think: since I have to walk miles in the morning to buy diaper pins I might as well buy a gallon of wine. I tell Ruth we should make our own wine and again she agrees. Perhaps I could make a pool table: slate, wood, felt, Black&Decker power tools.

To my left I hook slide into third while Fingers Sutton points to my right yelling here! here! The ball bounces past the third baseman and rolls against the stands. A boy leans over and snatches it in his mitt, raises it triumphantly and shakes it in his father's face. Their mouths open, their teeth split with laughter. The umpire sends me back to third. Fingers Sutton rushes to the umpire and gnaws on his nose.

As a semipro in Spencer, Iowa, I tripped in a gopher hole, lunged forward, accidentally caught the ball, and broke my ankle. On crutches in the dugout I enjoyed watching the infield dust blow into right field.

I borrow Thoreau's looking glass and hold it to my eye. The colors of the crowd blur gray. I can hear their spurs jangle and the shells clicking into empty chambers. The president fancies a .44; the trend is to larger caliber. My father continues carrying a .22; he believes it signifies his trust in fellow man. In the seventh the crowd stretches and shoots in the air. Blue smoke swirls around the flag in center. I adjust my tie and notice my cufflinks are loose and about to fall.

I hand Thoreau a cup of hot coffee. He thanks me and drinks it quickly, steam rising from his nostrils. Hurry back I tell him. He assures me over his shoulder that he will be back soon, to get me, to quit.

Question: rippling muscles, hands firm on wood, expecting a low curve, the pivot, eye on ball, a line shot still rising when a lady in Sec. D turns asking why her husband has stood up, peanut shells cracking, Fingers Sutton slapping my wrists apart as I round third, white rubber plate resisting the pierce of my sharp spikes, worth it?

Quit.

Thoreau says thank God there is so much virtue still in man. My uniform is blue tweed, my tieclip gold plated, my shoes floesheim ventilated cleats. On the streets they say hi star, hope you make the **bigtime**, nice homer against Tulsa. In Tulsa I slept in a **narrow** smoke stack, woke in the dark, someone trying to push past me, jammed against the dark bricks, stuck, we can't move.



Photo by
Tom Shultz '72



Snow blows off the platform in our faces. My daughter wears her purple hat and coat, carries her doll and a purse containing a small book about angels. Angels are our invisible selves, it says, too much a part of us, too close for our eyes to see. I wonder if my angel carries a gun concealed in the fold of its wings. Mine is concealed in my hair, the trigger wrapped tight with long strands. I'm uncertain where it points.

Floodlights glare down in the infield; in right they have burnt out. The candles Ruth makes are beautiful. I enjoy a fire in a potbelly stove. But I have developed a sense of knowing where the ball is going. The crack of the bat gives clues. I finally see the ball as it comes down in my outstretched glove.

Thoreau has agreed to meet us. He has promised to help with a lean-to and in the spring construct an earthen lodge. I intended to buy a small trailer for the winter, with a stove, toilet and shower. His plan has me sleeping in a goose-down bag beneath the lean-to, my wife and children in his cabin. He desires to help us.

The conductor smiles at our daughter and gives her a grape sucker. "Where are you going little girl?"

Thoreau greets us wearing feathers; we embrace. His hair smells of burnt wood. He has been talking, he says, and wishes now to enjoy the silence. The engine steams and screeches from the station. I hear my eardrums stretch.

In bed with Ruth I watch Thoreau at his writing table. He pauses to listen to an owl. His baggy pants hang from his knees, his cuffs crumple on the dirt floor. He grinds words between his back teeth. I am certain he has no flesh. His legs are bone etched and polished like an expensive cue. I want to examine my bones to see if the texture is smooth, gritty, pocked. I sand my shins with a power sander, chalk my toe and bank the eightball in the far left corner. Fast Eddy smiles setting me up for the hustle. "You should play more baseball," he says and runs the table. I want to snore so Thoreau will hear my common sense.

At dawn Thoreau and I walk the edge of a maple stand. Again he has not slept; the cold air shrinks his eyelids. He shows me a deer track partially filled with snow. "Snow that has sifted down from the trees," he says. His lesson concerns movement; he warns of resting too long in one place, of waking only to check that nothing has changed, that the door remains bolted, the silver safe, the heirloom mirror untouched. I tell him of a TV ad for milk: body cells change constantly, a new you coming every day. He reminds me he doesn't drink milk.

I confess to him about the gun; he doubts it's loaded. "A habit hard to break," I say and proving my point I frown, tightening my scalp, pulling the trigger. The lead sinks into a maple; sap runs. Thoreau wonders about the difference between pencil lead and bullets. He slowly picks the bullet from the tree. "Would this serve as a paper weight?" he asks, holding the lead to his eye. "Or as a plug for the

leaky roof? or perhaps to carve into a stamp for sealing wax?" He shakes his head, "Good for nothing." I suggest with another like it when flattened and polished to use on the eyelids at night, to keep them shut, to help one sleep. "You are contained by economy," he observes. His retreat from me is sudden enough to beat the catcher's throw to second.

I axe bits of wood to splinters. Birds in the upper branches applaud. Squirrels chatter about the taste of acorns. Ruth stirs vegetable soup in an iron caldron. My angel assures me no gun is concealed beneath his wings. I confide to Thoreau that I'm asleep. He offers me a pill he has made from dogwood roots and crow bones. Quicker than possible I leap and surprizingly catch the ball. The scoreboard flashes, firecrackers explode, water erupts in the shape of a gigantic smiling bear. Thoreau advises me to look higher: examine the stars, eat the moon, follow the comets. As if speaking to a large crowd he proclaims: "If you play, win."

Again it is time to quit. The envelope contains a contract, a report date. I tell Thoreau baseball reflects my life in a perverse way, "a base way" I add. He frowns reminding me puns are merely games. I frown reminding him I'm asleep. He crumbles reaching haphazardly for the shattered bits of his breastbone. I agree it's a habit hard to break.

A letter arrives from Thoreau. His congratulations that I have quit the team and have realized a pond is not required for inner retreat.

Ruth and Miss Snotch relax at the kitchen table talking about a recipe for chicken gumbo soup. Miss Snotch is fond of cats but not she assures us as much as the needy, the desperate, the downhearted. She hopes for a day when Americans share in a spirit of friendliness similar to the simplicity of her childhood in rural North Dakota. On Lincoln's birthday she brings glazed ham and her boyfriend. I admire his decorative leather chaps and his guns worn in the style of Hopalong Cassidy. He does not object that my weapon is concealed. He pretends junkmen greedy for old stoves, toasters, clock radios, cars, break down the door to find his guns blazing, the bullets burning their flesh. We watch the hockey game and drink gin. At dinner I unstrap my knife from my right calf and offer it to him asking would he slice the ham. He accepts and later tells me in private that only one chamber is lethal, the other shells merely blanks.

In the Tulsa County Building I wait in line for hours occasionally kneeling on the brown linoleum floor. The paywindow lady squints examining the hairs in my nose. We are friends. She has asked for my autograph ten times, for her grandchildren. Today she asks about my younger brother, a relief pitcher in the Allegheny Association. Ready

yet? she wants to know. Tulsa needs a strikeout artist. It pleases me that my cleats tied around my neck clack as I walk. They retired my cufflinks, encased them at the league headquarters in Omaha. They gave me patent leather cowboy boots that I cut into strips and weaved into a sheath.

I attempt writing Thoreau. I send him bits of me: scabs, hairs, sweat sealed in plastic medicine tubes.

Today the air of Tulsa sticks to windows. In the smoke stack my angel cleans his feathers. I visit often bringing ivory soap. That I have quit baseball no longer satisfies him. He massages the bones that flare from my back. "To give us wings," he chants. His litany:
Beyond clowns tossing peanuts from cadillacs,
Beyond queens wrenching earthmovers from their wombs,
Beyond sugar bowls, goodyear blimps and vapor trails,
Beyond hooked beaks and burnt olive leaves . . .

He accuses me of wanting to buy Big Sur, erect fences and stock the beach with my own seals and sandpipers; to drive fast cars and drink from a never emptying bottle; to sink my spikes in the white rubber plate where miss america splits moaning for a shaft of superstar lightning.

I agree my brain needs repair, my flesh a solitary place. On the moon he and I walk peace symbols in the dust. The thin air smells frozen. I can see for miles: piles of burning fossils, fresh cracks in mountain walls, imitation water, rigidly maintained bugles, car-hops dressed as cats, photographs of brotherly love. I am constantly hungry for a foot long hotdog with onions.

Against the dark bricks I press my back crushing my wings. My angel rages, rips feathers, peels layers of dust from his colorless eyes. His tongue flashes; its shredded ends twist upward around my arms, tighten on my neck, pierce my eardrums. He offers a final vision: I see myself opening the sachel; on each dollar my head is engraved, the mouth open. With my knife I carefully slice off his head.

Ruth tells me food stamps are insufficient. She'll be pleased when I bring my angel to stuff with dried bread and spices. Thoreau offers to help drag the heavy carcass. He says the hermitage is often the nest from which action, like a young bird, flies. I'm pleased by the pigeons cooing beneath warehouse eaves.

Downtown, alligators crawl the streets and sidewalks. Their drool and hungry gleam threaten the carcass. Thoreau and I carefully avoid the long tails. A small alligator with mossfree scales and almond eyes gives us a pamphlet. It asks our support in the campaign to

remove the statue of Hernando DeSoto from Heritage Park. The bronze explorer holds a bloody sword and stands on the belly of a slain alligator. It's nonsense the alligators claim. Included in the pamphlet is a statement signed by DeSoto swearing eternal affection for alligators: '... and while exploring the new continent I saw only one large reptile, a crocodile in southern Florida. Had I encountered an alligator I would have honored him for appearing in my dreams to defend against a certain red lion obsessed with shattering my spine.' Thoreau encourages me to join their campaign. He says he feels wide awake when speaking to large crowds, that he enjoys talking with the press, that social change is desperately needed. At Stonewall St. he gets on all fours to convene more directly with his new friends. They crawl off toward Heritage Park.

At the kitchen table Ruth and Miss Snotch remove feathers. They plan to stuff the ribcage with potato sausage, colby cheese, fresh mushrooms, onions, chopped almonds, eggs, celery, paprika and dried bread. They glide delicately about the house whispering, laughing about the advantages of natural childbirth, the price of porkchops, the aroma and texture of the baby's messy diaper. I draw the curtains and with my daughter watch Boris Badenov and Natasha try to escape with the secret blueprint of the mole tunnels beneath the Capitol. As their warship-disguised-as-freighter steams into the Black Sea, Rocky and Bullwinkel in their submarine accidentally fire a torpedo. It rushes in the water toward the frantic Boris. "Save us," he begs me, "dive in the water and get it." I refuse but invite he and Natasha for dinner. When I mention the ripe olives they applaud and announce they prefer dark meat.

Dear Thoreau,

Mornings I whittle sticks with my knife and tie them together; with a feather sail they float on the Arkansas River. The enclosed wishbone seems strong enough to plow dirt. Ruth enjoys making gravy with chopped heart and gizzard, flour, milk and drippings. On the street our daughter steals bullets from strangers. I melt the casings and mint coins. I'm headless, my wings extended. On the other side notice your taunt skin.

In the afternoon I make a fire in the backyard. Ruth boils water to wash diapers, I melt brass, our daughter roasts fish. In the house my voice echoed, kept us awake for weeks, sprang from cupboards, from beneath beds. Now we use sign language. Above us jet planes silently approach the air field two miles south. Ruth transplanted the tomatoes. I dyed the dog's hair blue. Miss Snotch made herself a white satin cape for her coronation as neighborhood princess. She kisses rose petals and gives them to the children.

At night I sleep on feathers. I dream my angel replaces lights in the outfield. The ground is covered with peanut shells. The crowd plays cards and complains when a foul ball upsets a stack of chips. The umpires tenderly hold hands. I build a bonfire at second. Large snowflakes fall gently. Brown bears hibernate in the exits. After all the rice is eaten people offer their angels. The paywindow lady has enough tabasco sauce to last for years. You and I test water to determine purity. I can't remember the color of anyone's eyes or if anyone had ears. Beneath home place I find my cuff links. Each member of the crowd anxiously identifies the cuff links as his own.

I wake and watch my daughter comb her doll's hair.

Today I'll make a raft for you. You can float on the river and sleep. Sleep well, snore peacefully,

R

WEDNESDAY'S TWO O'CLOCK ASSEMBLY
AT OPHEIM HIGH

He was wide across the chest
had a good arm
and his name was Bob.
Straight from the farm
and a step or two up
in his Roebuck slacks,
solid bleachers egged him on
and the lady acrobat
marched him front and center
to the middle of the floor.

Proud they had their man
and glad God missed the best of them
those troopers came alive
when the lady
rounding out her program
zipped him in a leopard suit
and pumped him full of air.
Wild Bob was just their kind of man.

Where she might have laid her head
and blossomed like a queen
she placed a patch, no, an acre
of hot black hair. And Bob,
not to be undone and stretching things
a bit, stood there, erect,
cool as a cucumber
King of the Prairie
and sucking in some air.
Was he ever her man.

Spread-eagle, with all that blood
rushing to his head, Bob's legs
buckled under when the lady
striking a pose in leotards
then spinning like a dime
jack-knifed through the gym
and came down like some flower
and handed him her knee.

The crowd of course loved it best
especially when they kissed.
And no wonder. From ear to ear
Bob's grin gave that gal
and one small town
all the latest
if not the widest birth
since Lord knows when.

John Holbrook

SUDDENLY DEEP

I watched you stand in waves
and loved you like the shells
I couldn't keep.

Shelley Collins

WHITE BEAR

Old woman hunches like a bush on ice. Aurora
rubs the belly of the sky, spilling fragments
like flowers she once saw in southern tundra.

In oil lamp flicker, daughter rolls on bearskin,
spilling from herself a fragile, naked hunter.
He howls bloody futures for the bear. Old woman

feels the marching of the black-eyed bear. Legs
have turned to ivory underneath her; once-quick
fingers freeze in strings of amulets.

An old smile makes withered clouds and dreams
of roaming windy over ice, riding in the belly
of the bear. Grandson, bear killer, flings

his spear and lets her spirit out. Hunter bathes
himself in blood and drinks white heat and courage
from the gleaming mountain corpse. Woman lays

ghost fur out to catch a child. Aurora is
a woman, born out of a bear, spreading summer
tundra flowers over freeze.

Scott Franzen

NEBULAE M42

I want a world where black is real,
where I lose the hand in front of
my face, the pale and jaundiced lines of fate
that we read by the vagrant gypsy lights --
where the body is only its weight.

Lamp light collects and subjugates,
big city I once desired, enlightened
tunnels in which I did fail,
I did not know the night.
When the East lost its light,
I knew the fear of unwanted man.

There are no mirrors here
amidst the wilderness of stars.
Orion's thrice-studded belt rises
from the mountain yoke clear
and hunts the Pleiades
who nestle on the bull.
The ladies have kindred
beneath his belt and pulsate
in the winter night. My groin erects;
there are no mirrors here.

Frank Cady

LANDLOCKED IN MISSOULA

The Squaw does not strain, she slopes
from the river clear cold to her tip,
tit that feeds the sky, cumulus
that settles to his sleep
in her feast of sky:

two rivers in, one out in
this womb of a valley;
when the winds blow full,
I can see the Clark Fork's opening,
which is no opening, but into the labyrinthine
ways of the Rocky Mountains to the sea:

to the south, the angular planes
of Mother Lolo's guardian breast.

Frank Cady

An Untitled Story

by Tim Nettles

However scorching the sun, the people working in the office felt none of its severity. They all attended to their official off-hand pausing minutes--before the last hour of scurrying, yawning, trying or pretending to wrap something up--possibly enjoyable chewing gum, drinking fountain, cigarette involvement, bracketed moments. And came back to their work in silence. Fritz Kamer, not moved, sat thinking, at his small drab sore desk, inconspicuous, letting delicate private farts. Not starting, not stopping, much. I really should do something, Fritz thought; pretty soon they'll stop bringing work to me, they'll stop coming to me, they'll tell someoneelse to speak to me. But he kept wishing that his paintings were more satisfying, more complete somehow. He would make the long trip uptown to her pale green rooming house. Make her feel good tonight, he thought. He would take his subway, and a cab for the last two blocks for style; and sit with the old woman in the hall for a tiresome while, just to be gallant in Shemia's eyes, through her ears, whose room captured all the voices in the hall.

Catlike, oddly pretty, she sat in her favorite chair applying hand lotion after having polished the bathtub. Half-pleased, half-bored, she did not listen but heard the voices interacting, from some little tunnel of obscure sensations; across her face came almost imperceptible signs of agitation. She would hate a line, a lie she came right out and thought, now more than anything. Distinctly the person who now moved toward her was an invader, this ship-like Fritz who was about to enter her harbor was a threat; he was coming close to violating the desire of islands to remain islands.

The crucial pause passed, Fritz's face relaxed, he was on his way now, unsure of his lines, but sure, however cautious, of the penetrating accuracy of Shemia's poetry and truth. She responded immediately and laconically to his knock. He was perspiring, and the elevator was running its course up and down as always. She looked at his face, but what new was there to look at when the blood stopped and started, just like the traffic so close outside, red and green. Yellow, yeah, yellow. Perhaps it was better this way, it was easier to speak. His smile was uneasy, almost as if a frown was struggling to replace it; as if he was thinking but not understanding. His smile widened. His dangling hand sort of caught her by the elbow and turned her toward the kitchen. "Why are you so happy?" she asked, rather uselessly. Looking stern and threatening, she added, "Make me happy too." She needn't have added the last remark, but she had; it cost her nothing.

"Finally made it," he said breathlessly. "I thought you needed someone around who'd brighten the place up a little."

"You could have painted the wall," Shemia said tonelessly. When Fritz stared, with his vulnerable but cloudy eyes, those of a boy, she said, "Nothing . . ." as she shifted slightly in her wooden chair, and moved the ashtray closer to Fritz, who was smoking and leaning forward seriously.

From her phonograph, at what was by no means arresting volume, came a folk symphony by Tchaikovsky, the trombones and flutes tussling playfully, the flute always ringing more somehow--the record turned proudly but was hardly more noticeably present than the buzz of the refrigerator.

She looked off into space and smiled reminiscently. His suit was wrinkled and he felt uncomfortable in it, which was obvious to even the canary from the way he moved his shoulders. Shemia finished the last of her coffee. "You get fatter every day," she said.

He looked up from the ashtray at her, his eyes frightened. "You think I ought to start dieting again?" he asked.

"No sense worrying; people get ideas like that and then start worrying," she answered benignly.

I'm glad there's no TV on, he thought. The previous day, he had chanced to catch some of what he considered nightclub news followed by a commercial about how a nonaggressive but not hopeless young man's personality was crystallized by a shiny new bright red car (it had been a color TV). The music stopped.

They went down the elevator together, some nagging little tune running through her head again, their eyes peering through the grill work iron of the elevator, each staring off into something perhaps private and secret. They fell to the first floor and emerged, her arm in his: a perfectly normal couple, which the man washing a window, who saw them and winked, didn't even bother to think.

She knows that she is the referee, of the contest. She gnaws at the empty, lonely scar tissue of Fritz's heart when it begins to bark at her a little, when he shrinks so low that he strikes back at her. He once very nearly slapped her at the bottom floor in the elevator, calling her a crazy bitch and a demon (in so many words), feeling robbed and jealous of the jewel dream of love--upsetting the delicately balanced equilibrium between his rotting cavity heart and his attempts and wishes for her to close the wound. But that elevator incident was months ago, quickly buried in time, leaving only a few symbolic toothmarks on her hard oak veneer finish. Her kitchen table was cedar.

On the street, they were silent, gaping at the fairytale. A dirty-looking old man was making a soapbox speech. He was perched pretty high up on a window sill, emphasizing the importance of the moment. Weaving and swaying, slightly studied by the pedestrians, he was talking loudly and excitedly for the whole world to hear: "There was a philosopher, Descartes. He said suspect everything."

Shemia's face froze, she stopped for a moment, and her eyes gazed unattached to a shop window. Fritz picked up this moment and said, "That man, Shemia, you seem pale, please let's go. The old sonovabitch is a fool. You make some things to be such a mystery."

She picked up her tongue quick, and said, "Fritz, in our everyday life, especially with you, there is no place for mystery. You are reasonable, yielding. I'm going home to sleep. Goodnight; maybe we can meet tomorrow, maybe."

She walked home through the tenement regions of granite rock, moving through her own personal sea unknown to human beings. Lost in the fog, the cold white fog of her falsity. She began to think about Fritz. His eyes enormous and brown but so seemingly empty in their transparency. She began talking, not quite aloud. She was talking to him, sitting there in her imagination, as though he was sitting across the round kitchen table from her, in the room's greenish light, like always. She was saying all that she could have said, and she was listening to him also. She had a receptive ear for anything he might tell her about himself. He was naive, nervously twisting and turning, but she felt she was getting used to him. Shemia was finishing the conversation that she had left over from today, telling him what couldn't have been said. But, of course, it could be said now, silently to herself. When you always pretend, your body, even if not perceptibly, convulses, your mind is dark and ravaging; you feel a sick joylessness. And now it seemed amazing how quickly she had walked. Here she found herself facing her home building, familiar and rooted sound and secure, not even staring at her; and soon she was focusing in on her keyhole and scooping into her purse, making direct contact with her key. Not in the least depressed, she unlocked the door to her apartment.

SECOND SPRING
or
BRIDGE OVER CLARK'S FORK

O iron rails
O wind beneath.
O wind above
These mountain's teeth.
And river there--
You! Tiny spring--
my heart laboring.
Of what green tale
With what finesse,
Or what great weight
Of wilderness
Would blood run fire
Or bridge run skill?
What heart would fly,
What love prevail?
How many miles?
Fresh as what breeze?
Far as what wind?
High as what trees?
How big? How rough?
Took all-in-all,
Is life enough?

Alan Naslund

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

by Pat Caffrey

This large lonely continent:

A vast snowy scab on a sun-roasted globe that skewered itself on polarity.

The white clot: Rupture of a sphere contracted down from spacious latitudes,
compressed to sterile worldliness.

The archaic arachnid, squatting on a web of netted continents.

Gravity at the bottom of the world is so inappropriate.

There's nothing here to organize,

not in this land of ancient snow,
crippling whiteness. Water eroded
by cold and time to form
ice in a great rock age.
Gravity's specific

And the present is so long.

The Undertaking

When he came into our cool dry place; a man on the go going nowhere,
clothed to perpetuate a perennial man, the hoarfrost a damp fuzz on his parka:

When he spoke of actions superceding the dream, fingering his glistening
gloatee in our warmth of Coleman and Sterno (we were also rustic clods):

When he said he had only intensified the world to provide what it represented
to him; for him to speak of the world, here in this silent solid sea we live on,
where privacy easily composites to a careless need--

Then we realized we had a habit of needing only what we had.

"A brisk live gleam, a glare like wax,
a murmur in the air--

Snow smoldered on the inland hills.

My ignorance has made me rich.

I crawled under clouds that were sunning themselves.

My chuckles were bruised in the cold.

The losses I have, I don't know what they were.

I continue my journey to now everyday.

I come into a time so slow.
I never stay to see it real.
Now sense revives. I lapse into
a quiet moment in a thought.
I live a life of fiction; I've
arranged myself with lies.
When botching up my fears again,
I fear what I can be.

This venture splits my heart from my head;
my selfhood from my wordless gaze.
Reflections are the screens of my dreams;
I look to see myself.
I woke up with the sun in my eyes.
My face was warm. The snow was wet.
I stood up in the breeze to smile.
What is a question? That's all that I need."

When he asked us out for a day hike in the morning,
we decided that that was just what we wanted.
Why attend the thermometer and seismograph?
We all had an *, and we were in a strange land.
We had always felt freedom in this land.

"I can't relate what's right and what is real," he urged,
desiring an opportunity for coincidence,
but we had already assented. It's only something you know in June.
We would leave a note for the provisions man who comes by early in the morning,
when things look new. We would make our preparations while our visitor regained
his stamina and the midnight hours passed.

The Overtaking

The room was full of conspicuous bodies. We settled down to sleep.
"For years I have never felt truly rested," he said. We wondered
What had he done out there? How had he lived? What was his purpose?

We, inmates for science, abided internal environments, too.
Lapses we found, permaprest in the memory: Nights extended--
Blackless, Soundless--The sky has no color and all shadows beckon:
Expressions of ancestors ripe in ourselves.
The mind has a mind of its own, and responses
Cannot be described; only stripped, recognized.

He dreamed in drones. The lantern nodded---

" The wind scours my face and freezes my tears as I face the icy gusts
" I do not know how cold it is perhaps Seventy below
" I strike my mittened hands to regain the painful tingling
" These furs are glazed in rime I recline upon white land
" under gleaming sky The numbness: past my toes
" that bundle in the south remains they have not moved
" they will not freeze in hell as we preferred
"

" I lounge out the nipping chill in peaceful delirium
" sundry phantoms fading blowing colors
" flung through the sky-glowing green and blue and yellow
" white realm burns with cold I love you, clouds
" my molecules vibrate the lower land blushes
" A gold-enveloped lavender stratus the solar load
" pulsing through serrated sillouettes
" in the old colors and patterns that are always new anyway.
"

" The squall has quit. The sky is full of frost dust.
" Scorpio--shadow of the lost frontier.

" The snow has turned tranquil blue under the mellow silver vividness
" In these days the zone has received my legs.

" I was warm, but I'm naked under my clothes.

" You never see a star. You only see its light.

" The whole land flashes. The moon is high in the sky,
" parallel to its halo. The land shines all colors. Borealis
" in robes of flowing light icicles of the galaxy splashing
" the moon and bounding to lasso the noose,
" hanging loosely in the sky with diamonds
" twinkling spectrums of the aurora, flaring
" tripping over the universe.

" I lower my eyes.

" The shimmering land is on fire--rainbow fevers
" I'm going numb all over. It will be soon.

" Lamps in the pass
" forging, twirling crystals slowly in the air
" drifting through, floating up and down
" precipitating, falling, stirring the turquoise fluorescence in
" currents of movement, suspended, a somber glitter of saturation
" Drifting through sand at the bottom of a moonlit tropical sea.
" I'm shivering to life. There's a breeze. Ice in my veins--
" It's below zero all night. The wind beds me down.

The Expedition

Both instruments read zero.
Rising free from care and opening the door, the purple plain was outside down.
We done summersaults stepping out, bulky boys.
The wind was gray and silent in the twilight.
We fed the sled, sporadic visible images in the bare weak dawn--
Like morons, harnessing ourselves, dashing off
Crazy calm; a frenzy of fresh confidence.

Lemon fibers, crisp in the blue, above a mountain range,
Scooping scarlet out of the hardy chill to clear the land.
We crave the cravability embracing white simplicity.

White is the capacity for sight.
Night is the winter minus light.
That is, we could see how alone we were.
The sun was making things perfectly clear.

We were out of provisions when we encountered liquid ice at the Ross Shelf--
A jade steaming sea, toppled flat
 from a perpendicular precipice
 Lofty as the sky--
 Grey, with copper cirrus.
Shaped in seasons, shattered in seconds:
Stupendous divisions, expansive diffusions--
Durable Water falling, Blue ripping Thunder roaring,
Terrific explosions, a trance of collapses--
Immaculate cleavages, falling with ease--
A spasm of shadows, a seizure of seas;
The bergs have no answers.
A secret thing matters.

Fluke-warm water--A Frolic of Penguins:
Diving for fish, milky mass in the deep black turquoise,
 shining in subtle distortions.
Pirating an iceberg, skylarking, patting flappers--
Standing regiments, each an integer,
Little legs strutting like fluid, cavorting;
Dancing, silently mimicing--ridiculous twitching of wings, elementary.
Web feet scuttling--Mutiny:
They hopped into the inlet, swam across,
Took to the land.

One had a fish. A scuffle. They slashed and tore,
Fashionable Fiends. One pecked on the head, One tugged on the guts--
The meat lay splintered on the gleaming ground. We laughed.

We found brains and entrails all over Merry Bird Land--
The others had taken the meat.
We pressed for the Shetlands and ate of the scraps,
Pronouncing the wet desolation with presence.

Fog fermented in the rocks.
Lead clouds sank from sea to sky.
Color sifted down, condensing nowadays in the winters' luminary blueprint.
The air stank.
There was a Walrus. The walrus is the polar elephant.

Massive mustached grocery store,
Flattered by those tuskless little serviceable beggars,
Sealing their approval of his luster. They bring
Shellfish on which he indulges.
We dredged for the revolver.

The hogs took wing as we, lumbering bipeds with
Swollen heads, ran retarded on the open side of sand
where the shells of once-hapless oysters are Insinuated.
Enlisting the piece, our pilot sighted
Straightforward and fired.

Shot the wind. Drew a bead--Singlehanded volley, redundant----
Projected to the heart of gray matter.

You could have heard a tear drop.
We drooped over the puppyfaced relic:
Eyes seeping to form mucus on the rims of the lids,
Caking in frozen black blocks. His hulk was so wrinkled,
Being that elephants never forget.
I wonder if I've changed.

After we butchered the walrus we headed for the pole, the center omissions.

We contracted months to take in those thousands of miles.
The land is free and unique and always continuing.

It was scarcely odd that the sky was always overcast.
The opportunity for hideous mistakes is tremendous, and we shared so well,
but the hurting is more dreadful than the loss. After all,
we had left salt water and fresh food. All we had
after the first week was walrus fat. We became ravenous--
Succumbing to what we wanted, not what we had.
The sun circled high overhead.

At the pole we found
Nothing. Nobody. None. Zero. We ate the last of the blubber.
"I've realized something so overwhelmingly significant that it has
Escaped my mind," he exclaimed. We discoursed,
Determining the pole to be a reference point,
Describing where one is at, not what's around him.

A human can live for weeks without food.
We admitted we could not outlast the locality.
The base was too remote, and the day would end in several weeks--
Provoking sudden nocturnal blizzards.

We thought we might attain the Queen Maud Range,
perhaps sustain beyond and drop in on Mount Erebus.
We had to endure at least to the range.
The British Quartermasters crossed there in April and might rove for us.

We clumped and slept; envisioning the sun
Vaulting over volcanic peaks before stumble tumble time,
then six months of darkness.

We woke up later in the middle of the day, a fringe of time.
The sled was on its side, killed by the wind. A shiver hurt the pain.
The lie was lost. We lingered bleakly. Grimness made us cry inside.
We clustered thinly in the Western Hemisphere and struck out north.

There's something valid in a dream.
Our feelings are a part-time thing.
A little pain can hurt no one.
The clouds had hid inside the sun.

We fear precisely what we crave.
Our peace of mind initiates
A conscious ignorance. The mind:

It has no exits. In spite of ourselves
We were so happy and cracked that stingy
Solemn air with chirps and roars.
The chill went limp. The wind was still.

Sun swooped into a spiral, and we surged from here to here.
Snow smoked across the ice pack, keenly streaked from there to there--
Unstrung like sand upon that desert, absolutely soluble.
We strolled, enchanted, chanting vespers to the steward and his vices.

An Allied Glint. It seemed like years.
Exceleration hazes air--
Deep in diamond dust to blaze a frosty face, and looking up--
Frigid parching, clean and shining,
Sparkling sundogs, blinding--The metallic sphere. Blue margin on
The semicircle skyline.

Peak-capped snow. Unique and silent--
Sunny level lapping up the cold clean rock, approaching us:
Pacing that unsurveyed territory, crackling--Chipper and thrill.
The harness sprawled across the crust;
The sleigh was standing fast.

Senile fellows, backed by brass.
Ridges, fissures, crags entire
Defined in contrast, audible--
Sceneries merge to memories while they are still before us: Prefaced,
As lack to seems, or fact to dreams.

We halted half way up the mantled mantle, on a ledge.
The continent blew bright across the wind. An alpine sea
Overhung a lean horizon scanty higher up the globe.

"I've decided to scale it alone," he scrawled upon the racing air.
"We are destined to do what we choose. I thrive on loneliness and now
I have no reason for this theme. Things verify themselves.

I can no longer give myself to causes. I have found
My living will be given to effects. I'm lost in what I've found.
White nurses white. I've lost a loss. Now sit you down. Farewell."

A smug melancholy. We snuggled to starve.
He strode away, cheerfully serene.
Sight the actuality? To squint and blur

In the clear force. Embalmed in
Muffled volume from an outer space permeated by weather.
Our naked eyes. They never froze. So in us we were there.

The landscape has no skull. The jaw
Bolts weight upon the glacial tongue.
A repast for eternity to suck upon a size.

We scanned the indentation, and we found him in the nick of time.
The tallest peak shed snow into its ensign, crimson gale.
He waved to us and to the drowsy shutter. Hypnotized, it yawned.
The wind turned in itself and moved the mountain, and he fell.

Arose to represent himself, a robust sanctuary.
Strides a-glide, heaves to a pose. Distinguishes the banner--
Helmsman for the glacier, ice staff stable. There she blows.

Fervent leering, chipped face crisp; a stern exhilaration--
Impulse, pounding bounds, soarmounting--issuing arrested phases.
Leaps at space on listing summit,
Cries in gaze and grits his eyes--
Burgundy rivet, pinhead of jet streamer,
Light speck spun in a dusky study, howling--
Ice dust taking off, intimate.
Flagging. Wheezing plume to upstart peaks intimidate.

It's nice to be a daddy for a weekend.
Zoos and parks, swims and swings,
Pink happiness on a paper cone;
Leading happy hands and being led,
Growing high from sipping little smiles,
Seeing adult eyes return to springtime.

But it's also sad to be a weekend daddy.
Those haunting questions, "When? Again?"
The "Isn't Mommy pretty?" hope;
Years of wasted bedtime hugs.
And all the while those knowing eyes
With goodbye cries for daddy who is leaving.

Linwood Laughy

THE FALL

Crack of pain, ring
Bend to the snap of thunder.
Bow low, humble
against the murderous rain.
A bursting sky, a flash
to light the cry of violence.

To glisade:
Alone between white and sky,
tumbling

And shatter:
a drop of rain on cement
or
a hand thrust against glass.
Gently drifting,
pushing the night aside,
searching for ground
to be still.

A fallen tree,
roots embrace the naked sky.
White ashes drift
down an endless slope.
Screaming arms clutch
The emptiness
of a forgotten meadow.

S. R. Smith

CALLEY SPEAKS

My voice is a dry rattle
like machineguns in the distance,
a military cadence of short clipped
assertions without flag or brass band.
"Thought I was a gun--fired a burst."

Unarmed civilians in an open trench,
a chorus of reality--buzzing--screaming.
M-16 against my machine man side
fills the back of my fear
with a smoking concussion.

My forehead hot as a furnace:
I'm echoing German staccatos
played in a glass boothed judgement
bulletproof years from Nuremburgh.
"An order is a commandment."

Jury verdict guilty, the sentence life.
A rivelet of words bubbles madly
through my thin tight lips
like an epileptic's bloody spittle.
"Yes, Sir. Certainly, Sir. Why not?"

Robert Bingham

AS I WATCH HER GO

The plane sweeps up into the low overcast
faster than the wind. The fired roar follows
making too real the graceful parting.
Inside a numbed smile held by the perfume of her last touch
my confusion grows into caverns,
and as the wind takes tears that will not reach her
I see no clearer. Always going back
to what is never the same, our home
may be at most in those clouds.
There will be a note in the room,
some small chord meant for joy
but sounding false in this day
when clouds have absorbed the sun.

Bill Burriss

MY BAD LUCK

Like a simple heart the morning light grows.
Laugh to see a quiet sun rise
To follow the long arm river.
Eyes of mountains peer over tall grass hills.
Thundering eyes; bristling green.

A town of children.
Naked, they drop their game and run.
The sheriff has a great belly,
He wears his star upside down.
And the golden-haired idiot boy
That no one would have
Is led around on a leather string
By an old woman.
She laughs and spits.
A cloud's funereal march across the sky.

Dust in the alley.
Faces pressing toward the wooden ring,
The gaming-cock's unnatural talon.
The feathered backs arch;
The bloody head to a lucky child.
And the little knife, still wet,
Is covered in its sheath of leather.
Dark and light move upon the earth.

Damp scented places, where the mouse listens.
A crayfish in the slow moving pool.
The old woman, with a small dry beetle
Draws out the fever,
Loads her eye with power.
Thunder and rain!
Surely it is the rage of a witch.
And, on a branch where the water flows down,
The little animal that chirps.

Steven Bridenbaugh

WAYSIDE BROTHERS

by Jim Warburton

In a fraternity, it's pledge night. There's a party in the basement and beer is flowing, more beer than I've seen my whole freshman year. I'm a pledge. There are thirteen others. The brotherhood is on hand, hugging pledges, chugging beer, throwing beer. You can hardly stand on the basement floor it's so slick with beer. A drunk pledge proclaims "This is MY HOUSE" and punches his fist through the low ceiling. The brothers just laugh: he'll get his later, but for now that's the spirit. I'm off in a corner, feeding dimes into a pinball machine. Pledge-brother Mark Rosenthal, a dark-haired spunky little kid, walks over with two large cups of beer.

"Hey. Here," he says. "Chug."

We chug our cupfulls, triumphantly flicking the leftover suds on the floor.

"How you doing on this thing?" he asks.

"As you can see. You try it."

Mark positions himself behind the machine and I go off to the keg for more beer. Some brother whose name I haven't learned yet puts his arm around me, bellowing "Pledge Ward! We'd almost given up getting you in this house."

The atmosphere is infectious, I'm pretty drunk. "I'd about given up," I say, "getting into any house."

"You chose right, Dave, boy."

I make it back to Mark in time to see him click off three free games. I give him a beer, set mine on the window ledge, and push the button for the next game.

"Hey, you know Ward, we oughta be roommates next year."

It was a damn good idea and I told him so, and now, looking back, that's something I can point to. In that small men's college in eastern Pennsylvania, as late as 1966, you either pledged a fraternity or you suffered. It was as simple as that, and I know of only one freshman who could have pledged a fraternity and declined to do so. So that night I had truly arrived: a fraternity, and not a bad one, wanted me; on top of that, this kid that I liked already was going to be my roommate. We would be College Friends, bet on it.

Rosenthal and I made it through Hell Week--Mark indomitable, shouting through his own puke "Phi Sig is cake"--, and we survived the semester, intact. We went our separate ways that summer and returned in the fall to share a third-floor room in the Phi Sig house. It was a nebulous college year, a time of transition when, by and large,

you had to chart your values in isolation. There weren't any political alliances for comfort, or any pot-filled rooms to drift through--or, if there were, you didn't know about it. To encounter a person like Mark Rosenthal, someone that understood and was searching too, was a stroke of luck. In that sanctuary, secure in our third-floor room, we played early Dylan albums, Eric Anderson, and a lot of Woody Guthrie. We talked about the highway as if it were a living entity, or an extension of our souls. Rosenthal--doctor's son from New Jersey--and I--third generation off a Midwestern farm--talked a lot about roots; our values became our roots, and our roots, organic or inorganic (we could never tell which, and it made some difference) became our sole lifeline in that structure of fraternity, of college, and of then we knew not what.

We hit the road, too--little weekend jaunts, and then, over Christmas break, hitchhiking to Denver; screaming, young, praying to the highway gods in the below-zero Wentzville, Missouri night to see us through. Which they did, of course, although we had to pray again and scream louder in Kimball, Nebraska.

Then, back in school, early second semester, came the rush dinner. In silence, Mark and I put on suits and ties for the first time in months, and descended the stairs to the dining room, possessors--we thought--of some knowledge that couldn't be communicated to freshmen, at least under the auspices of a rush dinner. We were each seated at tables with the less-promising freshmen, the borderline cases. We ate prime rib and were probably less at ease than many of the freshmen.

We moved into an apartment the next day. But, God knows how, we were talked into still eating our meals at the house. So there was still that small formal tie to the fraternity, and in the spring we utilized that tie by signing up to play for Phi Sig's softball team in the Interfraternity League.

It'd be a lie to say the league wasn't competitive. Given a choice, who wants to lose? Besides, it was unbearable for a fraternity to conceive of defeat from certain others. But the real value lay in the sport, in the springtime release of tension, the chance to lope after a fly ball or make a long accurate throw or connect solidly with a pitch.

Mark played centerfield and batted leadoff. He had speed and bunting ability, and he poked solid line drives with regularity. I caught and usually batted sixth. We went into the last game with a slight chance of winning the league, which meant we would have our name on a plaque or something, or compile x number of points toward the overall Interfraternity trophy. We had to beat Kappa Sig, easy enough, but then Chi Phi had to lose its remaining game, which wasn't at all likely.

I left our apartment that May day, pounding my glove. I got an ice cream at the corner store and walked five blocks to the Phi Sig house. The team piled into three cars and we drove to the softball fields. Mark had pedalled out on his bicycle and was waiting.

"Hey, Ward," he smiled.

"Ha-a-y, Rosenthal."

"Grab a bat and fungo me some. I want to run my ass off."

I started hitting flies, swinging smoothly, trying to send out some long ones. Four more from our team joined Mark. The others played catch. Then Chick Thompson, our pitcher, called me over to warm him up. It was a joke really, or a formality, warming him up, because Thompson was one of the slowest pitchers in the league. He went out and just lobbed the ball. Thompson thought he was an ace pitcher, and I suppose he was, since no one else on our team could even get the ball over the plate with regularity. Walks, in this league, were fatal; too many, and the game burst wide open.

Kappa Sig's pitcher, we soon found out, was sharp, real sharp. It was obvious after a few innings how much Kappa Sig's chances lay with their pitcher. We couldn't touch him. Mark tried a bunt but lined to the third baseman. My first time up, I grounded to short. In the third inning we cracked through for two runs, but that only evened the score. We started to worry, just a little--normally, in these games, you couldn't be safe unless you had upwards of a ten-run margin. And normally we had it.

With one out in the top of the fifth, and a runner on third, the Kappa Sig clean-up man hit a long foul down the right field line. I flipped off my mask and waited in front of the plate. Mark was running over from center, yelling at the rightfielder to let the ball drop, that it was foul. He caught it anyway, a fine catch, but pretty useless. He didn't even attempt a throw to the plate, and I saw the runner smile as he scored.

"Hey! What the fuck you doing?" Chick yelled.

"Scoring the go-ahead run," the Kappa Sig broadened his smile.

"Yeah. Fuck if you are. That was a foul ball, dummy."

"Thompson, you asshole!" someone yelled from the Kappa Sig bench. "It doesn't make any goddamn difference if it was foul or not."

Chick was at the first-base line, approaching the Kappa Sig players. "Which one of you Kappa Sig mother-fuckers called me that?" Both Watson, our first baseman, and I started after him. Watson reached him and blocked his path. "C'mon Chick," Watson said. "The run counts, c'mon, the run counts."

Maybe it was embarrassing, I don't know, to be a college senior in America, the pitcher of a pretty decent softball team, and not know that a runner could tag up on a foul ball as well as fair. Anyway, Chick walked the next two batters. Then someone fished for a bad pitch and I caught the foul pop-up.

We thought we would break the game wide open any inning, but we were running out of innings and we were still a run behind. And now we had Thompson to cope with. He was really pissed. Although we knew he was wrong, he was a Phi Sig, man, a brother, so most of us

were picking up on his anger. Irritation seeped in, here and there, and Kappa Sig was the ostensible focus. We were even claiming the Kappa Sig pitcher was pitching illegally, flicking the ball more sidearm than underhand.

And by the bottom of the seventh, the last inning, we were down another run. It was 4-2. I led off with a single up the middle, but the next batter forced me out at second. A walk put runners on first and second. Thompson struck out. Mark stepped up to bat, silent. Christ, he'd been silent for the last three innings; it was one of those moods and I knew I couldn't approach him, and shouldn't try.

He powered the first pitch into right-center. There weren't any fences and the ball shot through the two outfielders and kept rolling.

Sonofabitch! God! Rosenthal! we were screaming. Two runs were scoring, the game was tied, and with Rosenthal's speed he might make it all the way.

Except we hadn't counted on Rosenthal's not running.

My roommate stood at the plate, calmly watching the rolling ball. The baserunners almost knocked him over. Then he walked away, put down the bat and picked up his glove. Three or four guys mobbed and shoved him. "What the fuck do you mean, Rosenthal?" Thompson was almost out of his head.

"Let the Jew go," I heard someone say.

Mark got on his bicycle and rode away. He wasn't around for the extra inning when we pushed across a run to win. Wasn't around either, as the brothers of Phi Sigma Kappa, arms on shoulders in a circle, gave the mock cheer "Rah rah rah Kappa Sig! Rah rah rah Kappa Sig! Rah rah rah Kappa Sig!"

If I was lucky enough to make love with a girl that spring, a girl from town or a contact at a mixer, warm spring air cool over our naked bodies, my mind would most likely be out the window, I would be nine years old again--running, spring of the step in just soggy ground, basepaths drying mud. It was possible to run like Al Kaline, to be Al Kaline, and even though I was just learning the sport I was consumed totally by love. And I felt it, felt the daily growing better, on the fresh soggy ground, running not without, I now imagine, a kind of grace.

I'd come a long way in college. In another month I would be technically by the wayside, if I wasn't all ready, and I had come from the freshman dinner first week of the first semester, young men fanning out in the quad at twilight, in suits and blazers (world there for the grabbing); come from that to an upstairs apartment bedroom in a no longer quaint but stifling Eastern red brick row-house, tortuous scent in spring of lilacs. I'm in that room with a girl, it's Saturday afternoon, I'm about to make an impossible catch when I crash hard into orgasm. Soon I get up and go to the desk. On the desk is a stack of long novels that must be read in an increasingly short time. If I don't read them

it's for sure I flunk out; if I somehow get them all read, maybe I flunk out anyway. To complicate matters, whether or not I flunk out I'm not at all sure is the problem. If the girl stays, I end up back on the mattress.

My College Career went into that girl. Or if she wasn't there it went into a chilled bottle of wine on a spring afternoon, or it was in a long talk with Rosenthal. Or finally, maybe it was in the way I stared out the open window (light air drifting in) at the small patch of green grass and lilac bushes, behind which was an alley and the back of a factory building and, further still, the giant looming nighttime-neoned TASTYCAKE sign. I'd see that sign at four in the morning when, unable to sleep, I'd add up the pages in all the unread novels and divide by the number of days left until finals, and promptly get busy on the next day's quota of pages.

"Hoo," Mark said when I walked in the apartment.

"Yeah. Hoo. HOO," I laughed. "Did you buy beer?"

"You damned right," he smiled.

I brought back two cans from the refrigerator. "I was still around, I thought they'd kill me. They kept saying well he's your roommate, and then someone said ah they're both the same only one of them's got a nose."

"Oh yeah? Which one's that?"

"It took good balls," I said. I was proud.

"Nah. No balls. Just a sick stomach and rubbery legs. I couldn't run, swear to God." Then he added, "But Christ, that hit felt good."

"Well, you tied it up. Sort of gave both teams a chance. Oh shit, drink up," I said. "We're running out of time." We'd vowed to fill the living room with beer cans before school was out. Cans had been accumulating for three weeks now.

Mark looked at the clusters of cans on the end tables and the floor. "Maybe if we filled up the room before school's over, then we could just leave anyway."

"Sure, that's fair."

"This fucking place." He tossed his can into the corner. Mark was leaving next year for his junior year in France.

"You son of a bitch," I said. "You'll be in Strasbourg next year, and for all I know I'll be on the highway."

"You're the son of a bitch, cutting my throat getting all that road time in."

"A goddamn junction in Kansas."

"Ah! No, no. Wyoming."

"Saskatchewan."

"Hoo. Saskatoon."

"Girl From the North Country."

Mark held his head. "Ahhhhhh!"

Of course, we never filled up the room. Mark got drunk and sick the night before his father came from New Jersey to take him home. His pa looked the apartment over, not quite concealing his disdain. A bit of Joe College here, that's about what it was in our own way, Joe College. And before I left I filled eight boxes with beer cans. I went home to Illinois, and where I've been since I'm not going to say.

THE VIOLIN

Only yesterday the news came to me.
I found it on the doorstep, rolled
parchment tied with cord.
Unrolling the cracking paper I read:
Uncle Knute died you have inherited
one violin bow and a booklet
"The Finney Fingering Method."
Too bad I don't have a violin, I said.

This morning the news came to me.
I found it on the doorstep, folded
newspaper held with a rubberband.
Turning to the reviews I read:
Miss Finney's Violin Concert Best Ever Held
in Carnegie Hall, her fingering delicate,
precise but so soft as not to be heard -
Too bad she didn't have a violin, it said.

Malinda Finney

ON

when the semi-famous come
you don't have to know what to say
you say, as humbly as time will allow,
I'll try to bore you no more than the others

and go on about crazy acquaintances, drugs
what fanatics and politicians want

and go on about traveling in time or mind
what you come back to after you've been

and go on through smoky alcohol wit, trying
not to breathe on each other, or confess

and go on with names from books as though
they belong to you like a holiday

and on through beseeching drunks, fools
proving themselves, praise lying dead on the floor

then stop
hope there is no
finite number of words and go on

Barrett Briggs

THE REFUSAL

The old woman downstairs is dying.
Her coughing at night is like an axe
hacking frozen sea within me.
Each night I hear her sputter, choke, rattle--
In another town a woman dies of asthma.
Not here. It is not here people die.
Not in this country, this spring.

It is April. Crocuses crack the earth.
Morning rain prods buds on the trees.
Pods of spring crouch near my door.
Hard calyxes. Like swaddling clothes.
Outside there is no death.

And what of the dead? Shall we bless them?
Impeach all our claims and walk resigned?
I am not resigned. I know what I know.
They lie in the damp earth, the brave ones,
for whom being sane was no longer enough.
They deride the priest's last words
and refuse the blessing.
What of their refusal?

April understands.
The dead drag their harvest behind them.

Linda Swanberg

DEATH OF THE GRANDFATHER

He's afraid;

Seventy years of
Coming to this time and
What did he find to
Cushion the strain and silent scream
Of his own dying.

He hated to be coughing so loud it
Embarrassed us all with
Helplessness and fear.

We stood around the white and chrome bed
In the public, clean, sick smelling room.
His hand lay on the covers reaching open
For another younger one to grasp.
I saw and moved near, but left him
Alone.

I heard after he died that he had been
Persuaded to the faith in time
By his only son.
I was not present to those moments of
Old fear.
I could only pray that what he had known
Of life before had something of what he wanted,
Because the end of his time was but another dying.

Jan Fuglevand

DAVID'S CABIN

White horses step to the window,
pause,
wheel and tear sod
as they flee reflections.

No graves mark this valley.
Indian bones, picked clean
by the air, are scattered too wide
to find. Our papers fill
the air with words, sighs echo
the wind in our chimney.

A bald eagle circles lower into the valley,
chases our shadow into the rock.
We join the night,
looking east.

Paul S. Zeigler

ROCK PAINTING FOR A PEOPLE
WITHOUT DREAMS

Strange, the things we leave behind,
stick men painted on rocks,
red ochre sprinkled over bones.
The Indian has a word for it,
the hoop that brings time back,
a wind-tide flooding
onto snow, chipping years
from our hands to silt dreams to stone--
fingerbones of children,
a painted deer with calm gaze.

A. D. Zeigler

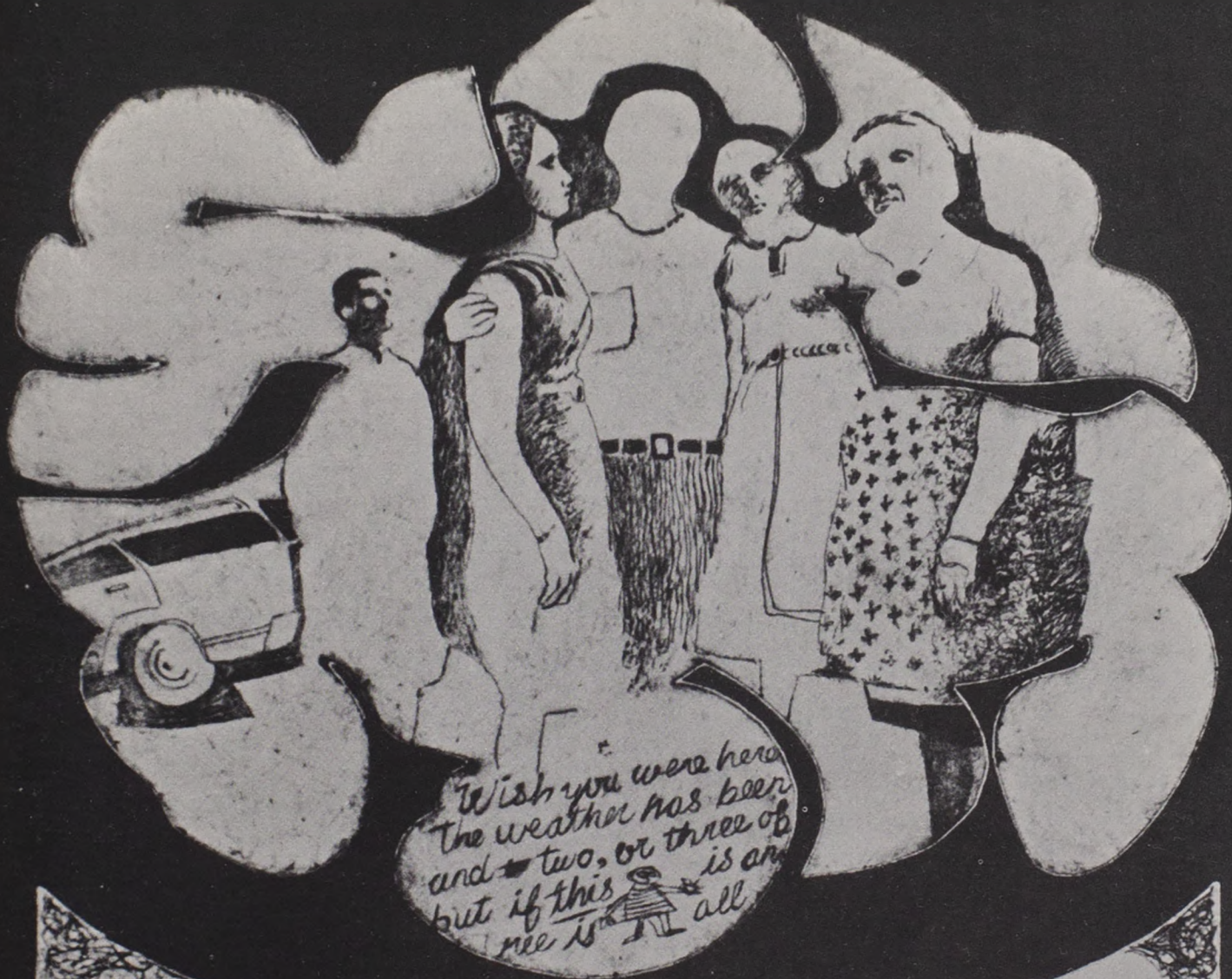
ROAD EAST

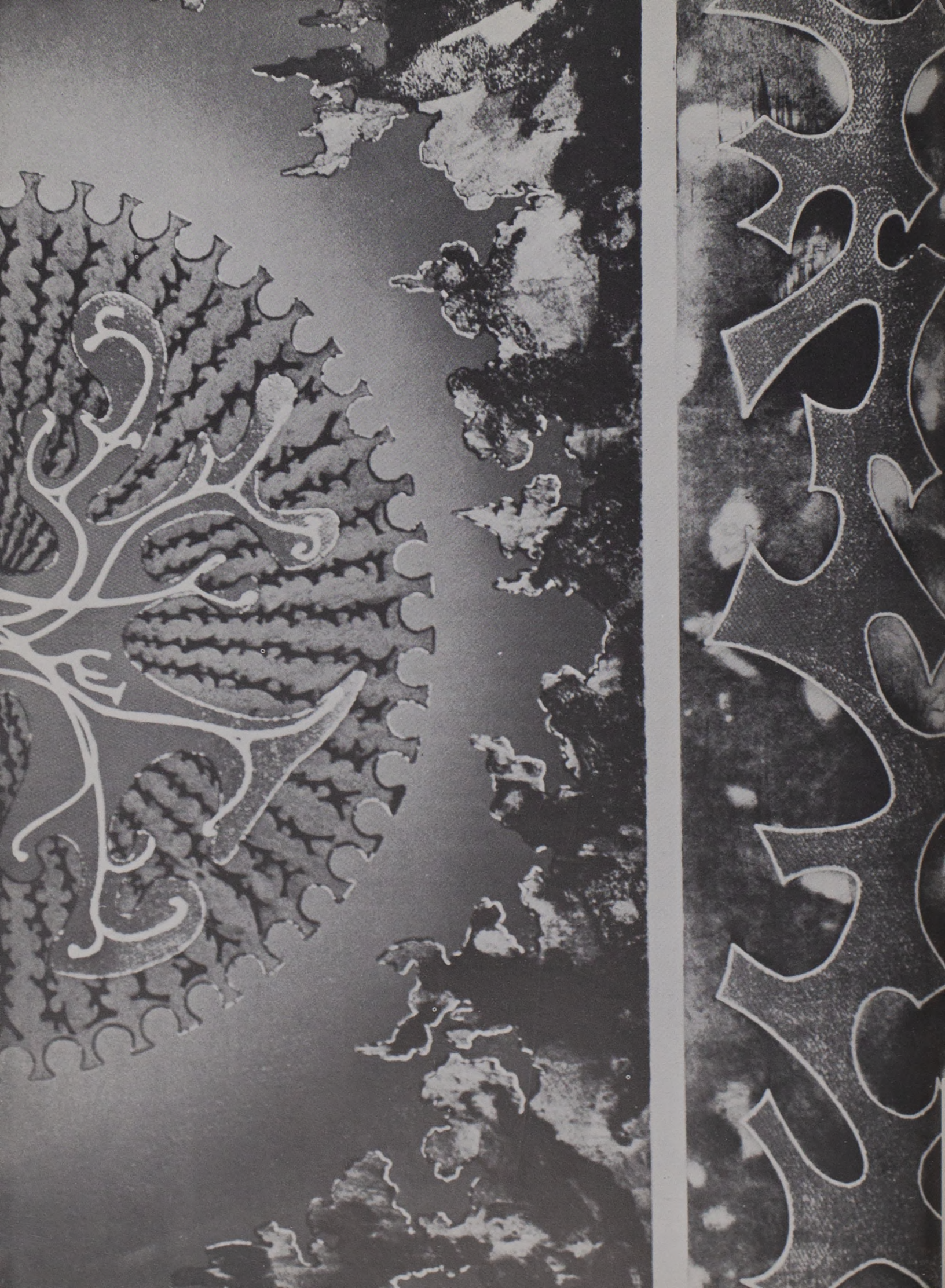
Arrows point to weigh stations, the only light
from Clinton to Drummond. Signs leap into headlights,
fall away into dark. Food, phone.
no services.

Fenceposts hitchhike east, guide the cows
still walking the road this fall.

Silver Bow, Rocker, Ramsey . . .
old towns die so long. These people with arsenic
in their bones know time,
watch it edge children's faces,
dry valley soil. In Butte,
hunger has pinched the mineshafts closed.

Paul S. Zeigler





LET ME IN I WON'T GO AWAY

by Barrett Briggs

I pounded the door of course if she's home or not. She must be home I saw her park her gray Opel in her regular parking space and hurry into the trailer looking around like she knew I was watching except she can't know about my telescope. I hit my knuckle on a nail that she might have used to hang a Christmas wreath or notes to her visitors. Again of course it comes clear that the trouble with my part of the world is texture. Too rough with nails sticking out for anybody who pounds to get cut. This nail bent and rusted because after her last message she left it stuck in the door, not thinking somebody new to her house would stick a knuckle on it only trying to see if she's home. While she doesn't answer I'll bleed and maybe she'll feel how the texture got me if I show her the nail. I heard she is not hard but soft as I thought seeing her through the shades when before I tried to find her home. I should have touched the door for the nail then but saw her home and being polite only watched. She saw what she looked at when looking at her man, her other man on top of her hair and face and his toes curled while she looked through his hair topping the long flat head. Smiling like that at each other I couldn't just go in and say hello because what if they got upset and wouldn't let me come back. And seeing them happy I knew that if they knew I saw them laughing and scratching each other they would be sad. I think they would not want to share their fun but this could be me. I would gladly claim not to be a voyeur such as one who peeps on anybody. But not an accident I saw her sweat and get up to fry the eggs her other man sat down to eat while she washed from a pail right there in plain view from the window. I wish the nail could have been seen or I knocked on the door then when texture was her soft wet hair and not blood drying on my knuckle.

She is not unknown to me (my telescope) but she wouldn't recognize me even the blood will dry before she gets here I'm sure she hears the pounding. I look at the nail and her house now is rough and necessary that she comes to see who I am at the door even if to say no. I know her very well all her body shines after the shower and the playful way she looks naked at herself in the mirror. But not knowing me I think she can't worry or be scared just because I'm bleeding. She might get out bandaids and wrap up my finger so no infection could keep me away when we get to know each other and understand the dangerous door I pounded because of the other metal walls around the trailer. Her walls would take knocks better than the nail but to get in through them I would be a different man again and not sweaty with eggs on my mind and cooking them not a good idea.

Well is she thinks the moon is flat looking through my telescope set up in my backyard to see the craters sometimes Saturn when it's there. Well maybe so. I know different when I saw the telescope work in the store it was different from anything because texture. The craters up close are easy to see as a hill in your backyard that you climb with your eyes the broken rocks and dust can't hurt your eyes if you can see you climbing up the hill and over down the other side.

She worries me and herself if she doesn't come and see why I stand at the door thinking of this thing. This not pounding on her door for the nail.

If she would come to my house or only look in I could open the door right away or take her to the telescope to watch her neighbors in the trailer court or her trailer to see who comes knocking to see her.

Christ the tv didn't work again how could I have stayed home and thought about her. I liked the shows not telling me about texture because a good sign is seeing through it all. The people mashed together all on the glass surface and talking like it was somebody out there listening who would answer or write letters saying I saw you. I am called dumb and worse to like it not textured but that's what makes the trouble of the world go away when I see no texture.

I hear her now walking in the trailer and how could she not want to know why it's me out here. I don't know but see it in eyes at my job where people come in blind and leave blinder paying for it. The doctor says don't discourage the customers telling them you can see the way you want if it looks the same all the time why get eyeglasses because you only pay to see what everybody else sees the same way only now you can still remember how it was to see your way. And because it's cosmetic jewelry he sells also to get them to want the most expensive kind like other people wear. But I say why pay to have what people who see good without help don't wear around the head hurting the ears and nose. The doctor keeps me anyway I'm doing good not talking into their ears because likely they can't hear or wouldn't see the fancy glasses on my face.

She is without helps for ears and eyes I know sure. It is not that way in paradise and I am not a funny man or stingy she can tell by the flowers in my car.

Today I ran fast picking flowers from backyards where I didn't think owners could see me or if they did wouldn't have time to call the police I'd run away because I know hiding places by fences, in trees and under trailers nobody can find. Mrs. Bennett talks to me everyonce in a while about what could happen to her roses because as soon as she plants them I dig them up they're in the way by her fence when I jump over it coming home from getting flowers for a special person like this pretty girl in the trailer. The roses never have time to bloom which could be a mistake since what pretty girl can't be interested with flowers. Left in my car they are my way of not worrying her inside with some phony thing like flowers stuck in her face for her to say--Oh, how nice,

let me water them--Rather she should say--Oh, it's you, let me meet you without silly flowers--And roses have their thorns her hand could get cut like my knuckle from the nail. I would be the cause of her blood except that she is not the cause of mine or I hit the nail myself just knocking on her door wanting to say hello, I notice you, if so far only through my telescope. Or I could give these flowers to somebody not special as a lady on some streetcorner not imagining me as I drive by thinking how wonderful her legs end in feet that touch the cement or pavement and carry her away with her new flowers. Inside the trailer her feet pound the floor she is wanting to find out what I want but can only think of where to hide or am I being silly since she doesn't know me.

Okay then why not? I could be not at her door or as easy somewhere else to waste my time waiting to show her. I could be flying too fast to stop my dream over her house and not think of her without my telescope or her eyes turned to the ceiling wondering if her ears hear what she can't see. I pound her door harder again with my good hand that isn't bleeding and hit it real hard pound after pound until I think it's weak enough just to break down and go in to her where she won't have to put up with the noise because inside I wouldn't talk much with her if she just opens the door and sees it's me and that I have made up my mind to be near enough this time so that we are too close to talk or make many noises at all.

I hear her walking again and her feet are pounding like my good hand on the door and luckily this time I miss the nail and my good hand stays good because I don't hit the nail anymore. Maybe I should have the flowers from my car that she could see looking through a crack in the curtains over the door window and she would see the smile and the flowers promising that if her texture is too rough I will leave anyway and never remember her. But she doesn't look only keeps pounding the floor with her feet and I keep knocking and pounding now she must know for sure it is me and how long can she stay in there without opening the door and telling me in her own voice something if it is only that she has something else to do.

AARDVARK

First was the name:
when I found you
you were the first animal
in the dictionary. I loved you
because of the two a's that began
your name, they told me why
you had to be nocturnal.

Then I thought of you and your ants,
you...aardvark! Your name, it's what
the ants say with their bodies
when they swarm, they spell you
as they file beneath the separate blades
of grass, going home.
You, destroyer of ant order!

(Ant sleep:
they dream of being shoe-wearers,
heavy walkers
up the boneless length of your tongue,
your conic snout. They fear the absolute
welling that comes alongside your tongue;
a protracted, mounting sound that surges
around their body segments and finally
washes over the tongue-edges to
carry them....)

The dictionary makes note of your
"enormous salivary glands,"
but says nothing of that sound,
that sound of which you are so proud
even, lonely, in love-making.
Aardvark, should I whisper your name?

George Manner

NOW TO THOSE QUESTIONS ON PREGNANCY

She is crazy
with pregnancy.
She designs impossible mazes.

If you can get her to talk,
she will give a frenzied analysis
of the details,
smoking cigarettes.

If you can get her
attention to her swelling,
she will feel it
and say there are two
furry lumps there,
much like rabbits.

Steve Thomas

WHERE WE WERE

I say how dark is it my eyes are no good,
and she says it is so dark.

She falls hurting her shoulder.
I pull her up by the arm.

She says when it's dark you can't tell what you're walking through.
We have to fight with our legs and arms because there are no stars.

I put black bread on her tongue.
She is a woman.

The eyes glow in a flat faced owl.
She says she wants his talons hooked in her arm.

We both walk in
where the stream runs over and collects leaves.

I push her and we are both up
on the hard road in the drizzle.

Steve Thomas

STALKING THE WILD ASPARAGUS
from the book by the same name

Jungles from civilization
Following the splashes of endless footprints.
My mind gone to blazes in the liquid sun.
Honeydecker's impatient interests.
The avalance of telegrams
That demanded the asparagus be seized
Before Others could capture
The inescapable market.

What was it September
When Palmeroy fell languid against the rubber plant
Mumbling insanities about Princeton
Amid the stench of mosquitos?

Caught as if by Kodak
In my existential disguise
Remembering how remarkably
The succession of close calls
Concluded its record breaking year.

Strangling maps
That refused to mention
The demonic mangoes,
Missing canteens,
Or one way trails of no exit from
The thickening rain forest
Where the invincible asparagus touches the sun.

The feeling, even now,
When the words go out of focus in my eyes
That the asparagus punctures the sky
That all the hypotheses were wrong
That utterly everything was wrong
That after all nothing could actually be true

JD Hawley

VIGIL

Nine days, like a loon, I have been sitting on the fence
hopping from picket to picket. I know you are circling
up there somewhere. Here, planes run every six minutes,
and at my window, cars flicker through the leaves all night.
You are in each one, with the sirens: Fire, Mobile
Coronary Unit. You are lost in a hospital: No Visitors,
Do Not Touch. Your hand comes through the window
looking for my keys. The phone rings
and I wake in the hall. Another dream.
My left arm, knitting so many inches,
wants to hang from the ceiling. Waiting--
I become a monster. Witch-bitch in the mere.
Should that car door finally slam or the plane
descend, I will be there, tape-measure around my neck,
olive green wool still tangled in my hair.

Michele Birch

BURLINGTON NORTHERN FIRST CLASS

This train, faster than the others, clicks
across country, trees, rivers under snow.
I've found the way home, lying here, my feet
in the right direction, one blue light
on the wall. The voice I love
coils through bones, hums in my ears.
I know where these crooked joints will take me.

In such a space I become a child, drawing
faces on the window. I was a mountain kid,
scraped elbows, knees, tumbling--
punkwood and whistling grass--
into the creek. No music I could play
would tame the teacher. Threat
of a corked-tip stick. Mother was the same.
A mile away we could not escape her eyes.

I would be clean when I arrive, my skin,
teeth, Seltzer in my veins. My scarf
neatly arranged, on time
with the clock in my case, I would
step into the sun, the snow, shining
toward the right face, shining.

Michele Birch

CHESTER--OPHEIM CIRCUIT

You set an easy pace, your steps
light on the leaves. You know these towns,
widow women out for news, and men, their eyes
weathered shut, hard on a stranger.
Fields are empty. Burlington Northern
opens track for wheat. After that--
Wind. Sky.

Places you have been remind you to survive.
Avoid the nervous restaurants. Pitch your tent
on the edge of town. The river keeps you calm.
Only church bells change the hour,
those hundred faces routine as clocks.

A boy follows you home. You cast your line
a mile upstream, trout back of every rock.
On the outskirts, sparrows bend the trees,
suffering a violent wind.

Michele Birch

A SEASON OF GLUTTONY

by Jon Jackson

In goose-summer, or goesomer . . . goose plus summer. When the geese ripen. Around the Feast of St. Martin, early November, in the days of scarce fodder, the season to kill off the beasts and salt them for winter, and therefore, a season of glotony, the tables groaning with meat. Before the coming of Christ.

These are still days. The gossamer floats; webs encumber spruce. Flocks of spiderlings are seen, the weavers of gossamer. Becalmed sailors have reported them, hundreds of miles at sea, drifting in the air.

Expect halcyon days: the gods command the sea to be still, for the Kingfisher, Alkuon, to nest upon the deep.

Still nights, too. Crystal nights. Der altweibersommer, or old wives summer; warm days give way to Cristallnächte. As in '38, when the ice shattered under boot heels, tinkling amid the screams, the doors of boxcars slamming at unusually busy sidings. It was the time of the goosehawk--gos-hafoc, from goose plus havoc, from hafoc, hawk--the goshawk, imperious raptor stooping among the splintered synagogues, among the milling geese. In Paris, France, a Polish emigré, 17-year old David Grynzpan, waiting outside the German embassy until handsome, 30-year old Ernst vom Rath stepped to the Mercedes, had fired four bone-smashing Webley bullets into the face of the Aryan diplomat, a handsome face. David was worried about the invasion of Poland. Mr. Goebbels was distressed. The Jews were distressed.

Indian summer. Lazy hazy days. By ten we have seen three grouse, fired harmlessly twice and must now remove our wool jackets, wandering pleasantly amid the bare sumac, sampling late apples, the chaff of field grass making our boots itch, beginning to think of "The Idle Hour," which is the nearest quiet, cool bar.

This was when the Martians invaded New Jersey. Mr. Welles and Mr. Wells presenting.

Off Gibraltar, the Nazis torpedoed a tanker.

In Salt Lake City, John W. Deering, who had killed five people, sat quietly while an EKG was attached and a blindfold tied. His pulse registered 180. Thirty seconds later, it read zero. Applications for the Utah firing squad are strictly confidential, one time to a customer, and always run thousands beyond the six required (one has a blank.)

What may I do!

Today, the Father of Turkey succumbed to cirrhosis of the liver. Having single-handedly jerked his nation into the Twentieth Century, he has gone to Allah--one hopes: the terminal diagnosis is suspicious in the liquorless lands of the Muslims. Beloved Ataturk.

My father marked the untimely bullbats circling the house in broad noon, squeaking. And migrant curlews yodeling, forced on strange ponds by the night. He has an eye for augury.

This is Thoth's time, god of moon, wisdom and learning; the ibis, bearing pen, tablet and palm branch. . . allwise snakebird. For my father it corresponds to the anhinga, the "lonely whang-doodle, crying in the swamp."

He went down on his knees and prayed the night through, weeping.

In Quintum Novembris . . . Iam pius extrema veniens Iacobus ab arcto . . . Pacificusque novo, felix devesque, sedebat . . . Now the devout James, coming from remote north . . . The establisher of peace was seated on his new throne, fortunate and affluent, with no suspicion of the Guy. A penny for which. Membratim poteris conspergere in auras . . . to scatter their dismembered bodies through the air. Quintoque Novembris nulla dies toto occurrit celebratior anno. Throughout the whole year there shall be no day more celebrated than the Fifth of November.

When Tristram Shandy was born.

Among the plovers, airing their stretched out wings on upland fenceposts . . . among the ballooning spiderlings, the gossamer, and the milling geese . . . I cried out!

And I cry. Forty years gone! Quintoque Novembris nulla dies . . .

Coming up the stairs at three a.m., in 1954, I stumbled and threw up. Southern Comfort and pizza (large cheese & sausage) spattered on my mother's bare legs. She beat me with a broom, uttering distraught shrieks.

In '56, the Texas Eagle rolled through the night. Toward day-break I am awakened by the unusual stillness and raise the shade. The station is deserted; the sign reads "Little Rock." It has rained during the night, the concrete glistens. For the next few days I sat on a foot locker, forlornly and desperately reading the "Airman's Manual," waiting for the barracks door to open, to leap to attention, my naked head bristling.

"Nov. 5, 1966. First snow. Two Black-capped Chickadees, a Ruffed Grouse, an unidentified warbler (very late!), several Blue Jays, and two ducks--Mallards--on Platt's Pond." Nobody around here remembers Platt, and his house has fallen into its basement . . . a creamy-looking, sandy mortar, with unfaced field stones, like a pudding. The boards have rotted away. The grass looks over the cellar wall. A healing socket. The little chicken coop sags into the wind, its dirty floor and battered shelves strewn with empty .22 casings, where we stood at the window and sighted in on the eternal stump in the middle of the pond at the foot of the hill where turtles sunned themselves never suspecting a shattering bolt.

I look into my father's clear blue eyes. One eyelid has a senile mole from which two crazy, silver hairs flow. He looks very good with his new teeth. Younger, but for the noble face crumbled at the edges. Does this man think? Will he understand my pain?

Wherewith Love to the hart's forest he fleeth, Leaving the enterprise with pain and cry . . . What may I do? Art is great, but it does not suffice. Good is the life ending faithfully?

"The whales are not built to be out of water," said Dr. F. G. Walton Smith, U. of Miami, College of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences. Rescue teams thought they might succeed with some of the more than 100 suicidal mammals by towing them back out to sea. But early Monday (November 5), three whales washed ashore at Palm

Beach Shores, 30 miles south of Fort Pierce. One had a towing rope tied to its tail.

Today being Martlemas, I had grilled pork chops, scalloped potatoes, green beans with pearl onions (comes in a frozen package), an excellent green salad with oil and vinegar, a piece of blueberry pie (only half of which I ate), and then, invoking Thoth, sundry ravens (notably Huginn & Muninn, who were advisers to Odin; Noah's un-returning seekers of land; Raven-Loki's similar navigation aids; as well as the anonymous purveyors to Elijah--can't go into this now), whang-doodles, bullbats and curlews, I took to my bed.

I expect halcyon days, and spiderlings ballooning at sea.

I awoke feeling neither surprise, joy, nor dismay. Two years ago, I gormlessly gave up whiskey. Now I find that I have given up sex. What may I do? Quintoque Novembris . . .

After forty years I smile at my wife, a complete stranger, and my equally unknown and unknowable son, and go out to the garage. The sun is old, like an old wife, and casts a weak shadow. A mild, still day, but uncomfortable.

Panic-stricken, I am frozen in the doorway, gazing at nothing. What do I love? What loves me? In the house the phonograph is playing. Regretfully, it is not Mozart, who has been dead for ten years.

There is no room for a car in this garage, which is fine. On the work bench lies my hatchet. A comforting thing, somewhat. It is a Plumb hatchet. Mr. Plumb, I believe, knew a thing or two about hatchet aesthetics. It has a tiny chip in its upper chopping edge; the pounding head is crosshatched. A long time ago, in a cabin . . . perhaps it was the day it was 27 below, when I stood in my kitchen, weary from nightlong novels, the fire as pale as this sun and frigid-looking, and watched the hare coming at dawn, floundering through blue drifts, wary of late owls, skirting the clump of pine where the snow was littered with rusty cones-teeth by squirrels. For a moment I wanted to snatch up my shotgun, to rush out and wait for him at the corner of the chimney, around which he must come to reach his hole under my stonecold hearth. But I recognized the hare. I understand him: while walking in the dunes last winter, I was startled by a Snowy Owl that flew from a bough above my head . . . I chased after it, beyond a dune, and came upon the Snowshoe, squatting, staring, its back as snowy as the owl's, eyes alive for foxes . . . I don't think it was metamorphosis, but I may. He doesn't fear the owl, he just doesn't wish to become one. A conservative. But I. I will never be an owl, and neither will turn into me.

I went to the lawn and waited, thinking we walk on the bottom of the sky . . . here is my house, there is my hatchet, the birds above me, fish under me, the people dancing . . . in this lively enclave, an eddy of the universe. Yes, yes, old man, Earth's the right place for Love. But I am afraid. I think it won't suffice. I should have been a

knave, a lout, a pure-finder rummaging London for dogshit, shilling a pailfull, for the curing of leather, morocco, to bind another's books.

For the wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure: And he that hath little business shall become wise. But the carpenter, ratsmith, pure-finder, knave . . . they will not be sought for in public counsel, they will maintain the state of the world, And all their desire is in the work of their craft.

Tomorrow I suppose my father will die. The tension in my wife will snap, we will have to talk. This splendid ambience seems young, and warm, but is only a preface to a long death, the birth of winter, a wierd nativity . . . the waies long, the weather sharpe. I will be wise, but I fear that wisdom will not suffice. There is only durance.

Unready, making my willy-nilly way across the dying lawn, in goose-summer, I wonder what's for supper. Nulla dies . . .

WET DREAM

Steel filings were in the mush
and mother's skin was the plate.
Father kept cutting his beard
with dull razors.
God would come in twice a day
and stand smiling by the cheese grater.

The gardens my mother grew:
roses, lilacs and bleeding hearts.
The violets went unnoticed in the shade.
I gave the zinnias peptalks.
Father had a passion for dogwood.
He locked the windows at night.

It ended with fantasies in the bathtub
where mother didn't belong.
In the spring I became a river
and unlocked the basement drain.

James Hatley

CITYSNOW

Under
the swirling,
plummeting
micro-worlds
cast from
their
floating castle,
an inferno
disguised
in stone
silently
awaits.

p. d. nesbitt

UNCOVERING

The ice
cracks
as I step
onto
its crystal window.
Floating fragments
catch
glints of sun,
rotting snow
tumbles
from crooked branches.

Among naked limbs,
two chipmunks
lick
a shriveled berry
left
from summerpast.

Wooddamp air
teases
my sweater--
"Fly away, clothes,
be free."
Tomorrow
I'll go barefoot--
toes
will pulse
in the melting snow
as
I wade into
Spring.

p. d. nesbitt

HAWKING

Today the weather stays
the same. Sunken
in fields, crushed
in our boots,
we fly a hawk
in sky that's winter.
Through brush bent
with crusted snow
a pheasant steps
in rabbit scent.
A pine beats the wind.
Our hawk dances on a limb,
his eyes gnaw
at pigeon wing, and foreign
bells, tied to his ankle,
loft quiet rings.

George Ford

LETHAL

your wrist the beautiful pivot
of a snake darting your hand
ready to strike the veins
of my overturned heart
vulnerable as any animal
fearing its blood once cold

do you fear that ice that steel

I flash a cold blade a tongue
to cut a precise line
to sever your hand

our touch in rows
of moments laid out
like white stones marking graves

the movement of your wrist
beneath the skin
the mystery that touches
with steel fangs the heart's veins
to puncture the cold animal
of our lives

Thomas Winkel

RUNNING THE MADISON

Take a raft down the Madison
for three days. It takes that long.
Go in the early spring
when no one comes this way
under a sky gray as brain. Wait.
If it rains, the rainbows
end in snowfields
out of reach as hawks.
Your tent is the only safety
along a river rushing on
to meet the other two north of here.
If you must take a guide for the rapids,
find a blind man with strong arms.
He sees the sounds you might miss
and draws the bears down.
No one hears you turn
away. It is still too cold.
At night you think of new compromise,
imagine love comes back upstream.
Anger shakes you with white water fever.
But after, sleep comes so well
that you can't believe you've gone this far.
Pay the blind man where the river ends.
In three days you are
brown with forgetfulness.
You say: it is better to promise the mountains.
The way home from Wyoming is easy.
This place will call you back.

Paula Petrik

THE BIRTHDAY POEM

We shed our skins today,
you for the twenty-fourth time.
Our old hides were dry,
let the wind peel them away.
We are refreshed lying on ferns.
The sun comes up so hot we fall
back surprised with pride.
You say: "Your breast will melt
in my hand like a snowball.
I will make love to you until
you burn away this winter."
We travel with the years now,
they settle on our shoulders.
I think: "No. Winter is mine.
Above the timberline I will
write my name in snow
tall as two storey houses,
and I will leave you breathless."
We are nothing to each other,
but muscle on muscle
bone on bone shiny
with the sweat of kisses.
Today we shed our skins
and lie telling our lives
on the wreckage of dry scales.

Paula Petrik

THE WAKE

I am sitting on your Indian rock watching the third
light go out, larger, in the ditch farther down.
When all those stricken wind chimes catch
a pine's snag tooth I am with you, pitched
like a tuning fork to your stark room
on Hyde Street in the City of the Golden Gate.

I wanted to crash the gate. Steady the night
that beat your threatened ground. A clutch
to disengage old drives: that head under the wheel
of the ocean road, turned helmet-white on the shoulder.
Asleep in a violent land, huge gears unlock.
The right sounds mesh, hand easy on the choke.

A shift into all weathers. We talk of going out
to the engine's relaxed running. The naked stand
on the soggy bath mat, everything slipping away
like a shoreline. Or into manic wind, our dead-end
words blown back into our faces. If people say,
"When she washed dishes like surf on Acapulco. . ."

we'll lean into that legend, weathered beams shifting,
everything moving out past the breakwater. The older drift
of single lives, true as rock to lichen. Covered by more
than the lover's body, we let the pared moon haul us in,
ride the hovercraft that barely touches water. Sky falls
into the sea. The dark wings past the window widen.

Madeline DeFrees

REPLY TO AN IRREMOVABLE PASTOR
TWENTY YEARS TOO LATE

Some trouble with the drains beyond repair, you said,
afraid of enlarging stains even when they came
from hell. We'd rigged your chair opposite the wall
that leaked Abe Lincoln's profile round
the bishop's goldrimmed frown. Rain, a better painter
than the local handyman, slapped our living room
with lumpy plaster every spring. Ritual
gesture meant to seal us in. No raven,
Miss Maloney manned the lookout station
in your kitchen, trained a spinster eye on backdoor
callers. She brought us angel food. Our front
gate nailed to order kept off tramps.
The sly ones climbed our fence. That German priest
who pitched his tent on woe knocked every afternoon.
His lamentations seeped into the woodwork. Light
drained from window wells. The sanitation
board wrote mildewed letters when the king
of seagulls screamed our dead-end street.
On Halloween Mother Superior held a witchy
flashlight while a novice pulled out nails.
Destructive boys, you said. Spare change would drive
them home. Weeks trickled off. Rouge drained
from wimpled cheeks. Warm air came back. It caught
us on the swollen porch, limp coifs
and windy veils, throwing out the garbage.

Madeline DeFrees

OUR MAN IN MINDINAO REPORTS ON THE TASADAY

I

Deep in the rain forest the Tasaday had never seen the moon or known the astronauts who mapped its craters. They passed their Stone-Age lives by jungle waters eating tadpoles, baiting monkey traps with wild bananas. They have no word for iron, run from the big word thunder. When rain comes on, as in this photograph they huddle under palm fronds, cut them for umbrellas. The floor of their forest home (They build no permanent dwellings), tangled fern, rattan, vines, ground orchids. Robert Fox, a Panamin official, helped them make a clearing. They had seen the sun but did not know who owned it.

II

They do not have, they do not have: rice, corn, salt, radios, contact with the sea, agriculture, aquaculture, sugar, pottery. They do not have guns. Snakes frighten the Tasaday. One of their gods is bingbang. Their word for think is dum-dum. They forage for wild vegetables. The deeper you dig, they say, the better the fruit. The most beautiful thing in the forest is finding choice wild roots. They may be the only people alive who do not know tobacco.

III

Defal, a neighboring tribesman, bird who walks
the forest like the wind, found them, the lost tribe,
these gentle people. Years passed, a few. He brought along
one or two others, told authorities. It is all so startling
to them, like lightning, as they watch the giant bird
descend, the head of the Presidential Arm emerge
for National Minorities. Enemy is just a stranger's
word. Notice how shyly they put bare arms around
the savior. Where do you get all those things you carry?

IV

Their shallow streams flow clear, musical as their
language--wild pigs and sela dang, dear to them
in season. The tribal name their fathers dreamed
could double for a mountain. This mug shot of a young man
drinking from talungtung is all bamboo and water.
On slopes outside, brush-burning neighbors open land
for farms. Cold wind bites the clearing. The drone
of Elizalde's helicopter, loud on logging roads
disturbs the timid eardrum. The Stone-Age hearts
of Tasaday, who have no leader, consent he may be god.
When forest yams give out, will he invent potatoes?
Now, this talk of reservations, people to protect.
Next month Fox will lead a band of scientists deep into
their secrets. He gives an old man sugar cubes,
headache pills, tells newsmen Tasaday are healthy,
do not want to leave the forest for good. The situation
is complex tonight. Natives file their teeth
by satellite and the sponsor's message comes on.

Madeline DeFrees

MORNING

by Edmund R. Apffel

After the Official Proclamation.

No, say Morning.

Lifting the lid of the coffee pot carefully, she managed to remove it without a sound. She crept through the bedroom into the bathroom, quietly closing the door behind her. Oh, quietly she turned the cold water on and filled the coffee pot, looking at herself quickly in the mirror over the sink and with a little toss and shrug removing the limp, cute coil of hair straying over her eyes more to the right. Better. Back to the kitchen. She plugged in the coffee and stood silently scratching the cool smooth silk over her abdomen listening to the gathering hiss and first stabbing, half-hearted burp of the percolator. Now she turned with a lingering, half solemn something in her walk and moved back into the bedroom. Smiling, she bounced gently back into bed and deliberately gave a noisy whack to the pillow, just in case. "I heard you in the bathroom," he said in a sleepy voice, amused and not turning. A shadow, distinct, but of indefinite origin (what monstrous hunch in the sun?) was now revealed on the kitchen floor just out the door. From the kitchen one would have seen the light whitening with a new flush (from vague rose to real paper, that for a morning poem, oh, soon, soon) out the window behind the irregular roof tops across the street. From the kitchen window one would now have seen that a single pigeon had quietly appeared from nowhere perched with tiny shocked shivers at the peak of the roof directly across. Please be careful today.

In the smaller apartment the next floor below the four sat at the kitchen table, coffee cups suspended between mouths and table, listening, their dim, still sleepy eyes drawn to the ceiling, waiting. Then Flora set her cup down with a determined clatter upsetting the spoon in the saucer. She compressed her lips several times looking down into her huge lap as if trying to whisper to the ugly folds of black satin, and gentle Karl noted with detached interest the gummy residue of spittal mixed with the coarse lipstick Flora used far too confidently, forming on the lips and collected at the corners of her mouth. Gio expressively drew a paper napkin to his lips concealing a faint smile, for he was always glad and a little embarrassed at loving them all so.

She curled an arm tenderly over his side and snuggled up to him feeling the nervous heat of his back and the prickle of the small hairs of his buttocks on her thighs. She playfully twisted and pulled at the fine hair on his belly moving her fingers lower and lower until a ragged nail strained too sharply a coarser hair and he twitched and barked softly sending the corsair coursing to the less coarse--but he could not phrase it exactly and so firmly clamped his thighs shut on her trapped contented hand. "Where's Gio?" he asked at last, sensing a weakening in his patience. "Who needs 'm," she announced heartily, squeezing up higher and more closely against him and insinuating (!--he nearly laughed aloud) and insinuating a tough little nipple into his dampening armpit. "Don't be so sinister," he said.

Gio rose gracefully from the table miraculously sweeping the chair back behind him across the floor without a sound. Cramer knew that he wouldn't be able to rise so expertly and that no amount of care would prevent his chair from scuttling back with the bumpkin's triumphant rattle he had come so to detest as a sure sign of a fatal lapse in grace's gifts to her most long-suffering and ill-starred pupil. And so he waited feeling like an idiot for the others to get up first in order to conceal the helpless stutters of his performance. Unfortunately, Karl seemed to sense this and nonchalantly waited him out while the seconds fluttered acidly through Cramer's heart. He seethed with loathing while Karl looked away out the window, indifferently appraising a darkened balcony of the old forgotten hotel across the street. And Gio looked back at them from the kitchen sink where he silently placed his cup and saucer, as if amused at their effort to maintain a silence that was no longer necessary (the way his younger brother--before he was killed in the terrible bombings at the age of twelve--used to continue Let's-Pretend-We're-Under-Water long after little Gio had tired of it and watched with languid interest the foolish, willing gamester sleep-walk past him, arms floating stupidly about, and once one foot dreamily dived over the bright, bright cringing roller skate that torpedoed him forward all at once suspended for a breathless second after which he crashed head on into the red wagon that with a grating howl limped painfully away). Karl studied his fingers laid flat on the table one last

time and with a sigh made a subtle move to rise. Relieved and shamed Cramer heaved clumsily to rise with him and then suddenly Karl paused and looked into Cramer's eyes and Cramer could not stop the harsh shriek of his chair against the floor as he flung away all restraint and bounded choking out of the room to get his viola while fearful laughter echoed through dark marble halls after him. With a demure shrug, Karl sidled out of his chair without moving it at all and stood patiently behind Flora with both hands resting on the back of her chair while she (thank God) finally closed her lips over her napkin and, noticing the hideous smudge left on it, rose hurriedly and bustled off to the bathroom for a much needed inspection. Karl smiled smugly to Gio who with a swift small movement unleashed a sparkling torrent of water from the faucet into the sink and hummed the exultant opening bars of this morning's quartet.

Abruptly he twisted around and slid over on top of her. Her heels slowly rose up and down the length of his tensing calves. Raising himself over her on his arms with a quick growl, he flexed his knees, slipping his legs out of her hold. Her lips parted revealing the tip of her tongue between her glistening, her pearly, wait! wait! her small white teeth. He heard the kitchen door open and the quick steps of the musicians across the floor.

Gio paused in the doorway a moment raising an eyebrow questioningly. Geoffrey grinned back sheepishly over his shoulder noticing how sunlight through the kitchen window paled the black of Gio's tuxedo making it look almost like paper and lit the side of his face in a soft white flame (how really beautiful). With a determined stride, Gio moved to the arrangement of straightback chairs near the bureau and deftly flung out his music, a single sharp flap, before him on the stand. He poised his bow over the strings and the other three smoothly took their places and hastily raised their bows. With a heave Gio lunged into the first powerful chord. Flora in the fury of her attack nearly fell off her chair for some reason and Cramer glanced over at her with disgust. Karl swept into the next broken chords with thrilling surrender to all the storming around him softened only by the divine warmth of his, his! second fiddle part--in this music, at least, the defining spirit of the ecstasy and torment in a deaf and dying genius' despair.

With a whimper Theresa clawed the rippling skin on Geoffrey's back. She closed her eyes and offered herself up to the fierce pounding (sounding? resounding? astounding glory of . . . but nothing to match the stateliness of the theme came to mind. For a moment he drew his brows together, thinking . . .). "I know this one," he panted at last.

Her eyelids fluttered open and a dimly questioning look flashed across her face.

"I say I know this one," he gasped. She started to smile and then winced, shutting her eyes again and her mouth opened letting out a low moan.

"The Fourth, posthumous."

Gio glanced ironically at Karl who lowered his eyes back to the music with a smirk. Flora writhed over her cello making that mysterious noise with her dental plates in time with the galloping descent of her part. Cramer watched the bed covertly with bright eyes while the cloudy thought of dark frozen marble halls haunted his imagination in the background. With regret he returned to the music to whisk the page over.

"I can whistle it!" (Geoffrey was shouting now.) Again Theresa opened her eyes and tried to laugh but the effort got tangled somewhere in her throat and she choked feebly.

"Bet I can whistle it?"

She swallowed once and began to clamp her legs with excruciating tightness almost up to his shoulders. He was practically kneeling now and supporting himself on his trembling arms. He pursed his lips to whistle but no sound came out. A spray of saliva flew out over her hair and he suddenly felt her teeth numbly against his chest. With a gag and a shudder he collapsed all at once over her in an explosion of jerks and she had the distinct impression that surely now her neck would break, simply, easily, and she mentally shrugged at the thought.

Gio nodded tranquilly to the musicians as a sign that they were to skip the recap and finish directly on the prearranged coda. With a bound Flora snatched at her music with her bow hand upsetting the stand into Cramer's and he icily looked away and set into the last measures which he knew quite well even if she, poor cow, did not.

"Excellent! Excellent!" Geoffrey cried tearing himself from her (she gave a tiny shriek and then fell back with a pant, flinging an arm across her forehead). He clapped enthusiastically and was instantly aware of a throbbing ache and a fearful feeling of exposure. Gio smiled urbanely and inclined his head in a princely bow.

"Well, let's clean up," Geoffrey said with weary exuberance, clutching his groin in relief and turning to the blissfully limp Theresa. "Come on Mary Sunshine! Late for work!" He trotted off to the bathroom and urinated with a vaguely gratifying pain. Peering around to the mirror he surveyed the smudges on the paint on his face. Shaking clean (keep that! he thought) he set to work with a piece of toilet paper wiping his face. The white around the eyes melted into the blue of the cheeks and forehead and finally (with more toilet paper, gently but firmly applied, as they say) the creamy blue began to disappear, the effort leaving a tingling flush on his face. Because he had not shaved the night before, the gum of the mustache tugged at the real hair causing him to grimace with theatrical exaggeration. With a wet washrag he wiped his face, carefully digging up behind the ear lobes and tilting his head back to inspect the underside of his jaws. With a clean towel he dried his face and leaned over to the shower blindly reaching through the curtain to the spigots.

Theresa watched the musicians collect their music and move slowly out to the kitchen with low whispers. "I don't care what you say," Flora was beginning to the funny looking Cramer but he firmly shoved her through the doorway and then suddenly shot back at Theresa a glance fully of pity and distress. Theresa looked up startled but in the next moment he was gone. Geoffrey reappeared cautiously out from behind the bathroom door. "Come and have a shower, darling." She got up and sat for a moment on the edge of the bed scrutinizing her toes. Then she walked languidly into the bathroom.

"Cramer's looking queer today," she said musingly to him over the thrum of the shower.

"What's that?"

"So," said Gio noncommittally. He snapped a speck of lint off the trousers and carried them to the closet. Still facing Cramer he retrieved with a sure and perfect jab (a not unfamiliar gesture) a wire hanger from the invisible depths of the clothes closet (Cramer half expected a rabbit or bouquet of roses).

"So, Gio. So I want you to tell her to rehearse better. . . ."

"Is that why you're so sad, little one?" Gio asked kindly, and there was something so inviting--a note of delicious melancholy that understood all in his question--that Cramer experienced an unreasoning impulse to throw himself sobbing at the feet of Good Great Gio.

"Well, you saw. Ah, how ridiculous it was. This morning. With her music stand!" he replied in short petulant whispers twisting a chipped button on the face of his nice coat and trying to resist the growing temptation to weep.

"He's complaining again," Flora whispered, squinting menacingly at Karl as they sat as usual at the kitchen table playing chess. Karl yawned and took up the sharp steel nail file and delicately dug out a white crumb of soap from under the gleaming nail of his right fourth finger.

"Karl!" she burst out again in a whisper leaning forward, "He's complaining again! You know it. What will Gio do with him this time?"

"Oh move," she added after a moment, her eye catching the position on the board. "Your queen's pinned, move." She sat back and drummed her fingers on the table abstractly.

"What will Gio do?" he asked pleasantly with an ingenious but futile dilatory move through a wilderness of pawns. "Why, he'll make him weep, of course."

Gio materialized at the door. He no longer wore the tuxedo, but was dressed now in fashionable street clothes consisting of a white flannel coat and checked trousers and a stiff broad-brimmed straw hat with a length of red silk wrapped around the crown. He wore patent

pumps and around his throat a floaty red scarf with a wide blue border waved limply in the breeze through the open kitchen window.

"You're going?" moaned Flora with a start at seeing him. There was something tragic in her face and tone that made Karl snigger as he looked up.

Gio nodded and stood waiting.

Flora breathed heavily and finally said in a husky voice: "You'll be careful?"

Gio smiled faintly, then swept noiselessly out the kitchen door to the hall. An unknown young man in a double breasted navy blazer and white slacks and oxfords clattered down the stairs twirling a set of keys around one upraised index finger. He replied to Gio's courtly nod with an ironic, bright smile, taking in at a glance the musician's splendor and perhaps not a little envious.

Theresa sat alone at the kitchen table resting her forehead on her hand and looking down into the brown reflection in her coffee cup. She heard the tiny whine of Geoffrey's car speed off down the street five stories below. With a sigh she got up and walked into the bedroom. She startled the dark, shifty eyed maid in the act of examining a rather horrible wound in her arm pit with her left elbow raised high up and her right fingers tentatively touching the bright red slash in the shaded hollow as she swayed slightly before the bathroom mirror.

"Heavens, Lisa! You must be more careful when you shreft (literally "shave," but much more feminine)."

"Oh mademoiselle! I thought you'd gone," Lisa cried lowering her arm reluctantly.

Theresa sat down on the low stool at the vanity near the closet, bending down to slip into her heels. Then she straightened and with a swift shake flung her heavy blond hair behind her and applied a quick twist of lipstick. Raising herself up with her hands on the glass top she stooped forward to the mirror and critically examined her face. A timid knocking came from the kitchen door. Patting her hair she crossed back through the kitchen with the regular sharp tap of her heels on the floor catching up with the stabbing race in his heart like some brisk, flapping doom splitting the seconds into bright gun shots, and snatching up her handbag from the table without a pause, she opened the door.

She was magnificent.

"Mademoiselle Theresa. I am nothing, of course. I am a fool."

"Why Cramer . . ."

She was magnificent in a pale green suit with blinding white cuffs.

"I am a fool. I weep too much. And I am afraid of many things."

"Cramer, Cramer, poor thing, come in and have some coffee; Lisa . . ."

"I am afraid of many things (here he felt his eyes fill with tears and he attempted to look away but could not) but I have always . . ."

"Yes, yes. Lisa will get it for you because I really must go."

She was magnificent with the soft bloom of gold in her skin and the blond hair tossed back over her shoulders.

"But I have always loved you and I shall be strong forever now that . . ."

"But of course, and I'm in love too, and I'm late--look!" She extended her magic hand to him trying to show him her tiny wrist watch.

Impetuously he seized her hand and for an instant it rested in his.

". . . now that I've told you."

"And I must must to go," she said, trying to be clear. The hand dissolved from his timorous clasp and she disappeared past him catching the elevator just in time as a tall elderly man gallantly held the iron gates open for her. Letting them creak closed with a smart clank he pressed the ground floor button and turned to Theresa with a look of benign concern. "I couldn't help overhearing that strange little man. One is so apt to meet all sorts in these sections of the Capitol. I trust he wasn't . . ."

Theresa cut him off with a crude sneer: "Buzz off, bogtur (heavily sarcastic, "old warrior")."

The smothered whirr stopped and Cramer stood stock still in the doorway where she had left him. Cautiously he tried to recall the sequence of the last confusing seconds. "One thing at any rate," he decided, walking into the kitchen and sitting down wearily in her chair, "I've told her and she has spurned me." Out the window a flock of greedy pigeons settled on the roof of a building across the street. They walked about each other impatiently and shot alert glances down into the street with little tilts of their heads. Then they seemed all at once to espy Cramer through the window and they stared across at him as if incredulous and scornful. Cramer, unnerved, looked back at them with envy and hate. A warm breeze lightly pushed the curtains out toward him and he got up heavily and went to the window. To his right the sun shone white, well above the roofs and in the narrow, still cool street far away he thought he saw her. But she was really much further away already, forever. He leaned out the window and watched the scene below. A few cars drove aimlessly by attempting to dodge the persistent hawkers that scrambled out directly in front of them and bombarded them from all sides with joyous supplication.

Cramer leaned further out and all at once he knew quite certainly that our whole sorrow is just a question of sleep. But of course, he thought, feeling the wind whip past him in his ears.

Lisa peeked out hesitantly from the bedroom doorway and saw a plump man in black leaning from the waist out the kitchen window. Then his feet slowly rose up off the floor as he edged further out now balanced directly on the sill. Lisa watched breathlessly as the man

tottered slowly back and forth dipping out and back where his toes lightly tapped the floor and sprang back up again once, twice and then vanished quite suddenly with a click of buttons on the ledge and a faint sougling over the breeze. Lisa blinked and brushed her cheek.

Karl noticed the black flash out the window with an uncontrollable start. Recovering himself he returned to the game and sighed. "My, my! Guess what's just happened." Through the open window the sound of a muted crash and several excited voices rose from the street. "What's that noise," Flora demanded moving imperiously to the window. From the roof across the way a dozen dusty pigeons fluttered leisurely to the street.

"Today, my sillies, all in English. Tot. OK?" Geoffrey dashed into the huge lecture hall with a dazzling smile to everyone ranged before him in tiers. His voice boomed grandly up to the ceiling and as the door flew closed behind him a gratifying roar reverberated for several seconds making the ornate suspended lamps tremble and tinkle faintly. Several girls tittered and one prankster solemnly raised his hand. "What is English for crapula?" Everyone laughed. "Yeg ved ik," Geoffrey replied, "nothing too precise, anyway. 'Hangover' perhaps," he mused, flinging a grammar open before him on the lectern. He wore those becoming wire frame glasses that gave him an irresistibly gentle and scholarly look that, even if Theresa failed to credit it so, was the unmistakable impression he made on his government class. All of his pupils were preparing for their civil service translators' examinations (here a foolish pun threatened to clot the way) and appealed to him in their stolid ambitions that he knew would culminate in the mechanical transjabbering of polyglot accusations and replies and guarded protests of all the delegations, tactfully attended to from those remote, cool cages of glass set high up in that heaven where everything is understood without a blush. And under the influence of the nostalgic classroom atmosphere how they blossomed, fresh, youthful, their imaginations soaring (if regressively)!

"Simple sentences, pronunciation!" he announced lifting his head quickly and aware that the sun through the tall windows to his right refracted off the gold and crystal of his glasses one glorious instant a bursting flame into the eyes of the fourth tier lovelies. "Civility is service."

"Civility is Service!" came the mocking echo.

"Too easy, huh?" he inquired superciliously. How popular he was! How beautifully you do beautifully!

"Civility, not servility, is the service of the civil servant!"

"Civility, NOT Servility, is the Service of the Civil Servant!!"

"Seven civil servants serve serviceably. . . ." (Laughter)

"Forget that one." (More laughter)

Gio bowed politely and presented his carefully prepared papers to the sergeant at the front desk. "And so," he began with a paternal sigh, "I am back."

"Yes, Yes, I see," said the sergeant, a frightened looking boy with trembling fingers and dirty nails (we had all expected someone dreadful and sour, of course). "But she still isn't seeing anyone, you know," he added unhappily. Whether he felt sorry for this rather wonderful old man (a famous violinist, he had heard) or whether he was reminded of something tragic and gorgeous in the musical shuttle of his prismatic name as it lay splendidly spilled out on his papers, Sergeant Pain felt always a rapturous melancholy overtake him in his impersonal connection with Gio's case, so that no matter how courteous and detachedly informative he tried to be, he always ended by saying something idiotic (the last time, Sergeant Pain had unaccountably offered him money. Gio had stood still, quietly watching the boy with a sympathy endless in its eloquence).

Today Gio was the tiniest bit impatient so he said in a melodious whisper: "Perhaps this once I could see her unannounced. By accident?"

"Oh that is impossible," murmured Pain wondering if he was going to collapse.

"Ah yes, we live in impossible times . . ."

"Ah!" gasped Pain.

"Yes. Much is impossible, nowadays, though we must try, must try. Try to live and forget the mistakes, the losses . . ." Gio suggested resignedly.

"Oh yes!" cried Pain, choking and he hastily rose and staggered toward the washroom, a crumpled handkerchief pressed to his face as he was suddenly reminded of his halfwit brother whimpering on the edge of his chair in the waiting room of the impossibly new institution into which he and his mother were trying to have him committed, and a much too grown up, blandly cheerful nurse helped him up and guided, no dragged the feebly protesting--casting imploring, puzzled--a thread of shimmering dew following the gleaming thumb pulled slowly out of the wretched mouth--turning with a look of wonder-- With a sigh Gio slipped behind the desk pressing the button that, humming, opened the passageway before him. Pause. Vanish.

Peeking over the edge of his morning newspaper Geoffrey noted her advance. She moved quickly and with a cool determination that effectively discouraged any thought of intruding on this lovely, awfully well dressed foreigner. "Miss, oh Miss," how one wanted to stop her for a moment, watch her toss her hair back and look at you with calculation and contempt!

He was sprawled expansively in a chair at a street side table on the terrace reading a newspaper that he held spread out in front of him like a pair of stiff wings. ("Yes, here I come, beaming.") By the way he had his legs crossed, the right knee high with the ankle resting on the left knee, she guessed he was in a good mood. His British mood? Yes, one which she liked rather much because it made her feel continental and elegantly bored.

"Good God," he said, glancing up at her in quick greeting. "Cramer's gone and killed himself this morning. Look, it's in the paper." He extended the paper to her but she brushed it away hastily and opened her menu.

"It couldn't be in the paper so soon. And that reminds me, Geoffrey. I shall need some money."

"What on earth for?" he asked with an endearing frown of stagey concern.

"Cramer visited me this morning, poor thing. I think he asked for a loan or something."

"Well they're not supposed to be bothering us that way," he said, reaching into the breast pocket of his coat for his billfold. "How much does he want?"

She coolly mentioned a monstrous sum.

There was genuine surprise on his face and he dropped his hands quickly to his lap and squared around to her. "We can't possibly lend him that much!"

"Well he's dead, you said," she cried, flinging her menu aside. "Don't you care about anything?" and all of a sudden she looked down with blinking eyes and a snuffle.

"Dearest, what is it?" he moaned, reaching across to her and taking her hand (and noting with pleasure a cluster of rhymes still ringing in the air quietly).

"Oh, it's nothing," she muttered, pressing his hand.

"Are you angry with me?" he whispered.

"Oh no!" she cried, lifting her head up to him with a brave, bright look. "I'm angry with myself."

The pose was captured in a larger photo showing the entire terrace of the restaurant from the door so that, inclining south, their table was off to the right side while a much less romantic couple dominated the center where, behind that couple, the hedge grew ragged and one could make out a passing straw hatted figure with a dark scarf around his throat floating off in a frozen breeze behind him.

They clasped hands tenderly across the table, she, with her mouth open a bit and a worried look in her shining eyes, he, caught in a blink and appearing to be half asleep or laughing quietly while he leaned over toward her and the dark blazer bowed out over the table top. Approaching at the left, through the hedge, the blur of a mid-stride pedestrian. In her lap her handbag lay open and her free hand was hidden inside searching for something.

Perhaps a dainty pearl and silver revolver.

His knee was raised right to the roof of the table while his right leg was unfolded out toward her chair, the foot perhaps searching for her foot. The shadow of the table fell distinctly in front of the scene and the smooth grey curve on the tiles was broken by a round protrusion. . . . Of course, now one noticed that the hedge beyond them was low enough to allow a glimpse of the heads of passersby rolling

beyond. Directly above them the head of an elderly man in profile rested on the dark foliage. A certain firm set in the mouth pressed firmly shut and the faint shadows extending from the flute of a strong nostril to the corner of that straight mouth attracted one by its energy and calm apparent even in the casual glance of the photograph, and then there was the scarf that flew up lightly behind.

She had tilted her chair out a few degrees and one foot hid shyly behind the other stretched slightly toward the viewer. Beyond her legs one saw the hedge and the short iron fence running along the bottom. Further to the right the hedge abruptly stopped and the fence sprang up with a baroque leap turning into a tall gate that lead on to the terrace. Caught with one hand on the gate latch as if undecided was an elderly man wearing a white flannel coat and checked trousers. A dark scarf played out in front of him as he paused in the act of smoothly sweeping in through the gate. A man in a straw hat stood with his back to the camera at the gate as if closing it. With a murmur he slipped into the lounge past the intent photographer thoughtlessly blocking the door.

He was a little surprised to see Karl seated at a corner table in the shadows. A pale lamp behind him on the wall lit up one side of his face lending it a strangely repulsive girlish softness.

"You work here too, now?" Gio asked seating himself before Karl who tittered with a serpent's smirk (Karl's invention).

"Cramer's dead."

"Yes, I know," Gio said with a trace of a shrug. He turned to the bartender with a finger gesture. "I read in the papers."

Karl was genuinely surprised. "How could they find out so soon?"

"Soon?" he murmured removing a leather cigarette case from his breast pocket (Karl watched, half expecting something else, there was a promising flair of the sleight of hand in Gio's movement while he steadily watched Karl's face). "Soon? It happened yesterday."

"Ah, I see."

"Well," Karl ventured at last, "Well, we will need a violist."

"Why?" asked Gio, looking up with a lovely smile to the entranced waiter who swept a tall glass of shattered ice and vermillion down before him. "We shall do as we did this morning."

"Of course. I must be going." Karl squirmed up abruptly and with a hurried bow walked away.

When he reached the terrace he spotted them over near the gate. With a snicker he drew softly up to the table and bowed to Theresa who didn't look up. They still sat, Geoffrey with his hand over hers in the middle of the table watching her intently while she studied her hand moving slowly in her purse on her lap.

"I have some terrible news," Karl said hopefully.

Without turning, Geoffrey waved him off with his free hand.

"He needs a haircut," decided Karl disdainfully and moved on.

"I've got to go," she murmured, withdrawing her hand. She pushed back her chair and stood up smoothing down her skirt. Pursing her lips in a pretty pout she tugged on a stubborn glove and picked up her purse. Then she straightened up and smiled coolly down at him.

"I may not be home tonight."

He smiled back not daring to breathe.

"And get a haircut," she said.

With a small polished farewell wave she was off, swinging and tapping.

I will, but I haven't time, he decided. And so he got up with a secret stretch and stifled yawn and asked a kind waiter kindly for the check, please.

Of course, of course, we didn't order, and he wondered whether he was hungry as he passed through the gate, quick shadow tentacles writhing on his coat. Dare I? He plunged his hands deep into his trouser pockets and handsomely considered: Love. Handsomely blessed the trees every twelve steps. Handsomely said, Love is blind, you know. And a beautiful little girl dodged by his legs racing toward a group of nodding, sleeping pigeons in the street.

What could she have meant by this money theme? Ahead, the glittering pink stone of the State Institute beckoned. And beyond that those lovely lawns and trees, he thought. He smiled one last time and crunched the loose change between his fingers in his pocket, bunching up his coat nicely, and skipped up the stairs, head bowed and a tuneless whistle just about out of his lips.

RODEO

Your fingers taunt ropes, and a bruise
rides in your thigh. Black horse, face brushed
by wild dreams, smells knowledge in your bones.
I'm moonsick, dusty in arid heat.
The crowd breaks into a rash, you spur
Night Wind from a chute. Fifty for the Sioux--

hometown boy. Buffalo weep for the Sioux.
Their tears grew strange plants that bruise
prairie canyons. Flowers shaped into spurs,
they leave horses unbroken. Like snails brushing
water grass, they touch houses aching with heat,
their gnarled roots weigh the clink of bones.

Children lean toward thunderheads the color of bone,
and coyotes dance with ruffled grouse. The Sioux
dance on solitude between jingling bells. Your heated
limbs recommend calm rain. Your freedom, bruised
by prayer and the snort of bulls, was hushed
in hours and minutes too old for enduring.

Bruise the fallen calf,
Brush my growing scar with your spurs.

Roberta Hill

BEGINNING THE YEAR AT ROSEBUD, S. D.

No pavement chalks the plain with memories,
rows of curb crumbling to dirt each twilight.
Raw bones bend from an amber flood of gravel,
used clothing, whiskey. We walked, and a dead dog
seemed to leap from an iced shore, barks swelling her belly.
Three days I've waited, eyes frosted shut
to illusions of scrap and promising wind.

I'm untrapped here, in another place where the banister
interned my smile and glued my soul to the lion's mane,
walls nibble this new year. While cedar cradles
its medicine in ironing, I see my father's red eyes lock
thunder in the living room. Someone's brain crys in the basket,
watches steam and church bells fade. My empty hands ache
from stains and cigarette smoke. I am a renegade,
name frozen at birth, entrails layered with scorpions.

Hay fields have poisoned my ears by now.
The fourth day grows heavy and fat like an orchid.
A withered grandmother's face trickles wisdom
of buffalo wallows and graveyards marked
with clumps of sage. Here, stars are ringed
by bitter wind and silence. I know of a lodestone in the prairie,
where children are unconsolated by wishes,
where tears salt bread.

Roberta Hill

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Photo by
Carl Hanson '72



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