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# P'AN KU



*P'an Ku* is  
the ancient  
Chinese  
god of creation.  
Anyone  
who is  
endowed  
with creativity  
is possessed  
by the spirit of  
*P'an Ku*.

*P'an Ku* is funded by the BCC Student Activity Board. The opinions expressed are those of the individual writers and artists, and do not necessarily reflect those of the faculty, staff, or administration.

305  
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*It's time now,  
time to consider fact and fiction,  
time to see the clustered frogs,  
the butterflies in soaring splendor.*

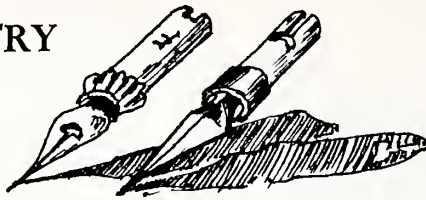
*Monica Earl Carlton*

November 1985



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## POETRY



### ELIZABETH BARDSLEY

<i>Patrick Tracy</i> .....	71
<i>Witness 1980's</i> .....	72
<i>Spin-Off</i> .....	72
<i>The Gathering</i> .....	73
<i>The Shallows</i> .....	73

### SHIRLEY BLUM

<i>Fine Lines</i> .....	33
<i>Through Open Windows</i> .....	79
<i>Squadrons Of Geese Glide</i> .....	79

### MONICA EARLE CARLTON

<i>It's Time Now</i> .....	1
<i>Cat's Cradle</i> .....	37

### SUSAN CARR

<i>Facades</i> .....	38
----------------------	----

### JAMES A. CRAVEN

<i>Acrostic</i> .....	54
-----------------------	----

### SUE DIBELER

<i>Spooning</i> .....	23
<i>A Return</i> .....	24
<i>The Summer Kitchen</i> .....	24

### JANE EDWARDS

<i>Miss Willie</i> .....	26
--------------------------	----

### LISA FIORILLO

<i>Trackless Desert</i> .....	54
-------------------------------	----

### JEFF FISHER

<i>The Mind Awaits An Answer</i> .....	80
--	----

### MARGIT GRASSWICK

<i>Waiting For Goldie</i> .....	27
---------------------------------	----

### STAR HEMENWAY

<i>Mirrors</i> .....	61
<i>Secrets</i> .....	62

### LINDA McKEOWN

<i>Uncles, Aunts</i> .....	17
<i>No Surrender, No Truce</i> .....	58

### ELAINE MICHAEL

<i>The Keys</i> .....	28
<i>Scars</i> .....	28
<i>The Cube</i> .....	54

### JOAN POLLAK

<i>Ashes</i> .....	34
<i>Cactus Endures</i> .....	35
<i>Oh To Be A Sub-Bourbon Housewife</i> ..	35
<i>Expired</i> .....	36

### JEANETTE SANTORO

<i>Lithe Huntress</i> .....	28
-----------------------------	----

### SHIRLEY ANN STIRNEMANN

<i>George?</i> .....	6
<i>Cold Storage</i> .....	7
<i>Exposures</i> .....	7
<i>Mae's Blues</i> .....	26
<i>Maudie: Dayworker</i> .....	27
<i>In Belfast, Now</i> .....	53
<i>Bird At Sundown</i> .....	79

### LAWRENCE SYROP

<i>Closed Feet Pajamas</i> .....	23
<i>My Grandma All Wise</i> .....	25
<i>On My Uncle's Shoulders</i> .....	25

### KIM WEISS

<i>Blood</i> .....	17
<i>Three Cornered Dream</i> .....	61

### ROBERT WIEMANN

<i>Orange Pops</i> .....	58
--------------------------	----

### MICHAEL WILSON

<i>Morning Mist</i> .....	28
---------------------------	----

### LORI WINKLER

<i>Why Is It?</i> .....	17
<i>Today</i> .....	37
<i>After The Rain</i> .....	62
<i>Ricky</i> .....	66

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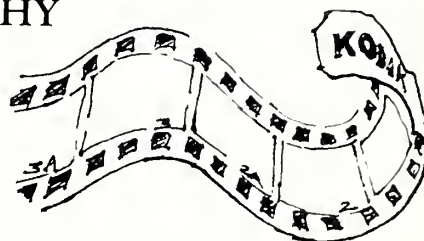
## PROSE



ELIZABETH BARDSLEY	
<i>Bone China</i> .....	18
DANIEL KENNY	
<i>With Warmest Regards To Boss</i> .....	47
ED LUBLANG	
<i>The First Violinist</i> .....	29
BRYAN L. McLANE	
<i>The Chess Game</i> .....	55
OLGA MAURE de NUNEZ	
<i>Warren Street</i> .....	63
JOAN POLLAK	
<i>The Blizzard</i> .....	4
<i>Chapter One</i> .....	56
S.A. STIRNEMANN	
<i>Circling The Salween</i> .....	13
<i>Wednesday's Physical Therapy</i> .....	45
LAWRENCE SYROP	
<i>A Stroke Of Poison</i> .....	67
ROBERT WIEMANN	
<i>Ruth</i> .....	8
<i>Ann</i> .....	8
<i>I Fried A Couple Eggs</i> .....	9
EMILIE WOLITZER	
<i>Hot Air Thermal</i> .....	74

MARK BAILEY .....	44
SHEILA BALBIER .....	22
NOEMI BRUDNO .....	39
SUSAN CONNORS DeCOSTA ..	22, 39
CALDERON ELKIN .....	55
NELLIE FRONABARGER .....	21
NOREEN LESSARD .....	18, 42
DAYRL MILLER .....	21
DIANE MUJARES .....	66
RAY RUSSOTTO ....	1, 26, 27, 38, 40, 80
MALGORZATA SAMEK .....	43

## PHOTOGRAPHY



LOYD H.F. ....	4, 59, 60
ZELDA HARRELL .....	69
CASEY McCORMICK .....	34, 53, 70
JOHN MORICONI .....	46, 48, 52
CHRIS OCHTINSKY .....	12
FRANK POLITO .....	50, 51
CYNTHIA ROBERTS .....	59
KEN ROTBERG .....	11, 12, 74, 76, 78
MALGORZATA SAMEK .....	60, 70
SHERRI SMETTS .....	11
BILL TSANGARES .....	10

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THE

# BLIZZARD

Joan Pollak

George stepped out into a snow-dusted day. Sitting in his heated home had frozen something inside of him. He walked to the corner and stood, hands in pockets and ice clinging to his mustache like rock candy that melted and left no taste when he touched it with his tongue. He breathed some more. Then he dropped a coin into the machine slot and pulled out a paper.

"Eight Buried Alive," the headline said.

At home Nora bent over the stove, warming her hands above a burner as though she needed defrosting. Her housecoat was inside out. She looked over her shoulder at the door.

"I bought a paper," he said, tossing it onto the table and into a puddle of tea. The headline darkened.

"Is that all?" Nora's voice rose.



"Ya didn't get 'me nothing?" She pointed to a box in the corner. "Did ya get something for him?"

Brown eyes appeared above the box rim. George bent over and scooped up the dog. It was a cardboard brown mutt and it was losing hair. George didn't know why he liked it, it was that ugly. He had seen it on the street, weaving through traffic, and brought it home to feed. Within a couple of weeks it began to drop both hair and pounds. And it smelled.

"Hi, dog," he said, pressing it against his chest. "Glad to see me?" The dog raised its head. Its tail hung limp. "He looks hungry," George said.

"Thought you got him something."

"Sure looks hungry," George repeated.

"Then give him the newspaper." Nora sat at the table and stared out the window onto the gray street.

"George, why don't we move to Florida? It's green year round. And there're palm trees."

"It's plastic," he said and stroked the dog.

"You telling me that ain't real?" She pointed to her favorite postcard. She'd won it at a carnival years ago when she laid her nickel on the black seven. She'd framed it and hung it on the wall. An alligator was smiling on the beach. "A taste of the tropic," was scrawled across it in hot pink.

"Nothing's real but that gray snow and this dog."

"Why, I could be sitting under that tree, sipping a *pina colada*," she was saying. "With the sun all hot and beating on my hands." She turned back to the window. "Can't even warm them up here. That stove just ain't the same."

"It could be worms." George was holding the dog in the air, peering at its belly.

"What?" Nora stood. She looked at the dog. "It could be he's cold. Could be he wants to move on down to Florida." She tugged at her housecoat. "Maybe I ought to pop

him in the oven and warm him up some."

George put the dog back in the box. "Plastic ain't real," he said. "Florida ain't no postcard."

Nora turned up the gas jet under a burner. "You never bring me nothing, George. I gotta have something." She stretched out a hand. "Now I'm just gonna stand here until this flame burns like sunshine and this white stove looks like sand."

George sat with the paper. "Big blizzard, Nora. Eight dead."

Nora spoke louder. "Now I got me a *pina colada* in one hand and a beach boy in the other. And I can't be bothered with no blizzard."

"How 'bout the alligator? Where's the 'gator?"

"Fating your dog."

"No. All these years he's been sitting on that card and he ain't got more of a taste of the tropics than you."

"George, don't bother me."

George shrugged and got into his coat. "I'm taking the dog out for a walk," he said.

Nora nodded. "Be careful. The rocks are slippery at high tide."

George tucked the dog into the pile lining of his coat and stepped onto the stone walkway, glazed in a thin layer of ice. He slid a couple of feet, but didn't fall.

"Palm trees," he said, his breath puffing and hanging like small clouds. "You don't want to go to Florida, do you, dog?"

The dog shivered.

At the end of the block George sat on a bus stop bench and unbuttoned his coat. He always felt warmer when he stepped outside.

It was noon, but the street lights shone like stars in a sunless sky. He had been to the planetarium one day and it had been the same. Big and dark with tiny pinpricks of starlight all around when it was daytime. He had gone alone and had fallen asleep. When he went home, Nora had been eating dinner by herself. Meatloaf oozed catsup like blood and canned potatoes. "Fix yourself a plate," she

had said without looking up.

He had watched her at the table, hair pulled tightly around curlers and her face pulled with it. He thought he felt a draft, but the windows were closed and locked.

A slice of meatloaf crumbled. He had to spoon it onto his plate.

Nora watched him, a crooked smile on her face. "Don't expect much when you don't give me nothing," she said.

He pushed the plate away. "I'm not hungry."


Her smile faded. "Used to be. Unless you're getting something somewhere else."

After that, he had gone to the planetarium once or twice a week. Until he found the dog and a bench under the street light where he could fall asleep and wake to the light shining and the sky dark.

A bus pulled up and opened its door. George shook his head. It drove off.

The dog wouldn't stop shaking. George took off his coat and wrapped the dog inside. It whimpered but lay still. He thought it was probably dying. "You don't belong in that house," he said. "Nora don't like you." But the dog wouldn't last long in this weather and he ought to get it home.

The moment he stepped through the doorway, he felt older, like his insides had dried out. Nora was stretched across the couch, smothering under a pile of blankets as though she were sweating on some tropical beach. The framed postcard lay upside down on her chest.

He put the coat-wrapped dog back into the box and opened the window a crack. The cold air felt good. Like waking up alone in the planetarium when it was dark and quiet and he'd see stars in the daytime when no one else did. He looked out at the gray sky and thought maybe he could make out a few now. But they might only be street lights. He picked out the brightest spot in the sky and made a wish for Nora. 

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*Shirley Ann Stirnemann*

GEORGE?

Yes, old George the cleanup man  
you remember him  
Bahamian I believe he was  
always polite  
he used to say hello  
Miss Sally how are you tonight  
and ask about our kids  
remember

And when your youngest had the croup  
he told you what to use cured him you said  
and he always gave us Christmas cards  
remember?

Sure you do he made coffee  
every night when we worked late  
we'd just look up and he'd be there  
with all those nice hot cups  
and sometimes a few sugar cookies too  
remember?

Well, it says here he died last week  
but I don't remember him  
ever mentioning he had kids too.  
Do you remember?



## COLD STORAGE

*MUD LAKE, Idaho (AP) Fresh snow Sunday left few traces of a bloody massacre of thousands of jackrabbits . . .*

The carved-in-granite sound  
of one last rabbit's breaking back  
turns the deed to stone  
as the slow, blood-trickling-from-the-mouth reality  
of ten thousand rabbit deaths  
freezes one cold winter afternoon  
into the glacial past of man,  
and into ice-hewn fragments for the memory  
of a young boy wielding a baseball bat.

## EXPOSURES

Caught in a naked moment  
passing by a cindered alley, you can feel  
an old building's ancient stone  
begin to scrape  
its way into the marrow of your bones,  
can feel it chipping frozen bits  
of you away to lay exposed  
like ice picks and razor blades  
left rusting on a fire escape  
to catch  
and reflect a brilliant slice of sun.

But you can't know  
what an old burnt stack of broken boards  
and window panes  
and blackened chimney bricks  
beside a weed-curbed lane can do  
when dust deeper than winter's ashes  
bathes your feet in summer's heat  
and, curling upward soft and slow,  
burns blisters on the far side of your soul.

## Ruth

Ruth's mother used to warn, "Don't cross your eyes . . . they'll stick that way," but Ruth continued and eventually they stuck. Years later, on Canadian Independence Day, Ruth wore moose antlers and somehow they stuck, too. I met Ruth in Atlanta, where we fell in love.

"What do you love most about me?" she asked.

"Your legs," I said, watching a movie with my arm around Ruth.

"You know, Canada has the most viable cinema in the world today, except maybe for New Zealand."

"Excuse me," said an usher, pointing a light at Ruth's antlers.

Movies gave Ruth a headache anyway, so we walked down Peach Tree where she caught snowflakes on her tongue and made wishes.

"I wish today would never end."

I boarded the next bus for New Zealand.

## Ann

Ann's husband left to find work as a prophet.

"I typed his resume," she said. "I just didn't think he'd go."

I looked in her empty refrigerator.

"Do you need anything typed?" she asked.

"I really need to work."

So we typed my stories about hard rain and about hard times in the city.

"What about diamond hard stare?" she asked.

"Hyphenated," I said, finishing my story about the girl upstairs whose bath water runs down my walls at night.

Ann typed stories about her high school prom and about getting her fingers smashed in a car door.

I timed her typing from the couch.

"Three hundred seventy-nine," I said.

Ann typed a letter to her mother in Florida.

"Dear Mom . . . John left me."

And she didn't look at the keys once.

## I Fried A Couple Eggs

I fried a couple eggs and found my father in the pan.

"Hello," said the eggs, ". . . surprised you."

"Hi, dad . . .you did."

I took a bite.

"You look tired, son . . ."

"I guess I am."

I took another bite.

"You need more sleep . . . your mother wants to know if you've been keeping warm enough."

"Tell her I'm fine."

"You know how she worries . . . how's Ann?"

"She's fine, too."

I scooped the last bit of egg onto my toast.

"Good-bye, dad."

"Oh . . . you need money or anything?"

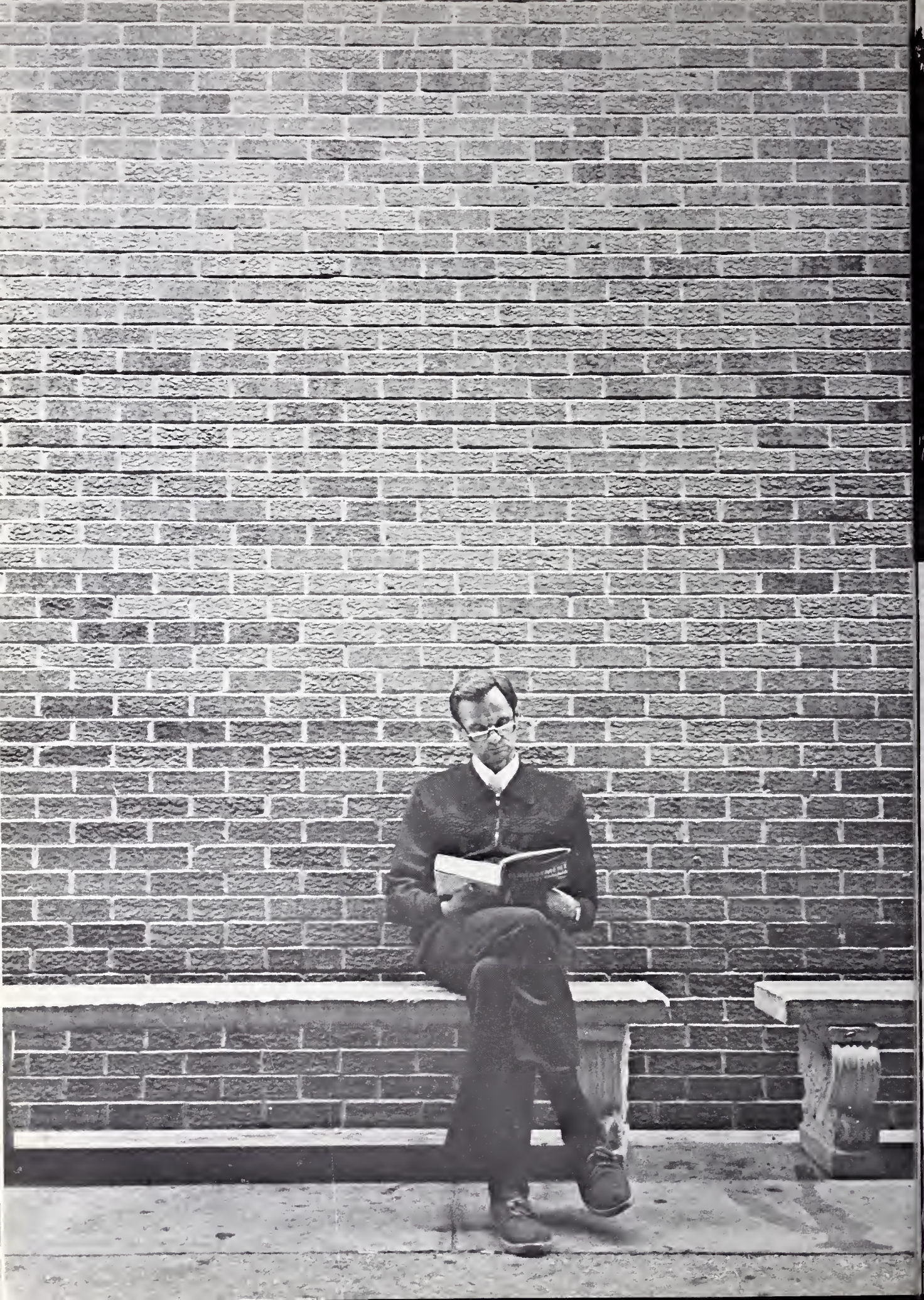
"No thanks . . ."

". . .then get some sleep."

I found the bed and slept all day.

Robert Wiemann









*Ken Rotberg*

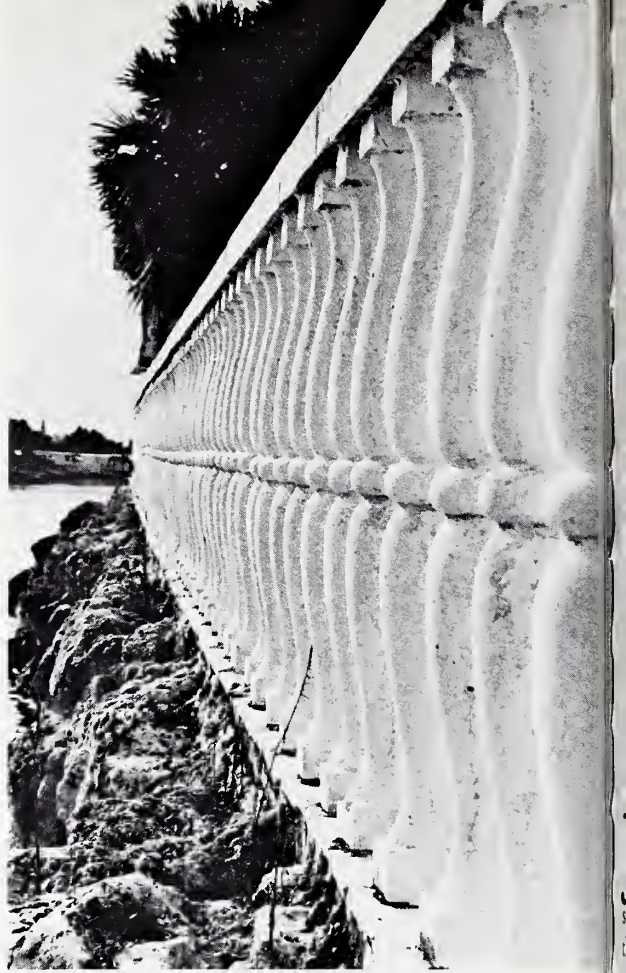
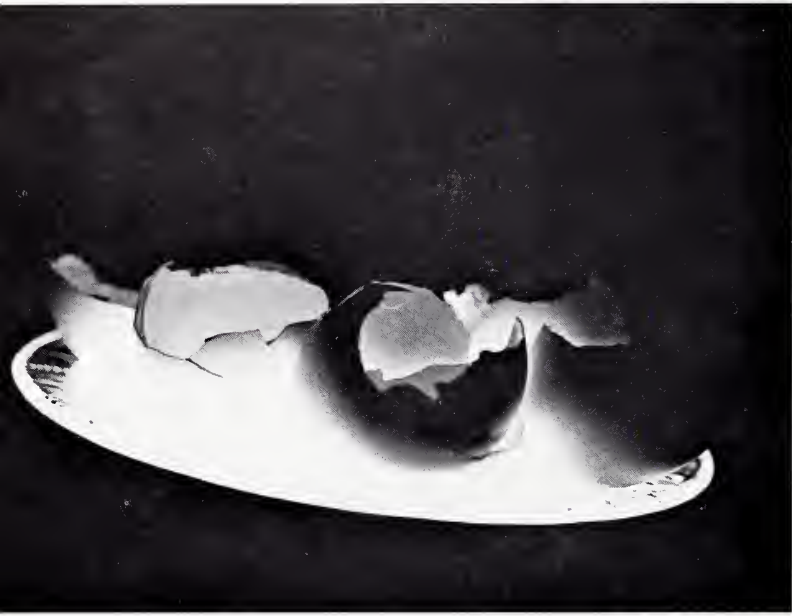
# PHOTOGRAPHY

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*Chris Ochtinsky*



*Ken Rotberg*

*Ken Rotberg*





# ircling the

# Salween

S.A. Stirnemann

Johnson slowed his footpace and searched the tangled mangroves along the riverbank, eyes darting in and out of the twisted trunks of the misshapen trees, trying to find an opening – trying to find an exit from the sunless corridor of lashing limbs and rotting leaves and mud. The Salween River. It had to be there. The little open boats and the fishermen with smiling faces, they'd be there. And among the thatched roofs of the village, women in colorful dresses carrying baskets on their heads, and children running and playing and laughing. They'd all be there. If he could just keep going, he'd find it. Then he could join his father and everything would be alright. He could stop running then.

Picking up his pace again, he held his arms up for protection against the branches. There would be birds, too. And a young girl feeding some chickens beside one of the huts.

Then it hit him. Suddenly, and without warning. The Salween was in Burma. And this wasn't Burma. He stopped. Something was wrong. It was too quiet. There were no birds, no chattering monkeys. The whole jungle was still – poised – at attention – listening. . . The animals knew.

They always knew first. Then he heard it, too. He heard the loud whapping sound of Cavalier Red and his Cobras as they made wide left-turning circles somewhere overhead. He listened. Behind the noise of the Cobras were the intermittent, staccato, popping sounds of gunfire. Then lower, just over the treetops, making right-turning circles, he picked out the Little Birds – call sign White – the Loaches – as in cockroaches.

It was a Pink team. A hunter-killer team. Dry, hollow laughter exploded against his eardrums. It all seemed too incongruous, like some sort of made-up game. The little birds would flush out the prey, then the cobras would attack and kill. The animals were doing the hunting.

He thought of that time a long time ago when he'd gone quail hunting and had flushed out the birds just before leveling the shotgun barrel and pulling the trigger. He remembered the smell of the long, well-oiled barrel of the gun as he looked along the top of it, centering its sights. He could see the iridescent gleam of the metal, and feel his hand slip along its smooth underside. Slowly, it began to move. It wasn't wood and metal, anymore.

A small, beady-eyed head appeared on the gun's sights, and then he began to feel the cold, dry, slippery skin of the snake in his hands.

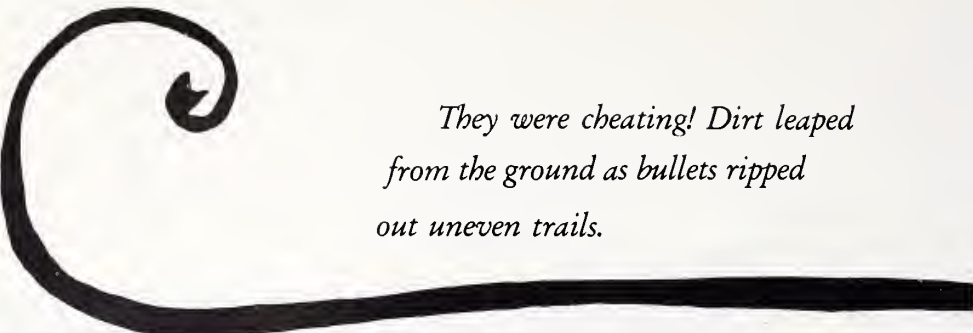
Quickly, he rubbed his palms against the olive-drab khaki covering his thighs and, darting a look around him, adjusted his crotch to ease the crawling sensation in his groin. The loud whapping and whirring somewhere overhead continued.

He had to get away. Flashing Talon could be patrolling somewhere in the vicinity, and if they found him, they'd want him to go back. He couldn't do that. Not yet, anyway. First, he had to try to figure out where he was and how he got there. Pieces were missing. What was he doing in all this rot and mud? Why wasn't he in the air, too?

It was the Silver Star.

Starting to run again, he left the footpath and cut into a stand of bamboo, working his way blindly through the tall, jointed trunks.

It had happened the last time he had gone out. And the thing was, they hadn't gone out after a downed Bird. It hadn't been an emergency. The bell hadn't gone off and no one had come running in and screaming for them to scramble. They hadn't had to



*They were cheating! Dirt leaped  
from the ground as bullets ripped  
out uneven trails.*

run for their choppers in their underwear with their clothes in their hands and tripping over their shoelaces. It hadn't been like that time Floyd Denton had gotten caught in the shower and had come running out naked with the soap still on him and yelling, "If anyone's going out with me, they'd better be in that fuckin' bird before I throw my clothes in, because when my naked ass hits the seat, we're leaving!"

No. The orders had been posted the night before. They had been sent over from TOC and put up by that cold-blooded bastard on Santori's team. The one with the shaved head. And it wasn't even supposed to be a dangerous mission; there was a ceasefire in effect at the time. The gooks were taking time off.

But the time. That's what had gotten so screwed up. What was the time? How long ago had it been? Yesterday? The day before? Last week?

He couldn't remember when it had happened, anymore.

Or why.

It had been at first light, though. It was just barely daybreak when he and Woolly Jim and Kenny had settled into his chopper and the big rotor blades had started whapping. He hadn't taken off like a sidewinder, bringing the nose around to keep the tail from sliding into the revetment. He had taxied out in a three-foot hover, then climbed out over the end of the runway. He only slid out across it sideways when they were in a scramble. It was just a routine reconnaissance mission. Nothing to worry about.

From the controls of the light observation chopper, he looked down

at the corrugated tin roofs, the tents, the sandbag bunkers, the ammo dump and field guns, and, behind him, at the grounded birds still sitting in their revetments. He was flying on out over the concertina wire surrounding the lookout tower on the berm. The greenline. He had always liked the wide area around the base where the trees had all been cut away to provide a field of fire. A no-man's land — a killing zone, it made a big circle of fresh green between the brown, barren ground of the base and the darker trees of the jungle. Even at night, from the air, the line of floodlights made the circle always look bright green.

Quickly leaving the familiar landscape of the base behind, he flew along behind several other choppers, flying at low level, just clearing the treetops. The pale sky lightened, changing colors as the sun rose above the horizon. They whizzed past jungle, bamboo, rice paddies, more corrugated roofs, thatched roof hootches . . . and then they were opening fire! They were cheating! Dirt leaped from the ground as bullets ripped out uneven trails. Ahead of him, a straw roof blew apart and smoke poured out of the hut beneath. A chopper hovered over a stock pen where panicked animals ran wildly about, running into one another, stumbling, falling, getting back up, and then, taking on enough fire, slumping to the ground again.

"Holy shit!" Woolly Jim swung his gun around and leaned into it. "Smack dab in a hornet's nest!"

Chickens scattered everywhere. A small boy grabbed the hand of an even smaller one and ran between two huts. In the middle of the road,

an old man stood waving his arm, and shouting. An old woman tugging on a rope tied around a water buffalo's neck, tried to pull the jerking animal into one of the huts.

He searched everywhere for the ground fire. He couldn't find any.

Kenny kept jumping from one side of the chopper to the other. "I can't see him! All I see's house dinks. Where's the incoming?"

Circling out to the right, he saw the bunkers. Rifles and field packs lay out in the open. He took the Loach in for a closer look and, intent on assessing the amount of arms and field equipment, didn't see Charlie off to the left until he heard the gunfire. He gripped his thigh. They'd been hit. Woolly Jim grabbed at his chest and blood started pouring down his arm. His gun! He tried to climb out, but the engine unwound. Where was his gun!

There was nothing but heavy bamboo below them, no place to see down, and they were losing power fast. He didn't have his gun! He brought the stick all the way back and plowed through the bamboo, sliding to a stop in a small open area, but the tail rotor had broken off causing the boom to spin around. Jesus Christ! The boom hit a tree and broke off. He'd left it back at the base!

Feeling his guts roll up into a softball, like a wad of cotton without his gunbelt to hold them tight, he made a quick assessment of their situation, estimating that the three of them wouldn't stand much of a chance if somebody didn't get in and help. He'd left it back at the base!

But first things first. The alpha before the omega. He grabbed a Willy Pete for identification.

Having gone down more than a hundred meters out into the bamboo, he should have been thinking about how he could throw the grenade far enough to do any good, but he couldn't stop thinking about forgetting his gun. He'd never gotten anywhere without strapping it on, and after all his months with the 1st Air Cavalry, this was the first time he'd ever needed it. It was in the



latrine. In the dark, he'd forgotten to put it back on. Stuffed in his father's old leather holster, it was still lying back by the stinkhole.

With the main rotor still spinning, he jumped out and threw the white phosphorous grenade. It hit the rotor blade. Nothing was like it was supposed to be. The rotor blade knocked the grenade farther than he could have thrown it, however, and in the right direction. Finally, a lucky break.

They started to get organized. There wasn't time to think anymore. Hunched over his machine gun, Woolly Jim was already laying down a heavy screen of fire, and Kenny, switching his M16 to rock and roll, started popping caps. Empty brass cartridge casings sprayed out around their feet, dancing like shiny bits of hail.

The Cobra made one pass and had to leave. The pilot probably thought he'd been hit, but it was only a malfunction. He'd lost his hydraulics seal and it made a noise straight out of hell. Like being in the middle of thunder. Not somewhere below it, but in it. The pilot screamed into his headset and headed back for home plate.

With the Cobra gone, it got quiet. There was still the popping of rounds, the firecracker sounds, the snap of a whip cracking over his head as he crawled through the grass, or the splintered pop when one of the bullets hit a tree, but after the loud roar of the busted seal on the Cobra, it seemed quiet. He bandaged Woolly Jim's wrist where the bullet had gone through it, and felt for the bullet lodged in the chicken plate. Woolly Jim was the only one wearing a protective vest, and the only one to need one. Their luck was still holding. Next, he tried to fix Kenny's leg, but the leg was pretty busted up, so he couldn't do much except stop the bleeding. And all the while, he kept scurrying around like a trapped animal, throwing frag and concussion grenades in a circle around them, trying to form a shield between them and Charlie to keep him away, and

throwing red smoke grenades in the direction of the gunfire.

He thought it would never end. It was as though they were caught in the middle of an animated cartoon and the frame they were in had gotten stuck. The same things kept happening over and over. And the technicolor unreality of the red smoke spiraling up out of the explosions could only be the creation of some special effects man somewhere. The grenades were running out. It was impossible to tell exactly where Charlie was anymore. But he was close. Way too close.

"Goddam, when is this ceasefire going to cease?"

Finally, the Cobras started coming. They laid down a heavy fire and the gooks pulled out. Altogether there must have been twenty or more of them overhead, and, for the first time, it occurred to him that helicopters weren't as smooth and graceful as fixed-wing aircraft. Against the sky, they looked like a swarm of vultures, all making Bomb Damage Assessments and checking for KIA's to see who'd get the credit for what.

A Medevac chopper lifted off with Woolly Jim and Kenny and the Blue team returned with their count. Although there weren't any bodies left behind, according to the Blue team's evaluation of the blood trails and paraphernalia that was left, there had been ten or fifteen KIA's. He climbed into a chopper, and as he looked back down through the pale traces of smoke, the glint of the brass cartridge casings looked like burning coals in the grass. Holding Kenny's helmet upside down between his knees, he swallowed hard to keep from vomiting.

He began to run faster now, stumbling over the dead tree trunks half hidden in the dense undergrowth. Narrow, bayonet-

pointed leaves on the younger trees crowded in among the older ones raked sharply across his face and hands. Dim light filtered down through the treetops.

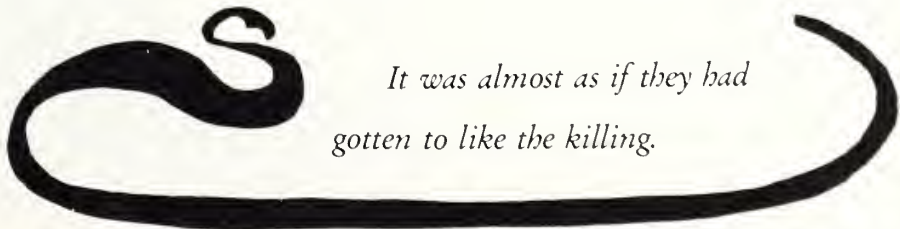
They had wanted to give him a medal. A Silver Star. They said he had saved the lives of his men. They said he had held off the enemy and had saved his helicopter. He hadn't. Only luck had saved them, It didn't make any sense. How could he get a medal for firing during a ceasefire? Besides, he hadn't even gotten hurt, not even a scratch. He'd been hurt worse just running across the compound during a scramble. Once he had sprained his ankle. The whole thing had just been a series of ridiculous, out-of-place incidents that had somehow all gotten jammed together into the same time slot, starting with when he had gone to the john, just before daylight. There'd been nothing heroic about any of it.

But there'd been a celebration when they got back in — barbecued steaks over a fire in the oil drum halves, lots of booze, plenty to smoke. They could chalk up ten or fifteen KIA's along with the livestock and burned hootches and the young girl with the straw basket feeding the chickens.

He stopped running. Most of the pieces were back together, but somehow they didn't seem to fit anymore. It was almost as if they had gotten to like the killing. As if it had become a cause for celebration. They could go out and do whatever they wanted to, but back at home plate they were safe. The greenline protected them, kept out the outside world.

At the party one of the big brass had raised a tall glass of whiskey up over his head. "If the general drinks too much, find out what brand it is and send some to all the generals."

"Snake poison!" someone had



*It was almost as if they had gotten to like the killing.*

yelled.

“White lightning!” called another, defending the Loaches.

The brass had used the old Lincoln remark to compliment them. And it had been good for their morale. No one seemed to mind what they were metamorphosing into. They had a good record of KIA's and they didn't lose too many of their helicopters. And he was a prize specimen.

He came out of the bamboo. He had been running in circles. Stretching out all around him was the open area of the killing zone. He dropped to the ground and watched the Birds, big and little, as they came back in from their missions. It was getting late. Long dark shadows reached out from the jungle as the sun slid down behind it.

He closed his eyes. The little village along the Salween returned. The people, the smiling faces, were still there just as they had always been — just as they had been the first time he could ever remember seeing them. They had always been there, never changing, just as they were in the picture — the one his father had sent. He couldn't remember a time before them. And his father was there, too. Somewhere inside the picture was his father, keeping everything safe, a hero. He had seen a movie about them once. The Flying Tigers. They had all been heroes, protecting the Burma Road, and all the little villages, and all the people in them. Everything was safe — suspended in time like the people in the village. As he watched them, the moment in time was released. Activities resumed. They moved peacefully about, talking amiably, laughing. The children continued their games. And he could almost see his father in the background.

Suddenly, the villagers' expressions began to change. Just as they had earlier. They were all looking up with fear on their faces, and pointing fingers toward the sky. Then he remembered why he had run. He tried to run again. But the damp, moldy earth held him rigid. He could feel the dampness crawl up his spine,

paralyzing him. Unable to move, he watched the pointing fingers.

And then he saw them. Great metal birds of prey were swooping down on the village with long, curving talons extended. Beneath the great roar of whapping blades, he could hear the screams. And then he was one of the birds and he could see the chickens scattering below him. He looked for the girl who'd been feeding them. She wasn't there. And then he looked down and saw the huge, grotesque metal claws protruding down from his body, and the torn body of the girl clutched tightly inside one of them. Now all he could hear was the loud, whapping sound of the rotor blades above him.

He opened his eyes. A big attack helicopter was coming in. It circled around to the other side of the base and hovered momentarily before dropping out of sight.

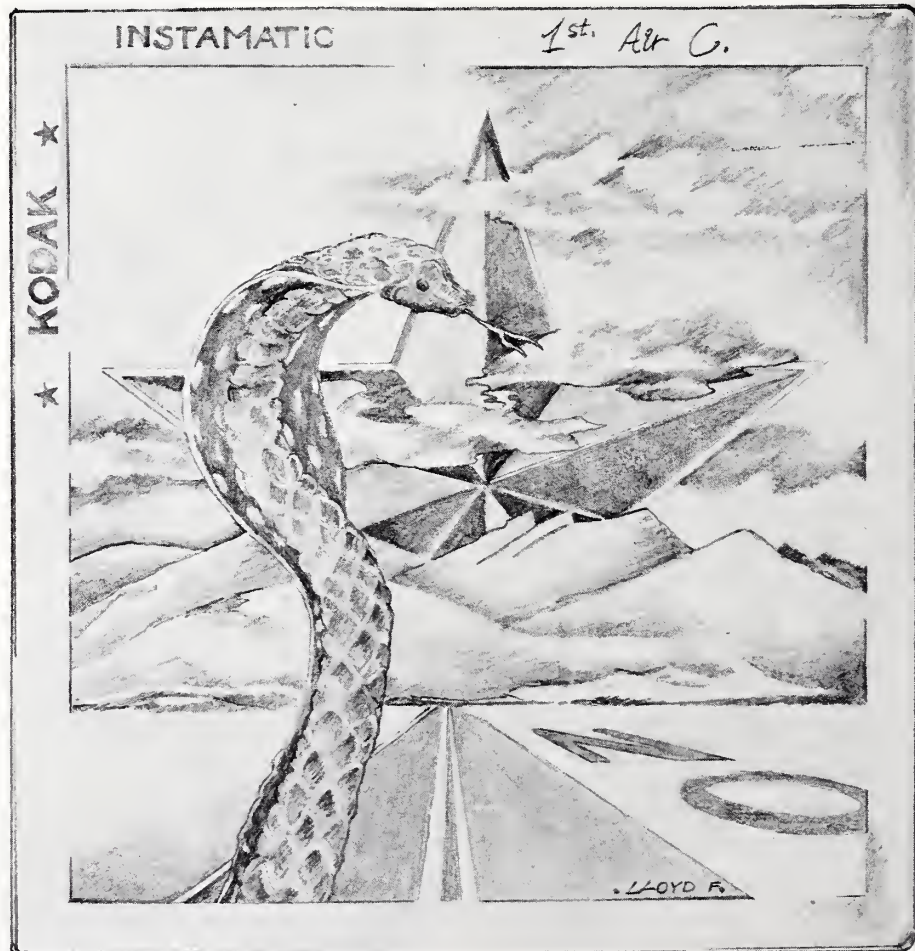
The floodlights came on.

Feeling a sharp sting on the lower part of his leg, he instinctively reached down to touch it and a snake

bit him again on his wrist. He hadn't seen it wriggling up through the damp grass. Grabbing it with both hands, he held it out in front of him. The snake, extending its ribs just behind its head, formed a flaring hood. Its long, olive-green length coiled in agitation, forming large green circles around him.

He gripped it tighter. Even for a king, it was huge, well over twelve feet long, and large, glittering, round pupils in its brass-colored eyes stared at him, while its tongue darted in and out between four sharp fangs like a miniature two-edged sword. Remembering that the king was also common in Burma, he threw it down and watched as it slithered away, its green quickly blending and disappearing into the surrounding green.

Suddenly, he had a ridiculous urge to laugh. It was just too incredible. Running across the berm, he called out to the lookout tower. “Hey, you guys! Guess how I got wasted? I was greased by a cobra. Get it? A cobra!”





## WHY IS IT?

Why is it that poetic phrases  
and wonderful metaphors enter  
my mind only when I am basking  
in the sun on a crowded beach  
with the National Enquirer sprawled  
across my stomach and no pen?

*lori winkler*

## UNCLES, AUNTS

They remember where they've been  
by what they ate there.  
The best times  
marked by the best menus.

I could only offer  
peanut butter

and knew when their lives  
flashed before  
their dying eyes,  
they would not see me.

I had not stuck to the roofs  
of their remembrance.

*l. mckeown*

## BLOOD

i want to write you something  
a spy story  
a french novel  
something more than a sonnet  
a living truth whose future is not yet born  
the continuing confidence of two women  
you open a mind that sleeps and sleeps  
essence to essence  
underneath the webs of maya

it all hurries like a home movie

something is unchanged  
you reach that far  
i reach for words  
to honor you on paper  
yet you are my blood  
and all this appears to be  
is a white page stained  
red

*Kim Weiss*





# BONE

# CHINA

elizabeth bardsley

*Noreen Lessard*

Everything was breakable and nothing was broken; not a chip from the sea-colored cloisonne vase, not a nick in the thinnest of the pale pink bone china teacups, not a scratch in the etched crystal of the wine glasses. When I walked into the room, I was overwhelmed by its fragility. The walls seemed to dript upward toward a ceiling whose only evidence of solidity was the chandelier it anchored. The floor was clouded with soft, pale carpeting. Everywhere I looked I saw small tables, slender chairs, petite sofas. The room was not crowded. Someone had arranged the furniture in small conversation groups, and placed bowls of tiny rosebuds, yellow, pink, white on the tables. It was the room of a small, graceful, slender woman. And so it was a shock when she entered and stretched out her hand – the square,

strong hand of a sturdy, slightly stocky woman, dark-haired, dark-eyed, middle-aged. Then I looked at the hand-embroidered batiste shift she was wearing, the thin silver bracelets, and I knew that this was her room. I knew that inside she was small, fragile, and pastel, as I had expected her to be, and that she had surrounded herself with possessions without a chip or a flaw anywhere.

I felt clumsy, awkward, overbearing, and intrusive. I did not like the mission upon which I had been sent, didn't know how to say what I had to say, didn't want to shatter the exquisite fragility of this room and of her questioning smile with the blunt demand I had to make. I took out a cigarette, lit it, and placed the dead match carefully into the small porcelain ashtray sitting on a table next to my knees. I was still

fiddling with the cigarette and wondering what had happened to my professional savoir-faire, when she saved the situation by motioning me to a small, comfortable sofa, sitting erectly in a brocaded chair herself, and asking, with a polite smile, "Before you explain your visit, Mr. Cartwright, I was just about to have tea. Would you like a glass of sherry?"

"No, thank you, Mrs. Edwards, I really don't have time." I would have liked a glass of sherry or something a great deal stronger. "I have come because your husband asked me, as his lawyer, to do something which he was too fond of you to do himself. That is, to ask you for a divorce."

She stiffened abruptly in the chair. Her left hand pushed the thin bracelets up her right arm until they dug into her skin, leaving thin red

circles as she released them, and they slid downward toward her wrists. The stubby little fingers with their beautifully manicured nails dug into the green silk of the chair arms and then slowly relaxed their grip.

"Why, Mr. Cartwright, why does my husband want a divorce?"

I couldn't tell her why. "I want a divorce, Cartwright, because I am bored out of my skull. I am tired of consideration and courtesy and gentility. I am tired of benefits and concerts and well-bred people making well-bred conversation. I am tired of being cared for, I am tired of being loved. Benita is too big and too blonde and too loud, and I like all that. She is noisy and demanding and exciting, and I want to marry her. I want to live in the midst of din and confusion and motion so that I'll know that I'm alive. I am sick to death of playing Prince Charming to Sue's Fairy Princess in the midst of all those damn cups and saucers."

I took my eyes from the disappearing red circlets on her plump little arms and transferred my gaze to the expanse of ivory carpet and marble stairway spiraling upward to the balcony and second floor, and said what I didn't want to say:

"Your husband wants to be free to marry, Mrs. Edwards."

Again the stiffening. This time the hands clasped each other. "Who does my husband want to marry?"

"His secretary - Benita Jacobsen."

"Miss Jacobsen? That tall woman with the yellow hair and the dreadful taste in clothes? Are you sure?"

"I'm sure," I said as gently as I could, aching for her and relieved that at that moment the maid had appeared with the tea tray. It didn't seem possible that I had been in this house for less than fifteen minutes.

She poured her tea, tasted it, and set the cup carefully down on the little table before her. "All right, Maria," and she turned to the waiting maid who had set the tray down on the table. "That's all. Oh -- and take this." And she picked up the little ash tray in which my smoldering

cigarette lay and handed it to Maria who bore it out of the room.

"Mr. Cartwright, I am not going to do anything in a hurry. This is a shock. I must have time to think."

"Mrs. Edwards, this whole thing is very uncomfortable for me. Your husband is not only a good client but a business friend and has always been extremely fair and honest in all his dealings; otherwise, I couldn't have been persuaded to come here on such an unpleasant errand. He says that any financial arrangement you care to make will be quite all right with him."

"Mr. Cartwright, I don't think you understand. My husband and I are both quite well off. I don't need his money. Money doesn't enter into it at all. But I love Robert. I always have, and I always will. I must have time to think -- to think about what is best for Robert and best for me. Give me forty-eight hours. Tell Robert to stay for a couple of days longer wherever he's been staying from time to time, and then to come home and talk to me on Wednesday; he can come and pack his things if he wants to. One of us will get back to you later about the legal aspects. It will be a few weeks, possibly a month, before I will be ready to do anything. He'll have to be satisfied with that." And before I knew quite how it had happened, I found myself standing outside the imposing front door, disposed of as neatly and effortlessly as the ashtray.

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*Suzanne Edwards asked me to return for... "a final resolution" of the problem.*

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The next day I was called away from the prospect of a messy and awkward follow-up visit to Bob Edwards by the sudden plea of an old lawyer friend to fly to Los Angeles and consult with him about the sticky legal points of a case he was involved in.

When I came back, I inquired about the Edwards'. No calls had come in

from either of them, and so I decided to let things coast for a bit. My secretary did think that she had read about Bob Edwards having been ill, "or something." This piece of rather foggy news made me more inclined to postpone any definite meeting with Bob Edwards until Suzanne Edwards had carried out her promise to contact me -- a promise which, from my meeting with her, I was sure she would fulfill.

Thirty days to the day from the date of our first meeting, Suzanne Edwards called and asked me to return for, as she said in her little tinkling tiny voice, "a final resolution" of the problem I had presented her with in July. I was both reluctant and curious. My feelings really didn't make any difference, anyhow; it was my job to go.

At four o'clock on a Monday afternoon I found myself standing in the same ethereally lovely room I had seen for the first time a month before. The same little bowls of roses glowed softly on the tables, yellow and pink and white, a bit overblown this time in the late summer afternoon light. The same graceful little conversation groups, looking as if they were drawn up for afternoon tea, were scattered around the room, and while I was remembering Bob Edwards' remark about "Prince Charming in the midst of those damn teacups," a new maid entered and said, "Mr. and Mrs. Edwards would like you to join them on the patio."

"Mr. and Mrs. Edwards"-- I was so unprepared and so astonished by the coziness of the invitation that whatever had been bothering me about the room -- and something was, somehow, wrong or off balance -- vanished abruptly as I followed the quiet little maid across the length of the room, down another avenue of ivory carpet, and out onto a terracotta tiled patio, bright with hanging plants, parakeets, and a fountain.

"Welcome, Mr. Cartwright," and the little high, sweet voice rivaled the timbre of the fountain as Suzanne Edwards, in a shell-pink linen shift,



rose to greet me from her filigreed wrought-iron chair.

Good to see you, Tom," Robert Edwards, pink-cheeked and smiling, beamed at me. But he didn't get up. His hair was black, tousled, and curly as ever. He wore a matching shell-pink shirt on his muscular torso, and white linen slacks. He was as slim and athletic looking as ever, but he was sitting in the glittering aluminum confines of a wheelchair! I stopped, hand extended, and stared. And stared.

Mrs. Edwards saved me from further embarrassment. She took my hand, grasped it in her cool, competent little brown fingers, and said, "I am sure that you will feel as happy and sad for us as we feel for ourselves, Mr. Cartwright. As you can see, Robert has had an unfortunate accident, and we have had to face the possibility -- the likelihood -- that he will never walk again. But his illness has brought us together again. It made us sit down and evaluate our lives and our needs -- what is important to us and what is not important, and we realized that we belonged together no matter what the circumstances. And that is the happy ending, Mr. Cartwright!" She beamed at me and added, "Now, how about that glass of sherry you refused on your last visit? You have a good visit with Robert and I'll get it for you." Without waiting for an answer, she bustled from the patio.

---

*I had put one foot into it before I knew it. It splintered in all directions.*

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"Sit down, Tom, sit down," Bob Edwards said, patting the chaise beside him. "Isn't she a darling? Do you know, through all of this, she has never made a bitter remark, never said another word about the divorce? Notice how cordial she was to you? She blames herself for the accident, you know, although it was my own

short fuse and stubbornness that caused it. I had come home to pack a few days after your visit. I could hardly wait to get out and have everything over with."

"Suzanne, as usual, wanted me to sit down and have a cup of tea and talk things out. I told her that there was nothing to talk about, that I was sure that you had done my talking for me, and I went upstairs to pack. The carpeting had been set out to be cleaned, and the stairway was bare. You know how slippery that marble can be. Ordinarily, we have someone come in and do the carpeting, but Maria had spilled tea on it, and Suzanne was frantic - thought it could be better treated at the plant. That's why she had let Maria go. Anyhow, I stormed upstairs to pack, and Suzanne waited a while and then followed me up to plead again. To show you the state poor Suzanne, who is usually so calm, was in - she put her teacup and saucer down on a step halfway up the stairs, ran up to my room, and went into such a tirade that I threw my things together, grabbed the suitcase, and ran down the stairs to get away from her. I was running, the stairs were a little slippery, and the teacup was in the middle of a step just below the curve in the staircase. I had put one foot into it before I saw it. It splintered in all directions; my other foot went up into the air and I fell the rest of the way, landing on my spine. The surgeon said that I'm lucky I'm alive. Suzanne says that she will never forgive herself, but I tell her that it was all my fault, and I'm lucky that she still loves me after all that's happened.

That was clearly a reference to Benita Jacobsen, and I had been dying to satisfy my curiosity about her.

"Bob," I asked, "what about Miss Jacobsen? Will there be any financial arrangement you want me to make?"


"Oh no, Tom, you don't have to worry about her," Edwards replied, a little bitterly, I thought. "I was fool enough to think that she might still want to go ahead with our plans. But

she came to the hospital, she informed me, 'to clean up any misunderstanding.' She made it very clear that the idea of being married to a wheelchair was quite repulsive to her - didn't want any money, just wanted to get out of the whole thing quickly. Thank God for Suzanne!" and he smiled fondly at his wife who had come in with the sherry.

"Here you are, Mr. Cartwright. In a way, this is a much happier visit than your last." She smiled and touched her husband's hand, and he beamed again at her fondly.

I sat there sipping my sherry, trying to think of some noncommittal reply to this remark. I could come up with nothing, and an awkward five minutes or so passed. Evidently Suzanne's own tactlessness of my lack of response bothered her because I was only about halfway down my glass when she said, "You must come again soon. Robert will be wanting some male conversation. But now it is time for him to rest."

At the tone of cool dismissal in her voice, I drained my glass and followed them, she refusing my offer to push the chair out into the living room, and at once I saw what had bothered me on my arrival. The beautiful arching staircase was gone, and in its place was a gold glass elevator. The walls and floor had been reconstructed and covered so expertly that there were no scars to show where the stairway had been. "So much for money!" I thought a little grimly, and even though I could see the need for the elevator, there was no way that it could replace the airy beauty gone with the arching stairs.

My dismay must have been more evident that I thought, for Suzanne Edwards said gently, "I know, Mr. Cartwright, but when circumstances change, needs change. I needed Robert and he found that he needed me. I loved the staircase too, but one has to be practical, and now we need the elevator. Although I do regret the dear little teacup. It was so lovely, Royal Doulton, you know." 

# art



*Daryl Miller*

*Nellie Fronabarger*





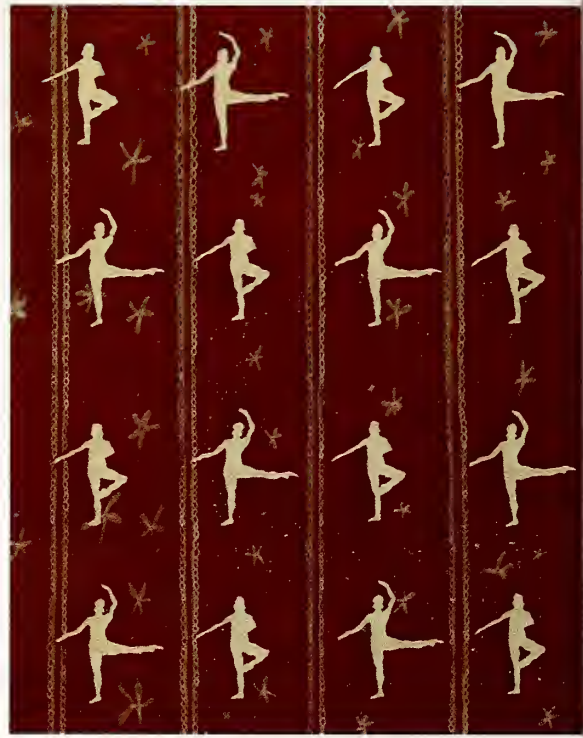
page 21 relief sculpture (top)  
original dimensions 6"x24"  
sculptor Daryl Miller

oil (bottom)  
original dimensions 20"x24"  
artist Nellie Fronabarger

page 22 acrylic (top)  
original dimensions 18"x24"  
artist Susan DeCosta

acrylic (bottom)  
original dimensions 30"x24"  
artist Shelia Balbier

Susan Connors DeCosta



Shelia Balbier



CLOSED FEET PAJAMAS

in yellow aura the kitchen strives to  
smell wood under faded wallpaper  
the roving fan cuts the sunbeams  
plastic feet shuffle and grey

the nightmare is over life  
is real feel the spring  
gold dusted rays mine  
dark nocturnal visions  
from my youth

crave those mornings in confined pajamas  
to when the mind dabbled  
in freedom fleeting freedom

cuddle close to the window pane  
watch umbrella trees hide the shade

*Lawrence Syrop*

SPOONING

Even when I was sixteen,  
you'd let me curl up beside you  
on your bed  
that sometimes safe always warm place.

There  
your weary body would spoon mine  
our two breaths and smells mingling lingering  
even when probably would have preferred to nap alone  
enjoying the solitary freedom only sleep can bring,  
still you spooned me.

There on your bed  
the singular pleasure of soft classical music  
would float across us  
as a cool breeze danced plies and leaps  
with the curtains at your window  
kissing our bodies with a promised of fall  
even that private orchestration you sometimes let me share,  
although not always.

Sometimes now, my own children climb to lie beside me  
uninvited unasked and I let them  
especially when I don't want to  
for they too love to be spooned  
and I remember.

*Sue Dibeler*



### A RETURN

because i was allowed to rest against breasts,  
sagging and baggy,  
and lean into bowels,  
popping and fizzing,  
and to cling to waists too round  
for anything but round dresses,  
i am pleased when children  
all children  
crush and run against my body      and i theirs

touch tells me that i exist  
and the memory of it makes one hopeful,  
especially on long lonely nights.

## *Sue Dibeler*

### THE SUMMER KITCHEN

When I look at the old pictures now  
I see it,  
the sad, drooping mouth and empty eyes,  
and I have to say to myself:  
“Ah. There it is.  
The look.”

I didn't know  
until much later  
that my grandmother was depressed.  
It was always enough for me that she never shouted  
or screamed.

It was a haven,  
her small summer kitchen in the country,  
away from my parents,  
a place to roam the swish of wheat fields,  
inhale the grape arbors  
and cow manure.  
It was enough for me  
that she never asked:  
“What are you doing?”  
Or “Where are you going?”

Now that I know the truth,  
it is still enough.

MY GRANDMA ALL WISE

My grandma all wise  
Would focus her teaching finger  
Above my upper lip  
There's the welt of life

You were chosen  
You were blessed  
The lord pinched  
That fleshy space

I'm uncertain  
That god squeezed  
my upper lip  
to live to die  
questioning.  
Do I hide it with my hair?

My grandma all wise  
Would focus her teaching finger  
Above the dish closet  
There's the sabbath candles

In them burns  
The heart of all jews  
Blow them out is  
A sin to the lord

Why did I creep  
so slowly by those  
two eyes of the lord?  
I learned fear  
for fear was only  
a smoking wick

My grandma all wise  
Would focus her teaching finger  
at me  
There's the law!

*Lawrence Syrop*

ON MY UNCLE'S SHOULDERS

Snowflakes bumped into us without  
apology but  
I was glad to feel the cold not the climate  
of warmer courtesies  
My face was singed by the command  
of the fire dots  
With my mittens grasping the reddened chin  
of my snow plough  
the pace seemed endless to the synagogue  
to attend an unknown ceremony

By a sleeping farm we crept hidden shrubs  
like frozen fingers  
With want of gloves they shivered from  
the cold and kindling force  
My eyes peered under a watch cap of ice  
blurred by uncooperative tears  
Reaching the enclosure I pulled off  
the white balls that captured me



## MISS WILLIE

I miss friend Wille  
with coffee bean skin  
and shiny-jet Betty Boop wig  
who speaks in lyric prose.  
Are them words right?  
'Cause she never paid no mind  
to iambic pentameter,  
onomatopoeia  
and such as that.  
'Cause she had her some no-count  
with one as big as you please  
trying to sniff sugar outa her  
and me too, child,  
if I didn't watch out.  
And he took up all her years  
till she's old as grandma,  
spending her days  
drinking ladies booze  
on the porch swing,  
thinking where'd he get off to,  
and spewing folk tales,  
gifts for me.

*Jane Edwards*



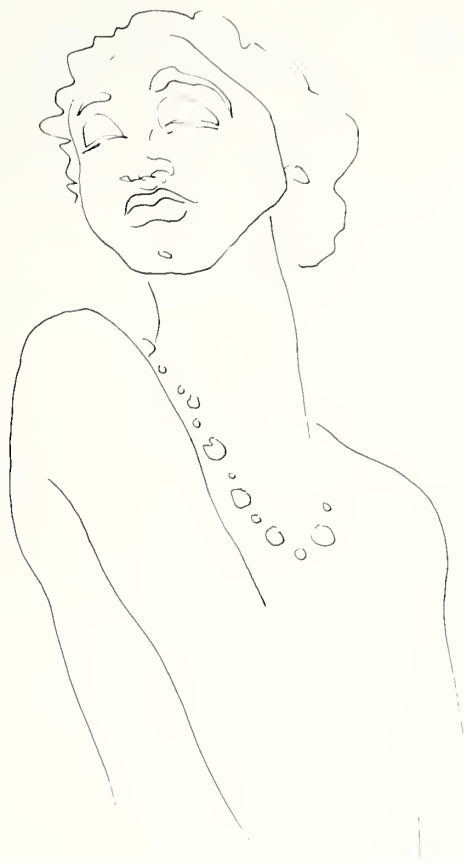
*Ray Russotto*

## MAE'S BLUES

Wailing through muffled horns of brass,  
baggey-eyed musicians mourn  
the passage of another love affair,  
blowing freight train loneliness  
into their late-night dirge,  
while the silent sound of smoke curls  
up around the smell of naked  
lightbulbs hanging in a lonely corridor  
somewhere.

On the dance floor, where bodies  
sway,  
slow,  
like a pendulum, Mae clings  
to the feel of sweat--afraid  
of falling back  
into another time--afraid  
the grave will burst and something else  
will pour out of those horns.

*Shirley Ann Stirnemann*



## MAUDIE DAYWORKER

I took these boxes  
    matchboxes they was  
and put them in a row  
    seven in all  
for each day of the week.

I kept track of things that way.

A bright blue button in one  
straight pins in one  
in one a long red string  
was them three days  
I took in washing and mending and ironing.  
An old crow feather  
and a short broomstraw  
was them two days  
I cleaned houses up the hill.  
A pumpkin seed  
was for that other'n  
when I helped out in the field.

The Sunday box was empty.  
    And papa asked me why  
    I didn't put a cross  
    or his picture there.  
But I just said I didn't think I would.

*Shirley Stirnemann*

## WAITING FOR GOLDIE

Old wrought iron chairs and railings  
Blue Willow sunsets  
Southern porches tinkling with  
amber glasses once became you.

Scuttlebutt rumors you  
hit the sack in blue jeans  
frequent nudist beaches  
read surreal books (your painting is lousy)  
march in protest lines  
have a live-in friend and  
come home once a year.

The wrought-iron gossips are lonely.

*Margit Grasswick*



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## SCARS

Silent souvenirs.  
What is left  
is more  
than what was there.

*Elaine Michael*

## THE KEYS

Islands  
like ringlets lie  
entwined beneath  
the sultry sky,  
golden bracelets  
looped around the  
ocean's waist.

Pelican and porpoise rest  
within the cleavage  
of her breast,  
a torrid tart  
that somehow  
still is chaste.

*Elaine Michael*

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## LITHE HUNTRESS

You look like royalty  
Sitting there so serene.  
So relaxed yet so alert  
Seeing all that can be seen.

You've watched for hours at a time  
Nature's many wonders.  
And we, in turn, watching you,  
Laughed at your innocent blunders.

How many minute empires  
Have you seen rise and fall?  
How many widows, families bereaved,  
Caused by the swiftness of your paw?

But to make you out a murderer  
Is not what I meant to say.  
'Cause for you it's all instinctive-  
You only meant to play.

*Jeanette Santoro*

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## MORNING MIST

Gentle rain, down ever down  
a destined downward journey  
falling ever slowly  
catching the sun along the way  
nature's prism among the clouds  
creates a colorful array  
droplets reflect, seem to glow  
I hear someone say--  
it's JUST a rainbow

*Michael Wilson*



During supper, a month or so after I was admitted to the New York Bar, Papa finished a glass of his homemade wine, pointed his chin at me and announced, "Anthony Lancellotti wants to see you at his studio tomorrow."

I was astonished. "He wants to see me? At his studio? What for?"

"Maybe," Papa chortled, "maybe he wants to give you an audition."

My sisters and brother tittered into their pasta. My sister Marie turned her luminous eyes upon me and purred, "You can borrow my cello if you like." More tittering together with pinching and punching of arms until Papa said, "Enough!"

Anthony Lancellotti was a familiar name in our household. I had often heard the story of how he and Papa were schoolmates in Naples where the same priest who had tutored Enrico Caruso as a choir boy undertook their musical education. The boys showed talent with the violin and the Church encouraged them. In a few years, Anthony Lancellotti was taken to America by his parents, and Papa followed several years later with his bride.

In America, Anthony steadfastly refused any kind of work except playing and studying the violin. While still a young man, he became a well known violin virtuoso, and then the first violinist in the orchestra for the Metropolitan Opera Company. Only last year he had given a recital at the White House for President Franklin Roosevelt.

The next morning, I awoke early and dressed carefully. On the way to New York by train, I sat back in my seat and daydreamed. My first client! Papa had told me that Anthony Lancellotti wanted to see me about a legal matter. Was it possible that the famous violinist would ask me to handle his booking contracts? Oh, I was good at contracts; I reviewed in my mind the Cardozo decision, a precedent-making case on contractual agreements to perform personal services.

When I arrived at the studio, I was impressed by Anthony Lancellotti's youthful appearance. He was my father's age, yet his hair was full and glossy black; his unwrinkled face was friendly. "Ah, so you're Angelo's daughter. I remember the last time I saw you; you were a regular roly-poly." He squeezed my arms and stepped back for further appraisal, open and warm. "Ah, yes, very nice. You look like your Mama. She is a queen among women."

With a little difficulty, I steered the conversation toward the purpose of my visit. Before responding, Lancellotti waved me toward the comfortable chair and sat down closely opposite.

*Ed Lublang*

"A policeman delivered this a week ago. Right in my studio," he said, handing me a legal document. "This crazy woman says that I stole her towels and sheets. That's America for you!"

I read the document. It was a criminal warrant and complaint, signed under oath by one Emily Simmons, charging that Anthony Lancellotti had committed a misdemeanor by the illegal taking and converting to his use \$180 in goods, to wit: one dozen towels, six sheets, and four pillow cases in violation of Section 462, Paragraph B, of the New York City Penal Code. The case was docketed in the Midtown Magistrate's Court for trial in four days, at ten o'clock.

I hid my dismay. I had only a vague knowledge of the New York City Magistrate's Court. My mind raced back to my notes on criminal law, but for the moment I could recall only





cases on murder and treason. Nor did I know the penalty for violation of Section 462, Paragraph B.

"Tell me what happened," I said. I hoped my voice sounded professional. "Who is this woman?" I looked at the warrant again. "Emily Simmons, who is she?"

"She's a crazy American woman, a devil, that's who she is. Do you know," he asked critically, "what would happen with such a woman in Naples?" I shook my head. "Well, I'll tell you. Her family would keep her locked up in the attic, that's what."

I remembered my briefcase, removed a pad of yellow legal paper, and prepared to take notes. "Let's start at the beginning," I suggested placatingly. "Why should Emily Simmons charge you with theft?"

"Huh! That's not the beginning." There was a note of rebuke in his voice. "That's the end." He pulled his chair closer. "I'm going to talk to you man to man."

I understood that he intended this as a compliment of high order.

"So," he continued. "I'll tell you the real beginning."

He reached for a portrait and held it up for my view. It was a stylized painting of a matron: wide, bare shoulders, very fair complexion, regular features, auburn hair pulled into a bun. An overall primness.

"My wife," he said. "Gorgeous, right? But, I regret to say that she is American born - no offense intended - and not very understanding. So, once - no, twice - I packed and moved out. Not for long, you know. The first time for, let's see, about two

weeks, and this last time for three months."

I interrupted. "This has something to do with the criminal complaint?"

He looked pained. "Of course," he said. "It's my wife's fault that I met Emily. When I moved out, I didn't want to go to a hotel - much too expensive. So I found a nice boarding house."

While I continued to take notes, Anthony Lancellotti explained that he rented a furnished room in a brownstone boardinghouse owned by Emily Simmons. The location was convenient, within walking distance of the studio and a short taxi ride to the Opera House on 39th Street.

Emily Simmons had asked how long he intended to rent. A year? He wasn't sure, but maybe. When he moved in, she presented him with a printed lease for a year, but he never got around to signing it.

She was delighted with her new tenant, with his old-world courtesies, his flowery phrases, and his imposing appearance. Within a week she asked him to join some of her select, long-time tenants for breakfast which she supplied at extra cost. Shortly thereafter, she sometimes invited him for dinner in her upstairs apartment, and she tried to cook some Italian dishes. He settled into a comfortable routine, but he disliked the depressing drabness of his room. The walls were brown, the carpet dark green, and the furniture plain.

"At first she seemed like a very understanding woman," he explained, "very cooperative. When I mentioned that her bedroom was papered with bright colors and mine

was so dark, you know what she did?" He paused and nodded his head in full approval of her decision. "She papered my room with the same bright colors. She even asked me to shop for carpet with her, so I could pick out what I liked."

I continued to scribble, hoping that all this was somehow connected with the warrant.

"Well," he continued, "about three weeks ago, my agent told me that he had booked me for summer concerts in Paris and Rome and arranged for my wife and me to sail on the Isle de France. My wife was happy to hear from me, you can bet, and still happier about our trip to Europe. Do you want a little wine? I have a good year - Lambrusco."

I looked up from my notes. "No, thank you. Please, are we going to get to the warrant?"

"Oh, sure, sure. The same day I heard from my agent, I told Emily that I was moving. It was late that night, after dinner. Ah, she made good lasagne and we finished off my wine. Well she, uh, Isabelle, hah, ha, she didn't say a word. Not a single word all night. The next morning at breakfast, it happened."

Did I miss something? "What happened?"

"When I was having breakfast with the others, she rushed into the dining room, waving some papers over her head, and accused me of breaking the lease. She called me a bum and screamed that I owed her nine months' rent."

"Wait a moment - wait," I interrupted. His explanation was going far afield. "She's not suing you



for the rent. She swore out a criminal complaint for theft!"

He hardly heard me. "I was disgraced in the presence of my friends. One of the tenants is a Neapolitan, a young widow, poor woman. I packed my things, called a cab, and left that morning. One, two, three!"

With much bitterness, Anthony Lancellotti continued. "Can you imagine how dishonored I felt, sitting at that table while she insulted me? I resolved that she would pay some day. How would you avenge yourself?"

I returned to my scribbling, but now I understood. Emily Simmons was illegally using a false criminal complaint to pressure her former tenant into paying for part of the rent which she could not collect on an unsigned lease.

I finished my notetaking, closed the briefcase, and told Anthony Lancellotti that we would meet in court at the designated time.

"I don't know," I said hesitantly, "how much of a fee to charge. I'll let you know after the trial. Okay?"

"Oh, sure, sure. Whatever you say. Listen, I knew your Papa when we were no bigger than a violin."

As soon as I left the studio, I rushed to a public telephone. Fortunately, Abe Schwartz was in his office. Abe worked for a busy law firm and was a friend from law school days.

I summarized the case and was pleased when he agreed to help. He asked that I visit him at his apartment that evening since his law firm held him closely accountable for his time in the office. I was unprepared for his

invitation, and began to offer some lame excuse.

"It took me three months," Abe said, "to persuade my mother that I was not deserting her if I rented my own apartment. I have one of those new pressure cookers. Hungarian goulash is the chef's special tonight. Dinner is at seven o'clock. Please bring an appetite."

I copied the address of his Manhattan apartment and then telephoned my home. Mama was out shopping, which allowed me to avoid a dozen pressing questions as to why I would not be home for dinner. I left a brief message with my sister.

That evening, while Abe and I ate goulash, he explained the penalty for violation of Section 462, Paragraph B. "It's thirty days to one year in the clinker, or up to a \$500 fine, or both, if you hit the jackpot."

I drew a deep breath. "Tell me about the Magistrate's Court," I asked. "We don't have one in New Rochelle."

"It's a New York City criminal court," Abe said, "but it tries misdemeanors only, and handles arraignments for felonies. There's no jury."

After dinner, I read my notes to Abe and he finally said, "Listen, my advice is for your fiddlin' friend to pay this gal the \$180 out of court - before the case is reached - so that the charges are dropped. Telephone your client right away. Tell him it's a bargain at that price."

I hesitated, thinking what an ignominious resolution of my first case, but I telephoned Anthony Lancellotti at his West End

apartment.

"Do you call that American justice?" he asked bitterly. "Not a red penny!"

I persisted for a few more minutes, emphasizing not justice, but pragmatism. My client remained adamant. "See you in court," he said with finality.

I turned to Abe. "You heard. I tried, but he refuses to cave in to her ridiculous charges."

We discussed the case further, Abe probing with more questions. "And another thing," he asked. "What's this business about his liking the wallpaper in her bedroom?"

"That's all -- he just liked the wallpaper." As soon as I said it, I felt foolish.

Abe looked wisely amused. "Emily Simmons," he pontificated, "did not swear out a warrant merely to get some rent money, no siree. She wants her famous client to sit in jail this summer. Hell hath no fury . . ."

Abe went no further, but later, while we walked up Fifth Avenue toward Grand Central Station, he warned me. "Don't put Lothario Lancellotti on the stand. Believe it or not, adultery is still a crime in New York, and your loquacious client might open that door. An assistant D. A. or a newspaper reporter might walk through the door right into the bedroom. Heh, heh, heh." That's how Abe laughs, even today.

I arrived home very late and used the rear entrance. Papa was waiting alone in the darkness on the porch; I could see the glow of his cigar.

"How is Anthony Lancellotti?" he asked. "Everything hunky-dory?"





Papa liked American slang.

Three days later, at the designated time, I saw my client in the rear of the crowded courtroom. He hurried toward me, smiling with excitement. "Did you hear the news?" he asked, clasp my free arm. "Did you see the *Times* this morning?"

"What news? I didn't see anything special."

"You didn't see anything?" He observed me solemnly, with disappointment. "It was right smack on the front page. Toscanini, Arturo Toscanini," he said reverently, "was chosen to organize and conduct the new NBC Philharmonic Orchestra."

"Oh, yes, that. I saw the headline."

"Imagine," he continued, "for the first time ever, the whole country will hear great music over the radio at the very moment it's played. Isn't that news?"

"Yes," I conceded, "that's news."

"It hasn't been officially announced yet," he whispered, "but guess who the first violinist will be?" He winked broadly and poked me in the ribs. "I report for rehearsal as soon as I return from Europe."

I disengaged my arm and, with much unease, I began to tell my client to prepare himself for the possible cancellation of both his European concert and his new appointment, depending on the outcome of the case.

"You see," I explained, "cases like these are . . . well, unpredictable."

"Un what?" he asked absently. His attention was directed over my shoulder toward the middle of the courtroom.

"Unpredictable. Listen to me; pay attention. What would happen, let's

say, if you had to cancel your concert or report for rehearsal a few weeks late?"

Before he could reply, the court clerk called out, "City of New York versus Anthony Lancellotti." A woman I took to be Emily Simmons arose from the middle of the courtroom and strode forward purposefully toward the witness stand. She was well groomed, wide shoulders, regular features, blondish hair pulled into a bun. Overall, prim.

I walked toward the attorney's bench, closely followed by my client. "Where's the jury?" I heard him ask suspiciously. "I don't see a jury."

Instead of sitting beside me, Anthony Lancellotti faced the visitors in the courtroom. He smiled and beamed as if he were granting an encore.

Emily Simmons testified that she had discovered one dozen towels, six sheets, and four pillow cases -- all brand new -- missing from her linen closet right after Anthony Lancellotti had moved. She displayed a Macy's sales receipt which showed that she had recently purchased the merchandise.

When she finished her testimony, I asked, "Did you see the defendant take the goods?" No, she did not. "Was the linen closet under lock and key?" No, not then, but it's locked now. "Was the linen closet accessible to others?" Well, yes.

I turned to the judge. "Your Honor, I respectfully ask that these charges be dismissed. There is no testimony that the defendant was seen taking the goods in question. My client, your Honor, is a highly respected, nationally famous

musician, and he has no need" -- I used theatrical sarcasm -- "for one dozen towels, six sheets and four pillow cases."

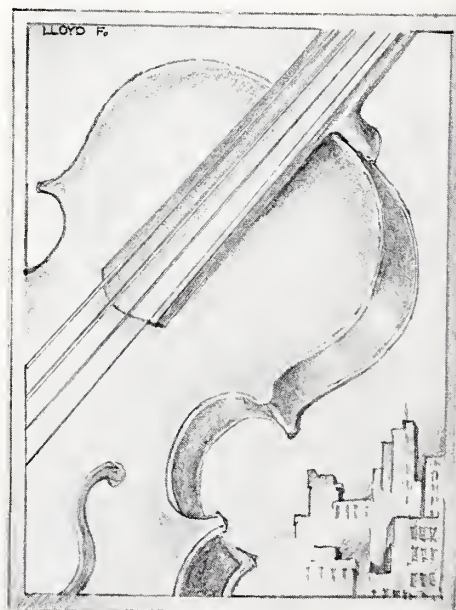
I paused for the judge's ruling. He said perfunctorily, "Charges dismissed. Next case."

When we left the courthouse, I floated down the steps while Anthony Lancellotti hailed a taxi and directed the driver to Carnegie Hall. In the cab I told him my fee -- fifty dollars.

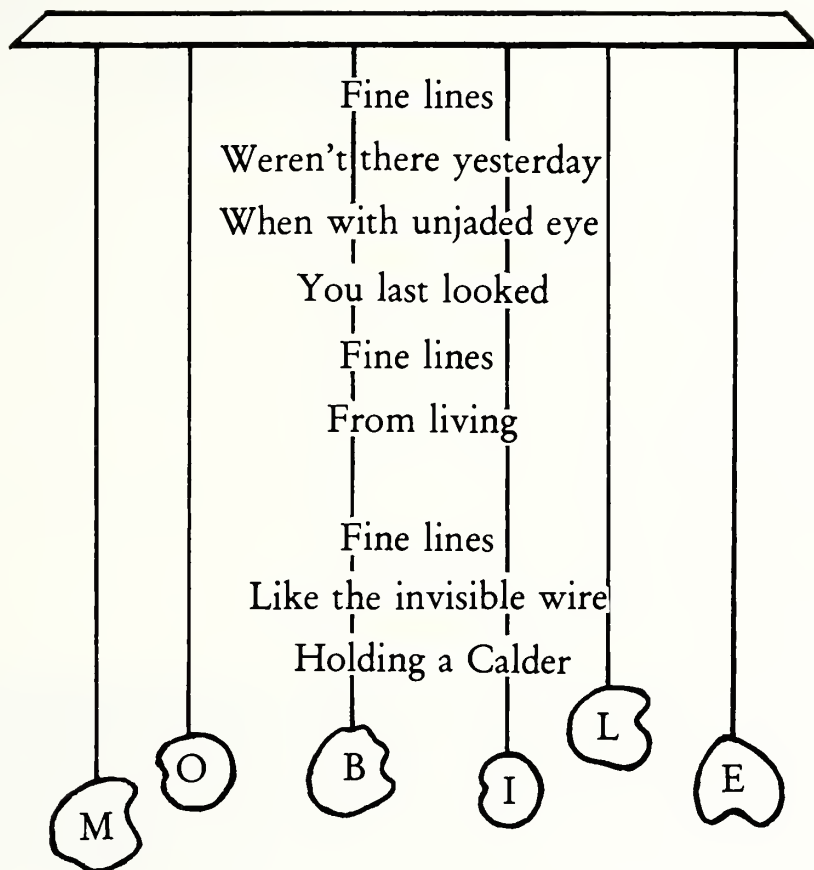
"That's fair," he said. "Very fair." And reached into his wallet to remove five ten dollar bills. I leaned forward to tell the driver to leave me off at the nearest subway station.

"Oh, no!" Anthony Lancellotti interrupted. "You must come with me to my studio. I have a present for your Mama. A nice set of towels, sheets, and pillow cases -- all brand new."

He leaned back, humming "Musetta's Waltz" from *La Boheme*.



FINE LINES



Immobile  
Until seized by a sigh  
It gyrates crazily

Fine lines  
Visible only  
When dreams outlive reality  
Unable to distinguish  
What is/what was  
Ending in  
The/final/fine/line

*Shirley Blum*



## Joan Pollak

### ASHES

A cigarette glows  
Dimly  
In the shadowed kitchen.  
Papa sits and rocks.  
Folks say  
He was better  
Before the lid was sealed  
On Mama's casket,  
Creaking  
Like rubber soles grinding  
Ashes  
Onto her waxed floor.



Casey McCormick

## CACTUS ENDURES

"Cactus endures,"  
He said in June  
And planted one  
Along the gravel of the drive.

She pulled the baby  
From its crib  
And diaper,  
And wrung it in the sink.  
"Cactus retains moisture,"  
He said.

She pushed a safety pin  
Through cloth  
And stroked  
Smooth baby skin  
As he pried  
A cactus-needle from his hand  
And licked the blood.  
The baby cried.  
"Cactus is self-sufficient,"  
He said,  
His tires  
Tossing gravel down the drive.

In March  
The cactus bloomed  
And the baby crawled.

## OH TO BE A SUB-BOURBON HOUSEWIFE

Oh to be a sub-bourbon housewife  
With 2.5 soaped and scrubbed kids  
Under her influence  
And underfoot.

Drunk with the power to plastic-purchase  
She goes out  
Fitted in Barbie-doll clothes  
With matching accessories,  
Searching for that something special  
To give her House Beautiful  
Its magazine gloss,  
And finding  
A warming spread  
Envelop her with the certainty  
That nothing really changes  
But the year,  
That she still has the same shape  
As ten years before,  
When she was pregnant.

Oh to be sub-bourbon,  
When her husband arranges his business affairs  
To resume when the office is locked  
For the night,  
And the meat and potatoes  
Have long since been stewed,  
And she waits for the phone call  
That says he'll be late  
In the hour or two  
That she's claimed as her own.

So she searches the classifieds  
Wanting some help,  
While the print of the page  
Blurs like smudges of dirt.  
But knowing  
How well alcohol disinfects,  
She empties the bottle.



EXPIRED

Grandma asked to see me  
Through black-bruised eyes that do not heal  
But dim and darken  
Turning glassy  
As dusk seeping through the window,  
While the robot organ  
At her bedside hums.

I remember driving with her  
In the city,  
Through the streams of traffic  
That hemorrhaged in the street.  
She pumped and pressed a blood-flow  
To the engine,  
Humming as the motor groaned and coughed.

I tell her  
That I will soon be leaving,  
Gaze out the window  
Onto an empty street,  
Watching, curbside,  
For my metered minutes to expire.  
Again she asks me  
When will I arrive.

Down in the street  
A siren wail approaches,  
Its shriek  
Persistent as a baby's cry.  
I say I really must be going  
Before rush hour  
Forms a traffic-clot of cars.

I bend as though to kiss her.  
She turns away  
And offers me a cheek,  
Mumbling she hopes that I will see her,  
In words dragging  
As though slowed by the brake.

I prop her head upon the pillow.  
She seems to sink  
And fade to white.  
And as I tug the pull-cord at the window,  
Her lids snap shut,  
A curtain drawn on life.

CAT'S CRADLE

Grampa played it:  
passed under, over,  
around each finger.  
Grandma taught how  
string would stretch:  
gentle contours  
swiftly sharp.  
Never understood why  
they called it "Cat's Cradle."  
Then they died:  
the mystery of the cradle  
followed them to the grave.

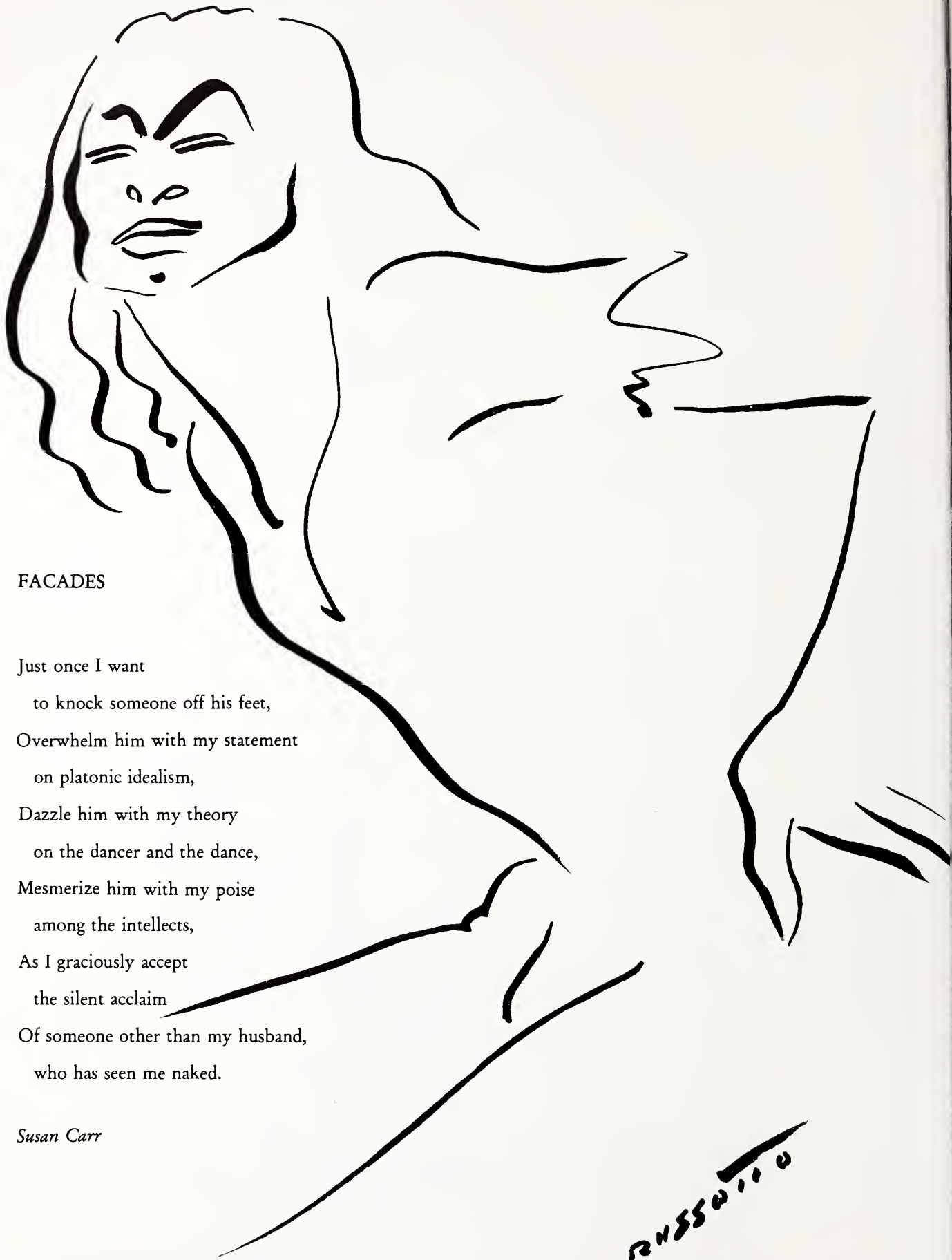
*Monica Earle Carlton*

TODAY

Today I held my mother's  
hand as we went to cross  
the street.  
That familiar feeling swept  
over me, only I was the one  
to grab her arm in the  
shielding, protective way.  
And hours later, while she  
was making an eggplant parmesian  
for dinner (my favorite),  
I sat on my bed and cried.

*lori winkler*





FACADES

Just once I want  
to knock someone off his feet,  
Overwhelm him with my statement  
on platonic idealism,  
Dazzle him with my theory  
on the dancer and the dance,  
Mesmerize him with my poise  
among the intellectuals,  
As I graciously accept  
the silent acclaim  
Of someone other than my husband,  
who has seen me naked.

*Susan Carr*

*RUSSELL*

# art



Noemi Brudno



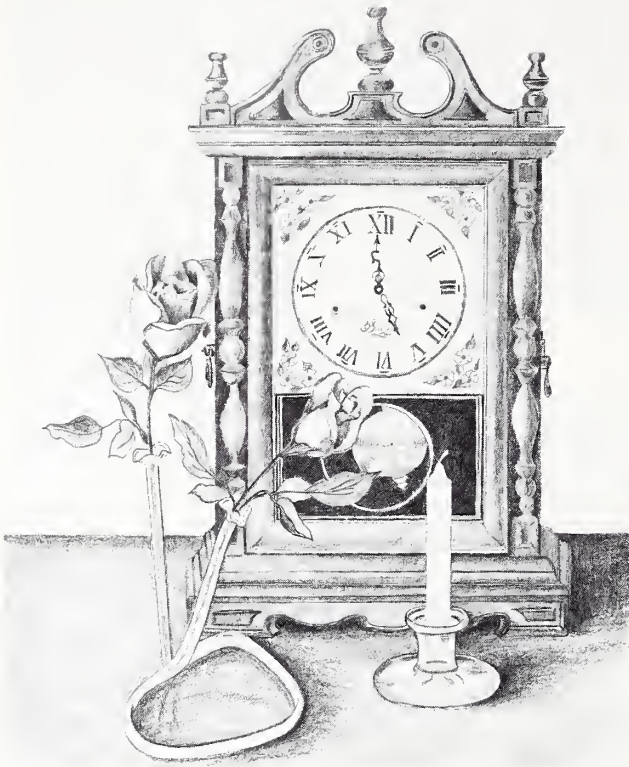
Susan DeCosta



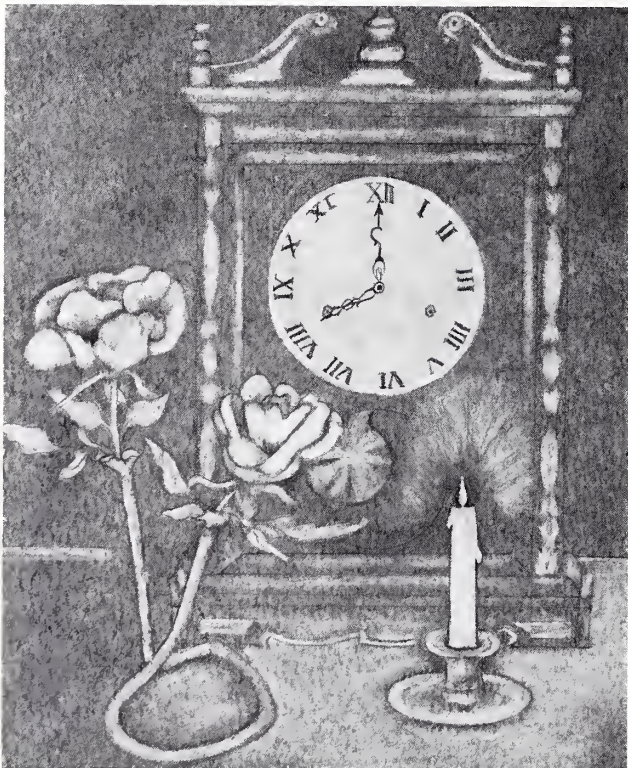




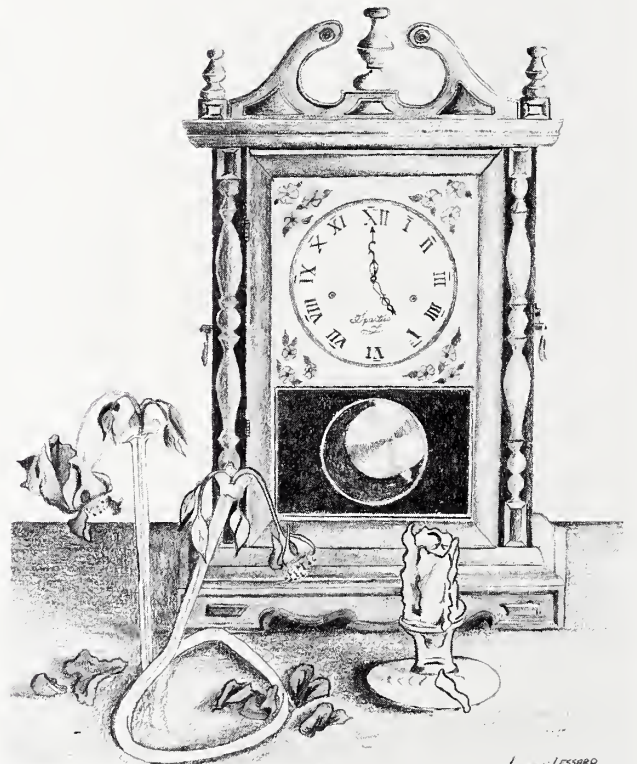
art



*Noreen Lessard*



*Noreen Lessard*



*NOREEN LESSARD*

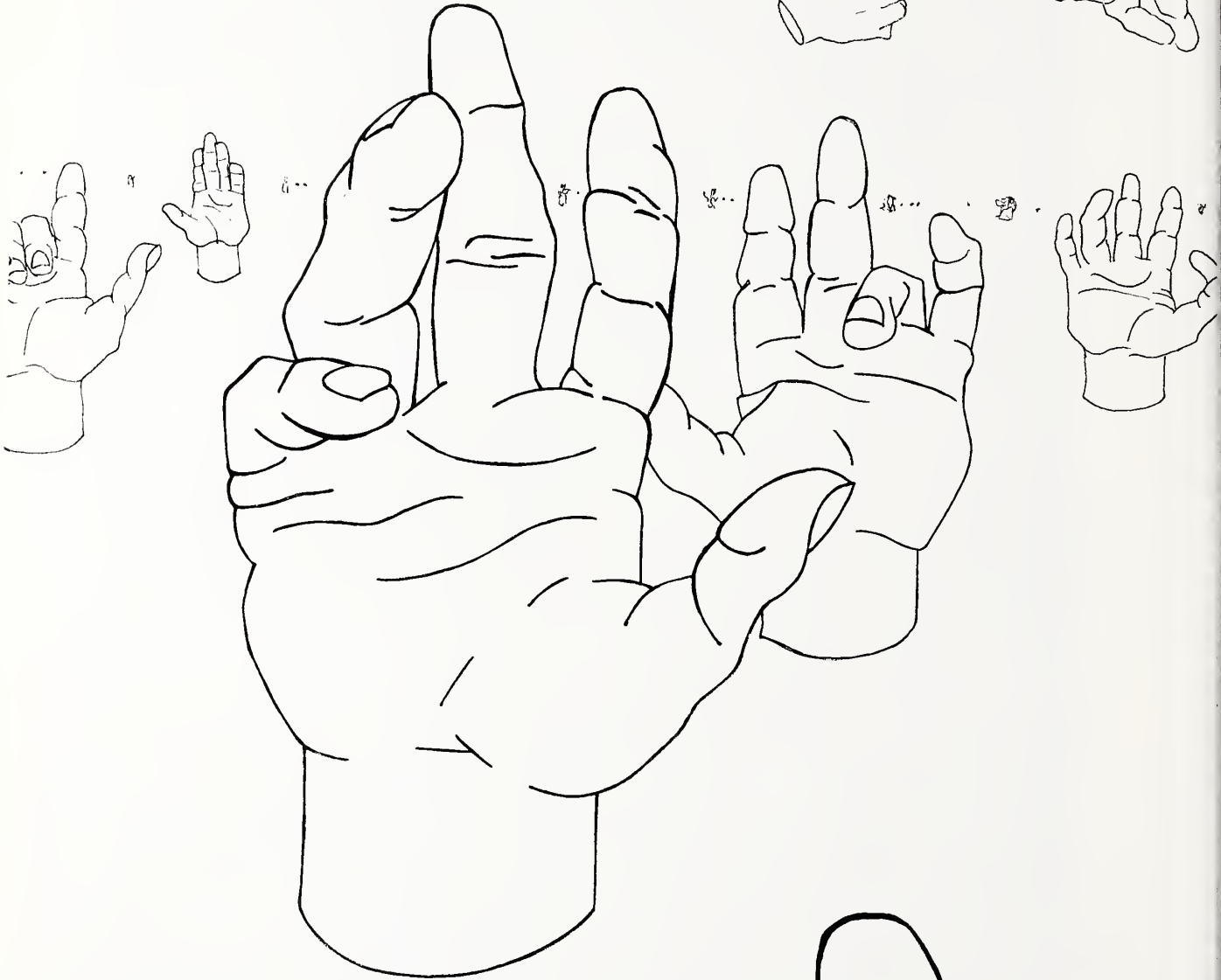
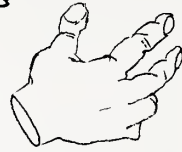
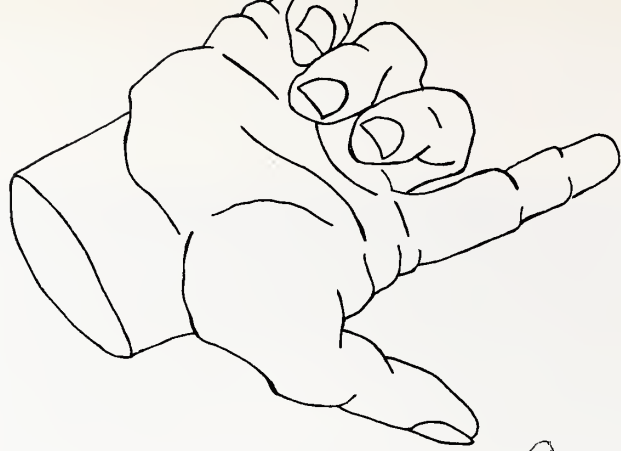
*Noreen Lessard*





*Malgorzata Samek*





# Wednesday's Physical Therapy

S. A. Stirnemann

All the machines down in Rehab are sort of moaning and sighing like they always do, pushing back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, and I look over at Sonny Man again and he's still got that same silly look on his face, sort of smiling, and I think, he wouldn't be smiling if anything was wrong, would he? No. No, of course not, and I pull harder, harder on the ropes and my arms will be as strong as Samson's soon. I'm only imagining . . . pull! Sonny Man's okay . . . pull! Nothing's wrong . . . pull! Pull! Pull! Pull!

I can pull myself all the way up by myself already Hey Dellie, watch me! I can chin myself on the high bar ten times. See? One . . . two . . . three I can chin better than anybody in the whole fifth grade four . . . five . . . five! five! five! dustoff! someone's screaming into the radio five! dustoff! and something's gone wrong and my legs are too heavy, they're pulling me down, down and I'm gonna fall! I'm gonna fall! Dellie's so pretty. Did you hurt your legs, Michael, does it hurt? No, it doesn't hurt, go away, go away! Don't anyone tell Dellie. Don't tell her. It doesn't hurt. Really. It doesn't. I don't feel anything at all.

Sonny Man's always saying he can feel his and I wish he'd move. I wish he'd stop smiling and move. The machines haven't stopped. They just

keep going up and down, up and down, up and down, and Sonny Man just grinned at Jarbo that time Jarbo called him a stumpman and said, at least I can still do something with mine and I used to like doing it a lot. Almost as much as football. And he kept on grinning and Jarbo didn't say anything anymore because Jarbo can't do it to a woman anymore because he can't feel his. But the only woman who ever comes to see Sonny Man is his mother and all she does is cry.

There's Jessie, of course, but Jessie comes to see all of us. Charlie Digby, Andrew, even Jarbo, so Sonny Man doesn't have his own girl coming to see him. Jessie's the only one. She's the one who brought him in those old Georgia Tech gym shorts he's got on and maybe that's why he's smiling, remembering, maybe, that time him and some girl named Karen De Harper did it in the men's locker room standing up behind the lockers and he said it was the best he ever had.

\*All that sweat, he said, sweaty socks, sweaty underwear, nearly drove her crazy and then he propped a chair up against the door and they did it again in the showers, the water washing the sweat down their legs . . . and that's what's wrong.

He isn't sweating.


After all that exercise, he should be sweating, but he's not.

And maybe I knew all along something was wrong, but I've been pretending so long I can't tell what's real anymore. I can't even tell if they're laughing in the whirlpools in there or if they're screaming. Sometimes it sounds like screaming and maybe it is or maybe I'm only making things up again except I'm pretty sure Sonny Man is gone only I won't want to drag myself over there and turn off his machine to find out for sure because I think if I do this whole place will turn into a solid block of white, freezing us inside, as blood oozes down the walls and drips from the ceiling, drops splattering all around us and splashing on our faces and hands and running down our legs until we're sitting in deep red pools and I baptize you in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord Amen but no, no Sonny Man had already baptized himself in that shower with that girl and it had been more real, more holy than any holy water anywhere in the world.

And it had saved him.

That memory had been the one real thing left for him when everything else was gone and he had to lay there in those clean white sheets and look up at that clean white ceiling, blank and odorless, with nothing to make him smell like a man anymore, cleansed of all traces of jungle rot and exploding smoke, and all traces, too, of football and locker rooms.

Too clean. So maybe it's okay if Sonny Man has stopped, sitting there in his old grey Georgia Tech gym shorts with the machines still going as though he couldn't stop until they did, and Sonny Man smiling and looking down sort of surprised like he had just noticed he didn't have any legs. Yes, maybe it's okay.

But not for me, I've still got legs. And I've got to know what it's like to do it in a shower, too. It's possible. I'm sure it's possible. Jessie will know. I'll ask her about it tomorrow when she comes. Tomorrow. 





*John Moriconi*



# With

## Warmest Regards

## To Boss

### Daniel Kenny

The dark ripped past his ears, filling his head. The streaks were getting to him. One after another, they came out of the black, barely missing him, vanishing, only to be followed by more. *whoosh whoosh whoosh. straight outta star wars. christ they're getting close.*

The twin beams struck him, breaking his empty thoughts. *aaagh!*

He hit the foot control. The intruder slid and scampered, then disappeared to the side. *take that. another alien sleaze bites the big one in the name of truth, justice and uh . . . freedom. yeah -- freedom. truth, justice and freedom. let's hear it for freedom. whoopee.*

Since the windows were already down, he figured he might as well put the top down, too. The wind blacked out everything: no music, no thinking, no nothing. Nothing but black. Complete black. Except, of course, for the Screamer. His brain was under construction, and now the little bastards were digging out the jackhammers. *ignore it ignore it. it figured something would have to foul this up. why can't i tear loose just once? rip it and just let go? not me, hell no.*

*nope nope nope not me.*

It made him want to scream himself. *right up from the gut and let it build up through the chest and keep on going till it stiffens the spine and tilts the head back and just let loose with a scream that would rip your head clean.*

"Henderson, if you don't get your head together, you're gonna find the slip in this week's envelope."

"Huh?"

"I said that if . . ." *i'm still here. jesus have mercy, i'm still here. i can't believe this.*

The gray shoved its way in through the windows, cutting through the fluorescent lights hanging high overhead. Hovering above the factory noises, it became heavy enough to press down on the heads working below. From every direction, heavy machinery ruptured the brain with explosive clanks and bangs. He felt it all squeezing the staleness out of his lungs. *just push it to the floor, punch it 'til it throws a piston and the block falls out. just get the hell outta here.*

The foreman was droning on, like an old refrigerator, but Henderson barely noticed him. Couldn't even hear him, in fact. Words like "quota"

and "fired" wormed in through the haze, but didn't register.

By now Henderson could work the foreman like a nine dollar transistor radio with a cracked speaker: shut the volume down far enough, and you shut out the distortion. This time, however, Henderson had turned the volume down so far, the music wasn't even coming out. But even with the cheapest radios, a note can sound that will rattle the speaker and make the listener flinch.

"Are you listening to me?"

"Yeah, sure."

"I mean it - get in gear. Blow your quota and you walk."

"Goddamnit, Bill, I've never missed a quota, and you know it."

"Don't start now."

Henderson just turned his back.

"Fuck you, Brownnose."

"Whadyou say?"

"I said, 'I won't.' Don't worry. I'll handle it, no problem. I promise."

"You better." *whiny, back-biting, egg-sucking worm even in high school.*

Psibilski walked away. *what do i do? jesus christ, i forgot what i do.*

From behind, Sonny broke the muck:

"Hey, Tommy." . . . *something to do with . . . uh . . .*

"Tommy."

Backward glance:

"Huh?"

"When you gonna put Brownnose's lights out for him?"

"Right."

"I mean, he's been doggin' you for the last four mon . . ." *yeah yeah right right right. i know.*

The jackhammers rang in the night.

He tried the key for the third time. *upside down. this is beautiful. i can't even get inna my own house. i'm in grand shape.*

The correction made, the key slid easily into the slot. The kitchen light was on, but the only other light visible was the flickering blue of the television in the living room. *cow.*

He looked at the dinner table, still not cleared. Frozen macaroni, once heated, now cold, filled half of its aluminum tray. He looked at the overcooked mush with a combination of revulsion and lust. He tried to pick up a slice of bread, knocked over the pepper, and tried again. *stale. thank god that wasn't salt. that'd be all i need.*

He bit into the bread.

It bounced slightly when he dropped it. *dear god, i'm in grand shape -- this even looks good. i love the way the grease turns white when the hamburgers get cold. it's like christmas.*

Humming "Jingle Bells," he foraged the refrigerator for a beer. *no -- six. i sprang for six rounds, unless it was seven. who cares? i don't. i got enough to get me through the rest of the week. well -- it's now or never.*

"Honey, I'm home."

No answer.

He walked through the living room, self-conscious and stiff. *don't step on the dump truck jesus, be careful. that's it -- she can't tell. if i trip, i'll die.*

Purposely coming between the tv and the couch, he braced himself for her tirade. *don't speak, then. bitch. you think you're doing me some sorta favor by speakin to me? i'm supposed to be*

*grateful that you're splayed all over the couch like that? all day . . . doing . . . working. yeah, bust my butt all day working and you don't even have the courtesy to speak. i oughtta bust your head for you. and a coupla teeth, too. you'd talk then. bet your ass. you ain't doin' me no favors.*

By this time, he was on the bed, having worked one foot bare. He was working on the other one when he passed out.

Hangover. *jesus, i wish i could puke. i'd be alright if i could just throw up.*

He looked at his eggs. The proposition of vomiting became too real, so the eggs ended up a foot away. On the other side of the table, his wife looked up to the sound of the sliding plate.

"Figured you wouldn't eat."

"Don't start."

"How much did you blow last night?"

"You're starting."

"You know, it kills me the way you'll go out and blow our money on your useless friends, while we're sitting here with this lousy wallpaper."

He looked at the wallpaper. It was yellowed and curling.

". . . it's a goddamned disgrace. You know that? Are you listening to me?"

"No."

"Well, you better listen, 'cause I'm telling you that I've had it up to here with this crap. I'm gonna have new wallpaper, and a few other things, in here by Christmas, or I'm gonna. . ." *jesus. she's still on the wallpaper. you'd think she woulda moved on by now. god knows her list is long enough.*

"I'll put in for overtime." *shoulda known she'd make eggs. every hangover -- eggs. how's she always know which morning i'll feel like shit?*

"Yeah, sure."

"Huh?"

"Yeah, I'm sure you'll put in for overtime. Wanna know the last time you put in for overtime? It was when you . . ."

The white streaks cut through her words like a chainsaw. *foot down til it won't go down anymore. may as well*

*put the top down, too.*

". . . so whadda we gonna do about Jimmy?"

Braked screeching fishtail.

"What about Jimmy?"

"Haven't you been listening?"

His Screamer would not let him answer. He just looked down and squeezed his eyes shut as reply. Her heavy sigh, perfected, patented, and gift-wrapped, preceded her narration.

"He was in a fight at school."

"Who'd he tell on now?" *oops.*

"There you go -- always blaming him . . ." *shit.*

". . . how do you know someone wasn't picking on him and he just stood up for himself?" *not at seven in the morning. i could scream.*

"You'd think you could be like a normal father and stick up for your own son. But, oh no, not Mr.





Baseball, not Tommy Henderson. Joe Athlete can't be bothered with a son who wears glasses and reads books. Not you. I bet if he went out for Little League you could . . ." *ab shut up.* ". . . you never did like him. Just because he loves me, you hate him." *you got it sweetheart. little mamma's boy. you did a wonderful job on him, baby. he's just like you: whiny and sneaky. but i can tell you right now, little jamie's gonna be different. my little girl's gonna act like a human being. you ain't gonna mess her up.*

". . . not 'Daddy's precious angel.' Oh no. God knows Jamie can do no wrong. If you were half as decent to him as you are to her . . ." *shut up.* ". . . gets all of your attention. Weekends, any time you're not drinking, you're playing with Jamie. Maybe if you spent more time with Jimmy, he just might be more the way you want. It's your fault."

"Don't blame me, baby. It's not my fault my son's a . . ." *oh hell. here we go.*

"You son of a bitch! You useless . . . How dare you . . ."

"Shut up."

"I will not!"

"Shut up, or I'll BREAK YOUR NECK!"

Believing him, she did, in fact, shut up.

"Where is he?"

"He's still in bed."

"Okay, baby, you're so concerned about our son's well-being, I'll tell ya whatchya do - go wake him up and take him to school."

"Me?"

"Yeah, you. I'd really love to do it, but I gotta go to work and bust my ass for your wallpaper. Now I know that this means that you'll have to get dressed for a change, but hey, baby, tough. And guess what - if you shag your ass a little bit, you just might make it back for 'General Hospital.'"

On his way to the factory, the sidewalk turned to streaks.

The beer can glowed in the dull red from his cigarette. He sipped the beer, put out the half-smoked cigarette, and

immediately lit another. Sitting alone in the kitchen, he was unaware that it was nearly three a.m. *he's another bill. my kid is another goddamned bill psibilski. little bastard is gonna go out for baseball. and he's gonna be good at it. i'm gonna kill him. he gets on my ass one more time, i'm gonna bust his friggin' head. i gotta wash the car. i haven't washed it in . . . jesus i'm drunk. i haven't washed it in three -- no, four years. four years this february. i loved that car. . . beer runs and all those parties at the lake. hadda lotta fun with that car. knocked her up in it, for chrissakes. shoulda slit her throat. lousy rotten job. do the same thing over and over and OVER. don't pay, either. christ almighty, i owe my ass to everybody from sears and kresge's to the bank. try to explain that. try and explain that i ain't her ol' man. i can't afford all this. i can't afford two kids. got half of what that car was worth. i swear to god, he's just like bill. he really is. gets beat up at school for tellin' on the other kids. i oughtta bust him like i busted bill. he was always tryin' to screw me over, from day one. one cigarette. one lousy cigarette in the john. i even flushed it down the toilet when i was done. so who'd it hurt? damn near got me kicked off the team. if they'd caught me doin it, they woulda. if i hadn't a been all-country, they woulda. you couldn't bust me then, and you ain't gonna do it now. wish i had my car. just jump in that baby, and cruise down some county road. maybe out to the lake. anywhere. maybe nowhere. just cruise . . . nothin but the wind and the dark. . . seven lousy years. it all went to shit so fast . . . so fast . . . i can't take it anymore.*

In the middle of the factory, he was cruising down the county road in the dark and the wind, with nothing but the white lines running past. He was in control. Complete control. No one was telling him what to do, no one was asking for money, or beating up his son. He was the boss. He was the driver, and his entire world lay in the weight of his right foot. He was calling all of the shots, and for once, he

was the Man. Then, Psibiski came up.

"That's it, Henderson! I've had it with your bullshit! Either get it in gear, or get the hell out!"

Henderson slowly turned to face the intrusion.

Sonny broke in from behind. "Hey, c'mon, Bill. Don't you ever think about things?"

"You mind your own business, Wilkins. You can be gone just as fast."

Sonny looked at the foreman, then at Henderson, then went back to work.

"Henderson, goddamnit! Didn't you hear me? Get to work!"

Henderson, numb from the wind, just looked at the foreman with a dull, blank stare.

"Huh?"

"You stupid moron! I said turn around and get back to . . ."

Psibilski grabbed him. ". . . work!"

Psibilski put both hands on Tommy's shoulders, and tried to twist him to the opposite direction, facing Henderson's work bench. Almost all work in the factory had ceased. Tommy snapped. He stiffened, and the once empty eyes cracked clear and sharp. He saw the foreman screaming, but didn't hear him. All he was aware of was Psibilski's mouth working furiously. All he felt was his hands placed hard upon his shoulders. All he knew was that everyone, for fifty feet around, was staring at him. All he understood was the gray and the stale and the anger. He was barely aware, however, that he was pulling his fist back.

"I'm the boss." Psibilski's blood splattered across the front of his shirt.

Psibilski was lying on the factory floor, crawling away from the staring Henderson. With one hand supporting himself, and the other trying to stop the flow of blood from the middle of his face, Psibilski screamed hysterically.

"Get out! Get him away from me! You moron bastard, you're through! Fired! Get him outta here! GET HIM OUT!"



Henderson had not moved. He simply stood, fists clenched at his sides, staring at the foreman. No one in the crowd that had gathered stepped forward to intervene.

"He finally did it."

"Look at that son of bitch bleed."

"Get him away from me!"

He didn't know how long he wandered. He vaguely remembered watching a group of kids playing stickball in the street. How long he had watched them, he could not be sure, but, yes, he had watched them. Of that he was sure.

It was still light out when he got back home, so he was reasonably sure that he had not been walking for too long. In the driveway, he saw the old Dodge. It burned oil, and cost \$750, and for the two years since he bought it, he had refused to drive it. The "Quarterback" was within walking distance, as was the factory, so he really had no need to drive it. Until now.

He walked into the living room, startling his wife into a sitting position on the couch.

"Tommy! . . . Why are you home so ear. . . Is that blood? What are you . . ."

"Where're the kids?"

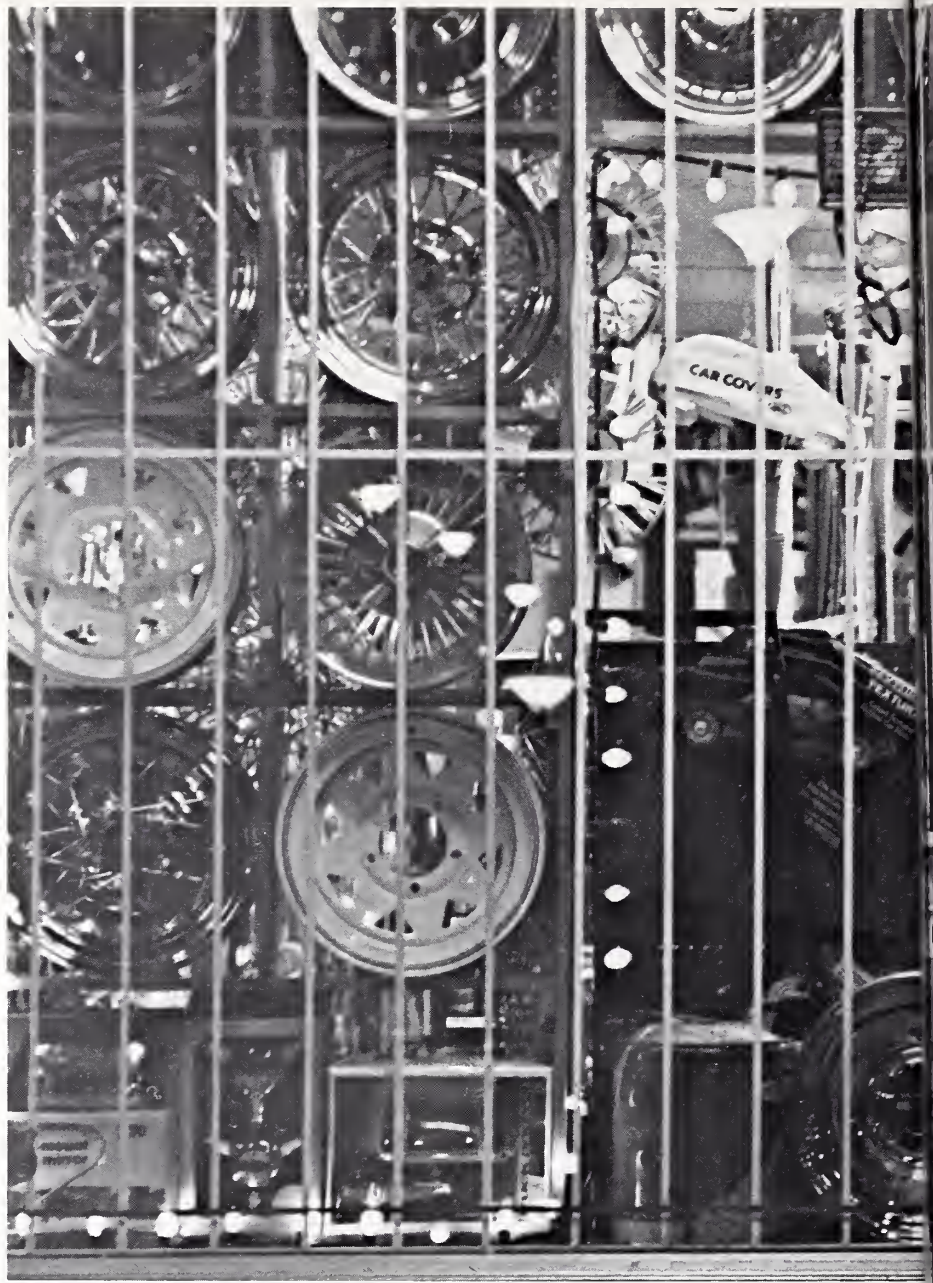
"Jimmy's out playing, and Jamie's taking her nap. Why? What's going on?"

Ignoring her, he walked into the kids' room, closing the door behind him. There lay his daughter. The curtains were drawn, and the late afternoon sun offered little light to the small room. Kneeling beside her, he began to whisper.

"You can't understand, can ya? I hope you never will. Oh, honey, I wanna take you with me, honest I do, but you're so little. What kinda life can a loser like me offer a four-year-old? Don't hate me. Please don't hate me. I love you so much. You're the only thing in this world that isn't rotten. You'll never know just how much . . ."

"Daddy?"

". . . Hi, Kitten."



Frank Polito

"Didja bring me sum'tin?"

"No, doll. Listen, Daddy has somethin' very important to tell you, so you gotta promise to listen, okay? Okay. Now I'm goin' away for a little bit . . ."

"Can I go too?" *damn.*

"No, honey. See - it's like this . . ." *why did she have to wake up?*

". . . I'm gonna be back real soon. But until I come back, you gotta promise to do everything Mommy tells you to do, okay?"

"Okay." *she's still not awake. do it and go. c'mon.*

"I love you, honey. You know that?"

"Uh huh. Daddy?"

"Yeah?"

"You gonna be back later?"

"Yes." *liar.*

"You gonna be back tonight?"

"Maybe . . ." *liar. liar.*

"Will you bring me sum'tin when you come back?"

"Anything you want, sweetheart. Anything at all."

She had fallen back asleep in the crook of his arm.

Back in the living room, his wife waited. Arms folded, she looked at him as he came from the room, waiting until he was almost next to





her before she spoke.

"Tommy, what the hell is going on?"

"I got fired."

"What?"

"I got fired."

"I heard that, but . . . why? How? When?"

"This afternoon. I punched Bill."

"Psibilski?"

"Yeah."

"Your boss?"

"Uh huh."

"You stupid jerk. You got a family and bills, and you go and beat up on your boss?"

"He ain't my boss, no more. And I

didn't 'beat him up.' I only hit him once."

"Oh, that's just wonderful. Everything's okay. You only hit him once. You're so damn stupid."

"Where're the keys?"

"What the hell do you want with those?"

"Just gimme the goddamn keys, will ya?"

"Not until you tell me what we're gonna do for money. How the hell're we gonna eat? What're we gonna . . ."

"Never mind, I found 'em."

"What?!"

"The keys."

"To hell with the goddamn keys!

Tommy, you lost your job. Now I wanna know what . . . wait a minute. You spineless creep, you aren't gonna walk out on me, are you? Tommy? Answer me."

He walked to the door, turned around, and went for her purse.

"No! You son of a bitch! Get away from that! Gimme those keys! Tommy!"

She chased him out to the kitchen. He rummaged the purse as he went.

"Thirty-four bucks? Where did you get thirty-four bucks, anyway?"

"I've been saving . . . Tommy, you can't! You bastard! What about Jimmy?"

"Screw him."

"What about Jamie?"

He winced.

". . . Well?"

As she panicked and lunged for him, he turned to go. Tears were streaming down her face and she screamed his name. Grabbing his shirt, she spun him around. By the time he finished slapping her, she was sobbing, bundled in the corner by the refrigerator. Before he started the car, he heard her shriek louder than she had shrieked in seven years of marriage.

"I'll kill you, you bastard!"

As he pulled away, she chased him, throwing dirty breakfast dishes. One of them struck the back of the car.

"Tommy, for chrissakes, don't leave!"

She fell to her knees as he turned the corner.

The Quarterback Lounge was not so much a lounge as it was a neighborhood dive. Don Andrews, the owner, decided that "lounge" sounded better than "bar" or any of the other tags given to drinking establishments. Its location, less than half a mile from the town's electronic components factory, dissolved any pretense of sophistication that Andrews had hoped to attain with "lounge." It was a working-class bar. Every weekday at five, factory workers started coming in to drown



the tedium of the last eight hours.

Tommy, figuring that he would have one for the road, had arrived at four-thirty. That was nearly four hours before, and since then, things had become progressively blurry. Bill Psibilski had not been particularly popular at the factory, and after the earlier events, Henderson had become something of a hero. As the workers filed in, they would spot Tommy sitting at the end of the bar. Invariably, they would insist upon buying him drinks.

"That was really pretty, Tommy."

"Yeah. Ol' Brownnose still don't know what hit him."

"Hey, Don, how about settin' Tommy, here, up again."

Despite the levity of his companions, Henderson simply sat, sullenly downing the offered drinks. He lost count of how many he had, or who had bought them. He didn't care. *leave me alone. just get lost. nothin' but sheep. you jump on the bus, go where they take ya, get off where they tell ya, when they tell ya. well i ain't no damn sheep and nobody's gonna drive me anywhere. i'm free of that bullshit. i got the wheel, and i'm gonna go where i wanna go.*

Things were becoming blurrier. Not only could he not keep track of the people he had spoken to, he was having trouble remembering who he was speaking to. Psibilski was indeed unpopular. He was so unpopular, Henderson was having trouble sitting upright on his stool. He could barely comprehend the great news that Sonny Wilkins was trying to tell him.

"... so anyway, me and Steve, we go to Andy Farrel, y'know, the shop steward. We tell him the whole story, and he goes to the area guys. Hey, Tommy, are you listening?"

"Uh... yeah."

"So we just got back from Andy's. He says you got a review. Ya hear that? You got a hearing before the Review Board. Ya know what that means?"

"... Uh... no."

"Jesus, you're really smashed

tonight. A Review Board means your job's almost as good as yours again. Andy says it's the most clear-cut case of harassment he's ever seen. He says that . . . hey, Tommy, you okay? Anyway, Andy says that chances are Psibilski's as good as out. How about that?"

"... I don't give a . . . I don't want that . . . jo. . ."

"Whadde say?"

"I don't know. Hey, Tommy, didn't you hear me? You got your job back. Ain't you happy?"

"... I don't even remember what . . . I did . . . there."

"What's he mumblin' about, Sonny?"

"I can't hear him. Jesus. Y'know, if we weren't so drunk he'd be jumpin' up and down."

"Hey, Sonny, he looks happy to me - don't he look happy to you?"

Someone else countered, "He looks kinda sick to me."

"Nah, he ain't sick. Hey, Tommy, you gonna be sick?"

"Goin' back to that toilet tomorrow mornin' makes me kinda sick."

The general laughter was broken by the phone. Don answered it, and immediately began to look nervous. He put the receiver to his chest and turned to Tommy.

"Hey, Tommy. It's your old lady, and she's kinda upset. You here?"

Tommy was slumped on the bar.

"M'am? Tommy's kinda . . . uh. Listen, I'll see to it that he gets home okay. . . No problem. Yes, ma'am. G'night. Sonny? Hey, Sonny?"

"Yeah?"

"You know where Tommy lives, dontcha?"

"Yeah."

"Well, why dontcha get a coupla guys and take him home? His wife just called."

"Hey, Steve. C'mere and gimme a hand with Tommy. C'mon, Tommy, the little woman's lonely. Time to go."

"Huh? What the . . ."

"Jesus Christ, is he heavy."

"I ain't goin' . . . home. . ."

"What the hell is he mumblin' about?"

"Who cares? Just get him on his feet."

"He ain't gonna puke, is he? I ain't gonna carry him if he's gonna puke."

"Well, let's just do it before he does."

"He ain't goin' in my car if he's gonna puke."

"... lemme go . . . i don't wanna go . . . i ain't got no . . ."

"Jesus. That's right. I don't want him pukin' in my car, either."

"What the hell we gonna do with him? Did he just say somethin' about streaks?"

"I don't know. Hey, Don, ain't no way he's gonna go in my car. What're we supposed to do with him?"

"Hell. I don't care, just get him outta here . . . Wait. Hold on. Why don't we just get him a cab, huh?"





IN BELFAST, NOW

With blackened bits of ash  
still clinging to its bearded mane,  
it rears back on its massive haunch--  
creates a barricade between  
the night's long shadows  
and the empty grey of dawn--  
while one huge stone paw eases forth,  
retractile talons poised,  
to trace the same trail that a harpy's claw  
leaves on a cherub's face.

Then with the sun, the heavy grating sound  
of stone on stone moves slowly  
on around the corner and is gone,  
leaving the desert smell of camel dung  
among the scorch of hair and fingernails  
and bone.

SHIRLEY ANN STIRNEMANN





THE CUBE

Symmetry of line  
sameness everywhere  
redundant on all sides  
rhythm in a square

*Elaine Michael*

TRACKLESS DESERT

Wavy lines  
    of warm sensual sand.  
High dunes,  
    the present and the past.  
Strong winds,  
    minds weak and afraid,  
    He who enters the trackless desert  
    has left our world behind.

*Lisa Fiorillo*

ACROSTIC

I	hunt	quietly
hunt	and	kill
quietly	kill	mankind.

*James A. Craven*



# THE CHESS GAME

Bryan L. McLane

Calderon Elkin

**C**are for a friendly game of chess, Zell?" queried the bored Novan, Wrenk. His slender fingers repeated a seven note tune in a green blur as they hit the table in succession.

Zell, equally weary, accepted. He positioned his stout, round body on the opposite side of the table with his five legs. Wrenk programmed the board.

The chess hologram flickered into being as Wrenk spoke. "I never lose."

"I'm afraid I won't be much of a challenge; I'm not very good at all."

"I'll go easy; you go first."

"Okay," Zell mumbled. Without hesitation, he moved forth a pawn.

"I've played 543 professional games, and never lost one." He also moved a pawn.

"Now I won't feel bad being beat by you." Zell moved a knight.

"I've played all over my planet. I'm riding this Hyper-Trans to the Galactic Chess Championships. I'm going to play the tops in the galaxy." He moved his queen left.


**W**ithin five minutes, Zell had cornered his king.

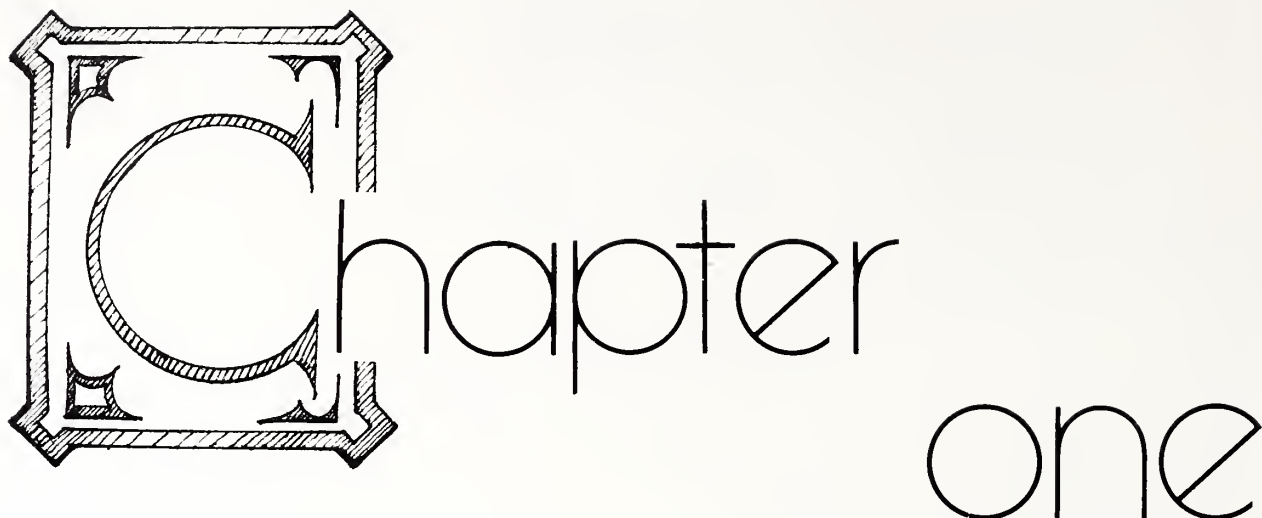
"Your move," Zell yawned. No matter how Wrenk moved, he would lose.

Wrenk jumped his knight. Zell returned to the game and made quick work of his king with a mere pawn. "Checkmate," he breathed as he moved the piece, "and game."

He yawned and stretched. It was an easy game.

Wrenk drew his blaster and pointed it at Zell. Before a scream could escape his lips, he was fast fried.

"Like I said," Wrenk yawned as he put away his weapon, "I never lose." 



# Chapter one

Joan Pollak

"I love you," Angie said. It was a cold day and she had to pull on her gloves to keep winter from needling the slice of skin stretching from her sleeve.

Joe scooped snow in a red, scaly hand and let the warmth of his fingers melt it. He never wore gloves. Once he'd lost a finger.

"I love you," Angie repeated. She faced the snowman as she spoke, hugging it as she tied Joe's scarf around the place two snowballs met.

"Tighter," Joe said through a narrow slit of a mouth. "Pull it tighter."

"I don't want to stretch the scarf, Joe."

"I said pull it tighter." He stepped in front of her and yanked.

"Joe, stop!"

He yanked until the snowball of a head rolled to the ground. Angie cried. Joe sat beside her and softly blew on his hands.

"It's cold," Angie said. "Let's go inside."

She first spoke to him in the dormitory library. Every day he sat at her table and read *A Confederacy of Dunces*.

She studied his face for hours, memorized every angle and slope, learned the number of creases in the corner of his eyes when he frowned. She liked the way his fingers moved, slow and steady, rubbing his temples, circling. She thought he'd rub them raw. Every day she waited for them to redden. Every day he started on chapter one.

"Good?" she asked the second week, keeping her voice low.

He looked at her, then turned his head and the page.

"What's it about?"

"I don't know," he said loudly. He shut the book



and stood up.

"All this noise. I can't concentrate." He left.

She followed him out the door. "I'm sorry," she said, pulling his arm.

He pulled away.

"My room's quiet. You could read while I make dinner."

He sat at her desk while she cooked spaghetti. The sauce bubbled, spattering on her shirt like blood. She carried a plate to him and set it down.

He ate the first forkful without closing the book.

On the second bite she caught him staring at her shirt. He kept staring and pushed the plate away.

"I can't eat this."

"You don't like it?"

"I just can't eat it." He stood up to go. He almost forgot his book. She handed it to him.

"You're missing a finger," she said.

"I know." He had a hand on the door.

"I hadn't noticed." She didn't take her eyes off his hand. "Look, Joe, I could make some tuna or something. If you could stay."

He looked her in the eye. "I was shooting once and the gun backfired."

"My God! You were lucky!"

"Yeah," he said, and laughed for the first time. She laughed, too. He had such a nice smile.

"Change your shirt," he said, "and I'll stay."

Most guys didn't care about dirt the way Joe did. He rewiped dishes after she had washed them and never stopped in to see her without showering and changing, even if it meant three times in one day.

Nobody cared like Joe did. Angie liked that. Once she kissed the stump of his finger and he cried.

And that made her cry.

"Does that hurt much?" Angie asked, pointing to where his finger used to be.

Joe leaned back in a chair. "I don't feel much, but when I do, it hurts."

When Thanksgiving came, Joe stayed in the dorm. Angie asked him home with her.

"I think I'll stay and read," he said. "Maybe I'll finish the book." He was on chapter two.

She stopped in to say goodbye. It was noon. Joe was still in bed. She bent to kiss him.

"No," he said, reaching his arm out to stop her. "I haven't brushed my teeth."

"Sure you won't come?"

Joe shook his head, his teeth clenched.

On the way home she tried to think of a

Christmas present for him. Something special.

She went to the bookstore, looking for another book by Joe's author.

"He only wrote this one," the salesman told her.

"It was published posthumously."

She bought a leather bookmark and a hardback copy.

"When you finish this, keep your place for me," she wrote on the inside cover, then wrapped it in silver metallic paper with a red bow.

She couldn't wait to get back. Joe came to her room and brought his book. He had it opened to chapter one.

"I lost my place," he said.

They came in from the snow and warmed up. Angie washed the tears from her face. Joe washed his hands.

"I have something for you."

Joe looked surprised.

"A Christmas present. It's early." She reached beneath her bed and handed him the package.

He held it on open palms. "I have nothing for you," he said.

"It's okay. Open it."

He didn't. He pushed it across the desk like the plate of spaghetti. "I don't want it," he said.

"Joe, please." She wanted him to have it. She thought she might cry again but she didn't want to. "You have to."


He touched the bow gently. She watched his fingers stroke it, then close and tighten, as they had earlier on the scarf. Then he ripped it from the package. The paper tore. So did the jacket cover. The author's photo ripped in half.

"I told you I didn't want it," Joe said and dropped it on the floor.

"I'm sorry." Angie's lips were trembling although she wasn't cold. "But he didn't write anything else. He died." She picked the book up off the floor and looked for the tape. Shreds of silver paper hung from her hands.

Joe was staring at the torn face. "He killed himself."

"I can return it. I'll get you something else." She was crying. "I love you, Joe. Don't you understand?"

"Sure I do," Joe said. He stuck the red bow to her forehead and kept his finger pointed there. "His gun didn't backfire." 

ORANGE POPS

Dept. store muzak strained into orange puddles  
Beneath a display of crocheted sweaters.  
"Always wondered 'bout muzak  
When ain't nobody 'round to hear it," said the janitor,  
Wringing his bright orange mop.

*Robert Wiemann*

NO SURRENDER, NO TRUCE

out of the way  
(like meeting places)  
I am,  
claps of amber gunshots  
fading north

ceding  
like blazing orange  
(How's the hue up there?)  
ambushed by a timid peach  
(the pits are bigger)

the trenches are everywhere

"grab your helmets," I shout,  
"I hear the strains  
of patchwork can(n)ons."

home fronts are never safe

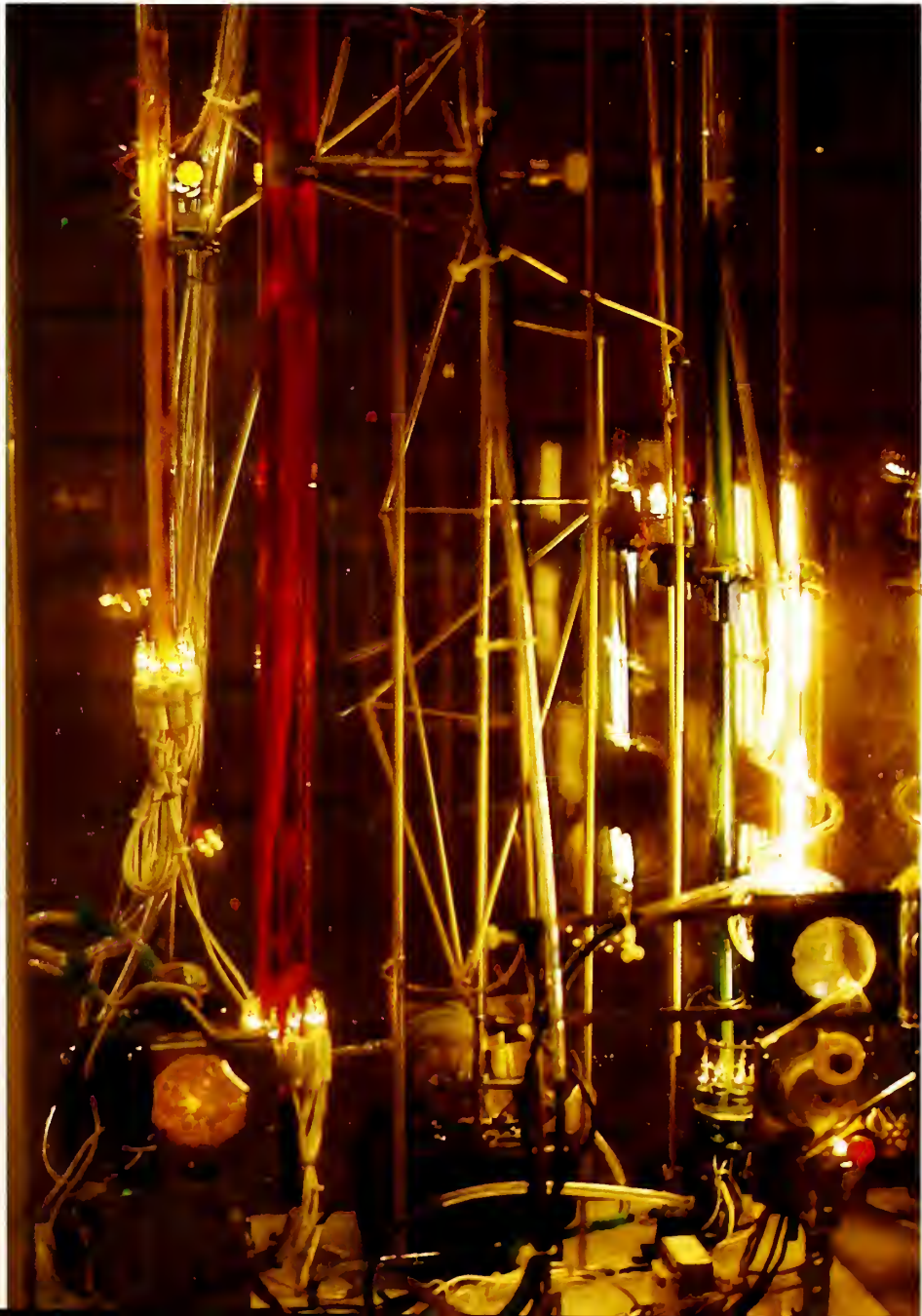
move the battleground  
and the postman still delivers  
the bullets.

*l. mckeown*



# PHOTOGRAPHY

*Cynthia Roberts*



*Lloyd H.F.*





*Lloyd H.F.*



*Malgorzata Samek*

## MIRRORS

This morning  
rain falling on the roof  
sounding like the mirror  
I broke at dawn.  
In each little raindrop  
reflections of myself  
shattered  
then disappeared  
into the soil

The air was cold  
like ice that grows  
inside the mountain caves  
of memory.  
I shivered, thinking  
these are not such happy times  
when mirrors shatter and rain falls  
in the shape of tears.

*Star Hemenway*

## THREE CORNERED DREAM

Grandmother's apartment door gaped a hole  
as big as a three cornered hat  
i worried for her safety.  
who was looking in?  
at ninety-three  
i let her exist without  
looking in.  
in a dream she lived  
with her broken door  
without me.  
perhaps i am the missing triangle in her door  
(the third granddaughter).  
asleep i visited my grandmother,  
asleep my love became guilt.  
guilt can't buy  
a plane ticket to  
New Jersey.

*Kim Weiss*

## SECRETS

Greyhound banners beckon you to follow  
them to whistling subways of cities that swallow  
you, child. Rain only muddles the mind  
and blurs the senses you have assigned  
to objects that you have yearned  
for. Girl, touch gently fingerprints to glass  
and leave your signature to pass  
the dead waters that steal your breathless heart.  
Lose your sadness in the dark  
and smile silently with stolen glances that give  
not a single clue into the secrets you live.

*Star Hemenway*

## AFTER THE RAIN

After the rain  
We'd hang around on the cement stoops.  
Our hair would frizz, our noses run.  
We'd smoke two Winston's each,  
Compare smoke rings  
(you always had bigger ones).  
We were silent,  
the rhythm of heartbeats and breath.  
Our palms would sweat  
(the dampness did that).  
When the sunlight peaked through,  
we'd go back inside  
leaving our ashes to melt in the cement.

*Lori Winkler*





WARREN ST.

## Olga Nunez

She reached the corner of Warren Street and Fifth Avenue. From there she could see the three-story brownstone building where she lived. She cocked her head to the right, trying to look at it straight. It was definitely a crooked building. It looked as if it were leaning against the next building, which in turn looked like it was leaning against the other building and on down the street she could see building after building leaning to one side.

She always stood there on the corner for a few minutes, looking at the buildings and down the street; she didn't know why she did that every day, but it meant something to her, something she was not able to define. Each day just as she glanced to the top floor of "her" building, she felt relieved from a heavy burden. It was the first time in the day that she knew everything was alright. She had to pull herself together a few times during work and not get up from her machine to ask the foreman to let her

call her landlady to inquire again if everything was fine. No fires? . . . No fights? . . . Was Charlie playing on the street? Was Liza with him?

She dreaded summer! At least, during the school year, she only had to worry after three o'clock, the time that Charlie would get home from school.

She started to walk toward . . . what? Her home? A sad smile crept to her lips. Mechanically she pulled her hair back with unsure hands. The day was hot and humid. Her black hair was soaked wet around her forehead, uncombed. Few heads turned to watch the woman as she walked slowly past them, her dress tight against her hips and thighs, accentuating her slimness.

The heat had brought everyone out. Charlie was in the middle of the street, playing with two other boys; a group of teenagers was gathering in front of the stoop with beers in their hands. She walked up the steps briskly. One of the boys offered her a beer. She took a sip, letting some of the

cool liquid run down the corner of her mouth. . She said, "Thanks" to no one in particular.

"Hey, mom . . . look!" Charlie had seen her, and motioning to the fire hydrant down in the middle of the block, went directly to it and helped by his friends and wrench, opened the valve to let the water out in a big spout. An uproar arose in the street. From everywhere, children and adults came running to bathe in the cool waters escaping from the hydrant.

She laughed, raising her eyes to the apartment at the same time that Liza came to the window.

"Hi, Myrna. I didn't know you were home. I'm just coming down!"

She met Liza halfway up the stairs. "Why didn't you wait for me?"

"I'm tired. Anyway, I'm going to start dinner early for a change."

"It won't be dark until about eight . . . come, before the cops shut it up."

"No, I'd better not. When you come up, bring Charlie."

Liza opened her mouth to say something, but didn't. Two by two, she went down the stairs, her young body bouncing up and down. Myrna followed her sister with her eyes. To be young again, she thought.

Young again! She wasn't old . . . she was only thirty-two, but compared to her sister, well . . . it was just not the same. Seventeen! It was hard to even remember how it was to be seventeen. She had some clouded memories of a youth, pretty dresses and boys . . . but that was all.

Too soon Myrna reopened her eyes to reality. It wasn't even a pretty dream. A boy she met at a party, a car, some dark park. All of a sudden, she was pregnant, the boy was gone. The romance was not sufficient for the memory to sustain her after it happened. And yet, she couldn't wish that it didn't happen, it would be like wanting Charlie not to be, and he was the best thing in her life.

The clamor from the street could be heard on the stairs. She had to drag herself to continue step by step until she reached the top floor. As soon as

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*"We are born and raised on Warren Street, and we die on Warren Street. Look at it, Myrna, it's a one way street!" There was a flash of anger in her clear eyes, but it died as soon as it appeared.*

---

she came into the two room apartment, she threw herself on top of the studio couch, sending her high heels across the room.

She heard the police siren and the confusion that followed. Insults flared when they shut the fire hydrant. She went to the window to look down at them. From all the windows nearby, people were hanging out, shouting and gesturing at the same time. She saw a policeman jerking her son by his shirt.

"You dirty . . ." She looked inside to see what she could throw down at the policeman, but contented herself with cursing and yelling instead.

Two minutes later, Charlie came dashing in. "Is dinner ready?"

Liza followed. "Did you see the cops? They got so mad, they said that if we do it again, they're going to put us in jail!"

Myrna shrugged. "They're just a bunch of bastards. They probably live in Long Island with swimming pools right in their backyards."

"Not Mike!"

"Who's Mike?" Myrna looked at Liza, surprised.

"Oh, an officer who lives on Dean Street . . . he's not too bad."

Myrna noticed the change from "cop" to "officer" and mimicking her sister, moved her head back and forth, crossing her hands on her chest: "He's not too bad." Liza, with a stubborn frown, walked to the window sill and sat there looking down at the street where minutes before she had been playing and dancing, the water caressing her body. Drops still hung to her legs. Mechanically, she dried her hair, then her body, taking the bathing suit off behind a towel,

without moving from the window.

"Liza, get away from the window. Somebody might see you!"

"That's what she wants."

"Shut up, Charlie!"

"Get up from that chair, Charlie. You're dripping all over!"

"Can I go to the movies tonight with Jon?"

"Who the hell is Jon?"

"The blonde kid. You know, the one who gave me the black eye."

"Oh, that Jon." Life was too fast when she got home. Cook, clean up, see to Charlie. If only she could keep him inside the four walls of their apartment. He was growing up so fast.

"Let him to to the movies," Liza said. "He's a good kid."

"Thanks for sticking up for me . . . but I'm going to tell anyway!"

"Tell what, Liza?" Myrna was suddenly in the middle of a towel fight between Charlie and Liza. After dinner, she let Charlie go to the movies.

"Aren't you going out, Myrna? It's Friday."

Myrna went to the window and pulled back one of the pretty curtains she had sewn in the factory during her lunch hour. She'd gotten the lacy material by bargaining in the Bowery.

"I thought Rudy was going to pick you up tonight, just like every Friday night."

"No, he's not." She paused, looking out into the night. "It is so hot. No fresh air. Nothing."

"Let's go down to the stoop for a while. It shouldn't be so hot there."

Downstairs, they sat opposite one another, on top of each bannister. No one from the building had come



down, so it was early yet, unusually quiet. Myrna had not changed her tight-fitting dress; her hair was still uncombed. She sighed, looking up to the summer sky: "Rudy and I had a fight today."

"I . . . well, I guessed that." They looked at each other quickly, then away. They were quite different. Myrna slim, dark olive skin, sharp features, strong hands. Liza petite, plum, fair skin and light brown hair. Myrna wore a perpetual frown, always worrying. Liza happy, laughing, free.

"Why did you fight?"

"It's not important now. But it's too late. It's always too late, isn't it?"

Rudy and Myrna were always fighting. It was not unusual - he was the foreman and she the worker, the operator; somehow they had managed to separate the roles of workers to those of lovers. "Why don't you call him, Myrna, you care for him!"

"He hurt me a lot. He called me a Spick."

"He did?" Liza's eyes opened in disbelief. "Did he?" raising her voice. "And what did you tell him?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing? Nothing! The least you could have called him was -"

"He hurt me so much, Liza, it went deep, so deep that I didn't say anything. Of course, I could have hurt him also, but if it was going to wound him that much, I didn't want to do it."

"I would have!"

"I'll bet you would!"

"I don't see why you had to take it."

"I'm a woman, Liza, and a woman can take more hurt than a man. Anyway, it's easier for a woman to forget and forgive. . . a man has his pride."

"You're thinking like Mom used to think, not my sister, no one." The look of anguish in her sister's face stopped her.

"Oh, don't mind me. Everything will be alright with you and Rudy. It

always is."

A heavy silence fell between the two, then Liza frowned. "Do you love him for real?"

Myrna took a deep breath of air and held it, then slowly let it out. "I don't know. What is love, anyway? Think about it, Liza. It's a struggle to control, not to let go. I love Charlie, and I see him going and I don't want him to. I want Rudy. I feel so complete when I'm in his arms, when I feel his body against mine. I love myself, but I don't love the reflection of me I see in the mirror everyday. I see a woman getting old and tired. You tell me what it is, Liza; maybe I can learn from you."

"The problem with you, sister, is that you're trying to romanticize your life. I'm not going to be hurt like you because I have no ideals. I think love is just the feeling you've got that moment. That is all: no future, no past."

"You're far too young to talk that way. I should be the one to talk that way, to say those things." A sarcasm crept into her voice. There was always tomorrow. A better job, a good man, nice things for her kid. And if it was attainable for her, maybe for Liza. But somehow it wasn't working.

"Myrna, it doesn't matter that I'm only seventeen. I could be seventy. I see things as they are, not like they should be. Mom was like you; she romanticized her life, and you know what - her life stunk."

"Liza!" Myrna looked horrified. She never would have thought to examine her mother's life, let alone criticize it. It was her mother's dream that brought them to New York and then to Brooklyn from the island. It was just Myrna and Mom. Liza came much later while her mother still chased an elusive dream she thought she found in Liza's dad.

"It's true, Myrna. Between your father and my father, there must have been at least five men in her life. It was always the hope of romance, of a better life, of food on the table. She

was always seeking the better future, or remembering the past, tales of her life before she came to the states. And at the end, emptiness, broken promises, vague pledges. She died at forty-five, right? Too young for me, sis."

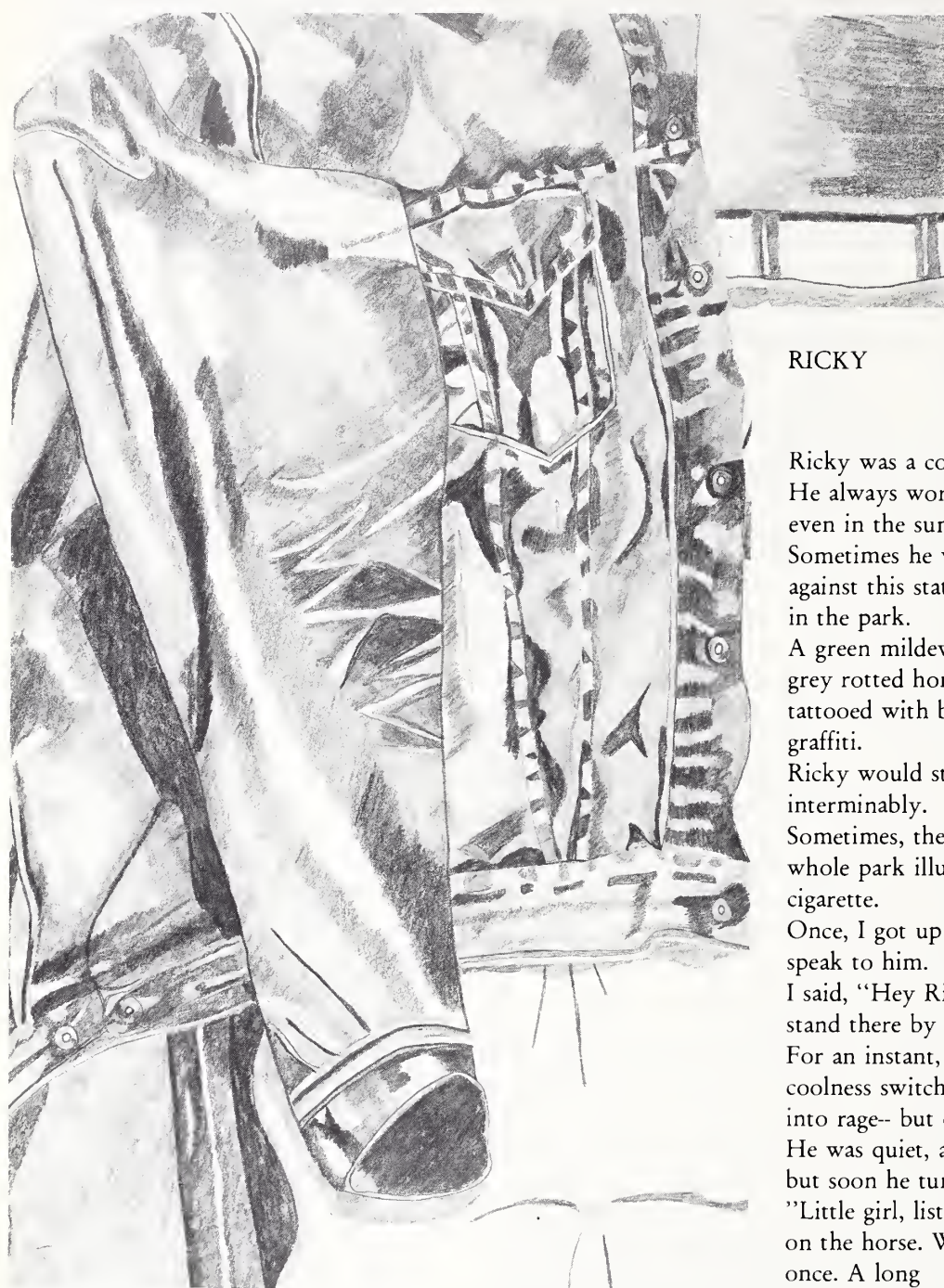
"Liza, how could you say those things? No, not the word, but your feelings. You say the words, and yet, you're not moved by them. You're indifferent; you just don't care!"

She laughed a short, loud laugh that pierced Myrna's heart. "We are born and raised on Warren Street, and we die on Warren Street. Look at it, Myrna, it's a one-way street!" There was a flash of anger in her clear eyes, but it died as soon as it appeared.

"Is Mike a one-way street too?" Myrna said it softly, almost to herself. It was Liza's turn to be surprised. The light from the street pole illuminated her soft features. She smiled. "You've got me there!" Then she spoke calmly. "We are trapped, sis. You and me and everybody else. Mike's just like Rudy. In the end he, too, will go, but I'll have no regrets." Her smile broadened as she gazed at Myrna's wide eyes. Myrna tried to talk, but the knot in her throat wouldn't let her.

From inside the building, people started to descend to the stoop, sitting on the steps, on the bannister. Myrna lifted her legs to give more room to the people coming to join them. Beer appeared in many hands. Charlie got back from the movies and sat close to his mother. Liza continued to smile, sitting away from everyone. Someone had a guitar. A chord vibrated in the young man's hands. The melody of a Spanish song filled the air. All listened to it, the deep embedded feelings toward a land most of them didn't know, a slim thread to hold them together to face the promise of the future that they somehow were not able to grasp. "Time goes on and the old people are dying," he sang melodiously, "the children are growing up, and the dreamers are getting tired . . ."





*Diane Mujares*

### RICKY

Ricky was a cool dude.  
He always wore a faded blue jean jacket  
even in the summertime.  
Sometimes he would lean  
against this statue  
in the park.  
A green mildewed soldier on a  
grey rotted horse  
tattooed with black and red  
graffiti.  
Ricky would stand there by that statue  
interminably.  
Sometimes, the only light in the  
whole park illuminated from his  
cigarette.  
Once, I got up the nerve to  
speak to him.  
I said, "Hey Ricky, why d'ya just  
stand there by that thing all night?"  
For an instant, I could see the  
coolness switch gears  
into rage- but only for a moment.  
He was quiet, almost too long,  
but soon he turned those black holes my way.  
"Little girl, listen here. Ya see this old man  
on the horse. Well, I knew him, man, I knew him..  
once. A long  
time ago. And he understood  
like I do. He knew... he knew."  
And a clouded tear fell down Ricky's cheek  
as I walked away.

Ricky was a cool dude.  
Some say he gets out of Bellevue  
next year,  
and that he's been asking about me.

*Lori Winkler*

# a stroke of poison

Lawrence Syrop

Reno and I walked up the street toward Montefiore Hospital. It was raining, and we were tired from a long day at work. As I strolled the gloomy street, the image of Gene Kelly dancing up and down the asphalt entered my fatigued state. Reno mentioned something about his car, and I awoke from my daydream. I needed the distraction of the daydream to rid me of this depressive mood. We were visiting our friend Ferd, short for Fredrick Erdleman.

"I still don't believe it, Reno. The guy's only twenty-three years old."

"I believe it, Sal."

"But, Reno, it happened so sudden!"

"That's life! Ya don't know what's around the corner till ya get there."

"I shoulda realized it."

"Realized what, Sal?"

"Remember last summer when Ferd and I went camping in Maine . . . at Baxter State Park?"

"Yeah, I remember . . . I couldn't make it."

"Well, you know, Ferd, he gets a laugh out of everything. He said, 'Wanna hear something funny? My right ball is as hard as a rock.' I didn't think it was funny. I told him it was probably a rupture. . . twisted your nuts around or something. Better see

a doctor when we get back.' The stupid son of a bitch didn't go. You know the rest."

"Yeah, well at least he's through with this second operation. Nine hours on the table . . . that's something else. He's a real piss . . . 'Call me Lefty,' he said, after they took his ball out."

"I spoke with his parents two days ago, Reno."

"Oh yeah? What did they say?"

"Doc took out one and a half pounds of tumor from his guts this time."

"Damn!"

"Yeah, I know."

Reno and I walked through what seemed like endless corridors. Soon we reached the orange ward. We took the elevator up to Ferd's floor. A chill went up my spine as I walked toward Ferd's room.

When we arrived at Ferd's room, Tito and Joe were there. A couple of guys Ferd worked with.

"Hey! Look who's here. Reno, Sal, whadaya say?"

"How ya doin', Tito? What's up, Joe?"

Reno shook the fellows' hands . . . I shook Ferd's.

I looked at Ferd, who was doped, but totally aware of the surroundings.

He had two drainage tubes running from his body; a Foley Catheter hung at the side of the bed, and an intravenous injection was dripping steadily, like an hour glass, into a pale arm.

"Hey, Ferd!" Tito shouted, "Why don't ya put on the T.V.? Rodent and Syphilis are on." We all laughed.

Ferd mumbled, "Come on you guys, don't make me laugh. You'll open up the scar. Wanna see it?"

"Huh? Sure, Ferd, let's check it out."

He showed us the scar. A railroad track from the base of his groin to the pit of his chest. Wire went through his belly also, so any abrupt movement wouldn't open the delicate fusion.

"Hey, guys, wanna hear something funny?"

"Sure, Ferd," said Joe, staring at the scar, gulping down some unwanted saliva.

"The doctors said I might not be able to bust my nut anymore." No laughter this time, just a moment of silence.

"Don't worry about it, Ferd, you'll be okay in a year or so." We all agreed with Reno's opinion.

I walked out of the room and into the corridor, for I felt a twinge of



nausea. I peered down the hall and saw Ferd's parents talking to a rabbi. I went back into Ferd's room.

"Ferd, your parents are outside with a rabbi. I told you they care for you."

"Bullshit! Send them away!" he raged. "And tell that damn rabbi to split, too. He can pray for his own ass."

Ferd cooled off a little. "Any of you guys got smoke?"

Joe produced a joint from his shirt pocket and lit it. He handed it to Ferd. Ferd smoked the jay in a pitiless state. In two weeks he would need chemotherapy. I looked at his eyes. His eyes answered, "Don't worry . . . a piece of cake."

I couldn't understand how a person could take a trauma so well. Was it me? I didn't know.

I visited several times during the next two weeks and I was at the hospital a few days after Ferd was given the chemo. I crept into his room. His hair had started to fall out and it matted the pillow. I became panicky. Look at him! Squirming on the bed in platinum induced torment.

"Ferd, should I call the nurse?"

I didn't know if he heard me. He leaned over the bed and gagged and gagged. Vomit smeared on his face. The bed and his pajamas were stained with diarrhea. He looked up at me with embarrassment.

"Ferd, ya need some tissues. I'll get some tissues."

He shook his head. His arms were tracked with purple lines where veins were supposed to be.

Cold sweat dripped down my back. I felt useless. I had to leave. "Hang in there," I said. "Hang in there."

I left the room not knowing. These were the only things I could see. I felt guilt not seeing his mind, for the scars in his mind were more deadly than the cancer.

During the year to follow, Ferd was his old self, cracking jokes, doing his movie star imitations and working again. But he changed a little. I couldn't pinpoint it, but he had changed.

That year ended. Ferd survived another session of chemo. The hair that sprouted was once again removed by the coarse chemicals. This time I realized what the change was. I recall the incident. It happened in a bar, a crowded impersonal bar. Ferd became violent. I was sipping my beer when . . .

"You're a goddamn motherf. . .," he said, accusing me of sitting silently.

"What, Ferd?"

"You heard me, you schmuck. You're a goddamn mother."

I don't remember what I thought, but I remember what I felt. I was angered by his remark.

"Get your mother off the street!"

---

*He proceeded to burn holes in his arms as he made a hissing sound.*

---

Ferd stood up and punched me in the forehead. I fell backward, off the chair, onto the dank and acrid floor.

Anger filled me like the bartender filling a mug of beer from the tap.

"Cool your beef," I thought, "this friend of yours had his share of hard twangs." I walked out of the bar.

I told Reno what happened.

"I know, man, the dude's getting violent!"

"Whadaya mean you know, Reno? You weren't there."

"I saw it comin', Sal. Ever since last year. I'm tellin' you, man, the guy's losin' his noodle."

I wouldn't believe it. "He took it so well, Reno. . . how could he be losin' his mind?"

"You wait and see, bro. It's all comin' out now."

I still wouldn't believe it.

I called Ferd that night and we reconciled. I invited him over to my apartment for a few beers and to watch the Knick game.

When Ferd arrived, he showed me deep gashes in his fists. He must have taken a sharp tool and gouged out his flesh.

"Cockroaches!" he laughed.

He lit a cigar in my living room, then went into another tantrum.

"Pain. What the fuck is pain ... nothing!"

He proceeded to burn holes in his arms as he made a hissing sound from his grinning teeth.

I watched in silence. Then it struck me. Ferd was drunk. He was drinking intensely between the scourge of the chemo. I remember Joe telling me that he found out from Ferd's doctor that his liver was going. I thought it was the cancer, but it was the alcohol.

The drinking took over his life. He didn't work anymore. He used his disability money for drink. When that wasn't enough, he mooched money. I had to draw the line for myself. I was becoming aware, which I probably already knew, that Ferd had crossed that line, and there was no return.

I met him on the street a month later.

"Hey, Sal! How's about a few bucks?"

"Nope, I gave ya enough money, Ferd - that's it."

"Come on man! Just a few bucks! Ya won't go bust."

"No! But anything else ya might need though?"

"Listen man, you don't give me the scratch, I know some junkies that'll cut ya up for a joint!"

Anger! Blood red anger! "You would do that to me?"

"Damn right!" he spat.


"Go to hell!" I yelled, and walked away quickly.

"See ya soon, chump!" he echoed.

That evening I awoke in the middle of a restless sleep. I realized I had many fears. It wasn't the fear of being cut up by some dopers; it was the fear of alcoholism, hospitals, and my friend.

A few months later Ferd was found dead on the streets of Honolulu. How he got there I'll never know. The news of his death sent a sense of relief through my soul.

I hadn't been able to look Ferd in the eyes when I told him to go to hell.

His eyes were the threshold to madness! 



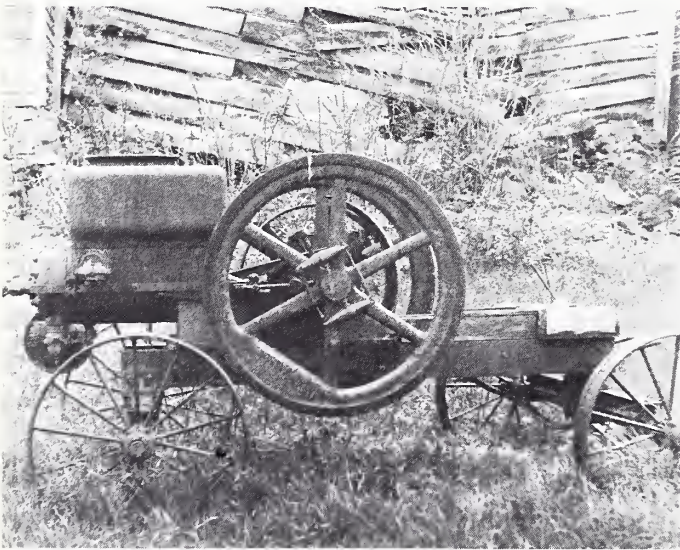


Zelda Harrell





*Malgorzata Samek*



*Casey McCormick*



*Casey McCormick*

## *Elizabeth Bardsley*

PATRICK TRACEY

When I remember my grandfather,  
I see him curved like the new moon,  
Fragile and silvered.  
My mother says that he was an earthy man,  
A gardener, drinker of beer brought home in a bucket  
After a day's labor;  
A jealous man glowering fiercely from his kitchen armchair  
At the tradesmen who invaded his castle during the day.  
"As if," said my mother, "your grandmother had time for the  
milkman  
and the mailman  
As she moved back and forth, back and forth  
Across the kitchen,  
with a child or two clinging to her skirts."  
My mother says he was irreverent,  
Shaking his fist in the pastor's face  
And calling him a black-hearted devil  
When two infant sons--  
John Patrick and John Lawrence--  
Were disinterred to make way for the city dam.  
My mother says he was a teller of tales,  
Of ladies clothed in green velvet  
Wearing white-plumed hats, riding white horses,  
Disappearing into the mists of Gaelic nights.  
Drinker,  
Jealous lover,  
Story teller.  
My grandmother said,  
"Sure what would I do with another one like him?"  
I don't know,  
But when I remember my grandfather,  
I see him  
Silvered and fragile  
Curved like the new moon.



WITNESS 1980'S

If you want  
to make the plural  
of a compound noun  
You add "s"  
to the most important word  
So the plural of passer-by  
Is passers-by

As in sending money  
to all those starving millions  
in other lands  
So they'll stay there

Or doing something  
about the violence  
in your own community  
By moving away

Because unless you're up to  
lying spread-eagled  
against the sky  
And sweating blood

You're better off to say  
"Have a good day"  
And keep on walking

These days if you intend to be  
your brother's keeper  
you're going to have to  
Buy the zoo

So is the plural  
of a doer-of-good  
Do-gooders?

Anyhow  
the plural of me  
Is us

SPIN-OFF

Spinning madly  
In a concentric circle  
Of windmill arms  
And conoidal toes,  
Little bits of me  
Fly off,  
Are snatched up  
By the ones I love.  
When the pieces fly back  
Into my whirling path,  
I'll catch them,  
Fit them  
Where they were before.  
Patched,  
With holes in me,  
Bits and pieces  
Still spinning off,  
I'm hoping  
That when my orbit collapses  
Into a heap of scraps,  
I will find myself  
Blessed into multiplication  
Like the remains  
Of the loaves and the fishes.

## THE GATHERING

He slept, a half smile yet upon his face;  
His hands were quiet and his lashes still,  
A centerpiece of sorrow and of grace,  
Who once had shoved and shouted, roamed at will.  
His mother sat among the swirling rings  
Of conversation, courteous, and bland;  
His father talked of desultory things  
Out in the kitchen, beer mug in his hand.  
The priest arrived. He signaled to begin  
The rosary; the conversation died.  
From the kitchen the men all drifted in;  
His father traveled to his mother's side.  
Stripped of the noisy comfort, bare to tears,  
They told the beads and touched the empty years.

---

## *E l i z a B e t h*

---

*a*  
*r*  
*d*  
*s*  
*l*  
*e*  
*y*

## THE SHALLOWS

Your thoughts, like quick shining fish,  
Dart silver and purple and gold  
Through translucent waters  
Green and blue and green  
Clear to the gleaming sand.

From murky depths  
A formless creature  
Thrashes its infuriated tail,  
Scatters the shining fish,  
Muddies the opalescent water,  
Terrifying, terrifying.

Retreating, it leaves  
Only the gritty sun-caught spectrum  
Of roiling colors,  
Warning me never to venture  
Beyond the shallows.





## *HOT AIR THERMAL*

**Emilie Wolitzer**

**F**riedman hadn't played with his airplanes in over seven years. Wings, tail sections, fuselages, and radio-control equipment had been tightly stored away from the South Florida mildew in neatly stacked boxes deep within his assigned storage bin adjacent to the condominium's sixth floor laundry room.

"Why don't you fly again?" Harriet glanced at Friedman over the top of her coffee cup.

Friedman sipped his coffee noisily. He intended to ignore Harriet, as usual, and pretended to be engrossed with the television.

"Dr. Schifrin said you should be getting more fresh air and exercise,

Marvin." Harriet stopped to spread cream cheese on a muffin. "And you know how much you used to enjoy building those model airplanes." Harriet took a bite of her muffin and waited. Radio-controlled model airplanes were the only hobby Friedman had ever had, but Harriet must have forgotten how he had

ruined their old dining room table – the mahogany heirloom from her grandmother.

Friedman eyed his wife with suspicion.

“You want me to get involved with airplanes?” That would mean finding a flying club, having to make new friends. He already had enough friends, but they were still up in Brooklyn or Long Island, most of them. Or dead.

It had been entirely Harriet’s idea to retire to Florida. “Who needs the cold weather?” she had demanded.

But Friedman knew he’d miss the camaraderie and excitement of flying model planes with his old group of buddies out on a desolate eastern Long Island sod farm. Wintertime they’d fly on gray, aching cold Saturday afternoons until their eyes went blurry from the sting of the frozen wind. In summer, when everyone herded to the beaches, Friedman and his fellow hobbyists headed for the sod farm. They flew mostly gliders in the summertime because it was always easy to find thermal columns for soaring.

Although Friedman took great pride in his meticulously built, fuel-powered aircraft collection, his favorite creation was his Aquila glider. It was bigger than any of his other planes, with a streamlined wingspan of over eight feet. Without a motor for takeoff or flight, the Aquila was launched into the air with a “hi-start,” a simple catapult mechanism. The glider reminded Friedman of a giant, graceful bird – a hawk maybe.

Once, several years ago on a drive across the state to Naples, despite Harriet’s protestations, Friedman had pulled off to the shoulder of the two-lane highway to watch a huge hawk glide and swoop over the Everglades swampland. Gradually the bird glided higher and higher on invisible swirls of hot current until it became a black speck in the sky, unrecognizable as a

living creature. Friedman thought of his packed-away Aquila and imagined it flying as high as the hawk, maybe higher. His reverie had been broken by the rude blast of the air horn of an eighteen wheeler barreling past and Harriet’s impatient whining that they get back on the road.

“Well, it’s up to you. Do what you want,” Harriet muttered as she cleared away the breakfast dishes. He could read for himself in the papers about the R. C. Modelers Club that met at the county park out by the Everglades, she thought, although fat chance that he’d have any interest in it or anything else she suggested. Indignantly, Harriet padded out of the kitchen in her floppy bedroom slippers.

Alone in the living room, Friedman sat thinking in his Barcalounger. The television, usually burbling mindlessly in the background throughout the days since his hospital stay, was now quiet. And Harriet had gone out to have her hair done.

Friedman pondered Harriet’s suggestion. She hadn’t wanted him to take the model airplanes with them to Florida in the first place. So why would she want him to get involved with the hobby again?

He had brought his airplanes to Florida, in boxes clandestinely marked “Kitchenware.” When Harriet went looking through the boxes for her blender, Friedman confessed.

With the article about the R. C. Modeler’s Club torn from the morning paper and folded neatly in his shirt pocket, Friedman began searching through Harriet’s antique desk for the keys to the storeroom. Annoyance pounded in his temples as he surveyed the disarray of their household bookkeeping system. Bills were unpaid and overdue, cancelled checks were out of order. Friedman had allowed Harriet to take over the family finances during his hospitalization and now he sourly

regretted it.

The pounding spread uncomfortably downward to his chest. Friedman wondered whether he should take an extra nitroglycerin, just in case. Maybe all he needed was just an aspirin to take away the tension.

Discovering the keys in a drawer, he momentarily forgot his discomfort. Feeling like a mischievous boy with a big secret, Friedman jangled the keys in his hand and hurried out of the apartment and down the hallway. For once he was going to take Harriet up on one of her suggestions. It would surprise the hell out of her.

Loading up the mammoth trunk of the Chevy was no problem. Friedman had decided to take his glider mainly because it was the first and lightest box he had lifted out of the bin. The glider would be relatively easy to assemble. Besides, he wasn’t even sure he was actually going to fly. It all depended on wind conditions and the field itself. Right now the sky was an innocent and unthreatening blue, but several South Florida rainy seasons had taught him otherwise. He threw in Harriet’s umbrella, just to be on the safe side.

The only thing that worried Friedman was his radio transmitter. Eight years ago the silver six-channeled box had been brand new, the best of its kind. It was obviously outdated by now and probably in need of an overhaul. The transmitter glinted beckoningly in the midday sunshine.

“What the heck,” said Friedman to himself and plugged the transmitter into the car’s cigarette lighter to charge it up.

Driving west to the county park took longer than expected. Friedman was surprised at the development that had taken place on what had formerly been orange groves or scraggly pastureland full of cattle. Shells of condominium villas under



construction stood against the wide horizon like grazing dinosaurs. Friedman honked impatiently at the sluggish station wagon just ahead, its open rear window crowded with pre-teen boys in baseball uniforms. He missed the light at the intersection. When several of the youngsters hooted and made obscene gestures back at him, Friedman's blood boiled.

The air conditioner in the Caprice strained noisily against the heat of the blazing sun outside. Friedman glanced at the clock on the dashboard. Harriet would probably be coming home soon for lunch. Undoubtedly she'd be worried that he'd gone out without so much as a note on the refrigerator. She would not suspect that Friedman had taken her up on going flying. The joy of conspiracy welled in him, only to be replaced by a gnawing apprehension. Did he still remember how to fly after seven years? Would he make a fool of himself?

The man in the gatehouse pointed out the road to the model airfield. It wound to the right past a log cabin pavilion housing restrooms and a water fountain shielded invitingly from the heat by several tall pines. Friedman longed for a nice cool drink of water and was about to stop when he heard the unmistakable buzz of model airplanes in the distance. He accelerated past the rest stop, hardly noticing that the blacktop ended a few yards ahead. The road to the airfield, at least a half mile further, was unpaved, dusty, and full of potholes left by a recent rainstorm.

Oblivious to the jostling and the powdery white clay blanketing the Caprice, Friedman's eyes followed the flight of the planes in the sky. He was mesmerized, barely aware of his heart thumping almost audibly in his chest.

Friedman pulled into a large grassy lot filled with cars, pickup trucks, vans, and even motorcycles and bikes. It was quite a crowd to be gathering

in the middle of nowhere. Perhaps there was some sort of competition going on.

Mothers held babies in their laps; older children sat or stood on the tables in between picnic baskets and ice chests. He wished he had brought along Harriet's folding beach chair.

Friedman opened the trunk of the Caprice; he took out his field box which contained the tools he would need to assemble the glider, and prepare it for flight. He unplugged the transmitter and flight pack from the cigarette lighter and placed them along with the coiled hi-start, in the field box. He lugged the box past a thin wire gate with a sign proclaiming "Pilots Only" and placed it on an empty patch of grass in the busy pit area. Sweat dribbled into Friedman's eyes, cheeks, and neck, soaking the collar of his polo shirt. Another thing he had left behind was his golf hat. All experienced flyers always wore a cap or hat as protection against the sun. Friedman had worn the same grimy baseball cap for years until Harriet had tossed it out one day in disgust. In Florida she had bought him a light green golfer's cap which sat unused on the shelf of his walk-in closet. He never had any desire to play golf.



After making a second trip back to the car for the wings and fuselage, Friedman surveyed the pit area, noting with pleasure the paved airstrip.

He watched an Aeromaster take off noisily down the smooth runway. A scale Piper Cub, controlled by a boy

who looked to be no more than fourteen, came in for an expert landing, settling gracefully onto the pavement. What a delightful luxury, thought Friedman, to land a plane on tarmac instead of sod! However, a glider had no wheels, so the grass beyond the airstrip would be a better place to land the Aquila. He didn't want to mar its perfect mylar finish which had taken him many painstaking hours to apply.

A man with a clipboard approached Friedman, who stood a few yards from the Aquila with his transmitter, test-controlling the elevator, ailerons, and rudder. Everything appeared to be working well. Wind conditions were perfect. The glider's upswept wingspan wavered gently in the breeze. Friedman imagined that it was impatient to get off the ground. Soon, with a little human effort, the Aquila would be skybound and soaring free.

"Excuse me, sir, but I'm afraid you won't be able to fly today," said the man apologetically. "We're having the finals for the sport flying contest in ten minutes. The club feels that your glider there might get in the way."

Friedman squinted at the man in disbelief. Nobody was going to stop the Aquila from flying. He was no amateur pilot, either. Get in the way, indeed!

"Aside from this being a county park, young man," began Friedman indignantly, "which means that my tax dollars pay for this field, what damn right do you and your club have to tell me that up there is reserved space?" He gestured angrily toward the sky. Friedman felt a huge stain of perspiration spread down the back of his shirt. He reached into his field box for a paper towel and dabbed testily at his back. His throat felt raw and dry with thirst, and he was sorry he hadn't stopped for a drink of water en route to the field.

"It won't be too much of a problem if he flies way downwind," remarked



a young man in a cowboy hat standing nearby. "And no one is on his frequency anyway."

The club official shrugged and walked away. Friedman stared with curiosity at his savior. He reminded Friedman of one of those redneck types who hung out at those country western saloons he had passed coming through the last town just before the Everglades.

"That's a real beauty of a glider you got there," said the cowboy admiringly. "I'd be glad to help you get her up, if you'd like."

"I hope you like walking," said Friedman, brusquely motioning to the coiled hi-start. It was much too hot for an old man to have to stake out six hundred feet of nylon line and surgical tubing in the meadow far beyond the airfield. The prospect of snakes and scorpions lurking in the grasses made him nervous, but worst of all were the burrs and stickers which would cling tenaciously to his pants legs. When Harriet did the laundry, she'd have a fit having to pick them off one by one.

Surprisingly, the cowboy knew how to set up the hi-start. He waited patiently for Friedman to follow him out with the glider and transmitter. Friedman stepped gingerly through the underbrush as lizards and insects jumped aside in a hysterical frenzy of motion. Holding the Aquila in one hand high above his head and the transmitter in the other, he nodded to the cowboy to attach the tiny red parachute at the end of the hi-start to the hook on the underbelly of the plane.

The restrained Aquila quavered in Friedman's hand. He felt the twenty pounds of tension from the hi-start pull sharply down his forearm and up through his shoulder. He could barely hold the plane back. Then, sensing the exact moment, he released the glider. The Aquila shot upwards like an escaped bird.

"Look at that baby go!" hooted the

cowboy. The parachute drifted slowly to the ground, trailing an umbilical cord of hi-start line. The Aquila was now gliding free and clear, its direction maneuvered by Friedman who stood transfixed at his



transmitter. The cowboy waved to Friedman and headed back to the pit area. Out of the corner of his eye, Friedman saw the tan brim of the cowboy's hat meld into the colorful blob of spectators and participants.

The Aquila leveled out and soared leisurely above the perimeters of the meadow at five hundred feet. The competition at the airfield had apparently been delayed, so Friedman swung the glider upwind. She was like a magnificent, giant, noiseless bird in the sky, and he wanted to share the sight of her.

As the Aquila made a pass high over the tarmac, it momentarily seemed to stand still in midair. Then, suddenly, the glider swooped upwards, nose pointed toward the heavens.

Fearing something had gone wrong with his transmitter, a broad numbness crept across Friedman's stomach. In dismay and embarrassment, he watched the Aquila climb even higher despite his frantic manipulation of the elevators. After seven years of disuse, mechanical failure was bound to happen. Or perhaps being out of practice was the problem. In any case, there was very little Friedman could do. Nose pitched downward, the glider still rose mysteriously, as if an invisible giant's hands was pushing it into the sky.

"Shit!" thought Friedman. He had

only once before lost a plane, and that was when he had stupidly forgotten to turn on his receiver. The unguided glider had sailed off into space and had probably crash-landed in the depths of Long Island Sound or in somebody's backyard. Here, once past the airfield and the meadow, there was nothing but mushy wilderness. He could not bear to think of his Aquila shattered, nose down in the mud, her demise witnessed only by alligators.

"Some thermal you've caught there, captain!" shouted someone to Friedman's right, startling him. It was the cowboy again. He too had seen the Aquila's sudden ascent. Momentarily distracted, Friedman almost lost sight of the glider. He scowled in irritation, squinting to recapture sight of what he figured was the tall rudder glinting like a tiny beacon in a sea of azure. Friedman's neck felt cramped and his legs ached mercilessly, but he dared not change position.

The cowboy repeated what he had shouted, figuring the old man hadn't heard him. But Friedman had, and the realization of what the cowboy had said hit him with relief. Of course, a thermal! They form all the time like giant bubbles over hot pavement. There was nothing wrong with either his transmitter or the plane's receiver. And he still had the Aquila under control. If he wanted to curb its thermal ascent, all he had to do was use the full up elevator and the full right rudder. That would cause the glider to begin to spiral downward and out of the thermal. But it would be a shame to bring the Aquila down just now. She was still going higher.

"Just heard a weather report over the radio that a front is coming in," said the cowboy conversationally as he stood beside Friedman. He cupped his hand over his eyes, straining to see the glider. "Maybe it's none of my business, but I think you don't want





her going up too high. As a matter of fact," he added, "we've decided to postpone the sport flying contest until tomorrow morning. There have been too many close calls with lightning out here." He eyed Friedman.

"I'll be careful," said Friedman. He dared not take his eyes off the Aquila. He had never before flown so high or so long with this plane.

Despite the brilliant sunshine directly overhead, a jagged zigzag of lightning flashed with silent menace on the western horizon. The pit area had emptied, and most of the cars and vans had pulled away.

"Guess I'd better be going," said the cowboy hesitantly. "See you again sometime, captain."


Friedman nodded absent-mindedly,

his attention honed in entirely on the sole black dot in the sky. There were no other planes or even birds flying, so the speck was his glider, still circling upward within the thermal. As long as he could see it, the Aquila was still under his control. He couldn't bring it down, not yet, not now.

Friedman sunk slowly to his knees, settling back on his haunches. He wondered idly whether he'd be able to get up off the ground. As a little boy he could squat like that for hours, carving balsa cowl and wing tips with a contraband razor blade on the cool, white octagonal tile of the bathroom floor.

Friedman craned his neck backwards. The Aquila had disappeared entirely into a soupy

mass of thick, gray clouds. It was gone. A plane worth over four hundred dollars had vanished in a thermal. Harriet would kill him.

A large drop of cold rain splattered onto the transmitter, followed by another. It didn't seem to matter. Friedman slipped awkwardly back onto his elbows, shakily supporting his weight. The grass was damp and soft. Staring into the dark, threatening sky overhead, Friedman remembered a mild hazy blue spattered with languid, puffy clouds. It was the sky of Prospect Park. As a kid he used to lie in the grass, watching the clouds, wondering what it would feel like to be a bird and fly through the clouds. His model planes had never flown high enough. But the Aquila had. Now he knew. 

Squadrons of geese glide  
wheel through funereal grey sky  
then  
fly  
south  
ward

*Shirley Blum*

Through open windows

gentle lavender fingers

leading me to dawn

*Shirley Blum*

BIRD AT SUNDOWN

He's back again!  
Atop the boxwood  
a diagonal pointing  
his beak skyward,  
bright feathers smooth  
against the wind,  
the brief arc of his breast,  
for an instant,  
eclipsing  
the evening sun.

*Shirley Ann Stirmemann*



*The mind awaits an answer  
like a solemn dancer  
upon a lonely stage.*

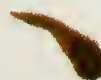
*Jeff Fisher*



*Ray Russotto*



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