



5-1963

## The Lantern Vol. 30, No. 2, May 1963

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### Recommended Citation

McDonough, Pam; Rodenhausen, Karen; Bloom, Geoffrey; Davis, Dorothy; Serio, Harry L.; Rutledge, George E.; Campbell, Sally; Sall, David; Pollock, Elwood R.; and Vennema, Peter, "The Lantern Vol. 30, No. 2, May 1963" (1963). *The Lantern Literary Magazines*. 83.

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**THE LANTERN**  
**Spring, 1963**

# The Lantern

URSINUS COLLEGE

May, 1963

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This issue of the *Lantern* is the last in which senior, Peter Vennema, will take part. The light of the *Lantern* has waxed dimly in the past few years; but because of Peter's unflinching desire to bring light to the medieval obscurity of our campus, the *Lantern* has survived.

In this issue we have attempted a few innovations, despite our more fervent critics. We have included a novelette, and to do this have excluded a great deal of prose—to no one's detriment.

At the end of this anthology, two of Peter's less esoteric poems have been highlighted. We honor Peter because he "saved" the *Lantern* while retaining his merits as a poet. Peter, *pax vobiscum*.

For those of you who have trouble with extended metaphor, try changing the Latin into English.

Peace be with you.



PROSE



# An Observation

—Pam McDonough

After almost nineteen years of experiencing the elements of the world surrounding me, I have discovered what it is that improves my outlook and allows me to enjoy the idea that I am a living being. I am continuously searching for beauty within the stimuli which affect my senses. In addition to the five physical senses—hearing, taste, smell, touch, and sight—there is another sense which responds to beauty. This sixth sense pertains to the heart and the mind rather than to intuition.

I have found a great deal of charm in sounds pertaining to nature. The sound of rain on the windows or the rhythmic beat of the ocean on the beach, or the crackling of wood burning in a campfire soothe yet stimulate me. The utter silence of an abundance of snow as it touches the ground has as much impact upon me as the sound of thunder. Hearing a child practice the piano or an orchestra tuning up fills me with a tremendous expectation of the future. Hebrew chants, Islamic prayers, or even the fluent Chinese of a child transmit me to distant times and places as do the sound of foghorns and the words, "Albany and points north". The clicking of printing presses and of Morse code give me a feeling of closeness to distant places.

There is also great beauty in certain tastes, such as the singular delicacy of an avocado or a wild strawberry. The taste of the salty ocean can often be as invigorating as that of a fine wine, although the emergence of one is so simple and natural as compared to the complex elements involved in preparing the other.

Moreover, I find enchantment in the smell of the country especially after rain. The uniqueness of the water lily fragrance causes its subject to stir. The odor of pipe smoke in crisp autumn air, and roasted chestnuts on Seventh Avenue make my spine tingle.

I love, too, the softness of moss and rose petals as compared to the sharpness of new grass. The feeling of sand sifting through my fingers fills me with the sense of the word, *infinity*. I tremble at the touch of cold, polished marble and of warm polished wood; there is such a contrast between the two objects of the same source, Nature. There is elegance in a nubby, tweed wool as much as in the sleek, silky fur of an

Angora cat. Contrasting elements felt at the same time are very exhilarating; consider sitting in front of a fire with the back exposed to the cold. I find beauty in old leather-bound books, for I wonder about those who have clutched and appreciated them in times past. One of the most stimulating moments pertaining to this sense occurs when a child grasps my hand and submits me to his confidence.

Sight is to me one of the broader senses, and there are many, many things in which I find beauty: the stalking mist, the low, saffron moon, the symmetrical tree trunks of a pine forest, the billowy clouds, and the fan-shaped Ginkgo leaves. The natural grain of wood is as interesting in design as the contour plowing done by man. Places can excite me also; I could pass the hours in antique shops, libraries, and railroad stations. My pulse rate rises when I see a skyline at night, or even lights on any horizon for that matter. I feel that there is grace in both the old and the new when I see a certain old, brownstone church backgrounded by an ultra-modern office building. I find artistic qualities in a second grade art exhibit as well as in the illuminated letters of an ancient manuscript. There is for me beauty of form and design in almost any object: the intricate layout of pipes in an oil refinery, the simple balance of church organ pipes, the complex innards of a television set, the symmetry of a milk bottle, or of a cabbage.

The final sense is linked to almost all the previous five as well as to the heart and the mind. It resembles a sponge which absorbs and is sensitive to the emotions of others. The beauty lies not in the emotions themselves, for some are quite painful, but in the idea that man is capable of experiencing such an abundance and variety of feelings. I, too, sense the depression felt by a defeated team, the strangeness of a guest inappropriately dressed, the anxiety of parents leaving their child with a new baby sitter, and the despondency of the vagrants seated in the park. It is thrilling to watch expectancy grow within those on the railroad platform as the train arrives, just as it is glorious to watch the poise and natural grace of a great artist in a difficult situation as exemplified by Robert Frost at the 1961 Inaugural ceremony. Thus, almost any sound, taste, odor, object, sight, or human emotion can be a source of beauty and interest—an incentive for searching and enjoying and living more fully—as it is to me.

# Interim

—Karen Rodenhausen

His eyelids twitched open. The first awareness of light was painful, and he quickly shielded his burning eyes with a scrawny hand. Then a shudder convulsed his body, and his hand fell back to his side, strength dribbling away again.

"I must have arrived in Hell by now," he decided.

A hot flash of pain tore through his emaciated body. Struggling to see whether he was actually simmering in a sea of flames in Hell, he forced his eyes to focus. He almost expected to see Satan in a red suit and horns grinning victoriously at this new conquest.

All he could see was a fuzzy line swimming over his head. Everything around him seemed to be hidden in a dense fog that was practically smothering him. He gasped for breath and then tried frantically to identify his surroundings. The swimming line divided into two and then three lines—then one again. With a jolt, he realized he was looking at a crack in a ceiling.

So he wasn't in Hell after all, but in a room. Now the floor felt hard and real against his back. He pressed his bony hand down to make sure that there was a firm foundation under him. Yes, there was. No flames, no Satan. But there was still this burning pain. Why?

The crack diverted his attention again. It curved in a big "S" shape and then wiggled feverishly over to a corner where it courted with another crack and finally joined it halfway down the wall. He followed the path of the wandering line down to the floor, turning his head slowly to the right. An object on the floor caught his attention. It seemed to be the only thing in the room on this side of him.

"That's odd," he thought.

Quickly he wrenched his head around to the left side. Nothing over there either, except dust. It was a vacant room. There must be a clue about his presence in this empty old room with this strange object beside him. He was confused. All he knew was that he felt lousy.

Blinking to focus his eyes a little better, he concentrated on the object. As the fuzzy outline became sharper he distinguished the shape of a small, squat bottle. It was dark brown with a black lid. If he squint-

ed, the label was clear enough to read. There seemed to be a picture of some sort on it.

"Oh God, no," he murmured in anguish, as the recognition of the skull and cross bones revived, with a sudden shock, the memory that struck his pain-wracked body like a physical blow.

But the tortured cry had caught in his parched throat. He was aware now of his tongue. Swollen and thick, it plugged his dry mouth. The feeling sickened him and he gagged. When he tried to loosen his tongue to lick his cracked lips, it stuck in his mouth. He needed water, but he knew there was none.

"Aaagh!" He gagged. "I'd be better off in Hell." He was so thirsty. Why had he been such a fool? No girl was worth this slow death.

He started to relive again, as he had so many times in the past two weeks, the scene that had begun all this misery. He remembered standing in front of the old, vacant house thinking to himself:

"Ah, this is it—the perfect place. Nobody will find me here for a while. Hardly anybody living up in these mountains. At least there weren't when I was a boy. Now to get inside."

Fumbling with the key in his extreme excitement, he finally succeeded in opening the front door. He knew the place by heart. As he hurried to the cellar door a rat scooted out of his way. The place had really gone to ruin inside, he noticed. Probably rat holes leading into the house from all directions. Well they might as well live in it since nobody else did. He wished that he had had life as good as a rat—but no, life had been so rotten to him. Well, he would show everybody just what he thought of the whole shebang.

"Nuts to the filthy rotten world," he sneered.

He reached the cellar door. Too easily, the handle turned. As the door opened, the musty atmosphere choked him for a minute. He closed the door with a defiant bang and twisted the key in the lock from the inside. Now, to kick the key under the door. There, it was done now. There was no turning back.

"She'll be sorry," he snickered contemptuously.

He hurried down the creaking steps two at a time, anxious to get his task over with. Patting his pocket to feel the bottle, the twenty-two year old boy looked around the cellar with glassy eyes. It was a dimly lighted room, owing to the single dirt-stained window at the top of one wall. It was barred to keep out prowlers. The heavy stone walls seemed to be eroded and disintegrating in spots. There were big cracks and some holes—probably made by rats, he reflected. Yes, this was the perfect place. Nobody would disturb him here or prevent him from doing what he had to do. Now to get to it!

He sat down on the bottom step—it was dirty and partly rotted away. He jabbed his hand into his pocket and gripped the cold glass bottle. It wouldn't be long now. He would get his revenge on everybody. Just a couple of swigs would do it. Breathing heavily, he pulled the bottle out of his pocket and squeezed the lid with his fingers. He tried to twist the lid, but it was fastened too tightly. His face, screwed up in

intense determination, was shiny with sweat.

"Damn lid!" he swore, exasperated. He grunted as he applied all the strength he could summon. There—it turned easily now. He twisted the cap off quickly. The poison looked cool and liquid. It didn't particularly smell like anything he knew. It really didn't smell much at all. Such innocent looking stuff. Just a couple of mouthfuls and his whole miserable existence would be finished. Nothing to it. Nothing to live for anyway. Life had dealt him such a lousy hand of cards. Just one gulp.

He started to raise the bottle to his lips. Sweat was popping out all over his forehead and he could feel his shirt getting wet under his arms. What was the matter with him? He wasn't scared, was he? There was nothing to it. He looked at the dark brown bottle and cursed himself. Again he tried to raise his arm, but a paralysis gripped him. He couldn't do it. There was a funny feeling in the pit of his stomach—an odd, sick feeling.

He cleared his throat nervously and spit. The hand that gripped the bottle was as cold as ice and started to shake. He set the bottle down on the step and got up. This wasn't the way he had planned it. He had to do it—he knew that. There was no way out now. So why prolong it? He paced around in front of the steps like a caged animal. Life's no good, he told himself. Don't be such a chicken. His hands were clammy and cold. The trembling that had started in his hands spread to his stomach. It felt like it would turn inside out. He felt a contraction in all his muscles.

"This is silly," he reproached himself. But he had already hesitated too long. In his mind there was a mental block now. Death loomed suddenly black and frightening—even worse than his miserable life. Fear of the unknown scared him. He had just realized that he had an instinctive desire to live and to protect himself. But he was locked in. Could he get out? Up the stairs he ran.

Banging on the door violently and hysterically, he bruised his hands—but to no avail. The door was indifferent to his frantic beating. And there was no one to hear him. Breathing hard now, he knelt down and peered under the door. He couldn't even see the key. What had happened to it? He must have kicked it harder than he thought. What now?

His eyes were glassy and nervous. His thumb twitched—a peculiar nervous reaction he had had since childhood. His face felt like stone—the blood drained out slowly. Silence—a suffocating silence.

Suddenly, a long, terrifying, bloodchilling scream split the air. Silence closed in on him again. There was no one to hear. The nearest house was a mile away. He knew it was hopeless. His heart was drumming in his ears now, faster and louder all the time. Panic had a firm grip on his senses. He couldn't think clearly. There was the poison sitting as coolly as ever on the bottom step. But he couldn't do that. He wanted to live more than anything else now. Death was terrifying. But the door—solid behind his back. He was trapped!

Slowly he dragged himself down the steps again. He felt weak and limp now after his passionate outburst. He sank onto the bottom step, exhausted and frustrated. A shock of blond hair fell across his brow as

his head sunk forward in despair. He had never prayed before—but now he wanted to.

"If there is anybody up there," he blurted out, "please don't let me die." He didn't know if this was good enough. He had never been to church and didn't know what he was supposed to say in a prayer. "I know I deserve to go to Hell. But just please don't let me die." His body shook as he broke into rasping sobs.

He slapped his face. He had to get control of his wits if he were going to survive. Gradually his hiccupping sobs quieted down. He blew his nose. Then he looked over at the window. There was a chance. It looked pretty high, but maybe he could reach it by jumping. It was barred, but if he could hang onto one of the bars he could break the window with the other hand. Then it would be easier for someone to hear his calls for help.

In a few strides the boy reached the other side of the cellar. Positioning himself under the window, he judged that it was about nine feet above the ground. Since he was only five feet, nine inches, he didn't know if he could do it. But he had to try, at least. He crouched and swung his arms behind his back. Then up—his hand hit the wall about six inches below the window. The stony wall was rough and scraped the skin on his hand. He swore as he landed hard and crouched again. Up he went again—this time his hand gripped the bar. The sudden jolt wrenched his shoulder and his body thudded against the wall. But he held on. Straining, he gritted his teeth as he pulled himself up with the help of his feet against the wall. The bars were too close together. He could never get his body through them. He braced himself against the wall with his feet and swung one arm between the bars. Crash! Glass shattered. There was blood on his fist—nothing serious. He dropped to the ground.

He stood under the window then and screamed with all his might. No answer. Only the wind outside. In the next few hours he kept a constant vigil under the window until his voice was too hoarse. He had grown hungry and thirsty by the time it was dark outside. There was no light inside the cellar, either. He was really alone. He might as well sleep and conserve his strength, he decided. The cellar floor was dirty and hard and some faint hunger pains accompanied him to sleep.

All this had taken place over two weeks ago, he thought now as he lay on the floor looking at the cracks in the ceiling. He wondered how long he had been on his back this time. It had been dark when he had had his last dizzy spell, but now the light was filtering dimly through the dirty glass and beamed more brightly through the broken part of the window.

"My time is getting short," he thought. His whole body ached as he struggled to get himself into a kneeling position. Faltering dizzily, he tried to stand up. Shuffling like an old man, he limped slowly and painfully over to the window.

"Dry joints and a dry throat," he thought grimly.

He bolstered himself against the wall with a trembling hand. The effects of dehydration and starvation were visible in the sharp, bony contours of his face and body. His skin was dried up and wrinkled—pre-

maturely aged. He might be mistaken for a sixty year old man.

"Aagh," he moaned. "So thirsty. Gotta have something to drink." His throat felt like it was stuffed with cotton. Biting his cracked lip, he sucked desperately at the few drops of blood that oozed to the surface. His insane desire now for something to drink led him to look at the hated bottle on the step again, as he had so many times in the past weeks. Glassy-eyed, he stumbled across the floor to the steps. The wrinkled, dirty, stinking clothes—a ragged plaid shirt and dungarees—hung on him loosely now, like rags on a scarecrow. His mouth hung open vacantly as he picked up the bottle and his breathing was painful.

Contemptuously eying the bottle, he argued with himself. But it was liquid, at least. Anyway, nobody had come to look for him or heard his call for help yet. Was there really any chance for him now? The lines in his forehead deepened as he considered his choices. Gripping the lid he twisted it off slowly and deliberately. "It won't be long now," he thought.

"I can soothe my throat and end this hellish existence all in one gulp." He felt much calmer about approaching Death now than he had two weeks ago. His hand shook more from weakness than from fear as he raised the bottle to his lips.

"What was that? What was that noise?" His mind became suddenly alert. Was that a child's voice he had heard? He paused, his hand hanging in the air. He quieted his excited breathing while he listened intently. Silence! Was his mind gone now too? No—there it was again. Then a rustling of bushes. Another playful shout followed. Some kids must be playing around the old house. It couldn't just be his imagination, could it?

An insane smile played on his feverish lips. This was the chance he had been hoping for. He only had to scream now with all his might. They would hear him and his nightmare would be over at last. His eyes were glassy with excitement. All he had to do was scream for help. He opened his mouth and forced the air through his parched throat. What was the matter? He had meant to scream, but only a weak moan came out. There was intense pain in his throat. He tried again and still produced only a moan. Again and again he moaned, as loud as he could. In between these feeble sounds he listened expectantly for a footstep near the window or in the house.

No help came. No one knew he was there in the dim hole. Minutes crept by slowly and tensely and finally he stopped moaning and listened. Now there was no rustling of the bushes, no childish voice. The kids had gone. Death was warming her hands on his breath. That horrible bottle was still staring him in the face. In a state of utter exhaustion and frustration, he collapsed. The dusty stone floor was cool on his emaciated cheek. Around his eyes hung a dizziness. Then all was black.

When he woke up this time, there was darkness all around him. Had another day or two passed already? It was more than two weeks since his first sight of the abominable cellar. He looked at his bony hand and knew his time was getting short. His body was shriveling up quickly now without water. And he had progressed to a state of hearing and imagining

things that weren't really there. Like right now—there was an odd scratching noise. Was it real or just his imagination? The noise seemed to get louder and softer as if it were closer and then farther from him at intervals. Then the noise stopped for a minute. There it was again.

He dragged himself into a sitting position. With his head cocked, listening intently, he made an eerie picture—a skeleton sitting in the faint moonlight. As his eyes became adjusted to the gloom, he could distinguish the four walls, the window and steps. Everything was just as he had left it and he was still alone. But what was making this irritating noise then? Even a little noise like this reverberated in his aching head like thunder.

Something brushed against his foot as he attempted to stand up. With an instinctive protective effort, he swung his arm around, expecting to meet with something of substance. Instead, there was empty space. He looked down as he felt something touch his foot again. It was a rat!

The long, ugly, black tail disappeared quickly into darkness. Ravenously starved, he staggered after it. His first meal in almost three weeks was escaping him! With a gaunt expression on his ashen face he looked like a shade of Death. He steadied himself against the wall panting heavily. There wasn't much energy left in his shriveled body. He could hear the animal as it scurried about unaware of his desperate mood.

He had to catch the rat! It was his only chance to stay alive until someone might hear his calls for help. Life was dear to him now that he had struggled so long to keep it. The thought of such a meal would have repulsed him if he hadn't been so desperate. He would have to use his wits. He didn't have enough strength to chase the rat and corner it. He had to think of a way to outwit the animal—before he was too weak to think. He felt for the wall again and leaned there for support.

If he only had a little piece of food, he could use it as bait. But the only thing in the room besides himself and the rat was poison. A poisoned rat wouldn't do him any good, he reflected. Exhausted and faint, he sank into a sitting position. He couldn't afford to black out now. The rat might disappear again. Waiting for this dizzy spell to pass, he hung his head between his knees. The rat whizzed by him again, almost impudently. He had to get it!

As his head hung motionless in thought, the buckle on his belt caught his attention. Suddenly he smiled. This could be just what he was looking for. Maybe all hope wasn't lost after all. He recalled the incident in his boyhood when he had lived in this very house. One day he had stumbled on the nest of a pack rat and had been amused to find in it an assortment of shiny metallic objects—nails, silverware and a buckle. He didn't know what kind of rat shared the cellar with him, but it was worth a try. Impatiently he fumbled with his belt and then yanked it off his pants. In a moment he had detached the buckle. He steadied himself against the stony wall again, as the blood pounded in his head. Just a little longer, he pleaded with his ghost. Just give me this one more chance.

Now he needed a weapon to kill the rat if he should succeed in lur-



ing him. Looking frantically around, his eyes automatically rested on that detested bottle of poison. There it was—his weapon! So it might come to some good use after all. He wilted down onto his hands and knees. Crawling to conserve energy that was fast leaving him, he looked like a pack of loosely connected, uncoordinated bones as he panted his way across the floor. The bottle looked fuzzy. No—he argued with himself—don't black out now. Just a little longer. The pains in his stomach and legs and arms swelled over him. It was hard to breathe. A few more paces. There—now he had the bottle in his hand.

Crash! The vile liquid spilled onto the dirty floor and ran away in little rivulets. He snickered insanely as he held up half a bottle with a jagged cruel edge. He could cut his own throat with it in a second, he thought. But no—not yet. Back to the plan.

He moved slowly and with an expression of agony on his face. His destination was a section of the floor lighted by a stream of moonlight. Carefully he laid the buckle in the way that the light would shine on it most. Then he eased off a few paces into the darker part of the cellar. He grunted as he got into a squatting position. He didn't care any longer about the added pain in his legs, cramped in this position. But he had to fight a dizzy spell with all the strength he could summon.

Minutes passed and he breathlessly waited, perfectly still, for the sound of the rat's feet scratching on the stone floor near him. Suddenly the rat was before him. He had been caught off guard. Down came the jagged glass. Crash! Glass shattered. But the rat had been too fast. The brute was gone and so was the buckle.

There was a frenzied, desperate look in the boy's eyes. In a second he was up on his feet and with a violent burst of his remaining energy he plunged over to the wall. The black tail was just disappearing through a hole between two crumbling stones. He seized the end of the tail and pulled as hard as he still could. Suddenly there was no resistance. A bloody piece of tail was all he held in his hand. Squealing excitedly, the rat had escaped.

A pitiful old man stood by the wall, motionless. His hand was still in the hole and as complete exhaustion and despair overcame him, his hand went limp. It rested on something metallic.

"The buckle," he thought miserably. His fingers wrapped around it and slowly he pulled his hand out of the hole.

Suddenly an electric charge went through him. The blood was pounding in his ears. It couldn't be. He tried to stagger across the floor, but the shock had sent things swirling in his head. Faint from exhaustion and excitement, he collapsed in the dawn lit cellar. Like a pile of bones, he lay there. In his open hand was a shiny object from the pack rat's treasures—the key to the cellar door.

# The Collected Raid

—*Geoffrey Bloom*

“. . . I think I think, therefore  
I think I am—I think . . .”  
Edgeton Raid

## Introduction

By this time most of you are familiar with Edgeton Raid, although I have the feeling that few of you have developed a cogent face-to-face relationship. Who or what Edgeton really is lies somewhere in this collection, or at least it does for me, and perhaps this is all that any writer can expect to achieve from a hastily developed character.

To say that I have fallen in love with Edgeton would either serve to mislead the reader or to prompt an understandable linking of author-subject personalities, neither of which coincides with my purpose, I must, however, admit a fondness for Edgeton. He is neither likeable, admirable, intelligent, nor witty, and yet his taciturn bulk is real substance, much more real than the stereotyped pickers of pansies or scathing delinquents who seep from the pages of American fiction.

Edgeton Raid is nobody, not you or I or anyone we know. It is this same composite "nobodiness" which gives Edgeton life, and it is this very formula, which imbibed freely, has stimulated me to tell you about him, or in places to ask him to tell you about himself.

Most of you won't like him—good—hate him if you must, but don't laugh at him. He isn't funny, you know—but then again you don't know because you haven't as yet met him. I shan't detain you any longer.

## Chapter One

## THE BIRDS

"Good morning Gladys, good morning fatso, good morning dear fatso Gladys, good morning to you." Edgeton hums the repetitive stanzas repetitiously to the tune of *Happy Birthday*, as the misdirected stream of warm water from the shower erodes some of last night's liberally applied acne cream.

Seconds later he emerges from the shower, his glistening body still untouched by a single bubble of soap, and immediately begins dressing. Edgeton is the type of boy who gets the most mileage from his underwear, and in fact feels no qualms about a single set of boxers for an infinite number of washings. He is also one of a growing fraternity of "locker room jollies" who have eliminated from their daily routine the gnawing necessity of drying or matting the skin with towels, and thus complacently dresses dripping wet. He, therefore, appears a trifle "splotchy" to the uninitiated, but remains comfortably unconcerned in the knowledge that his very own body heat will quickly eradicate the splotches.

Once the traditional sweatshirt, further moistened from its passage over undried locks of red hair, is in place, Edgeton shuffles slowly into

his room. Outside the birds are singing.

"Birds," he thinks to himself, "I hate birds. To the hunt—just like Uncle Remmington says—if you don't like something—shoot it!"

The 22 stands loaded in the corner. The window raises slowly. The screen folds out silently. A cocky jay rests on the tree, then on the bird bath. Three shots later the unsuspecting regal, Zeus, Mrs. Fibbs' pedigree Persian cat, lies dead in the yard. The cocky jay clacks on.

## Chapter Two

## CREATIVITY

English Composition 181BD5

Anno Domine 1963

Edgeton Raid

Professor G. B. Schlepp

### The Gutter

Diseased lies the tissue,  
The dirt it profanes,  
A bit of a bar,  
Soaked crushed cellophane.

A hole for a man,  
Yet no soul dwells therein,  
Hardly a refuge,  
But a refuse bin.

Old sot rests his head,  
A dry bottle of gin,  
Hardly a refuge,  
But a refuse bin.

A wad of spent chickle,  
Green bands for the thumb,  
For each open window  
One new layer of scum.

We see it says Lawrence,<sup>1</sup>  
I like it says Grace,<sup>2</sup>  
I eat it says Miller<sup>3</sup>  
And thrive in the place.

Old Walter,<sup>4</sup> he clothed it—  
For shame—yea for shame!  
Reality brother  
Cries out for acclaim.

Depravity brother,  
Don't wail—nay no sputter,  
The good had their day,  
As for us it's the gutter.

- 1 D. H. Lawrence
- 2 Grace of Peyton Place
- 3 Henry Miller
- 4 Sir Walter Raleigh—refers to the episode with the cape.

Dear Mr. Raid,

I hardly think that these deranged, semi-poetic ramblings, represent an extensive critical analysis of contemporary American fiction. I hesitate to use the word analysis in relation to anything you do, Mr. Raid, but your "poetry" has upset me. If you find that henceforth you are unable to confine your creativity to the course in question, please resign.

Adamently,

Professor G. B. Schlepp

Needless to say Edgeton conjured up some appropriate remarks for Professor G. B. Schlepp's appropriate remarks, but in respect for gentility, and with an eye to the homogenous nature of my reading public, I will omit them.

Chapter Three

THE SHOE PERHAPS

I have often thought about the shoe, not just because it is Edgeton's shoe, or because his lesser leg leans on it. The great equalizer—the massive tap laden truncheon—the fly's swatter—the sum and substance of invective animosity, worn like a favor on Sir Edgeton's armor. There is more than an undersized foot in the oversized shoe.

Perhaps you are laughing—perhaps you think I am one of those Freudian Sherlocks in miniature, or perhaps you think that Edgeton's not Edgeton—a figment perhaps you're saying—perhaps you think I created this nobody, that he isn't real.

He's real alright, and perhaps a large part of his atrophied marrow lies sealed in the shoe. Clanking and clunking, the iron monster discerns little as it indiscriminately leaves its gnarled impressions on Edgeton's associates. It does, however, tell us much about Edgeton, for it seems

to step hardest and clank loudest on those very areas in Edgeton's thinking where the fissures are fleshy and unsound

About the time you really get to know Edgeton you will be hearing those clanks in your sleep, the antithesis of the "silent reminder," and yet as meaningful in its apparent boisterousness as its obsolete predecessor was in its inferred solemnity.

## Chapter Four

## FRAGMENTS

The following bits of verse were found on a discarded piece of scrap paper by Professor G. B. Schlepp, and he concluded that they were written by Edgeton Raid. I include them only because they admit no explanation and leave the reader free to draw an infinite number of inferences.

### For Gladys

. . . You thought I think  
I had no spunk.  
Don't fly my kite  
Cause I am right—  
So right.

Fleshy fatty flesh—  
Hairy matty mesh—  
Fat—  
Flesh—  
Mat—  
Mesh—  
(Gladys)

Curls and swirls,  
Fatty pearls,  
Fibbs's cat—  
Flat so flat—  
Fat.

Green and gross—  
So morose—  
Adipose.

Bumps and lumps,  
Stumps and pumps,  
Rumps—  
Fatty lumps and rumps.

## Chapter Five

## NO BUG BOMB

"You know what Serie said?—or maybe I better ask you if you remember Serie—you know—Seraphim Menendez—drew my murals. Quite a kidder that Serie—kinda loonie—asked me if I was any relation to the bug bomb. Now I ask you, what in the hell kind of a question is that to ask a guy?"

"Now Gladys, there's a bug bomb—looks like a bug bomb—smells

like a bug bomb—bugs like a bug bomb. If I didn't hate Gladys I'd like her—or maybe if I didn't like Gladys I'd hate her. In any event I hate her—at least I like to hate her. If I didn't have her to hate, who would I hate?—Pop?—Doc Schlepp?—no, you can't hate a shadow if you know what I mean, and boy if there's one thing Gladys isn't it's a shadow. Dear fat Gladys.

## Chapter Six

## GLADYS AGAIN

“Boy there are days when I just feel like getting sick—Old Zeus—dead—I just can't believe it.”

For Gladys the “accidental” demise of the beloved Zeus was just another lump in the long line of welts raised by her unbearable stepson. Without Edgeton Gladys would be sitting pretty, or to be more specific, without Edgeton Gladys would be sitting, for the adjective pretty loses all significance when associated with Gladys.

Edgeton once summed up his stepmother as an habitually lazy, chronically indolent, overweight snip. He misrepresented her, however, by failing to include wealthy, self-satisfied, and sensitive. For underneath the many layers of well cultivated flesh, Gladys harbors a uniquely vulnerable sensitivity which colors her thought processes on one hand, and assigns a place for her as a human being on the other.

For Gladys, Edgeton is an intolerable burden, and for Edgeton, Gladys is an indispensable foil, the focal point for every overt frustration and latent aggression. Edgeton, however, keeps his feelings in a bullet-proof bottle, and wears his armor in his dreams. Gladys, on the other hand, although lacking the perception to distinguish hurt from hysteria, suffers in her daily jousts with the iron monster. In essence, Edgeton is mentally aware of what appears to be an objectively human reaction from Gladys, and yet is unable to temper his attitudes with an emotional response, while Gladys is fully capable of a human reaction, and yet is unwilling or unable to recognize it for what it is. Rarely in the annals of psychological warfare have two opposing forces been as thoroughly entrenched.

“Yes,” she thought to herself, “Now I really do hate him. It's hard enough having to cater to a puffy asthmatic who clanks around the house looking for trouble, but when he turns out to be a killer, a lousy cold-blooded killer, then it's time he was put away.”

The local chapter of the S.P.C.A., not to mention Mrs. Fibbs, are mighty proud of Gladys.

## Chapter Seven

## RODERICK THE SUPERNATURAL

Roderick Raid is a little man, a tired rich little man, who looks upon his son and second wife with a dregree of enthusiasm comparable to that shown by Edgeton and Gladys when they look upon each other. He

stopped sleeping with Gladys six weeks after they were married. Shortly after, with Edgeton present, he accused her of having begun change of life at seventeen. He relocated his mailing address and assumed the guise of a transient boarder, making occasional appearances on the home-front to preserve a semblance of domestic solidarity for the benefit of the neighbors. To Edgeton, Roderick is a ghost, an amusing almost admirable shadow that sporadically flits in and out of his world, leaving nothing more than gold dust as an indication of presence.

Roderick, the absentee landlord, maintains the Raid plantation from beyond; the overseas overseer, content to see his corpulent chattels devour each other.

For our purposes this is all we need to know of Roderick. I only include this sketch to remind the reader that like the chains in the attic he is always there, and although he plays no tangible part in the Edgeton of future chapters, one must never forget that Edgeton is Roderick's son, a shadowy yet significant distinction. Think before you condemn. Probe before you sever.

## Chapter Eight

## SPITE AND SPITTOONS

Doc Schlepp coughed and gazed absently at the pocket watch which lay on the desk in front of him, a signal for the eighteen semi-alert members of English Composition 181BD5 to fumble for their wraps and pass on.

"What a helluva class," Edgeton thought to himself as he reached back to pick up his trench coat which lay on the floor, "Schlepp is the only man I know who can say the same thing for fifty minutes and then have the gumption to apologize for taking a position which he realizes we are not able to grasp for the present. Old Schlepp will be long buried before anyone finds anything of his to grasp."

With all his weight resting on his good leg, he picked up his notebook, pivoted toward the aisle, and then drove the metal monster down with such a bang that Doc Schlepp, who was still fumbling with some papers in his brief case, nearly fell off his chair. Edgeton chuckled under his breath and clanked out of the room.

Outside the door a number of students stood aimlessly chatting, but as Edgeton approached they hurriedly stepped aside. Most people gave the thumping lout a wide berth, for it was common knowledge on campus that Edgeton Raid was a perverted trouble maker, and that his name was attached to a number of questionable incidents. Many felt that he was at best a gregarious if not demented homosexual. All knew that he was wealthy, and at one time a story was circulated that Edgeton was carrying on an incestuous affaire with his stepmother. Gossip moves slowly through a large city college, but as in most things Edgeton was the exception.

Upon reaching the foyer in front of the main door, Edgeton paused momentarily to stare into a large brass spittoon which stood in the corner, flanked comfortably by two cylindrical butt snuffers. Gazing over his shoulder to see that he was alone, Edgeton picked up the iron monster and launched the brassy saucer with one well placed kick. Wheezing



quite loudly he thumped quickly out the door. A long thin layer of mucus stained the wall, as if some silent slug had crawled half way up, only to fall back forever.

## Chapter Nine

## MOTHER MINE

"Hello fatso," Edgeton bellowed, "I'm home."

"Wonderful Puffy," (Gladys had a habit of calling Edgeton Puffy because of his pronounced breathing) Gladys responded from the living room, "It's just wonderful having a cat killer living under your roof."

"It's not your roof fatso and you know it, and besides it was an accident, I didn't mean to kill the damn cat."

"That's great," sneered Gladys, "Maybe next time you'll bag Mrs. Fibbs, not her cat."

"She's quite a bag to bag," Edgeton snickered.

"Maybe you think you're funny Puffy," Gladys answered, "But the police didn't think so when they were here this morning, they think you're nuts, and you can be sure I didn't say anything to change their mind."

"I bet you didn't fatso, I'll bet dear fat Gladys gave our public servants the last full measure of devotion. Yessir I bet those cops think dear Gladys is a real patriot. It's just too bad that dear old dad owns this lousy neighborhood or I might be in trouble."

Gladys, by this time at the point of hysteria, struggled up from the sofa and stormed by Edgeton into the kitchen.

"Yessir," Edgeton laughed to himself, "Dear Gladys is going to have heart failure one of these days if she doesn't learn to take things in stride."

## Chapter Ten

## TERMINUS

English Composition 181BD5

Anno Domine 1963

Edgeton Raid

Professor G. B. Schlepp

### Impressions

Acne splotches mark the bore,  
Feline glances stir the flesh,  
Unmarred manhood bars the door,  
Some leave aching, others fresh.

Satiate liquids clog the pore,  
Anxious ointment mars the cheek,  
Omnipresent tremors gore,  
Some are happy, others weak.

Sinews throbbing yearn for more,  
Flaccid flesh chills, lumpy, cold—  
Passions mutely fade and roar,  
Some sneer weakly, others bold.

Languid humor's pleasant sore,  
Anguished fibres taut and firm,  
Why in life's calm hidden lore,  
Some sleep softly, others squirm?

Congratulations Mr. Raid, you have accomplished what you have apparently set out to do. I have notified the Dean of your resignation from English Composition 181BD5. If you feel slighted, or perhaps if you can find some minute connection between your latest offering and the assignment, please notify the Dean of your intention and the three of us will have a conference. As I am quite confident that this cannot be so, I close.

Contentedly,

G. B. Schlepp

Edgeton received his personal valedictory from Doc Schlepp with a callous indifference. So indifferent was he, in fact, that I somehow suspect he anticipated the break before receiving actual notice.

## Chapter Eleven

## A MAN'S BEST FRIEND

"Every man ought to have at least one friend—of course most men wouldn't choose Serie—but I chose him and I like him, and that's all that really matters.

"Whatta kook that Serie—you know I stopped over at his place the other day, and I'll be damned if he wasn't wearing a dress, came right to the door in a dress—and earrings too, if you can imagine it—rhinestone earrings—and you know what he said when I came in?—'Kiss me lover.' I asked him if he was some kind of a queer or something. He just laughed and told me he was trying to get some inspiration for a new painting. I told him I thought it was a helluva way to get inspiration—walking around like some kind of a broad—but then again he is a pretty good painter, and most pretty good painters are kinda queer I guess.

"I'm not just saying that you know—no sir—there are two of Serie's

paintings hanging in the school art gallery, so somebody must think he's pretty damned good—at least he thinks he's pretty damned good—and I do too. I spent the night with Serie, and you know I even put on the dress when he asked me to—says it gives him more inspiration. I probably shouldn't have—I mean spend the night with a guy like Serie—but it makes Gladys so damned happy when I don't show up for an evening."

## Chapter Twelve

## TOO MUCH MAKE-UP

"Too much make-up—a slut—that's what everyone says about Ronnie Chink—even Serie says it—but boy that Ronnie Chink is a lotta loving if you know what I mean—wears lots of blue on her eyelids—makes her eyes look as big as the rest of her—Yessir Ronnie Chink's eyes look like they've seen a lot. And you know I actually sweat when she walks by—wears the damndest short skirts you ever saw—everyone says she's a real "Serta"—you know Serta—the perfect sleeper—maybe so, but she's not dumb—and you know she's the only girl I've ever talked to—at least since I came to college—that is if you don't count Gladys—and boy Gladys isn't any Ronnie Chink!

"Ronnie—Ronnie Chink that is—used to sit in front of me in Schlepp's class before I got kicked out. You know she had the cutest fanny I ever saw—if there is such a thing as a cute fanny—not real little, but not real big either—if you know what I mean. Well anyway, I was walking down the hall the other day and she stopped me—Ronnie Chink stopped me—everybody gave me a funny look. She asked me how come I didn't go to Schlepp's class anymore. I showed her the poem, and I'll be damned if she didn't like it—said Schlepp was an old—well never mind what she said Schlepp was—but I couldn't help agreeing with her—a real frank girl that Ronnie Chink—and I don't usually agree with anybody.

"I told Serie all about her—liking my poem and everything—he said she was a whore—only talked to me because she knew I was rich. This made me kind of mad, but I really don't have the guts to talk to her again—and anyway, she does wear too much make-up."

## Chapter Thirteen

## A LARGER THAN LARGE LARGE TOE

It has often been said, *ad nauseam*, that a fine line separates love and hate in human beings, and that one may be little more than the natural complement of the other. I do not mean to imply that there is any love lost between Gladys and Edgeton, or that their surface animosity is in any way an indication of some subterranean love. I only mention it in regard to the Edgeton-Gladys sociological complex to point out an interesting facet in Edgeton's personality. For all of his apparently self-centered bitterness he is not the least bit intentionally malicious. Perhaps you find this difficult to accept in the light of past experience, and

in truth Edgeton is nothing short of the "great tormentor."

Reveling as he does in the mental anguish of others, he strangely enough has a chronic aversion to physical pain, and thus deserves a place at least one notch above the little throwers of stones. You are probably saying so what. I would be asking the same thing if it was not for an unusual incident at the Raid household last week.

Gladys, it seems, suffers from bunions, and for no apparent reason, for she spends the absolute minimum number of hours on her feet each day. The pain, none-the-less, is real, and when the weather is especially damp she would willingly give up either of her flabby oversized feet. The incident in question took place when Edgeton got home from school, clanked into the living room, and accidentally thumped his armor plated Buster Brown squarely on Gladys's throbbing bunion.

For perhaps the first time in months Edgeton responded like a normal human being, making genuine overtures of concern and apology. Gladys, however, as was typical in similar situations, refused to hear anything more than what she imagined were derisive taunts, and thus limped tearfully up to her room.

#### Chapter Fourteen

#### BLACK VEILS OR PUSSY PARADISE

"Good morning Hortense," Gladys chirped as she opened the back door for Mrs. Fibbs.

"It's a lovely morning isn't it Gladys?" replied Mrs. Fibbs.

"Yes," answered Gladys, "Now that he's gone."

"I still can't believe that Zeus is dead, shot down like some kind of a rodent, when only yesterday I prepared him a nice bowl of warm cream and low calorie chicken livers."

Hortense Fibbs is one of a growing sorority of elderly well-to-do widows, who have successfully driven good men like Fred Fibbs to early graves by focusing the sum and substance of their limited affections on their cats rather than their husbands. For Mrs. Fibbs the loss of the beloved Zeus made Fred's viewing seem like her sixteenth birthday.

"Yes, I know Hortense," Gladys responded, "But with beasts like Puffy on the loose, nobody is safe these days."

"I still can't figure out why he did it," Hortense sobbed, "Zeus was such a lovely cat, and very affectionate when you took the time to know him."

"Well Hortense," Gladys answered, "You can be sure that Zeus is resting peacefully wherever he is, and some day Edgeton will have to answer for it."

"I do hope so Gladys, Zeus was such a sensitive animal, much more than the normal pet."

Thus Gladys and Hortense spent most of the morning and half the afternoon voiding their separate spleens of the substance which caused them the most anxiety.

Edgeton, wearing nothing but his favorite mint green boxers, complacently inhaled his thirtieth Camel of the day, and absently doodled "Mr. and Mrs. Edgeton Chink" on the scratch paper in front of him. Chuckling at his subconscious *faux pas*, he scratched it out and wrote "Mrs. Ronnie Raid" in its place.

"Has kind of a nice ring to it." Edgeton thought to himself. He straightened up suddenly and began violently scratching his unkempt hair. "Boy I must be getting soft," he thought, "That little piece is getting to me." With that he wrinkled up the scratch paper and threw it to the floor.

A week later, Gladys, on the pretense of cleaning Edgeton's room, discovered this scrap and another. On the other was the following offering:

#### A Chunk of Chink

Rouge resplendent, vapid smells—  
 Bluish trace of morphine's smear—  
 Firm pink flesh in pleated swells—  
 Yearning impulse, why not near?

Rancid fear clings close in nobs—  
 Turgid cells dilate in pain—  
 Sapphire channel's pressing throbs—  
 One parched mouth and still no rain.

Calcium shelves and silky slip—  
 Downy thighs, no razor scrapes—  
 Raven curl with grayish tip—  
 Legions wink while one mouth gapes.

Grassy blankets, hand loomed strands—  
 Football fields, pink wall to wall—  
 Sampled by self seeking bands,  
 And quarantine where I would crawl.

"I believe it's a love poem," Gladys mused to herself as she re-read Edgeton's eulogy to Ronnie Chink, "But I don't understand it—except the lines about the rouge and the pink flesh, and I never figured that queer even thought about girls."

She rested her pulpy cheek momentarily on the back of her hand and smiled. "I've got it," she thought, "This Chink's no girl, she's a guy—that queer wrote this about some boyfriend—of course—Dr. Kcops says lots of queers wear make-up and dresses. Imagine me even thinking Puffy had a girl friend. How could any girl be attracted to that?"

She stood up, and with uncommonly deliberate strides flowed into her bedroom. Hortense Fibbs wasn't able to get the receiver to her ear before the awful truth seeped out.

## Chapter Seventeen

## WE'LL NEVER KNOW

The saccharin scent of rose water was more than the militant mosquitoes were able to stand. Whining comfortably in the halo of light they one by one dispersed, instantaneously absorbed in the park's blackness.

Rose water and stuffy wet wool—the old car blanket—still sheltering a bit of potato chip or a mustard smear from picnics come and gone. How strange the smells and touches—the sweetness—the cold dampness—the warm dampness—the softness—the harshness—the quiet—the tension—the pleasure—the pain—and mosquitoes.

Who sees in the blackness?—the moistness and blackness. Do squealers squeal? Is blackness whiteness? Do mosquitoes have eyes? Is moist grass capable of compounding myth, or perpetrating rumor, of making men from jelly? Do smells and sounds and moist blackness and squeals exist if only for mosquitoes? Do men's pens make men for other men? Do parks and sounds and squeals exist, or are all men mosquitoes, whining about in a cloud of rose water, hovering over blankets in blackness?

Suggest a thump, a loud metallic thump. Infer a squeal, a scented fleshy squeal. With light the black is white, the squeal is flesh to feel. The haloed light, the blackness, the mosquitoes—only the whine rings true—but for whom?—only the mosquitoes.

## Chapter Eighteen

## DON'T SHIRK THE SMIRK

Gladys wore a noticeable smirk on her face as Edgeton entered the kitchen. It had been an oppressive spring, and the heavy air had so aggravated Edgeton's asthma that even the normal exertion of climbing stairs caused him to puff with an abnormally pronounced whine. During the past few weeks the continuously vociferous encounters between Edgeton and Gladys had reverted to a silent stalemate. Their lances cast aside, they jostled with glances, wry sneers, contemptuous shrugs, and this morning with smirks.

"What the hell are you grinning about fatso?" Edgeton snarled, "Just what in hell have you got to smirk about?"

"A little chinky this morning, Puffy, I see," Gladys replied, "Just a little chinky." Her eyes twinkled as she accentuated the last word.

Edgeton threw back his head and laughed. "Well, I do believe fat snoopy Gladys thinks she knows something about mean old Edgeton," he chuckled, "Yes I think dear Gladys thinks she has something to smirk about."

"You're damned right I do, queer," she answered, "You'd better

learn to pick up your love poems, because 'Chinky' is going to be awfully disappointed to think that some woman has come between you two gaybirds."

"Why you sexless snip," Edgeton snarled, "If I ever catch you in my room you'll be sharing a plot with dear departed Zeus." He stopped suddenly and began laughing even more hysterically than before. "Gladys," he sputtered, "You think Chinky—you stupid slob."

## Chapter Nineteen

## YOUR HOME AWAY FROM HOME

"Look Serie, be a pal," Edgeton pleaded, "Just this once."

"Sure, be a pal," he responded, "Turn my studio into some whorehouse."

"Look, I told you it was nothing like that, I'm getting sick of movies and walks—and besides I'm not much good at walking, if you know what I mean."

"Allright Edge, what's in it for me, and where do you propose I sleep while my studio plays host to the A. F. of L.?"

"I told you you could sleep in my room" Edgeton answered, "And I also told you I'm no advocate of free love—it is just like you said, for some things surface tension isn't enough, and this time I either come up with some glue or the seal breaks permanently."

"I repeat," Serie queried, "What's in it for me? And besides why don't you use your place, there's nobody in that monstrous pad but big mouth?"

"That's enough," Edgeton answered, "I don't feel like giving fatso anything more to talk about. Look, I'll pose for that picture you were telling me about if you'll stay away until noon tomorrow."

"In that case it's a deal," Serie replied, "But I don't want anything messed up, if you know what I mean."

"Get the hell out of here," Edgeton snapped, "And don't come back until after twelve."

At one fifteen the following afternoon Seraphim Menendez, budding young artist, returned to his apartment. Entering his studio he found everything just as it had been the night before—only the faint odor of rose water belied the presence of any intruder.

## Chapter Twenty

## PLEASURE BEGETS PAIN

"I'm late," Edgeton thought to himself as he alternately clanked and wheezed up the steps to the humanities building, "I'm really late." He pulled open the door and threw the iron monster forward. This time, however, the characteristic clank was replaced by an anguished thud as Edgeton's massive bulk fell crashing to the floor. He tried to get up but found his head pinned down by a large black engineer boot. Standing over him were two well oiled warriors, clad in leather, and vaguely familiar to

the prostrate Edgeton.

The larger of the two toughs was smiling. "Now you listen, queer, and you listen good—some things just aren't for queers—this is a big school—lots of queers—so you just stay queer—queer—or you're going to find out that ice cream cone is a mouthful of razor blades—and you know just what I mean."

Edgeton got up slowly, wheezing in short sporadic snorts. He picked up his books and thumped loudly through the foyer, past a large brassy spittoon, and into the hurly burly world of pencil sharpeners, pleats, and rose water.

## Chapter Twenty-One

## ACADEMIA

Edgeton's city is like most cities, dirty and clean, rich and poor, loud, soft, hard, impersonal, and a score more of appropriately urbanized adjectives. The concrete college campus covers six and a half city blocks and includes forty-three buildings, sixteen libraries, four gymnasiums, three hundred and thirty men's rooms, and an estimated one thousand three hundred and seven water fountains. Thirty-six thousand students are enrolled in the fifteen colleges.

Engineer boots, pimples, falsies—devout worshippers of Zen, followers of Billy Graham, Israeli freedom fighters, southern negroes—masochists, Mennonites, Moslems—nymphomaniacs, frigid Freudeans, fiery Freudeans—perverts, painters, probers, pushers—hairless, bearded, busty, pock marked—pinks, whites, yellows—strongs, weaks—sweets, sours—Doc Schlepp, Seraphim Menendez, Ronnie Chink and Edgeton Raid.

The enlightened academic community fosters knowledge, love, distrust, prejudice, and in some cases even violence—thousands or irresponsible minds instinctively groping for footholds in the concrete.

Do each have an assigned niche? Are the Chinks and Raids able to align their thought processes with a complete lack of encouragement and motivation? Do men instinctively seek their own level? Is the Raid-Schlepp-Chink-Menendez diatribe the inevitable union of interdependent personalities? Are rose water and engineer boots and dresses and pants and taps and acne the undefinable stereotypes of a hopelessly complex network of human animals? Are we all really one in the same person? Aren't all men bound to Edgeton just as Edgeton is bound to the inevitable demands of his surroundings? Can six and a half indifferent city blocks of concrete provide the answer? And if they could—who would tell Edgeton, would tell Ronnie, would tell Seraphim, *ad infinitum*?

## Chapter Twenty-Two

## COMES THE NIGHT

The moist macadam magnified the solitary thumps of Edgeton's taps, much like a lone bongo drum in a deserted cellar. Loneliness and the night—the great sounding board—the echo chamber for all the empty



vessels of wasted pain and frustration. How often it is that the conspicuously desolate sounds of humankind ring loudest in men's ears. The secretive solitaries limp in moist shadows, only to stand out in the optic spotlights of the boisterous.

Small stones loom like mountains in the night. Thorny shrubs stand like mute sentries, masking their intent in a thousand pointed patterns. The quiet drizzle settles silently, and almost imperceptible phenomenon, which imparts to the atmosphere a feeling of closeness, much like the "John" after Saturday night showers.

So Edgeton, deprived of even the abstract intimacy of comradeship, molded by forces beyond his limited ken, thumps along the macadam, beating out a message so basic in make-up that it loses itself in its primitive passivity.

## Chapter Twenty-Three

## THE OTHER SIDE

The pink brocade bed spread wore noticeable wrinkles as it cradled Gladys's limp frame. Gladys, the personification of lonesome luxuriance—held back by an ingrained indolence—incapable of attaching a positive significance to her life. Eighteen empty rooms—four thousand square feet of untrod wall to wall carpeting.

"What a life," she thought to herself, "What a hell of an empty life. Edgeton and Gladys Raid. Boy if I had ever known what I was getting myself into—an animal sired by a worm."

For Gladys the days hung heavily—and yet Gladys, unlike Edgeton, squats on top of her surroundings, much like the lamprey, indiscriminate about her choice of hosts, and yet constitutionally unable to sustain herself. Edgeton recognizes the moles on the surface of his mein and does everything to stamp them out. Gladys, however, after years of mirror breaking can see nothing but the tiny pieces of glass which she ironically imagines to be from another world.

Comes the night and many thumps are heard—self contained thumps—thumps of ecstasy and adoration—thumps of canes and crutches—thumps of worn and withered hearts—and thumps of loneliness.

## Chapter Twenty-Four

## BUY THE IMPROBABLE

At six thirty in the morning a damp and thoroughly cleansed Edgeton Raid clanked weakly through the front door after a night of walking. The surname Puffy could never have been more aptly applied than at this moment, for Edgeton, a boy to whom the thought of physical exertion was utterly alien, was unquestionably exhausted. Lurching quite noticeably in an effort to keep the bulk of his weight off the iron monster, he hobbled up the stairs.

When he reached the second floor he couldn't help notice the light from under Gladys's door or fail to hear the swinish grunts so character-

istic of Gladys in slumber. Making every effort to conceal his presence he shuffled to the door, opened it slightly, and looked in on Gladys who still lay quite motionless on top of the pink bedspread. Her face took on a more grotesque appearance in the light, for lining the liberally applied layers of pancake make-up were several uncharacteristic avenues which hinted of tears.

He started to close the door, but instead entered the room, bent down, and kissed his portly stepmother on her cheek. "Good night dear Gladys—good night dear fat Gladys." He limped quietly out of the room as Gladys subconsciously swatted at what her reflexes no doubt interpreted to be a fly.

## Chapter Twenty-Five

## THE BIRDS AGAIN

"Good morning Gladys, good morning fatso, good morning dear fatso Gladys, good morning to you." Edgeton hummed the repetitive stanzas repetitiously to the tune of *Happy Birthday*, as the misdirected stream of warm water from the shower eroded some of yesterday's liberally applied acne cream.

Seconds later he emerged from the shower, his glistening body still untouched by a single bubble of soap, and immediately began dressing. Seemingly enthusiastic about getting back into some old friends, Edgeton shuffled into his room. Outside, a number of noisy birds played "post office" in the trees.

"Birds," he thought to himself, "I hate birds. To the hunt! Just like Uncle Remmington says—if you don't like something—shoot it."

The 22 stood loaded in the corner. The window opened slowly. The screen folded out silently. A cocky jay rested on the tree, then on the bird bath. Three rapid shots were fired. "Well," he thought to himself, "As an old sage once said, a miss is as good as a mile."

Outside on the lawn, however, directly behind the massive old oak, and shaded from Edgeton's immediate view, lay the bloated and lifeless body of Gladys Raid. The cocky jay clacked on.

POETRY



## PLEASE

Please  
Handle me  
Gently  
And with the greatest  
Sincerity.  
For I am of  
A lighter stuff  
Of which you would not  
Understand  
And of which  
I myself  
Do not  
Understand.

## LOVE ME

You picture him  
With you always.  
Wherever you go.  
He sees  
As you see—  
    The bright green of the trees  
    The deep blue of the sky  
    The clear water of the brook  
    The reds and yellows of the sunset  
    The falling leaf and snowflake.

You want to share  
With him  
Beauty—  
The beauty of  
    Poetry  
    Laughter  
    Music  
    Nature  
    Love  
        and of God.

And you say to him:  
    Teach me.  
    Learn with me.  
And most of all—  
    Love me.

Then all too soon  
You are alone.  
And you hear him,  
As time stops—

In the rustle of the trees  
In the sweep of the clouds  
In the ripple of the brook  
In the chill of the sunset  
In the silent whisper of  
    the falling leaf and  
        snowflake.

#### WAITING WITH THE SUN

The sun shines through  
The stained-glass windows  
Embedded in the wall.

I sit beneath  
the tall straight windows  
Waiting for His call.

    Time passes slowly  
    Sitting here.

Clouds drift by  
Shadows loom  
All reflect within.

But once again  
The sun appears  
My solitary kin.

    Yet . . .  
    Time passes slowly  
    Sitting here.

—*Dorothy Davis*

## UPON A SUMMIT

Upon a summit  
as the sun  
its daily course had run  
Was departing to a distant land,  
I heard in the background of the silence  
the low humming  
of the world turning  
upon its axis.

As the sound,  
ascending from the earth  
and echoing from the vault of heaven,  
touched my ears,  
I thought of how the hollow men whose  
sawdust minds  
and tinder hearts  
clog the cogs  
Of the spinning world,  
creating friction  
through restriction  
of its progress.

What a fire  
they could inspire  
Should the oiling can of the Master Engineer  
ever diminish.

—*Harry L. Serio*

A HEDONIST COMMENTS ON HIS RELIGION

I read all night, I sleep all day;  
A mixed up schedule—I never pray.  
It's time to eat, It's time to rest;  
Taking five to argue—I answer a guest.  
Exams are pending, Rocco is stumped;  
For all of my drinking I never get drunk.  
In a couple of hours the sun will rise;  
I'll laugh in my chambers while Dracula dies.  
I'd reach for my Bible, but it's getting late;  
So here's to the morning—my future with fate.

—George E. Rutledge

## LIKE ICE

I walk across the ice and fall in.  
    That's life.  
    A thin, hard crust, a shiny surface.  
And when you break through you find the real current,  
    the life stream.  
    It's been there all along but you didn't feel it then  
    up there,  
On your hard, cold, safe, unmoving ice.  
It's swift and dangerous underneath where you have to  
    feel.  
Only here can you experience, live,  
    die  
    completely.  
Only with us it's not the cold, like the water.  
    With us it's the heat  
The awful, wonderful heat of human emotion.  
The cold, cold heat of human hate.  
The sizzling heat of love, the scars left,  
    the burns.  
You don't get hurt up there, it's too cold.  
Underneath, where the real current is,  
    Go there  
        if you want to get hurt,  
            burn your hands on love,  
                on caring too much.  
Go there to die living, feeling  
    Ecstasy is here too.  
Stay up there on your ice, Cowards.



## DARK MORNING

Dark Morning comes,  
    She races with the hour,  
And skirts with sandy feet along the beach.  
    Her cold, cold hair swept misty out behind her  
As far as sea and sky and night can reach.

Dark Morning smiles.  
    She lures the ocean higher,  
And runs damp, salty fingers through the air.  
    Soft velvet train trailed silver-grey behind her  
Across the sand, but leaves no traces there.

Dark Morning laughs,  
    She's slashed the sky with daybreak  
And crimson dawn is bleeding through the breach.  
    But where is she who left the blood-stained ocean  
To roll the fiery sun up to the beach?

—*Sally Campbell*

## SO SOFT THE BREEZE

So soft the breeze brushed above our roof.  
Unfurnished rooms and rugless floors of wood  
Swept free of dust and past debris untold.  
An angry welt on Time's unyielding hand  
Not stopped before—nor planning for it now—  
A life renewed, reborn, renewed, redressed,  
(No hollow effort here!) At last the Fates  
Deceived, beguiled, and never more to threaten.  
Direct your step and follow us to drink  
A new and ancient toast of Hemlock wine  
Verbatim now repeat with us our pledge:  
"Eternal Truth are We, Immortal Youth!"

—*David Sall*

## THE HEAT OF YOUTH

The heat of youth builds dreams  
On one warm day in March,  
The promise of those days to come  
When Love, triumphant, builds his arch.

But early warmth, false spring,  
Is followed by maudlin cold,  
The ling'ring remnant of winter's chill  
When dormant love dared not be bold.

But, Youth, lose not your faith  
In Love and days not yet,  
For lazy spring will slowly creep  
From 'neath her greens just wet.

## SOLEMNITY

### I

Death came home.  
I sensed it as it came  
Slowly, creeping  
Till it finally took aim.

Death came home.  
I knew it must come soon  
Slowly, creeping  
Unable to wait for June.

Death came home.  
I saw it when it rose  
Slowly, creeping  
Directly to the one it chose.

Death came home.  
I smelled its air of doom  
Slowly, creeping  
While the odor filled the room.

Death came home.  
I heard its steady pace  
Slowly, creeping  
Till it found its long-sought place.

## II

Death and I shall together go  
From here unto the paths below  
Then Death and I must part, for he  
Has far to go and much to see.

He'll leave me at my cottage door  
Where Time won't matter any more.  
Then he'll return on silent feet  
To make another life complete.

There I'll be in that one-room place  
Away from each familiar face,  
For there shall be no company  
In the narrow confines giv'n me.

## III

Silence framed your death  
When I and you were parted.  
Nothing stirred a breath  
When I and you were parted.

Everything went on  
When I and you were parted—  
Even golden dawn—  
When I and you were parted.

My world grew more strange  
When I and you were parted.  
You were out of range  
When I and you were parted.

I lost everything  
When I and you were parted.  
But you felt nothing  
When I and you were parted.

—*Gabrielle*

## A LAUGH

God smiled today; no, I think He  
Laughed. Our orchestra of ecstasy  
Echoed, reverberated in the symphony  
Of Silence. My love and I regained  
The bitter piece of Apple, we gave  
Him cause to smile. Again He saw  
His children finding Eden and He  
Was pleased.

God smiled today and we were happy.  
No conductor or bandmaster did we  
Have. Unrehearsed and unorchestrated  
Was our music. But across the great  
Acoustical Music Hall of Heaven, we  
Gained entry into eternity. Our tune  
Was simple—trust. Our rhythm was to  
The beat—beauty. Our stanzas were  
Repetitive—exhilaration.

The title?—Love.

God smiled today and all the stalactite  
Clouds above gleamed in time with  
Our music.

God smiled today—we found love.

—*Elwood R. Pollock*

We have coupled Peter Vennema's most recent poem with his first to be published in the *Lantern*.

CONSUMPTION  
(*Lantern* - 1959)

The sun sets in gold and purple  
and acqua marine. Water sparkles and  
brooks burble and birds sing.  
A beam of light, a pillar of gold,  
stands from fertile earth to forest  
top. Around it bides the deep blue-black,  
broken by twin green dots of animal eye.  
Man has not yet come.

The world spins on, but who gives a damn?  
There's light, but no sight. The bloated sun,  
bilious and bleary, gloats from low west  
in red and purple and black. A sick green  
beam, a pillar so pale, leans 'tween  
blanched white in child's face and sky-scratcher  
tip. Around it bides the industrial fog in  
gray and soot, broken by twin red blotches  
of animal eye. Pallor, trouble, squalor  
and rubble; fire burn and cauldron bubble.  
Man has come.

TO LIFE AND LOVE  
AN EPITAPH

Frozen rivers failed  
To clear their throats in time enough  
To greet the rising spring  
This year. Not time enough.

Saline bitter seas  
Somehow began to warm too late,  
And met a rising chill  
This year. It was too late.

Perhaps my error was  
In not becoming more of you  
Or not becoming less.  
In any case, it's through.

