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fioretti

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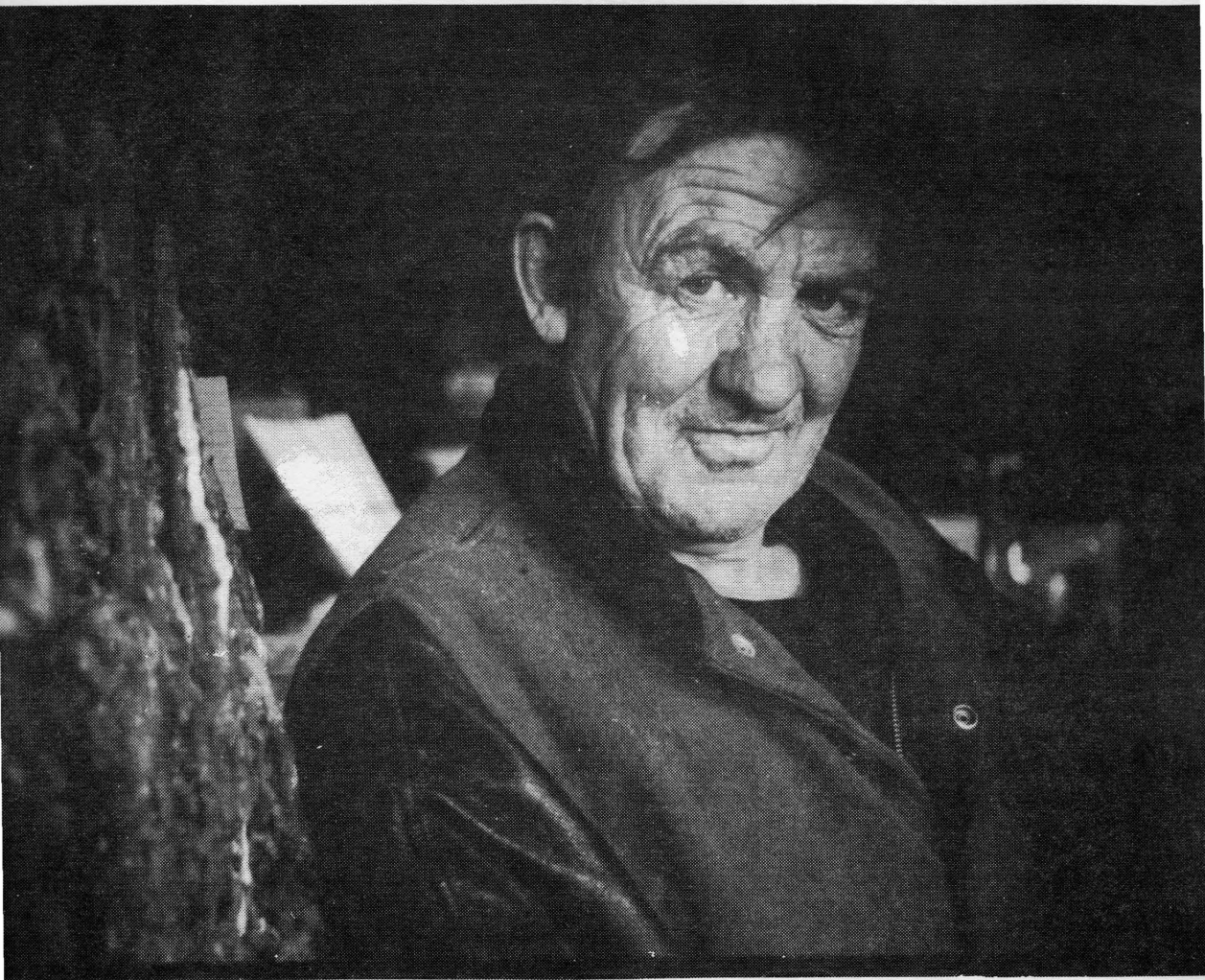
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CONTENT 21010



REQUIESCAT

Cindy Pio

Today,
early,
the horizon glowed golden for a brief moment.
And that grand star
stepped slowly, majestically out of the night,
and created day.

Earthlings stirred,
aroused by the brilliant birth.
And most commenced to just live,
simply and naturally.

But self-named "homo sapiens"
(so-called for feigning intelligence)
set about contaminating today,
cluttering its fleeting seconds
with sorrow,
with frustration,
and always, always
the thoughts and ideas and plans
for the future.

He fancies himself a divine architect of some sort,
this "homo sapiens,"
laden as he is with all his
groundplans and blueprints for the superstructure
he calls tomorrow.

He plots and graphs and toils, and yet
the finished product wobbles a bit,
not at all what he had in mind,
nothing at all like he'd planned.
So daily he begins anew,
cementing his dreams together
with mounds of hope
and not just a touch of fear.
And yet.....

Red, exhausted,
the aged sun neared its sepulcher
where daily it dies
and lays itself to rest.
Yet it lingered,
only momentarily,
and then carried with it to death
the very child to which it had given birth.

Today
passed on thus,
ignored,
uncelebrated,
unrealized as a tomorrow fulfilled,
now forever yesterday.

A MODERN CHRISTMAS STORY

Kathleen Giesting

To begin this story in the traditional manner we will begin with --- Once upon a time, long ago but not too far away, there lived in Indianapolis a small boy who longed to grow up and become a Santa Claus for the Salvation Army --- ringing bells for collections on the street corners of Cincinnati (everyone **knows** that Cincinnati is the **only** place to be a bell-ringing Salvation Army Santa).

Well, this little boy's name was Tommy and he had been certain ever since his third birthday that he wanted to become a Salvation Army Santa. Now he was six years old and Christmas was coming again. Tommy decided that it was about time he started his career before the field got too filled up (he had been noticing an awful lot of Santas around lately). So Tommy decided to ask his friend Max, the policeman, who knew almost **everything**, how it was you became a Santa for the Salvation Army. (Tommy wasn't a religious fanatic or anything --- it's just that he'd never seen any Santas that weren't from the Salvation Army.) Max, your typical "County Mountie" and all around nice guy, told Tommy that he was too young to be a Salvation Army Santa Claus. Tommy was crushed. He was certain that if he didn't become a Santa this year, there would never be another chance (you know how hard it is to get **any** kind of job nowadays) so he decided to go straight up to one of the Salvation Army Santas and ask him where he could sign up.

The first Santa he approached was grumpy from the cold and ringing his bell with very little enthusiasm. He simply ignored Tommy's even being there. The Santa on the next corner was a kind old gent though, and Tommy asked him how he could become a Salvation Army Santa.

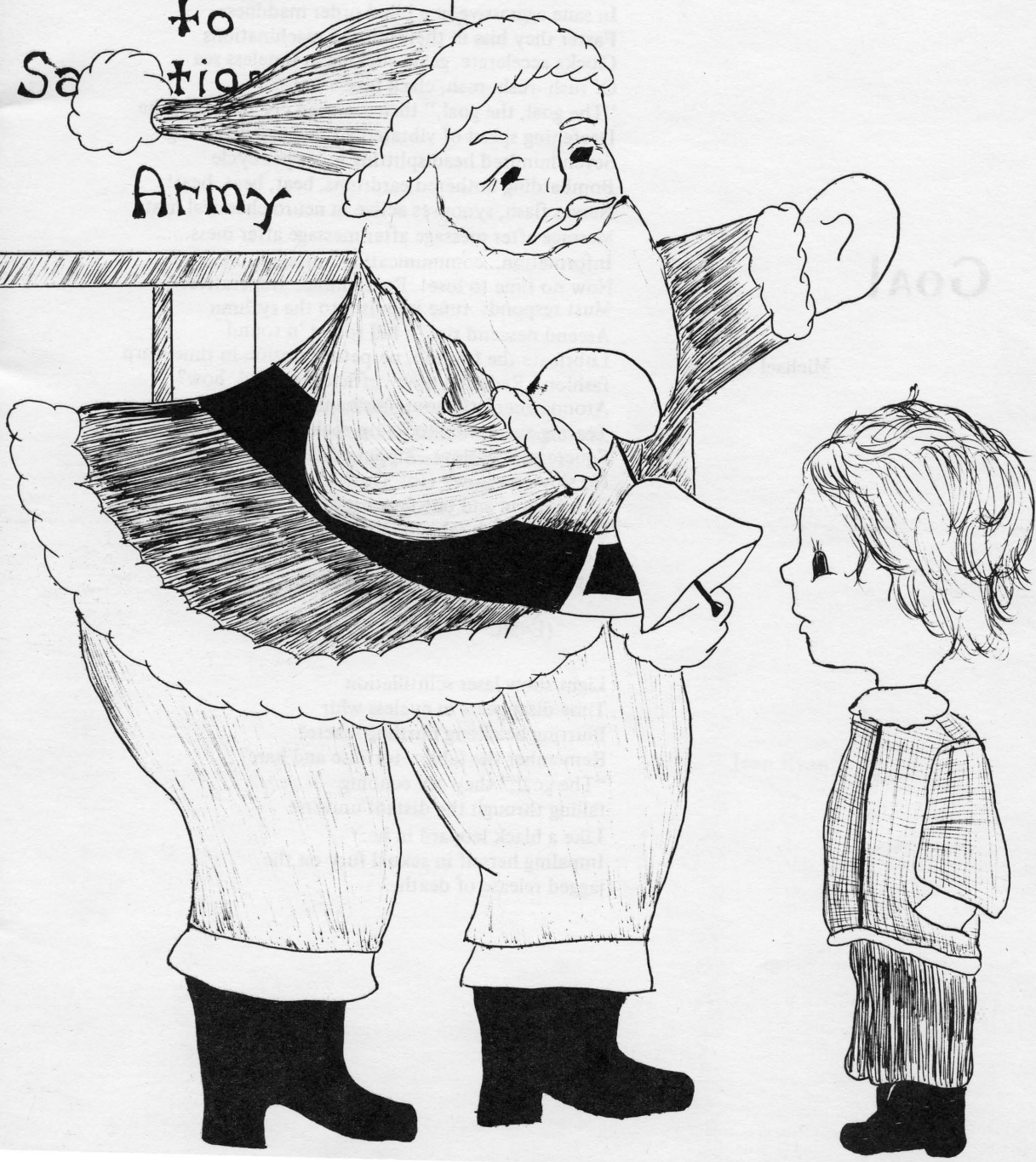
The old man laughed and said, "Someday, if you really want it, you can be just like me, collecting money for gifts for poor people. But right now you have a much more important job to do."

Tommy was puzzled. "What could possibly be more important than bell-ringing Salvation Army Santas?" he asked.

The Santa smiled at him and said, "Enjoy your young years and spread the joy of your youth; it is worth more than all the money in my pot."

And Tommy smiled as he walked home, kicking a stone before him.

Give
to
Sanitation
Army



GOAL

Michael Wallace

World spins, spirals top-like faster
Spinning to spin in nano-second flash
Cadence unbroken in unsyncopated motion
Auto-men, computomen spitting sounds furiously
In sane aggressive in a blind order maddness
Faster they hiss in their hurried machinations
Clocks accelerate, gears clicking in timeless sea
Of rush--rush--rush,, clack hiss.
“The goal, the goal,” their frenzied cry travels at the
Deafening speed of vibrated air. whooosh! clang.
Seven hundred head-splitting miles per cycle
Bombarding bothered eardrums, beat, beat, beat!
Nerves flash, synopses active in neuro-chemical haste
Message after message after message after mess.....
Information...communication...integration.
Now no time to lose! Reassemble. Imperative.
Must respond: tune impulses to the rythmn
Ascend descend rise 'n fall round 'n round
Lubricate the friction, perpetual motion in time warp
fashion. Redesign now! efficiency now! how?
Atomic energetic hourglass hands whirling, ripping
Tearing away; tick-tock, rip-rock. precise vise
Squeezing the slow. Zipping through the wires
No slow, no slow. Go! Go!! Go!!!
Streaking in and out faster faster!
Straining mach schnell mach schnell
No room in workd breathing speed, for snail
Popping reds amphetamine gazelle

($E=MC^2$)

Light show laser scintillation
Time disappears in eyeless whir
Blurring headlong hurtling where?
Remember the fable: tortoise and hare?
“The goal,” they cry echoing
falling through the distant universe
Like a black leopard in heat
Impaling herself in sexual fury on the
jagged release of death.

mad fly,
bouncing inside the lampshade,
the light makes you crazy.

I'll turn it off.

mad fly,
you lie in darkness.
was it better to be crazy
in the light?

Joan Ryan



"Mei"

Michael Wallace

Today I went to the museum
Me and myself stayed home
For I went alone
Love statue swallowed me whole
though I had the strength to fight
me won and I fell in
I put no stock in such a thing, love
Foolish to invest with no insured return
but me needs you (whoever you may be)
me foolish and timid please let me in
I bought butterflies and bells to win
the I in you
though the you me like is really the me you
I strut and swear like poppa bear
and me squeaks in fright
at the sight
of Goldilocks
You may have my porridge
And don't mind I, he's just me.

In the mystical land of Hush-a-bye
far and far away
A young girl caught a young man's eye
and he to her did say,
"Where tend thee now my pretty maid?
Where do thy footsteps wend?"
So prettily the young girl said,
"I go to seek a friend."
"A friend you've found,
Your friend I'll be!"
the young man cried in joy.
"And we'll sail away
O'er the sparkling sea
we'll all our time employ
in seeking shells
and wading brooks
and tending flowers sweet.
We'll question how we e'er deserved
to share a joy so meet."
The young girl's eyes with tears brimmed full
"My friend you ne'er can be.
The friend I seek
I needs must seek
he has been promised me.
I dare not tarry on my way
he waits; he comes for me.
I ne'er shall seek the sparkling shells
or wade in babbling brook.
My love was promised
ere I was.
My love too soon he took.
He stole me from my mother's arms
from hearth and home and kin.
He wooed me with the promises
of-Oh!-what might have been!
We go to a darkness never lit
by fire or moon or sun,
Where smiles are merely fancies
hardly half begun.

'Tis cold and bleak--this bitter place
where sun has ne'er been seen
I hesitate, yet hurry on
I move as in a dream.

A nightmare now--
the Fates did spin
Those woeful sisters three
charting a new life for him,
cruel death for me."

"Why go thee then?"

the young man said,
"Come fly with me, come flee."

"I needs must go,"
the young girl said,

"He waits; he comes for me.

Wedded now must I be his
We walk in death and life
I needs must live and die in him
I needs must be his wife."

Eternal circle--circle round
the lifeless trees of winter frown
the young man the young girl part
springtime lives in lovers' hearts
summer sees them smile anew
autumn too soon brings the dew
life has tarried far too long--
Death will sing the victory song.

Kathleen Giesting





IN MOURNING

Elaine Watson

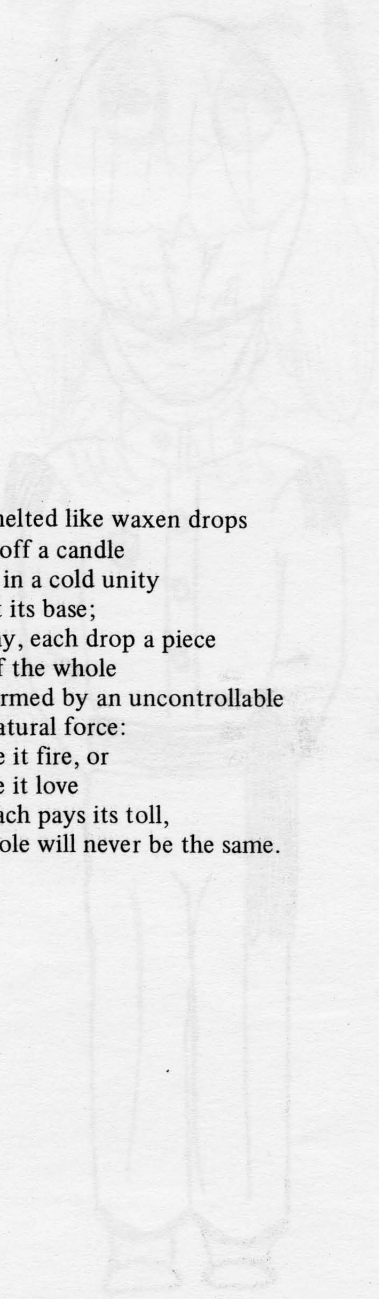
Today I glanced over my shoulder,
and it was you.
-There you stood.
I could feel the glares
from the corners of our eyes,
pulling together as with magnetic force.
Still, neither of us possessed the courage
to meet face to face.

The memories of all we had shared
were tempting me to speak,
but pride arrived promptly on the scene
tying my tongue in a million knots.

When I think of our impromptu
encounter,
the lump that was in my throat
suddenly reappears,
and seems to grow like a cancer
as I remember that our romance is dead.

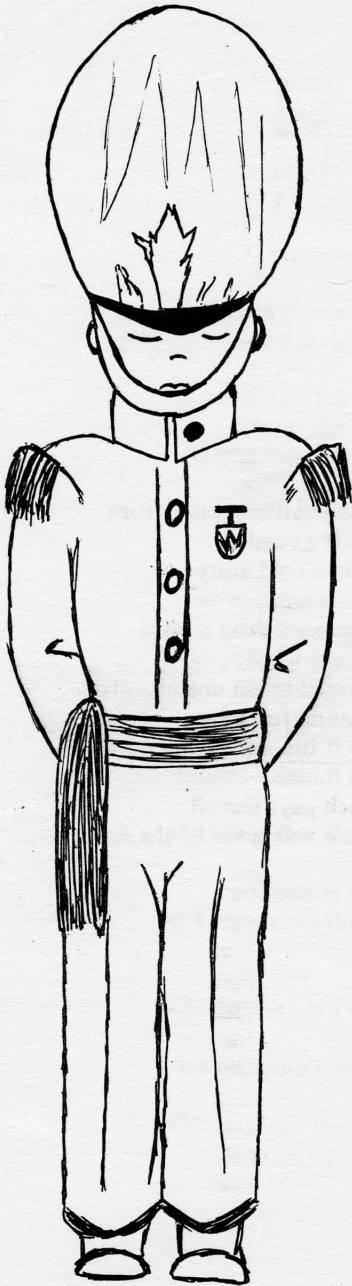
The disease with which we were stricken
was stubbornness
with its complications, jealousy, anger and pride,

Why is it that the warmest of romances
fade like a suntan in mid-September?



Days, melted like waxen drops
Sliding off a candle
Harden in a cold unity
 at its base;
Each day, each drop a piece
 of the whole
Transformed by an uncontrollable
 natural force:
 be it fire, or
 be it love
When each pays its toll,
The Whole will never be the same.

Pat Paquin



Stand tall, walk tall
Soldier, little boy.
Momma calls, the sun's down
up the shallow moon --
birds wane, owls wax
swallow pride, sleep.

Herb Finke

NOTES TO AN "Owl" I KNOW



I have
Seen the
Shadows in your
Eyes
That speak to me
Of your
Sorrowing-sadness
And your
Heavy laden
Heart
I would not
Wish you walk
Or make your way
Without some
Darkness
(As long as you grope
or stumble not all
alone, devoid of light....)
I only ask
That when you must
Travel
In the deepening dusk
There always be
STARS
To brighten up your
Nights!

Sr. Francesca Thompson

REFLECTION ON LOVE

Joseph Kempf

We two,
composed of such mind stuffs
and flesh,
caught ourselves one night
striking egos
together like steel
on flint
and conjured reflections
so bright
they made thousand-faceted
mirrors
of our bodies.

Later a single leaf
falling
shattered the image.

Somewhere in Greece
Narcissus
/struck blind/
vanishes from mirrors
of the world,
slips beneath
the silvery surface
and drowns.

Life

only the far side of death
a line so easy to cross over
and so beckoning

at times, so lonely
at times, so rough
bleeding, crying, hating, useless,
yet every moment yielding something to hang onto.

give up and you lose the might have been dreams
despair, and you waste the could have been joys
consent and you live in the maybe world
of happiness today and the possibility of
another tomorrow.

Donna Meyers

THE OCEAN

Linda Hagan

I often find myself longing for the ocean. It has an air of complete and uninterrupted freedom about it, making me feel as though I'm in a place of solitude where I can bring my never-ending dreams to rest. Its outstretched arms embrace me with many thoughts. Its immensity spreads a feeling of eternity throughout my cluttered brain. The quietness projects a feeling of loneliness, down to the deepest depths, exploring in me what is left to be uncovered, and reminding me.....

I see laughter in the waves as it goes by gurgling, bubbling, enthusiastically flowing, unwinding its way through the world. It's a place of dreams -- the waves coming up to meet them and then taking them away while I continue to hope that they will reach someone on the other side, far away. Even being such a quiet cove, it is supplied with a certain friendship.

I can find promises, I can share hope, and I can surely share my emotions. For the wind blowing the waves encompasses the entire span of emotion. But exactly exactly what this emotion is I really cannot know, because the tide always changes.



THE FLAMING SWORD

Joe Rea

The day had begun with unusual natural beauty for the community. As the clouds of dawn made their formation you wondered which one of the many brilliant colors would predominate over the others. The appearance of the sun made that guesswork needless. Its strong bright rays supplied the answer as the day took the form of a cloudless, hot and muggy extension on our lives.

I would not go to work today for the community. There was other work planned for me. I had perpetrated a pretty heavy offense. It seemed that I had not been happy for a while. Disaffection with the group and with life in general had warranted some controlling help. The community's controlling device of psychotherapy was in store for me, or rather, I was in store for it.

The modern air-conditioned psychiatry offices in the medical complex were pleasant to walk into that day. No one paid much attention to me as I came in simply because there was no one in the waiting room. I was alone in that spacious place. An old familiar feeling of uniqueness came creeping into my skull. "So here I am alone," I thought, "I must be a special case." This attitude, I vaguely felt, was in essence the reason that I was standing here now.

"Come on into the back, Mr. Burrhus," the old nurse smilingly beckoned. "The doctor will be with you in a moment."

The office resembled the outside hall and waiting room in that it was cool and comfortable. However, it differed from the passive simplicity I had just left as it appeared ready for action. The affect in there must have been transmitted by the large amount of apparatus. The situation was also made more pressing by the reduced amount of space in which that equipment could somehow close in and pounce on you.

"Hello, Mr. Burrhus," said the voice at my back. "I am Doctor Renniks and I have come to help you."

"You want to help me, doctor?"

"Sure, I would like to see you happy. I want to see you in a peaceful relation with the community here. You must be at one with your environment. This is what I want, Mr. Burrhus."

"You are welcome to try, Doc."

"O.K. Go lie down on that couch over there and we can start talking."

"Gee, Doc, I have never been analyzed before. I almost got brave for a minute until you said that. You have just appealed to my warped and stereotyped misconception of head-shrinking. The next thing you will want to know is if I ever hated my father."

The good doctor did not laugh. It was just as well since he would have had no one to laugh with.

"Actually, Mr. Burrhus, I will try to do the most talking. In answer to your statement about hating your father, well, we probably know more about that than you do. You are the third generation of your family here in this particular community. Your personal history is carefully filed downstairs and is very, very complete."

"That is fine, doctor. Now, tell me why you people have to go digging up those files."

"Your case is not extremely peculiar, Mr. Burrhus, but it does warrant some serious consideration. You show signs of some slight maladjustment. Your behavior is characteristic of those small, scattered groups on the outside of all the established communities who refuse conformance with society at large. You do know to what I am referring? "

"Yes, Doctor Renniks."

The small and scattered groups on the outside made up society's behavioral hermits. For some unknown reason these few had not complied with society's standards. They refused the set environmental pattern offered to them and instead sought other modes of living. All evidence had shown that this small band of humanity was apparently failing.

The voice of Renniks began to push my inner voice into the back seat for a while as it took over the wheel.

"Those people out there will not last with their system simply because they have no system to begin with," said Renniks. "Science now knows that all human behavior is a function of the variables in a given environment. Whatever you do or decide not to do is dependent only upon outside factors. This, Burrhus, is called a behavioral repertoire. We all have one. It consists of the responses we make to certain stimuli. Every response will either be reinforced or left unreinforced or possibly punished. Thus, the probability of any action which will be taken depends upon the reinforcement or the lack of it."

This was elementary stuff learned by our grade-schoolers. However, in my case, a refresher course must have been considered necessary. I inwardly writhed with doubt as the doctor continued.

"There are unfortunate by-products in controlling behavior," he explained. "I like to call them anomalies. This is especially true if control is excessive or inconsistent. If this happens then we get escape, revolt or maybe passive resistance of some kind. In escape there appears the anchorite from the ethical group. This type may renounce citizenship or be anti-social. Revolt consists of counter-attacking the controlling agent through criticism or active physical fighting. Not behaving in conformity with controlling practices shapes passive resistance.

"These anomalies have always crept up in history, doctor. How do you propose to stop them? "

"The controlling agencies deal with them by intensifying their practices. The escapee is captured and confined more securely. The revolt is put down. A Thoreau is jailed or a Gandhi is assassinated."

"Then how do you explain the success, small though it be, of the outside groups? " I queried.

I must have touched a sensitive nerve and very happily noticed that it somehow innervated the mouth for he stopped talking and replaced that action with a small, crooked, and possibly worried, smile.

"Nothing is perfect, Burrhus," he whined as he stood up to look out the window.

Those outsiders were a real problem to all of the communities. It must have affected the doctor more than he let on. Like any form of government the behavioral control system had to present an air of infallibility. This was reasonable. If by some chance those outsiders proved them wrong in the smallest way then the loss of face would be dangerous. Any results would then ultimately fall back on themselves. For any with such high confidence the gnawing pain of self-doubt is a tough one to bear. It was better that they stay away from the strange ones. They would not conflict but merely consider the others irrelevant, unimportant.

The doctor quickly continued, "This system offers a set and pre-planned behavioral environment. The variables that stimulate us to certain responses have been calculated and controlled. We have the means to our destiny."

"What about the question of personal freedom? " I broke in. "Can it exist in this set environment geared for some destiny? "

"This system offers freedom. The freedom from aversive consequences. What is more, it offers security. This is the security from aversive events. Plans can be made to avoid behavioral disasters. People conform to set moral codes with virtuous aspects emphasized. Ultimately, bad qualities of behavior will be effaced."

My mind had begun to wander as was the usual custom. This lack of concentration on anything was deemed to be a basic fault of mine in conforming with the community. In the past I had often tried to make a soft bed of excuses for my ego to lie on by considering this problem nothing more than excessive introspection. But whatever title was applied the result remained the same. There was always mild distrust at what was said, vague doubt for what had been done and a very real fear of any promises made.

A voice slowly began to struggle with my attention. Then it finally won the fight.

"Think of it, Burrhus. All non-virtuous behavior might be eliminated. Aggression and domination, words once very common in our language, but less so today, could eventually know only a position in some thick, archaic dictionary."

"And how might this universal concept of good virtues be used? "

The doctor looked puzzled.

"Why, to obtain happiness."

"What will happiness bring us? "

"Survival, Burrhus, survival."

"What if we cannot get this happiness and its consequent survival by just imposing set virtues for all to observe? Maybe to survive we are meant to be aggressive and to dominate by using hate and fear to fuel our struggle. Suppose that happiness is not the key to survival?"

"Happiness not the key? Burrhus, that is ridiculous!"

"Yes, it seems so. It seems so ridiculous that it might be just what we desperately need to get along in this ridiculous world. We should be subduing a tough world with tough values. That old idea about fighting fire with fire is trite, but it has not lost its cogency with me doctor."

"Look, Burrhus, the environmental control aspect is the only way we can go. By this we must achieve the great goal."

"Doctor, you imply a master plan concocted by some behavioral heads. How can you be sure that it is on the right track?"

"Right track!" exploded the doctor. "Burrhus, that ridiculous question is not worth the miserable breath it is wasted on!"

The positions of inquisitor and defendant had really been turned around. I wondered if the good medicine man's indignation was genuine. Or was he disturbed because the psychic prey had turned predator?

"Burrhus, as I have implied before, the mechanism of behavior control is aimed at the most positive and valuable goal conceived. That goal is the nearest perfect happiness of humanity, the final and grandest achievement which is possible for our kind."

"But what is the perfect happiness?" I implored. "Does such a thing exist? Can it exist?"

"Yes, it can exist," he retorted. "Our job now is to find the means of forcing it into existence."

"And this means is not in the realm of personal control?"

"Individual steering will be disastrously wrong."

"But this set plan may be wrong. What you are asking is that I accept either glory or damnation by employing some set and unalterable life plan. I cannot endure that thought, doctor. I have to take personal chances and experience mistakes. Without that, existence is not complete. If I take personal action and if in the event that I happen to set fire to my hell, then I

can be justified in burning there. But I want to actively light the match. I don't just want to be given the book of matches to hold for someone else."

A new sensation permeated the room. There was a huge deep silence. It was the impossible kind you hope for when peace needs to be attained but it was the same type that is dreaded when it does come.

The doctor was the first to bring sound back again into that hot day which had suddenly become very icy.

"There is always the outside, Burrhus. Do you feel you belong there?"

"I feel that I am obliged to belong there, sir."

"Very well then, you can leave tonight. The community will furnish you with enough to get you safely to the outside."

"Thanks, doctor."

With that we left and, as earlier that morning, I again faced the sky. The sun was setting as I began to move. I was headed toward the sun and knew that the night's stars would not be far behind as they would follow me in the same direction. Looking up into the shrinking sky I think I saw an angel with the flaming sword you sometimes hear about. However, either he or I had become so disoriented that he seemed to hold no position in space nor purpose in time. Was there ever a unique paradise for him to guard? Was there ever a positive direction in which the sword had to be pointed?

That brilliant and hopeful sunset began to parallel my slowly evolving insight. It was my right to secure that sword for myself and to wield it in a fight for destiny. I had to find my own paradise, and, if I did find it, to guard it with my own sword. Again catching sight of the sun, I thought of my sword and prayerfully challenged heaven to take up its shield.



Donna Meyers



coming down
is always hard
but necessary
to taste the joy of rising.

