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## Exile Vol. XX No. 1

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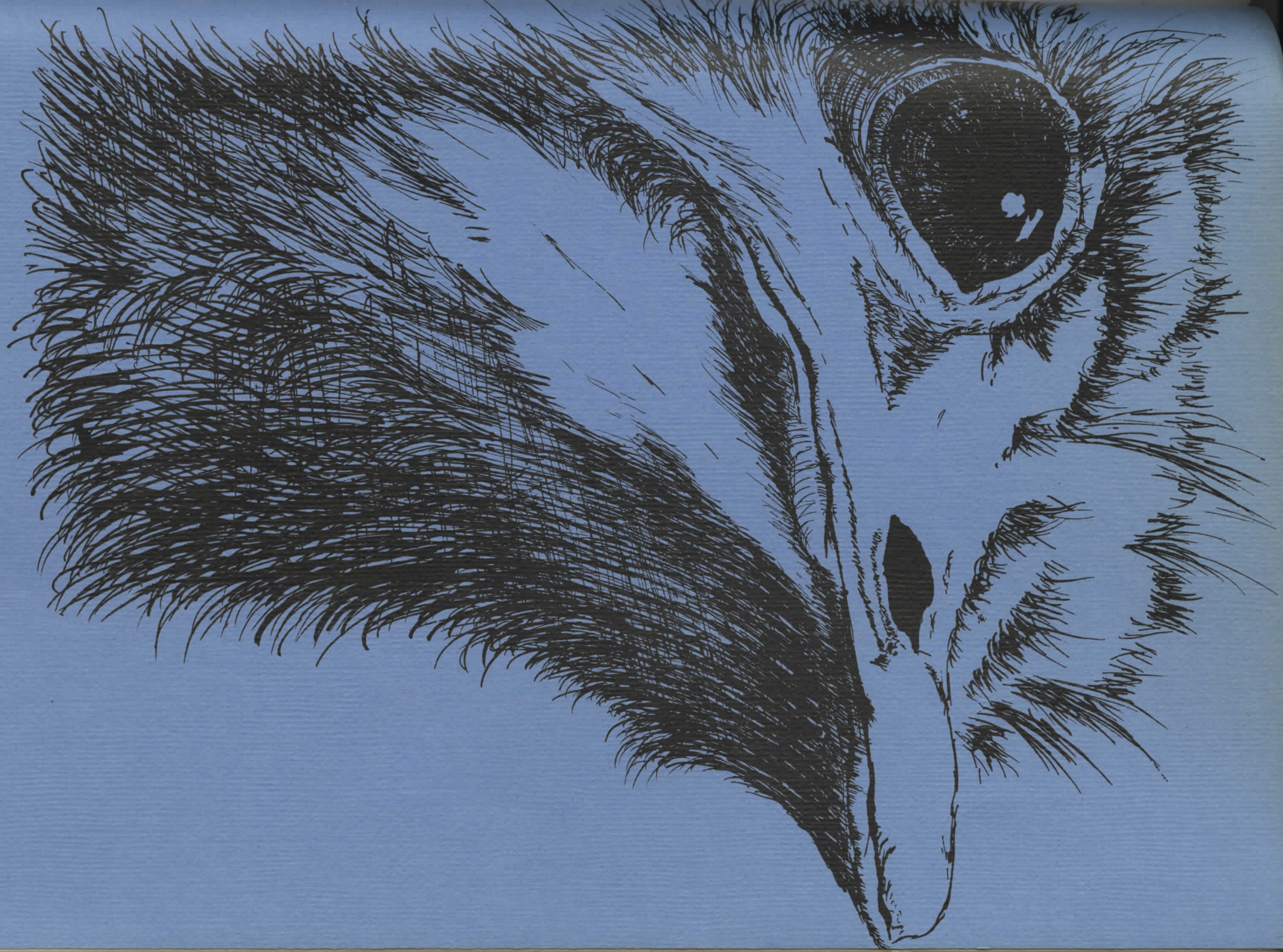
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## Exile Vol. XX No. 1

### **Authors**

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*The title of this magazine was suggested by the concluding phrase in "The Rest" by Ezra Pound, 1912, PERSONAE.*

## THE REST

O Helpless few in my country,  
O remnant enslaved!

Artists broken against her,  
A-stray, lost in the villages,  
Mistrusted, spoken-against,

Lovers of beauty, starved,  
Thwarted with systems,  
Helpless against the control;

You who can not wear yourselves out  
By persisting to successes,  
You who can only speak,  
Who can not steel yourselves into reiteration;

You of the finer sense,  
Broken against false knowledge,  
You who can know at first hand,  
Hated, shut in, mistrusted:

Take thought:  
I have weathered the storm,  
I have beaten out my exile.



Denison University, Granville, Ohio

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Many thanks to the advertising agency

"They're very clean, I'm telling you. You'll enjoy it. There's no doubt in my mind. You'll enjoy it."

"Larry, forget it. What do you need me for anyway? I just don't want to do it. Clear?"

"No! It's not clear. Why don't you want to go? Really, I mean. Jesus God. Think of the benefits it's brought Lewbank. Business has gone from bad to booming --- practically overnight."

"Oh come on, Markham. Bad to booming?"

"Yeah. Bad to booming. Look at the area surrounding the parlor; a new mall, everything modernized. And it's not just in Lewbank. Every town that's had the common sense to start one has flourished financially. Deny that."

"Why do I have to deny it? I told you. It just doesn't interest me. Now let's change the subject."

"Look, Smitty." Anytime I saw Smitty I knew I was in for a devastating argument. "Look. If there's one thing I've always said to myself it's that Smitty is an open minded guy--- not liberal minded by any means---but open minded. Why is it you're so close minded about the parlor?"

"I'm not close minded."

"Narrowminded, then."

"For Chrissakes. I'm not narrowminded either."

"Jesus God. What do you call it when a guy refuses to participate in a community function that's not only materially beneficial but altogether moral and...wholesome?"

"Larry, if that's a definition of narrowminded..."

"Look Smitty. It's not like you're deflowering a fucking virgin. You're merely releasing tension through an external, certainly worthwhile, means."

"Listen, Larry. It just doesn't seem right. It's degrading--- personally I mean. I have no moral qualms about it. It's just that it's...it's not right for me."

"Yeah, but how do you know it's not right when you've never tried it? That's not being narrowminded? Look at it this way. It's a hell of a lot safer---and easier---doing it this way."

Larry had concluded his spiel. We just sat there in his parent's den staring at each other.

"What do you say? I'll drive and I'll pay."

"Oh shit, Markham. If it'll shut you up I'll go."

It was only minutes between Larry's home and the parlor. We said nothing to each other during the trip there though I sensed there was something --- something encouraging, I imagined---that Larry wanted to say. Before I had time to develop a foolproof escape line, he had me through a pair of electrically operated crystal doors into an obscurely lit, white walled waiting room. He approached a small aperture in the wall facing the entrance. A light breathy, distinctively feminine voice greeted us.

"Hello, Gentlemen. How may I help you?"

Larry glanced at me and smiled. "Two rooms, please," he said. He kept smiling.

"What models, Sir?"

Larry looked at me sheepishly. "I've only got thirty on me right now. That's fifteen minutes apiece. Hah! That was unintentional. I'm sorry. I thought I had more."

He turned to the opening in the wall. "We'll take two--- what do you want blond, red head, what?"

I was momentarily stunned. "Jesus. I don't care. Blond's okay."

"Two BL 610's, please."

"Fine," the voice responded, "Please follow the corridor to your right to the room marked Preparatory. Thank you. Pay upon culmination."

"Did you hear that?" I blurted as we paced down the corridor. "Pay upon culmination. Jesus Christ. Culmination of what? What's a BL 610, anyway? The least you could do, Markham, is forewarn me a little. Give me a few details. What is a BL610?"

"Take it easy, Smitty. BL are the call letters for hair color, obviously. 610 is the model number."

"How many models are there? What's the difference between a 610 and a 310 or a 210 for Chrissake?"

"A 610 is the more advanced model here in Lewbank. If her battery's well charged she's capable of a hundred words and multiple orgasms. The great thing though are the sounds."

"What sounds?"

"Christ, you are green. A 610 is equipped with a full genre of guttural sounds---sighs, pants, moans, groans, you know. All the sensual sounds."

"My God."

As we entered the preparatory room I realized how thoroughly unprepared I was. There to greet us were two hostesses---both very blond and very nude. They stood amidst bottles and sponges and small wash basins.

"Is this it?" I demanded. "For Chrissake, we don't do it here do we?"

"Schmidt, please. Just take off your clothes and sit on that cushioned table."

"Larry, you didn't tell me..."

"It's not. Just take it easy. They're just gonna make sure we're clean. This is a very sterile parlor."

"Ha-ha. Very funny." I took off my clothes and sat on the upholstered table. I was quivering too much to notice how cold it was to my bare flesh. One of the 'hostesses' came up, sponge in hand and a wonderful smile on her plastic face. She soaked the sponge in some medicinal smelling liquid in a nearby basin then thoroughly covered me with the fluid.

"Oh my God. I had no idea, Larry. Larry?"

Larry was gone as was the other preparatory girl. My cleaning lady took my hand and led me down a brightly colored carpet.

"Here's your room, Sir." It was the same fascinating, breathy voice.

I walked into the room wearing an involuntary, embarrassed smile, and met my 610. She was lying in horizontal grandeur upon a circular shaped bed. Hourglass proportions, lovely face. Perfect.

"Come. I am Jeanette. Come to Jeanette."

She enunciated each syllable slowly; precisely.

"Come."

Not seeing any feasible alternative, I went.

Near her, there was nothing that my untrained eye could notice that indicated that Jeanette was not human. Her hair was silky, hanging in little girl curls along the sides of her face. Her body was warm and soft and supple. Her movements were smooth and flowing. Every physical gesture seemed human. Every area of her anatomy was flawlessly designed to appear human. Her only imperfection was, in fact, her flawlessness.

During our play, Jeanette contributed a vast amount to the mood with her soprano sighs and pants and moans. She lived up to all the expectations I didn't have time to previously form.

"Jeanette," I muttered wistfully, realizing her inability to understand, "you are one beautiful creature."

"I am capable of multiple orgasms," she smiled.

I didn't know whether that was a subtle request for more, or merely a learned response to the word 'beautiful'. I did know that one more fling would run well over the time Larry granted me.

### IN THE MIDST OF AN ECHO

for Trena

I move hands through slow, thick air  
leaving trails and traces.

Do you watch with intent?

I long to look at you.

I long to linger over each silken vertebrae  
to knead the muscles of your soft back.

I long to be strangled.

I long to try on your pants to see if they will fit.

I long to kiss your neck until I long not to repeat myself.

Do you feel the heat of suffocation?

I wait not to touch your hair and touch your hair.

I long for ends and find there are none.

I long to smooth your nose

so that we may breathe again, and

I long to leave myself for your eyes

which are black wildernesses with ebbing irises.

I long for an open mouth which is speechless.

Phil Mercurio



### SIERRA MADRE PROSE

Sat in the back of a second class bus  
and watched

dusty Mexican towns with dirt streets

Women in long, multicolored skirts  
and shawls

Through the swinging doors,  
Men sitting in saloons  
the fans, suspended from the ceiling,  
moving just as slow as the drinkers

(some are singing.)

Men, with two hundred year old faces,  
pulling their carts down sun  
hard clay streets.

little girls selling  
little girls watching me  
a little girl in the middle of  
the store floor, playing,  
quietly, talking to herself

farther inland, the land rises

Villages full of burros and  
barefoot children running to meet  
the bus and sell fruit, tortas, and hand-made goods,  
cheaply.

No clay houses, just stilt houses  
with thatched roofs. Some hidden  
by scarce desert forest.

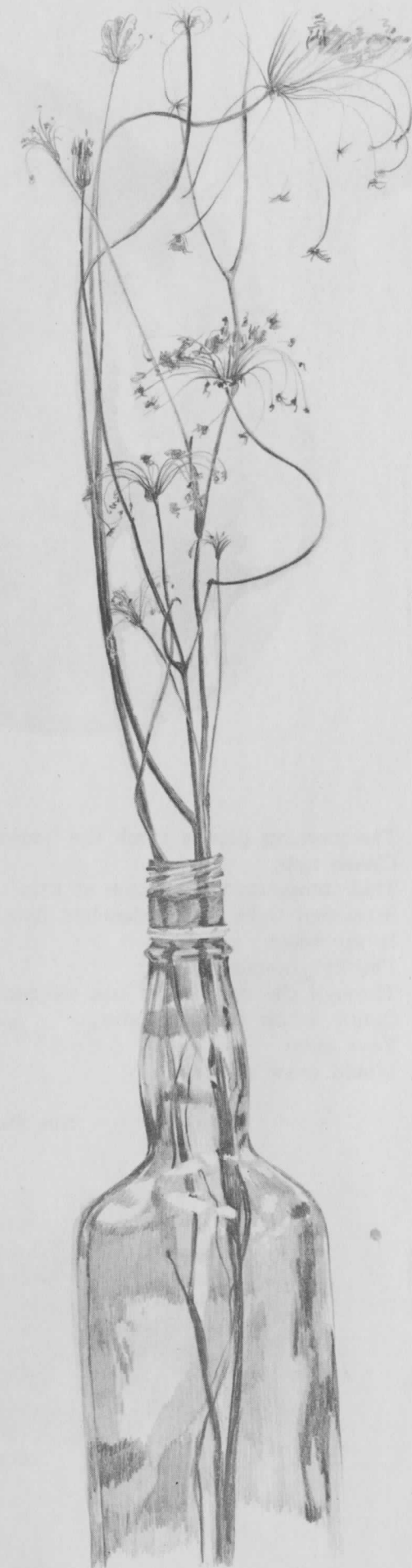
All in twilight, tired and big  
and rolling back towards  
the mountains, over dry, brown  
hills.

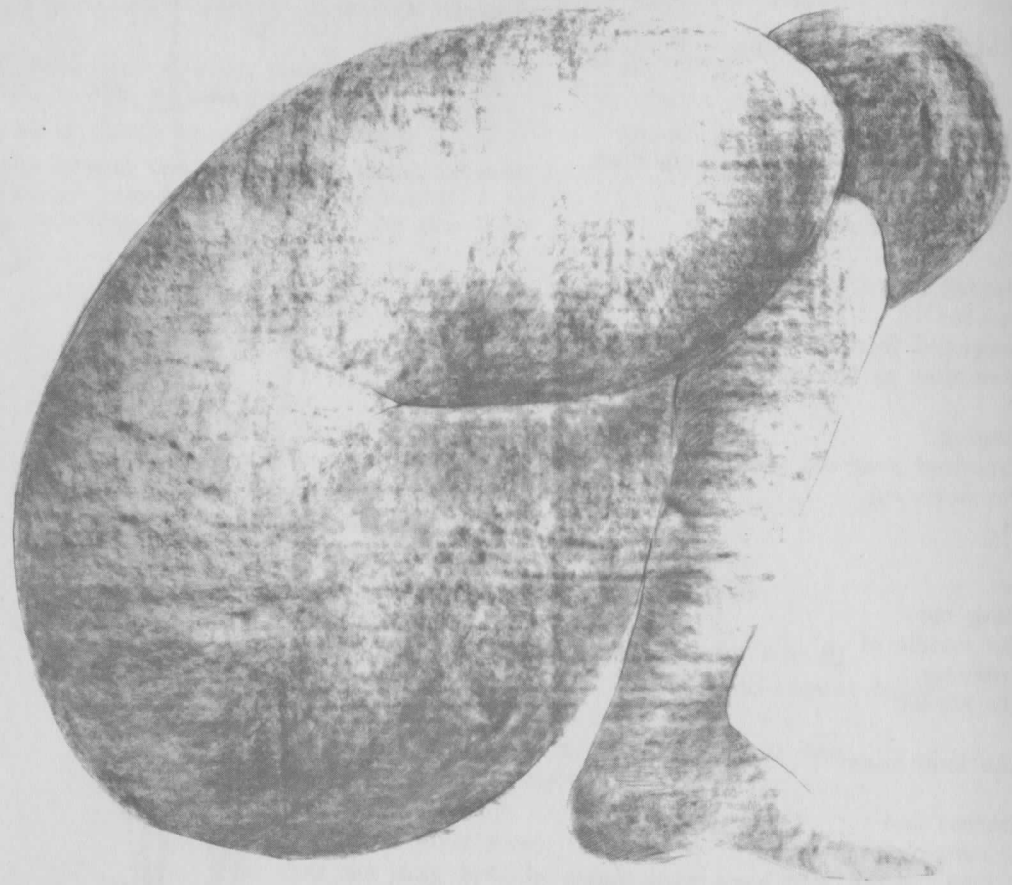
I saw the mountains,  
miles of shrubbery running  
faster and faster and then  
leaping towards the sky in  
great grey mountains  
surmounting the earth

a five year old senoretta lying on  
my lap, shared with a friend.  
that same senoretta sleepily  
grab my arm, pull herself  
up, look into the  
mountain night, nodding,  
and then crawl down from the window.

and darkness coming, covering my view  
and leaving me to look at  
that sleeping child on my lap, clutching  
my jacket as a pillow.

John Purcell





The morning glories climb the house on strings.  
Closed now,  
Their blossoms are as pale as skin  
Stretched tight across clenched fists.  
In my room  
The light comes green  
Through the curtains of late afternoon.  
Gentle as air turning warm,  
Your arms  
Would draw me out.

**Sue Payne**

today's bleakness  
made sad sounds in the air  
as if a moaning cow had lost his lover  
no longer does naked sunshine  
erase the gray of dismal  
broken fences and bent rusted nails  
compete for the suicidal victory  
only to deteriorate and emerge  
silenced and defeated.

**Cathy Graff**

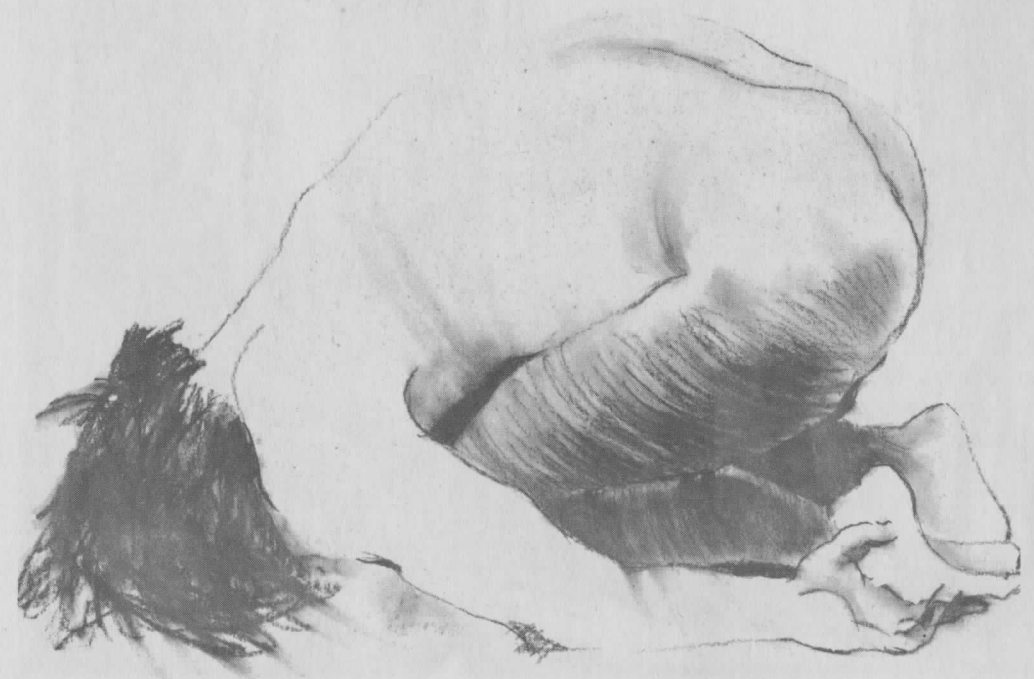
A rock is growing in me.  
Strange, how once I trusted  
the certainty of its size.  
But now, defying me,  
it grows.

I must adapt to the expansion  
I avoid water,  
knowing I would sink.  
I must not remain still  
for I settle quickly into the earth.

I try moving  
and hope that the motion  
will slow the permanent growing  
of the rock.  
Each step is a difficult distance.  
The rock increases  
forcing my blood  
through the surface of my body.

My legs stiffen  
and refuse all living motion.  
I watch my blood dry  
like paint on a statue.

**Sharon Singleton**





We have a hinting household here.  
Hideous flies buzz between  
winter windows  
and inner windows.  
They buzz insomnia at night.  
And in the day they --  
fat and black --  
will lick their sneers  
and rub their spindled appendages.

We open screens to shoo them  
when the sun is screaming summer.  
But neighbors send us hurtling messages  
drenched in martinis  
and 'going-homes to mother.'  
So we decently slam our windows shut.

And we indigest in uncomfortable  
silence at dinners. Crunching  
and squashing and slopping  
and smacking.  
Glances of suspicion pour around  
like spilling milk.  
And we lower our eyes  
to avoid the invisible mirrored-maze  
of insistent monotone humming on windows.

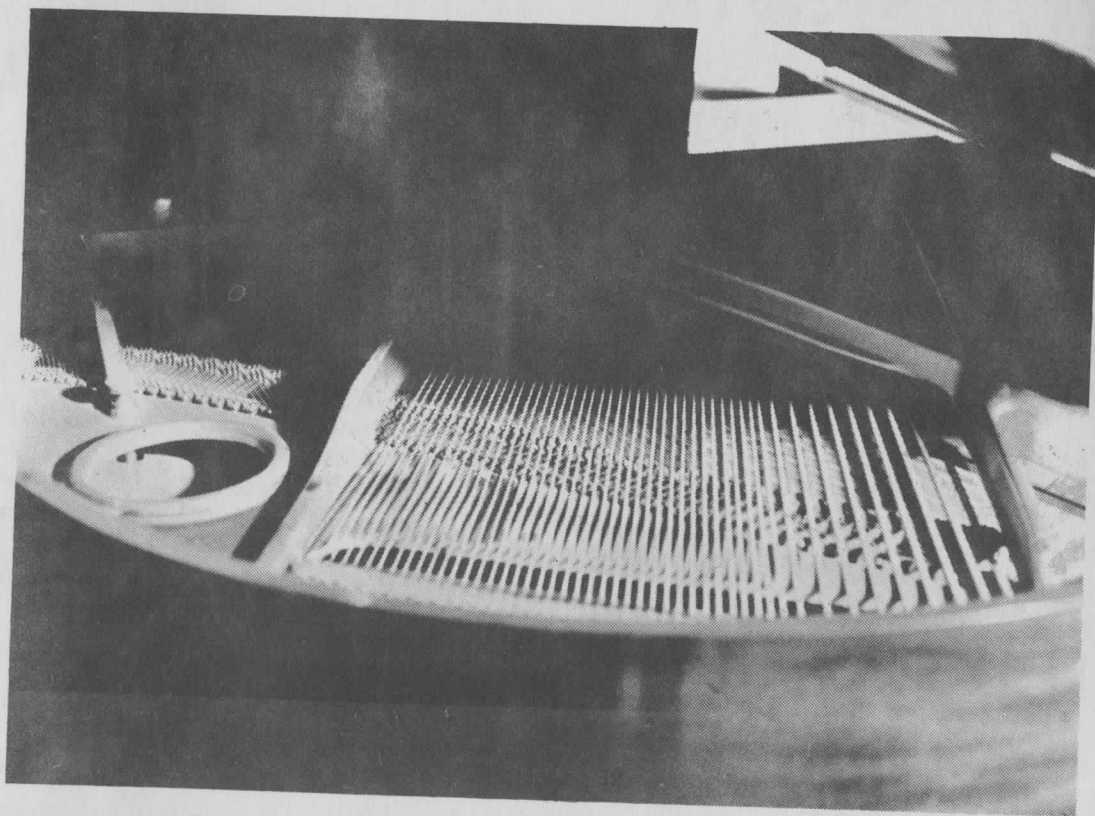
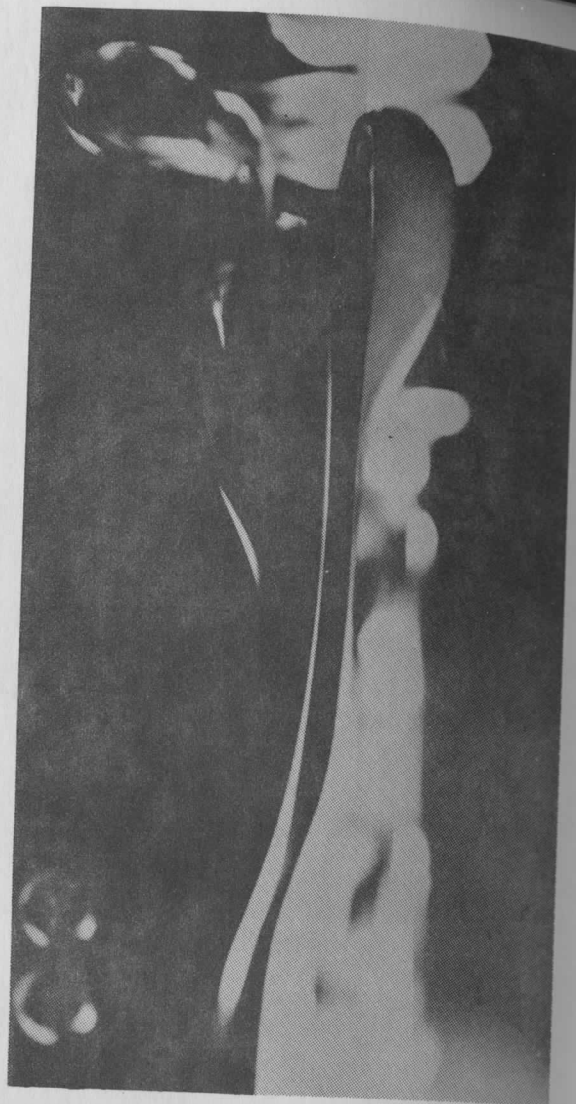
**Dawn Patnode**

### **The Barn**

Cobwebs laced on bulging beams  
grasp bits of straw and dust.  
Heavy, hot smells of animal breath  
and the cool musty hay.  
Horses' hoofs shuffle soundlessly under dirt floors.  
We look long, very long at the birth of a calf-  
the silence of life's emergence lays softly in the stall.  
Her wet wisps of hair warm with the mother's blood.  
Slowly in the night the crystal casing is gone  
and the cow nudges to stand the delicate bones  
of her new companion.

**Mary Schloss**



**BIG AL**

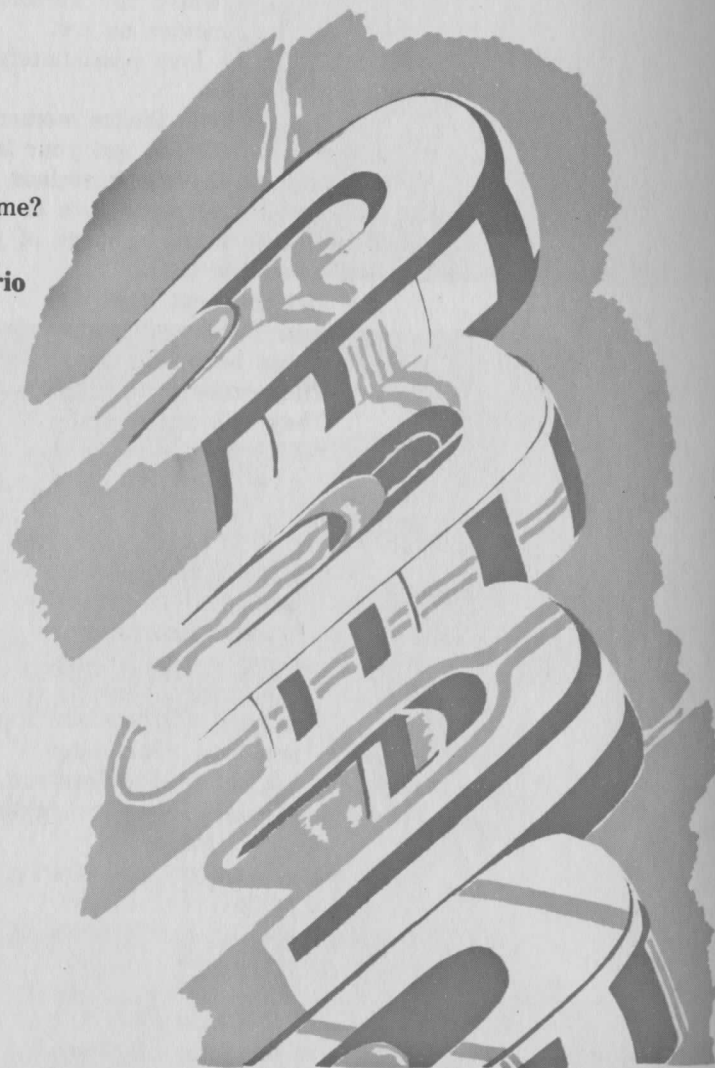
- I You will be born with a big nose  
and black kinky hair.  
It will be all right because your parents are Jewish  
because you have a strong left arm  
and because your grades are high.  
You will play ping-pong until you are good enough  
to quote obscure rules.  
You will play RISK with your friends  
and you will lose.  
You will play football on gravel  
and you will lose even if you win.  
Your friends will laugh  
and point at your bloody knees.  
They will call you "boogy".  
Your mother will yell at them almost as much  
as she yells at you and your new name.  
You will not disobey her strong right arm.  
Your father will crouch and split his seams;  
he will feel sorry for you.
- II When you come home from school  
you will do HOMEWORK  
go to Hebrew school, come home again  
and do more homework.  
In stolen moments, with food warming in your bed  
you will watch the Yankees  
and old movies on t.v.  
Women will make love passionately  
to men in the dark  
and you will idolize women.  
At sixteen you will not get your learner's permit  
because driving is serious business;  
and your chance to make love to women  
will diminish with the upsurge of your thoughts.  
You will mow the lawn  
and the next day  
your father will remove it.  
Your thoughts burn like cigarette smoke.  
They will try to divide you.  
They will try to tell you  
not to be divided.  
They will push you further.
- III You will go to teachers in school  
and they will consider you strange.  
You will chase girls in the halls  
and ask them to marry you.  
They will consider you strange.  
You will read many books  
and you will consider yourself strange.  
You will then beat your sister  
in hopes that she will understand your strangeness.  
Inside your head sounds are reverberating  
to your pulse.  
Inside your head you will hear  
a ping  
It will be a quiet gentle sound.  
Inside your head there is no sound.  
The door to your room closes  
with a hush of wind.  
Your heart flutters and slows  
to a murmur.

IV Hospitals, yes. And doctors.  
OUR SON HAS A COLD.  
Medication, yes.  
HE WILL GET BETTER SOON.  
Money, money, money, yes, yes  
No. OUR SON IS NOT INSANE.

You will come home  
and your friends will be in college.  
You will play with their younger brothers  
and their younger brothers' friends.  
They will not call you "boogy".  
They will grow up too soon.  
You will mow your lawn  
eyeing pretty young girls  
returning from school.  
You will invite them up to your room  
and show them your graduation picture,  
but they will not know you.

V Your friends will come back from college  
and your eyes will glow.  
This black glow of the pupil  
will speak to them  
but they will scatter like leaves in the wind.  
They will no longer play RISK.  
At night your bed will address itself  
to the room.  
It will hint at leaving home  
and "Physical Jobs".  
Headlights will pour into the window  
and you will ask:  
Where is the music in the dark to comfort me?

Phil Mercurio



## FATHER'S LAST PARTY

Mother called me a couple of days ago, or was it a week ago, reminding me not to plan anything for the twenty-fifth of May since that day was set aside for father's funeral party. Even though it was a week away she insisted that I should immediately call up the airlines and make reservations for a flight. Her letter was sweet and encouraging as usual, but also contained a certain amount of bitterness concerning my lackadaisical attitude about spending time at home. "This is your father's last year. You could have spent more time with him." Thank God, I won't have to put up with this constant nagging much longer.

As I sit here looking out the window I see nothing except clouds, and memories of my childhood come back to me.

If it wouldn't have been for father I probably could never have made it through college.

Everything was fine as long as I was away at school, but as soon as I came home for the summer things would quickly return to normal. Father would say, "Why don't you do this, and why don't you that, and can't you see that this needs to be done. You're just a good time Charlie." However, when the grass was cut, and the flowers were watered, and the car was washed and waxed he never told us how nice it looked. Father was never satisfied until he got all of us out of the house so he could sit back in his chair and be king again-- the center of attention. It was almost like we had never been born. Sometimes I think that's the only reason the old bastard sent us to college. So we would get a good job, and wouldn't hang around the house like a lamprey on a Lake Erie Lake Trout.

The loud speaker reminded me to buckle my seat belt and prepare for a smooth landing. As the plane started to go down I thought that it would be nice to get together with my family for I haven't seen them for such a long time.

Michael was a successful surgeon in Boston, and Mark was an ecologist in South Carolina. The rest of my relatives, the ones still alive, I really couldn't give two shits about. I could just hear that old bitch, Aunt Edith, at father's funeral party, "Here sweetheart, I bought you some candy, some good Italian candy." She and Aunt Stella would probably discuss the procedure for the distribution of ashes after father's cremation.

I think next year it's time for those two twin sister bitches to call it a day and go to the big Italy up in the sky. And I'll be damned if I'm going to fly all of the way from San Francisco to Pittsburgh for their funeral party. I'm not even going to send a card, not even one of those long skinny funny ones.

As the plane landed I folded up my newspaper and put it in my back pocket. Getting off the plane I could see my brother Mark sitting in the lounge tapping his foot, waiting for me.

"How's it goin, buddy?" We threw our arms around each other.

"Not bad. And from those pictures you sent me I don't think I even need to ask you how's Frisco. It looks just beautiful. And that girl of yours, wow, is she nice!"

"Didn't believe me, hey, when I told you that she was really fine. And she's really a nice person too. She really has her head together."

"Wait until you see the car I have."

"Porsche, Vet, Pintera, what?"

"Just wait and see; it's just parked outside."

As we walked through the parking lot I spotted a silver Maserati glittering in the sun light, and immediately turned my head to Mark and said, "No, that's not yours, is it?"

He just smiled.

"You lucky bastard, that's really nice."

"Wanta drive?"

"Ya, I'd love to."

Within minutes we were home. As we joined the party a crowd of people surrounded me, and I excused myself for I wanted to see mother, father, and Michael.

"Hi Mom."

"Well if it isn't..." She hugged me and kissed me and said, "Well, come and say hello to your father."

"Hi Dad."

"Hi son. How are you? Come and sit down and tell me all about the west coast."

Father was in a surprisingly good mood. He even told me a couple of his corny jokes which made me smile and think that the old bastard was all right. I guess everyone has their bad points.

Later on that night we had the funeral toast. I said that I would take care of the champagne, but father insisted that he pour it even though it was against custom.

When I sneezed I went into the kitchen to get a kleenex, and found father slipping a pill into everyone's champagne. I got mad at first but did not want to spoil father's party so I asked him to sit down at the kitchen table.

"Look Dad, you can't take all of us with you. O.K.? I won't say anything if you don't. I don't want to cause any commotion and spoil your party. Now spill out those drinks and please go in the living room and sit down."

"Son I'm sorry. I only meant to do..."

"No big deal, Dad. I understand. Now come on, please go in the living room and make yourself comfortable. I'll be right in after I pour the champagne. O.K.?"

He hugged me and brought my head to his heart and said, "You always were a momma's boy, but I love you just the same." He smiled and left the kitchen.

When everybody was situated in the living room with a drink Uncle John turned off the baseball game, and father gently dropped a little red death pill into his champagne. Everyone then made a toast, contributing a compliment to father.

Before long the company had left. I kissed mother and father good night before they went to bed.

After watching the late movie I set my alarm for 7:30, and went to sleep. I had to make an early flight tomorrow morning and could not stay for the cremation ceremony.

Vic Coccimiglio

My father is a dreamer  
and I but a thought  
conceived in a night  
when sleep proved fertile.

Night contains me in its womb  
yet I am free as sleeper's thoughts  
contained by nothing but the edges  
of the mind.

But I am cautious, silent  
and my life rages in quiet  
lest my father be wakened  
by something cruel as morning.

Sharon Singleton



## FOLKSINGER

Hey, pretty girl  
half hidden by that brown felt hat.  
Your carnal eyes  
entice me,  
Your carnal tongue  
invites me.  
You're raping me  
with laser beams  
from cobalt eyes.  
Your words are peace and freedom  
but your lips shape them so sensually  
it all sounds lilke pornography.

After the show is over  
I will smash your guitar  
and lay you down  
under the red lights  
of smoky coffee houses.  
You will give in to me.  
I will make you give me  
everything,  
you promised with your eyes.

Alison Orleans



## Sweat Rebellion

My clothes drip off,  
sweat replacing them;  
there is no nakedness in this heat.  
Dampness moves over my body,  
slipping under the skin  
to touch the base of my skull  
and send a thrilling message of rebellion  
down my spine.

S. Hunt

**blackgrey**

blackgrey  
the colors of your world.  
child of dark  
grasping shadow-motion.  
hold tighter to emotion  
that violent inside  
fireworks coloring skies.

we flew a kite together, child  
and i could see it  
pinned against blue.  
you felt its strength against yours  
and held  
to understand the wind.

**Laurie Wharton**

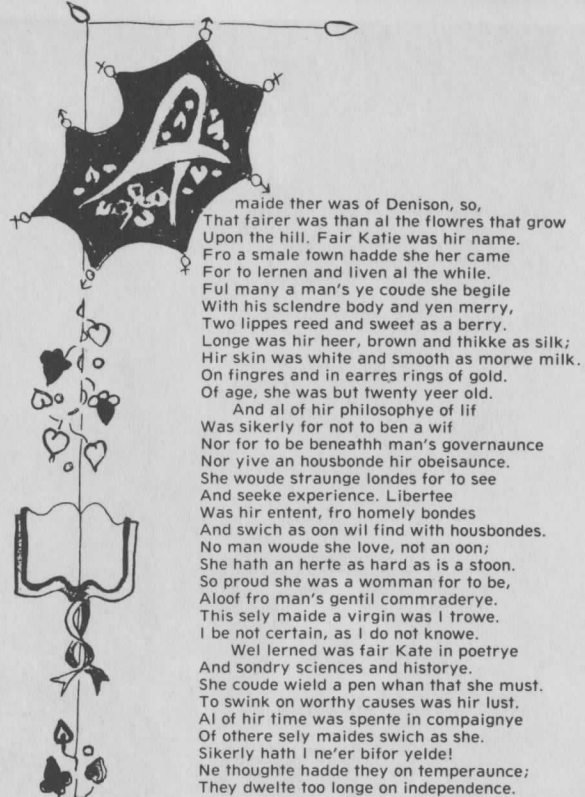


6:30-10:07 Thurs Dec. 13  
12:30-5:00 Fri. 14

Marquand - Point of no Return - about 3 young  
people and class distinctions in a new England  
town.

ch. 13-14 } Most F. societies have racial, religious etc cleavages.

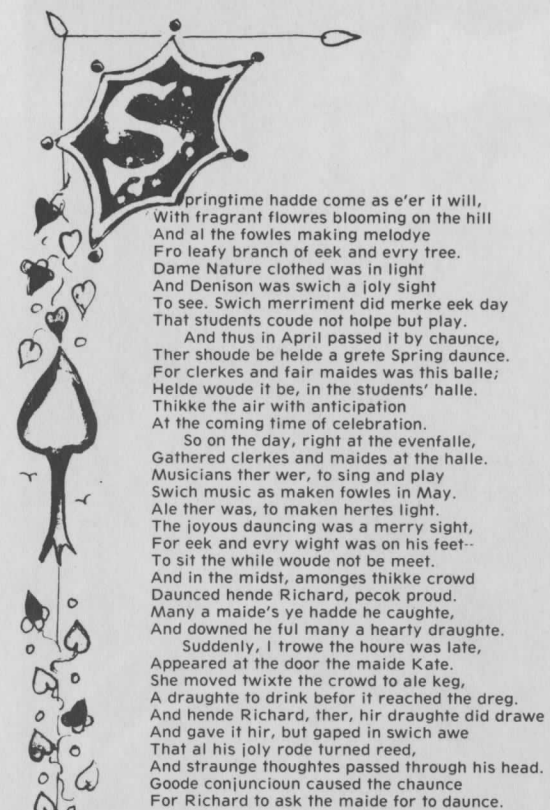




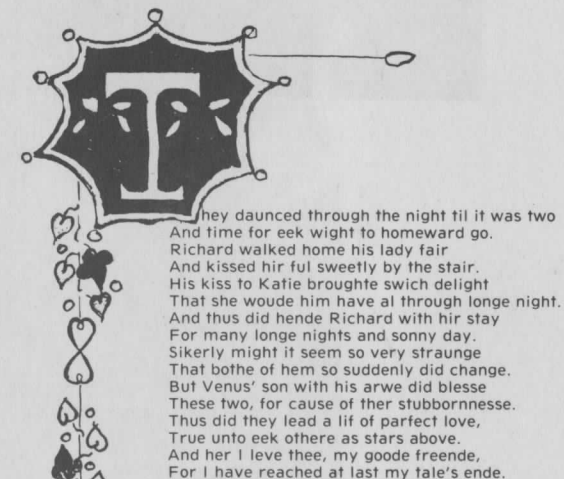
maide ther was of Denison, so,  
 That fairer was than al the flowres that grow  
 Upon the hill. Fair Katie was hir name.  
 Fro a smale town hadde she her came  
 For to lerne and liven al the while.  
 Ful many a man's ye coude she begile  
 With his sclendre body and yen merry,  
 Two lippes reed and sweet as a berry.  
 Longe was hir heer, brown and thikke as silk;  
 Hir skin was white and smooth as morwe milk.  
 On fingres and in earres rings of gold.  
 Of age, she was but twenty year old.  
 And al of hir filosofhye of lif  
 Was sikerly for not to ben a wif  
 Nor for to be beneath man's governaunce  
 Nor yive an housbonde hir obeisaunce.  
 She woude straunge londes for to see  
 And seeke experience. Libertee  
 Was hir entent, fro homely bondes  
 And swich as oon wil find with housbondes.  
 No man woude she love, not an oon;  
 She hath an herte as hard as is a stoon.  
 So proud she was a womman for to be,  
 Aloof fro man's gentil commraderye.  
 This sely maide a virgin was I trowe.  
 I be not certain, as I do not knowe.  
 Wel lerned was fair Kate in poetrye  
 And sondry sciences and historye.  
 She coude wield a pen whan that she must.  
 To swink on worthy causes was hir lust.  
 Al of hir time was spente in compaignye  
 Of othere sely maides swich as she.  
 Sikerly hath I ne'er bifor yelde!  
 Ne thoughte hadde they on temperaunce;  
 They dwelte too longe on independence.



clerk ther was at Denison, also.  
 A fine yonge man who came fro  
 Grete town, to liven her and stay.  
 And al of his entent was for to play.  
 Much knewe he of lif and of plesaunce:  
 Wel coude he daunce and sing, eat and drink,  
 For sikerly he thoughte not for to swink.  
 In al the town he knewe of eek taverne  
 And swich as he did not, he woude lerne.  
 And jeste he coude, so ribauldiye,  
 With the brothers of his fraternitee.  
 Hende Richard was this yonge clerk cleped.  
 In his chambre seldom hadde he sleped.  
 And thus this hende clerk his time spente  
 Among his freendes in swich merrimente.  
 Many joly heddes coude he turn  
 And with his sweetness, plesaunce did he earn.  
 Longe and softe, shoon his crul brown heer;  
 His lippes sweet, his rode reed and fair.  
 Yclad he was ful smale and fetisly.  
 His two brown yen shoon so likerously.  
 Seldom coude this clerk be seen in classe,  
 For he woude not thus his time passe.  
 He remained the morwe in his bedde  
 As oft he woken with a sore hedde.  
 Come the midday, ready for disporte  
 Woude he be. He seeketh any sorte,  
 His merry apetite for to slake.  
 He liveth for plesaunce's sorry sake.  
 Far fro his thoughtes lay honeste labour;  
 He woude not swink not for gold nor honour.  
 He hadde to many a maide taughte  
 The art of love, but ne'er ben he caughte  
 In Venus' close webbe. A blisful lif  
 He woude have, without a wedded wif.  
 Thus lete I Richard and the fair Kate,  
 Mo of my tale for to relate.



pringtime hadde come as e'er it will,  
 With fragrant flowres blooming on the hill  
 And al the fowles making melodye  
 Fro leafy branch of eek and evry tree.  
 Dame Nature clothed was in light  
 And Denison was swich a joly sight  
 To see. Swich merriment did merke eek day  
 That students coude not holpe but play.  
 And thus in April passed it by chaunce,  
 Ther shoude be helde a grete Spring daunce.  
 For clerkes and fair maides was this balle;  
 Helde woude it be, in the students' halle.  
 Thikke the air with anticipation  
 At the coming time of celebration.  
 So on the day, right at the evenfalle,  
 Gathered clerkes and maides at the halle.  
 Musicians ther wer, to sing and play  
 Swich music as maken fowles in May.  
 Ale ther was, to maken hertes light.  
 The jolyous dauncing was a merry sight,  
 For eek and evry wight was on his feet--  
 To sit the while woude not be meet.  
 And in the midst, amonges thikke crowd  
 Daunced hende Richard, pecok proud.  
 Many a maide's ye hadde he caughte,  
 And downed he ful many a hearty draughte.  
 Suddenly, I trowe the heure was late,  
 Appeared at the door the maide Kate.  
 She moved twixte the crowd to ale keg,  
 A draughte to drink befor it reached the dreg.  
 And hende Richard, ther, hir draughte did drawe  
 And gave it hir, but gaped in swich awe  
 That al his joly rode turned reed,  
 And straunge thoughtes passed through his head.  
 Goode conjuncioun caused the chaunce  
 For Richard to ask the maide for to daunce.



hey daunced through the night til it was two  
 And time for eek wight to homeward go.  
 Richard walked home his lady fair  
 And kissed hir ful sweetly by the stair.  
 His kiss to Katie broughte swich delight  
 That she woude him have al through longe night.  
 And thus did hende Richard with hir stay  
 For many longe nights and sonny day.  
 Sikerly might it seem so very strange  
 That bothe of hem so suddenly did change.  
 But Venus' son with his arwe did blesse  
 These two, for cause of ther stubbornnesse.  
 Thus did they lead a lif of perfect love,  
 True unto eek othere as stars above.  
 And her I leve thee, my goode freende,  
 For I have reached at last my tale's ende.



**What is she to you?**

"A long hair I pull from my coat,  
let fall and disappear  
like lint. And you?"

"Yes, a hair; but in the pulling  
my coat unravels,  
and is soon a pile of string.  
I am left naked and cold."

I enter the room silent-  
enter to weave a hair into my coat;  
to weave it in, to tie the ends  
deep within warm cloth.

**Peter Porteous**





**"Projects"**

The old Spaniard,  
sitting in bed,  
passes peas from one pan to the other.

The man,  
across the way,  
spits on cats.

People,  
standing on street corners,  
wait for revelation.

**Mary Mueller**



## GOD AND SERGEANT MAYS

Evans got it in the head when they first opened up. The bullet left only a small hole in his face but blew the entire back of his head off, splattering pieces of skull and brain all over Mays. As he dove for the ground, Mays felt a sharp pain in his groin, as if someone had hit him very hard with a fist. By the time he hit the ground and began returning fire, it had already grown numb and he knew he had been hit.

Evans was still twitching convulsively on the ground but Mays knew he was dead. Ha Klong, the montagnard point man, was laying on his back just in front of Evans with his head bent back awkwardly. He was staring directly at Mays; his eyes still showing the fear and surprise with which he had died a few moments before. Mays wanted to wipe Evans off of his face and arms, but he was too busy returning fire. It burned like hell wherever Evans had landed on him, and Mays wanted more than anything to wipe him off...No, more than anything he wanted out of there.

"Oh God! Please, God! Get me out of here, God! Please, God! I'll do anything, just get me out of here!"

The noise was terrific and frightening. There must have been a hundred of them blasting away. Mays could hear the gook bastards yelling and laughing like kids on a playground. Their fire seemed to be coming from everywhere. The B-40 rockets made a hell of a racket coming in and then landed with a deafening "kawumpf" that shook the ground under him. The grenadier, Y-Sok, wasn't returning fire, so Mays knew he was either dead or near dead. He wondered how many of the six man team were left. He wondered if he was all alone.

"Oh God! Please, please, please, God! They'll kill me God! Please!"

Mays tried to crawl backwards but found he couldn't move his legs. He couldn't even feel them. Rolling on his side to look at his wound, he saw his legs sprawled up under him. A dark stain was spreading over his lower abdomen and groin, and he knew he was bleeding bad.

"Oh God! Please, God! Help me, God! Please, God!"

He saw a movement to his side and rolled to fire but it was Y-San. San's fatigues were soaked with sweat as he crawled backwards, firing like a son of a bitch.

"San! Ha rhet en nae! Over here!" San laboriously worked his way over to Mays, firing then crawling firing then crawling. When he reached Mays he gripped him by the legs and began dragging him back, stopping only to slam a fresh clip into his weapon. Then Mays heard someone firing an automatic rifle behind them and was afraid they had been flanked. But when he looked over his shoulder, he saw Y-Nhiem, the fourteen year old boy soldier, pouring fire toward the gooks. When then finally reached the mound of dirt that Nhiem was using for cover, San got to his knees to pull the big American behind it. A machine gun ripped his chest apart.

The gooks were firing as before but they had stopped all the yelling and laughing. Y-Nhiem finally managed to drag Mays behind the clump of dirt. He sat him up with his back to the dirt and then took a W. P. grenade from May's belt, pulled the pin and threw it towards the North Vietnamese. A few seconds later, they heard a hollow "whump" and then the screams of the gooks who had been hit with the burning phosphorous. Nhiem became excited and yelled at the commies, but Mays didn't give a damn.

"All I want is out of here, God! Please, God! I'll never come back. Never! Just get me outa here! Please God, please!"

Y-Nhiem used his knife to cut open May's pants and inspect the wound. "Ma jackou," he muttered. It was bad. Mays looked down and got sick to his stomach. Nhiem held a bandage to the wound and applied pressure but the blood kept pumping out in steady spurts and Mays knew he had a severed artery deep in his guts.

"Oh God! Please God! I don't want to die! Please, please, God! Not here! Not now! Please!"

"Mai, you call wop-wop, no sweat."

"No can do, Nhiem. The radio is fini."

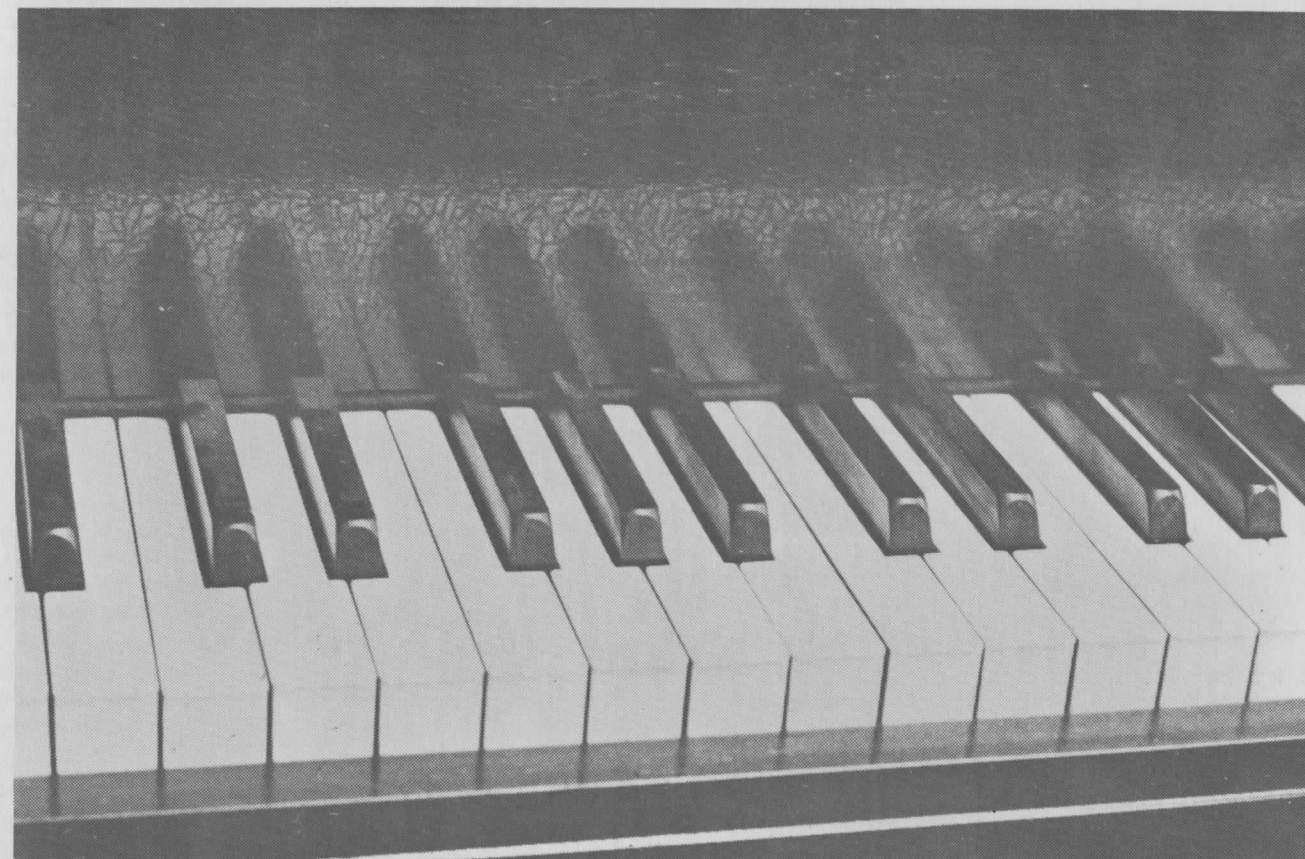
"Fuck'n Vetnamee! Mou a breme eh, Mai."

Nhiem picked up his gun and inserted a fresh clip into it. When he had just said good-bye, Mays thought he was going to run out on him. But when he saw the hate in Nhiem's eyes, he knew what the yard was going to do.

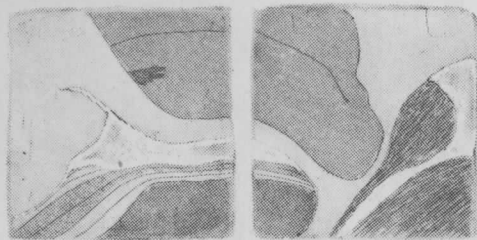
Shouting "Y-yok ei louha!" the little guy assaulted the woodline. He got about thirty meters before the automatic weapons zeroed on him. They picked him up and shook him like a child would a rag doll, and when his body finally fell to the ground about ten meters away, Mays couldn't look.

Everything was quiet. Mays was alone now. But it was starting to get dark! If he could just hold them until it was dark, he might be able to crawl into the jungle and hide until morning and then the Brightlight team would come in and...Oh God, no! It couldn't be getting dark...it was only noon and it couldn't be getting...Mays grabbed his groin with both hands and tried to hold his blood in. But it wasn't any use. It was getting darker and colder and maybe the gooks had left, maybe Valenti and the Brightlight team were coming and they could save him, there was time and then he could hear voices and he tried to call out to Valenti but then the voices were louder and closer and they were gook voices and he was afraid to look and it was darker yet and colder yet and then he knew, "OH GOD NO!"

J. Frank Burkhard







As Jeff entered the locker room he caught sight of Ron, his formidable opponent, examining his face in the mirror.

"I'm here, Ron."

"About time."

"Yeh, well. Had to finish some work." He hurriedly stripped down and pulled on his jock and shorts. As he was tying his shoes, Ron appeared and picked up the ball and gloves.

"How's the landlady? You down there much?"

"Yeh. It's a good place to study, pretty quiet."

"I've heard some stories about her, from Tony..."

"She's not so bad. Reads a lot." Jeff was piqued by Ron's attitude, by his willingness to judge people he didn't even know. He knew her better than any one, probably, and he didn't know the entire story. If she were crazy, it was no more than those who judged her, the shopkeepers who gave an "Oh, I see" when they learned of his address.

He stopped for a drink along the narrow hall leading to the courts. He was ready for a good workout, ready to beat Ron and even the score.

"I don't know. I'd be scared to live down there."

"Ah, she's okay. Better than hitting the bottle all the time. Have you heard about Jerry's landlady? Always drunk, gets pretty wild at times."

"So does Jerry. They make a good pair."

"Yeh."

They ducked, slammed the door, and attacked the end wall of the scuffed-white cell. Jeff smacked the ball whenever it came near him, concentrating on the sensation in his hands, rubbing them between shots to get the blood flowing. As he hit straight off the wall, taking the smacks in his padded palms, an image interrupted his light concentration as if his mind had the four corners of the handball court and someone had looked in at the door, demanded a wave of recognition and moved on. He saw Mrs. Greer on her couch, before the TV set. She lay still, a handwoven shawl to her neck, her wispy hair caught in its cob-webbed design.

"Jeff....Jeff. You ready?"

"What? Yet, I'm ready." His hands were hot and filled his gloves to the point of bursting. He rubbed them hard against each other as he stood in the left service box, eager for the first service.

In the two-story house that he had left, Mrs. Greer lay much as Jeff had imagined—prone on her bony couch, wrapped in a blanket in front of the tiny TV with its tin-foil appendages and bent antenna. She was sitting up now, though, propped against a dusty pillow, reading one of her few books by the yellow light of an ornate lamp. The evening news droned from the set. Pages were flipped back and forth, slicing the air and falling silent against the others. The book was thick and old. As her thin fingers slid across them, the pages seemed pressed into her lap, as if buoying up a great weight. She raised her head slowly, finally looking away from the words, toward the insistent doorbell.

She stiffly crossed the dim room and peered out through the front window. There was no one in sight - must be those kids again. She opened the door by habit, and almost closed it again before seeing the tiny face.

"Ah, it's you, Mindy. Nice to see you. You want more sugar for your cake? I knew you'd need more."

"Yeh, it's going to be a big one," Mindy said as they entered the kitchen. "My mother says you work too hard in the yard. Says you need someone to take care of you."

"Nonsense. It keeps me healthy. Tell your mother I've got plenty of men around. We're all doing fine now. Gregory is back, you know. Here you go."

"Thank you...I guess I better go."

"Don't you worry about me!" she shouted, raising her fist slightly, giving a short laugh.

Jeff entered the house exhausted and happy. His hands were puffy and pink, sore as he grabbed the door handle.

"Hello, Gregory," Mrs. Greer called from the couch.

He sighed and stood in the doorway. "Hello, Mrs. Greer."

"Have a good game?"

"Yes, won two out of three games."

"I knew you would."

Jeff started to say something else, but with the first flip of a page he lost the thought and walked upstairs. Grey paint broke from the walls as he walked, stepping slowly, tasting the air that seemed just an aged version of the sweaty air that had choked the handball court. The hall light that had never worked before was on now and he could clearly see the walls and the widening cracks creasing them like the crow's feet of tired eyes. The glare reminded him of the first time he had been inside the house—in early September, when the house was light and open.

Mrs. Greer had shown him the bedrooms and the front and back porches, after giving him tea and cookies. The slight nervousness he had felt on the porch, as he formulated a sentence in his mind, was quickly dissolved by her casual manner. As his visit lengthened, though, she grew increasingly informal and interested in him. He had noticed the dusty pictures of her sons and husband over the bureau and accepted her familiarity, for the moment, as part of her apparent senility. But the irritation stayed with him as he walked back to campus—the way she tangled his name (she didn't seem hard of hearing), the way she hovered solicitously over him. Had it not been for his aversion to the constant, blaring noise he would have willingly settled for the security of the dorms. But she was pleasant and open-minded, it seemed, and there was no better location.

Jeff continued along the hallway and into his room, thinking of the family pictures he had seen that day, recalling the relaxed afternoon weeks later when she had finally mentioned having any family at all. It had done little to ease his apprehension.

He had been on the front porch, stretched on a lawn chair struggling to fit together bits of writing from pages of forced words. He glanced up occasionally, finding solace in the trees that hid doorways, swingsets and gardens.

"Hello, Gregory." Mrs. Greer had sighed as she eased herself into her rocker.

"Oh, hello, Mrs. Greer."

She wiped some crumbs from the stained apron that covered her lap with loud letters: Chief Cook: Move or I'll bake your buns. "Anna, Anna. You should call me Anna. You're just too stuffy, Gregory."

"It's Jeff, Mrs. Greer, Jeff."

"Oh, you are difficult, but I appreciate your coming home. I know your father does too. The other boys call me Anna. Try it. See if it's not better."

"I...I just wouldn't feel right about it." He could just see Tony calling her Anna. He hadn't talked to her more than five minutes since he moved in.

"How do you like my apron?" She was suddenly standing with her arms out, circling slowly.

"Yeh, that's really, that's quite something."

She laughed loudly. He smiled, added a chuckle to her continuing laughter, wanting desperately to lose himself in the papers his wet fingers held. "I was noticing the pictures on your bureau earlier. You certainly have a nice looking..."

"Yes, yes, a wonderful family we are. You should meet your father soon I think. Oh, I love this apron." She began laughing again, her voice rapidly becoming gruff, cracking into coughs as she went inside. Jeff searched the pages, listening to the cough slow to wheezing and then die away. The sound was replaced by the shuffling of pages, back and forth, back and forth. He waited until that too slowed and stopped; and then, quietly gathering his papers, he eased the door open and creaked along the hall.

"Gregory, come sit down for a moment."

Jeff saw no way out, no excuse that would put her to sleep. His arm pits and crotch were hot as he sank into the green love seat recessed into the living room wall. Dark curtains hung behind him, hiding most of the sunlight. Two tall planters framed the short couch, green ivy stringing down its arms. What should he say? He felt as if he had been called upon to give a short talk on the virtues of the long life that now lay curled on the couch. So natural. Just like she was asleep. He felt underdressed, having forgotten his eulogistic collar and Bible. But she moved. She sat up and pulled her frown into a slight smile.

"Gregory, have you been writing a lot lately?"

Unsure what she would make of his words, he coughed. "Yes. I've been working on my short story writing lately. Doing a little poetry too, but mainly short stories."

"I'd like to read some of your things if you'd let me."

"Sure. I have some already typed up."

"No, no, not right now. I'm too tired. Just put them on the chair sometime. I do wish your father would fix that darn TV. He just isn't around enough."

"Maybe I could look at it."

"No, you've got your studies, Gregory. We'll have a repair-man come. There's no problem with money now, no problem." She sank on the couch, closed her eyes, and flopped her arm idly on the top of the book. Jeff glanced at her, climbed to the edge of the love seat, and brought his palms together. A wave of heat swamped him as he rose, leaving tiny drops of sweat.

"I'd better go do some studying." There was no response. It took four steps to cross the room, to find the cool hallway.

That uneasiness and misunderstanding seemed far in the past to Jeff, though it had been less than two months since he had moved in.

It was as though the problem were solved, now that he had defined it and was determined to deal with it somehow. It was a tiresome performance, this reader's theatre he was caught in, reading a part he had no desire to read. It was in large part the comforting thought that he could, in fact, change the script that kept his spirits from deflating whenever the front door of her house closed behind him.

Since he had moved in he had been into her apartment several times: had helped with her laundry and seen her few family histories and scrapbooks in the basement, behind the rickety staircase than ended on a dirt floor. He had eaten a meal with her in the cramped dining room just off the kitchen. There had been the dishes to wash and put away and the lettuce and bread to put back in the purring refrigerator. The more he was around her, the more persistent he became in his efforts to direct their conversations. He spoke of what was happening on campus and asked what the college had been like before. There were times when their conversation flowed,

when she smiled deeply and memories fell like coins from the folds of her skin. He held on to those conversations, as if they were tangible and of value. But inevitably she would suck the discussions into a single point, a single stubborn remark that placed Jeff miles away though he stood just beside her.

Sitting at his desk, wrapped in a blanket against the increasingly cold room, Jeff reworked the stories, read religion and history. He felt as if he were rooted there--straight in his chair, staring out onto the yard and road. It was an evening like so many others: he wore a sweater and his wool socks, had his tea cup and crackers before him. And the shuffling sound poured from the heating duct in place of heat, regularly tearing him from his work. He had long ago given in to it, would listen attentively for a moment, to appease it, before turning back to his writing. But it would again become loud--pages slicing, cutting his silence--and he would gaze at the window.

He stood up now and wandered to Tony's room, as he occasionally did when the door was open, to hear something said, anything: to look at anything but words. He found Tony packing, angrily, stuffing shirts into a bag, throwing things on the bed.

"Tony, what's up?"

"I'm leaving."

"What? The semester's only half over."

"I know. I got a place on Baker Street."

"But why?"

"Come on, Jeff. She's driving me nuts."

"About Cindy sleeping with you?"

"Yeh, but more than that, just everything. It's no good. I think she needs help, I really do."

"What about your rent?"

"It'll be worth it, paying double for a while. This new place won't be any hassle."

"Can't you get some back?"

"I don't want to talk to her about it. I couldn't even take it, really. She needs it more than I do."

"Well, she can probably get someone else to take your room."

"I doubt it. Not now, that's for sure. Maybe not even next semester. Not that many people move off in the middle of the year...I hope she finds someone, though."

"Yeh."

"Did you hear about her substitute teaching? I heard some old bags in Jenson's Market saying she might lose her job if there were any more complaints."

"Wow. I didn't know that. She'd really be hard pressed. As it is she has to pinch for hotdogs and lettuce."

"Yeh, I know. Social Security isn't much."

"Maybe I can talk someone into moving in."

"At least keep your ears open. Say, give me a hand with this trunk. I've got to be out of here tomorrow."

Tony had been upset, and had even mentioned getting out at the end of the semester, but Jeff had hardly expected him to leave now. He slept poorly for several nights, weighted down, as if Tony had displaced all responsibility to his shoulders. He had to do something. Tony was not running from anything. It was no one's fault, he thought, but this entire circumstance was a real heaviness on him. He squirmed at night, struggling for a way to roll from under it.

He thought the easiest part would be finding it. It must be under some stack of papers near the couch, or on the mantle.



But as he searched, it was in none of the obvious places. He looked under the couch, through the stack of papers below the TV, behind the love seat. The more he looked the more he ran to the window and glanced down the street. She said she was going to mail some letters and buy some things and be right back. Maybe she stopped to talk to someone. Highly unlikely. Where was she? It's been fifteen minutes. He ran to the basement, to the row of dusty black volumes along the wall. He listened for the door. He had to do this. Sweat ran down his side. As he pulled a volume from the row a cockroach crawled over his hand. He dropped the book, Goddamn, and shook his hand until the bug dropped and disappeared. He ran back upstairs, into her room, opened every drawer, checked the closet. Twenty minutes. He felt along the bed, pushed the pillow aside. There it was, heavy, loosely bound. He carefully turned the cover and the first pages. "Carlyle Brighton." He read out loud. "From the Shoreline." MCMXXVII, one thousand, nine hundred...nineteen twenty-seven. The front door opened and then the door to the living room...Jeff walked out of the room, his face set, the book dangling at his side.

"Oh, Gregory. Come help me with this package."

"I have to talk to you." He swallowed and held out the book. "Mrs. Greer."

She dropped the bag onto a chair, walked into her bedroom and turned at the sight of the pillow. "Give it to me. Give it to me! You have no right. Damn you, give it to me!"

Jeff backed into the living room. "Please, sit down."

"You stole it. You stole it, damn you."

Jeff caught her wrist as she reached for the book. He squeezed it unconsciously, feeling the thin muscles like a bundle of strings. He drew back again and pointed the book at her. "This is just a book. These people don't exist. It's just words. Your husband is gone, your family is gone. You have your students, your neighbors, but not these. There is no Gregory. I'm Jeff. And that's Tony upstairs, and Carl. But this. This is just fiction, understand. Understand?"

In the long silence his arm continued to shake, he continued to hold the book in front of him. Her quivering glance jumped from his eyes, to the book, and back.

"Do you understand?"

Her face still quivering, she slowly took the book in both hands and laid it on the table. And as slowly she put her arms around Jeff's neck, buried her face in his shoulder and cried, softly at first then harder, until her whole body racked with sobs. Jeff wrapped his arms around her and blinked. "It's all right. It's all right. It's all right."

Jeff looked through the frosted glass of the front window and rubbed his hands together before knocking on Mrs. Greer's door. The snow came down silently, softening the sound of cars rolling by. "Mrs. Greer?" He cracked the door open and slid his head in. "Mind if I watch the news with you?" Getting no answer he walked in and sat on her couch. She was on the love seat, huddled under a blanket.

"Been a lot of car accidents lately," he said cheerfully.

She turned to the TV momentarily and then back. "I prefer the snow..."

Jeff watched the news. The excitement of the first heavy snows sweeping across the country filled him with nights of hot chocolate and sleeping in front of the fireplace. Public schools announced they would be closed tomorrow. Then the broadcast switched to basketball and Jeff looked up. Mrs. Greer remained quiescent, frozen into the scene. The floor ducts struggled to cough up heat. The words that left his mouth warm and sincere congealed into a frosty blast.

"How about a checker game, Mrs. Greer? I haven't got much to do tonight." He unfolded the game board and laid it out on the table. "Ah, come on."

She turned toward his smile, examined it and slowly swung her feet to the ground like dead weights. Pulling herself to the end of the love seat, she wrapped the blanket closer, up under her arms.

"You can have white, like the snow and I'll take black, like all the crazy printed words I've been reading lately." He noticed her mouth twist almost to a smile and pulled the couch out slightly, closer to the game. The snow deepened. It swirled about the house and whistled occasionally against the thin windows. At the end of the game she eased back and stared at the board. Her remaining white piece was in a corner, boxed in by aggressive black pieces stacked together.

As the Christmas vacation neared, Jeff's work load increased. Papers were due, tests to take, a thousand things to do. Yet he continued to visit her in the evenings before he studied, after he had eaten. The thought of a Christmas tree came to him as he sat with her one evening. His hands were wrapped about a steaming cup of tea when he said out loud, "Of course, that would liven up the place." Mrs. Greer sat across from him, her hands folded on her lap, watching the snow filter down upon her empty bird feeder. She noticed neither his remark nor the spot of tea he spilled.

The next day Jeff bought the smallest tree the Jaycees had to offer, nailed a square block of wood to it and stuck it on the wobbly table that leaned in front of the window. He hurried up the steps before she could walk from her bedroom, pleased with himself. That night he had a deep strong sleep. The next evening when he sat down to watch the news, Mrs. Greer was still considering the sloppy street. The tree sat nearly three feet high on the table. It looked flat, like it belonged to the wallpaper. It added neither color nor warmth.

"You know, a string of popcorn might be just what it needs. Want to make some?...Mind if I make some?...Do you have any oil? Do you have any popcorn?" He searched the kitchen, she would probably help when he tried to put the needle through. It must be somewhere. Ah, yes. "Hey! Colored popcorn! Did you know you had colored popcorn?"

He popped a small amount, put it in a bowl, salted it heavily and laughed at salting it as he took it into the living room. Mrs. Greer sighed feebly and wheezed "Pin's on the bureau." She watched as he strung every kernel onto the thread and hung it around and around the tree. Several days went by. The tree still belonged to the wall paper. He thought of ginger-bread men, but if she was her typically taciturn self he might not make it out of her kitchen for hours. He settled on a jelly bean string. One evening he strung and hung hard jelly beans, pricking himself twice as she absently looked on.

In the last week before vacation, papers and words consumed him completely. The day before he left he walked into her living room, noticed the burdened but bright tree and walked on into the kitchen. It was the first time he had seen her in days. Her face was drawn, her arms more folded in skin than he had remembered. There was nothing to do but say goodbye and leave the Christmas card he had made for her. He laid it on the table and walked away. The next morning, his head light with visions of comfort, Jeff walked from the house, sucking in the delicious air. Later that day, on the airplane, somewhere in the fine fuzz between waking and sleeping, he thought back on the tree and his efforts and he smiled into sleep.

He had no way of knowing that the tree lay on its side at the foot of the TV, many of the jelly beans mashed into the thin rug. Nor could he have known, as he sat down to dinner with his parents, sister, and two brothers, that at that moment Mrs. Greer was sitting crosslegged on her kitchen table, laughing and coughing, rocking back and forth, tears

streaming down gulleys in her face onto her chin. The radio in the dining room was blaring out in wiry nasal tones. It spoke of roasting chestnuts. Mrs. Greer sat swaying to the music, squeezing the can in her hands, sending lines of short-lived flames across the dirty floor, up the gas stove, across the blue cooking rings, onto the wall.

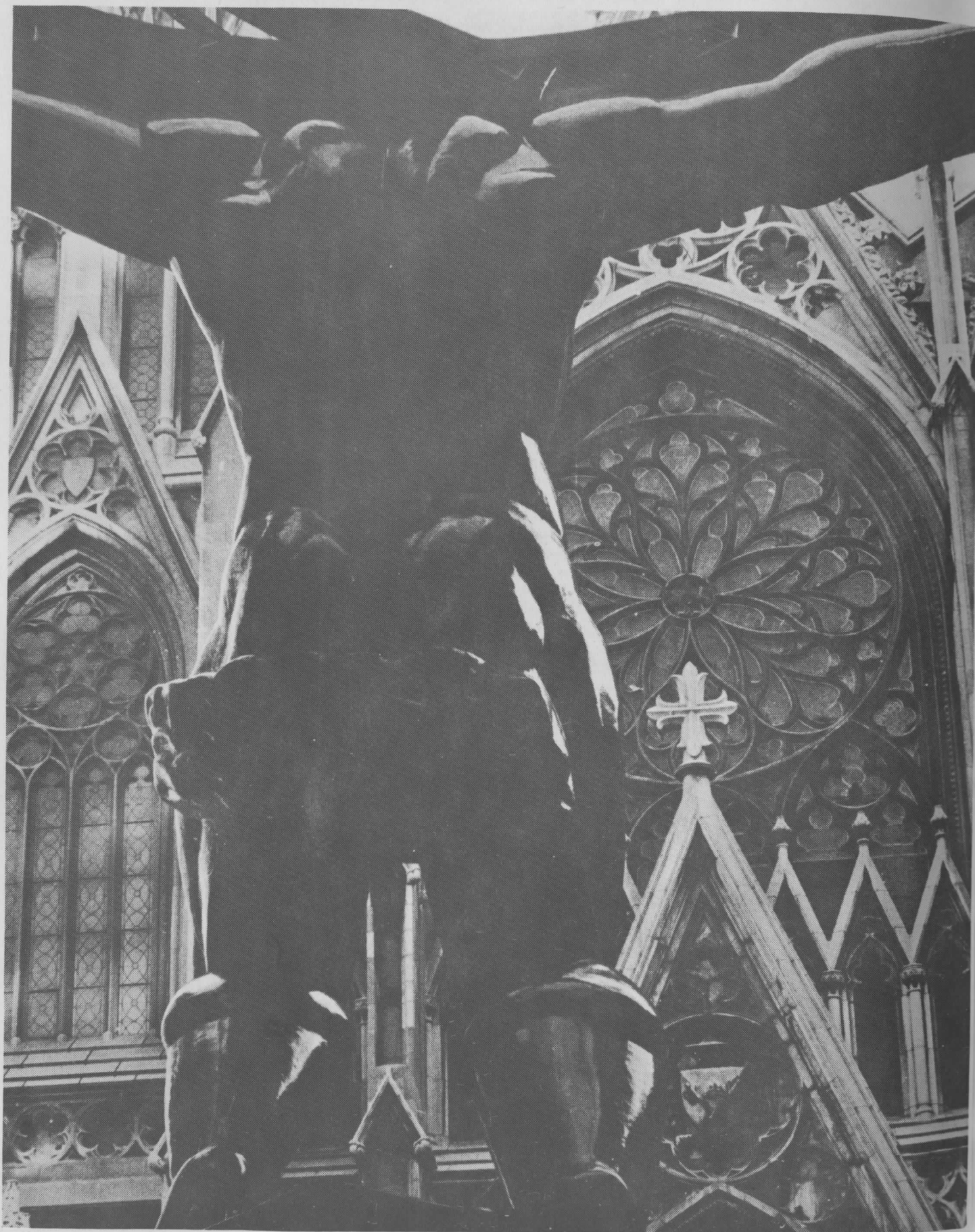
Jeff approached the house from the road, taking long strides, feeling light. The snow made everything look clean and new, there was none of the dirty slush that had covered the yard just before Christmas. He pulled his new ski cap lower on his ears with one hand and turned up the short driveway, holding a bag of toiletries under his arm. He had it down to a routine now--every semester, a visit to the drug-store for three of everything. He was eager to be inside, cold scraped the inside of his nose. He was eager, also, to crack his new course books. They looked good, and he was ready for a change, ready for a little less writing.

Pulling the door shut after him, he stood at the bottom of the steps, drinking in the warm air, pulling off his cap and gloves. Mrs. Greer's door was just cracked and Jeff could see her on the couch, apparently asleep. He tip-toed up the creaky stairs, reaching the third one before her voice caught him.

"Gregory, come sit down for a moment."

Peter Porteous





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