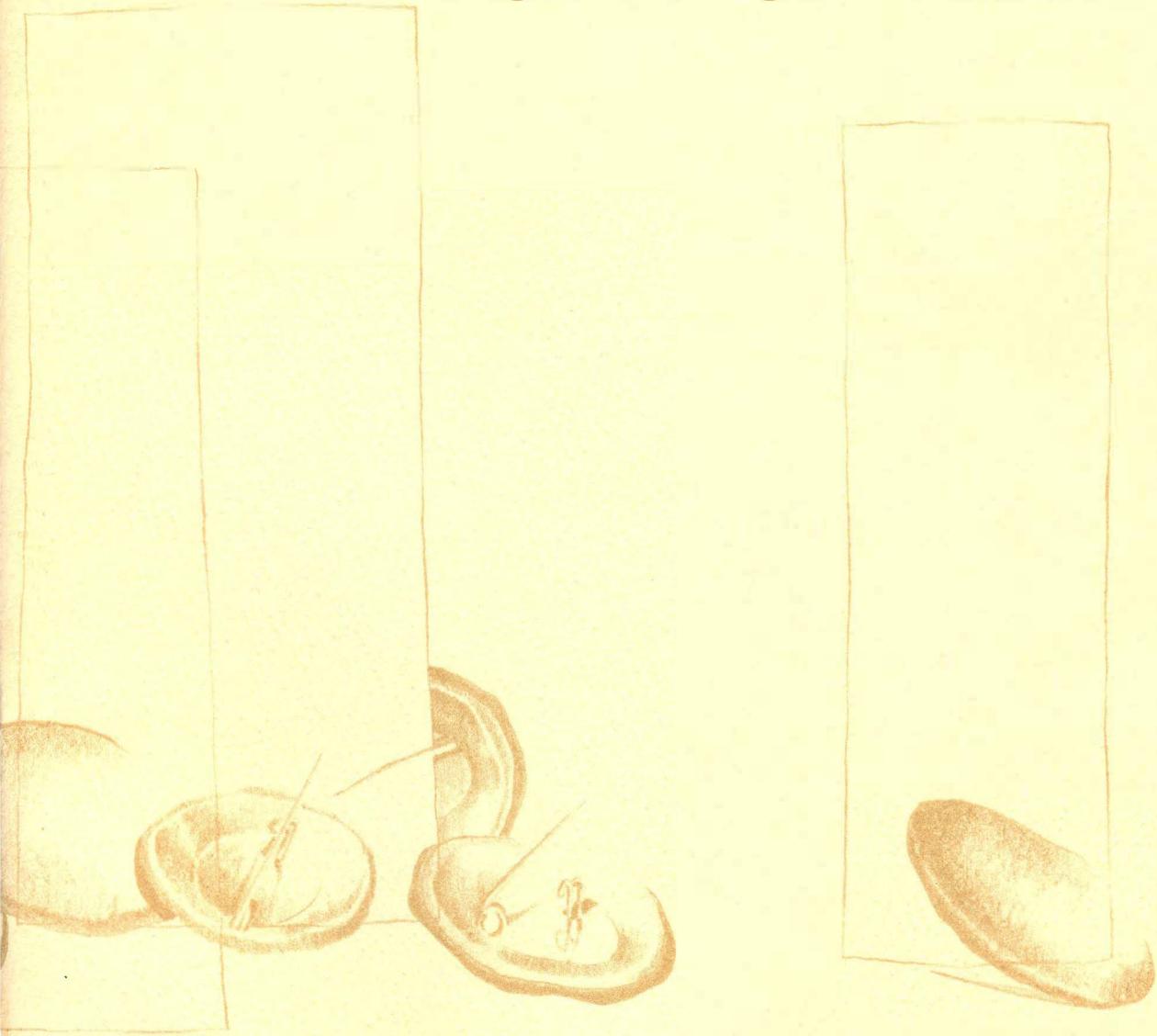
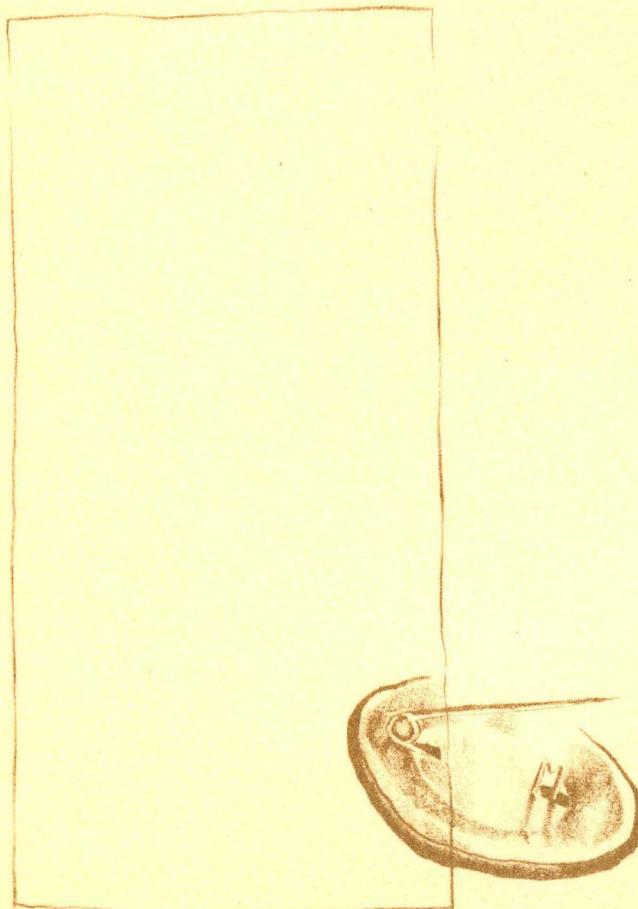


POINT OF VIEW



Spring 1975



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Never Again?

Annelye Turner

Never to hear
 a baby's cry
Never to hear the wind
 pass by
Never again to hear
A breeze
Only to see
The rustling trees
Never, no never again

Never again you say
To hear a child's
 foolish play
Never to hear a loved
 one's voice
Never again you say
I have no choice

Never before did my heart
 break so
Than it did the other day
Never again to hear
Is what you say

The memories have flooded
 my mind
Of the sounds
That I used to hear
To close my eyes and
 remember them
Has brought me
 anguish dear
Never again you say
Never again to hear

I think what you say
Is only a myth
Only a silly fact
For somehow, sometime
Scientists will find
A way
To bring it back

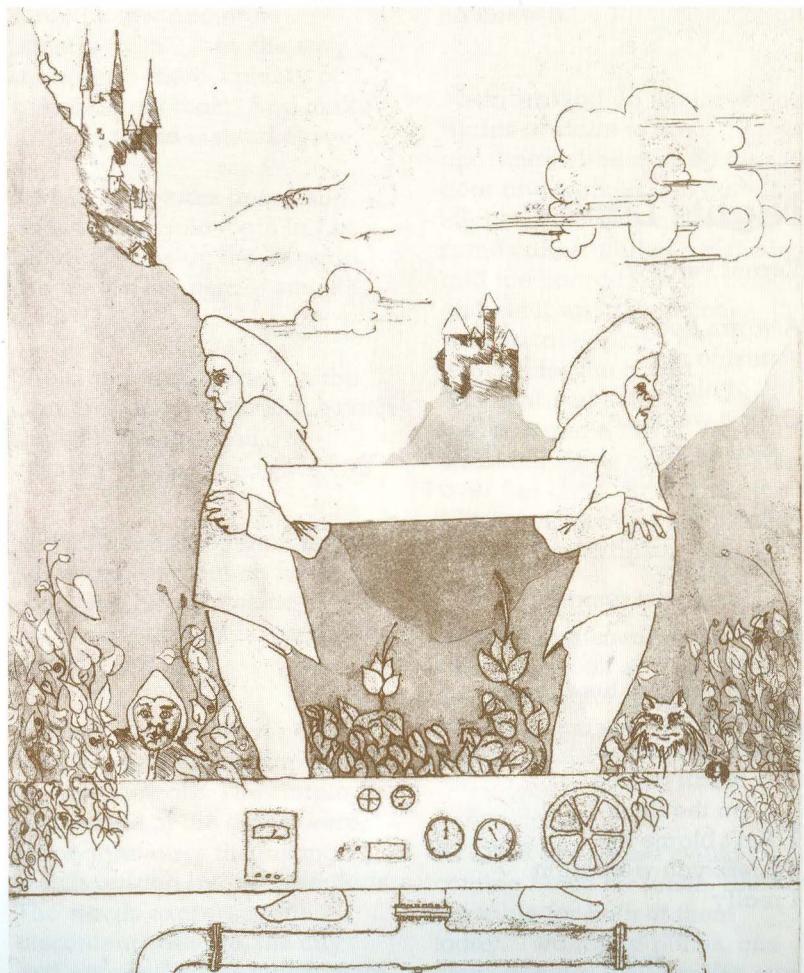
The Life of the Party

Penny McIlraith

Death had a party. As host He hovered over the Ground—a hooded shadow with a tray of canapes, Offering them quite pleasantly, "Anyone care for Consumption or an assortment of wasting diseases?" Most guests hesitated but upon His polite request complied. I said I wasn't hungry and Death smiled warmly, trying to Tempt me. I assured him that I would rather die first.



Jerry Hummer



a flanders love poem

Al Balaz

look there! see how he comes now!
running forward, hot to meet me.
i love the sight of him!
my heart surges with joy!
i run. "forward! i cry.
i run with quicksilver feet.
i run to meet my love.
to feel the steel of my bayonet
lovingly meet his protesting flesh resistance,
to hear him scream.

Nights Lately

Kermit Perdew

A warm body
next to me
at night
Only a wet nose
and claws
make it difficult
to sleep
She
my puppy
is all that remains

I
wish
it was you here
But you left
and she jumps
to fall asleep
on the floor
I don't blame her
I guess you were right
I really
do
snore.

A Foo Haiku

Sylvia J. Bolduan

APPEARANCE FORSAKE
Long hair, tight blue jeans,
from the back, you are lovely,
but you are a guy.

SHARRIED PEACHES
Oh, it makes me squirm
to learn that I am sharing
a peach with a worm.

White Smiles

Claire L. Costello

The sun was beginning to scatter between the tall buildings when Merri woke up. This was the only light that brightened the old neighborhood, and sometimes it even could not be seen.

She thrust aside the yellowed curtains to gaze at the familiar empty cracked sidewalks. Merri sighed, then began to dress in her white uniform. She works at the little coffee shop down the street every morning till 11:30 a.m. Then after the busy breakfast hours, she leaves and returns about 2:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m.

While peering into the mirror, Merri checked the dark aging circles under her eyes. Her black skin was beginning to wrinkle under her eyes and around her mouth. Indeed, Merri's husband's death was difficult to accept at first, but she had to keep her spirit for her seventeen year old son. Jense was still in school. She wanted to keep him there; that's why the waitress job. Each morning she set her son's breakfast on the table. The bowl for cornflakes, the spoon and the sugar were always in the same position when he dragged into the kitchen. He woke up about 6:00 a.m., the time Merri was already at the Coffee Shop. She was home

though, by the time he came for lunch.

At work this morning, a customer could not decide what to order. She was friendly, flashing a bright smile to the white man.

"I know I want three eggs, but I don't know about the sausage. Oh . . . by the way make sure there's plenty of butter on my toast. And make it white bread instead of rye."

As Merri took the order, she noticed one gold tooth in his mouth. It was on the left side, disrupting the pearly smooth grin.

She slapped the order on the counter and sat next to the cash register, rising when a customer came to pay his bill.

At 11:30 a.m. she removed her white cap and put on her tan coat. She brought some newly glazed doughnuts home for her son.

While walking, Merri noticed young girls playing hopscotch on the sidewalk. The simple white lines of the game were among the dirty disgusting words written by the older kids. The words expressed the discontent with life, the city and people. Words which were

familiar to Merri because Jense used them. She knew he was not in the rut that some of the other kids were. He worked, washing cars, and she worked. Money was scarce but available. He ate three meals and went to school. Even though his father had died, Jense had it pretty good, and he knew it.

Merri walked up the three flights of stairs to the apartment. She opened the door and walked into the kitchen. She began brewing some coffee, pulled out the iron and the board from the closet, and set it up in the kitchen. It was the only place large enough for the board. She grabbed her other white uniform and a few of Jense's wrinkled shirts and hung them over her chair. She drank the black coffee while she waited for the iron to finish heating.

After she finished ironing a few shirts, she took an egg out of the refrigerator, put it in a pot of water, and set it on the stove to boil.

At 12:15 p.m. Jense would be coming home for lunch. She set the table for both of them today. Two round plates, one glass and her white coffee cup.

When the egg had been boiled long enough, she peeled off the white shell and cut it into a bowl. She added two tablespoons of mayonnaise, salt and a small chopped pickle. She spread the mixture on two slabs of white bread, then covered them with a buttered slice. After she cut the sandwiches, she placed them on the plates. She could hear her son stomp up the steps. He barged into the kitchen. She looked up at him.

"That son of a swine!"

"Why Jense, what's . . . ?"
"He made a fool of me in front of the whole class, just for writing that stupid paper in pencil!"

"Who? Mr. Harveys?"

"Yeah, that white . . ."

"Now, Jense, it doesn't matter, just eat and forget about it. O.K.? I brought some good doughnuts from the Coffee Shop."

"Just cause I didn't have a pen in class, so I did it in pencil. Big dif it makes anyhow!" He grumbled while stuffing the sandwich in his mouth.

"It's rather dumb, I'll admit." She searched for a pen in her

purse and dropped it near him.

"Here!" He looked and began to laugh showing the white bread in his mouth.

She sat down and began to sip her coffee again.

"Doughnuts good?"

"Yeah . . . they're O.K."

"Good!"

"Hey, gotta go." Jense said as he pushed himself from the table.

"But why?" Merri asked holding the cup in her black hands.

"Cause," he said gulping down his last bit of milk, "There's a chick I want to talk to."

"A what?"

"A girl," he said mockingly.
"She's got lunch this hour too, but she's eating at school."

"Oh."

"Might get a date with her." He said waiting for her approval.

"Fine . . . I get to meet her?"

"Oh sure!" Jense grabbed his jacket. "Her name is Carrie."

"Great! Be home for dinner?"

"Yeah, what are we havin'?"

"Cheese hotdogs." She replied.

"Oh Boy!" Jense said with mocking wide eyes. "Don't forget to wash my white pants." He added while walking towards the door.

"O.K. Big boy . . . out before I start ordering you around!"

He waved and was out the door. She shrugged and then nodded. Yep it was that girl that had made him a little more relaxed. This was a relief to her, since lately things had been rough, at least that is what she sensed when he came home with that swollen eye the other night. She did not ever mention it. She knew he would rather her not.

She sighed as she pushed herself up from the table. She quickly washed the lunch dishes and wiped the table and counters.

Merri remembered that Jense wanted his white pants washed. She walked into the living room and picked the pants up off the floor near his cot.

You'd think he'd take care of them, She thought as she threw them over her arm.

After washing a few clothes she sat down to relax. They had a little old television set and she turned it on for a few minutes. There was a commercial on for an all purpose cleanser for the kitchen. The scene was a large sparkling kitchen with dark walnut cabinets and white countertops and floor. The woman speaking about the cleaner was white, her blonde hair was tied back in a scarf, and her shirt dress was mid-length. She looked so perfect while cleaning the empty stainless steel sink.

Merri glanced around her, and noticed the small and dull kitchen. The wood stain on the cabinets was too thin and the knobs were loose. The floor was yellowed and in the corner the tile was curving up from the floor. Under the sink, the leaking pipe etched a path of water stain across the floor. Even the table and chairs were scuffed with age. She looked at herself in the dingy dress with dirt smeared into the creases. She felt disgusted. Disgusted at herself, her home and that damn commercial. She realized how shameful it must be for Jense to have a mother

looking sweaty from work. She stood on her feet, snapped off the T.V. and lay on her bed with her head in the pillow. She wept and mumbled herself to sleep.

She did not go back to work today. Merri called and explained that she was ill and would not be able to come in. They were understanding and told her it wasn't that busy today anyway, but they expected her in the morning. She told them she would be there and hung up the phone.

About 4:30 p.m. Jensen entered the apartment. He was surprised to see his mother.

"What in the hell are you doing home?"

"Jensen!" Merri scoffed.

"Yeah, but it ain't everyday you're home now!"

"I know, I didn't feel well, so I stayed home."

"Oh," he paused, "feeling O.K. now?"

"Uh huh."

He explained that he didn't get to talk to that girl, so he didn't have a date. Merri could see that he was disappointed.

"I even saw her walking with that . . ." he looked at his ma and finished, "with Jim Brooks."

"So?" Merri questioned.

"So? So she could like him ya know!"

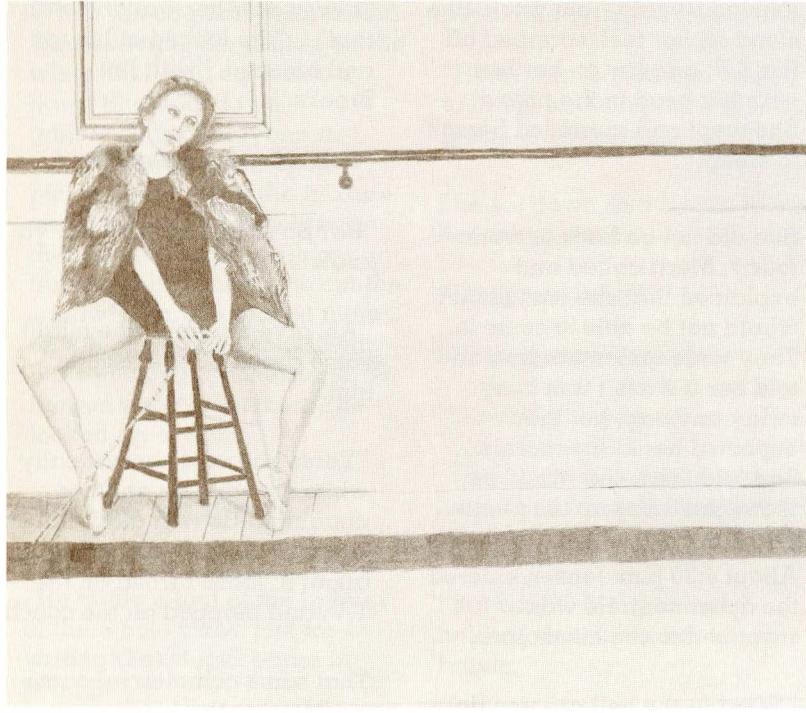
"Ah, give her time, she might come around," she assured him.

"Yeah," he said sarcastically while chewing on another doughnut. He was glad that she cared enough to talk to him about it. Jense turned on the T.V. and plopped on the couch.

That same commercial came on. Merri looked away, remembering the afternoon.

"Will you look at this!" She heard her son grumble. "A lady all spruced up to clean the kitchen, and it don't even need cleaning! The junk they'll do to sell a stupid cleaner! I'd take you over her any day, ma." He laughed and passed it off.

But his simple words relieved Merri, as tears came to her eyes. She smiled with content as Jensen just continued to watching the black and white television.



Jim Savage

I'm Not Lonesome

Ruth Nakutny

I've got some strawberry yogurt, a
Spoon, and a letter from you—All to
Keep me company.
My cup runneth over.
I can hear your voice
Speaking the words you wrote
Day before yesterday;
Can feel your smile in mine;
Can see you so clearly that I can
Almost reach out and touch you with
My numb fingertips.

Pat Bailey



Working Out

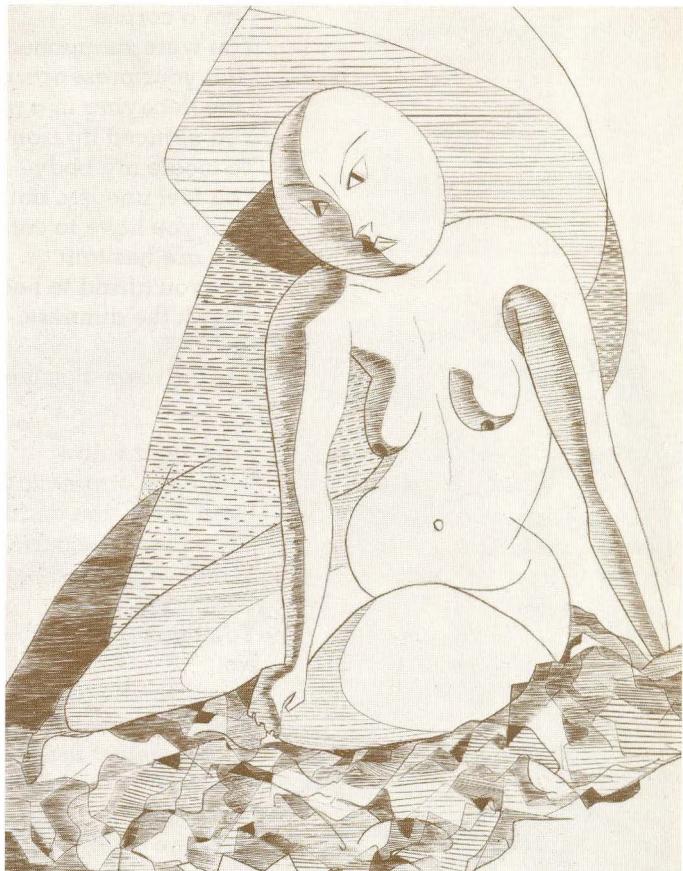
Kurt Straub

I'm down at the "Y"
Getting a pump
Crazy Steve was there
Making his jump
On the other lifters
Who were not yet there
Doing all of his work
And most of their share.
Doing pullovers, squats, benches and flys,
Working like hell to gain some size.
His muscles are straining
The sweat's running down
This is one lifter
Who's not screwing around.
He'll go home tonite
Stiff as a board
But maybe someday
He'll wake up and be lord.
Yeah, he knows that his training
Will be worth it the day
When he wakes up
"Mr. U.S.A."

Rondo

Verna Sobiesk

my poem shall be round so
round and whole and sound and it will bounce
perhaps or float or roll over the clouds or it
may hold you it goes round and round and round
and i have found it has a roundness so profound
that it is rounder than a globe it's like two
bowls that mouth to mouth control the roundness
of the whole it sounds so round and rolls so
round it's rounder than a ball and it is all i
hope to own a proud round rounder roundest rounded
soul like the sound of



Pat Dillavoy

Vows of a Groom

B. Smarto

I am a corpse
You were summoned here by tradition
I felt your presence, as you stepped into the Chapel
I am decaying in a rented suit
You glanced up front once,
To locate my body
You feel uneasy, but you know,
That you have to come forward, to view
You are hesitant
Are you afraid to hear my silence?
Or is it the dimness, and the lighted tabernacle?
No
It is the rows of seated eyes; staring

Come to me now
While the organ plays a march
I will show you death's hollow look
Gaze upon this carrion tomb,
Which you stand before; with buttocks clenched
That odor!
You think it is death
No
Death smells of rotting flesh
This is a florist's scent; talcumed flowers
Do you detect the nostril hairs moving?
The eyelids wander?
Peer closer
Does the chest rise? A finger twitch?
My lips are sealed
But were they to come undone, it would be you who would
Twitch

The priest in a doilyed dress will wet everyone
Sanctify
Did you say your sentence?
I saw the words crawling from your mouth,
Dropping on the floor
No one trades with the dead
But you have; I can tell
By the artificial coloring, of powdered rouge
By the covered veil
Are you passing the way of the flowers; that surround us?

Take my hand and I shall save you,
To slave
Your ringed finger points the way,
That way that we will go
Under the sound of chapel bells
We leave the lives we know
I am black and you are white
Together we will mix a gray
Day ...
After day
After day
After day

Ty Blik



La Mort Du Loup (Part I)

Alfred de Vigny

(The Death of the Wolf)

translated by Betty Bass

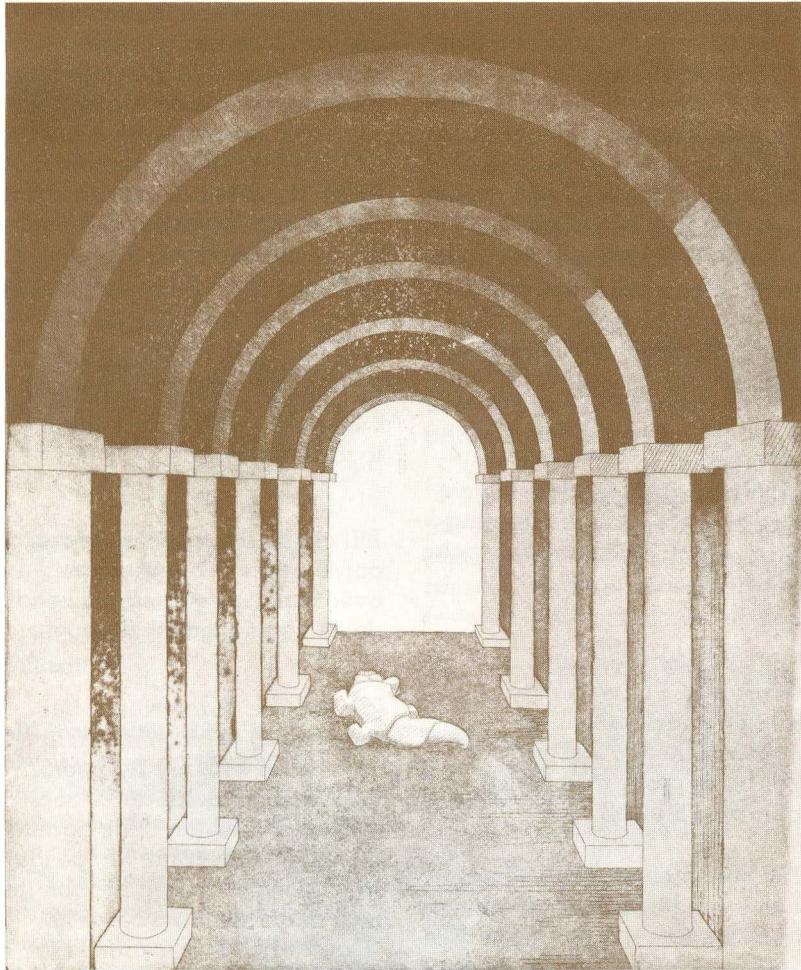
Across the moon, clouds seemed to race
As smoke that flees the fire's embrace,
By the endless forest's blackness where we walked.
The grass was wet and no one talked
There—nor in the tangled briar and heath;
Not even when we saw, beneath
The firs, tracks of a roving band
Of wolves etched sharply in the moistened sand.
Nothing in the world around
Seemed to breathe or make a sound;
Only the weathercock in the wind
Cried silently for those that sinned
Or were about to when the prey
Was brought to earth and held at bay
While under some tilted rocks fat oak trees sat
Hunched and sleeping, low and squat.
The oldest hunter scanned the ground
And, whispering, told us he had found
Signs to say we followed four
Lynxes—a little family, no more,
We hid our guns and drew out knives
Ready to boldly take the lives
From beasts that waited in the light
Of silver moon, in silver night.
The parent, in still and silent calm
Prepared to keep the cubs from harm
While they leaped round in silent play
Echoing the noisy games by day
Of hounds who hear their master's feet
And leap with joy his touch to meet.
The she-wolf sat beyond her mate
Her pelt wire-hard with fear and hate
For us, who with our hounds and knives
Were set to rob them of their lives.
The male crouched square to meet the foe
With nails dug in and haunches low.
We lunged with knives and teeth and claws;
He reared at us without a pause.
Attacking the bravest nearest hound

He seized his throat and brought him down;
Although he reeled from claw and knife
He did not loose his grip until the life
Beneath his jaws was stilled and
The hound fell dead upon the sand.
Soon the wolf himself was felled
Lying where his bright blood welled
From wounds of knives and claws and fangs
Watching there I felt the sudden pangs
Of first regret that I had been
A part of such an ugly scene.
The widowed wolf slipped out of sight
Heading her children through the white
Moonlit heath—to distant forests where
Hounds and hunters cause no fear.

.....
The noble wolf, without a sound,
Lay dying, while the silver ground
Wept with his blood. Then fast my
Thoughts and his entwined. His eye
Glared proud and proudly said, "If I
Have shown you how to die,
To take defeat and suffer pain,
To live for life's sake, not for gain,
Your journey through the coming years,
Of hopes and troubles, joys and fears,
Will end like this, without a sound—
A silver sky and gentle ground.

The Tyrant

Catherine Tenenholz



Jeff Turek

How deceiving, the deep honey
Color of cognac;
It bites my lips,
Rakes my tongue and
Its anger slithers to my belly.
Yet, I take another sip;
I am released.
The tyrant is gone.

Stupor pervades.
Hands crumpled on my lap.
Head hanging heavy.
What was that I heard?
Uselessly
I fight the urge.
At the window
My eyes strain.
All is darkness, empty blackness;
No one is there; you are not there.
Back again.
A thousand mallets pounding
Inside.
The room is blurred now.
One more sip.
The tyrant wants to return.
He lies next to me,
Heavenly appointed my
Lifemate.
A curly brown head,
A mustache, a beard;
Asleep.
Familiarly his large hand finds
My naked thigh . . .
It is you I want and not he;
But, that cannot be.
The last drop is gone.
The tyrant is back.

#22

Kermit Perdew

To see you is to view
the break of day.
And to see you leave
is to gaze at an empty way
Which needs to be traveled.

Saturday Night in a Farm Town

C. J. Fowler

Officer Pepper sat in the radar equipped interceptor alone three miles east of town. The narrow two lane state highway had an eerie gray glow illuminated by the cold autumn moon. He boringly bumped his right knee against the twelve gauge shotgun strapped vertically to the dash of his Ford. He strained his eyes up and down the highway hoping to see headlights. He looked at his watch; it was only nine-thirty and there hadn't been a vehicle past in the last half hour.

The corn stalks in the fields next to the car made a lonely crackling sound as the almost still night air pushed past them. A few nights previously he had seen a large racoon eating a mashed rabbit on the highway but that was the highlight of the evening.

Officer Pepper knew that if he didn't meet his quota this month the shortage of revenue could mean that he would be fired. He thought, What a bitch, the President has lowered the speed laws, everyone in Macomb County knows that this city is a God damn radar trap, yet I am supposed to issue enough tickets to cover my salary.

"Car five, car three, over,"

the radio snapped.

"Yeah, three here."

"Bill, your wife's car ain't at the house no more and it ain't at Aliceann's house neither. I'm sorry but she knows we're watchin' her. When I got called to put Jess in the drunk tank, she took off. I drove by every bar in Macomb and didn't see her car."

"Goddamn it. Can't you do nothing right? How would you like to have your wife running around and not know where she is when you're on duty?"

"Bill, I'm sorry as hell but we're the only two cars on duty tonight with Tom laid up. Someone had to lock up Jess before he broke the bar up or hurted himself."

Bill keyed his mike, "Listen here, you find my wife's car and call me, you understand?"

"I'll sure try."

Bill climbed out of the squad and kicked the tire as hard as he could, "God Damn that Judy. I'll break that son-of-a-bitch's neck that's messin' with her when we catch him."

Bill walked behind the back

bumper to the ditch. He took one last look up the highway and unzipped his blue trousers. He urinated into the dusty weeds causing a light steam to be noticeable in his nostrils. As he turned back toward the car, he saw a truck speeding up the highway.

"God damn it," Bill pounded the fender. "There goes half a week's pay just cause I had to take a piss."

Bill climbed back into the warm car. Further depression settled over him. As he hung his head down he noticed his fly open.

"Damn, the Sarge would be right proud to catch me writing up a ticket with my fly open." Bill stood up as far as he could in the car pushing back against the vinyl seat. "Shit, I hope the seat busts." But then he thought he'd only have to pay for it. "Can't win." Bill grabbed the tab and yanked the zipper up.

"Wow!" A pain filled his groin as if he'd been jabbed with an icepick. After a few long seconds, the zipper was down and the jewel was saved. Bill got things in order and then sat there pounding on the steering wheel.

Bill looked up at the lonely moon through his dusty windshield. His mind wandered back to the night he'd decided to take the big chance with Judy. Bill remembered being in the back seat of his Dad's car when Judy had spoken. "The reason I wanted to know for sure if you really loved me Bill, is because I'm pregnant."

Bill remembered answering, "Ah, guess you're sure it's mine 'cause you haven't seen Tony in six months have you?"

Judy had answered, "Bill, I swear I haven't."

"Then we'll get married," Bill settled it.

Bill remembered his doubts about marrying the cute cheerleader he'd grown up with. He knew he really loved her but there was something strange about her, he remembered. She would drop me for every cute guy that came along, but when it was over she'd always come back to Good Ol' Bill, he recalled. She sure ain't like no other girl I ever knew, Bill concluded, but maybe that's why I love her so much.

Bill wondered if he might be a little screwy too. Why should he have hung around someone

like Judy all of those years? Then he thought how much Judy was like his Mother, always giving Dad grief until she died. Dad never treated Mother too good, but she didn't act too good neither, he told himself. He tried to figure out who started acting up first, Dad or Mom.

Bill sat there in the car thinking about all the problems with his wife, the police department, his parents, and himself.

"Here I am," Bill admitted up to the empty sky, "an officer of peace, with a four-hundred horsepower car, a service revolver and a shotgun—trying to make this world a better place to live in, and safe for the kids. But why ain't you doin' nothing to look out for me?" The crisp darkening sky did not answer.

At the Town Square Tavern, two young Viet Nam veterans in leather jackets sat on plastic topped stools, one on each side of a slightly older, attractive blonde.

"So I got stationed with Ken on the same gun boat," David, the taller vet, rattled. "Here we were, six thousand miles from Macomb and I ran into Ken. And guess what, we both went into the Navy in 'sixty-four,

about one month apart and we're both from the same county and we both ride bikes."

The blonde interrupted, "Those your big Hondas sitting in front?"

Ken nodded.

"Goodness me, they look like brand new," the blonde continued.

David picked up the cue, "Say how'd you like to go for a ride?"

"I wouldn't," the blonde replied, "I'd freeze my butt off."

"That'd sure be a shame," David replied. "Say did you ever know Gloria Miller?"

The blonde nodded, "Yeah, she lived on the same block as me before she got married, but we didn't go to high school at the same time. You used to go with her?"

"Yeah, before I went in the Navy we were engaged and I got smart and forgot about her."

The blonde questioned, "Who forgot about who . . ."

Ken interrupted, "She forgot about him first."

The three of them laughed. The bartender walked over to where they were sitting, thinking he'd missed a joke. "Can I get you anything?"

David reached into his Levis and produced five quarters.

The blonde spoke, "I'll have another beer."

"How about you?" the bartender questioned the vets.

David replied, "No, just beer for the lady." He looked at Ken.

Ken spoke, "Beer for all of us. I'll buy."

David nodded, "Shit, we'll never get home in one piece."

The blonde changed the subject, "You get those motorcycles right in Japan?"

"No," Ken replied. "We got them through the Exchange for almost half price. Dave and me bought them with our hazardous duty pay."

"You ever get shot at?" the blonde questioned.

"Lots of times," David answered.

"Ever hit?" she pressed.

"No, thank God," David gulped as he finished his beer. "Do you come here often?"

"No, just at night."

"You ain't married?"
David pried.

"Well we're separated, kind of." She squirmed nervously.

At that moment a police car stopped in front of the tavern and an officer walked through the bar. The vets sat up and hoped that he was going to be friendly.

Just as David was about to speak, the officer put his hand on the blonde's shoulder. "Judy, can you come outside for a minute. Your husband has been raising hell trying to get a hold of you."

Judy spun around on her plastic seat and warmly grabbed the officer by the arm. "Good night boys, see you around."

Ken looked at David. "Jesus Christ, you almost picked up some cop's wife!"

David shook his head. "If that don't beat all. She sits and

drinks up all our money and then leaves."

"Dave, you ought to thank God she didn't leave with us. It's bad enough messin' with married women, but a cop's wife is a good way to wind up dead."

The bartender leaned across the bar. His bloodshot eyes stared through his fat smiling face. "Boys, you should have guessed she was married at her age. Almost everyone is around here, the women anyway. How about a burger before you go?"

Ken looked at David, "I'm broke."

The bartender replied, "It's on the house for you vets. Say, tell me about Vietnam, I weren't never in the service . . ."

Back at the edge of town, Bill's radio broke into his daydreaming. "Car five, car three, over," Bill automatically replied.

"Bill, I found Judy at the Tavern and I'm following her home now."

"Was she with any men?"

"No, she wasn't. She was just

sitting there talking to a couple of fellers from out of town."

"What kind of car?"

"Weren't no car, they were on motorcycles. Bill, I know what you're thinking and I'm a-tellin' you they weren't doing nothin'. So forget it."

"Nothing, you calling my wife nothing?"

The voice from car five angrily replied, "Bill, forget it. You're bein' paid to issue tickets, not to guard your wife!"

Bill pounded his dash, "Go to hell!"

A pair of oncoming headlights caught Bill's eyes. He glanced down at the radar's meter. "Sixty-three, . . . sixty-four, come on, come on . . . sixty-five, sixty-six, sixty-seven, bingo!" A smile broke on Bill's face for the first time that evening.

Bill keyed the mike, "Car five, I got one!"

Car five replied, "'Bout time you woked up."

Bill jammed on the emergency brake and gently revved the engine in drive. "Come on, come on, . . . five, four, three, two, one, get 'em!"

As the car sped by, the interceptor screamed as it threw gravel and weeds and catapulted off the shoulder of the road. Bill jerked on the headlights; he steered with one hand as he groped on the dash, fumbling for the red flasher switch. He kept his eyes glued to the car falling back ahead of him.

The Cadillac casually slowed and finally pulled off the road.

Bill stopped behind the car and shined his blue white spotlight through the rear window of the big car. Bill could see an older man and a young girl in the front seat.

He put on his hat and marched up to the limousine. He shined his flashlight into the front seat. A well dressed graying man pressed a button and the large tinted glass window silently dropped.

"Take out your license, turn it over and give it to me!"

"Yes sir, officer," the voice replied. The girl started smiling.

Bill read the license, "S. O. Bitters, 124 Chestnut Court, Springfield, Illinois. You ain't the State's Attorney, are you sir!"

The graying man replied as he reached for his license, "Yes, officer. Have a nice evening." The large window slid up as silently as it had slid down.

Bill could hear the girl laughing.

The Cadillac started forward a few feet then stopped. The window slid down. "Officer, would you mind closing your fly in front of the lady." With that, the car sped off.

Bill jerked off his hat in the darkness and started to throw it on the ground, then stopped. "I'd just have to pay to get it clean." He took one step then, threw the hat in the gravel and started jumping on it.

The radio in the interceptor cracked, "Bill, you all right?"

Bill didn't answer for a long time but after several queries replied, "No, that son-of-a-bitch was the State's Attorney." Bill reached down and turned the volume down on his radio as the laughter was unbearable.

The bartender held the oak door open with the keys dangling from the lock as the two vets passed the stained glass into the darkness. "You come back again, ya' hear?"

A voice echoed back from the darkness, "Sure will, and thanks again."

The vets started their bikes and backed them away from the curb. David zipped his jacket up as much as possible to keep out the cool, damp, night air. They didn't buzz around the town square as they normally would have in the summer. Instead, they cruised eastward passing the firehouse, the old high school, past block after block of old victorian frame houses that look like all other frame houses in the Midwest.

Within a few minutes they glided by the grain elevator on the outskirts of town. The gray silos reached like fingers toward the moon.

David read the sign on the side of the last silo, "Red Pouch Tobacco, finest in the West." He glanced down at his speedometer, "Fifty-Five." He tooted his horn and pointed down the road to Ken. Automatically his foot kicked the bike into fourth as he cranked the throttle on. As he leaned down on the tank, he noticed his buddy, Ken, chasing a few feet behind.

Bill heard the buzzer on his radar unit as he sat hanging his head half asleep. His eyes

jumped to the meter which was reading all the way to the upper limit.

"One hundred miles an hour, Bingo!"

Bill looked into the rear view mirror to see the oncoming car. He noticed the two headlights moving closer, then farther apart.

"Hot dog, it's those bikes." He went to the previously unsuccessful procedure of preparing the interceptor for the big pounce. He remembered car five's advice to cool it. Then he rationalized, "This is my job and they're fuckin' off!"

As the two Hondas flashed by, Bill sprang off the shoulder onto the highway. He accelerated to eighty miles an hour before pulling his headlights on. He reached for the red flasher switch, then hesitated.

"I'll pass them first and scare the hell out of them. Once I'm in front, I'll switch on the flasher and they will shit."

Bill forgot about his problems with Judy as the motor of the interceptor screamed at its upper limit. The speedometer touched one-hundred-and-fifty miles an hour. The two specks

of red taillights fell backwards toward the screaming interceptor.

As Bill shot past the first bike he saw the brake light of Ken's bike come on. Bill passed David's bike before he switched on the red flasher. But as he bent forward, he accidentally tugged the steering wheel to the right. There was a gentle bump on the back right fender. Bill looked to the right as he hit the brakes. David's Honda shot alongside of the car on the gravel shoulder, obviously out of control.

"Oh my God," Bill murmured as he jerked the interceptor into the left lane to get out of the way of the runaway bike. But it was too late.

The Honda hit a telephone pole and a white ball shot from the impact back onto the highway in front of the police car. Bill tried to straddle the helmet with the car's front wheels and a brief bumpy, bump passed under the car.

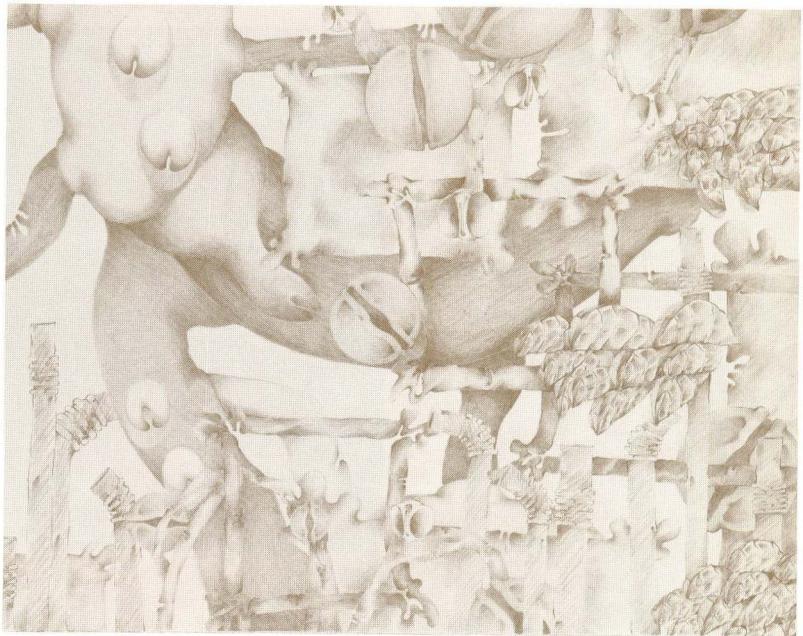
"No, God," Bill cried out again. His car was almost stopped.

"I ran over his head!" In the rear view mirror he saw the second bike approaching him. Cold fear spread over him. Bill floored the car again and

the interceptor screamed down the highway into the darkness.

The squad's radio cracked,
"Car five, car three, come in."

Bill felt tears running down his cheeks. He turned the radio off. In his rear view mirror he noticed that the last motorcyclist had returned to the accident. Bill wiped his eyes to clear them. The sight before him made him jerk the wheel so hard he broke his right thumb. But it was too late—the grove of Sam's trees off the side of the curve swallowed the interceptor in a ball of yellow fire.



Bill Calkins

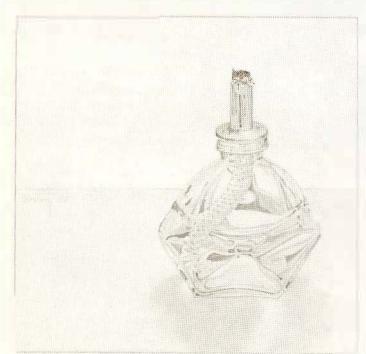


Tim Mincey



Mary Swenson

Tim Mincey



Peter Birren



Al Balaz

before the smouldering heap of his house,
he grovelled and sobbed in the sooty dust,
wailing for death.
"my house you've burned—
my children spitted with bayonets—
marie . . . my wife marie . . ."
we grinned at this last name of his litany.
savoring the memory
of her furiously writhing white thighs.
how they had shone in the sun!
he cried out for death,
so we bound his hands
to prevent his harming himself.
we bound his feet so he could not run away.
we made him eat choice fowl and venison,
plied him with rare vintages
from his lord's plundered chateau.
we made him live.

Some Other Place

Dale J. Barnett

Some Other Place is where the Red Jackets check I.D.s,
V.I.P.s look for sideorders to add Zest before bacon and eggs.
Closing time captures the lover; she or he must make a decision,
Bouncers fantasizing, count the hours and the scars.
Laodicean females shovel melancholy bullshit into your face;
Did you really expect to find love here, in the meat factory?
Lots of frustration, different strokes for different folks,
You have to have a muscular body or lots of that corruptible money.
Why do you run, I gotta lotta things to say baby,
Cigarette smoke bellows with the young rock heads,
Good people enter through the front door, turn right around and leave
My friend's wife left with another man, it's such a bore;
Fondling Hell hath been incompass'd in thought,
If you see its sign, pass by this roadside courtship.



Thomas Sorensen 75

Tom Sorensen

The Letter

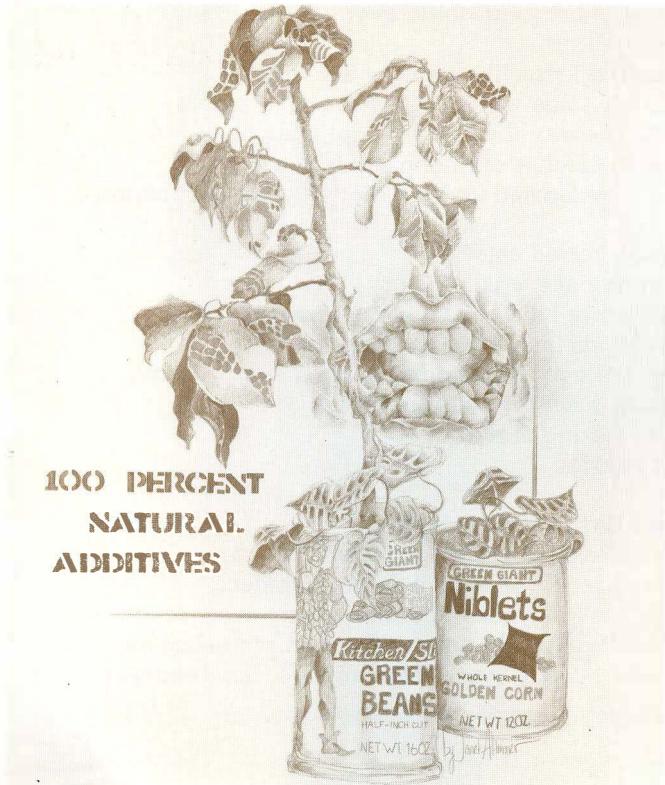
Victor Ciancanelli

Well Hello,

Just snowed four inches here, and all is covered white
High, rising blood floods my brains even as day passes into night
Wrong is it to love other colors that may not be your own
Worthless they decree you judging begrudging you not even known
To them or any of their likes, music soothes souls late and stoned
Daybreak and time to begin to wash the rust across my face
Noon-day sun burning bright 'tis time to puff pure smoke space
In time to twisted turns tossing truth into colors gold and grey
Punch-out punch in punch up your ass and go homeward way
Rising roosting roasted toasted evening falls freely, lay
Upon your cot and hello, it just snowed four inches here today
Missing Yearning Groaning Moaning Drinking Thinking
Smoking Rolling Coasting blues away, I love the snow

I miss you yesterday.

Janet Altmaier

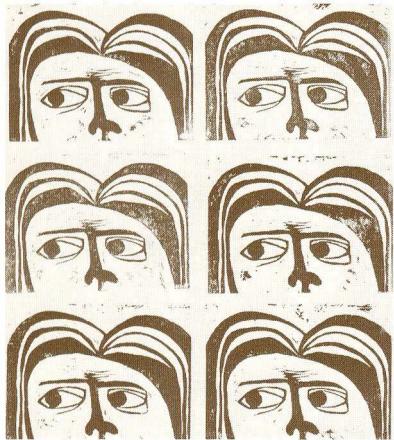


Kelly Nicholas



Ballad of the Last Nine Years

Leslie Keress



Adrienne Rudy

In '65 wildly I bloomed with great discomfort
As that horrible wooden paddle came down upon
My confused head, my skinny back, and what was left
Of my pancake ass.

Teacher oh Teacher I could shake you
Until time loses every grain of sand,
I could shake you so well your brain would fall
From your head like a wild stampede of jungle animals
Crushing every blade of grass.

In '67 I was a black jacket freak, greased hair straight back,
Skin tight pants, black high heeled boots,
And a moonlighter.

Yes indeed I was the one who lit the moon
And watched its burning yellow flames color the sky
Brighter than white lightning,
Brighter than the fiery sun could ever do.

Hatred oh hatred I was like an ugly duckling
Swimming in the blue waters of my dreadful elders
As they danced away their lives while mine
Was in deep freeze like a T-bone steak
Waiting to be swallowed up by a dizzy dancing drunkard.

In '71 a blonde haired chick
Bright and sunny she was.
Her golden beauty I did collect in my memory bank
Where she spends the rest of her long life
Like a stamp collection poisoning me to a sloppy death,
As each stamp is her face staring at me.
Why are you staring at me?
And still no answer.

In '72 I was a flesh eating monster
As nighttime like a curtain from a stage fell on me.
Back then I did retire to find a little nourishment,
But that cure has long since abandoned me
As I find myself regularly eating a crayon picture of her.
Now you know lipstick was not last night's true discovery.

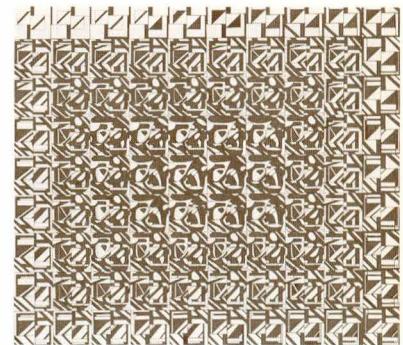
Loudness

Mary Boldan

These be
Three loud things.
The banging of drums,
The clash of thunder,
The roar of a vicious lion.

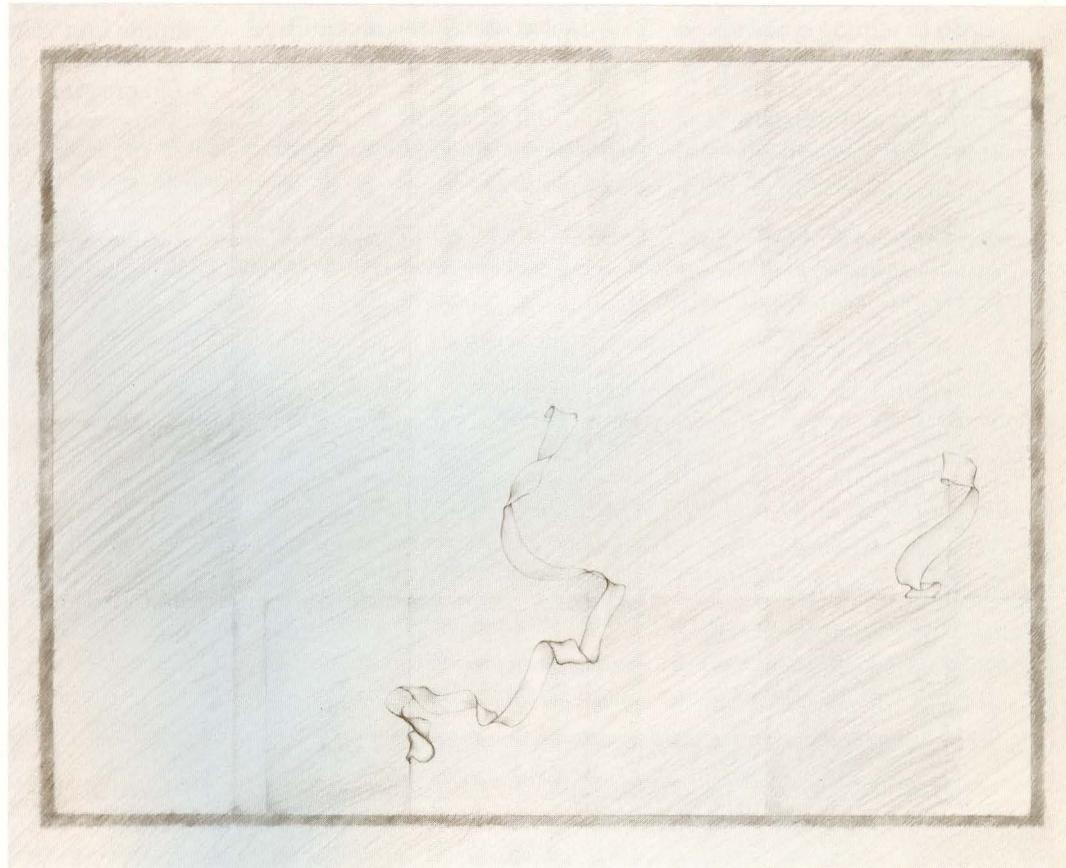
In '74 as I keep blooming on a hot summery day
I hear the sound of children laughing.
I feel so afraid and so completely alone
With my friends that more often seem like strangers
Who only bother looking in the mirror,
But my confidence has not been fully shaken yet.
I too can play the game of reality and be at my worst
Only looking in the mirror until it breaks.

I Am Beautiful And You Better Believe It.



Judy Gagliardi

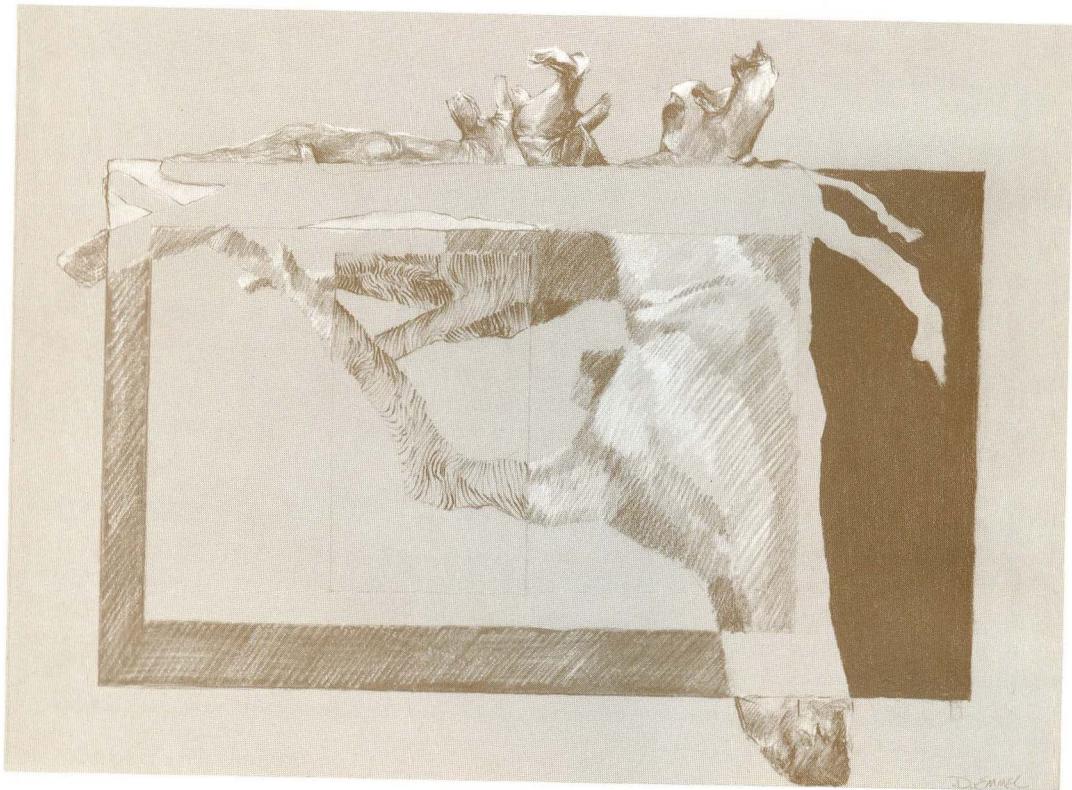
Lynette Franz





Mary Swenson

Debbie Emmel



Nothing Left to Lose

Laura E. Bishop

We pulled out of Indianapolis early one fine morning in September. I don't know why I say it was a fine morning, because it was drizzling and bleak. The only fine thing about it was that we were leaving. We hit Gary about ten A.M. There we saw the factories and billboards as the drizzle became a fine mist, and we were even more depressed. Steve was sitting in the back of my '67 Ford, strumming his Martin folk guitar and singing a patchwork of the songs we usually used, and trying out a few others. While I was driving, Steve was driving me out of my mind. "Can you knock it off for a few minutes? I can't stand this much longer. Why don't we listen to the radio for a while?"

He hadn't even been keeping time with the windshield wipers, and that really bugged me. Steve finished the chorus he'd started: "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose/Nothing, nothing honey, still ain't free/Feeling good was easy when Bobbie sang the blues/Feeling good was good enough for me . . ."

"You win," Steve finally said. "Besides, this dampness does nothing for my picking." I'd thought his picking was doing nothing for the dampness, but I recognized victory and switched the radio on. I flipped

back and forth between news, temple-throbbing hard rock, more news, Schubert's Concerto in G, and a Budweiser commercial. Making my decision, I hummed along with the Budweiser jingle. I grew annoyed with the radio as soon as the weather came on.

I turned it off again and, looking back at Steve in the mirror, asked, "Do you do requests?" He replied he'd play it if he knew it. I then asked, "Can you play far, far away?" We both laughed, tension and depression easing at the punchline of the old musicians' joke. On that note (no pun intended) we toolled into Chicago on I-94 as Steve sang about Swanee Rivers and the old folks at home.

A few days later we had installed ourselves in a second rate boarding hotel, had made the rounds of the area pubs and coffee-houses, and were leaning back, figuring ways to avoid becoming poor. Or rather, I was. Steve was again plucking at the guitar, although with a marked lack of enthusiasm. "Okay, how much do we have left?" I asked him.

Steve tilted his head back, squinted one eye, and looked for all the world as if he were thinking. Of course there was no need to think about it, but

he tried anyway. "We have exactly forty-nine dollars and eighty cents left," came the final reply. We both realized that our second week's board was due in three days. Zero, then, when you included the food and gas we would need. That meant we had three days to find a way to earn money. Steve left me to contemplate his guitar. I got up and went back to a pub two blocks down, whose proprietor we had spoken to a couple of days back. I went in with a feeling of foreboding, but that was soon dispelled as the owner himself greeted me from behind the bar.

"Hi!" I said as I slid onto a bar stool. "It's me again—Carol. The other half of Steve and Carol. Remember me?"

"Of course, of course. I remember you. Sit down, sit down." The man had a way of repeating himself. I informed him that I was indeed already seated. "So you are," he mumbled pleasantly, "So you are." He cleared his throat and offered me a beer. "On the house naturally," he added. It was eleven in the morning.

"Not before noon, but thanks." I decided to get right down to business. "I came here for a reason, sir. I thought perhaps you might have decided you need extra entertainment, and I wanted to let you know we still happen to be available."

"Well, well. That's quite a coincidence. Just this morning I was saying to myself, 'Those two kids were certainly two nice kids,' and I thought maybe I could give you a start here in my own little establishment." He belched, and looked pleased with himself. "I suppose tonight would be too soon, but I'd like to see you kids start right in. I sure would like that."

I listened to his little speech with a growing excitement, although I knew his regular entertainment must have quit without notice.

"Tonight wouldn't be too soon at all sir, but there is a matter of pay and length of engagement." I was no Carole King but I could drive a hard bargain. We settled on thirty-five a night, all we wanted to drink, and a clear take on any tips for doing requests. On a good night, we might make nearly fifty dollars; getting smashed afterward was an added option. I accepted,

we shook on it, and we were to arrive at 8 p.m. for a week's trial run.

I walked out of the pub on air and floated the two blocks back to our hotel, where I imagined Steve to be eagerly awaiting my return. He was sound asleep, his guitar wrapped in his arms, when I got there. I gently removed the guitar, crept out to the little porch, and strummed the opening chords of "We've Only Just Begun."

Our first night, Friday, went extremely well. Of course, there were the usual winos and middle-agers with marriages on the rocks, who requested songs not included in our repertoire. "Won't You Come Home, Bill Bailey" and "Melancholy Baby" were not among our specialties. However, with a little persuasion and a lot of booze they were pacified by "Leaving on a Jet Plane" and "Song Sung Blue." A clergyman sauntered in about ten-thirty so we did "Put Your Hand in the Hand" for him. Delighted, he bought everyone a seven-up with Sunday's offering and left about eleven-thirty. A true missionary.

By one-thirty A.M. most of the customers had gone and I was not sorry to say goodbye to them. I was almost hoarse,

very tired, and I could see Steve was having a rough time holding on to the pick. As we packed away the guitars and tambourine, Mr. Proprietor sir came over to tell us we'd done well. "You kids sure did a fine job tonight. Done me proud. A fine job!" He beamed, and waddled away.

The week flew by, and we made one change in our program: we added "Moon River," our most popular request song. The owner was pleased by our adaptability and kept us on three more weeks. We stayed on in ignorant bliss, and had it been up to Steve, we'd probably still be there. However, I became restless and somehow felt we could do better than the Come on Inn at Moss and Third. Shrewd business woman that I am however, I knew better than to quit this job before we had another one; so I spent a good part of my afternoons pounding the pavement all over the north-east side of Chicago.

The second job was easily found, since word had spread. We were well known among the neighborhood pub-crawlers. A manager asked me if we did "Moon River" and when I said yes we were hired. This time we got forty-five a night and a

two week trial. The new bar was in a better location, and larger. It was a good opportunity and we took it gratefully.

We finished our job there, and for more than a month we continued to play there off and on or when another offer fell through. It was an exciting and occasionally prestigious existence, however unstable it might have been. We soon tired of the Windy City, and went up to Detroit and then Toledo. We then decided to travel west and hit Davenport, Omaha, Wichita, and Denver. We were on the road a total of ten months and in almost as many cities. Then I, feeling down and homesick, bequeathed to Steve my '67 Ford and bought a one-way ticket back to Indianapolis. We'd never quite made the jet set, so Steve saw me off at the Greyhound Terminal with a tear in his eye and a guitar in his hand.

"Remember," I told him and tried to sound cheerful, "most guys can get just one girl, but the guitar player always has his pick." On that note (pun intended), I boarded the bus to the tune of "Kansas City, Champaign, Indianapolis, Dayton."

I went back to my folks, but not for long. In a short time, my knight in shining armor (a business suit) stole me away, and we settled in Detroit. It didn't look the same as when Steve and I had passed through. Just the same, and though my once unstable life had become stable and humdrum, I was reasonably happy with Tom. I'd tried to keep in touch with Steve, but gave up before long. He rarely stayed in one place long enough to get my return letters. I was, however, collecting newspaper clippings, postcards, and entertainment ads he'd sent me. My absence didn't seem to hurt his style any; he became more popular on his own. He still hadn't really made the big time. Last I heard, he'd been second billing in a UCLA concert and with no new partners, was thinking of starting a road trip back east. That had come on a postcard from Los Angeles about a month before.

Then in April Tom had a convention and auto show to attend in Chicago. I looked forward to the upheaval in our routine lives and packed eagerly for the weekend trip. I spent that Saturday in Chicago window shopping and reminiscing while Tom was in conference with some other automotive bigwigs. In the

evening we decided to rent a car and take in some sights. After dinner and dancing, we somehow got on the wrong side streets as we made our way back to the hotel. Soon we were completely lost in a maze of one-ways and dead ends. We were looking for some familiar landmarks when my husband spied a small bar and suggested that we go in to have a drink and ask directions. I agreed, so we parked the car down the street and got out. It didn't hit me until we were almost to the corner, and only then because I happened to notice the street sign. I looked up at the front of the building where a neon sign proclaimed "Freakie Freddie's" and I heard guitar music from inside. Regardless of the sign, I knew we were in front of the Come on Inn at Moss and Third. My ears picked up the familiar chords and lyrics as I heard a male voice sing, "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose/Nothing, nothing honey, still ain't free/Feeling good was easy when Bobbie sang the blues/Feeling good was good enough for me . . ."

It really was Steve there at Freakie Freddie's that night, even though it will always have another name to me. But Steve didn't see me come in that night, nor did he see that

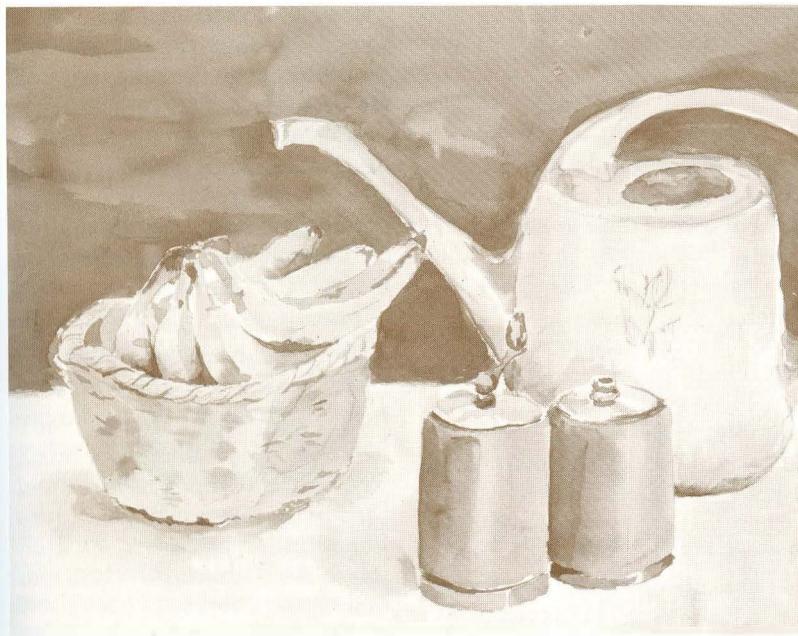
I was married and beaten. Now I am glad he didn't notice our entrance, because if he had he would not have played the song he did next. "This is sort of a homecoming for me," his introduction began, "because this is where I began my career. I had a partner then, her name was Carol, and we started here in this little bar. We split up some time back and I'm not sure what she's doing now. My next song is for Carol, wherever she is."

I quietly listened as I sipped my mixed drink, and suddenly felt quite sad for something that had never been. We left after Steve finished his song, and I can't, hard as I try, forget that song. Even as we left the bar that night, the words still sounded in my head—an old Judy Collins song—and the part: "Don't it always seem to go/That you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone?"

Carol Wehunt



Adrienne Rudy



Tom Sorensen



Valerie Newman



The Hunt

Victor Ciancanelli

Hunt the wildlife living nature's way
Sow the seeds that all must reap
Stalking the beast where he may be
Browns in golden sparkling hues
Thoughts are deep as skies are blue
Cold crippling progress we trudge on
Though sleet slick snow to gain the prizes won
Thickets sharp and thorns the same
Tracks stop cold and we know the game
Birds flying cackling flustering all
Thunder clap by thunder clap we watch
The golden roosters fall.

Jim Jacobsen



The Gift

Sylvia J. Bolduan

The first snow stretched over the city like an artist's canvas waiting for the designs that would give it life. Weary people would soon open their eyes, curse, and go back to sleep or drag reluctant bodies out of their cozy nests to do battle with the world. But not Karla.

Karla stood back to admire the mound of snow that towered a few inches above the tassel on her knit hat. "It'll be the best snowman I've ever built," she said.

John, one of those reluctant bodies who had been rolled out of a warm bed to help her assemble this formless clump, was not so enthusiastic. "You say that every year."

"And I build good ones too. You remember Mr. Freeze. They even took his picture for the *Daily News*, but this one will be even better."

John smiled. She knew he would. He still thought she did all this work for fun. "You can go back in the house now, if you want," she said. "I'm ready to carve."

John obeyed; he hated the snow. Karla was left alone to devote her skill to the serious task ahead. She patted, hacked,

and carved with a kitchen knife until a symmetrical form had emerged. This would be a woman, a large mama-type with a soft bosom that had comforted many small tousled heads. That's what the world needs this year, Karla decided —a happy mama who can make people smile and who they can talk to when no one else is listening.

The cold was inching up Karla's coat sleeves now, and her nose dripped with the regularity of a melting icicle. Still, she removed her mittens that were warm but inefficient. Powdered ice bit into her bare fingers as she smoothed out a nose that this kindly creature could be proud of. By now John, driven by that certain second sense husbands seem to have of knowing when to be concerned, had traded in his woolly slippers for detestable snow boots and waded out again.

"What are you doing with your gloves off!" he demanded.
"Your fingers are gonna break right off at the knuckles. Aren't you ready to come in yet?"

"I'm almost through. I just want it to be perfect."

"Someone will just tear it down

tonight. You know they always do."

"I know that."

"Then why all the work?"

"It makes people smile. It's my gift to them."

John did not understand—she didn't expect him to—but he did not interfere. She placed the final touches: a happy mouth of red velvet, sawtooth eyelashes cut from John's old black wool pants to frame black button eyes, a red turban, and a wool muffler tied loosely around the shoulders. The lady was finished. Karla stepped back a few feet to admire her work, then satisfied that it was as perfect as she could make it, she silently dedicated it to the world.

Throughout the day, Karla watched over the creation from her upstairs window. Neighbors wandered by to admire; children stared up in awe, then tried to construct their own crude copies nearby; strangers snapped pictures.

"John, they like it! Look at the cars slowing down. Oh, John!"

"That one is stopping!"
"You're really a showoff, aren't you?" John teased.

"I guess I am. But it's anonymous. Nobody knows I did it. I'm just excited because they're enjoying it so much."

It did not belong to her now; she knew that. It had been placed on a vacant no-man's lot across the street for a reason; it must belong to everyone. It was not important who put it there.

Karla checked on the lady several times before going to bed, and all was well. But long after the lights were out, she heard them and knew. They always came, those whose own creative spirits were twisted to destroy; those who could not appreciate, so they denied others the right to appreciate. She lay very still, listening to the sounds of death.

Later, she looked out at the heap of crumpled snow and felt cheated because something good had been lost to the world forever. But it didn't matter. The snowlady must die anyway to make way for bouquets and Easter eggs and clover chain necklaces.

"Besides," Karla thought. "I created her for pleasure and she gave pleasure, even to those who destroyed her." The thought pleased Karla. "I'll build another one tomorrow."

The Host

Mary Swenson

The Guest

Dylma J. Dahlberg



Mary Swenson

A Summer of Independence

Sibyl E. Albright

"So tell me exactly what you did this summer. I want to hear everything."

It really seemed strange to be hearing David's voice and seeing his face at the same time. He had spent the summer in Los Angeles and I in Boston, so the majority of our communications had been via the United States Postal System.

I studied him for a while. He looked exactly the same, except his skin was a little browner and his sandy colored hair had bleached a bit in the California sun. I remember wondering what was different. Since I could perceive no real physical change, I decided it was undoubtedly just a side effect of our three-month separation.

"Well, do I get to hear about it or not?"

"David, I'm sure I wrote you everything. Besides, as I'm sure you gathered from my letters, I spent practically every waking hour that I wasn't working wrestling with the details of our wedding." Our wedding. After three months of preparations, I still had to push the words off my tongue.

David smiled broadly and

suggested that I had probably enjoyed it much more than I was admitting.

"That's not true and you can ask Martha."

"Is she the divorcee who lives across the hall that you wrote about?"

"Un huh." I wondered if I should tell David about her. She had been my only close friend that summer, but I knew David didn't particularly appreciate her type. She was outspoken and a feminist as well as completely unpredictable due to her vacillating nature.

I had met Martha at the very beginning of the summer. I had just collapsed in the big overstuffed chair in my bedroom/living room when someone knocked on the door. I was exhausted from a full day of shopping and so I yelled "It's the butler's day off. Come in."

A thin, dark haired woman appeared in the doorway. I guessed she was about 40. "Hi, I'm Martha. I live across the hall. I hate to bother you, but would you happen to have an egg I could borrow?"

"Sure," I said as I pushed myself out of the chair. "My name is Carolyn."

"You just moved in, didn't you?"

"I'm subletting for the summer."

"Oh," she said. As she glanced around the room she noticed the pile of shopping bags occupying about one-third of my walking space and said, "Looks like you've been on a buying spree."

"Assignment would be a better word. Spree connotes fun and gaiety."

"What is it, pots and pans or sponges and cleansers?"

"Neither, it's material for my wedding gown."

"I would think you'd be excited about that."

"Maybe I would be if this didn't signal the beginning of hours over the sewing machine. I'm only making it because we haven't much money and I would hate to have my parents pay for our wedding after having spent a small fortune on college tuition fees during the past four years."

"When are you getting married?"

"October."

"That gives you plenty of time to make your gown."

"I'm sure I'll get it finished. It's just that I think I would be just as happy in a simple, tailored dress."

"So why don't you make a simple, tailored dress?"

"That's what I had originally hoped to do, but David—that's my fiance—is an only child and he thought it would be unfair to deprive his parents of a big event with all the trimmings."

"So let David wear the gown." Martha said this in a very off-hand manner, but I wasn't sure she had said it just for the sake of humor. I laughed anyway.

Although I had by that time given her her egg, she somehow seemed anchored to my living room floor so I offered her a seat and a cup of coffee. She accepted and thus began our friendship.

Martha quickly became my confidant. Actually, she was more than that. She was my Mother Confessor. Her unorthodox attitude allowed me to confide all my repressed frustrations and anger.

especially regarding the endless wedding plans.

Although I accepted her advice with a ton of salt, I did find it comforting to have someone I could say, "The minister looks constipated," without having her look appalled. As a matter of fact, in Martha's presence I attained great heights of sacrilegious fervor.

On one occasion I had been sitting at my kitchen table trying to achieve a compatible seating arrangement for the reception. I had been playing with the possibilities for hours with my mother's voice haunting the echo chambers of my ears: "Aunt Mildred and Grace haven't been getting along lately so keep them separated. Don't put anyone who drinks a lot near Harry Cumberland . . ." ad nauseum. Finally, I threw up my arms and let out a scream.

Martha came rushing in. "What happened?"

I was really embarrassed to think someone had heard my little tantrum, but I proceeded to groan on about my dilemma to her. "If it's giving you that much trouble, send it to David. He's been keeping his hands disgustingly clean of this whole matter if you ask me."

"How can he help when he's in L.A.?" I regretted having mentioned the seating arrangements.

"Send him the list of invitees and footnote all the peculiarities. After all, this is his parent's extravaganza."

"Come on, if he were here I'm sure he'd help." Although I defended him, I knew nothing could be further from the truth. David hated petty details.

"Well," Martha continued, "if you don't like that idea why don't you just stop planning. Be different: relax and enjoy your wedding. Anyway, I've been to a dozen 'successful weddings,' you'll distinguish yourself if yours is a flop."

Martha's remark about enjoying my wedding became a constant, though subliminal, thought. Soon-to-be-brides were always described as aglow with excitement. I had lost weight and gained circles under my eyes. Martha often asked, "Why are there so many beautiful brides and so many homely wives?" I rationalized that I was obviously going to reverse the process. More and more I wished the whole thing were behind me.

One night while Martha and I were enjoying our after-dinner coffee, I lapsed into a little monologue about how delightful things would be once David and I were settled. I told her of the houses David had been looking at on the West Coast. Immediately I was off on a "We'll have a white picket fence, two dogs and four children" tangent.

Martha interrupted for the first time, "Do you really want four children?"

"David's always wanted a whole batch because he was an only child."

Suddenly Martha reversed gears on me. "Did you ever want to be a schoolteacher?"

I couldn't imagine where her line of questioning was leading. "Sure," I said, "doesn't every little girl of the '50's grow up wanting to be either a teacher or a nurse?"

"Why didn't you become a teacher?"

"I guess because I didn't think I had the patience to have children around me six hours a day and . . ." I paused and looked at Martha. We both burst into laughter.

Although Martha always seemed to be in control, once in a while her inner rigging would temporarily collapse. The details of her marriage, especially the reasons for its failure, were common knowledge to me. Her divorce was to be official in November. She had bragged long and wide about the many positive changes that had taken place in her life since the separation. For this reason, I was totally unprepared one Sunday evening for her state of mind.

"Maybe I should go back to Ben," she said.

I thought I had misunderstood her. "What?" I asked.

"Maybe I should move back into the house. I went there today and couldn't get over what a mess it is. Ben never cleans it. And it's so awkward with the children. It's not bad with Laura since she's living in her own apartment, but I feel badly about John." John was a senior in high school. "Maybe he'll blame me—I was the one who deserted."

I was shocked. "How can you say that after all you've told me about your marriage. If you told me you'd realized you were still in love with Ben I could understand, but to compromise yourself for the

sake of some shag carpeting . . . And John's no baby. He realizes why you had to leave. I'm sure he loves you and always will."

"Oh, I know, I know. It's just that sometimes I'm at sixes and nines with myself."

"Martha, I'm sure every day is not a bed of roses for you, but you've got to think of all the humiliating days that would stretch before you if you were to return to him."

"Don't worry, I won't but sometimes I succumb to the fear of being alone."

"Well, try not to. Come on, let's have a cigarette in honor of long-lasting independence." She offered me a cigarette from her pack of Viceroy's.

"I thought you gave up smoking two weeks ago," she said sarcastically.

"I did, but this is an occasion."

"You really don't want to stop, do you?"

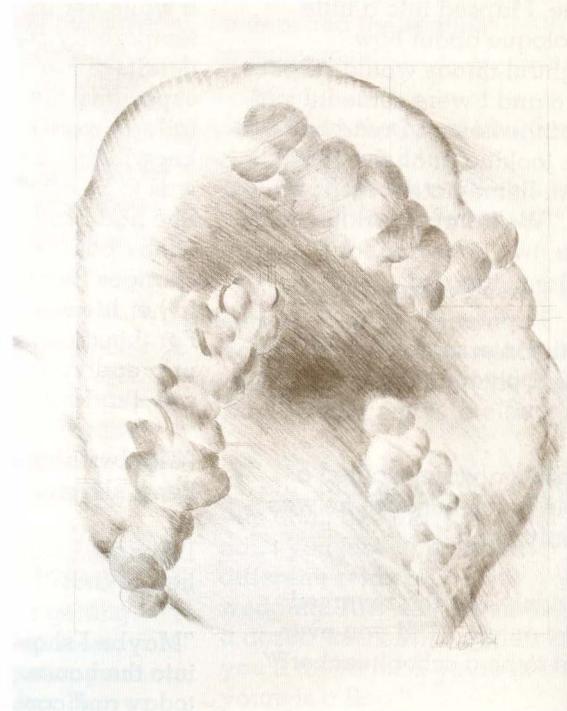
"You know I'm mainly quitting because David can't stand the smell. Anyway, it's a filthy habit and bad for my health."

"I completely agree with you

about the filth and health, but I thought we were smoking in honor of independence."

"Well, if you won't tell me about your summer of independence, perhaps I can get you to talk about the 'important matter' you want to discuss in person."

I focused on absolutely nothing and said, "I think we should call off the wedding."



Carol Wehr

remembrance

Al Balaz

david oistrakh is dead.
no auditorium atmospheres
will quiver at the
tilting lifting falling
of arms fingers
(aural aerial vibration).
no auditorium audiences
will heart thrill
at musical love in virtuoso violining
(virtual ideal virginal purity of violining).
david oistrakh is dead.

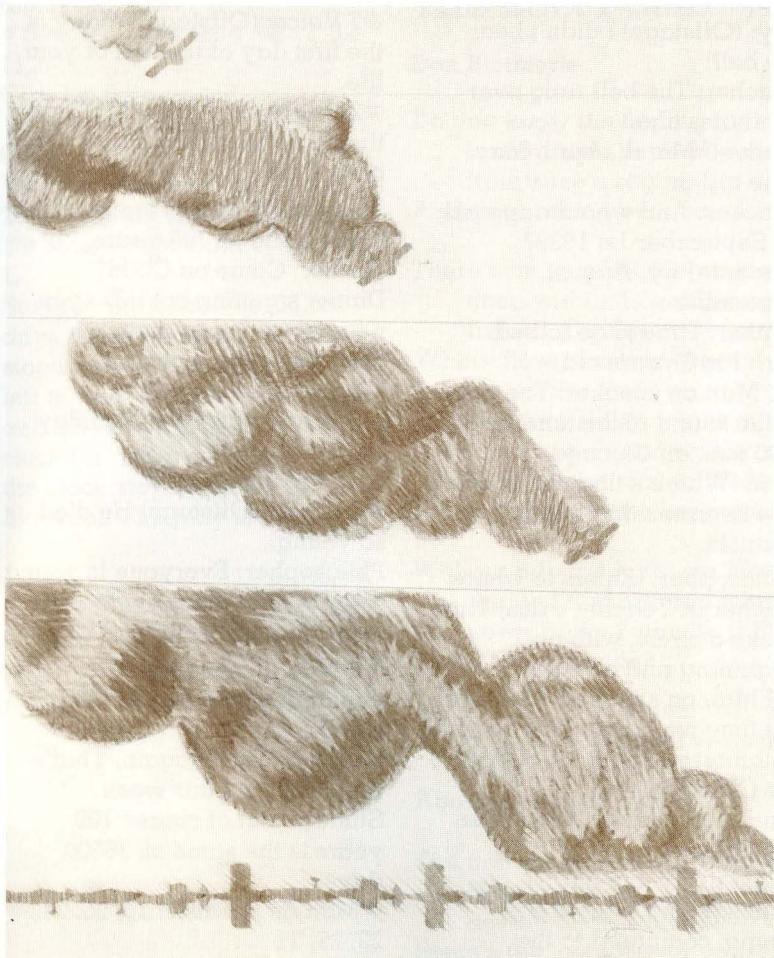
Time

Frederick Mensch

Notes on the Play

The dialogue in this play must move very quickly. The lines should almost be one on top of the other. Movement in the play, if any, should be limited. The play should work like a fine watch.

Jim Jacobsen



(The back of the stage is decorated with clocks. All kinds of clocks. They all say a different time. Throughout the play we hear the ticking of one clock. The stage is lit very brightly. Platforms have upstage raised slightly above downstage. Downstage right has a bench. Upstage center has a table and two chairs.)

At the start of the play the clock should already be ticking when the audience enters the theater. Then, when it is time to start the lights should be brought up and the audience should be allowed to look at the stage and listen to the clock ticking. The actors should be in position when the lights go up. Then after about a minute of waiting, when the audience thinks somebody forgot a line, the play begins.)

Man: (Seated at bench, d.s.r.) Where is that damn bus!? I've been waiting fifteen minutes!
Mother: (At table, u.s.c.) Come on child! Dinner's getting cold! Do you need a special invitation?

Student: (d.s.l.—he is holding notecards) The speed of light is 186,284 miles per second.

Man: Damn bus! It's always late.

Mother: You don't hurry down here you won't get dessert!
Boys: (Offstage) Come on! Pitch the ball would ya! We don't got all day!

#1 Man on speaker: (He is speaking over a speaker system) The time at the sound of the tone is 6 a.m. in Chicago.
Student: There are 60 seconds in a minute and 60 minutes in an hour.

#2 Man on speaker: It's 4 a.m. in Seattle.

Girl: (d.s.r.) The longest engagement on record is one of 67 years!

#3 Man on speaker: It's 3 p.m. in Moscow.

#4 Man on speaker: That's all the time we have folks, but tune in tomorrow for more of Beat the Clock!

Student: There are 24 hours in a day and 7 days in a week.

#5 Man on speaker: Our feature tonight starts at 6:15 with other showings at 8:30 and 10:45.

Mother: Where's your father? He always takes the 6:05 home.

#6 Man on speaker: It's

9:00 p.m. in Tokyo.

Singer: (Offstage. Singing) Just

in time, I found you just in time.
Teacher: (Enters from u.l., takes position u.c., she speaks to

imaginary students) Tardy again! That's the third time this week.

#7 Man on speaker: There's just 6 minutes left in the half!

Student: There are about 4 weeks in a month and there are 12 months in a year. January, February....

Teacher: Now class . . . what happened on June 28, 1919?

Boy: (Offstage) I didn't hear the bell!

Teacher: The bell rang over 6 minutes ago.

Student: March, April, May, June . . .

Teacher: And what happened on September 1st 1939?

Student: July, August, September . . .

Mother: Time to go to bed.

Girl: I'm 6 years old

#1 Man on speaker: The time at the sound of the tone is 6:00 a.m. on Chicago.

Man: Where's that damn bus!?. I've been waiting fifteen minutes.

Philosopher: (Enters to where teacher is. Teacher exits.) Time is like a circle, with no beginning and no end.

#4 Man on speaker: That's all the time we have folks, but tune in tomorrow for more of Beat the Clock!

Student: October, November, December.

Girl: I'm 6 years old.

Philosopher: Everyone is young, compared to the universe. (He exits. Teacher enters)

universe.

Girl: I'm 6 years old.

Boys: (Offstage) Come on! Pitch the ball would ya! We don't got all day!

Singer: (Offstage. Singing) Just in time . . . I found you just in time.

Student: There are ten years in a decade and ten decades in a century.

#7 Voice: (Offstage) Today is the first day of the rest of your life.

#2 Voice: (Offstage) My! How time flies when you're having a good time.

Student: Of course ten decades is the same as 100 years.

Mother: Come on Child! Dinner's getting cold! Do you need a special invitation?

Girl: I'm 6 years old.

Woman: (Offstage) I'm celebrating my 29th birthday for the 6th time.

Girl: I'm 6 years old.

#1 Voice: (Offstage) He died so young.

Philosopher: Everyone is young compared to the universe. (He exits. Teacher enters)

#8 Man on speaker: The countdown has begun! 30, 29, 28, 27 . . .

Teacher: Tardy again. That's the third time this week.

Student: But of course 100 years is the same as 36500 days.

Man on speaker: 26, 25, 24, 23, 22, 21 . . .

Mother: Where is your father?
He always takes the 6:05 home.
#8 Man on speaker: 20, 19, 18,
17, 16, 15 . . .

Singer: (Offstage. Singing.) Just
in time, I found you just in time.
(From here to the end of the
play the dialogue begins to
increase in volume until the
last lines of the play are
almost shouted.)

#8 Man on speaker: 14, 13, 12,
11 . . .

Girl: I'm 6 years old.

#8 Man on speaker: 10, 9, 8, 7,
6 . . .

Woman: I'm celebrating my
29th birthday for the 6th time.
#8 Man on speaker: 5, 4, 3, 2,
1.

Student: But of course, 36,500
days is the same as . . . (He
stops, frozen. The audience is
left to look at the frozen actors
and listen to the ticking of the
clock for about a minute. Then
the clock stops. Pause.

Blackout. The play is over.)

The Last Poem

Don Bimmerle

Do you know the feeling trying to bring some writing
from a mind expired—as embers
from once a raging fire—my thoughts burned . . .
And yet, nothing ever came.

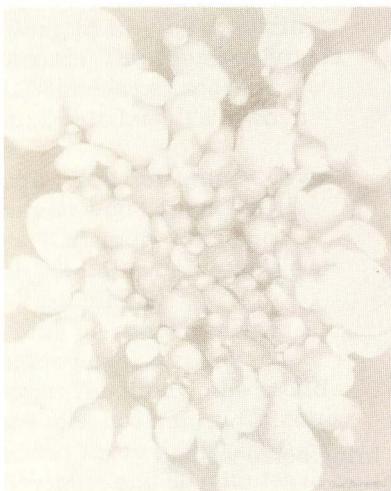
There was no relief for me from my most hollow feelings
deep within. I could no lay ideas bare!
Indeed, I'm desert—
Where flowers never grew.

I confess I've stolen pages in the past of poetry,
and have copied words of poets real. I felt not want;
I felt a need to steal. Still, it only served to
Praise the work of other men.

Without ado great shame has come to usher out my
drained and tattered mind. I know success I'll
never find—I wonder if I'll
Even fail in suicide?

My writing now . . . tears . . . while I've groped for
only vivid words I've seen my writing
melt into absurdity. I know I must
Abandon this disaster.

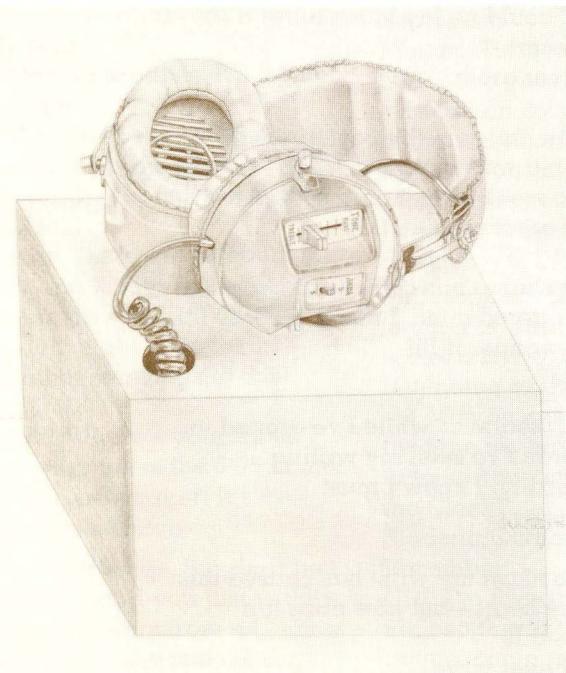
The first attempt to slash my wrist has caused this
bleeding of the heart—but now ebbs life
devoid of art—this
Poem's the last I'll ever write.



Clare Bornarth



Jerry Hummer



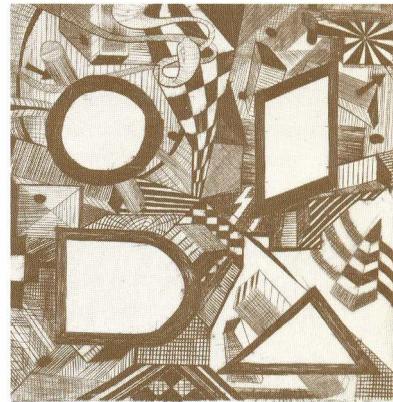
Dan Swanger



Seconds

Jeanne Watson

My head was propped up
For I had to see
Just how the vac was hooked up to me
Seconds
Seconds
Was all it would take
To render me new from a small mistake
Out of my belly and down through the tubes
Was a nothing soft redness coming on through
Red albumen'd wrapping
Of pieces of he and me
Of people parts
Of fingers and toes
A hole for a nose
And a tiny black dot for a heart
It hurt only a bit
And I walked from the room
Alone and complete as a full blue moon
Swept clean
Weaned
From that unfortunate event
I spent only a day recovering
Sometimes in the night
Though I've still no regret
I dream of an eye
Milky and white
Rolling endlessly on
Through a blackened sky.



John Tyszko

Amphitrite

Dan Swanger

Sliding on impish emeraldine coats of dolphins,
Hard and glossed green, to mirror glassy seas,
The sea-girls skim the almost boundless waters,
Or else they rush, mercurial speed, to their matron,
Amphitrite, to wind clear beads within her hair,
And smooth the scintillating hyaline of silk
And satin cushioning her shell-shaped chariot . . .

They drift from here and fro,
Languishing the breeze which drifts them negligently,
And seep the fragrant, fragrant air,
Effuming vapors which escape to wither . . .

So Amphitrite's vessel stays upon the sea,
Of hardened polish-gloss of gold and green
Lapping ocean-currents left to linger
Hazardly, like all her maidens' minds—
Drifting happily and thoughtlessly
Around, across the sea.

Janet Altmaier



Malling

Jeanne Watson

Spangly, multi-level market
Balloons stuck to your skylights
That can't get out.
Stores that go on like the Yellow Pages
Spattered with Slick smiles
And co-ordinated arms and legs that
Minister to runners untired of the race.
Wares!
Wares!
Wares! Wetting our greeds
Creating new needs.
Bobbly bosoms bumpling up your ramps
Straight jeans jawing on your steps
Wide "Bermudas" brushing alongside tiny heads
Searching out the elevators
To upper El Dorados
Or plushy beaneries
Or "Men's"
Or "Ladies'"
Yellow Page Infinity
Infinite variety
Planned and packaged and displayed
In genius-like incanity.
Bags rumply big
Boxes thumply drumming
And babies crying like cats
Heading away/down the ramps
And out to the grey flat
That stretches on like Oklahoma
Home
Home
Shell shock from war and
Overkill.

Gone

Verna Sobiesk

When he awoke the next morning he automatically reached out for her before he even opened his eyes. Then it all came flooding back, hurting him worse than the headache he knew would last all day. Yesterday, without any warning, his wife had pulled the rug out from under him. He relived the shock as he remembered her announcement.

"Harry," she had said, "there is no easy way to say this, and I can't make it sound nice or kind, but I have thought it over very carefully and my mind is made up. I'm leaving you. I have seen a lawyer and I'm getting a divorce."

Just like that. He couldn't believe his ears at first. He thought perhaps she was joking, but he looked at her face and it was apparent by the tight set of her lips and the firm angle of her jaw that she was in earnest.

She was a great gal. The greatest. They had had loads of fun together in the old days, and she had always been a good little wife to him. Until recently when she started getting those ridiculous ideas about wanting to "be her own person." Those damn Women's Libbers! Why can't they leave

well enough alone? First it was school. School! Imagine a woman her age going back to school! He had tried to talk reason into her head about it.

"Honey," he had said, "if you're bored or something we could go to Florida maybe, or even Hawaii. We could go to Vegas—or around the world for Chrissake! But I can't have any wife of mine going to school with a bunch of kids. A woman your age—it don't make sense!"

She had gone anyway. And she had started reading all those books. He knew it would come to no good.

"Honey," he had said, "I want to tell you something. Now just listen to me for a minute. Books are a waste of time. A complete waste of time. I used to read a lot myself, remember? Well, I soon learned that with all the books that have ever been written on the philosophy of life, man hasn't learned a damn thing. Not a goddam thing! And that's the truth. So don't waste your time honey. Take up knitting or something. Something useful."

She hadn't answered him, but she had gone on reading. And she had gotten her degree. He had kidded her about that. "Who ever heard of a gal being

a bachelor?" he had quipped. For some reason she hadn't thought it very funny.

And now she had a job. She worked for a publishing company. Not as a secretary mind you. Oh no, she was too high and mighty for that now. She was some kind of research assistant. Or editorial assistant. Actually he never could figure out what it was she did exactly. But she made pretty good money—for a woman. Not that they needed it. He made plenty, and had always supported her very well thank you.

Then there was that trip out of town, when she had attended some sort of convention. He had really put his foot down about that, but she went anyway. He simply could not accept the idea of her, his own wife traveling on the road with other men. He had tried not to think about what might be happening. He supposed he just had to trust her, that was all. But he woke up in the middle of the night and broke out in a cold sweat. His stomach was all tied up in knots and he had had a glass of warm milk and an Alka-Seltzer and tried to go back to sleep. But he couldn't sleep at all, and had lain awake, wretchedly, until dawn. When she returned he had told

her, once and for all, that there were to be no more business trips.

And now he was alone again in that huge bed. He roused himself and looked at the space-age numerals on the digital clock radio: 9:04. Saturday. No need to rush. Slowly he got out of bed and went into the bathroom, where he took two aspirin and surveyed his image in the mirror: Harry Armstrong—a balding, slightly paunchy man of fifty. His face was of a florid cast, with tiny blue veins on his nose and cheeks. His teeth needed some work. Okay, he knew he wasn't handsome, but he had always been a good husband, hadn't he? Hadn't he bought her this fifty-thousand-dollar home? Not too bad for a self-made man.

Back in the bedroom he opened the door of her closet and looked at the dresses she had left behind. Nobody could say he hadn't been generous, he thought, as he caught a whiff of her expensive perfume. Then there was the time last Easter when he had bought her that lily plant. She had seemed pleased then.

He padded downstairs in his pajamas. The carpeting felt thick and comfortable under the soft soles of his slippers.

This feeling had always given him a sense of satisfaction, but it felt hollow now. The whole house felt hollow without her in it. It was quiet, too quiet. Outside though it was a different story. The birds were singing their fool heads off, and the sun was shining enough to split his head open. How his head ached! But that was nothing compared to the ache in his chest where he supposed his heart was. How he loved that gal! Could it really be over? She really was the greatest! The greatest . . .

Until lately when she would come home from work too tired to fix supper. Or not be home for supper at all, and he would stick a TV dinner in the oven or order a pizza. That was no way to live. He had told her that, over and over. A wife was supposed to take care of her husband. He was the breadwinner, after all.

He sighed as he opened the refrigerator door and peered inside. He took out a package of bacon and two eggs, placed them on the counter and turned on the tea kettle. One of the eggs rolled perilously close to the edge of the counter. He placed them both inside the sugar bowl. Now, where did she keep the pots and pans? He found a Teflon skillet in a cupboard, peeled four greasy

strips of bacon off their plastic bed and turned on the stove. Prematurely he poured water from the tea kettle over a teaspoonful of instant coffee in an earthenware mug and watched the coffee powder float sadly to the surface. He took the unappetizing lukewarm brew over to the table, where he sat down to wait for the bacon to cook.

Another thing, she had turned cold in bed. They used to have great sex in the old days. But lately, since she got the job and all, she always made some excuse about being too tired or having a headache, and when he insisted on his rights and begged her to be reasonable, it seemed like her heart wasn't in it. She just seemed anxious to get it over with so she could turn over and go to sleep.

"What kind of a life is that, I'm asking you?" he said aloud.

Yesterday, when she told him about this divorce thing he had tried to talk some sense into her about it.

"Listen, hon," he had said, "I love you. I've always loved you—you know that. I've been a good husband to you, haven't I, all these years? Look at this house. Look at this furniture. Honey," he lowered his voice intimately, "remember that lily

plant I bought you last Easter?

"Look, even when you got those crazy ideas about going back school and getting a job I let you, didn't I? I went along with it and tried not to let it spoil our marriage. You know, we've had some good times together, honey. We've raised a couple of swell kids, but they're grown now, and I make enough money for us to take it easy and enjoy life. Why, we've got the best years of our lives ahead of us. And besides, honey, listen—a gal needs a man to protect her and take care of her. You know, it's a tough world out there."

She had said nothing.

"Look honey," he went on, "Let's give ourselves another chance. What about I take you to Europe maybe or on a Caribbean cruise? You'd like that, wouldn't you? Years ago, when we couldn't afford it, you used to beg me to take you on a vacation. How about it honey?"

A large trapped fly buzzed loudly as it flew frantically up and down a window pane.

"Harry," she had said quietly, "I'm leaving you, that's all."

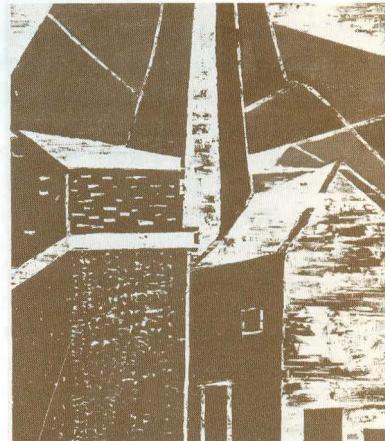
It had been no use. He shook his head and sighed deeply.

Suddenly he noticed the kitchen filling up with smoke. Hell! The goddam bacon was burning. He carried the sizzling pan of black cinders to the sink and poured water on it, causing it to erupt in a sputtering fury of grease and smoke. When the loud hissing had subsided he set the pan down and went back to his cup of cold coffee. The dog's dish stood half empty. She had taken the dog. Dumb of her not to realize she'd be needing the dish. He put his aching head in his hands, wishing those fucking birds would shut up. The shrill cry of the telephone pierced his thoughts. He almost fell over his own feet in his eagerness to get to the phone.

"Hello," he said hoarsely.

"Hello, Mr. Armstrong? My name is James Richardson. I'm an attorney representing your wife . . ."

In spite of himself, Harry *Armstrong, a grown man,* started to cry.



Jeff Arhart

Ode to a Little Mouse

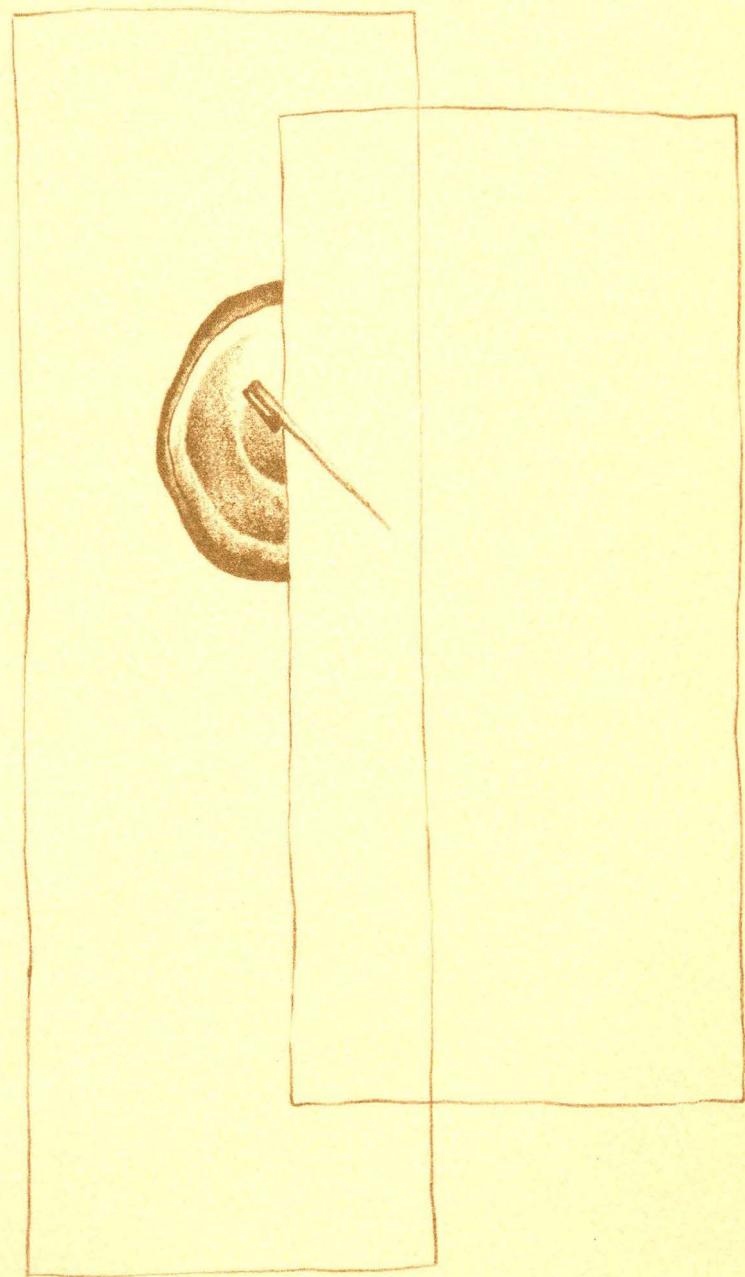
Sylvia J. Bolduan

Little mouse, there you are!
I've sealed you in a pickle jar.
You stole my bread and spoiled the flour;
Now, friend, this is your final hour.

But what'll I do to murder you?
Feed the cat?
Oh, no! Not that.
Flush you down
And let you drown?
Squash you? bury you
In the ground?

Stop looking at me
With that pitiful stare
If you weren't such a vandal,
You wouldn't be there.

Okay, you win, you naughty mouse.
I'll turn you loose
By my neighbor's house.



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