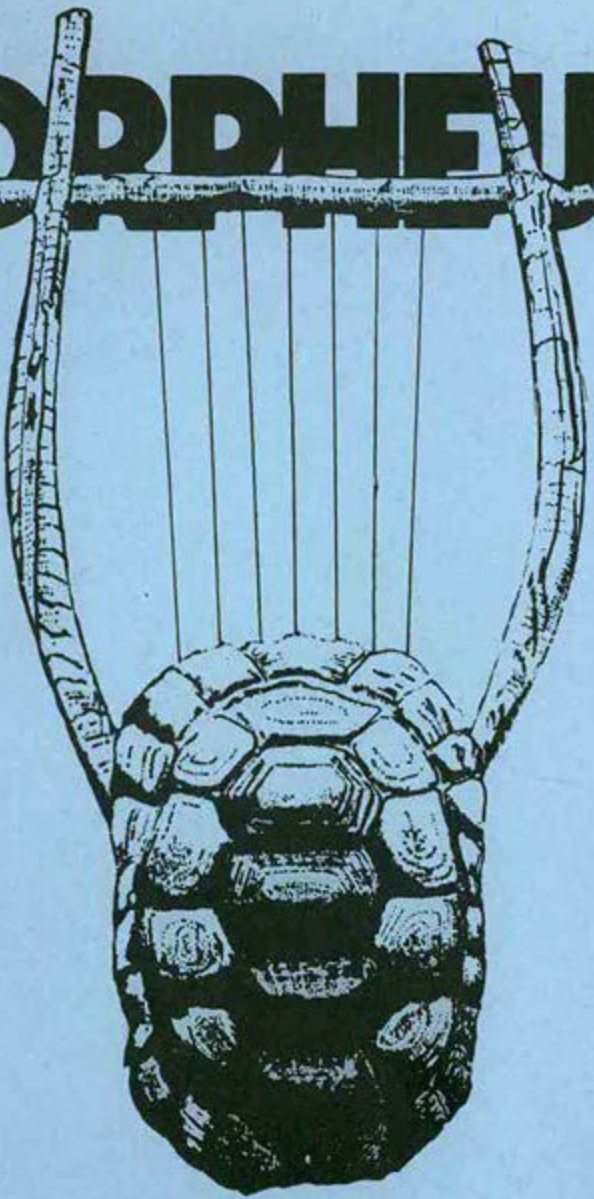
ORPHEUS



CALIFORNIA STATE COLLEGE, BAKERSFIELD

ORPHEUS

VOLUME V, 1977
CALIFORNIA STATE COLLEGE, BAKERSFIELD

THIS ISSUE OF

ORPHEUS

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

TO

DR. DAVID SPENCER

THE RETIRING CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

A MAN WHO NEVER WALKED ON PAVED STREETS
LACED WITH FLIMSY GLORY,
BUT A KINDRED AND COMPASSIONATE SOUL
WHO KNOWS THE CONFLICTS OF
THE HUMAN HEART.

Preface

I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's, duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail.

William Faulkner

These words by William Faulkner capture the spirit and purpose of this edition of ***Orpheus***. Human beings are born, and they die. In between these two points we become entangled in a complex state of emotional and intellectual moments. It is these moments which characterize our interactions within a world that does not always bend to meet our expectations. In order to emerge from this chaos we create forms and images to give meaning to an existence which lies beyond individual determination. Thus we have the confrontation of creative spirit with what writer-philosopher John Cafferata calls "the central paradox of life: man / woman lives inside a world and a world lives inside of man / woman."

For most this confrontation becomes a source of anxiety for in the evolutions of our experiences we have come to equate the unknown with fear and longing. To the life searcher, the poet, the artist, this anxiety acts as a catalyst, a force that stimulates the imagination to move beyond the moment. It is this emotional and intellectual interface that constitutes the content of ***Orpheus***. The significance of this interface is best described by Andre Malraux:

> The greatest mystery is not that we have been flung at random among the profusion of the earth and the galaxy of the stars, but that in this prison we can fashion images of ourselves sufficiently powerful to deny our nothingness.

In the final analysis, the value of ***Orpheus*** can be judged only through the inner thoughts of its readers. If the words contained within offer you one second of self-discovery, one fleeting moment of cutting across time and space, then we, the staff and contributors of ***Orpheus***, are satisfied.

Acknowledgements

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Staff

Editor
Dale Berona

Associate Editors
Wilma Cassel
William O. Shoars

Cover Design & Artwork
Michael Antonell
Richard Kolar

Graphics
Jerome Evans

POETRY



Written On The Sea

Whisper gently the love you have for me,
If love it is you have.

Let the oboes and violins serenade us
The dreams explode–
The star is in silent cacophony.
Proclaim the love.

The waves, the mountain air with
its fresh scent tittilate us.

Whisper love, and say it's me you love
For I love you.

Silent moments, reality that is a dream
the piano striking gently
And your voice–
Comfort me.

Don't think I don't love you
I'm afraid to think you might be right.
I don't know what love is; hurt
Down deep there is a feeling.

Midnight dawns
the morning rise sets
I wish you were with me.

I don't have fancy words to tell
you
You know the heart cannot speak

And words merely tell a lie.
Read deeply into my eyes
And see the tears--they come
only from joy and love and you.

It's more than I've ever had.

I guess I'm saying I need you.
Let us drink a glass of cool pure
water.

Untitled

Dancing stars on rigid waves
singing tunes that were meant to save,
Oh, the light has brought surprise,
you and I, we need no eyes.

Shining, shining, Oh so bright,
the stars and we commence to night.

Waves they come
like men and thee
only to face
odds of history.

Come, come, but they came no more,
Servitude we all have bore.

Flameless Flaws that
time will tell,
Mysery is so close to Hell.

Lift us up and let's start again,
some day, we shall win.

Erin Beck

Shells

Shells filled with sand
brought forth by the wind
Then washed away
left empty
Like souls-bereft
from their lack of love

Jenny White

Help

Lord, I cry to you.
Alleviate my suffering.

Help

I am lost. . .
Searching for an answer.
My being cries with anguish,
My soul suffers excruciating pain
And hope is lost.

I am scared,
The unknown frightens me,
So lost in the vast possibilities of tomorrow
And I know nothing.

Within me, I scream from the torture
Of uncertainty.
Nothing is real or solid. . .
Reaching out to grasp a single something
And nothing is there.

I live through one nightmare
Simply to enter another.
Life rolls on at its monotonous pace.

CA

Coming from the center of myself
Energy dancing throughout my body
And extending beyond the bounds of my being
To my beloved.
Blind bliss of ecstasy.

Sherrie Davis Calhoun

Time's Child

It wasn't that I didn't have time.
Time to appease you.

It was just easier other ways.
Easier to fill your small enclosed room
    with modern diversions
And to fill your days with others who knew better ways.

But let us go now.
I am alone with myself and my chores are done.

The Dock

Water splashes
Against blistered walls.
Fish nets piled high
On salty decks.
Small boats waltz endlessly,
Guided by the waves.
Yellow people with squinting eyes
And fingers like butterflies,
Make ready,
Mending soggy fishing nets
With tough white string.

Gary Powell

Wasted, as the golden leaves of autumn
Gone, leaving nakedness to face
    winter's quietude
Dreaming, of spring's joyous rebirth
    which can never return.

Bertie Martin Taylor

Silent Enemy

Moving in from nowhere,
Unrelentless, unnerving my inner soul.
Like a fog that suddenly appears,
With a sense of eeriness & uncalm.
And may linger on for indefinite periods,
Or leave suddenly.
I have no control & can not change it.
Why must it invade & come between?
I contemplate & try to understand,
But the answers are not apparent,
And my never be.

Upon it's creeping in I feel lost in a mist,
Not sure if there is an edge,
Or if it be near.
I move slowly so not to overstep my viewing,
Caution that can turn inward,
And tear at my insides.
Oh, for only a voice, a noise, anything!

Silence, go away,
I can not deal with you,
As I can not deal with fog.
It is only there & I am helpless.

It is noisy as a loud sound,
Because it vibrates so.
I want to shout at it,
Stop, stop------before I am crushed by your pressure.

Silence, go away & leave me,
To create the closeness I seek,
But it can not be without words.
So leave me to be.

Chau Kim Dinh

Plaintes d'un Refugie (suite et fin)

L'eau lui vient a la bouche
Quand il evoque l'image saissante
Du bol de soupe de poisson favori
De la saveur brulante du vin de riz
Et des gateaux, des fruits, des delicatesses
Que seule chaque contree natale puisse offrir:
Il perd tout espoir
De revoir jamais son patrimoine
Mais peut-etre ses enfants
Reverront un jour la terre des ancetres
Quand les grands parents
Les oncles et les tantes
Auront repose trois metres sous terre
Sans stele, sans encens ni papier votif. . .

Car les enfants n'auront plus garde
Le souvenir sacre de l'image des defunts

Mais seul peut-etre le refugie
Garde toute sa vie la nostalgie
Du parfum doux et prenant
Du nenuphar un soir calme d'ete
Et la senteur rafraichissante
Du paddy jaune murissant
Un soir d'hiver frissonnant
Accable d'insomnie
Et de tristesse dechirante
Le visage ride, baigne de larmes ecoeurantes.

Vietnam

To the everlasting and deep
Humanist soul of Vietnam.

Vietnam the pacified South, suzerain of imperial China
Or the land of proud fighters for freedom

Legendary offspring of Queen fairy and King dragon;
Whose forefathers came from the misty
Dong Dinh lake in the heart of China's mainland.

One hundred Viet tribes in all came out,
But the Lac Viet alone managed to survive
The Han's land-grabbing and assimilating tribe!

Starting from the Red River Delta,
Vietnamese set out to slowly push
And gnaw away turbulent Champa.
Then came the turn of placid lower Cambodia
Cochinchina--this lush land
Watered by the mighty Mekong;
Its silt, alluvium dragged from southern China
Its spring flowing from the Tibetan soil
Sacred Land of the Buddhist Mahayana!

Like a lotus spurting from the mud
And protruding its Camau golden petal
And like a formidable nine-headed Naga,*

South Vietnam poses itself
A sentinel always on the look out
Watching and screening those who prey
Upon the rich, strategic Indochinese peninsula.

Vietnam--a small kingdom ruled by China
For ten centures and more
Yet able to withstand
And route the ill-famed
World-conquering Genghis Khan's army!

Vietnam--small country which has produced
Great heroes and brave men
Well-versed in Resistance war.

*Cuu Long means nine dragons

Vietnam (2)

Vietnam--cross fertilization
of the essence of two old civilizations:
from the positive wisdom of China
to the mystic, self-inquisitive India
and the encounters with Western powers
It has melted and shaped up
a Humanism so rare and lovable
that it embraces all philosophies and ideals.

Vietnam--a catalyst of diverse trends
Where East reverently meets West
In the profusion of pagodas, temples, churches
in concord between religious sects
in toleration among ethnic minorities
in learning institutions, in architecture
in fine arts, poetry and literature
in thinking
and in the way and art of living.

Vietnam
where the traditional and the modern
and where East and West
happily blend and live in harmony.
where one castle of many rooms and styles
stand up proudly
and mirrors its image
on the Pacific enigma. . .

Forlorn Music

I don't like red
Glaring purple and violet,
Nor stark black and blaring white,
Nothing shocking to the eyes
Nor sounds tickling to the ear.

Glory to the delicate mysterious twin
to the magic, the mystic the eerie.
I like light green, pale yellow,
Subtle amber, emerald, sapphire.

All soft glows
all hues and shades;
Hushed sounds, murmurs
since they match better
and two in one
easily blend together.

I love dark transparencies
The twilight at crepuscular time
The pink aurora blushing shy
Before the sun darts its nude rays
for they mellow my weary heart
and soften my bitter mind.

Like some forlorn music
still deeply resounding in my soul
like heavenly accord
and concord and symphony

between the highly melodious flute
and the deeply sonorous
and heart rendering
moving one string guitar
of ancient melancholic past

For they are voices
deeply concealed in my subconscious.
For they are tenuous and tenacious link
between the traditional venerable soul
of my native Southeast Asian country
permeated with Chinese, Indian wisdom
and the hustle and bustle
of the modern Western world.

For they remind me
of my anguished exile
far, far away
from things and men
dear to my small heart.

San Francisco, Ten Years Later

San Francisco o marvelous town
The twain did meet in concord harmony
Thou alone gaveth a most blatant
outcry
To Kipling's doomed prophecy.

A seemingly endless bridge
Spanning graceful, majestic
Floating on a calm blue sea
This calm afternoon; ten years flew by.

A myriad of titillating shining gems
The eyes of millions of city dwellers
Peering at you, beckoning your open mind
And mellowing your sour heart. . .

A bay so lovely, so fantastic, so eerie
That it embraces and hugs, o very tenderly
A truly cosmopolitan city
Spreading far and wide
Up hill and down front warf.

How I love its rambling street cars
Its tortuous, flowered Lombardo row
What a Babel tower
of languages, races, cultures and colors

What a wonderful mingling
of exotic Orient and modern West,
This harbor and gate of continental U.S.
Which swings wide its strong arms
to embrace the fresh breeze
and to lift and lay on its generous shore
the wretched, the exiled
from the monsooned, forbidden Far East.

Hurly burly Chinatown
Sells Oriental luxuries
Flavor and taste
And open stalls, wharf restaurants
Lure tourists and gourmets
with savory fruits from the ocean.

I also find charm and delight
In gorgeous art museums,
In resplendent painting galleries,
a cross section of Eastern treasures
and Western, Roman and Greek cultures.

San Francisco, Ten Years Later (2)

But low! the Japanese tea garden
Seems lost in self-contemplation;
Amid roaring cars, flashing lights,
It emanates freshness, serenity of mind
A lasting monument of the Orient
An eternal mirror of transcendental Zen.

And my heart soars and soars
With the lone, enigmatic seagull
Who surveys his earthly empire
of colossal sky scrapers and spires.

And my soul shares the despair
of a black talented musician
who mesmerizes late pedestrians
with his hoarse voice and love songs
his pathetic, melodious flute
tinged with nostalgia from the South.

Camille Gavin

Tidepool

Spiny-skinned creature skitters
near a limpet locked in itself.
Patient, the crusty fellow marks
the puckered dome, then shows
a tipsy trail to a surer port,
to chart, to plot, to devise.

Hovering in that blue-green womb,
gritty champagne crystals teasing
soft, pink underbelly,
he hinges for the unhasping.
A blind foot probes the welcome trap.
Slither, crunch–it's done.

The liquid lens waltzes a crazy chord,
flinging lashes on its shattered shore.

Bittersweet

Just before dawn,
when night sounds cease,
I touch the aching space–
And hear the joy that
once attacked
my unforgiving face.

7AM on the Parking Lot

Slim-necked bottles roll in naked grace,
Mocking the path of the night before.

Elaine Ferguson

The Ecstacy

Where, like garmeted velvet,
A pregnant bank swelled
sat we two,
One another's best.

Our hands were firmly cemented,
By a cohesion of the Mind.
Our eye-beams twisted and threaded
Our eyes upon one double line.

As 'tween two like-armed nations
Fate
Suspends uncertain victory
Our senses, advancing their state,
Were gone out-hung 'tween him and me.

When love with one another
so interanimates two
That nobler one, interfused
loneliness controls

Joel Sherman

Ode to a Calculator

Blackbord Lady--
    --buried in your universe of chalkdust equations.
Can you survive--
    --when two plus two is five?

Andrew Grzeskowiak

Las Polillas de Seda

Life is another chance come into the room:
Brown dots against pink squares.
I tell the children, Watch, and soon
black writhing blips bloom from the dots, movement
so miniature as cheats our belief. Haul over
the lenses, bend light till it aches, yes!
Quick! Get the leaves! Trees helplessly give
them, links paper-heavy
filagreed tiny, neat lacing, pinholing.
Dots drape to thin threads that whip up
white worms--get leaves, bring more leaves!
The worms grow green rings, strange tail horns;
we write their stories as their size spans my hand:
they bulge, from thumbnail to knuckle-nigh,
a fine Easter fatness. Long as my last
limb, their munching fills up all the quiet.
Now they are tender, forelegs to faces--
"Are they friends?" "'course--they're
gonna have babies."

Touching tails, faced out for hope or farewell,
Leaving small yellow sprinkles
that hold the next wave, they are clumsy.
The class points. The worms undo,
huddle and wait the work done.

To Henry James --An Apology

European novels are afternoon rooms
Gauzed by the dust lying thick on the floor;
Studies in gray, and disciplined gloom
Various settings of furniture, bored.

Desert Eagle

For they have grown old, and thought themselves wise
To stay, while I fly over the hill.
But that kind of life is to die, for me--mine
Is the wicked, high and shrill
Cry of the kite,
The whistle of sand on the rocks,
And the harsh, brittle sounds
When a beast makes his kill.

Century of the Victim

We are the oppressed masses,
A minority of millions
Whose lives are weighted out
On some global metronome of fancy;
For we have said, "On us, Lord, and
On our children!" And on our
Fifth, and sixth, and seventh generations;
Of them we hate and learn to hate.
Heritage is important to us now,
Far more than to our ancestors:
We count by heaps of rotting dead--
Who counts the faces?

Wilma Cassel

After She Left

After she left,
After the feeling of guilt-ridden
Release had lessened,
The lack of her presence
Filled all my days.
The weight was gone,
The unwanted weight.
"What have you ever given me?"
I'd silently shouted.
The space in the middle was scant enough
Without the pushing pressure,
Without the cluching clasp
Of dragging dependence.

Now, the ends are gone,
And the middle's much too large to think in—
Hollow, vacant;
Yet still busy with quick blurred images
Of half-glimpsed scenes
Of selfless giving and of love.

There's too much room now.
I cannot think clearly
In all this added space.

I cannot think clearly.

Summer Song

A long fortotten arm has lain under my head
Till dawn.

Tonight the rain nymphs cry
And toss tears on my pane.
My heart stirs with quiet pain,
For that unremembered love.

Winter's tree stands
Stark, alone
No bird nests safely sheltered
In those barren boughs.

I do not know where the bird has flown,
But I remember the Summer Song
It sings no more.

Stages

Roll the curtain down! AgeingActors,
Center front!
Attend: Please, no more plaints of
Hoarfrost hair
And aching, juiceless joints.
No more laments of sunken skin

And faltering feet;
Such self service only speeds
The final score.

Janus waits in the wings,
But with prudent patience
Leaves the telling turnstile
In your hands.

Raise the curtain! Dim the lights–
Places, please!
Speak out to slow time's flow!
Cavort!
And sob with tempered tears.

Substitute (An Extended Hyperbole)

She swept into the room,
And she spotted me there,
Blue-suited and all unsuspecting.
I was fixed with her stare
While in accents quite fair
She examined my verse and informed me:
"Well, your iambs jam, and your dactyls lack,
And your trochees are merely atrocious!"
Oh, we knew she was wise
As she looked in our eyes
And quoted us freely from Milton.

I sat there alone midst the shards of my verse,
All shattered along with my ego.
But I couldn't help but mutter,
Or perhaps more like stutter:
"I don't love you, Ms. X, and neither, I feel,
Would have Milton."

There is a Stage

A stage
Complete with players.
A peaceful place
Far from the cutting edges of
Fury and Frustration, yet
Close enough to
The pained, then peaceful faces.

Listen:
The searching sounds of
Being.
We are as
We are,
Reflected in endless lengths of
Masking mirrors;
Each present image
Superimposed on the Past.
Infinite;
One bonded blend of
Sane Sickness
And
Sick Sanity.

There is no pause in the
Pulsing Panorama,
Nor ever will be till

The End.

Clowns

Strip a clown
down,
Incising skin,
to
Shining sinews and
nerves.

Pluck a nerve
Like a cello string
And feel with him
The pulsing pain.

Dress him up in
His puppet's disguise,
Press button "on,"
And watch the fool perform.

Laugh at clowns,
The sounds of mirth
Seep down through skin
Like desert rain
To stay the twanging, restless
nerves
And mute the ever-present pain.

Marijana

Why Do I Cling to You

It's not enough to say I'm sorry and then move on
but sometimes it's all that's possible.

It's strange how strongly dead leaves cling to
a sturdy tree, even though death has touched them.

In this same way I cling to you
remembering your touch, which is better forgotten
then ever felt.

Why then do I cling to you?
I've known you a few short weeks
yet I bend toward you when we walk.

Wherever we walked, a part of me was left. . .

clinging to trees,

scattered in the wind,

mixed in crowds.

Each tender moment we shared included a letting go of
precious feelings gone. . .given. . .taken. . .lost. . .to you.

Now as I rewalk these paths I hope for a feeling or a
sensation
But they are gone, now do you see why I cling to you?

Chy'a

Waterbed Fugue , D minor, F Plus

Can't chronicle the numbers of the tears
Can't count the letters of the heart.
(The tales of love that never flee the hand through pen to pad
to Taint and Taunt.)
Skill lies in the wooing, and the sport is lost thereafter.
Where goes the said affections of this lover?
(The pits of darkness deeper than the depths of hell
To that one who would fathom that deepness
To carry back the death-claimed love.)
Yes, your trials are folly and the plot is dreadfully old.
You may love while you're young and jolly.
(And the aged one's bed is cold.)

Dwane Johnson

Seed in darkness;
destiny unknown
So affected inside, by the earth that
feeds so strictly slow
Patiently set, then a push through a crack,
where freedom for growth
awaits
Still a bud, cut from thy reconditely roots

Now isolated I stand, seen not known–
wilting innocently

Must he still sit, with face fixed, sketched
Seeming not stroked, while tears erase
The portrait that's only memory seen?
His face framed with eyes endeavoring
Blackness–when upon a tower and well they melt.
Then, flooding the pump with canvas blood.

Terrence M. Matthews

Onward

The thunder roared and shook
the silence of the valley
green and calm.
And masks of smoke climbed steadily
until the sun stained openly,
now draped in the foul arms of war.
Ponderously–
a greyness shudders in the day
moving lightward upon a shadeless field,
where fear and courage run side to side,
arm in arm
run the fleeting lines of grey.

"Onward!"
Cries the generation lost to time.
So young they ran that afternoon,
so young the fleeting lines of grey
that afternoon.
And from the rows a throaty scream:
an agony placed on the air
so shattered now with unseen, nameless
tragedy.

"Onward!"
And still they ventured out that charge
till soldiers so spot the shadowed field
and death and fear so stain the softness of the eve
with blood of blue and grey deceived
arm in arm
they lie
and dream yet the sweet thoughts of youth.

Autumn Song

An autumn wind whistles a changing breath
over the face of a passing year,
and upwards through sleeping branches
waving wildly
slaps at freckled leaves.

Question

Silent
endless falling night,
sweet with the breath of youth concealed
yet,
can we grasp upon the right
of death to stalk revealed?

April's Man

I am April's man October held,
a stranger pulled to Sunday's lanes
I walk, unfamiliar, past the waves
captive still with memory's stains.

Susan Bain

Crystal closets full of dust
and crusts from day-old bread
the sugarplums had turned to crumbs
beneath her well-coifed head.

Her fantasies had rancid seams
beneath the tarnished store-bought dreams
she searched for some small simple thing
that she could call her own.

Then hanging up her evening clothes
through doors that trembled as they closed
she tore a petal from the rose
he'd left in sympathy.

And turning on a polished heel
she begged the room to stop its reeling
panic rushing to the ceiling
washing white the floor.

"We're all adored but who are we
when freedom means not being free
and roses left in sympathy
lie wilting on the floor?"

Through doors that close each time they open
words that change each time they're spoken
she searched for one small thread unbroken
a token for the lame.

"I'll name this role I've played 'til now
that's turned to sweat beads on my brow
before I've laid it in the ground
no unnamed epitaphs."

And laughing then for laugh she must
or slowly sink into the dust
with nothing left but naive trust
and crusts from day-old bread.

Tears Unspent

I see the ripples
of time and grace
unhurried

Fury raged in dust
'til trust succumbed at last
numbed by nature's wrath
dropping crumbs in the beggar's bowl

Furrows hold those years
those tears unspent
your shoulders bent
by acres left to till

and still those eyes
reach out from weathered brows
to touch the land you nursed through summer's drought
and loving fingers rest upon that plow
I stop
    to ask you how

Sweet Melanie
with your china face
embracing love
you laugh each time he speaks
you seek your image in his eyes
his sighs, his touch
with such unfailing trust
must you flutter so
relax
he's asking for your hand

branded things heal quickly
    in the summer
slumber on the chaise
his days are nine to five
your life's a matinee
held over for the dinner crowd
louder Please
I can't hear you
could someone please adjust the sound

Fantasy in G
he was free to be alone
no roller skates to block his path
no lath
or plaster crumbling to repair
and there he sat
hat in hand
waiting for the band to play
Fantasy in G
she was free to be alone
no lather in the bowl
no soul to talk to
woks and china sets left on the shelf
a self to find
wind the clock
the talk show's running down
around her feet
repeating
Fantasies in G
they were free
to be alone

Watchmen Don't Roll Dice

You pulled the shade again
just when I was starting to believe
your smarting wounds avoiding turpentine.

Please, let's try the wheel once more
we'll drop like dice upon the gambler's floor
adored, abhored
the Lord of Light will pass us by
to try new lovers.

But there you sit
unfit for battle
No more rattling the cage!
The lions are asleep
and the watchman's going home alone.

Father Nickolas G. Milatos

The Instructor

To understand is to know.
To know is to have that special key.
That special key
is the tool which opens the avenue
that interconnects the two worlds.
The exoteric with the esoteric one.

When this is achieved
there is the feeling of accomplishment.
The feeling that is within
so unknown to explain
but yet so precious when you possess it.

It is a feeling that gives you love.
It is the love that opens the door of darkness.
It opens the door of the dark
and lets in the light which reveals.
Then the one increases, the other declines.

In the process, the understanding,
the knowledge, the special key
are ever so much increased.
Then the feeling is in your heart
present for evermore.

It is the feeling which distinguishes
one human from the other.
It is the feeling
which makes one human a master of its art
and the other a slave.

It is the feeling of stability
It is the feeling of knowing thyself
Then the one can be a builder
The other a bearer of a name.
It is this feeling within
that makes you so different
and so special from others.

C. W. Morrison

San Joaquin Sunrise

Moonless darkness brightens waiting stars;
Farmyard floodlights gleam in disarray;
Nibbling Night-folk, sensing coming light,
Warily seek safe haven--before becoming prey.

A paleness rises, spreads behind the East;
The twinkling night-sky markers disappear.
Ah! All but Mighty Venus, shining still,
'Til routed as the Sun (behind the mountains) hovers near.

SO STARTS THE DAY:

The skyline of Sierras showing stark,
Pale light above while all below is dark;
And birds chirp sleepily, and then aware
Of morn approaching; chatter fills the air.

Above, a lazily floating cloud shows pink;
Dark clouds in mountain passes turn to rose.
But quickly! Quickly look! The rosey fleece
Turns scarlet! Brilliant scarlet! As the tiny sun disc shows.

Grey shadows shun the growing Sun, the sky
Soon pales to pinks, washed yellows, then the blue.
The Valley lights just disappear, and man,
Just merely man, returns to toil. He never knew--
He never saw. And yet each day it happens once again--
Again, again, again, and yet again.

San Joaquin Sunset

With noon-time heat diminished,
A lowering Sun casts shadows long;
An evening breeze, disturbing leaves,
Softly mutes the sparrow's song.

That great red orb upon the rim
Of all the earth that man can see,
Enhances handsome mockingbirds–
Singing on delightfully.

So Sol succumbs: swift silent flight!
Pale rosy rays of vanquished Sun
Enliven high far clouds with light
For breathless moments - then - 'tis done!

NOW,

Twilight holds the stage until
The twittering songsters cease, but still
Grey mockingbirds sing on, unseen,
And dare dread dark to intervene!

Hushed, mystic shadows bring the night;
Excepting sarts there is no light.
Must I assess my day?
Self-righteously rant for right to prey?
Or must I, shamed, prayer denied,
In sombre, sinister shadows hide?

And Such Are We

The source of light
Is composed of, created by,
The selfish desire of mankind;

An intellect, an oddity too foolish to
Survive without a beam, a path,
Or some elusive law of nature:
A god to worship or neglect
By whim.

A cross convenient to man
With nails of solid rust:
Red nails
That have not known blood;
A street that never turns
But is not straight.

This s'posed intellect 'pon which
Man's arrogance and pride is based;
Is still a tool
With which mankind destroys mankind,
And other things perhaps more precious
Than itself.

A spade that digs a grave
And wonders why
It cannot fill
The space
Now occupied.

Clara Meek

Love Be Quieted

Memories run unrepelled
In the cradle of my mind.
Reflecting,ne'erforgetting,
Happenings of bygone time.
Bright as spring you entered
Unbeknownst and unprevailed.
Beguiling and adoring,
Forcing blossoms to unfurl.

Grapes ripen on the vine,
Spring turned to summer folly.
Frolicing, skylarking, unabridged,
Not caring whose hearts volley.

When leaves begin to fall,
And wisdom does abide;
Compassion for the fawn and doe
Require a love be quieted.

Is winter now and all is still
Snow blanket from above.
But memories rever or many years
Our quieting love.

Love Lost

Youth be gone, I need you not
You fill me with despair.
Like spring you are, fragile, gentle, blossoms white, unaware.

I need a strong, brisk summer storm
To mature the fruit waiting to be born.
Abundant rain twill make me ripen,
Elucidate contours to mirror my diamonds.

Alas the day, much to my chagrin, suddenly did pass.
Leaving floods and mud, alloyed with broken glass.
Its strength was masked hiding recalcitrant harm,
And you left me there, suspended by your arm.

For gentle youth I do so pine,
Old age alone is cruel, unkind.
My loss, like blossoms, is gone forever.
Alack, still I'll yearn till the "twelfth of never."

Delores Bratton

Old Beauty

Time has passed so
swiftly by
There does not seem
to be a sigh.

Stooped,
Worn,
Wisdom told as time
grows cold.

Life and death
has passed near
Makes it so much
more dear.

Not a beauty of a
rose,
A Beauty of the
times.

A Century Gone

He seemed unliked
in the past, a lone
shadow in a sea of grass.
Beauty is lost in a crowd.
He stands proud.
The rodents of the earth and sky.
Abused at their will.
A Century of wind and storm
tore at his very core.
He bakes, He burns
He weeps, He chills
"Such a messy,
Smelly thing."
When death does come
As it must to all,
Some will stand
Some will fall.
It does not seem
he did enough.
No one seems to
know, the Centurian.

Bertha Crow

Facets

The road was untraveled then,
And the gods held out paths
Enticing feet to stray into worlds unknown.
Eager eyes, whose depths had not yet shadowed,
Beheld the shining ball-
Multicolored-
Impatient hands held it tightly
As the sunlight filtered through

Intermission

Intermission - Bertha Crow

The waves of agitation ceased,
Leaving the massed throng
Quiet and thoughtful.
The drums muffled the last staccato beat,
And the bass viola stood vacant
Of the deeply melodious quality
That tied the trills together.
Even the woodwinds
And the brassy trumpets were forgotten,
Left carelessly to gleam without a hint
Of motion they once had stirred.
The music hangs silent now
And the score a massed jumble
Of black dotted lines on
White paper.
But the deep rumbling
Storm of the ocean lives on,
And the triumphant march
Of the conqueror,
The gentle swelling of high tide,
And the sprightly dance of Pan.
The Conductor sits in the midst of silence,
And contemplates that which was,
And time could not destroy.

Deserted

It stands forlorn,
Its hoarded secret corners
Empty as rain barrels in the dead of summer
That drowned once before,
Bare, open for the world to see,
Yet not so swept as I,
Tempting doors to close and the drapes to be drawn
Upon the far horizon that recedes with the day.
Full well I know,
Once the limp, responding soul
Should cease to yield,
The door will close forever.

Jerome Evans

More Than

The heart is more
    Than pumping blood,
The brain is more
    Than sending
Electric-like impulses
    Along nerve roots unending.

Fire is more
    Than man's good friend,
Water is always healing.
    The mind is more
Than thinking only,
    And the heart is more than feeling.

T'Sin

In Passing

She a sea
foam- -ing
churn- -ing
un-
-dul-
-ated
before me;
femininity was in her tread
malignancy in her flow

She came.
I saw.

She -held-
the wind
[trapped]; within my nostrils
and strai----------ning at the pipes
without/effort
without/thought

She came.
I saw.
She did- -not

She-drew-near
unaware
worlds c
r
u
m
b
l
e
in a failure to hear:
see:
or care

She came.
I trembled.

Retrospect

Liquid rivers of gold and silver coupled at the delta;
Metallic elements which could not mate,
Neither could be divided,
Were married:
By the natural courses of the valley and the mountain.

Within the banks where they did mesh,
Turmoiled they, in colors of sun and light.
Their glory gone unnoticed while in the flood
But from a distance fully discerned.

But, when passion's flame was dimmed
And alchemy's grown brighter,
East and West the metals divided.
So great the schism
The rivers took to separate beds.
A cover of herbs and bushes
Lost each from the other's view.

The State of Uriah the Hittite

Descended,
    A spider milken white

Upon,
    A butterfly painted bright

Stoic,
    Gazed the rounded maker

Treason,
    Thirty talent traitor

The Phoenix

Vaulted heavenward in cataclysmic blast
Rough-hews monolith, birthed of Vulcan flame,
Runs down Father's shoulder before His fired wrath,
And comes to rest in liquid bed, protected from His heated rain.

It rested placidly, and did not hear
The laughter of the master sculptor
Who, languidly slow, began his labor
And cared not whether completion came fast or never.

Laboriously nature's watery scribe
Etched away the roughened edges
As the sculptor seemed to fashion from the stone
An object, a tool, for some useful purpose.
But, when the job seemed finished, he continued
Till there was nothing but grains of sand.

A billion particles of nothingness
Till heated by Vulcan's furnaced breath,
Then they become one again: a monolith,
Resting silently in the ground awaiting
The molten sperm which will start the process once again.

ESSAYS



David R. Worley

The People's Champion

Introduction

As I was exposed to that golden age known as the Renaissance I encountered many remarkable accomplishments that filled my mind with awe and wonder. The beauty and passion to be found in these works of art and literature speak not only to the eye, but to the heart as well. They speak with such eloquence of the dignity of man that each encounter with such a work leaves one filled with a sense of his own limitless potential.

The true value of these gifts from the Renaissance, however, goes far beyond a spiritual uplifting. The serious student soon realizes that many of the products of this period reflect not only the nature of historical figures, but speak to men of all ages as well. Trapped within the confines of our modern age and environment, we are often unable (and more often unwilling) to see the world from the broader perspective. However, one can gain access to this higher level of understanding through the timeless works of the Renaissance.

If the above leads the reader to expect the following pages to contain accounts of numerous men and events of the Renaissance, he will be disappointed. This paper sprung from an idea put forth by one man: Nicoolo' Machiavelli. The ideas that I profess here resulted from a combination of personal experience and formal learning that has laid smoldering in my mind for some time. But it was Machiavelli's "Circle of Governments"[1] that ignited this unarticulated feeling into a somewhat refined belief.

In "The Circle of Governments" Machiavelli distinguished between three types of government: the monarchical, the aristocratic, and the democratic. Although he labels these three as good governments, he states that, due to the corruptible nature of man, each of these good governments will inevitably decay into a bad one. Thus, through a cyclical process, monarchy becomes tyranny; aristocracy becomes oligarchy; and democracy degenerates into licentiousness.[2]

According to this paradigm, popular governments are typically formed by a people after having overthrown an oligarchy. Sparked by the memory of the prince, a democracy is formed to insure those civil rights that were so often violated in the past. However, this concern with the protection of individual rights ultimately leads to a state of anarchy. And because this popular state has lapsed "...into that kind of licence which inflicts injury upon public as well as private interests,"[3] the people are forced to seek the safety and regularity of government by a prince.

And so the pendulum swings. In an effort to insure individual freedom we sacrifice a degree of order. As time goes on and the bounds of these freedoms are continually expanded, there comes a point at which the degree of order

lost becomes too great to bear. The State respects the individual's freedom to such a degree that it becomes powerless to stop that individual when he threatens the freedom of others. When the common man finds that he can no longer depend upon his government for simple law and order, he will seek an alternative. Even though that alternative may reduce his freedom considerably, it will at least relieve his present distress. "Such is the circle which all republics are destined to run through."[4]

Such dire predictions for the course of popular government lead one to consider the fate of our own (so-called) democracy. If Machiavelli's prediction is correct, we should see signs of an increasing disregard for law and order which will ultimately precipitate the swing toward a police state. Surely, the multitude of laws protecting the accused and the general leniency of the courts have taken much of the sting out of the legal deterrents to crime. Whether this has actually led to greater anarchy in America today than in the past is the subject of much debate. However, few reasonable men can deny the assertion that because of technological advances such as television, America certainly *seems* more violent. Due to nationwide coverage by three major networks, we are constantly bombarded with instances of violence and alarming statistics on the rising crime rate. Whether this reflects a true increase in crime and unrest is not as important as the perception of spreading anarchy that it fosters in the minds of the public. For it is what people believe to be true that causes them to act. By continually confronting the individual with the harshest realities of life, we may inadvertently force his hand, thereby causing the drastic overreaction that Machiavelli predicted.

When the time comes that Americans feel so threatened and insecure that such an overreaction does take place, who will be their champion? What man, or group of men, will finally decide that the time has come to take control and restore order to a distraught and frightened America? This group must not only have the trust and respect of the American people, it must also have the means for such a move as well. It is my belief that we will ultimately reach the threshold of anarchy that Machiavelli describes. Furthermore, I believe that we are, at this very moment, training that elite group of men who will answer the call when that moment arrives. The training ground is the United States Military Academy at West Point. By relating some of the particulars of the training that I received as a West Point cadet, I hope to explain in the following pages the basis for this assertion.

Entry into the corps of cadets can be most easily likened to entry into a religious community. Having suffered both afflictions, I can speak from authority. After getting over the shock of a school with bars on the windows,[5] the eager but somewhat apprehensive high school graduate walks through the gates that cut him off from civilian life. What follows is an incredible series of efforts directed at erasing any semblance of civilian appearance and attitude. It is quite effective. Just four hours after the new cadets are admitted, they appear fully uniformed, bald, and in perfect formation to march to Trophy Point for the swearing-in ceremony. The entire occasion is undoubtably for the parent's benefit. They leave the base secure in the knowledge that their sons (daughters too, these days) will learn the many benefits of personal discipline. They rarely realize that the extent of that discipline goes far beyond the immaculate appearance, shouted responses and new chins.

A common theme in many of the lectures that we attended during the first two months was the necessity of shedding our civilian identity. I could easily envision my Baptist pastor in place of the U.S. Army major that warned "You are no longer part of that world." First it was sinners and now civilians! I, like my classmates, ate it right up. Part of the same presentation was a long expose on how we were "the cream of the crop in America." They spent so much time reviewing the stiff competition for acceptance among America's finest and generally patting us on the back that they had us eating right out of their hands. When one's ego is constantly fed on the same food, that food can become addictive. Such is the case here. The cadet quickly develops a very strong ego and self pride based upon his membership in the Corps. This helps greatly in weakening one's ties with the civilian world. As a cadet, one is admired and lauded by civilians and military alike. Since cadets are very competitively oriented, this proves to be a very effective indoctrination technique. Of course, upon leaving the auditorium we are once again reminded of the low station we held in our brave new world.

As time and training progressed, the theme of the military/civilian dichotomy was articulated in greater detail. It became one of the major mental constructs that we used in ordering our environment. By this time the modes of transferring these attitudes became more subtle, but the idea was, nevertheless, consistently reinforced that civilians were a different breed of animal. Since the overriding characteristic of West Point is its incredible discipline, it was only natural that the comparison fell along those lines. Civilians were conceived of as generally undisciplined, inefficient and blundering in spite of their good intentions. Their self- serving nature and lack of true commitment to group goals caused them to be too caught up in the petty games and niceties of politics to make any real progress. The cadet becomes so impressed with the seemingly impossible tasks he achieves simply because of his will power that discipline becomes his answer to the nation's ills as well. There is a natural tendency to generalize the lessons learned within our microcosm to the world at large. We learn of the great efficiency and flexibility that can be achieved through a unified chain of command. We study many impressive examples of the necssity to act quickly, decisively and with great flexibility. Such flexibility as a unit, however, necessitates great control within that unit

By contrast, the civilian government is a rather slow and cumbersome beast indeed. The system of checks and balances intended to preserve civil rights are often looked upon by the military as obstacles to the efficient discharge of duties in today's fast paced world. The military argument admits that a certain degree of flexibility and efficiency must be sacrificed in order to establish a democracy. However, the degree of that sacrifice is the point of contention. The opinion was frequently voiced that the present degree of sacrifice of these two factors far exceeds the bounds of good judgment. The Army makes its case through promotion of the perception that the world is an environment that is hostile to democracy. The development of such a perception is inevitable for the cadet. His entire life experience for four years is directed toward perfecting him as an efficient fighting machine. When one spends four years studying the world by sizing it up as a probable enemy, the environment looks very hostile indeed.

This hostile environment concept is applied to the Army's arguments concerning civilian government in terms of the necessity to be on our guard. This is, we must first be militarily strong in order to protect what we've already got. Progress in terms of human rights must be secondary, lest we lose what we've accomplished thus far. The general populace has no real concept (so they say) of the intricacies of the world balance of power and the fragile forces that have kept us safe up to now. Therefore, any policy goals that are decided by compromise between these persons' perceptions of the national interest are at best ineffective and at worst extremely dangerous. In order to effectively compete with other militarily advanced nations having the advantage of a highly organized and disciplined hierarchy of command, we must concede to the expertise of those whose business it is to defend us from such hostile forces. If we continue to shackle those who are best able to preserve our system, this will ultimately lead to its downfall. Again I must note that what I refer to here as the Army's argument is not presented formally as such (although it is often voiced in informal conversation). Rather, this perspective is fostered through the selective presentation of materials and attitudes. This is not to say that the Army fosters these perspectives consciously (although I believe a good case can be made that they do). They may just be the by-products of training designed for other goals. But whether the situation is consciously constructed or simply an accident, it is no less real.

The weakness of this argument is pointed out in the writing of Machiavelli. That is, while the Army generates considerable alarm over the dangers inherent in the lack of control our government can exert on the public, it ignores the danger of the other extreme. The strength of our system is that it has built-in mechanisms (inefficiencies, if you will) designed to save us from this possibility. When the military martyr announces his intent to save us in spite of ourselves, he pays only lip service to democracy and no more. While vowing to defend such nebulous concepts as freedom, democracy, the American way, and the national interest, he views civilian government as posing the greatest threat to our nation.

This, then, is the danger: that the defense of our nation and government lies with a fighting force that is contemptuous of its weaknesses, its propensity to make difficult military decisions even more difficult, and its unwillingness to recognize the "real" dangers that we face. Now most Americans can probably think of many more reasons to be fearful of our government. But most Americans are not elite members of the most effective fighting force in the world. The importance of this distinction is most aptly described by returning to the religious analogy. The Corps of Cadets is made up not only of extremely disciplined and able soldiers, but of highly motivated individuals as well. To social scientists, motivation is a constantly redefined concept. To a cadet, it is life. Even among the highly competitive and able cadets, only those who are willing to devote their every fiber to the appointed task will survive. In such a stressful life situation, motivation becomes a cadet's closest ally and his most valuable adaptive response. The same is true of the new religious convert. The burdensome gestalt of attitudes and beliefs that he must accept on his road toward a new identity calls for a high degree of desire. When redefining one's self concept and the concept of others in such an abrupt manner, one must rely heavily on the goal as justification for one's current anguish. As stress increases, that reliance is stronger. And each repetition of this process heightens the perception of that goal as one's reason for being.

For the religious convert, his reason for being, acting and living is to seek the kingdom of God. For the West Point cadet, it is the maintenance of national security. After four years of intensive and repetitive use of this concept as justification for his life style, his profession, his attitudes and his sacrifice, it becomes a dominating factor in his mental processes. This is fine when his concept of the national interest resembles that held by the rest of us. However, when it does not, we are faced with a very powerful individual with an unshakable resolve to pursue the goals he believes in.

Multiply the above mentioned individual by the vast number of subordinates and munitions at his disposal, plus the forces available from his ring-tapping cohorts, and the possibilities are truly frightening. In addition, the respect commanded by West Point graduates in the civilian community would lend substantial support – or at least lack of resistance – from the masses. Superficially, the idea that West Point may train the cadre that overthrows our political system may seem absurd. But it would not suprise Machiavelli in the least. The need for law and order, for national security, for "liebenstraum," has provided adequate justification for many coups throughout history.

CONCLUSION

So what are we to conclude from all this? Can we use our awareness of the possibility of a military coup d 'etat to alter the course of history? I think not. For even if we were to eliminate West Point as a breeding ground for future tyrants, new ones would emerge. And if we were to systematically chase down and eliminate all such possible threats to our democracy, we would have lost it in the process. We cannot succumb to the fear of our system's inevitable demise. This paranoia has fostered such disgusting episodes as McCarthy's search for communists and the internment of Asian Americans during World War Two.

We must instead leap to that higher level of understanding offered by Machiavelli which points out that GOVERNMENTS MUST CHANGE. The fear of what may follow that change leads many to adopt an ultra-conservative stance which resists all change or to simply refuse to acknowledge the possibility. Such reactions demonstrate a lack of courage. If change is inevitable, then we must embrace it. This is one of many lessons handed down to us from the Renaissance. It is regrettable that such a successful social experiment in freedom as America will ultimately crumble. But Machiavelli gives hope, too, in that just as surely as freedom will disappear, it will surface again, eventually.

Father Nickolas G. Milatos

Fiction

Let us begin with this question, "What is fiction?"

We are a practical people, down to earth, fact-minded, ill at ease with abstractions and high-falutin' language, the all-American grain of our our minds being one we either sand down or polish up. Although we attempt to face up to and live by the facts, we carry on the business of living in fiction.

The answer is unavoidable: We do because we can't help it. Only fiction will accommodate the facts of life. For example, before they made tools, perhaps before they made trouble, men and women were busy at the loom of fiction looking for clues to becoming more human.

Many of you will agree that the proven facts of our lives take one line on a tombstone, but the fiction may well fill many volumes.

The principal choice that we ought to be concerned with, in so far as we have one, is not between fiction and fact, but between good and bad fiction. For instance Watergate is bad fiction. Misleading facts and bad fiction govern our lives, if it is a matter of words, if it is a function of language, if it is concerned with what it is like or not like to be human, it will prove to be some sort of fiction.

"We make to ourselves pictures of facts. The picture is a model of reality." Those are words of a philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and here the fiction writer could not have put it better. You see, writers are picture makers of facts. Their pictures are models of reality.

For those who appreciate facts, assume that non-fiction is real in a way that fiction is not. Therefore, we see people buying with confidence books of non-fiction; fiction they buy for children and convalescents.

Who can say what novels are really about? Non-fiction is plainly about history, about war and peace, house repairs, vitamins, and how to do so many other things. Non-fiction is then by nature, about something that might prove to be useful. Fiction, on the other hand, if it is good, will often prove to be useless. "What good is reading that going to do?" This is an unanswerable question. The power of fiction, as distinct from its uses, are believed to align themselved with the occult, and thus we should put a label reading; "Let the Reader Enter at His Own Risk."

History, for example, is a good solid subject, but we can print most of the facts on one page of the book. ***What*** happened and ***Where*** is history. ***How*** and ***Why*** it happened is fiction. If the author has done a good job we accept the total as history, as truth.

To be the general, the soldier, the statesman, the spy, the hero or the victim, is merely to establish the point of view from which fiction can be written. Whatever truth we might perceive from the report will be through the shaping of the imagination.

The tremendous fiction of Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) persuaded the English people to the degree that they grasped the decline and fall of Rome. Gibbon read up on Rome, he lived and breathed ruins, he imagined himself and others as humans, and thus he wrote the first massive historical novel.

With the above statement, one may ask the question; "What about biography?" In biography, the fiction is compounded, because the author presumes to know the unknown, the unknowable: what the subject felt, what he actually thought, what he really said.

If all this impresses the reader as true, he is reading the work of a good writer of fiction. Anything might be his subject. His problem is to give it the semblance of life.

Now that biography is put to rest, for your information we can ask one more question. What about auto-biography, the honest-to-goodness confessions of the man himself? Rousseau, together with so many others, assures the reader that they are sticking to the facts. Thoreau tells us, "I should not talk so much about myself if there were anybody else whom I knew as well." I am sure you will agree with me that what Thoreau said sounds very sensible. We are a fount of knowledge about ourselves.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), the German poet and dramatist, describes his research into himself as Truth and Poetry. It is either Truth and Poetry or it will prove to be very little indeed.

In my mind the question arises,. "There must be some facts — what about those documents that record forever the crucial events in human history?" I can give you one on which the ink is still drying, and which is talking about the cease-fire agreement in Vietnam:

> "Immediately after the cease-fire the two South Vietnamese Parties will achieve national concord and reconciliation; end hatred and enmity; prohibit all acts of reprisal and discrimination against individuals or organizations that have collaborated with one side or the other; ensure the democratic liberties of the people-personal freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of meeting, freedom of organization, freedom of political activities, freedom of belief, freedom of movement, freedom of residence, freedom of work, right to property ownership, and right to free enterprise."

The person that reads fiction might well come to the conclusion that this is black humor, a parody of the very concept of a cease-fire. Here then we see, where facts of necessity should have prevailed, we find that fiction has taken over.

The compulsion toward fiction is so great among writers of history that only the self-aware fiction writer should be trusted with the drafts of these statements.

To stick to the facts is a respectable goal, but no writer of interest has long achieved it. I know it and you know it. Vital statistics are notoriously brief. It is a fact that we are born and die, but in between it is all a tangle of fiction, rounded with sleep. It is a fact that Jimmy Carter is the elected President. But it is fiction as to what he is going to do.

It is a fact that the President of the United States each year gives a report on the State of the Union. The President, the report and the Union are facts, but the speech will invariably brove to be fiction, and most of it bad at times. In this world of ours, we are long accustomed, having no choice, to believing the pictures of facts, that provide us with false models of reality.

Wilma Cassel

Smoke That Cigaret

I am a smokeoholic. A reformed smokeoholic, I might add smugly, if I were smug, which I am not.

Although it has been six years since I "Kicked the habit," I can still identify with smokers and their peculiar problems; one of these is the "I quit" smoker. Usually, these people have the reform zeal of the religious convert. Their righteous forced coughs, outraged eyes, and fanning gestures make one feel like crawling under a rug and pulling it protectively over one – but with cigaret still in hand. "Quit" and non-smokers could, of course, present numerous valid arguments to consider, but that is another story.

Whether or not to stop smoking is a personal decision. Either one sincerely wishes to quit for whatever reason, or one enjoys smoking, and no one's nagging will make one quit. To the contrary. Me? I enjoyed smoking. I must have. I smoked the first thing in the morning, during the day, with coffee, without coffee, before meals, after meals, and sometimes in bed at night, while reading. I invented reasons for smoking: tension, overwork, or just for sitting down to read or write. I rewarded myself for duties performed; smoking was necessary; I NEEDED to smoke. Enjoyed smoking? Yes, indeed! I never bought a full carton, because that might "Make me smoke more," but if I didn't have at least one pack of cigarets hidden safely away, I felt desperately insecure and my heart pounded. I wanted my pacifiers, I wanted my thumb, I wanted my mommy!

So, after countless unsuccessful attempts, I finally quit smoking, and this is how it happened:

I was working in the hous one day, carrying my "dirty" ashtray with me from room to room. All other ashtrays in the house I kept compulsively clean after every use. Suddenly, when I was walking through the kitchen, a mental image of an old, old woman avidly clutching a cigaret in her yellow-stained, wizened fingers appeared in front of me. I shook my head to clear it, but the image persisted. Half-frightened, I grabbed my cigarets and lighter, ran to my husband and pushed them into his hands. "I'm through," I gibbered, "I'll never smoke again, this is it – all – you can have them, I don't want them, you keep them!" Of course you've quit," he said blandly, "I KNOW." Infuriating! But understandable. This, to him, was merely the beginning of another one of my "I'm–quitting–smoking" episodes, to which he was boredly accustomed. My husband doesn't smoke, and never has, blast him! "This time," I said, with measured emphasis on each word, "I am not TRYING to quit smoking, I have QUIT smoking." And I stalked haughtily from the room. The effect of this exit was somewhat diminished when I stumbled over the leg of a small table.

For days after, I walked around in a daze – apart from the world – isolated. And I ate. When my body and senses screamed for their pacifiers, I ate. Any and all food in sight, I ate. Pampering the child, bringing the blanket. I ate all day and got out of bed at night to attack the refrigerator voraciously. I was at times tempted to bite my husband, not from hunger, but just because he didn't smoke.

After months of this foraging, the haze began to clear, and I found that I had gained twenty pounds, two dress sizes, two new plump understanding friends in caftans, and the dislike of my husband. During the time I dimly remember his pleading voice saying: "For God's sake – smoke!" On the positive side, I found that my hacking cough was gone, my clothing, hair, and house no longer reeked of smoke, and I could breathe deeply. My lungs felt pink and healed, not like the blackened, sick-looking pair I had seen pictured on television during a stop-smoking drive.

Gradually, I began to feel that I was a part of the world again, and to realize that something had to be done about my excess avoirdupois. Girding myself both literally and figuratively, I went forth to do battle! I successfully dropped the twenty pounds, the two dress sizes, and my plump new friends in caftans. Oh, and my husband no longer disliked me – I THINK. I still don't care too much for low-fat cottage cheese. I no longer smoke, and never shall.

But I remember the indescribable feeling of settling back comfortably after dinner with a cup of coffee . . .

Olga B. Winston

Robby Lee-- A Story of Separation with an introduction by Dr. Carlos Lozano

Joseph V. Torres-Metzgar, author of "Below the Summit," is another of the Mexican-American/Chicano writers who are contributing to the increasing fund of Chicano literature. Torres-Metzgar, professor of history at the University of Nevada, Reno, is a direct descendant of the Sanchez, Barela, and Torres families that came to New Mexico in the 1700's. A point that highlights the fact that his family has been on New Mexican land for generations. It is obvious that he knows the lot of the Chicano in the Southwest, whose lands were once his: He is now a pariah in his own land.

Torres-Metzgar follows in the footsteps of Ruolfo Anaya in "Bless Me, Ultima," by seeking to universalize his characters, to lend them greater dimension, and thus free them from the strictures of the "lloro, lloro," that is the angry, accusatory motif that has characterized a great many of the Chicano novels to date.

The time has come, most serious critics and literary historians agree, to look at Chicano literature with a critical eye; to view it, not as an exotic curiosity, but as a serious attempt on the part of Mexican-American/Chicano intellectuals and artists of Mexican ancestry to express their reality in universal terms; and to apply to it the criteria used to evaluate other literatures. Whether "Below the Summit," indeed, satisfies such criteria is a task undertaken by students in my Chicano literature course recently. One of the rewards of teaching literature courses is the discovery of students with the sensitivity and the perception, as well as the critical acumen of Olga Winston, the writer of the interpretation below.

With reference to "Below the Summit," it must be said that it is an indictment of the racist Anglo, but one carried out obliquely. Robby Lee, the protagonist, becomes the instrument of the intolerance and inhumanity of the Anglo in Texas. It is he, Robby, the self-appointed moral arbiter of one and all, who visits the wrath and the disdain of his people upon the one lovely, pure thing in his life: Maria Dolores, transformed into Marie, the symbol of things Mexican or Chicano. One may well question whether the author has fulfilled his characters; whether Maria Dolores, for example, achieves the independence from her creator, that such a character must reach; whether Serveto, the Mexican-American/Chicano scholar, believed by the self-deluded, parochial Anglos to be Italian, rather than Chicano, is not too shadowy and unsubstantial. However, such matters are open to discussion.

It is a sad story, yes, the story of the fall of man. Since that fateful moment in which man lost paradise, man has continued to fall and his fall is a story of separation. Robby Lee's life is such a story – it is this concept which might save "Below the Summit" from being merely another indictment of the intolerance and inhumanity of the anglo against Chicanos in the setting of a highly parochial and closed West Texas town.

The theme of separation is introduced at the beginning of the novel as we see Robby Lee heading home singing a song which will set the tone of the novel. It will recur in the middle as a melody intensifying the theme of separation, and will emerge again at the end when we witness the final fall not only of Robby but of the judgment of man.

"You'll take the high road
And I'll take the low road
And I'll be in Scotland afore yuh.
But me and my true love
We'll never meet again
On the bonnie, bonnie banks of Loch Lomond."

The novel begins by introducing Robby Lee to us as a man married to a Chicano girl, they have a son, he is a fundamentalist preacher as well as a salesman of cutlery. They live in a nice house quite secluded and protected and it seems there is love and happiness. The seed that will germinate into the final tragedy seems to be a sin inherited – his family's intolerance and an unforgiving attitude toward his marriage to Marian Dolores. Robby faces the problem of two forces pulling him apart – his personal relationship with Maria and the environmental weakness of a society unable to find reconciliation, of a world of inhumanity. How Robby faces this problem is the indicator of his character and the impulsive force of his fall. Robby is a poor excuse of a man. His love for Marie cannot redeem his selfishness; cannot elevate the beloved to a position of real loved one. Robby is unable to rise above the environmental forces. Instead he molds his world, his studies, his religion, and his conception of life to conform to his original sin.

Maria Dolores is a shadow of a woman. She is the victim of a man and a society whose phenomenological insight falls only inside of a rotten ego. Marie is forced to lose contact with her identity, with her religion, with her family, even with her language. She is no more Maria Dolores, but Marie. At the end of the novel in her sacrifice she recovers her name again. She is forced to live in isolation both physical and spiritual and she seems to accept her lot, not because of weakness but because of love and perhaps conditioning.

At the beginning of the novel Robby seems to be happy to come home from work. As the novel proceeds and his conflict becomes deeper, Robby goes to work earlier and stays away longer with the pretext of selling more knives, or preparing more sermons, or enjoying the company of his friends in college and at parties. He feels at ease

with his friends because they reinforce each other in their intolerance and inhumanity (even tho they are college people). Education devoid of charity and compassion does not help to solve social problems in which the dignity of the human being is concerned. This people are mostly social study teachers and students or religion professors and students. Fine representatives of a Humanities Department!!! Robby Lee tries to preach a gospel he cannot reach or relate to his life and surroundings so he turns to a humanistic and social gospel that he cannot understand. The sermon (p. 67-70) is a tirade, a twisted moralistic approach that sees man as an animal. A tirade against science, psychology, government, and mostly against man himself as a defeated organism in a frenzy and orgy of hedonism. There is no hope, no light to mark the way – The Old Testament without the prophesy of salvation. Only through reading the Bible, Robby tells us, can we be revived, transformed and put right with God. What a limited view of Christianity. Hemmingway reminds us "Man can be destroyed, but never defeated."

The process of separation continues. Robby doesn't want to indulge in sex for a while with Marie and he tells her of his intentions. His own sermon strengthens his use of religion as self-recrimination, not as a religion of creation based on faith, hope, and love, and the word charity seems to be unknown in his religious approach. Modern immorality (?) and the need of spiritual regeneration seems to be his preoccupation. Good and evil seen from a very narrow point of view and tinged by human selfishness. He looks for this regeneration outside of himself and not as a core process of the individual through the love of Christ. At this point (p. 75) even nature changes to foreshadow tragedy – the tragedy of a man without a soul. Robby witnesses two tragedies in one day and they are instrumental in feeding his morbid development. From this moment on Robby begins not only to withdraw completely from Marie, but also to withdraw from himself and in himself. At this point we hear the melody of his song again:

"You'll take the high road
And I'll take the low road . . . etc.

Robby is experiencing a profound spiritual crisis. He saw in the two tragedies, the portent of great evil and from now on we will see him in fearful contemplation. He is no longer able to notice the country and nature he loved so well. His intolerance towards negros and minority groups grow. To generate his inner conflict and to release his guild, Robby accuses Marie of being fascinated by Dr. Serveto at a party. From now on the outward appearance of Robby's conflict is sadism. A savage sex act without tenderness (P. 98-99) not only to hurt Marie and belittle her, but to hurt and lower himself is part of his process of brutalization. This act is preceded by a nightmare which symbolizes the cancer of his own being and that makes him a "forceless preacher" – even the identity of the man is beginning to disappear. Oh! What a mess of contradictions and confusion is his next sermon! (P. 103-106) "I am the seeker . . . etc." How many biblical misconceptions climaxing in his assertion. "Man becomes one with the Lord God in his struggle to attain the absolute." Is not God the absolute?

Robby's jealousy (a form of sadism) intensifies as he learns that Rex Austin has been in his house. Now he only thinks of swift retribution and with his low concept of mankind his retribution becomes savage and completely out of touch with reality. Robby is living now his own distorted reality. This distortion brings him to severe drinking, his comings and goings are now irregular and confused, his disoriented mind makes him see Marie as the symbol of evil – the Eve Eternal. He takes refuge in whiskey, in marihuana and in a whorehouse. His almost complete degradation is exemplified after his might of drinking, marihuana and isolation (p. 117-118): "He struggled moaning out of bed and staggered to the door, sank to his knees outside in the broadwalk and vomitted painfully onto the sterile sand . . . He felt he had lost his soul." Now his sickness is irreversible, his faith in the Lord or in human beings is dead. The only salvation of a sick, irresponsible mind, is to attempt regeneration through the passing of his guilt to Marie. Marie is the only one who could make him whole again because of her desire to be one with him again. But Robby cannot control now his doubts, his piercing headaches, his ugly thoughts, his fears, his despair, his desire for death.

Before the final act of desintegration Robby goes to Mexico. It is necessary to go back, to go back to a strip-tease act to relive the time as a youngster when he lost his innocence in Mexico (p. 134-135). Now he looses his manhood – among the whores and bitches – he is beaten up by a Texan in a bar in Mexico. It has to be in Mexico as an unconcious desire to purify himself in the fires of that ancestry he has condemned. Beaten by his own kind because we are responsible and accountable for our own acts. Now Robby is ready for the final fall, the final act of savagery. The ceremony in the barn symbolizes the purification of a soul who is going to be sacrified. Everything turns to nothing. And with the judgment of the Old Testament he slaughtered Marie with the savagery of a loveless sexual act (p. 177). "He felt a weak hollow sensation in his loins and a hot sticky wetness down his pant leg. He felt freed of all passion, completely satiated." Another chingada in the womb of humanity!! There was nothing Robby could change. He had been unable to ask for forgiveness only the acceptance of the shadow of the original sin (p. 178). And the word nothing seems to erase the possibility of redemption because all he had done was search for judgment.

The novel ends with Robby's death alone on the highway on a rainy night. It ends with complete denial of justice or common decency. The tragedy had not served to arouse and clean a social conscience (p. 180). In the background lurks the figure of the wolf, the spectre of Brigitta Obispo, Robby's song, and Eve Eternal. No glimpse of forgiveness or salvation, only fall and separation. And that's what happened to man ***Below the Summit***.

Ruben Mendoza

In the Aura of the White Mountain

In a remote region of Middle America exist the shattered remnants of an ancient citadel known as the "white mountain." For centuries, the inhabitants of this mountain-top retreat would succumb to an urge to create, to build, and to eventually entomb themselves in the womb of eternity.

The "white mountain" is as timeless as the centuries which created it, as eternal as the millenia it has yet to traverse. With the dawning of a new sun, it radiates an aura as mystifying, as eternal, and as ominous as creation itself.

As a spectator to eternity, and as a participant in humanity, one is captivated by an omnipresent sensation of limitless union with the universe. As a subject in the midst of objects, one transcends time as the vestigal remnants of bygone ages parade before weary eyes.

Faint images out of time and place, with the power to grasp the infinite depths of the imagination, and create havoc with the senses. Shadows from the tomb which leap forward in the guise of reality. Sounds which emanate from the past, distant mutterings of a bygone age whose inhabitants are the captives of antiquity.

Wandering among the tombs which pockmark the hillside, one begins a mutual conversation with the dead, a conversation of internal chattering which transcends the barriers of time and space. Peering into crumbled tombs, one is likely to perceive one's own image gasping for life through reflections in the mirror of time. One is beckoned by large weary eyes protruding from the crypt. Upon entering this darkened abode, the maddening silence is jarred by the palpitations of ones own heart.

Vaulted chambers with no exit in sight, monoliths which gaze from their monumental abodes, massive constructions jutting upward into oblivion, subterranean tunnels which function as darkened corridors into the underworld, testimonies to the existence of the aura of the "white mountain."

The "white mountain" is truly the place of the "cloud people," a literal microcosm in the inner depths of the imagination which will see you from the womb to the tomb.

SHORT STORIES

PLAYS



Joel Sherman

Dust and Ashes

Our town died three years before my father, in the late 1980's when the squatting, leeching oil pumps drew air and ceased their rhythmic heaving. Though lasting a year longer than the supposedly bottomless wells of the Middle East, the end had come eventually, methodically destined by a power too great to be understood. The citizens formed torrents of steel and chrome, which flowed down the highway and washed into San Francisco. There the promise of energy was better but still no more than a vague dream at the edge of sleep.

I remember father on a brassy day, when the last of the fleeing hordes had vanished, standing in a field down by the schoolyard. Around him the monolith relics of the oil age were frozen in leaning postures. The wind whipped the clothing along his thin frame and fluttered the tousled brown hair away from his concrete features. I climbed to a perch on a pump and watched a lone automobile clatter down the highway. Its echoes rang in the gutted town.

"Are we leaving too?" I asked.

"No," he answered rigidly, scooping a handful of dry soil from the ground and trickling it away into the breeze. "There'd be trouble in San Francisco. Might as well remain and practice farming instead of law. Never needed electricity, anyway." The earth blew away from his open palm in a dirty cloud and he walked me back to the house, stopping for some seed at the abandoned hardware. We planted within a month, burying the seed in the wet, black soil of the school play yard.

We buried dad in the park across the street. It was a bleak gathering presided over by Father Padua — the circuit priest. A nervous little man with stooped shoulders and a habit of wringing his hands, Father Padua never adjusted to the ritual of interring empty caskets. He cornered me in the lobby of our apartment before the services. The room was solemnly lit with flickering candles surrounding dad's coffin, like flowers on waxen stalks. With his cassock coated by dirt, and sweat beading on his forehead and nose, he tapped the pinewood container.

"Is Mr. Mitchell inside?"

"No, Father." I said.

"They came for him then?"

"Yes, two days ago," I said. "There was nothing I could do."

"Of course not, Joseph." Father twisted his hands with a squeaking sound, and paced the length of the room. His shoes, with holes worn through each sole, rasped lightly on the carpet. It was oriental in design, where the design could be viewed around the threads and brown patches of backing. A path of dirt stained a line through the lobby from doorway to stair–residue of red earth which clung to our shoes.

"Is nothing spared?" said Father Padua. "Can't anyone see it's against the Lord?" He pressed his hands to his wrinkled brow, covering frustrated tears.

"I guess not," I said.

"And did they pay you?"

"Yes."

"Blood money!" he wailed – a bleating vibration in the back of his throat, a despairing whine.

I left him pounding softly on dad's casket and walked out into the summer heat. The wheatfield in the empty schoolyard was tinting from green to gold, the blades rattling with the gentle breeze stirring among them. Water percolated through an irrigation ditch where red-winged blackbirds had settled to drink. At the approach of a huddled figure, they scattered with a squawk and a flash of crimson. Mrs. Swartz, a widow from crosstown, had walked three miles through dust and sun to pay her respects to my father. We'd done the same for Mr. Swartz.

"Am I on time, Joseph?" Her thin, reedy voice issued from a wide slash of mouth in a puckered, leather face.

"You're early."

"For your poppa, I should be a little early. A saint, your poppa, a saint. I'll always think of what he did for me the night my David died. Your poppa was a wonderful man."

"Thank you, Mrs. Swartz."

Father didn't resemble sainthood the night David Swartz died. He came in late, marching a measured pace across the porch. His square cheeks were pale when he stopped at the dinner table, meaty hands twisting the gingham table coth.

"You and the kids go ahead and eat without me," he said to mother.

"Yes, dear." Her tone was reserved for tense occasions. She served our meal quietly – busily laboring around the woodstove. Heavy footsteps went up the broad staircase and returned long moments later. Mother dropped a square of cornbread into each of our plates.

"Eat all your supper," she commanded and was gone into the lobby. Their voices drifted in from the front door.

"What's happening?" mother pleaded.

"They're coming for Swartz' corpse."

"What?"

"There was a call on the shortwave, after we reported his death. His body is now government property. We're supposed to have it packaged in a bag for some men from San Francisco. It's the law." His words were choked with rage.

"But what are you going to do?"

"Well, if they want him, they'll have to cut through us." Dad's reply was cold and dry.

Then the screen door slammed and I ran to the window to see him leave. Jenny peered beside me, squinting in the darkness to watch father mount his horse. The chestnut mare snorted impatiently. His rifle was clutched tightly in one hand, moonlight playing on the oiled barrel. He spurred the horse and was gone into the darkness. Hoofbeats rang on the pavement.

Mother did not come in for a while, but sat on the porch hiding her tears. When she came inside it was to lead us to bed, up the dark stairs with the mahogany banister in a wavering circle of candle light. We were deep in sleep when the gunshots pattered faintly in the night, and mother stood in the window biting her lips till the blood ran saltily in her mouth.

Father was not killed that night. But Kelly Morris and two others joined the body of Swartz in bags of their own — laying prone in the back of a green van filled with armed men returning to San Francisco. These were the first empty coffins which Father Padua ever had to bury. He did not like the feeling, or the sound of the earth as it thumped hollowly on the varnished pine surfaces.

Thinking of her husband, Mrs. Swartz said, "Is you poppa's body here?"

"No." I scraped my feet on the concrete steps directing my rage to an ancient hunk of chewing gun which clung there.

"Would no one help you?" Her wrinkles parted in the brown face, revealing glittering fragments of glass — such were her eyes.

"The fight's gone. Outrage has been accepted . . . except by those it directly effects."

"How's this to your mother, poor dear."

"She's alright." I took her withered hand, feeling the hard callouses which farming had placed on the age-spotted skin. Mrs. Swartz struggled from her seat on the concrete. "Jenny is the problem. She doesn't understand. Mother told her about an old custom . . . something about kissing the dead goodbye. Now Jenny wants to kiss Dad."

"Poor child, she doesn't know," said Mrs. Swartz, nodding her head. "Such a sin, such a sin." Her tongue clucked in the silence.

We went inside the building, past the Rosewood Gardens sign creaking in the wind on rusted hinges. Strands of English ivy creeped over the surface of the front and hung limply above the doorway. Swallows flew from a mud nest, plastered around a floodlight. Chrome sparkled amid the dirt and twigs. We stopped for a final look from the door and spotted a stray dog drinking water from an irrigation ditch, beneath the shadow of Nelson's waterwheel, where the electricity was generated for the shortwave radio. Above the sodden wheel, broken power lines dangled from useless poles. Then I led her into the lobby.

Father Padua began his service when we were seated. Mother was a rigid form cloaked in a black dress. Her white arms lay stiffly in her lap. She seemed older and grayer, and the flesh of her face emitted weariness – a shocked despair resulting from the treachery of the world. At her right Jenny was frozen, a small pale statuary with large, hurt, brown eyes. Her gaze was riveted on the coffin, searching the impartial wooden surface for an opening, straining for a final glimpse at the man who had given us life. I felt the rage welling within me. A hurt, bewildered anger consumed me, flushing me with helpless warmth and stinging memories.

It was hot on the roof the day they came for dad's corpse. I lay flat against the parapet. The gravel dug into my knees and elbows and the anger was searing within me. In my hands, the hardness of the rifle felt good. It's weight was comforting. Sunlight glistened on the barrel as I sighted along it, drawing aim at a window across the street. Mother's voice was sharp, rebounding from the dead buildings and the fragments of glass and steel which surrounded me.

"What are you doing with that rifle?" She paused and the faint echo whispered from down the barren street. I sighted on an oil pump, placing the bead on a large bolt. The gun barked and rust flew away from the pump. The spent bullet whined into the air.

"Joseph! Come down here, now!" She was angry and frightened, stamping her feet in a childish tantrum. "You can't stop them from taking your father!"

"Nobody's touching him." The words were harsh fiery darts flung at her. "I'll kill anyone who tries!"

"No! You mustn't interfere. I don't want any more deaths. Please!"

"If those men from San Francisco want trash, they can have what's in the kitchen. But I'm not discarding my father like simple refuse!"

White-faced, mother clutched at the sides of her dress, outlining her thin body in the tight cloth. "And what if you're killed?"

The highway was empty as I followed its gray length with my gaze, ignoring her question. Diamond bright, the sun burned in a cloudless sky. Heat waves melted from the roof and flowed into the air.

"What if you're killed like Mr. Morris? Who'll tend the farm?" Mother was craning her neck, trying to see where I lay behind the waving rifle.

"I won't be."

"But think of your dad. He knew fighting was useless after the first night, He wouldn't want you to do this. Stop it, Joseph! Please!"

In the distance was a plume of dust, a small green speck quivering in the heat. Gradually it took the shape of a speeding van, roaring into the deserted town. The auto crossed beneath a derelict signal light four blocks up. Its reflection was fragmented and splintered over the few remaining windows in the bank building. I slipped the scope onto the Winchester and brought the crosshairs up to the windshield. Two men were in the front, laughing at a private joke. The driver swallowed. I watched the sweat trickle on his throat, gliding over his adam's apple where the crosshairs stopped. My target was found. The throat convulsed as the man laughed, throbbing in and out. He would never see my father's body.

"No!" mother shouted. "No!"

My finger squeezed on the trigger, trembling. The van rolled closer with the laughing men. Along my arm the veins throbbed with the quickened pulse of my heart.

"Don't leave us alone!" she wailed, falling on her knees. Her voice trailed away in the silence, leaving only sobs and panicked choking sounds. And Jenny was at mother's side, staring at me with those hollow eyes. Passively, the brown orbs begged me. The rifle lowered, disappearing behind the parapet.

In the street, the van stopped. The men went inside with mother and returned with a large bundle. Dad was slung between them like a huge slug, wrapped in a white cloth bag. He disappeared into the back. The doors slammed and then the car was gone -- tires spinning the road. Mother let the money they had given her flutter away in the breeze. Later we picked it up for an emergency, but at the moment I wiped away the tears which were streaming from my eyes.

I did not cry the day of dad's funeral. When those of us who were pallbearers lifted the coffin, Jenny was at my side, tugging on my shirt.

"Joseph, I want to kiss daddy."

"Go back to mother," I said. The casket was very light. We had laid his suit inside and the weight was negligible.

"But is daddy there?" Jenny cried. Her hands were folded as in prayer. A fly buzzed around her neck.

Susan Bain

Pink Taffeta Tears

I watched her shuffle across the yard, raising dust with each ageless step. She pulled her heavy tattered overcoat closer around her chest, then slowly bent over to pick up a rake and began forming small piles of leaves and dry weeds. Her head, circled by matted white hair, seemed to be balanced precariously upon her stooped shoulders as she struggle with the uneven ground.

Two cars screeched to a stop at the unmarked intersection. She looked around, frightened for a moment, then resumed her work. A group of small children in bathing suits were screaming in delight as they ran through the sprinkler in the yard next door, obscured from her view by the jungle-like growth by her fence. Her head pivoted slowly as she heard them. A faint glimmer of some remote recollection seemed to pass over her sagging cheeks for a brief moment, then she pulled her coat together once again and resumed raking.

The sign said "Notice to Clear Weeds and Debris by July 31, 1974, By Order of Bakersfield City Fire Department." They were regular visitors at her house. She usually had her weeds cleared by this time of year, but they frowned on her burning them in the barrel by the street. She had always burned her leaves and weeds in that barrel in spite of the city ordinance which prohibited it some twenty years prior. They would knock on her door and she would peer out from a crack, make some incoherent reply to their warning, then quickly close it. They would simply douse the fire and return chuckling and shaking their heads to the station. She no longer burned her house trash outside. At least twice a week, no matter what the weather, one could see smoke curling from her chimney, slowly lifting bits of burned paper into the air, then drifting and settling among the weeds and tangled vines.

I said hello to her once as I passed on my way to the local neighborhood market. It was a hot day but the old knarled elms hanging over her house offered a brief respite from the glaring sun. She was standing by her front door haphazardly spraying water on the unorganized growth. She lifted her head, an unruly wisp of white hair obscuring one eye, and with the frightened look of a startled cat quickly dropped the hose and moved inside where she waited, peering through a dirty grey pane, until I had passed.

None of the neighbors seemed to know much about her. The little girl next door told me that she burned cats in her fireplace and I was amused to note that she and her friends always crossed the street when they passed the old lady's house. Across the street was an old immaculate mansion that had recently been converted into a

"I think we'll go for a walk."

"Good," she said. In the town the sound of a cat fight came pitching over the stillness. I wondered who would get possession of the body. I left her rocking on the porch, the chair moaning under her weight and the shadows flickering across her tense features. When Jenny and I walked past, she was humming faintly.

The two of us went out into the darkness and the sweet summer eve, barefoot and quiet for a time — listening to the chatter of bats and the rattle of scurrying animals in the ruined structures. The moon became a crescent chunk of silver in a cobalt sky. Scents of growing plants and moist earth rose in the night breeze.

Presently Jenny whispered, "Where are we going?"

"Down to the oil field," I said.

"You going to talk about daddy?"

"Yes."

We walked over the street and into the dry lot. The moonlight danced on the rusting faces of the oil pumps. steel backs bent, forever frozen in angular postures. Weeds and stickers grew beneath the protection of their concrete foundations. Sometimes bits of tar were visible around the pump shafts, clining forlornly to their fallen masters. A smell of decayed power drifted into my head — a wind from a mausoleum of human inventiveness.

"What will happen to them?" Jenny asked, pointing at the derelict pumps.

"They'll go for scrap, I suppose . . . . What else happens to the dead? Did you know, the shortage may be over soon?" My voice was soft in the night, like the moaning breeze eddying among the oil derricks.

"No," she said. "How?"

"Oil can be manufactured now, by subjecting material to intense pressure."

"What kind of material?"

"Wood and other things." I felt dead inside, and my eyes were burning fiercely. "You know . . . garbage."

"Where's daddy?" she said, facing me with her hands resting on her hips, lips trembling in fear of an answer she already knew.

"Dead bodies are garbage," I said. Then her face was moist on my shoulder and the crickets fell quiet to listen to Jenny's muffled sobs and I wished I had my rifle to kill the men from San Francisco.

"Mother needs you," I dismissed her with a wave of my hand. Pausing for a moment, her eyes bore into the ground.

"But I want to see him."

"He's gone!" I snapped.

"Where?"

"Go to mother, now!"

Jenny fell silent and we walked away with the box. Those eyes followed me, pain draining from them in crystalline droplets of moisture.

Down the front steps the procession marched reverently. Scant, brown junipers pointed to the sky from the corner of the walk, where the steps merged with the street. I could see Jenny holding mother's hand, but still staring. We crossed a blood spot on the sidewalk, still red where dad had fallen from a swift kick of our mule's hindlegs. There were skid marks where the van had pulled away. Onto the grass the group moved as a single unit. Birds darted from the fresh mound of earth by the grave – dirt flying from final scratches after food.

No one was sweating when the box was set onto the grass. The other pallbearers moved away mechanically. Wringing his hands, Father Padua began the litany.

"And let perpetual light shine upon him." A practiced, memorized speech of one who had been given ample time to learn. Jenny was standing alone, several steps from mother. The sun was slightly past zenith and the hot, sultry air surrounded us. Then Jenny was running, boney legs carrying her like a gazelle. We moved as figures struggling under heavy liquid and she squirmed from our grasps. Father Padua reached for her, clutching, but Jenny was too swift, a little white fish flashing among us. At the casket, she tossed back the lid. The inside was hollow. Dad's suit was laid out, a empty mockery of a man.

"Daddy?" Jenny screamed, glancing around with wild eyes. "Where's Daddy?" Lifting her body, I swung the girl to my shoulder. Her pitiful cry followed me into the house and it took two hours to quiet the tiny throat into sleep.

The evening was sweet and melancholy. Night birds whistled forlornly and raked through the black sky. Mother rocked in a steel recliner, sipping at a glass of lemonade.

"I suppose I should tell her now. She has a right to know," she sighed, creaking in the chair.

"I'll do it." My voice was calm, resigned. "You've been strained enough today."

"She'll listen to you more than me, anyway."

The highway was empty as I followed its gray length with my gaze, ignoring her question. Diamond bright, the sun burned in a cloudless sky. Heat waves melted from the roof and flowed into the air.

"What if you're killed like Mr. Morris? Who'll tend the farm?" Mother was craning her neck, trying to see where I lay behind the waving rifle.

"I won't be."

"But think of your dad. He knew fighting was useless after the first night. He wouldn't want you to do this. Stop it, Joseph! Please!"

In the distance was a plume of dust, a small green speck quivering in the heat. Gradually it took the shape of a speeding van, roaring into the deserted town. The auto crossed beneath a derelict signal light four blocks up. Its reflection was fragmented and splintered over the few remaining windows in the bank building. I slipped the scope onto the Winchester and brought the crosshairs up to the windshield. Two men were in the front, laughing at a private joke. The driver swallowed. I watched the sweat trickle on his throat, gliding over his adam's apple where the crosshairs stopped. My target was found. The throat convulsed as the man laughed, throbbing in and out. He would never see my father's body.

"No!" mother shouted. "No!"

My finger squeezed on the trigger, trembling. The van rolled closer with the laughing men. Along my arm the veins throbbed with the quickened pulse of my heart.

"Don't leave us alone!" she wailed, falling on her knees. Her voice trailed away in the silence, leaving only sobs and panicked choking sounds. And Jenny was at mother's side, staring at me with those hollow eyes. Passively, the brown orbs begged me. The rifle lowered, disappearing behind the parapet.

In the street, the van stopped. The men went inside with mother and returned with a large bundle. Dad was slung between them like a huge slug, wrapped in a white cloth bag. He disappeared into the back. The doors slammed and then the car was gone — tires spinning the road. Mother let the money they had given her flutter away in the breeze. Later we picked it up for an emergency, but at the moment I wiped away the tears which were streaming from my eyes.

I did not cry the day of dad's funeral. When those of us who were pallbearers lifted the coffin, Jenny was at my side, tugging on my shirt.

"Joseph, I want to kiss daddy."

"Go back to mother," I said. The casket was very light. We had laid his suit inside and the weight was negligible.

"But is daddy there?" Jenny cried. Her hands were folded as in prayer. A fly buzzed around her neck.

home for boys. One day as she was rearranging the debris in her yard, one of them yelled "why don't you go back inside you old witch?" His friends all laughed, some uproariously, some nervously, but I'm sure she didn't hear them. She went on about her work then slowly shuffled back inside with two of her cats following nervously at her feet.

I only noticed two visitors in the two years that we shared the same block. One was the lame owner of the neighborhood market who would stop by twice a week on his way home after closing up the store at 6 o'clock. He would limp up to her door with a grocery bag. She would open the door, accept his bundle without a word, then close the door. I never knew if he did it out of the kindness of his heart or if some arrangement had been made by her relatives. He was a quiet, somber, older man and there was never more than a perfunctory exchange of pleasantries as he tallied my daily purchases. I never asked him about the old lady.

The other visitor was a tall, lean serious looking woman in her fifties who stayed there for a couple of weeks. I later learned that it was her daughter visiting from the east. She was the only one I ever saw enter the house. She came and went frequently during her stay.

Some of the local realtors were eager to get the old lady to sell her house because older homes were scarce and in such demand, and they were certain, judging from the appearance of the place that she would be eager to sell it and move into something that she could handle. But they knocked at her door in vain, and when there was no answer one well-dressed, sophisticated-looking broker decided to catch a peek at the inside from one of the windows. She was greeted by two small grey eyes peering adamantly back at her through the dirty dishelved curtains. She turned nervously and hurried back to her car, fumbling with her keys, dropped her pocketbook, retrieved it and with frequent furtive glances back at the face in the window, quickly climbed into the car and jerked it onto the quiet shady street.

Late one afternoon I heard the ominous screech of brakes and this time the inevitable crunch of metal. I rushed from the house toward the muffled cries coming from an overturned truck. Someone helped the dark-complected couple out of the pickup cab while others were attending to the children who were mostly just cut and bruised, scattered about the corner by the old lady's house. They appeared to be a migrant family coming into town after a day's work in the fields east of town, their well-worn jeans and shirts stained by their labors. When I came out of the house I was startled by the form of the old lady huddled over the motionless figure of a small child that had landed on the sidewalk by her front door, but was diverted by the badly cut leg of an older boy, his dark eyes looking out from his sweat-streaked but tearless face. After I had stopped the bleeding his shaken and still disoriented mother came over, Spanish endearments cascading from her lips as she wept and caressed him. Then an older girl cried "Where's Teresa?" and as they frantically glanced around

I noticed the old lady was gone. I entered the open door of the old house and stopped behind the cracked glass doors of the parlor. An open trunk stood in the corner and I saw the old lady kneeling on the frayed rug by the worn and faded damask davenport gently holding and stroking the small dark hand. An old picture of a young girl with long bronze curls, dressed in a lovely pink taffeta dress, sat in solitary vigil on the mantle above the fireplace, piled high with trash. The old lady had carefully washed the blood from the girl's forehead and brushed her long dark hair, all the while singing softly in her whispery, cracking voice to the tiny figure with bare feet protruding from the faded pink taffeta dress. Mechanically I motioned to the ambulance attendants who came in and carried the little girl out on a stretcher. The old lady was staring into the picture, humming softly, as I turned quietly and left, closing the front door tightly after me.

A few weeks later while out for an early evening walk I stopped to talk with a very charming old lady who lived a couple of blocks away. She was out in the yard watering a bed of pansies. We had talked before but I never tired of hearing her tell the tales of the old neighborhood. I asked her if she knew the old lady who lived on my corner. "Ah, yes," she told me. "I used to live in the old house across the street from her – oh, but that's gone now." She nodded her head slowly. "Yes, she was a nervous young thing – always watching over those two daughters like a mother hen. Never even let them come across the street to play with the other children in my yard. They were nice girls – always dressed as pretty as a picture. I especially remember the younger one," she laughed, "with that devilish gleam in her eyes – and the older one – always scolding her and watching that she did what their mother said." She bent and turned off the faucet then continued hesitantly with the unpleasant recollection. "One day the father gave them permission to go on a hayride with a group from the church. The mother came home shortly after they'd left and sparks began to fly. Later the pastor came. The wagon was sideswiped by a truck while they were riding on a narrow lane in the farmland out east of town." She shook her head. "It was a sad thing – the funeral. He tried to put his arm around her but she pushed him away – just stood there – dry-eyed, as they slowly lowered the casket into the ground." She gently laid down the hose and wiped her hands on her gardening smock. "Well, he stayed for a number of years, kept hoping she'd get better. Finally he and the older daughter moved away."

I walked home in the waning sunlight, painfully aware of my intrusion from another time and place. I was oblivious of my surroundings until I came to the old lady's house. There were no lights on inside and I thought I perceived her hunched figure in the doorway motioning to one of her cats who quickly ran inside. The door latched shut.

A few months later I saw a real estate management truck parked beside the curb and a couple of men clearing out some of the choked vines and planting a lawn. Then the painters came and a For Sale sign took the place of the Notice to Clear. No one seems to know what happened to her. Someone said they saw an ambulance come one evening.

Father Nickolas G. Milatos

Kalymnos and Her Unconquerable Gold

Morning came after the night, and the blindness which existed was there no more.

The light came and chaos behaved as never before. His darkness took its appropriate time and shared in the total complex (MAZA) which now began to form in some orderly manner.

Day after day some things began to recede and others to impregnate. Liquidity found her place and the bulk did likewise.

The unruling elements by custom still expressed dissatisfaction with the new commands destined to rule over them, but they must obey or be cursed forever more.

Heroes and villians were born and the new orderly complex became the AGHONE (noose) of the weak. The tub of the unruling and the tomb of the righteous, whose echo of crying can be heard trying to protect something so dear to them.

Days have passed by since the beginning when all things took their place. All things and beings learned to adjust to their new habitat except a creation called MAN.

Everything took its orderly place and, destined to stay unmoved forever, was there as a witness to testify whenever questioned, for the things which were there before.

This is but a peak of the total mountain. When the almighty one spoke, the roar of thunder was heard, and caused this giant to shiver and slowly to bend on his knees. The blinding lightning brought waters that so rapidly climbed up the mountain, whose burial seemed much quicker, for it was by now completely on its knees.

Fear conquered the giant and by force an unwilling cry came out for help. The almightly one heard this giant supplicating as a man in need and thus allowed the waters to come only up to his neck.

There this mountain head stands, but few people can tell that this is a crying head because it was frozen when it looked upward to be heard by the almighty one.

His nose stands high. There a righteous one has his stables to feed and to rest his firing horses that took him to heaven.

His cheek bones are made in such a manner that man used them as a place of safety and survival. The highest one to the north is called the old castle. The lowest one to the south is called the new castle.

The head full of hair gently waves to the west and is the attraction of common and royal stock alike. Every person shares his beautiful wave that so tenderly strokes the neck of the one-time-great giant.

The chin lies towards the east, and with its beautiful and attractive dimple has become the host of so many sailing homes. So thankful they are because here they can find food and water so precious for the continuance of their voyage.

The wind softly blows as though whispering sweet words that no one can comprehend. No ear can distinguish their meaning. Though their sound brings comfort and an expression of thanks in the ears of the listener.

This undistinguishable sound, so soothing to the human ear, can be heard much more intensely when Boreas in fury rushes through the island. Other neighboring islands — for the Aegean is much populated with them — can hear this sound, and to their dismay for the inability to hear clearly and to distinguish what this melodiuous sound carries, have unanimously, in a meeting, reached the only solution to the riddle.

Leros from the west, Kos from the east, and other islands, once giants like the one which they are in council to reach a decision for his melodious sound, have called this giant "Kalymnos."

No name could have been more appropriate, for the sound of the whispering wind melodiously reaches the human ear, justifying the name, "Kalymnos, The Good Hymn."

Life continued upon this frozen giant head and the sound of his name made many men curious. They came from afar to see and to hear and justify these tales.

As this influx continued, wealth spread over the island. Castles were built. One to the north became the safety indwelling of many great men and their flock.

Her riches and fame brought many curious strangers ashore. Thus the unavoidable need to hide the people's treasure became the reason to build the new castle. Easily it was seen; for anyone entering the port could not miss the old creation high above looking down and upon the new one. Looking down not to make fun of its youth or its size, but rather to reassure any curious visitor that the old people's heart (the old castle's leadership) was willing and ready to meet the adversity and to protect their new creation. For they strongly believed and practiced: where man's treasure is, there his heart is also.

Years have passed and many men have ruled over this land. Some were stern, some were soft. But one rule remained unyielding to any force; the rule to protect the new castle, treasuring the treasure of the people.

The people were happy living under the protection of their ruler. Prosperity was a blessing given by the almightly and inherited by their children's children.

As the season changes thus the good and serene life became disturbed by the envy and greed of those who have no love in their heart for their fellow man and neighbor.

This ominous day came when a nation from afar west, built upon one hundred and eighteen islands washed by the Adriatic sea, proclaimed themselves conquerors of the east.

The Aegean sea and shores became their habitat. They too were attracted to "Kalymnos," but there the foe met his match.

Many days and nights the islanders fought. Blood was shed like a torrent that raises its fury in season. In vain the foe tried to capture the port, for the port was protected by Zeus the almighty, the Protector of the island.

Fate was to bring sorrow and destruction upon "Kalymnos." The almighty one was making love to Hera in his royal cave in the village of Emporios. When their own son Hephaestus, to revenge the way his parents had treated him, being kicked by Zeus into the ocean, gave the fire to the foe.

Instantaneously all four corners of the island began to flame and the people found themselves in a predicament from which the only exodus was destruction.

The king called the guards. "Bring all the gold hither," he commanded. "Down, lay it down beneath the aghone. Down to the lower level of the new castle. There where the bones of many villians be. Seal the gold. Call the priest and all those who are willing to partake in the ceremony."

The king spoke and the people shared one thing in common. With tears in their eyes, the king first and then the people asked the priest to curse the gold.

The fire has lusciously been feeding thus burning down whatsoever she met in her way. The priests with open hands and with one voice recited the curse;

> "Almighty god Zeus, Protector of every element of this island: We who are destined to be burned and to die, because of the envy of the enemy and the wickedness of your son, we pray to you, Almighty father, to curse this treasure. Let no man's hand lie upon it? for he surely must die? and let no man's eyes witness its sight, for he surely would lose his mind. For those who tamper with the thought of entering this locale, let their thoughts ricochet in an ominous way wherefore no man can comprehend the purpose of their goal. Let any man who tampers with our blood-earned gold, let that man be destroyed by the burning of the fire and the shedding of his own blood. Amen."

The fire has consumed everything. Those of whom are left have become the booty of the enemy.

The foe has conquered the giant head and together all that is upon it. Guards here, guards there, trying to secure their prey. Fools! They know not that the Kalymnian body can be conquered, but not the soul!

The soldiers have the people march to their new leader, instructed to give all they have. One by one passes through. The leader from the west greets them with a smile. While the inhabitants soberly curtsy as though to salute, but they simply give their precious belongings.

Time has passed and many conquerors have become the rulers of the inhabitants. One thing, however, stays free and untouched. The treasure of the island, buried in the castle, enjoys the serenity and peace which death brings to a tormented body.

But alas and may God forgive the intruder. Through a dream the Mprouzos mother discovers the centuries' old secret.

She dreams of wealth and riches. She reveals her dream to her two younger sons. All three are conquered with a hope full of greed. Dreams that dreamed by awakened people are filling their minds and the decision is reached to disturb the serenity of the cursed gold.

Their dream has failed to reveal that this precious treasure was guarded by the remains of the twelve peiests, destined to be watchful in order to fulfill their promise given to the king years ago.

In secret, the three of them, the mother and two sons, Paraskeve, Peter and John, are surveying the castle. They have found something which encourages their drive. For days they dig. John the younger son began to dream of tomorrow in a manner which only young men do. Their goal has been revealed. The piece of gold which they have found now is lost.

The mother, the wisest of all, retreats. But the curse of the priest is with them. The mother falls ill. The doctors are puzzled and unaware of what the illness is. The two sons though, they are (ephivoi) adolescent to the amazement of many people, they have changed and the neighbors, friends and relatives are perplexed as to what is happening.

Those that so much love them are asking one question whose answer was given thousands of years ago; what has brought this childish attitude upon Peter and John. Oh my God! Where is their responsible manners and the wisdom which so much distinguished them from others? Oh God! Give us an answer. But there is no answer.

The oldest son in the family searched in every which way to find the cause, but for every effort the answer was negative. Old Nick and his sister Irene and Skevos and Nicki were lost to the riddle which has befallen their family.

The mother is ill. The two brothers Peter and John became lovers of fire and were delighted to watch the flames climbing high only to disappear in the unreachable heights of the air.

The day came. The curse had to be imposed. Peter and John were trapped in a cave of porcelain fifteen yards from their front door. The fire grew. The smoke climbs. The exodus to the cave was buried with smoke. The only thing one can hear was the cry of the two intruders of the cursed gold. The mother is sick. For days she is in bed. She hears the screaming of her sons. She stands up. Then she runs to where the voices buried in smoke could be heard. She screams. She goes through the smoke. Then her voice too can be heard from the same depth as her two sons. All three are burned and dead.

Friends, relatives, and strangers alike pray for the souls of Paraskevi, Peter, and John. While you see the terror destined to last for many years to come in every one's eyes.

Every man is his own here, but alas every man is his own destruction. Years have passed and the story has been retold. Many have been amazed, but none has undertaken the chore to challenge the validity of the tale, except the hard working man George Kompalli.

He was a bricklayer and an honest man. He stood tall and with conviction he said, "I will challenge the curse. I will find the gold."

The old folks called him a fool. The young, a dare-devil. Only one person counciled George with the experience a council must have. The old Nick Mprouzos, but his council was unheard.

Ready and prepared, he starts his expedition. No second thought can bring reluctance to his mind. "Forward I must go? I must be free from labor once and for all."

"This easy gold will make me rich. No longer will I have to work."

Oh, human greed, one can hear the voice of the priests. Easy Gold! Where is our sweat? Where is the blood we shed? Where is the youth that has been lost trying to protect their fathers' fathers' gold? All this has been forgotten. Only one thought lusciously feeds into your mind. Something buried is something easily captured. Fools!

George continues his work. When one May day when all the souls of the dead are free to go anywhere they wish, George struck something which he said was gold.

"I have found what I was looking for; I have found the treasure." He rushes down to the city and there he explains what has happened. It was three o'clock in the afternoon. Yes, three o'clock. George Compalis shows the clock trying to convince his audience of his success.

"What a pity" said an old man. "What a pity! Where is the gold, George? Where is the gold?" "Come my dear friend, come and I will show you the biggest urn you ever saw." The crowd follows him and anxiously looked upon the place where George found his gold. There was nothing. Only one thing was clear, the agony of George's family and the pity toward them from those who loved them so much.

Tick, tock, George's clock counts the moments, the hours, the days telling George how rich he is while his family struggles for their daily bread. Oh, Fate! Oh fortune that brings misfortune. When will you stop imposing your will? Those who have suffered are not the enemy! Those are people of your own lineage.

Nick, the old man, took interest. He spoke out loud as though he had enough: "Ladies and gentlemen, listen to what I have to say. If there is anyone here who has more to grieve, I am that person."

"I remember when once we were a happy family. Now, as I am sure you can remember, I have lost my good mother and my two brothers, two young men full of future. They, because of the cursed gold, were burned with fire almost to ashes. Now there stands George feeling and acting as though he is the happiest man in the whole world, while, as you can see, his family is dressed in black. Your hearts, I am sure, are broken with grief and sorrow, as mine is. There is no other alternative left but one; to search and to find another opening that perhaps the priests have not walked through. My mother and two brothers started from the east. George here started from the south. I will start from the west and then let fate take her course."

Many were silent, many wept, but many showed their love by trying to stop dear old Nick.

"I should start at four hours past midnight, for I believe the air is free from all the evil spirits that are free to torment the innocent people. People that simply are looking to improve themselves." Silence has fallen. No one breathes. One can only hear the sigh of his sister Irene; "Nick," she says and marches forward. With arms open and tears in her eyes that she can no longer hold back, she keels down at his feet.

"I pray to the living God, my brother, to enable you to see the futile task you are undertaking. We lost a mother and two brothers, you are the oldest left. Let it be. Let this gold be as it is. My brother, its value has been lost, for there is no gold to buy the life of any human being. Not alone you."

Nick prepares himself. He forces himself to go to sleep. His sleepless night is shared by many. He is up. The time is 2 a.m. He hopes not to be seen by anyone. He marches as though he comes from victory. He reaches the west side of the castle. He stops. The time is 3:55 a.m. He takes the baggage off his back. Then he hears a voice greeting him: "Good morning, friend." He turns around. He sees nothing, he hears nothing more.

Clop-clop, you can hear the pick. Agressively he strikes the ground praying that no man or priest has passed this way. The time runs so fast. The sun began to shed some light when old Nick stopped.

He looks around, There is nothing he can see or hear. He puts his ear on the ground thus to hear more efficiently. Nothing. Nothing to see! Nothing to hear! Again he stands.

He proceeded to leave the castle. Down the hill he goes. His foot steps betray his aggressiveness. He is about to cross the street when out of nowhere an automobile hits old Nick.

When all spectators, friedns and relatives came, Nick was dead, covered with his own blood.

Silence conquered the hearts of young and old. Then it was broken by the fragile voice of an old lady who said: "Now I can see our forefathers spoke the truth. Everything took its course. We sorrow. Others are sleeping in peace still, knowing their gold will never be touched."

Nancy Sabovich

A Doll for Sharon

(A Short Story for Children - 4th to 5th grade reading level)

A cold breeze whipped hard against Sharon's Apple, red cheeks as she turned into the tiny unnoticed shop on her right. Cradling something in her warm arms, she gently opened the handsomely carved wooden door. A silver bell sang out a welcome as the warmth of the crackling fire from the old black belly stove reached out to warm her cold body.

A smile formed on her delicate pink lips as Sharon eagerly looked around the crowded room. The late afternoon sunlight played on her redish brown hair and her curls seemed to bounce in delight. On the heavily laden walls were dolls. Nothing else. Just dolls. There were big dolls, little dolls, dolls that talked; dolls that walked, beautiful dolls and plain dolls. All of their carefully dusted brightly colored outfits blended together into a brillant rainbow.

"Hello, Sharon," said a big grey-haired man as he stepped out of a back room. His broad shoulders seemed to fill the room but his thin body did not seem to match his big frame. His face was growing old fast and his body knew it. The wrinkled face was kind but serious. His arms seemed too long for the faded plaid long-sleeved shirt.

"Hello, Dr. Peppermint," answered Sharon putting her precious bundle on the high counter.

"What have we here? Not again!" exclaimed Dr. Peppermint.

"Melissa did it! Not me! I told her not to play with it, Dr. Peppermint. Honest I did," Sharon replied.

Tenderly graspoing the limp doll, Dr. Peppermint bent over for a closer look.

"Umpn . . . umm . . . ah ah!" exclaimed Dr. Peppermint. "Here's the problem! Her right arm needs to be put back into her shoulder socket. This missing right finger will have to be replaced. Hmm . . "

"Dr. Peppermint? She'll be alright, won't she?" Sharon asked worriedly.

"Of course she will, dear," Dr. Peppermint said gently as he patted her chubby hand. "Come back the day after tomorrow, Thursday, O.K.?"

"Thank you," Sharon replied as she turned to leave. Turning back to look once more at her cherished doll she noticed how thin Dr. Peppermint was getting.

"He should eat more," Sharon thought to herself as she stepped out in the chilly air. Dusk was falling fast.

"I'd better get home or Mom will worry," Sharon thought as she quickened her tiny steps.

The afternoon traffic rushed by and people bumped into her as they hurried home to their warm house and dinner. Nobody seemed to notice the old man either as he hung a Closed sign in his window cluttered with dolls.

Dr. Peppermint watched the rushed people for a little while then quietly went over to the counter and picked up the broken pieces of the doll.

"Now don't you fret," Dr. Peppermint said smiling, looking down at the doll. "I'll have you fixed in a jiffy."

As he turned the light on in the back room, clutter seem to jump out at him from everywhere. Glue, pieces of clothing and paper were scattered all over his small bed and dresser. His work counter was groaning under the weight of his small refrigerator and work tools. A lifelike image of him in his younger days decorated the peeling beige wall along with some other assorted dusty pictures. Sitting down in an old ragged chair, he started to examine the sick doll.

"Just a few more blocks," Sharon thought as she hurried along. "Doesn't some nice warm hot chocolate sound good now."

The downtown rush hour noise was dimming as Sharon turned down the last block. The houses were of a square shape trimmed with brown lawns frozen by the cold.

"What would we ever do without Dr. Peppermint," mused Sharon. "He's the only one who can fix our dolls just right. I can't ever remember him not being here."

Her house was yellow with a white trim. The leafless trees in front of her house seemed to shake with cold as the chilling breeze blew through them. A light was on and beckoned Sharon on as she jumped up the front porch steps two at a time.

"Mom, I'm back," yelled Sharon, as she peeled off a coat and two sweaters.

"Hi, honey! Dinner's almost ready. Steak tonight!" her mom answered as she stuck her head out of the kitchen door, her face flushed with the heat from the stove.

"Oh, boy!" thought Sharon as she scrambled for the bathroom to wash up.

Dr. Peppermint washed his long fingers carefully and dried them on his thin dish towel. Upon opening the refrigerator, he did not have to look very long for something to eat for dinner. Only a carrot and some stale bread.

Dr. Peppermint sighed as he settled back down in his chair. An unopened envelope laid on the tope of his clock by his elbow. It was addressed to a Mr. Arthur Peppermint, 299 So. 3rd St., Totlo, Maine. It was from the State.

"I know what they want. Can't they understand I'll pay them when I can?" Dr. Peppermint said outloud to himself as he chewed on the rubbery carrot.

Frowning, he put the letter in a long grey box on top of several other unopened white long envelopes. Finishing the bread off with his usual glass of water, he gathered up all his things from his bed and piled it on the already sagging counter. Squeezing his tall frame into the cramped bed, he managed to fall asleep quickly.

"Did Mr. Peppermint look at your . . ."

"Dr. Peppermint, Mom. I've told you before it's Dr. and not Mr. Don't let him hear you say that, please," Sharon interrupted anxiously.

"Oh, I seem to forget. Never mind . . . did he look at the doll?" her mom answered as they cleared the table off. Her father had retired to the study to look over some more papers. Melissa went over to turn on the T.V.

"Yes! And he said he could fix it again! Isn't that great, Mom!" exclaimed Sharon.

"I don't know how else he would make it unless you kids didn't keep bringing him dolls to fix. Whenever I pass by his shop, I never see anybody in there. I wonder where he lives? Have you ever met his wife, Sharon?" asked her mom.

"No," answered Sharon slowly. "No, I've never seen anyone else in there besides Betty, Martha and the other kids. But he sure can fix anything."

Finishing the dishes did not take long so Sharon had time to finish some math problems before bed time. Solving math problems did not come easy for Sharon as she sat over the long division problems biting her thumb nail nervously. With her eyes growing more and more weary over each problem Sharon decided she'd better go to bed.

"Maybe I can think better in the morning and will be able to work the rest of the math problems out then," she reasoned as she crawled under her warm blankets.

She soon fell asleep thinking about the wonderful room full of nothing but dolls. A smile formed on her still face as she slept.

The week passed quickly as Sharon went to school and played with her friends afterwards. Everyday they always ran by Dr. Peppermint's shop waving as they went. Dr. Peppermint always had a big smile and a wave for the children as he stood by the large glass window.

Then one day after school Sharon stopped at the tiny doll shop and went in.

"It's Thursday, Dr. Peppermint!" exclaimed Sharon.

"Yes, it is Sharon, I have your doll in the back. One moment," said Dr. Peppermint as he went into the back. Bringing the precious doll out, he laid it carefully in Sharon's arms. It looked good as new.

"She looks happy now, Dr. Peppermint," Sharon said smiling. "How much did it cost to fix her?"

"A dollar," Dr. Peppermint answered.

Counting out her change carefully, Sharon laid one dollar on the high counter clutching the doll tightly in her left arm.

"Thank you, Dr. Peppermint. Thank you so much!"

After she had left, Dr. Peppermint opened the old cash register and put the change in the empty stalls.

Sharon was so happy, she skipped all the way home hugging her doll all the way.

"Melissa isn't going to play with you again," she said as she comforted the doll.

As Sharon ran by the doll shop the next day, like she did every day, her hand stopped in the middle of a wave as she saw the Closed sign in the window.

"What?!" exclaimed Sharon as she stopped running. The other children stopped also.

"Is he sick?" someone else asked.

"He didn't look sick yesterday, Dr. Peppermint's never sick," answered Sharon.

Peering into the window, they strained to see something. All they could see were empty shelves. Instead of cheerful dolls only an opened long white envelope stared back at them.

Camille Gavin

Confirmation Day

That particular Easter Day began like any other in my memory. Petie, sweet with sleep, tiptoed into my room and urged me out of the covering softness to go with him outdoors to search for the dyed eggs he knew would be hidden among the dewy faces of my mother's pansies and under the bud-heavy bridal wreath. I tied my brother's shoelaces, listening to his endless chatter about the Easter Bunny. Finally, he asked if Rannie would come to visit when we returned from morning prayer at St. John's and the pinging ache passed. Holidays were more of a pageant than a ritual when Rannie was around.

Rannie's real name was Maudie L. O'Hanrahan and, although even now I do not believe in such notions, she was our fairy godmother. Maudie L. O'Hanrahan — rich and warm and round sounds — took a tumble on my two-year-old tongue. I could manage only "Rannie." Nobody, she least of all, seemed to mind the corruption and Rannie is what I would call her for a long time. Petie too. To my parents, she was then, is now, and forever will be, Mrs. O'Hanrahan.

She came to us on holidays and at other times, to discuss business with my father but I did not know much about that until I was older. Whenever she came, she brought gifts. Most of all, though, she brought herself.

On Easter, looking as delicious as one of the candy-filled baskets wrapped in crackling, pastel cellophane which Herbert, her campanion, lifted carefully from the truck of the big black Packard, Rannie made her entrance. Taking my father's welcoming hand, she extended first one high-arched, size-five suede pump, then the other, springing from the car with a lively grace. The shoes were important because the color of those cued the remainder of her attire. On that particular Sunday, Rannie had chosen shoes that looked like the succulent plums that ripened on our backyard tree each summer. My mother said Rannie's shoes were mauve but I could not find the word in the dictionary and anyway, I liked plum better. (Once, I counted the shoes springkled like bon-bons on the carpeted floor of the huge, dark closet in her turreted house in Pasadena. There were thirty-three pair, each a different color. Mrs. O'Hanrahan, I had heard my mother say more than once, is quite a dresser.)

Rannie pressed a kiss on my father's cheek, then my mother's, and, after smothering Petie and me in a cloud of perfume, stood back, holding me at arms-length. "Look at you, Leslie, all in blue, my how you've grown, you're getting to be a young lady." For the first time,

I wondered what she would have said if I had shrunk since her last visit. I almost asked but sensed my father's stony smile, and decided to save the thought.

My father tucked Rannie's hand inside his arm and led the procession up the walk to our house where Rannie and Herbert would join us for dinner. I followed behind, warmed by the sunlight radiating from Rannie's ever-golden curls, thinking of Billie Burke whom I had seen the week before in "The Wizard of Oz" at the Rialto. Petie sat cross-legged in the lawn, smearing his chubby cheeks with the remains of a marshmallow bunny. Herbert, cameras slung round his neck, brought up the rear.

Rannie never seemed to feel she needed to explain Herbert to anyone. He simply was a necessity of her life. Maudie had come to Riverview as a young girl – her name was Langford then – and lived in our town until she met Terence O'Hanrahan who whisked her away to Pasadena, a hundred miles to the south. My mother, who was just a little girl at the time, said Mrs. O'Hanrahan left behind a clutch of desolated suitors. I never knew Mr. O'Hanrahan. He died about ten years after their marriage, leaving his widow childless and wealthy. Herbert, I am told, appeared sometime later. He lived in Rannie's house, drove the Packard and took pictures. He was not her husband; he was not her servant. He was Herbert.

Just before we sat down for dinner – my mother always cooked baked ham and candied yams and hot biscuits with honey and pickled peaches and three kinds of vegetables for Easter – I got itchy. It was my dress. It scratched. My dress was Alice-blue dotted Swiss and it had seemed all right when my mother and I had bought it at Miss Alma's Smart Shoppe but now I was not so sure. I said I was going upstairs to change my clothes. My mother said, "What do you want to do that for, here, take the pickled peaches," and Rannie said, "such a lovely blue, Leslie." My father shook his nead and Herbert said, "oh no you can't I have to take your picture first." I said because it itches but by that ,time my father was saying grace.

Herbert started to tell us about his new movie camera and that made Rannie think about the cruise she and Herbert had taken to Alaska the summer before. She could not swim and since she knew that Herbert would be occupied with picture-taking when the ship sailed through the narrow, icy straits, she had asked a handsome young crew member – paid him five dollars, actually – to save her if the ship went down. He said he would. Herbert took miles of pictures – we'd see them later – the ship got through all right and then the sailor told Rannie – ha! ha! – you'd have been out of luck I can't swim either. Can you imagine, Rannie said, and he wouldn't give the money back either. Somehow, when Rannie told a tale, you believed it.

I helped my mother clear the table and Rannie and my father went in his study and closed the door. Get the Easter baskets Petie, you too, Leslie, we're going outside to take some pictures. I want

to change my dress. It itches. No it doesn't you look fine honey smile honey you're grinning can't you smile? Petie's smiling give the basket to Petie that's the way pretend you're just found an egg. What's the matter don't you like to have your picture taken anymore? Smile Leslie smile.

My father's hesitant chuckle mingled with Rannie's clear tinkling laughter. Gaining strength, it formed a single, harsh crazy-shaped orb, ricocheted out the study window, skittered across the lawn and somewhere near the bridal wreath, died. Where are you going Leslie comb back here we're not finished.

I slammed shut the kitchen door behind me and seeing the hambone on the counter picked at the pink slivery bits. My mother said what's wrong with you today Leslie and I said nothing. She said go wash your hands it's time for you to play. I picked a little bit more.

Leslie's going to play how nice what will it be today Shubert? Shubert would be nice for an Easter Day play whatever you like dear. I lifted the piano bench lid and took out the music book, flipped the pages, played and nobody listened. They never did. I finished the piece and everybody stopped talking and Rannie clapped her hands and somebody said play something else dear. I have to change my dress it itches. Later, Leslie. Play something from Carmen you know it by heart. Does she really? Yes indeed. Extraordinary child. I placed my fingers on the keys and the black ones seemed to swim into the white ones. I played, crashing one chord against the other. Everybody talked louder than before. Toreador-a don't spit on the floor-a Use the cuspidor-a That is what it's . . . . . Leslie!

I went upstairs to change my dress. When I awoke, my room was dusky. I heard the sound of a motor humming and wento the window in time to see the Packard glide under the sycamore trees that shaded the driveway. I watched the black sedan until it disappeared around the corner.

The following winter, I took instruction from Father Braithwaite at St. John's. At Eastertime the Bishop, covered in a transparent white surplice, made the sign of the cross above my veiled head and I was confirmed . . . In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, World without End, Amen. Rannie came. She brought me a white prayerbook. My name was printed in gold letters on the cover. Herbert took pictures of me and the Bishop. Everybody smiled.

Andrew Grzeskowiak

Seldom Close Enough To See

Even in the city, buried by a warm thick layer of yellow-gray murk and roiled by clots of cars and clamor, it was possible to seek out and share one another. So in the afternoons they went to paint together. The dark air and cold had burned away by then; the sun was mixing filth flung at the sky with the delicacy of a young wife folding in a beaten egg white. They would meet, always where the shadows of the huge auditorium and the few large pine trees mixed, sheltering from the harsh glare. They would walk through the outer double doors and down the wide step to the art lab in the basement. It was cool there with the damp smells of acrylics and tempra, the quiet accentuated by the gentle whisper of the air conditioners. The lab's huge green walls bulwarked, thick blocks of stone shutting out the smooth race of cars on the nearby freeway, that went like the pulling of warm taffy.

He had been carrying her art kit, a white cardboard box that rattled with loose brushes, and now he put it on one of the large cream-colored work tables.

"Is this okay?" There was no answer. "Janet? Hey, Janet!"

"I'm right here--there's no need to shout," she said behind him. He whirled around. "Oh. . .where were you?"

"In there." She pointed to the small office in the back of the room. "I changed, see?"

She wore a large man's shirt instead of her blouse. It was spotted with haphazard slashes of color which showed where she spilled or wiped when she was painting. "You wouldn't want me to get my blouse messy, would you?"

"No, I guess not. Just don't scare me like that, alright?" He was puzzled. She couldn't have gone anywhere; he was next to the only door. He smiled suddenly, an apology to her and a rebuke to himself.

She was looking at her painting. "Come over here and help me, will you?"

He walked to her. "What's the problem?"

"Oh, I don't know. It's sort of. . .too florid."

"'Florid?'" He smiled. "What does that mean?"

She turned away. "Now you're making fun of me! You don't need to act so superior. Just because you're such. . ***good*** friends with our professor. . ."

"Janet." There was a sharp rising edge to the name that stopped her. He wanted to be done with that. "I respect him as an artist. He helps me with tough assignments, especially in design and perspective. That's all."

"Oh, yes, I can see you respect each other. That's why he does half your work in class, where everyone can witness your mutual, uh, admiration. . ."

"Shut up, please. You want to finish this painting, don't you? Well, this middle area isn't bad, but gray in the corner tends to lead the eye off the picture, away from your subject. . ." She watched him, smiling and clicking the end of her paint brush against her teeth. ". . .so that's why I asked you what you meant by 'florid,' he finished. He looked at her and smiled. "See?"

"Yes," she said, clicking the brush, "I see." She laughed. "You're so funny."

His smile slowly left. "Funny? Why?"

She laughed again. "***That's*** why. You're always asking ***why***. I thought you Humanities majors sort of, um, inwardly knew all the answers without needing to ask."

He frowned. "That's not it at all. It's like research, in science--you find the answers by looking for the right questions to ask." She looked confused. "It's . . . hard to explain."

Evidently. Look, let's forget all the questions and answers for a while, okay? Forget the painting, too; I'll finish it later. How about going to the beach--we've got time before I go to work and my suit's still in your car." He didn't like the swift change. If she could let it lie, though, so could he. "Okay."

They were both silent on the drive to the beach. Each one felt the other's truce. He stopped the car at the entrance to the parking lot while Janet took her orange and green bag from the back seat and ran to change. Then he parked the car and walked to a clear space, away from the sparse late clumps of greased or sweaty bodies, a few dozen feet from where the waves ended in small, silver curls. He spread the blanket he'd brought, sat down on it, and looked at the people around him, slightly blurred with sand and salt glare.

There was something slightly obscene about the way the people on the beach took off their clothes, even though they had their swimming suits underneath. It was too casual, as though they were in their own bathrooms. The men exposed hairy legs unfamiliar to the sun. The women, though, seemed at each while the sea licked their shoulders and stomachs and half-naked breasts. The sea is their

lover, he though, and laughed. It was a funny picture: the men rushed at the sea with their angry legs and gull-white chests, a bedroom charge when their women submitted to the love of another. Yet the men didn't mind! They took their mate's hand and laughed, and the sea-lover and they romped, wet and shouting. He felt sorry for the sea, the only one he made no effort to conceal the discovery.

"Hey, wake up!" cried Janet, her voice cascading through his thoughts with the handful of sand she had flung over him. "Why don't you join me?" she said, flopping down beside him, scrubbing at her short hair with a towel. Her hair was a dark riot with gold glints the salt and sun caught and teased. "The water is beautimous."

"You know I haven't got my suit." Yes, she knows. Compromise time. He turned on his stomach, which brought his face inches from hers. "I have here, m'dear, in this very receptacle," as he fished in his pants picket, "a scarce, not to mention rare commodity, yaas." She giggled; even a poor W.C. Fields caught her off guard. He held up a roll of heavy nylon thread. "Not since the ungles of the MOgogo have I been without this handy lifeline. It is slender but strong, thin but durable, long but, ah, ah. . ."

"Long but boring," she finished for him, in between breathy laughs.

"Go 'way, ya bother me. Hm, yaas. . .as I was about to continue. .merely slip this cord about your shapely ankle, my dove, and I shall station myself on shore, thusly," he posed, hand above brows, eyes alertly focused on the horizon, nose quivering," and at the merest sign or signal of distress, I shall haul you in."

She pouted her face into a smile, put one wrist on her hip, and replied in her best Mae West. "Okay, big boy, but if I flag ya, make it snappy, ooooh."

He knelt and looped the cord around her ankle. He breathed deeply as he tied the knot. "Do my nostrils deceive me, or can this be Eau de la Mountain Goat?" he muttered, and dodged the sand her other foot flipped at him. He stood. "There you are, my little sea urchin. You may proceed when ready." She turned and flounced down to the waves, a sweet say even exaggerated, as he paid out the line.

She was a strong swimmer, and as his line spun to the small breakers he thought of the incredibly pompous letter Hemingway had written for a Ballentine's Ale ad, back in the early Forties. Hemingway probably grossly over-charged Ballentine's for that several dozen words of transparently commercial prose, but even then it was great. The line tugged as Janet dove beneath a large crest, and he remembered how Hemmingway had talked about trying to bring in the big marlin fast because the sharks were after the fish. Then came the blurb for the beer, deftly sweaty and masculine and muscular. Ah, Papa, did you ever play this kind of fish?

She was turning now, back to the beach, a little south off course because of the strong current. He wound in the line, slick and salty, reflecting that he would probably have to clean it later. Near the shore, she was caught near the knees by a swift wave that neatly flipped her over so that she landed on her feet, the bottom of her suit askew, only a dozen feet from him. He scuttled away from the high wash of water, She struck an acrobat's pose: "Ta-daaah!" He applauded furiously. "Author, author!"

Her hair dashed drops to the sand as she shook the water off. "Bee-you-timous!" He smiled at her jargon, and matched it: "Behold, O water nymph, the setting sun! Now is a salubrious time to leave."

"If 'slaubrious' means what I think it means, I don't agree. But it is time for me to get to work, even if I only have a quick shower and don't wash my hair." She sighed. "Let's go."

They picked up the blanket and her towel and walked slowly back to the car. On the way home she broke the silence. "Will I see you tonight, or are you going to barricade yourself in that gloomy old Roman citadel until dawn?"

He spoke patiently. "I really should go. Tonight is High Mass and I promised my parents I'd be there. But I'll pick you up anyway, even if I have to sneak out early."

"Okay. On the way home we'll have to stop at the store. I promised my roommate; we're out of everything but cream cheese."

"Alright." They pulled up to Janet's apartment building. "See you tonight."

"See you."

The church was only a short drive away, and though the mass was not for several hours he went directly to the small parish parking lot. He turned off the motor and sat, listening to the discrete tick of cooling metal. The light had already pulled from the streets and was leaving the walls of the basilica dim and darkening the lower stained glass, the roof still pale. He imagined himself patient enough to watch the rising tide of shadow, to time his pulse with darkening inches, and so he unexpectedly fell asleep.

It was fully night when he woke, but the city lights glowed off a canopy of haze that only rarely left. It was never entirely dark. He got out of the car and went around to the facade of the basilica. One door was partly open, and the steps spilled from the dark out and down from the high archway.

He pulled the heavy door open and went in. It was cool and quiet and very dark. At first only his hearing guided him; then the air conditioner spoke softly to the altar candles, and they nodded in agreement as his eyes picked them out. There was nothing to keep

him from leaving, for he was still early--but if he left then what was the good of coming. The candles seemed to warm him, to beckon as they shone off the chipped plaster faces and the robes of saints in their niches. The life-like statues confused him, but again the candles beckoned and the peace smothered him, and drew him inside.

Mechanically he genuflected and crossed himself, then rose and sat in the shadow of one of the roof's thick supporting columns. He noticed people scattered around him in the darkness, but he could not tell who they were. Their heads were bowed, and above the gentle rush of air he heard them murmur like bees, or the sound of far-off sawmills. He wondered if even they could hear the words they mumbled, for their minds were far, far away, with God. . . . He thought something had moved just past his vision, but when he turned all he saw were the painted, patient smiles of the saints. Pray to us, the smiles silently commanded, and obediently he picked up a prayer book and began to page through it. Prayers for sickness, for peace, for good weather, for strength in temptation; they were hard black missles fired at heaven. God must have heard them all before. There were no prayers in that little book a pregnant fourteen year-old or a murderer or a petty thief could pray. There was no patron saint for prostitutes or dope addicts. How horrible for God to say he could give you peach, when all these prayers begged was for Him to stick you behind a wall so thick you would no longer be aware of the world.

He stood up, and ran out of the coolness and the soft, remote buzz into the street. No one had seen him come; no one saw him go.

He drove aimlessly until it was time to meet Janet. She was waiting as she had said, on the corner. The late evening mist had become a rare rain, and when she turned at the sound of his car he almost gasped, she looked so beautiful. He got out of the car and walked to her, wanting to believe that she would always be like this. Her mouth, which usually looked too wide when she wore lipstick, had been sponged clean by the dampness and was now soft and smoother at the corners. She wasn't wearing her glasses or any makeup, and her eyes looked out at him from inside the small hollow created by the brim of her yellow hat at the top and her hair pushed forward at the sides. So very lovely, he thought, and softly kissed her lips.

"You're wearing your yellow coat, the one I like," he said, and took her hand as they began to walk towards the supermarket.

"Yes." She was very happy he had kissed her.

The rain was very soft, and it tickled his throat like someone pushing the texture of velvet with a finger. He would see her face glow with its cool, moist touch.

He said, "The earth is washing her face."

"Mine, too," and she smiled.

The supermarket loomed above them, neon-lit in the misty air. They walked in, its electric door swinging open as it felt their presence. He took a metal cart, and pushed it up and down the packed rows of shelves as she debated over this price and that, bouncing her choices into the wire basket, careful only of things not wrapped in metal or plastic. She stopped him at the end of one row, having forgotten an item they had passed earlier. "You wait here," said Janet. "I won't be a minute," and she was gone.

He had not heard her. He stood looking, completely absorbed in the table advertising a new soap. One large sign said, ". . .washes your clothes heavenly pure. . ." and another, ". . .follow me for a circus of values." That sign held a large arrow which pointed up to a figure dominating the entire display. It was at first shrunken in upon itself, standing perhaps three feet high. Then a pump started somewhere in its canvas body, and it began to rise. The movements were exactly those of a person getting up from a squatting position. Slowly, with an odd dignity, its legs filled till they were rigid--there were no knees--while the chest filled and expanded. The instant the chest was full, its arms threw themselves out in an expansive embrace. At its full height the figure stood more than six feet tall. The cardboard clown's head split itself in an idiot grin, and the top of the head was bald and shiny white, with tufts of feathry orange plastic sprouting on either side. It wore a green tuxedo with tails, and a yellow shirt with two huge purple buttons. The hands were immense, and wore deep purple gloves. The trousers were purple with dark green checks, and the feet were two small black felt pads.

The noise of the pump stopped then, and the giant stood silent and grinning. Very slowly, it began to collapse vertically, emptying down to its original position. Even with its air all out, the head still stood straight up, grinning madly.

"I said, I've checked out and we can go now!" yelling Janet in his ear.

"What?" Oh, yeah. Okay."

He curled the bag of groceries in one arm as they turned and walked out, holding hands. Just outside the door, to the left and running the wall's outer length, was a brick planter holding a thick conglomeration of semitropical trees and plants. On a corner of the planter nearest the door sat a small man in dirty clothes and cracked shoes, selling papers. He looked as though he had made a mold from the inky newsprint he sold and cast it upon himself. His face was turned away from them, and when he spoke it was as if to himself.

"Paper," he said. "Paper."

Jack Moon Gallon

A Novel in Progress

Diary

August :
I woke up this morning and it seemed like it had happened a long time ago, like a dream dreamt by a child. Maybe it was because I woke to the songs of birds outside. It feels good to be putting time between then and now. Sometimes I tend to think of those days as not having happened. Like I was walking into T. S. Eliot's wasted land with a mirror held in front of my face to see where the steps were taking me. Everything was reversed. The hero never got the girl. The sun rose in grey over skyscraping tombstones. No slight of hand, just naturally backwards.

August :
It was no illusion! It did happen! Remember!

August :
Laura is vibrant today. She makes me live. We made love in the grass by the pond. She has given me a place to grow.

It's funny how you meet people who instinctively know how to touch and how to feel, who know that sharing moments in time is the only true treasure life has to offer.

September :
I see it now! There it is. Love and lust and delusions and unrelenting human weaknesses; lies that fell like dead leaves between the idea and the real.

My father's world died long ago. Was it so easy? He knew nothing but work. Worked for everything he had and he had nothing. An empty shell for a wife. Sons that were not sons but filled his heart with misery and emptied his wallet as fast as he could fill it.

September :
A letter from home today. No good news, just old pains that refuse to die. Talk about coming out for a visit. I hope they will but Pop never did like staying in his children's homes. Somehow it always made him nervous.

September :
Break downs are all right! I lived through it. Why does it keep coming back to haunt me? I thought I had it down, taken care of, out of the way! That world is dead! I think my brain is diseased.

September :
I see. Two years ago today. It's like being born again.

CHAPTER ONE:

"Come on boy and quit draggin your ass," the father boomed from the foot of the stairs. "You are always late."

"Now father don't press the boy. He's trying."

"I'll damn well press him. As long as he lives in my house he will do as I say."

Peter closed his diary and bolted up from his chair, grabbed his ballcap from the bed post and started for the door. As he passed the wall mirror on the door he checked his hair. Closing the door behind him, he rushed to the staircase and bolted down. In the air he raised his arms for balance. He came to a stop standing before his mother and father. The parents stood and stared, the mother with a mild smile, the father with stern resolution. Peter smiled at them. The big man drew his arm high above his head, a long shadow cast against the wall rose across the ceiling.

"I'll break your damned neck," the father growled.

The shadow descended, flashing from the ceiling, and Peter fell back against the stairs. The light seemed to fade into darkness. Peter's cheek throbbed. He heard a woman's cry as tears invaded his eyes.

"Damned you boy," the father said. His fingers closed again against his palm, his knuckles whitening under the pressure. Moving swiftly, he stepped in towards Peter. Peter froze, and watched the angry man, heard his large feet against the floor.

"Don't you raise your hand against that child again," the mother cried.

The father stopped at her words, and, turning, looked hard into her eyes.

"No man should have to," he said under his breath. "Damnit."

He turned quickly and disappeared in the hall, his footsteps echoing as his shadow filled it. The mother sensed the end. She crept towards the stairs where Peter sat frozen. As she knelt she looked back over her shoulder down the hall. She began to cry softly. Through the hall, in the kitchen, they could hear the sound of the father as he growled to himself.

"He shouldn't have done that Peter."

The mother's hands trembled as she reached out.

"Beast!" she screamed in her husband's path. "Did he hurt you?"

"No."

The mother slipped her arms around Peter, burying her face over his shoulder. "Peter he's told you over and over;" she pleaded. "He's so much bigger. Oh Peter, he didn't mean it."

Peter's face stung. "It's okay. He didn't hurt me."

Peter's knees wobbled under his weight as he stood. He spun from the mother's grasp and ran for the door, thinking the questions for which she had no answer "he didn't have to do that. Why'd he have to do that?"

Standing on the front steps Peter looked up into the sky. The cool autumn day felt good. A plane flew silently overhead. Peter watched it as he rubbed the sting on his cheek.

"He got you again, uh Peter?"

It was Gary, Peter's brother. Peter's face broke in a smile. Gary closed the book cradled in his lap and set it aside. He paused.

"Why?" Peter asked. "Why?"

"I don't know Peter. I don't know." Gary replied as his eyes searched the pavement. "You'd better watch it though."

They both smiled. They understood.

"Come on let's wait for them on the corner."

Gary rose, and tucking his book under his arm, led the way silently out the walkway to the sidewalk. Peter fell, in stride, beside Gary.

"What you readin?" Peter asked as he stared at the book cradled under Gary's arm.

"Mr. Graver told us to read it."

"What's it about?"

Gary laughed. "It's about this hunchback called Cosimoto."

Peter's face grew thoughtful as he pondered the book's cover. The hunched back man on the cover had a face that seemed to call to him, to speak in some uncommon voice. "Lonnie's dad told us he once saw a hunchback. In Germany during the war."

Gary smiled and walked silently a step ahead of Peter. They walked along the quiet suburban street under a canopy of high treetops. Peter watched the spaces, the light and dark spaces between the tree branches. The sun felt hot and good. Peter felt better. His chest was warm from the sun's rays.

"Gary?"

"Ya Petie."

"I am going to run away."

Gary looked at Peter and smiled. The shadows against the sunlight popped and paisliied the street. Cars woosed by drawing autumn leaves in their wake. Peter grabbed a light pole in his stride and began to spin around it. He closed his eyes and watched from behind. Round an round he spun. The blood swirled in his veins. Round and round he spun, faster, until his fingers slipped from the pole and he twirled on one foot, then the other, careening across the sidewalk into a lawn. He let his legs up and fell across the grass. His head was spinning. He smiled behind his eyes and spread his legs and arms out against the cool grass.

"Here they come Peter."

Peter opened one eye. Then the other. The sunlight hurt. He rolled up onto his elbow and propped his head on his hand.

"You'd better get up."

Gary sounded different. Peter sat up and looked down his pant legs, brushing off grass clippings. In the distance Peter could see the two figures wavering in the heat. A funny feeling crept through his guts. He wondered if his father might hear his thoughts. Through the heat the sounds of their footsteps sounded. Peter watched the two figutes in the distance as they came closer. He saw a robbin searching in the grass. Peter smiled to himself. He watched the robbin as it freed a worm from the moist grass. Peter felt good. The bird flew with its meal into the air. The sound of footsteps grew stronger.

"Get moving boys," the father ordered, "we're late already. Go on," he prodded. "Go on."

"Come boys" the mother echoed. "Let's go."

The father and mother walked on past. Peter and Gary fell in behind the parents. Peter watched the figure walking before him and thought of the sadness in his mother's eyes. It bothered him. They seemed strange and forbidding to him. The rhythm of their footsteps seemed to carry them forward without meaning. But there was no other world.

As they rounded the corner, the church steeple raised high against the sky. The father stopped, turned and looked down on his children. He reached deep into his pant pockets for a coin to place in his children's outreached hands. The church bells began to toll. Birds flushed into the air in fright. The mother crossed herself as the four began to climb the steps to the church. Peter watched the mother as her lips began to move in a silent prayer.

CHAPTER

The night was silent. Autumn noises sprang through the bedroom windows on the breathy breeze that blew. Dogs echoed in the night. The bright moonlight slipped through, spilling dark shapes against the bedroom walls. The curtains flapped gently as the breeze passed through. Peter rested on his bed but could not sleep. The clock on the nightstand ticked against tick as its second hand flowed swiftly past luminous numbers. It was three o'clock. Peter studied the dark silhouettes cast by the liquid light. He knew the shapes, knew what they

were without seeing them. He closed his eyes and watched the silhouettes form against his eyelids. The mirror on the bedroom door reflected brilliant moonlight that shone through the window. The stars rolled on the paths of prediction in the dark night sky.

Peter rose from the bed, throwing the covers hand over against the wall, and set his feet on the cold bedroom floor. Next to his feet set his travelling bag filled and ready to go. He took his pants from the foot of the bed and from the bed post grabbed his ball cap. Putting on his shoes and coat, he looked once more around the room. From below the stairs Peter could hear the faint voice of a T.V. personality laugh. He opened the door. Stopped and standing in the doorway, Peter looked back through the room one more time. He closed the door behind him.

The stairs groaned with his footsteps as he descended. Stopping at the bottom, Peter looked around the corner of the wall and into the livingroom. Hushed and quiet, the mother slept in her favorite brown weathered chair.

"This is a nighttime show for those of you nighttime people who don't care who you spend the night with." The laughter from the T.V. set was low and melodic. "Ed. . . you know Ed!"

Peter closed the front door behind him. Standing on the front steps, the moon seemed alive and dancing against the puffs of night clouds moving across its face. The breeze felt fresh and blew new across Peter's face. He felt a flush of excitement as he took his first steps away from his home. The street was clean and vacant in the night. A fine mist covered the street, reflecting diamond, beading light in the darkness. The houses on the row stood silent and seemed sleeping under the shroud of dark and trees. Peter stopped at the end of the walk and turned to look at the old house. Somehow in the unforgiving light of darkness it looked older. Through the livingroom window Peter could see the fluttering light of the T.V. alive against the frail cloth curtains. He turned away and walked silently down the street. The night was clean and crisp, and the sounds of his footsteps lead him into the darkness.

Passing the school y ard Peter could hear the vacant voices that filled the yard, those feet that wore the paths, the circles, as if held by a tether and swung around. It stood there a quiet giant behind the chain link.

Houses began to disappear and tall buildings grew on the sky as Peter walked deeper into town. The night light traffic lights beat a steady rhythm of yellow that was captured and reflected by standing pools of gutter water. The green of plants turned to a faded grey and black, as life began to change form. Cement. Hard and enduring.

The bus station was filled with late night comotion. The bright lights flashed promises in silent communication. High above the bus station doors a neon dog raced with his neon legs to the rhythm of electric pops. Peter stood before the automatic doors and waited. The street seemed conjested with traffic. Peter watched as an elderly lady walked past him and into the station. Under her arms she carried two paperbags. Peter felt inside his pant pocket. The money was there. He stepped on the plastic mat and the doors swung

open. Inside, the station was bright with artificial light. In the rear of the building Peter saw doors numbered and before them, people standing and waiting. Peter walked to the ticket counter.

"Where you going sonny?"

"Los Angeles, please,"

"One way? Two ways?

"One."

The man at the counter grabbed a carbon set ticket and placed it in the ticket slide. The machine banged back and forth.

"That'll be fourteen fifty-three, Sonny."

Peter reached into his pants and pulled out his small savings. Out of the corner of his eye he noticed an old man standing next to the wall watching him.

"Have a good trip. Your bus leaves in fifteen minutes."

Startled, Peter nodded and accepted his change.

"Door A, sonny. Bus twelve ninety-two." Peter stepped back away from the counter, picked up his bag and looked for Door A.

Peter looked again for the old man he had seen standing next to the wall watching him. He was not there. Peter stepped through the door marked A. The smell of desil exhaust filled the air. In front of him stood a row of idling buses. People filed into some and out of others. A man dressed in dark blue and carrying a briefcase flew past Peter and through the door behind him. Peter checked the ticket for his bus number. 1292.

The bus was just left of the doorway. He stepped up the three steps and inside the bus. The sound of the idling buses grew softer. Peter walked to the deep rear of the bus and took a seat next to the very back window. He set his bag down near his feet and settled in his seat. The old man that had been watching him in the bus station was sitting across the aisle. He was sleeping. Peter closed his eyes and settled back into his seat. He could hear the bus as it backed out of the space and left the station. Peter felt good behind his eyes and fell softly into sleep as the bus left the city and rolled smoothly down the highway. Through the drone of the steady rolling bus came a dream. His family tree. The little town of Ireland where his mother's father's father had been born. And his ancient family working the Irish soil, turning her over and over til the day earth went dry and burned his fields. And his family left with nothing. The horse and beside him Great Grandfather, in his hands the tether, before him darkly shrouded men holding crosses. The sentence was loud and omniscent. Disgrace, criminally libel to church law. Transportation to America. Lying on the dark street his throat cut, his pockets turned out and empty. Flowers and fresh dirt for the grave. Young John, frightened young John. Playing in the streets and against tenament walls. Rent, Mother's

treatments, food from the store. Mounting up and back into the streets. He felt good in the streets. He knew them better. They didn't cry or complain. They were just paths that led somewhere; just streets with lamp posts that stood side-by-side in regimented rows throwing low light on tenaments. Fear. Vergal and the baby. The apartment shallow and closed. Fixed, tiny upstairs flat. Look at John run, disappearing in the dark, and Vergal crying, a baby at her feet. Vergal fading growing closed inside walls and whiskey flowing full loud and burning inside that wooden box with my mother "no use for words, heard them all already, don't need them, I can see already the tears, and wouldn't answer the door for fear, those tears of gulped desperation. Vergal sitting crumpled on her knees, her chin buryed on his chest and lower to the spot and mother behind the couch watching their bodies. A long row of tenaments; a corner block of two room flats. Vergal walking wavering happy. Strolling out under the gallery of street lamps and awnings and stripped blacktop the men were the same. "One bottle and a kiss, the family jewels for one bottle, sir. Will you do me?" He could not resist her standing holding her hands at the loose knot that held her skirt against her slow hips. Smiling and grasps him by his shoulder. Lips meeting. The little girl inside knows the knocking and bumping at the door; two tangled figures stumble into the middle of the room and fall fluid to the floor, the little girl behind the couch, the catch snap that let the feeling out and her eyes closed, the tangled legs and the stranger twisting and heaving and throwing against her, fit tight and liquid rolling and plunging where flush and reddened flesh is bare and Vergal sprawling on the floor, her lone figure naked against the shadows cast by night's light, laying there near her empty bottle, her breasts soft red, her thighs turned open and warm, the smell of trees in spring filled the air as the sun rose slowly on the horizon. Through her sleep she reached out with a soft moan.

The stady drone of the tires rolling on the concrete came louder into Peter's ears. He listened and turned his head to the window. Outside the landscape began to mount lowland to highland. Tumbleweeds rolled effortlessly in the fields beside the highway. The sun was raising on the eastern horizon. The climbing light struck gold fingers across the slopes of the eastern mountains, casting shadows down against the valley floor. The bus engine began to labor as the climb became steeper. Peter looked across the aisle at the old man twisting in his seat, restless against the sound of the laboring engines. Peter closed his eyes and slept.

The bus began to whine. It sounded a different sound. When Peter woke he looked out the window to see the bus descending into a mountain valley that stretched straight and down into a bowl. Peter looked across the aisle. The old man was awake and listening to a transister radio which he held against his ear. Peter smiled at the old man. The sky outside the window began to change to a dark blue that streaked the mountaintops with a red that resembled the opening of a fresh cut. The sky swelled as if gut-punched, turning black and blue against the mountaintops. Peter watched. Cloud pushed against cloud like moths in furious ritual around a street light. Peter pulled his coat close around his neck. Against the mountainsides Peter could see the evergreen trees bow and give way to the invisible wind that was walking slowly across the valley. In the sky the clouds began to swirl as if smoke from a chimney. Peter lay his head against the head rest and watched as the sky brewed color on color. A giant cloud entered the valley walls. Peter felt excited. His hands began to sweat as his eyes seemed glued to this giant puff of cloud that swung into

the sky. It opened and spread. As he watched, the faces of two figures began to appear. Peter closed his eyes thinking he was seeing something that wasn't there. He opened them again. They were there. Two faces in the clouds. Peter gasped. As quickly as he had seen them, they disappeared.

"Your name Peter," Peter heard over his shoulder. It was the old man. "Don't be afraid Peter. I saw your name inside your cap." The old man pointed at the cap laying beside Peter in the seat.

"Don't mean to be nosey or nothing," the old man said. "Just making conversation."

Peter smiled and looked out the window. The cloud had disappeared.

"Looking kind of nasty out there ain't it."

Peter nodded.

Bertha Crow

A Mirror For Nickaway

CHARACTERS:

NICKWAY, a good man but hard and harsh, lacking in sensitivity.

DOROLAS, his wife. Nickaway is her second husband. Since her first husband's death, she has rather lost her hold on life.

RAY NICKAWAY, Dorolas's son, step son to Nickaway. Ray would like to admire Nickaway. He even calls him Dad and uses the Nickaway name. He is a thoughtful, rather private person.

DAN BEALE, neighbor to Nickaway.

WILLA BEALE, wife of Dan Beale. They are older people, about fifty.

LILLIAN BEALE, daughter of Willa and Dan Beale.

PAULINE BEALE, daughter of Willa and Dan Beale. Pauline and Lillian are classmates of Ray Nickaway.

CAPTAIN RHODES, neighbor across the street from Nickaway.

DIANE RHODES, daughter of Captain Rhodes (small). Diane is mentioned but not seen.

A miscellaneous CROWD, neighbors of the Nickaways.

ACT I

Scene I - Saturday morning

A stereo, cabinet style, standing against the east wall, is playing soft rock music rather loudly. A bronze eagle, with wings widespread, hangs on the wall above the stereo. A dresser, with a large mirror is against the south wall. Two pictures of pirates, one propped forward on a gun, one standing over a treasure chest, hang on the wall on each side of the mirror. A guitar case leans against the wall beside the dresser. A dull, green-gray backpack, stuffed, leans against the open closet door. A dark blue, down sleeping bag hangs suspended from the ceiling in one corner. The bed is against the east wall, in the center of the wall, beneath almost-picture windows. However, bright green curtains, trimmed with white, shut out most of the light, leaving only a green cast over everything. A large oil painting of an Indian Chief, in full headdress, hangs on the north wall. He seems to be looking far in the distance.

Ray Nickaway is lying on the bed, feet protruding from the end, his hands locked behind his head, listening to the stereo. A pensive expression is on his face as he stares at the bronze eagle.

NICKAWAY (with a heavy, purposeful tread, strides into the younger Nickaway's room): It's ten o'clock, Ray, and you haven't even started on that lawn yet.

RAY (without moving or looking at Nickaway):
I know. I'll do it.

NICKAWAY (Anger beginning to show in his face and voice):
I know you'll do it! Right now! And turn that infernal thing off. (Without waiting for Ray to do it, Nickaway turns the switch. Ray does not move. Nickaway raises his voice even louder) You heard me!

RAY (still reclining, a little irritated):
I said I'd do it.

NICKAWAY:
But when? If you do it like you do everything else around here, you won't have it done by Christmas. And when you get through with that, you can clean the garage.

RAY (suddenly extremely angry):
I won't do it! I'll mow the lawn but I won't clean the garage! You can't make me, and if Mom was here, you wouldn't dare mention it!

NICKAWAY (mimicking):
If Mom was here you wouldn't dare mention it. (vehemently) What do you think I'm doing? You want to be a sissy all your life? Hiddin' behind your mother's shirt tail! I see! Well, she won't be back for another hour at least, maybe more. You do as I say, this instant, and don't tell me what you won't do! (Nickaway makes as if to yank Ray off the bed but thinks better of it. Ray gazes at the eagle, an intense expression on his face.)

RAY (calm and pleading):
Dad, I try so hard to get along with you, but you won't let me. I'm sorry I said I wouldn't clean the garage. (Wearily, as if all this has been explained many times before.) It's just that I get so stuffed up with allergy every time I do. You know I do. I won't be able to do anything for two or three days, and I was going backpacking tomorrow.

NICKAWAY:
That's just some more of your mother's bunk. Can't you see that? She's really got you believing all that stuff. Take a good look at yourself. Just take a good look! And see what do you see. (Nickaway yanks Ray up and pushes him before the mirror.) No son of mine would spend half his time in the mountains with the animals and the other half thumping that guitar all day long like an idiot. (Nickaway flings his arms about so wildly he accidently knocks over the guitar case but makes no move to catch it. It falls with a clatter, the strings sounding inharmoniously. Ray springs for the case. He checks the instrument, strums it. It is out of tune.)

RAY (angrily):
Get out of my room! Just get out! (Visably, he struggles for control. With a strained expression, he adds too quietly) I know you hoped you broke it, but you didn't.

NICKAWAY:
You just mind what I tell you. If you don't you won't go anywhere tomorrow! And I mean get at it right now, too!

(Nickaway leaves and slams the door behind him. Ray puts his guitar away. He slowly walks around the room, touching each object contemplatively. He paces restlessly. He looks long at the Indian picture. He takes the pirates off the wall, one at a time, and looks at them carefully.)

RAY:
I should give these to Jimmy's little boy. (With a heavy sigh he hangs them back in place, then changes his mind. He opens the dresser drawer and carefully puts them away. Carefully, he dusts the eagle, measuring again, with his eye, the length of the wing span. His backpack stands ready before the yawning door. He looks around in its dark interior for his bow and arrow. He touches his face to the down sleeping bag. He opens the heavy green curtains, but only the night comes in. He stands before the dresser, looking into the mirror. He starts suddenly and his face turns white. A strained look appears in his eyes. He leans forward for a closer look and quickly turns away.)

SCENE II

A typical yard scene. Nickaway's yard. Captian Rhodes is kneeling on one knee replacing a section of stone border around Nickaway's south flower bed. It is near a low block fence separating the Nickaway yard from the Beale's yard. Cacti, in huge redwood tubs stand at the north corner of the house. Bedding plants bloom around a wagon-wheeled mailbox. Everything is meticulously neat and in place. Dan and Willa Beale approach the fence. Dan props one foot on the fence and picks at his teeth with a straw.

DAN(grinning):
Now, just tell me, what do you think you're doing?

CAPTAIN (looking up and squinting in the sun, laughing): I'm fixing this man's flower border. What does it look like I'm doing?

DAN:
I'll swear. What're you doing that for?

CAPTAIN:
Well, he come over to my house this morning and raised cain with my wife about Diana breaking his border.

DAN (taken aback):
You don't mean it? (He laughs again.)

CAPTAIN (straightening up to survey his work):
He sure done it.

WILLA:
Well, how did she do it?

CAPTAIN:
He said she was walking on it.

WILLA:
Why, I bet she doesn't weigh fifty pounds.

CAPTAIN:
She didn't break it. If she did, it was already cracked.

DAN:
Why, I wouldn't have fixed it.

CAPTAIN:
I didn't want any trouble out of him. I told him I had bought that place over there and I was going to live there if I had to fight him every day. (They laugh.)

DAN:
Does he know you're fixing it?

CAPTAIN:
I told him I was going to town and get a section and put it in.

DAN:
They're not home, are they?

CAPTAIN:
I came over here as soon as they left. Gone to church probably.

DAN:
You'd better hurry up and get out of that man's yard. He's liable to come back and throw you out.

SCENE III

NICKAWAY'S LIVING ROOM. It is a completely feminine room. A couch in floral upholstery, is against the east wall. There are pillows that never seem to have been plumped. Two chairs are arranged attractively. A chandelier sparkles coldly. A T.V. set channels in the news but no one is watching. A phone, with table, is near the front east window. What-nots are everywhere: Fine china ladies in gorgeous painted-on dresses of another era. Tiny tea cups and saucers, porcelain ponies and all manner of fine ceramic images. Ray is seated in one chair, facing the television, but reading. Occasionally he is seized with a fit of sneezing and nose blowing. Nickaway is half reclining on the couch perusing an ***Airway Magazine.*** Dorolas is seated in the other chair by the phone, engaged in a telephone conversation. She is not a pretty lady but young looking for forty. She has on an expensively tailored gray suit and red shoes.

DOROLAS:
Yes, he's here. He's been here all day. He is having problems with his allergy again and couldn't come to school. Yes. I know his grades are down.

(Nickaway raises to one elbow and glances at Ray. Ray, instantly on the defensive, sees the glance but does not acknowledge it.)

DOROLAS:
Thank you for your interest. Oh, yes, I'll tell him. Goodnight. (To Ray) That was your Math teacher, Ray. He's disappointed that your grade has dropped so low. He gave me your assignments.

NICKAWAY (to Ray):
How low has the rest of your grades dropped?

RAY:
They're all about the same.

DOROLAS:
I wish you'd tell us what the problem is. You used to be such a good student.

RAY:
I know, Mom. I just can't seem to buckle down. Spring fever, I guess.

NICKAWAY:
I think you're just goofin' off.

RAY:
Everyone goofs off once in a while.

DOROLAS:
Ray, don't be disrespectful.

NICKAWAY:
It's no secret how he feels about me. Let him talk. Then we'll know how he really feels.

(Ray refused to be drawn into an argument. He goes back to his reading.)

NICKAWAY (without anger):
Well, I can't see that you're working so much. Looks to me like you sit down as much as anything else. You're living in my daddy's house and spending my daddy's money. That's how I feel.

DOROLAS (visably upset):
Ray! Please! What would you daddy say if he knew how you're behaving now?

RAY:
How am I behaving, Mom? He asked for it. He always asks for it.

NICKAWAY:
Now, that's just about enough out of you, young man. Ray (closing his book and standing). Mom, I think I'll call up Harry and have him come over. O.K.?

DOROLAS:
I don't see why not. Call him up. We could do with some company.

NICKAWAY (stretching and yawning):
No-o, I think not. It's late now, and I'm tired. I don't want to be bothered with Harry.

RAY:
But no one ever comes over anymore. We used to have lots of company. And we used to take a car full everywhere we went, even to church every Sunday. We don't take anyone anywhere anymore.

NICKAWAY:
I go to church every Sunday. That's why. Ray, well I know you're big, but you don't take up the whole car.

NICKAWAY:
Well, let's just say they're a bother.

RAY:
We aren't kids anymore.

NICKAWAY:
You're still a bother.

RAY:
I know. You're afraid you'll get what you're asking for. They're too old to take a cussing out like they used to. And I heard you the other day, too.

DOROLAS (shocked):
You didn't? Who was it, Nick?

RAY:
That kid across the street that picks up all the stray dogs. If I was her parents, I'd come over here and put you in your place. You don't have any business talking to a child like that.

NICKAWAY (getting off the couch and going to the kitchen):
Baloney.

DOROLAS:
Ray, I do wish you would try to get along with Nick.

RAY:
He doesn't want to get along with me, Mom. I try. He makes me mad, and I make him mad.

(Dorolas sighs.)

What did you marry him for anyway?

DOROLAS:
Well, you know I used to go with him a long time ago. Before me and your dad was married.

RAY:
I know.

DOROLAS:
After your father died, I just couldn't seem to snap back. I tried to work, but you know how that worked out. I simply couldn't take it. Got sick. He was just there, and I just married him.

ACT II

Scene I - Dan and Willa's house

The backyard can be seen. It is a very black night, and raining. Clothes on the clothes line shake and flap in the wind and rain. A mop hanging on the back tool shed bangs occasionally, making muffled noises. Inside the lights are on. It is cozy and warm. The television is on, and the girls, Lillian and Pauline, are on the floor with pillows, watching the Miss America Contest. Dan and Willa are playing monopoly in the dining area, which is a continuation of the living room. Otherwise, typical living room furniture, dining table, etc.

WILLA (suddenly):
You can't do that? That railroad belongs to me. Give me my money.

DAN (shifting through his cards):
This card says I can do that. You owe me money. Hand it over.

WILLA:
I declare. I thought I owned that. (She takes Dan's card and looks at it carefully). I guess you do own that.

LILLIAN:
I wish you two would be quiet. You made me miss what they said about Denmark's candidate. She's really pretty.

PAULINE:
Be quiet.

WILLA:
I can talk. . .

PAULINE (holding up her hand, listening):
No. Listen.

WILLA (whispering):
. . .in my own house whenever I want to.

(everyone listens)

DAN (rearming his game):
I told you you shouldn't watch ***Rose Mary's Baby***.

PAULINE (insistent):
No. I did hear something.

LILLIAN:
How can you tell with the wind blowing so. It's probably the drip of the rain.

PAULINE (going to the door):
I'm going to look anyway. (She opens the front door and looks out. The rain in the yellow light looks like millions of tiny silver needles falling.)

LILLIAN:
Shut the door. You're freezing me to death.

PAULINE (she shuts the door, goes to the back door and looks out. She returns to the living room.)
I'm cold, too. Let's light the fire.

DAN:
I think we all ought to go to bed. (He looks at Willa and laughs). While I'm ahead.

WILLA:
No, let's finish this game. You always quit when you're ahead.

DAN (stretching his hands over his head as he rises. He grins.)
Tomorrow.

SCENE II

(Captain, Dan, Willa, Lillian, Pauline and many neighbors are crowded in Dan's front yard. They are talking among themselves.

DAN (speaking above the murmur):
They didn't even know he was gone.

LILLIAN:
He hasn't been to school in a day or two.

DAN:
I never did take him fishing. I wanted to. Offered to several times, but Nick never would let him go.

CAPTAIN:
He was a rather shy, quiet boy, wasn't he?

DAN:
Yeah. All time going backpacking by himself. Nothing wrong with that though. He had to do something.

WILLA
Dorolas was worried about him. Grades dropping and all. I told her he'd get over it. My girls did.

PAULINE:
He slept in his sleeping bag.

LILLIAN:
He took his pirate pictures. Did he take his bronze eagle?

PAULINE:
No.

LILLIAN:
He drew a face in the dust on the window.

PAULINE:
I wonder why he liked that old house.

DAN:
I never would've thought he would've taken my gun.

PAULINE:
He knew right where it was.

LILLIAN:
I can't say that I blame him.

WILLA:
Lillian! What a thing to say!

LILLIAN:
Sh-sh-sh-h-h. Here they come.

(Nickaway came out the door and went to the car. He looked at his neighbors, ill at ease. He straightened his tie in the car mirror.)

NICKAWAY:
I always knew he'd pull just some fool stunt as this.

(Dorolas came out and got in the car. She didn't look up. Her youthful face was sagging and drawn. Her hair was white.)

Jerome Evans

Not with a Bang

(A short one-act based on
T. S. Eliot's ***The Hollow Men***)

Cast:

Chorus

Mr. Julian Zoff
Mr. John Klopp
Man
Woman
Chorus Leader

Setting - bare stage, cast in a soft orange glow, simulating sunset. The stage is always dim unless otherwise stated.

Chorus (Facing audience):

Can we see the evening sun
As it's setting all day long
Through the hills we see it going
Fizzling in the sea wind's blowing,
While our night does come so slowly–
Dare we see the sun so lowly?

Mr. Zoff and Mr. Klopp (Facing each other, they speak dryly, mechanically in unison):

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw, Alas!
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass
Or rats' feet over broken glass
In our dry

(At this point Mr. Zoff falters and says "basement" rather than "cellar")

MR. ZOFF:
Basement

MR. KLOPP:
Cellar. Mr. Zoff, you must learn your lines.

MR. ZOFF (apologetically):
I'm working on it John. It's
been a long time.

MR. KLOPP:
Yes, a long time.

MR. ZOFF:
Do you remember?

MR. KLOPP:
If God is god. . .

MR. ZOFF:
He is not good. . .

MR. KLOPP:
If God is good. . .

MR. ZOFF:
He is not god. . .

MR. KLOPP AND MR. ZOFF (in unison):
Take the even, take the odd
(with nostalgic joy) I would not sleep her if I could. . .

MR. KLOPP (acting his part):
But for the little green leaves in the wood. . .

MR. ZOFF (in soft reply):
And the wind on the water.

MR. KLOPP (smiling):
Those were the days!

MR. ZOFF:
Those were the plays!

MR. KLOPP:
Zinfandel!

MR. ZOFF:
Burlesque! (a pause)

MR. KLOPP:
What now?

MR. ZOFF:
Learn lines.

MR. KLOPP
It goes on still.

Mr. ZOFF:
It never ends.

MR. KLOPP (jokingly, overacting):
Like peanut shells
It swells and swells
Like water from the deep.
Those stars from height
Make bright the night
Yet I close my eyes in sleep.

MR. ZOFF (in reply):
Truly bad poetry, sir.

MR. KLOPP:
But accomplished acting.

MR. ZOFF:
With fortitude.

MR. KLOPP (triumphantly):
With guts!
(pausing, reflecting) Learn lines.

MR. ZOFF:
Learn lines. (Striking a pose) Violent souls, but only (Mr. Klopp joins in, facing Zoff, who slowly turns away from him)
As the hollow men
The stuffed men.

MR. ZOFF:
Dry basement.

MR. KLOPP (adamant):
Dry cellar!

Silence - blackout

Lights dim up in the same orange glow as before. It reveals a dinner scene at a relatively fancy restaurant. Zoff and Klopp look on from the left wing of the stage. Man and woman are involved in their meal and the evening's intercourse.

MAN (voraciously):
The steak is great!

WOMAN (sweetly, softly):
The wine is fine.

MAN (cautioning):
Don't over do it.

WOMAN (calm reply):
Don't eat so fast, (sarcastic now) dear.

MAN (slowing his pace):
Of course love.

WOMAN:
Thank you.

MAN:
For what?

WOMAN:
For calling me "love." I feel so young when you talk to me that way.

MAN:
But you're barely thirty.

WOMAN:
But when you speak so nicely, you make me feel like I'm eighteen.

MAN:
I love you.

WOMAN:
I love you. (They gently kiss)

MR. KLOPP (whispering, aside)
Truly touching scene, eh Mr. Zoff?

MR. ZOFF (involved):
Sshl Truly romantic.

MR. KLOPP:
Youth is the language of romance.

MR. ZOFF:
But it's good to hope. To remember.

MR. KLOPP (resolutely):
I don't think so.

MR. ZOFF:
Ssh. Just watch. Just hope.

MAN:
I love you.

WOMAN (taking his hand, she spills the wine in his lap, he takes little notice):
I love you.

MAN (in a lighter, but still loving mood):
Kiss me Katel (They kiss again, and become passionate.)

The candle on their table burns down, lights dim with it to blackout. Picking up the pace, Mr. Klopp and Mr. Zoff move out to center stage and speak even during the blackout (while man and woman and props are removed).

MR. KLOPP (matter of factly, quickly spoken):
Shape without form,
shade without colour. . .

MR. ZOFF (sadly, in disbelief, slower):
Paralyzed force,
gesture without motion.

(Lights come up now. Chorus surrounds Zoff and Klopp)

MR. ZOFF (sad and reflecting):
Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the shadow

CHORUS (loudly, resolutely):
For Thine is the Kingdom!

MR. KLOPP (Acting his part, unmoved yet convincing):
Between the conception
And the creation
Between the emotion
And the response
Falls the shadow

CHORUS (same as before):
Life is very long!

MR. ZOFF (falling to his knees, expressing great agony):
Between the desire
And the spasm
Between the potency
And the existence
No! I cannot go on!

CHORUS (singsongy, resolute):
You must! You must! You must go on.
You must do your part.

MR. ZOFF (more distrought):
Between the essence
And the descent
Falls the shadow (he collapses now)

CHORUS (triumphant):
For Thine is the Kingdom

MR. KLOPP (looking at Mr. Zoff, speaking with detached sorrow):
For thine is
Life is
For thine is the . . .

MR. ZOFF (screaming in intense agony):
Kingdom!
(Mr. Zoff collapses totally now. He sobs on the floor, then becomes quiet. Mr. Klopp and Chorus look on detatchedly.)

(Chorus leader moves out to Mr. Klopp.)

CHORUS LEADER:
Is he?

MR. KLOPP:
No. Not yet. He'll linger.

CHORUS LEADER:
How long?

MR. KLOPP:
Until he's finished with it.

CHORUS LEADER:
Is there no other way?

MR. KLOPP:
Yes. But I can't do it.

CHORUS LEADER:
Perhaps I can.

MR. KLOPP:
Yes. You're young still. But you'll need this. (He hands him a pistol)

CHORUS LEADER:
Will he?

MR. KLOPP:
Yes, of course. Do it quickly.

CHORUS LEADER:
I know what to do. It must be so.

MR. KLOPP:
Or else he will linger.

CHORUS LEADER (resolute, cold):
I know what to do. Good-bye Mr. (he fires the pistol point blank into Mr. Zoff's head. Zoff flips over at the shock of it, exposing his agonized face to the audience) Zoff!

(Chorus leader moves back into the chorus as lights dim out, leaving Mr. Klopp, standing, and Mr. Zoff, prone and dead, alone in the spotlight, center stage left)

MR. KLOPP (to audience):
This is the way the world ends
(coldly) This is the way the world ends
(To Mr. Zoff) This is the way the world ends

(In alarm, Mr. Klopp falls down to the floor, grabs Mr. Zoff and cradles his bleeding head in his lap. He is now moved to tears.) Oh Julian! My God! Julian, my Friend! Oh Julian!

(Blackout)

CHORUS (detached, sounding like a disembodied voice in the darkness. Speaking in a chanting way):
Can we see the evening sun
As it's setting all day long
Through the hills we watch it going
Fizzling in the sea wind's blowing,
While the night does come so slowly–
Dare we see the sun so lowly?


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