

MSS

**M S S**

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## FOR ELLIE

by Jeff Devens

I met Ellie in Rome.

Not in Rome, Italy, but in the park that my friends and I called Rome.

It really wasn't a park, either. Actually it was a semi-private estate called Untermeyer Gardens in Yonkers. We didn't know who Untermeyer was at the time, and we cared less. We had on several occasions, however, set forth various theories concerning the place we called Rome.

The popular opinion was that the land belonged to a rich city merchant who used to stroll along the serene garden paths which overlooked the Hudson River. Untermeyer had probably been a lover of ancient Italian architecture and sculpture, for there were several busts of famous Romans placed artistically about the grounds. In addition, there was a miniature Pantheon located at the north end of the gardens. At the south end was a splendid marble fountain. The fountain's sparkling pool was drained by a subterranean aqueduct which extended to the park's edge where it gushed cascades into the river below.

It was by this man-made waterfall that I met Ellie on a Saturday morning in the spring of my seventeenth year.

I had come to Rome to smoke some marijuana and to read my literature assignment for the following Monday.

Ellie was sitting passively beneath the rising sun, legs crossed, and seemed to be in a meditative trance. She was wearing a modest white shift with a silver brocade collar. Her hands were folded in her lap.

I sat beside her and assumed her position in the warm grass. I was about to introduce myself when she turned to me and smiled.

It was a gentle, radiant smile that seemed to say, "It's a beautiful morning." I hadn't expected the smile, but I accepted it willingly.

Her hair was the color of midnight on the ocean, drawn back and fixed with a yellow ribbon at the neck. Silver, crescent-shaped earrings dangled from her fully-exposed ears. The crystalline quality of her dark eyes complemented the appeal of her slender, aquiline nose.

"My name is Richard," I began. "I live in Forest Hills. You have a lovely smile."

"Do you come here often?" she asked, still smiling.

"Yes. My friends and I drive up once in a while and get high. We call this place Rome. Doesn't it remind you a little of Rome?"

"A little," she replied.

"What's your name?" I continued.

"Ellie. Actually it's Eleanor, but I prefer Ellie. What's that book?"

"Oh, it's just my World Lit. Came up to do some reading."

"Do you like to read?" she asked.

"Sometimes. I have to be in the mood though."

"What kind of a mood, Richard?" She had stopped smiling and had placed her right hand upon my arm. I hadn't even noticed her doing it. She did it so quietly, so spiritually, as if she had always been touching me.

"A relaxed mood," I explained. "I retain more if I'm relaxed. I think you can appreciate literature more if you're relaxed. You're more receptive then."

"How do you get into a relaxed mood?"

It was the way she said "relaxed" that struck me. She had said it so softly, so strangely, as if she were but a voice from the fountain. She was priming me, trying to find out what I was like. It was all part of a game I imagined had begun when I first sat down next to her. I began to play along.

"Smoking relaxes me. You know—pot." I was taking a chance, a risk. If she didn't smoke, the game would be over. I would have lost.

"Do you have some with you now?" she asked.

"Yeah. Would you like some?"

"Please. How long have you been smoking?"

Her tone reassured me. I could continue now. In my mind I had already envisioned the outcome of the game. We would smoke, talk about poetry or music, and then I'd kiss her. I'd make a date with her and maybe go to bed with her. I'd never been in bed with a girl before, but felt that my "moment of truth" was fast approaching.

"My best friend turned me on at a party in the Village last year. I really liked it. I enjoy music when I'm stoned. Laughing is a groove too. You know, 'contact high'?"

"Have you ever made love while you were high?" she asked matter-of-factly.

I had expected her to ask me something like, "Isn't food unbelievable when you're stoned?" or "Have you ever tried writing poetry when you were stoned?", but "Have you ever made love while you were high?" really shook me. Every 17-year old male likes to think of himself as a future great lover. I had often dreamed of how I would lose my virginity. I'd meet some lonely girl in the Village or at a party, talk to her and take her to bed. Of course, I wouldn't reveal my inexperience. I had read too much Mailer and Southern not to know how to make love.

"Not exactly. I hear it's great though," I said as convincingly as possible.

"It's heaven," Ellie whispered as she leaned forward and kissed my ear. At the same time, she began rubbing my back.

I took her in my arms and began kissing her neck as passionately as I could without being too suggestive.

With her tongue she outlined my ear and returned my offering at the neck.

"Would you like to get high and make love to me?" she purred.

"Here? Now?" I stammered.

"Yes. Right here in the grass. Now is a perfect time, the sun is just right."

"What's the sun got to do with it?" I asked lamely.

"It's in the right house, the perfect time for love."

I didn't want to seem ignorant of the sun's significance regarding sexual relations so I withdrew from her for a moment, rolled two joints and lit them. I placed one in her mouth, which I thought was quite amorous. I was proud of myself, yet worried about making love in the open air.

"Someone will see us, won't they? You know how it is on Saturday."

"No one will be watching us. Don't worry. Today is different—special. Trust me."

It was the way she said "trust me" that convinced me that she knew something that I didn't. But I believed her. I mean, if the girl wants to do it in the grass in Rome, it must be all right.

She took the final drag from her cigarette and tossed it ceremoniously into the waterfall.



"An offering to Venus, the Roman goddess of Love and Beauty. She was born in the foam of the sea," she chanted.

We smoked two more joints, took off our shoes and stretched out in the grass. After a half-hour of French kissing and fondling each other, we removed ourselves to a far corner of the gardens.

"This rose bush is my favorite," she said. "It's a very good strain. It will be in full bloom by the end of the month."

"You know a lot about this place, don't you?" I asked.

"I come here often," she replied.

COME! Oh, Christ, I haven't got a rubber, I thought. Now what do I do, I wondered. I decided to cross that bridge when I got to it.

I removed my pants as gracefully as I could. I tugged at her lace panties and succeeded in getting them as far as her ankles. She took them and placed them carefully next to the rose bush. She unbuttoned my shirt and began to kiss half-moons on my chest. She was quite experienced, I mused.

"Have you ever read Kama Sutra?" she whispered.

"Of course!" I blurted. By then I would have admitted anything to establish my virility and worldliness.

"It's my favorite book," Ellie said.

The time had arrived. "Ellie, I don't have any . . . uh . . . I don't have a thing to make it . . . uh . . . safe."

"That's all right," she sighed. "I take the pill."

Oh, my God, she takes the pill! I was becoming rather unnerved. What would Dustin Hoffman do now, I wondered.

My question was answered all too soon. It was over almost as soon as it began. I hadn't expected it to be so fleeting a moment. I was sure that I hadn't satisfied her. She would know it was my first time. I wanted to dive into the river.

"Kinda' happened all at once, didn't it?" I said innocently.

"It was wonderful," Ellie assured me. "We were together. You were very nice. We touched the heart of eternity and lifted the veil of love . . . 'Kahlil Gibran'."

I didn't understand, but I dared not contradict her. I was too proud for that.

"How old are you, Ellie?" It was the only thing I could think to ask.

"Nineteen," she replied dryly.

"That's good. You know, I'm only seventeen," I boasted.

"Of course." She smiled again. It was the first time that she had smiled since we had moved away from the waterfall.

We dressed quickly in silence. So that's what it's like, I thought. Now I'm a man, I suppose.

"Will I see you again?" I asked sincerely.

"No. I'm leaving today and I won't be back here again."

I *had* failed her! I was stunned and depressed. Why couldn't I have been a man?

"But you said it was wonderful," I protested.

"It was. But I'll never come back here again. I can't. My father won't allow me to."

"But I don't understand. Why won't your father allow you to come back here?"

"Today was the last time I can come here," she repeated coldly.

"But *I* can come back here anytime. I want you to come back too. You must! Don't you understand?" I shouted.

"I do. But *you* may never understand. It really doesn't matter though. There'll be other times and other places. The sun will be right again. Dream to the sky, and it will bring you happiness."

"God damn it! To hell with the sun and the sky. I want to see you again," I roared.

"You *are* only seventeen," she said sadly while staring directly into the noonday sun.

I stood there watching her go, refusing to believe that she was actually walking out of the gardens. She stopped near the fountain and turned toward me. She smiled and pointed at the sun.

"At least tell me your last name," I pleaded. "What is it?"

She stood there in front of the fountain for an eternal instant. The fountain's mid-day mist cast a rainbow around her. And she stood there smiling.

I became a boy again. Tears stung my swollen eyes and streaked my burning cheeks. I was at the ocean again and the taste of the sea was in my mouth.

Standing in front of the fountain, Ellie appeared now as one of the statues, Venue bathed in sunlight and smiling forever.

I heard her say "Untermeyer," as she turned and left me standing alone with my tears in the garden I called Rome.

THE END.



## I WATCHED THE CLEANING MEN

by Glory-June Greiff

I watched the cleaning men sweep the streets  
and I laughed.

The leaves still floated down—  
what beautiful insolence!

And the sky is brilliant  
and grey in spots  
and wind is everywhere  
and the trees are upside down  
and still too much green  
but it's coming

it's coming  
it's already here just waiting  
to burst from the air.



## TO LIVE THE WORLD OF THE POET

by John Claxton

The natural world of wood lot and field reflects little of man's preoccupation with the computable aspects of our punch-card society. But it is often only in the realm of this natural element that the poet can find the peace to pursue and the substance to enhance inspiration. Therefore, it follows that any understanding of poetry necessarily entails a comprehensible communication with the natural rather than an indiscriminate acceptance of the calculable. Perhaps this is the great fault of provincial studies of poetry. In students' attempts to categorize syntax into simple columns of convenience, in their reliance upon Webster to answer any uncertainties, in their search for meanings in minutiae, they have perhaps been blinded by the brightness of their own knowledge, which has cast a shadow over the unpredictable creativity of the poet. And I believe that this gloom of delusion can be dispelled only by a conscious effort to live the world of the poet.

His world of experience starts with the rising of the sun. For the poet greets the morning gold with optimism, with sensitivity, with everything but that indifference with which millions recognize the arrival of just another day (usually manifested in a blank stare of disbelief). As his day continues, he may experience the uncomfortable ride of a suburban commuter, yet still be amused by the genuine smile of a small child. He may experience the uncomfortable warmth of an afternoon sun, yet still take interest in the birdbath antics of a splashing sparrow. His world is one of total awareness, but even more important, it is his task to instill this awareness in others by utilization of his talents. For in attempting to verbalize the heightened emotion of a woodland kingdom pensively anticipating the blossoming morn, the poet can possibly initiate a spark of natural interest in mankind. Failure to live these experiences of the poet results in difficulty with and misunderstandings of the poet's meaning—the prevalent pitfall of traditional poetry studies.

The world of the poet is also manifested in places. Mountain, struggling streamlet, meandering cinder path—now rainy-day-thoughts in the archives of his mind—these were once integral parts of a vivid reality: not a weekend reality sought only for lack of other treasures, but a reality which is part of his daily experience. So how then can


one expect to master the mysteries of the poet if he has not even met the mysteries of the mountain? How can one expect to recognize the world of nature while yet enshrouded in the blackness of the pedantic? However fruitless this pursuit may seem, it is practiced by every student of poetry who attempts to visualize Xanadu, the Lorelei, or the chateau of Chillon. Indeed, there is nothing sacred about the places of the poet: they are common, they are easily found, and they have, at last report, neither ascended nor descended into oblivion. Perhaps their merit lies in the very fact that they are so readily discoverable, an attribute which is apparently overlooked by many.

Ultimately, the poet's world is inhabited by people—not people who are fettered by the chains of society which are worn to restrain their creative impulses, but people who choose to show their true selves to this ignoble world. Having little faith in facades, these are people who kiss because they are in love, fight because they are angry, smile because they are happy. Indeed, the people of the poet are genuine. And only when we become more like the poet's people, becoming indignant of facades, disdaining the entanglements of artificiality, seeking meaningful relationships, only then can we rise into the saddle and ride society—only then can we understand the secret of the poet.

Therefore, the search for the meaning of the poem is not a difficult one if the proper places are investigated. Do not search for the meaning in Webster, but rather in the awakening call of the mourning dove. Do not rely upon the dusty volumes of dormant scholars, but rather upon the immutable wisdom of an aged mountain. And ultimately, the truth of the poem can be found in the truthful man.





  
C. Elizabeth Braxton  
March 17, 1969

## YOU'RE IN THE WINTER . . .

by Chris Kleinschmidt

You're in the winter of your sensitivity.  
Dandelions don't turn the under side of your chin yellow.  
You're not even ticklish anymore.  
I loved you when you squirmed,  
While i teasingly poked at your ribs.  
What happened to you?  
Do you ever think of building sand castles,  
Or playing flashlight tag in the moonlight?  
I still do.  
But maybe i'm just being childish.  
Does the sun ever shine on your side of the wall?  
Let it creep over the edge sometime,  
And warm your soul a bit.  
The sun doesn't always shine you know.  
Some days it does rain.  
If the sun shines too brightly  
I'll give you a hat to shade your eyes.  
Or if the rains do come  
You can have my umbrella.  
i don't need it anymore.

## PLAN FOR TOMORROW

by Brian Walker

"Plan for tomorrow," they tell me.  
But if you spend today planning,  
Tomorrow you won't have any memories.



## BOREAL QUEST

by Karlis Rusa

Cold and dark and bleak  
 dawn my Northern days;  
 truly the soul would grow weak  
 had I not seen beyond the haze  
 enshrouding the mountains that rise  
 before and above me—  
 veiling a land of surprise,  
 savage and lovely.

(For my dreams once brought me sight  
 of citadels there, and never-thawed gardens;  
 on battlements stood silent wardens  
 and in the deep skies was a blue-flashing light.)

In the abode of ever-winter, 'mid hyaline splendor,  
 frozen sits the pale Queen on her throne, far from tender,  
 deaf to the winds that whistle forlornly the icy turrets among,  
 deaf to crystal-chimes that tinkle in septentrional song.

(The rigidly leaning watchers I shall pass  
 and softly mount frosted stairways to doors hanging open forever;  
 and completely my heart I shall sever  
 from dusky Southland memories, for I shall be where the snow-  
 clouds mass . . .  
 and the piping wind as music will be  
 in the hall where moveless sits She.)

Unknown, unreal is this land whither I turn,  
 but having attained it, at the Queen's feet I shall learn  
 to love the coldness, the whiteness, the wild keening wind—  
 be one with them, forgetting all I have suffered or sinned.

Yet still through boundless fields of snow I must plow;  
 deep into my spirit the teeth of the North sink now!

## A CHILD AGAIN/1

by Dean F. Landsman

Little children and animals  
are so innocent  
they're cute and alive  
the witnesses of our lies

Testimony and testimonials  
night and daze  
and all your efforts to change  
in a foggy haze

Vivacious girls  
football players  
garbage men  
mayors

Lovers and hurt people  
agnostics and a church steeple  
the draft and the war  
the schizo and the whore.

I wish I was a child again

## A CHILD AGAIN/2

by Dean F. Landsman

I'd like to be a child again  
toy boats and trains  
wanting a dog  
being happy when it rains

wanting to go out into the **WORLD**  
having a first crush on a **GIRL**  
feeling good and watching tv  
**Mommy, Daddy, my sisters and me**

Hans Brinker Anderson, ice skates  
someday going to school  
playing catch, not many hates  
not knowing I was a fool

wanting to grow up and see  
the things that awaited me  
enjoying everything around  
morale never going down

if I had known what was  
coming I could have waited  
**BUT I DIDN'T**

I'd like to be happy again  
I'd like to be a child again.

## A MODEST PROPOSAL

by Tom Johnson

Millions of years ago, archaeologists tell us, the earth was populated almost entirely by giant, cold-blooded reptiles. Dim-witted, lazy creatures, we can suppose that they spent most of their time either eating or sleeping. But changes in the climate caused the decline of these noble beasts and favored the development of smaller, warm-blooded animals, the marsupials and the mammals. In the last category simians evolved and slowly, we are told, developed into the first men at least two million years ago. These first men were about two feet tall and were not far removed from their fellow primates. Arboreal creatures, inconspicuous at first, they were physically inferior to most other creatures, but mentally they developed an amazing superiority. They began to use this power to alter their environment, to change the course of nature, and to conquer the world. To do these things more effectively, they banded together and established things called "societies." And so it all began.

Cities, slums, epidemics, wars, genocides, slavery, bombs, knives, crime, billboards, television commercials, automobile horns, sonic booms, zoos, garbage dumps, automobile junkyards, LSD, rock and roll, poverty, income tax, and big government. These, needless to say, are just a few examples of the ingenious creations of mankind. After all, nature may be pretty and quiet and peaceful, but it simply is not efficient; it therefore has been replaced as much as possible.

But in the last fifty years, and especially in the last ten years, man has reached a plateau in his mental development, and a carefully devised plan has been instituted that would solve all of these problems. While I cannot claim to be the sole author of this plan, I must say, humbly, that I have perfected it to a degree in which it will quickly, efficiently, inconspicuously rid mankind of all its problems. Therefore, in co-authorship with the other people who have helped develop this plan, I will present the details of our remarkably simple solution.

We have decided to exterminate the human race. That this has been tried before is a fact of which we are aware, but past attempts have used wars as a means of accomplishing the goal of extermination. Success was prevented by a lack of technological developments, although that corporal with the funny little moustache made a good



effort. However, man has now reached the point where he can turn the earth into a thermonuclear fireball. But we reject that idea for two reasons. First, all other life on this planet will be destroyed as well, and we feel that, of all of nature's creatures, only man is destructive, evil, and corrupt. The rest, therefore, should be given every possible chance of survival, and our plan allows for this. Secondly, the little greenmen who are observing the earth would expect something more subtle and sophisticated from us, and, by all means, we should not disappoint them. Having found no other acceptable alternatives, our plan is gradually being implemented.

Sir Walter Raleigh was one of the first members of our group. Countless successes have resulted from his introduction of tobacco smoking into Europe. The last fifty years has been a period of tremendous progress; in the United States alone, we can count on over fifty thousand victories each year. But the disconcerting fact is that the American Cancer Society is attempting to nullify our gains. We cannot protest too strongly! A vigorous counter-campaign shall be waged. Longer cigarettes are being produced. Slogans such as "Be a real he-man! Show her you like to live dangerously!" and "Come on all you tigers. Smoke Feline cigarettes and roar!" will soon appear. For the women we have developed a special, slim cigarette that soon will be available in a variety of colors to match any outfit. We are confident that with such tactics the opposition will be defeated.

Another successful member of our group was Henry Ford; his invention also manages to kill over fifty thousand people each year in the United States. Comparable successes are being reported in most of the advanced countries of the world. In spite of attacks by Ralph Nader and others, we shall, in the end, prevail. Very few people fasten seat belts, and windshield glass is harder than ever. Engines are constantly being made larger and more powerful. Many car models can be on the road for several years before the government takes notice of certain defects in the vehicles and makes the factory call them back. The popularity of the Volkswagen (one of our best designs) is soaring. We are also proposing the abolition of speed limits and the elimination of nuisances such as stop signs and warning signs. After all, signs have incredibly low intelligence quotients, and everybody should consider his judgment to be better than that of a sign.

The Wright brothers also made a contribution to our cause. Crowded skies and overworked air controllers have been a very success-



ful combination. In addition, new airplanes will be able to decrease the population by over five hundred in a single crash.

Countless other methods of extermination exist. Color televisions that emitted radiation had a marvelous future until the government learned about them. Nevertheless, television helps promote inactivity which, when combined with large amounts of high-cholesterol foods, can be a very efficient means of extermination. The government however, has suggested that people exercise. We also agree with this policy. In fact, it is our opinion that people should build up their bodies as fast as possible by immediately doing the most vigorous exercises that can be devised. It might be noted that this technique has proved best after at least several years of almost complete inactivity, especially with older people.

However, the ultimate weapon to be used in accomplishing the announced goal of this plan is combined air and water pollution. New York, Los Angeles, and Pittsburgh are excellent examples of the high degree of air pollution that can be reached with very little effort. New inventions help create more and more factories to produce goods and, in the process, pollute the air. Since people tend to concentrate in cities, the bulk of the human race can eventually be dispatched in this manner. Many animals will also be killed by this air pollution, but, since most animals tend to inhabit remote areas, enough will survive to repopulate the world once all humans are gone. Factories, particularly chemical plants, also produce excellent water pollution. The once-blue Danube has turned brown, and even the Great Lakes are becoming polluted. With some effort, pollution levels can be increased until water purification plants can no longer handle the load. Elimination of the people in urban areas will thus be hastened. People in the rural areas of the more advanced countries will meet the same fate as their urban brothers; it will just take a little longer.

To eliminate the people of underdeveloped countries would seem much more difficult, but it actually will be very easy. We propose that the United States adopt as part of its plan for aid to underdeveloped countries the construction of large chemical factories at the sources of and at various points along the lengths of each of the major river systems in the world. Having no purification plants, primitive peoples must rely on stream water being potable. By the time they perceive that the water is no longer safe to drink, it will be too late. Animal life in and along these river systems will also die, but enough

creatures in remote areas will survive to repopulate the land. Ocean-dwelling creatures will, of course, remain relatively unaffected.

Thus, the major advantages of this plan are that it is subtle, gradual, neat, and that it will basically limit extinction to the human race, nature's greatest mistake. And once more the noble creatures of nature will reign supreme; once more the earth will be beautiful.

### ENTER, SIR

by Robert Basile

Enter, sir.

Enter Sir Robert's manor and gaze  
upon the work of a man.

Notice the hue and fragrance of his garden;  
The rough-hewn walls and simple furnishings  
with which he lives.

In this room sir, is the altar where Robert and his love  
meet in silent communion, a precious creation.  
Here is his desk, where he pours out a tale as sylvan  
and sweet as life itself.

And here, sir, is the hearth, where he sits at night  
To coax secrets from the flickering lights,  
delving into the rose-hued coals.

And now I bid you leave, sir, for Sir Robert stands  
by the window, weeping.

## THE DOLL

by Greg Shelton

It was a rather ordinary doll; I don't know why I hated it or when the intense tension began to build between it and me. My only daughter was still an infant when she was given the doll. Always it has been intensely frustrating for me to try to remember who gave her the wretched thing. I sometimes think it was my great aunt who has since died. Died. My whole world has died. And it is with increasing certainty that I can pinpoint the disaster to that doll. If only that doll had never been made!

I think perhaps I did not really hate the doll the first time I saw it. But I found it grotesque. Yes, at least grotesque the first time I saw it. It was rather like any other baby doll, small and cuddly with arms made of soft rubber and a cute face with eyes that open and close. The first time I looked at it, the eyes must have been closed. Then the doll was tilted up and I saw them. The eyes. Somewhere in the manufacturing of this devil doll a mistake had been made that placed in the rubber eye sockets those unhuman eyes. When I first perceived this malformation, I decided at that very moment to destroy the doll. Not out of hate. Not yet. But as I reached to take the doll from my darling's crib, she woke up a little and pulled the doll to her. Let the child sleep with it, I thought. Tomorrow, when she is interested in another plaything, I can take the doll to destroy it.

Now it occurs to me that I should have snatched it immediately from the sleeping infant. She never would have missed it, not then. But the mistake had been made. I do not know, nor could I figure out at the time why she loved that one particular doll so much. The fact is she was never without it. It occurred to me that she might have taken pity on its hideous face, but then she did not know it was so grossly distorted. Maybe by its constant companionship with her, she began to think that those cursed eyes were the proper visual instruments for the human creature and that none of the live human beings lived up to the perfection of the features of her doll. Maybe the doll represented her lost mother. For it was shortly after her birth that my wife met a most tragic fate. Her mother was virtually burned alive in a horrible auto crash. Death by fire. It was the kind of death she feared most. Fire.



It seems to me now that it was shortly after the tragedy that I first noticed the doll. Who was it that gave my sweet child such a cursed thing? It must have been Aunt Clare.

I remember at first I tried to lure my daughter away from the doll with other dolls and stuffed animals. But she would always clutch her doll as she investigated her new playthings. After a few minutes with her new toy, she would again devote her entire attention to the devil doll. Her room was filled with hundreds of unused toys. Shelves were lined with every kind of doll imaginable, dolls that could walk or talk. Dolls that were three feet tall. Dolls that were tiny. Dolls that could splash and sing and burp and wet. But she never paid any attention. I even bought her a doll just like her devil doll, except with normal eyes. I thought maybe she was going to accept this doll, but when its eyes opened, revealing a beautiful set of azure eyes, she immediately lost interest.

My daughter did not learn quickly. Though the nanny and I spent a good deal of time in trying to teach the child rudimentary speech, she had not spoken a word. My concern grew. I took the child, now over two years old, to a specialist. Rigorous testing was done to determine wherein her speech problem lay. The physician reported—no physical defects. She should be talking in monosyllables at least. Throughout all the tests my daughter clutched that beastly doll. She would not let it go. The doctor noticed this affection of hers for the doll. He suggested that the child be weaned from the doll in an attempt to encourage her to grow up. He said the doll might be some kind of psychological crutch for her.

But my daughter and the doll were inseparable. Each time I would try to take it away, the child went into a frenzy. She was almost hysterical each time I would approach her and that doll. The doctor warned me not to use force in trying to get the doll. When I told him of her reactions he suggested that she should perhaps keep the doll if she were that dependent on it. Even with this warning, I kept trying to pry the damned thing away from her. No success. I curse Aunt Clare for ever giving it to her.

One evening, I came home a little earlier than usual. As I passed my daughter's room, I heard a voice from behind the closed door. The nanny was downstairs in the kitchen, so I knew it could not be her. I eased my way up to door and listened. It sounded like a child's voice. Maybe it was the playmate for my daughter, the girl next door. I opened the door a crack to peer in. To my surprise my daughter sat there talking to that doll! In complete sentences. Although she was only three and a half at the time, she was talking as well as any six year old. I rushed up to her and embraced her.

"My darling. My darling."

"Don't ever take my doll away," were the first words she ever spoke to me. In my jubilation, I promised her that I would never try to take away her doll. From that time on she would speak when she was spoken to. But she never did initiate a conversation.

At last my extraordinary child was ready to start school. By this time, the doll was little more than a rag. Its right arm had been amputated and re sewn on the doll at least six times. Its garments were filthy, but my girl would never allow the tattered clothes to be mended or cleaned. The only things that remained the same were those penetrating eyes that I loathed. Even at this age, my daughter was never without that doll. My contempt for the thing grew as it became more and more ragged and malformed. Often I would try to talk her into letting me throw the doll away and get her a new one. But when I talked like this, she again became dumb. Weeks would pass without her talking. So I gave up. She was due to outgrow this doll soon anyway, I assured myself.

I had planned a celebration at the end of her first week of school. The nanny, my daughter, and I were going to have a cookout. The dear nanny had laid the fire, but she had piled too many logs on it causing a bonfire much too wild to cook on. Since it was unseasonably cold, our group retired to the house to let the fire die down a little. The telephone rang. Her teacher had called to tell me to make my girl leave that doll at home. Or else she was going to have to talk to the principal. It seemed my daughter was causing a disturbance with that devil doll, and the other children were upset by it. I told her she would not have to worry any more.



"I shall get rid of it tonight," I promised.

My daughter had heard nothing of this conversation for she was in the corner talking with that doll. I walked over to her and smiled.

"The time has come for you to grow up, my dear. You are no longer a baby. It's time you should cast off your baby things." And I took the doll. She offered no resistance, but only glared at me.

"If you hurt her," she said in a dull monotone, "you will be the one who will suffer."

At last I had that doll in my hands. I remember thinking that I would like to cut those plastic eyes out of its head. I had hated—maybe feared—that doll for so long. My memory becomes very confused at this point. I must have gone into a kind of frenzy as I now realized that my next conscious thought was watching the doll melt in the fire that the nanny had prepared. It seemed to me that the eyes were the last remnant of the doll to succumb to the lively flame. I returned to the house for a drink.

I assumed myself that my daughter was playing the brat and had decided to have one of her speechless fits. I chose to ignore her now. I just wanted to relax with my drink.

Burning, burning, I again saw the doll burning. Its arms and legs wriggled as if it were striving to free itself from the flame. (She fell across the steering column and the horn honked loudly. Then the explosion. I ran from the car. I couldn't help her. After all, I had to save the baby, didn't I? The baby first, then her. But now it was too late. Oh, God, let her get free. If someone would take the baby, I know I can . . . I know.)

The scream awoke me. At first I thought it too was a part of this recurring nightmare. But I heard the scream again. I rushed outside. The only illumination was from the fire. From its glow I saw the nanny scream again, then collapse to the ground. As I rushed up to help her, I saw it. On top of the bonfire curled up in a fetal position was the body of my only daughter. The eyes of the flaming corpse were open.



## ELECTRIC MOTHER (UP AGAINST THE WALL)

by Becky Bunch

Someone; dark mysterious someone.  
Chopping, slicing, sawing at my  
Typewriter cord  
My light cord  
Now my toothbrush  
And my razor  
My radio!  
My clock, the fiend moves on  
All sound stops  
Motion freezes  
Images on a magic screen  
Flash—gone  
No more  
energy  
sapped  
A severed cord  
A million severed  
Umbilical  
Cords.



## THE TREASURE TREE

by Kathy Dutton

The city bought the McCarey orchard in 1955, and that spring a crew of workmen started undoing Johnny Appleseed's planting. One by one the blossom-laden trees crashed to the ground, making room for the new housing complex. The work stopped momentarily when a giant elm was discovered. Because of its great size and the consequent difficulty in felling it, the tree was spared. The work resumed, and soon only the elm stood in the field. The complex was soon finished, and the houses looked like rows of boxes that had been painted different colors. Each lot had two maple saplings in the front yard and two in the back, except 410 which had the giant elm in its back yard. Families came to choose the box of their favorite color, and soon all the boxes were filled with people. The family that lived in 410 was luckier than the others, because the elm shaded their house and kept it cool in the summer. In the evening, the shade extended into the next yard, and the people in 414 shared the luxury.

In the summer of 1957, Mr. and Mrs. Dutton and their seven daughters moved to 414 East South "E" Street. During the first afternoon in their new home, the Dutton girls hurried next door to inspect the giant elm. It was not as pretty as it had once been; lightning had struck the elm during a thunderstorm, and now the tree was dead. The bark had rotted away until the tree, except for part of the trunk, was naked. The huge, bare elm looked strangely out-of-place amid the thriving young maples. Linda, the eldest daughter, stripped a piece of bark from the tree, revealing hundreds of red ants that scurried away in as many directions. Then Larry, the boy who lived at 410, came outside and said to the girls, "You can't play with my tree unless you ask me." The girls quickly went home. Later they met Larry's younger sister, Theresa, and she invited them to play under the elm.

That summer the tree caught on fire, but the children used the garden hose to put out the fire. The tree was spared.

Once Larry announced that there was a treasure buried under the tree and that he was going to cut down the tree and dig up the treasure. The children watched as Larry and Rod started chopping the tree at the burned part. One girl felt silent tears run down her cheeks—the



tears the tree could not cry. The boys chopped until they had made a triangular opening in the base of the hollow tree. They decided to crawl inside, but the opening was too small for them. Anita Dutton, the second daughter, was the only one small enough and brave enough to crawl inside. As she crawled into the tree, she noticed a difference in the light. The brilliant light outside could not compare to the light inside the tree. The long, slender rays of quiet sunlight cast soft shadows within the tree. She looked up and watched a small portion of the sky through the opening at the top of the tree. The world outside seemed far away. Anita heard a woodpecker hunting for insects in the wood of the tree, and she heard bees buzzing far up in the tree; but it was a long time before she heard her mother telling her to come out of the tree. When she crawled out, the brilliant light hurt her eyes, and she had no words with which to tell the others what she had seen. In time the children forgot about cutting down the tree and finding the treasure, but Anita did not forget that the tree sheltered life.

When Larry's pet rat died, the children buried the tiny animal inside the tree. Thereafter the tree sheltered the graveyard for the pets that died and any dead animals that the children found.

The elm was magically transformed into a winter fortress, and the boys on "E" street never lost a home snowball fight. In the summers the girls played house and the boys wrestled under the elm, and the tree was always "safe" when they played tag. The years passed, and the elm silently watched over the children.

Then those children forgot the elm. The girls primped, and the boys took odd jobs; but the wonderful tree remained the same and was inherited by younger children.

The year after Larry was graduated from high school and was drafted into the army, his parents decided to cut down the elm. A young girl ran to her mother, crying the words that the tree could not say, "Mother, don't let them kill our tree."

"But, Honey, the tree is already dead."

"Not to us!"

The ashes of the tree were still burning in the pet graveyard when it was learned that Larry had been killed in Vietnam. The tree had again been spared—spared the grief of losing one of its children.

## A WHILE AGO

by Debbie Corwith

A while ago, you were leaning against the car  
And your loafers scuffed the parking lot sand.  
Night was surrounding your darkly hidden face.  
That was a while ago, when you stared out at the dull, empty lake,  
Yet, even I felt your penetrating glance  
From far down the beach.

A while ago, you seemed different to me,  
Sitting there, apart from the rest on the sofa,  
Holding a beer can tightly, as if a last hope,  
But non-chalantly gazing at the T.V.  
I noticed you, and sat across from you in the dim light,  
Wondering if you cared about anything.

But that was a while ago, when I played the role for a night.  
My body and soul cried out for attention,  
And yearned to provoke fate.  
You only fiddled with the pillow beside you  
Wishing it weren't an inanimate object.  
But that was a while ago.

A while ago the lines on your forehead were unseen,  
As was the serenely lost look of a little boy.  
Your eyes still searched perhaps a light-year further,  
But you saw my puzzled face more, and happy smiles,  
The more you let me touch your heart.  
And, that was a while ago.

## "NIGHT WALK"

By Larry Gilbert

The night was delicious. Reaching out to grasp it, his hand was stopped short by the thin wire mesh which always sifted the darkness, screening out its impurities but permeable to the sights, feel and exquisite smells of the night. "They're there," he thought, "waiting for me. I must come."

The air was warm but fresh and the night clear and bright when he closed the screen door behind him. The dusty gray stretch of gravel lay in shadows, its beginning and end both disappearing into inky blackness. Before him, directly across the road, lay the river, obedient for the moment to the short but steep banks which flanked it. At his back he felt the imposing density of the forest, rising up like a bleak wall under the summer sky. Breathing now in short gasps, he pivoted slowly, drinking in all there was to be seen. The moon shivered above, largely obscured by two wispy clouds which drifted across its face. The tree crickets hushed their chirping, waiting for him to choose his path. Even the trees ceased whispering, watching in anticipation. He took a few quick steps up the road, hesitated, then turned and walked down a path leading to the river.

Here the path was clear. It was narrow but well traced along riverside. The soft ground afforded a comfortable, quiet avenue and the river current gurgled contentedly as it rolled over the rocks near the bank. It was easy travel, as if he merely stood there while the path transported him deeper and deeper into a dark world. As he walked, his hearing became accustomed to the night sounds, discerning the soft beating of the current lapping at the rocks along the shore from the sudden ripple of a fish rising for a night-flyer. His senses grew sharper and more instinctual; his feet skimmed the ground lightly, always finding firm ground on which to tread, his hand brushed away branches before they were seen or felt, his eyes sighted objects as they moved among the brush. The very subtlest changes of expression possible accompanied all this. His face was still boyish, but its softness had taken on a tautness; his eyes were the same light blue, but they had become colder, gleaming and piercing the shadows which surrounded him. He still carried his body loosely, but now it



was more like the relaxed jog of a skilled tracker, skipping lightly over fallen stumps and brush which hindered his progress, ever steadfast in his course.

The path led on evenly for another mile and then began to disintegrate. From now on the brambles would be thicker, the path narrower, the footing more treacherous. Clouds were blowing in and the night sky was becoming darker, the silent world was closing about him tighter and tighter. Looking to the river, he saw that the white specks of froth which swirled in its current were keeping pace with his advance. It made him wonder if he too wasn't one with them, being swept to his destination by irresistible forces. He lengthened his stride, attempting to assert his individuality, but the added darkness and the gnarled underbrush held him back. The only alternative was to lessen his gait and allow the river to scurry by. With this slower rate of travel he could no longer maintain the sensual glow which had so far supported him. Stripped of its vitality, he felt perplexed, confused, lost in the jumble of shadows which clustered about him. With a few more quick strides, however, he burst loose from the snarl of branches, vines and darkness and stood quietly on the edge of a smooth sand bar which jutted out into the river, eyeing the blackness with nervous anticipation.

"That you, Mark?" a voice hissed from the far edge of the bar.

"Yea, that's me" Mark returned, squinting in the direction of the voice.

"We'd nearly given ya up, boy. Jed and me were just hunching up to see . . ."

"Where are you?" the boy interrupted impatiently. "I can't see a thing in this inkpot. Stand up, will you?"

"What's the matter fella?" a second voice chuckled maliciously. "Fraid of the dark?"

"No!" Mark blurted, "just want to see what you are up to."

Dimly discernible in the night, a tall slender figure arose from the sand near the edge of the bar, silhouetted by the dim reflection of the moon in the water behind it. Even though he could not see clearly, Mark could imagine Luke's appearance. It would be the same as that of their first and all of their subsequent meetings; dirty leather cowboy boots, black levis, and a short black vest over a grimy white tee shirt. Despite the darkness, Mark studied Luke's faint outline carefully, looking for any sign of nervousness or tension. Finding none, he



walked slowly toward the tall, dark figure, feeling his stomach tingling with an odd lightness, as if freed of gravity, and his face began to itch as sweat broke out on his forehead.

"Get up, jackass" Luke said as he nudged a formless shape lying below him on the sand, "little old Mark's ready to go to town."

The lightness in Mark's stomach tingled sharply with these words, as if sparks were shooting from the middle of it, extinguishing themselves only when they had reached his outmost layer of flesh. His knees felt elastic, seemingly wanting to buckle and spill out of his mouth the sparks which crackled in his gut.

"About time," Jed chortled, rising. "I was beginning to feel like a crawdad, hunched up in that damn sand. Besides, my bottle's empty—gotta go fill up."

Jed's face, with its scruff of black beard, was nearly indistinguishable in the dark. This relieved Mark. He hated Jed's eyes. They were sunken into his narrow head within scarcely a quarter inch of each other and were nearly black, glinting with the steely hardness and vacant stare of alcoholism. He too was shabbily dressed. A filthy sweatshirt, cut off at the arms and bearing the incongruous title *Notre Dame*, covered his thick chest. He too wore black levis, but on his feet were a pair of ragged black sneakers.

"Here, have some of mine" said Luke, revealing a stout flask inside his vest. Jed's mouth broadened into a grin. He reached out and took the flask lovingly in his huge hands.

"Come'ere, baby, and give me a kiss," he said, as he raised the bottle to his lips.

"Take off the cap first, you lunkhead," said Luke, grabbing the container and spinning off its top neatly. "Try her now."

"That's better," Jed gurgled while gulping down two mouthfuls of heavy smelling liquid, "that'll put some fire in me for Sally to quench."

"Sally?" asked Mark. "Is she the one, Luke?"

"Shore nuff, sonny boy, she's the one that'll take your edge off . . . for a price, of caws."

Mark stared at him uncertainly. "What do you mean, 'for a price'? I gave you your money this morning", he said slowly.

"Prices have gone up. Inflation, you know. Jed and me went over and spent our part of your money on a couple of pints, and presto! right before our eyes they inflated clear into fifths before we could

get them out of the store. Storekeeper he naturally charges us a full fifth's worth, so's we was out of money for old Sally. Don't blame us, though, it was inflation, warn't it, Jed."

"That very thing," chuckled his crony, "that's wot done it, the very thing!"

"Bullshit," mumbled Mark.

Jed took one step forward, changing his grip on the flask. "What's that you say, boy?"

"Nothing, I was just wondering if I had enough cash."

"Why shore you do," Luke offered, "a rich boy like you got's lot'sa dough. Tell you what, though, since your money bought it you can have a drink."

"Like hell he can," answered Jed as he brought the flask down from his lips with a snap, "tain't hardly enough for us."

"I don't want any, anyhow," said Mark.

A faint flicker passed through Jed's eyes. He debated a while, then thrust out the flask to the boy.

"Have a drink on me, a nice long drink. Ain't afraid of a little whiskey, are you?"

Mark hesitated, looking over to Luke, who only grinned back at him stupidly. "Nope, I reckon I'm not" he replied, as he extended a shaky hand to the offered bottle.

"That a boy, that a boy," whispered Jed to Mark as the boy put the flask to his lips and tilted his head back sharply, "that a way to put the fire in."

"C'mon, let's go" said Luke, "we kin all git fired up on the way to to Sally's place."

The three turned toward the dark woods, where a thin path ran up the bank. Having gained the top they started off at a steady pace through a pasture that led to the same gravel road which ran past Mark's house. Luke had parked his car, a rusty old Cadillac, alongside the road adjacent to the pasture. They got in and Luke drove down the road, away from Mark's house, leaving a billow of dust which was gratefully swallowed by the blackness which swirled about them.

Turning onto blacktop, the trio headed south until they reached the tiny village which supplied the surrounding farms and summer cottages. All of its stores were located on Main Street, a half mile stretch of chuckholed asphalt. Scattered loosely around this street were about one hundred homes, drab and simple, but well kept. Luke

drove through the town and turned left at the last narrow avenue, stopping in front of an old gray-shingled house which stood well back from the road.

"We're home," Jed hollered drunkenly, his breath heavy with the smell of whiskey, "everybody out and go kiss mother."

Mark gazed at the tired-looking house. The resolve which had carried him this far began to crumble, and his legs failed to respond to his commands to move. Jed solved the problem for him, however.

"Up and at them, Mark old boy. She ain't coming down here, you'll have to go git her" he said, reaching into the car and yanking Mark out onto his feet.

Jed escorted him up the broad, cracked sidewalk. They both staggered to the front porch, Jed reeling drunkenly, and Mark weakened by the sickening feeling in his stomach, a combination of alcohol and fear. Luke sat in the car, pulling contentedly at his flask.

"Open up," Jed yelled, beating his fists on the screen door, "You open up in there! This here young man got a date with Sally!"

The door opened. A medium sized man with gray hair stood in the open door, a small black revolver in his hand. "You're drunk, Jed" he said methodically. "I told you before I don't want you coming here drunk."

Jed swayed uncertainly in the twilight, his jaw moved up and down but no words came from him. Finally he coughed violently, and leaned on the wall for support. "Aw, Major," he began, "You knows I wouldn't go get drunk and come here. I jest had a few drinks with me pal here, Mark, what's come to pay Sally a little visit."

The man turned his eyes on Mark. "How old are you, boy?" he asked.

Mark felt his stomach turn completely over now. He wanted to run for the porch rail and puke up the whole ghastly night, his whole wretched existence, too, for that matter. He looked over at Jed, who shot him a groggy wink from one of these hated eyes. His own eyes were trapped by his. In their cold, vacant stare, he saw the meanness and triviality of his own life. He fancied that his own eyes now appeared as Jed's, black and brutal.

"How old, boy?" The man's question broke the spell which locked his eyes to Jed's.

"Sixteen, sir," he answered, beginning to gasp loudly for air, "and I don't want to go into your stinking whore house, sir, I don't



want to!" Mark's tears now flowed freely and his breath came in rattling gasps.

The man called Major turned on Jed, his eyes blazing. "You degenerate moron," he said, "if you ever come here with another green kid again, I'll see that you never have a chance to make the same mistake a third time. It's your type of idiot blunders that could put me in jail, and I don't relish that. Now get out and take this boy away with you!"

Jed looked at the gun, then at Mark. Dully he turned around and slowly staggered toward the car. The man in the doorway waved his gun at Mark, who turned and followed Jed.

"Wal', that certainly was quick," laughed Luke from the driver's window. "How'd you like Sally, sonny boy? Pretty nice stuff, huh?"

"Shut up," snapped Jed, "the kid blew it and that son-of-a-bitch ordered us off the place."

"Which son-of-a-bitch?" asked Luke, puzzled.

"That Major son-of-a-bitch," shot back Jed, slamming his foot in disgust into the side of the car. "Owwww," he cried, "god'am your god'am car, it's broke my toes."

"Any fool what kicks a car with tennis shoes on deserves to git them broke," rejoined Luke. "Git in the car and let's git out. You too Mark, git in."

Mark looked about him, unheeding for the moment of Luke's command. As he furtively scanned the block, he noticed how alone he was, save Jed and Luke. He wanted to escape, but of all the houses about him the one he had just left was the only one in which any light could be seen and it terrified him to think of himself fleeing along in the night. It was well after midnight now, and the darkness was still as thick as when they had stood on the sand dune. Only now, the night inspired him with fear. Rather than penetrating the darkness, his eyes could only behold leering shadows, with unknown shapes creeping behind them. His hands clutched and relaxed spasmodically at his sides. Again he turned toward the car, eyeing it disdainfully. He looked hopefully toward the main road, but all there was darkness too. Casting a frightened glance about him, he sprawled disheartedly into the front seat between Luke and Jed, the same arrangement in which they had arrived.

"Damn punk kid," Jed was muttering angrily, "ruined my chance to waltz with Sally!" He paused, then added, in a faint whining tone, "I need a dance bad, too. I most shorely do."



"Don't worry none, Jed," Luke said with an odd grin playing across his stubby face. "I know where we kin find a first-rate dancin' partner and we won't have to pay a cent neither." Luke leaned over heavily against Mark and his voice instinctively lowered to a whisper. "I've had my eye on that little waitress, the one at the *Royal Oaks*. She'll be walking home at one; that's about a half hour from now. She lives alone, and no one'll know if we was to take her to a little party of our own. What do you say?"

Jed's face took on a momentary sober expression. "That little bitch," he said through clenched teeth, "she nearly scratched my eyes out that time I grabbed her—called me a filthy pig, too! It'd serve her right to get herself raped, god'am wench!"

"What about you Mark?" Luke asked deadpan. "Are you game?"

"What do we need him for?" screamed Jed, "He damn near got me shot back at the house!"

Luke looked over at Mark, his eyes narrowing another grin starting to spread across his haggard face. "Two reasons" he said dryly. "First I jest wanna do old Mark a favor. I wanna show him what this world's really like. Not like the world his fancy, big-city family shows him, but the real one. All he sees is sugar and candy. Lot's of nice things—and all you got to do is ask for them. Well I see something I want, only it ain't no sugar ner candy and I ain't gonna git it by asking. If I want it I gotta take it myself. That's the real world, Mark old boy, and it's time you learned how to take, if yer gonna live in it. Anyway," he said turning to Jed, "the cat's out of the bag already. If we're gonna keep him from the police, then we're best to git him in this, too. Whad'cha think Mark, would your family want you in jail for rape? How'd your ma like to think of her little boy screwing some helpless broad, she'd be might proud, wouldn't she?"

"Yea . . . yea!" Jed responded, the whole plot only just beginning to soak through his foggy consciousness. "Why Mark here is our golden ticket to sin. We kin get away with anything long as he's with us."

"I don't want to go; I won't," Mark sobbed. "I don't want to hurt nobody. I don't want no girl—I don't want one now or never. Go ahead, but take me home first, I promise I won't tell nobody."

Jed slammed his hand over Mark's mouth, his powerful thumb and fingers nearly squeezing the insides of Mark's cheeks together. "You'll go," he said, his voice oddly high and tremulous. "You'll go or you might accidentally fall in the river. Now you don't want that to happen

do you? Besides you gotta be around to clear our good names if something goes wrong and they track us down. Who'd ever believe a lawyer's son would be one of three what raped that waitress? Huh? So you jest relax and git ready to enjoy yourself. She's a nice little broad, she is," he added softly to himself, "nice, very very . . . nice."

"No need to worry about it anyway, Mark," said Luke, starting the car, "we ain't gonna hurt her none, jest use her a little, like God made her to be used. Besides we're gonna pull this off jest as slick as goose greese. She won't even know what hit her." He began to laugh, She won't even know what hit her. He began to laugh, nearly hysterically. "Jest look at it this way, Mark," he wheezed between laughs, "God put the fruit on the earth so it could be picked and eaten when it gits ripe. Think of this here waitress as a piece of fruit that's ripe and ought to be picked. Now some folks' God would say it ain't right to take this gal like you was picking apples. But not me and Jed's God, He says apples and people are jest the same, put on this here earth for people what wants them and ain't afraid to take them. Ain't that so, Jed?"

"That's our God all right," Jed mused softly, "That's the very one we know and trust. But say," he cried, sitting up in the seat, "jest how we gonna pull this off?"

"Easy," began Luke. "The street she has to walk down don't have no lights, and at one in the morning, won't be nobody up. You and me hide behind those hedges at the Thomas house, Mark stays in the car. When she walks by you, slip a rag around her mouth and gag her. I'll be right with you and throw a pillowcase over her head before she can see who's got her, then I'll grab her arms and tie them behind her back. By then Mark'll come up with the car; we throw her in and take off for the country. When we're done with her we'll leave her there—someone'll pick her up in the morning—and she won't be none the worse for wear. What do you say, Mark? We ain't doing no harm to nobody, jest picking the fruits of the earth." Luke gasped with choking laughter at this last statement.

Mark had been sitting with his head in his hands, feeling his stomach growing sicker as he listened to Luke's words. "Sure," he said in a faltering tone, raising his head and looking slowly and dejectedly from side to side, "seeing as how I don't have no choice I might as well settle back and enjoy myself. I planned on getting my first woman tonight. This way's just as good as the other."



"I thought you'd see my point," Luke said, satisfied with his powers of persuasion.

It was ten before one when they arrived in front of the Thomas home. Luke parked the car on the same side of the street, so that he and Jed would be between Mark, in the car, and the girl. They waited until about ten minutes after one, then the crisp clear staccato click of a woman's high heels could be heard making its way through the murky darkness.

Mark heard, and he gripped the steering wheel of the car tighter and tighter, biting his lower lip until the blood came. The sound of the woman's heels resounded louder and louder in his ears. The whole night seemed to echo the sound as it bore down on him, as if it wanted to squeeze his ears together by the sheer force of its volume, crushing his brain into a pulpy, insensate mass. He looked about him at the world of darkness. Jed's eyes seemed to glare at him from their hiding place, trying to usurp his own eyes and perpetually discolor his own perceptions with those Jed saw in his dirty, drunken world. He felt Luke's God lurking behind every shadow, menacing and terrifying his whole existence, leering maniacally at him from the shadows. His mind conjured an image of their god; huge, satanic, with eyes staring emptily forward, a thousand-fold more hideous than Jed's.

"Light, light," his brain screamed amidst the blackness which surrounded him as the sound of those clicking heels kept coming closer, almost abreast of the hedge which concealed Luke and Jed, "my world needs light!"

Saying this, he felt his hand on the car's instrument panel. Unconsciously, he pulled out on the headlight switch, bathing the scene in brightness. As he turned the ignition he could see the woman's shout etched in her features, but not yet escaped from her mouth. He felt his foot plunge the gas pedal to the floor and as he threw the car into gear, he saw Luke and Jed's faces contorted with hatred and surprise. The car shot forward, jumping the curb with a loud thump directly under his seat. Luke's flask cracked the window near his head and he heard at last the waitress' piercing scream as the car mowed down Luke and Jed and plowed through the hedge, continuing down the road.

Mark wiped his fingerprints from the car and let it roll off the bank into the river, about five miles below his parents' cottage. As he walked home the night was still dim and foreboding, but he felt a sympathy with the silent world which loomed about him, once more, the shadows held no terror.

## I NEVER NEEDED ANYONE

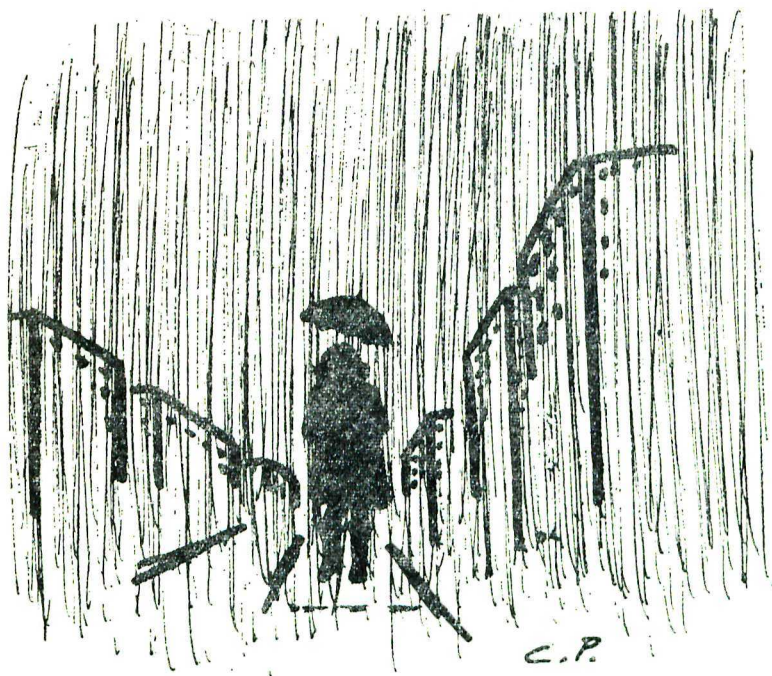
by Glory-June Greiff

I never needed anyone  
when I came to this town  
but a brooding look under dark hair changed me.  
My soul stepped out to see,  
and he slipped in . . .

We had our time.

He barged out one day, but  
my soul has not yet returned,  
and his impression still remains on the bed.

Oh God I never needed anyone  
but  
now if my soul returned  
it would catch cold  
and die in the rain.





## THE WISE MAN

by Jody Neff

A Wise Philosopher  
Now feels a draft  
Within the rafters  
Of his cobwebbed soul;  
He feels a chilly breeze  
Flutter and stir—  
Could be, with little ease,  
He might grasp it?  
But, no, he “has the answers,”  
All the facts  
To prove the worthy, waxed  
Realities.  
Alas, but to the grave  
The Wise Man goes,  
Conjecturing  
Just how the Poet Knows!