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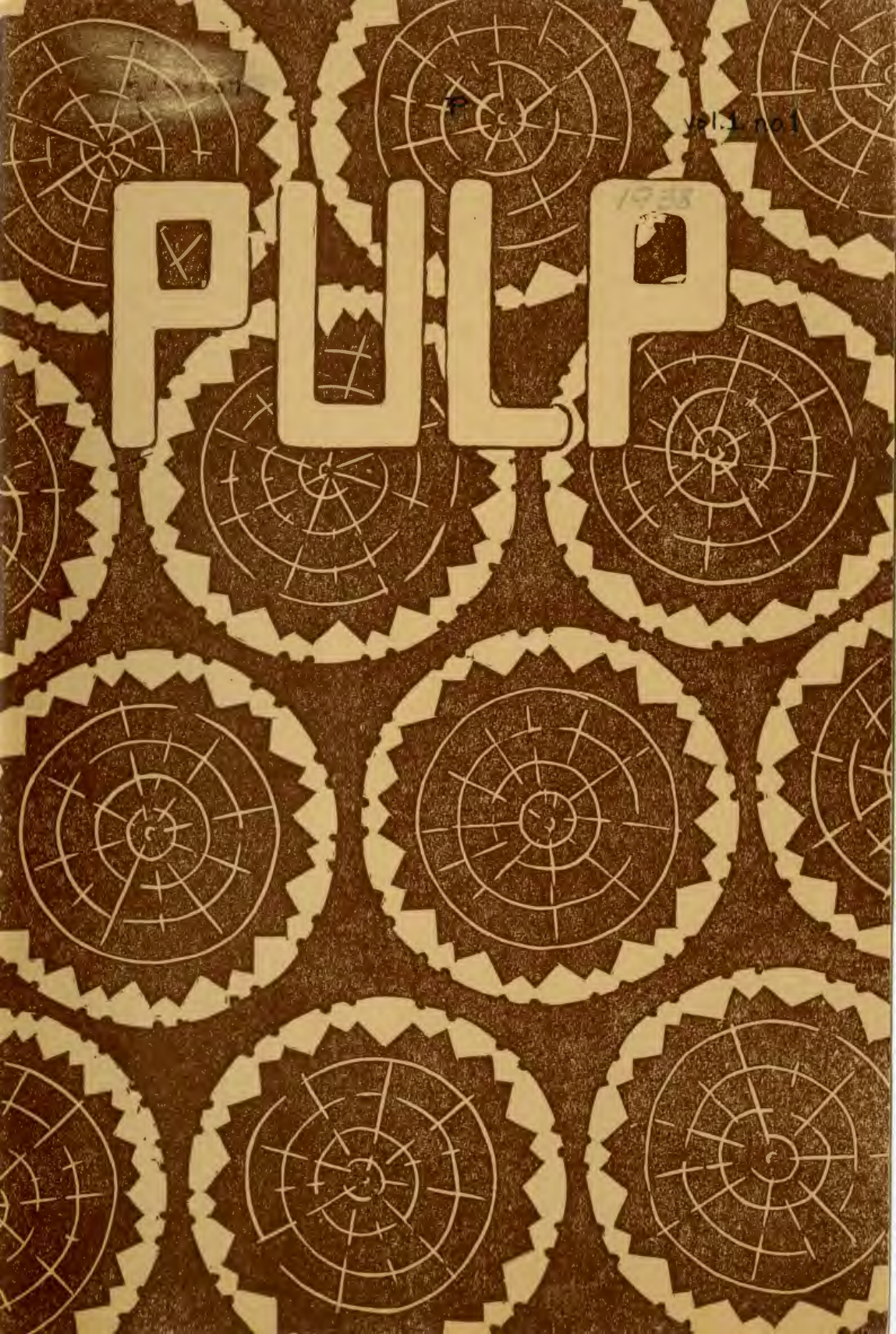
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1935

PULP



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NACOGDOCHES, TEXAS



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STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE
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NACOGDOCHES, TEXAS

Vol. 1, No. 1

May, 1938

How I Came To Be

Though you behold me in this seemingly tangible state, I am a wraith, a spirit, a nebulous idea. That you can see me at all is a source of high satisfaction, for I once had grave doubts of my visibility. It all came about this way.

Early during this school year several students who had ambitions to be writers but who never had been able to persuade any editor that they were serious in their intentions began to meet together for a mutual exchange of condolence, of ideas, and of criticism. So far as club organization was concerned it was an unexclusive, unnamed group bound together only by rejection slips, persistence, and a desire to write. About Christmas the group began to be curious concerning the activities of similar organizations on other campuses. Investigation showed that most of them published some sort of literary magazine. This is where I made my first appearance—as a mere wisp of fog. Then the PINE LOG began to advocate such a magazine for S. F. A. I could feel myself getting denser. During the ensuing talk, consultations with printers, and discussions of ways and means I wavered between fog-like and cloud-like proportions and would have vanished completely before the expenses involved had not the Publications Committee come to my rescue with a promise of partial financial backing.

Then followed the most critical period of my existence. I was limited, defined, cut, expanded, begged for, stolen for, sworn at, praised, and despaired of. In other words, I was edited and christened to the end that I, PULP, come to you in the full knowledge of all the connotations of my name, bringing in me as much literary worth as my contributors afford and containing nothing of a purely factual nature, nothing that has appeared in print before, and nothing that either parallels or overlaps PINE LOG material.

I present to Miss Martin and her art students my sincere appreciation for the beauty they have added to my life.

I am an experiment in your hands. It is for you to decide whether I return to my original fog-like self or grow to be a brawny fellow of sinew and bone to return to you once or twice a semester during the long term. Your expressions of approbation or disgust to my executioners will seal my fate.

Gladys Burrows
Muffet Davis
Howard C. Key

Lloyd McCameron
Weldon Wright
Mildred Wyatt

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MACOGDOCHES, TEXAS

Target Practice

By Lloyd (Droopy) McCameron

Generally speaking, the crowd that last year I was in the university was just about the average one you would expect to find in the melting pot of a college boarding house. Most of us were forced to burn midnight oil when exams were pressing close because too much of our time had been spent in midnight "bull sessions" and other mild forms of hell raising. Yes, we were a careless lot, all the way from the blustering freshmen who were striving to make the impression that their "intellectual curiosity" had been aroused to the handful of seniors who were to be graduated by that institution of higher education in the hope that at some time there had been aroused in them a spark of culture and a love of the beautiful. Yes, now I'm an up-and-coming young engineer; a dignified, well educated young man. My sheep-skin proves it. But frankly, my appreciation of the literary or, for that matter, anything else artistic, rises no higher than my joy at finding myself in bed, clad in pajamas, and with a good blood-curdling mystery thriller at hand.

But Dan was different. As a room-mate he was an asset. Whenever cram night came he was always in demand because he could furnish notes and serve as coach on any course he'd ever had, and would do it gladly. Being his room-mate, I was always able to corner him before anyone else. Needless to say I have reasons to be grateful to him.

Now, don't get the idea that he was a snobbish bookworm, because he wasn't. A bookworm maybe, but a snob never. As far as boarding house life was concerned, he fitted in. He'd buy his share of the beer and contribute his share of conversation to a "bull session". And don't think he couldn't match anybody else's yarn, either.

He was a likeable cuss and we admired his brains. But after all there are just certain things that are over some peoples' heads. And in that crowd, high brow music was one of them. If a song got beyond the boop-a-doop class, it was too heavy for us.

But not for Dan. If he could corner a listener, he could rave for hours on his beloved Chopin, Wagner, Beethoven, Caruso, and Schumann-Heink. I think he must have known the biography of every great singer and composer who ever played an active part in the field of music. Well, that stuff is just too heavy an intellectual diet for me, but understand I'm not saying it's bunk. Dan taught me to appreciate some of the lighter classic music and showed me real beauty in it. So the fact that I can't find beauty in a thing doesn't prove that it isn't there.

And now I come to the striking way in which he was different. In this way he was almost anti-social. On nights

when the boarding house crowd had cleared out to amuse themselves at some shindig or whing-dilly of one kind or another, Dan would barge down to the living room to the piano and there he'd play and sing to himself. He defended his action on the ground that no mind is truly educated that cannot produce its own amusement in one way or another.

Even my untrained ear must admit that he had a not at all displeasing baritone, and could that guy tickle the ivory! If we could ever have persuaded him to go in for anything the least bit jazzy, he would always have an audience. But the nearest he would get to a popular rhythm was marches, drinking songs, and college songs.

It was not until after mid-term finals that we had an idea of bringing pressure to bear on the situation in any way. After we had hashed and discussed various schemes bearing upon the social reform of Dan, we finally decided that what he needed to awaken in him a sense of social responsibility was a love affair. Preferably it should be with a widow. But since we knew no widows who were scrupulous enough to be trusted with an inexperienced young man's heart, we did what we thought was the next best thing. We chose June Adams as the conductor of our noble experiment.

June was red-headed and sophisticated—a good sport, with practically the whole male population of the campus at her feet. But she couldn't be called fickle. She simply liked them all and loved none. Popularity was her game, and she knew how to play it.

I explained to June what we wanted. I tried to make it plain that this was not just a joke. We were really trying to do something for Dan and were soliciting her aid. Of course, since the thing was bound to have its element of fun, we intended to enjoy that too; but that was only incidental.

When I had finished, June smiled at me a moment through a cloud of cigarette smoke. In a moment she broke the silence:

"From what you've said I gather that your Dan is just a rather shy, overgrown boy and you'd like for me to teach him a little about the art of living. Well, I'm waiting for the joker in the deck. There must be one, or why all the plotting? After all, isn't this just about the same thing that I've been doing all along? If this is all you want just bring him to a party some time. He ought to be good target practice anyway."

"But, June, there is a joker. That's just why this must take the form of a conquest with you. He won't come to a party unless you persuade him to do it yourself. Until he meets the right girl he'd rather stay home and play his beloved Beethoven and Bach——."

"He'd what!"

"Sure that's the joker. Just what I've been trying to get around to all the time. You'll have to be careful with him. If you once let him get started on that high brow music, you'll never stop him. That seems to be about the only thing he can discuss. That is—I mean that a lady could afford to listen to. You're the only girl that I know who is capable of handling him properly."

I had a lot more that I was going to say, but it wasn't necessary. June agreed to give the boy a tumble. Dan and I met June on the campus the next day. I introduced them and then ducked because I felt that my presence would be awkward.

I don't know what June said or did, but Dan came in that afternoon telling me what a wonderful girl she was and that she'd invited him to her party that Saturday night. I was rather taken aback that she had not only persuaded him to go but even had him in such a state of mind that he was looking forward to it.

By nine o'clock Saturday night a good crowd had drifted in at June's, and the party was going fine. She threw swell parties; the living room had plenty of dancing space and not too many lights. There was a hot swing orchestra on the radio and some of us were dancing. I stayed as close to Dan and June as I possibly could without making my intentions too obvious. He never seemed to notice, but every now and then she would look daggers at me and shake her head. I just laughed, because I knew June and her S.M.H. technique (Systematic Man Hunting to you).

It began to look as if June were slipping. Many a time I'd seen her turn her line on guys who knew their way around, and in less time than this they were hooked and liked it. But she wasn't saying anything much tonight. I was getting impatient, but a break came in a minute. When some orchestra on the radio began to swing "The Blue Danube", I saw him stiffen and just stand there a moment. Then I heard him say, "Damn! Come on. Let's get out of here." He took her arm and they made what they thought was an inconspicuous exit.

I gave them time enough to get settled somewhere; then I eased out into the garden. I heard them talking in rather subdued voices, and by being careful I eased up behind them without disturbing them. They were sitting in the glider, and he just had his arm flung sort of carelessly back of her and she had her head lying on his shoulder, and he was speaking rather earnestly. I heard him say:

"Why don't you stop pulling this act and let the person you really are come to the surface?"

"What's the matter? Don't you like the surface?" I knew just the impudent look she must be wearing now.

"You know I do, but my interest goes deeper. You know what I mean—or, dadgummit, don't you?" he ended in exasperation.

"I think I'm getting the general idea. In other words

you think that I ought to begin growing up and—well, sort of expand my personality." I think there was just a hint of Mae West in the tone of her voice, but if there was he missed it completely.

"That's the idea exactly. The things one thinks about and the things one does have a direct bearing upon his personality. They serve either to develop or dwarf it. You have the brains to be more than a butterfly so why not develop them?"

"Well, after all, you know it's a bit hard to go in for the intellectual side all alone and if a girl starts forcing that sort of thing on her associates when they are not en rapport, she soon finds herself being avoided, perhaps politely but the result is the same either way."

"Well, I'm still here."

"You are tonight, but what about later?"

"I was thinking of that. Do you want to do that or go on fluttering around like the rest of that crowd in there?"

"Not as long as you're here. It would be grand to really begin to live instead of just being entertained or thrilled."

"Then it's a deal! And you might begin to get back on the track by throwing that damned cigarette away."

To my surprise she did exactly that. I couldn't figure June out—letting a guy boss her like that and seeming to like it. Perhaps it was a good line, but this was the first time I'd ever seen her swallowing one from somebody else. I left then because it just wasn't making sense.

June still gave parties, but somehow they just weren't the same. I don't know just what was the matter, but they weren't breezy and peppy like the old ones had been. Finally they just stopped altogether.

I didn't see much of her for a long time. Then one night she called me and told me to get a crowd together and we'd go down to Granny's. Granny's was a honky-tonk out of town where a lot of the crowd went. It wasn't so bad though, because you could behave there if you wanted to.

I got a crowd together and we went on down that night. Things were going smooth. Everybody making cracks and puns just like we used to do. June was going strong and when we stormed the place, she led the crowd and sat down on a stool, waved her hands in an inebriated fashion at Granny and demanded:

"Shay, we wanna know if we're the shame bunsh 'at wash here before and if we are can we come in again." That brought a good laugh from everyone and soon things were going just right. She had a string of empty Coca-Cola bottles tuned with water and was giving an impromptu concert. Dan was with her, and from the way he was laughing I knew what kind of time he was having.

I had been dancing, and when the nickelodeon started up again it was playing the St. Louis blues in a mean, low-down honky-tonk style. June was in my arms almost before

I knew it.

"I can't keep still," she whispered in my ear. "I have to dance when I hear that."

I didn't say anything. I just held her close, but I remembered how we'd both always known that we just had to dance together when we heard that. After that we drifted into a booth and somebody produced some bottles. Everybody took a bracer except June.

"Why not?" I asked.

She gave me a hurt look and said, "Because it's cheap and degrading. I wish you all wouldn't. It's fun to act like this until this part comes. I know I've done it too, but I wish I never had."

She begged Dan to let it alone, but he wouldn't do it. We drifted back on to the dance floor and by this time I had a good rosy glow, but it was soon evident that Dan was definitely plastered. June asked me to get him out of there and take them on home. She was quiet all the way back to town and I couldn't make her snap out of it. If it hadn't been for that, Dan would have been a lot of fun. When I took her to the door she was crying, and I couldn't think of anything to say so I just put my arm around her and told her not to worry, that I'd take care of him.

Dan woke up next morning cold sober and with a splitting headache. You could tell it was his first time because he kept talking about what an utter ass he'd been and of course it was going to be "Never again." He was touchy about the whole thing and didn't like it when I laughed and told him they always said that. I plied him with tomato juice and then he felt better but still seemed to think he'd done something that would require spending the rest of his life in sack-cloth and ashes.

He called June but she wouldn't talk to him. Needless to say that didn't make him any more agreeable. Then after a while he got a note from her which he read several times and then handed it to me. I read,

"Come on over to see me. I couldn't talk to you when you called, but I want to now. I'm not angry. It's something else. I think you can understand what, but we need not let it spoil everything."

They were married in June and I couldn't escape being best man even though it was a pretty tough job. When we all came out of the church, I felt like giving myself a good kick in the seat of my pants. Here I had started the whole mess just to have some fun and this was the way it had to turn out. I didn't watch June and Dan. It would be easier that way I thought.

There were some rather interesting bridesmaids though, and I noticed one of them, Joe Blaine, sort of giving me the once over. I was thinking that it was funny how I'd never noticed the possibilities that kid had before. I remembered now she was a pretty smooth stepper and just dizzy

enough to keep things interesting. I must have forgotten where I was for a minute because I vaguely remember someone saying, "Swell, isn't it?" or something like that, and I said, "Yeah, she sure is." Then all at once I realized that I'd been kissed soundly on the cheek, and I heard June saying, "Thanks for making me happier than I've ever been before."

I jerked back feeling rather unnecessary and exclaimed, "Say: I'm not the groom."

"No, but you soon will be."

I guess she must have been psychic, that's the only way I can figure it out, and she hadn't been bad target practice herself.

Time Changeth

When once we'd meet on busy street
In wind, in driving rain, or snow,
I'd doff my hat, and we would chat
Away oftentimes an hour or so.
Then we were young, and not the tongue
Alone bade us not go.
We met again today in rain
But could not stand and talk enthralled—
Oh, time has passed along so fast—
She's married now and I am bald.

—Robert Grayson.

The Old Indian

Old Indian, lover of the great outdoors,
Worshipper of the golden autumn's sunset,
You know who made those moonlit shores,
Who guided your path in the dewy-wet,
Who gave the lark its call and let you hear it,
Who watched over wigwam, papoose, and squaw.
Arise, tell us that He is the Great Spirit!
Teach us to love through nature what you saw.

—Mary Frances Dorsey.



Dark Upon the Mountain

By Wilma Woodward

The sheer beauty of the moment held me spellbound. Sitting on a rock ledge which looked out over the valley, I could see for miles around. Yet, it was with a certain uneasiness that I viewed this splendor of nature. The trees were flecked with gold and the gorgeous colors of early autumn. The dying sun cast a strange light which, like the touch of Midas, seemed to turn everything into gold. The deep shadows against the mountains lurked like sinister forces, ready to swallow up all the golden beauty of the moment.

The air was hushed, as though nature held a finger to her lips. A flock of softly twittering birds hurried by, winging to their place of shelter. The sun had almost disappeared behind the hills, and the shadows lengthened their dark mantles over the silent land. Only the tips of the tallest trees were burnished. The sky with high fleecy clouds breathed pink and gold in the west. Above the clouds blue-green hung like a filmy canopy. Yet the sun paused, reluctant to leave his task, sensing the evil that lay in the darkness.

A dog howled as though he, too, were afraid to see night approach. I shivered at the sound, and discovered that the air had suddenly grown cold. I arose slowly, and started down to my cabin. I could not help wondering what all this foreboding had meant. I turned to look once more. All at once there came a cracking sound, and the ledge on which I had been sitting plunged down into the valley far below, with a sullen roar that lingered eternally across a dusk-filled world. I caught my breath.

I suddenly found it so dark that I could hardly see the path which led to my cabin.

Reflection

I've watched candlelight on silver,
And mid soft shadows hovering near
The faces there, I've seen your eyes
Aglow with love that bound me
To you forever, and though I know
Some things that I must bear
May break my heart, still, my soul
Will keep that glow for you!

—Gladys Burrows.

Shadows: Black-robed ghosts following in our very footsteps.

Across the Ozarks on a Mule— a la Halliburton

By James Fuller

The headlines "Arkansas Mountaineer Rides Mule Across Ozarks From Ft. Smith to Little Rock" started me on the dizziest journey of my entire life.

Being a lad whose intellect is slightly bent toward adventure, I set out to retrace the route made by the mountaineer over the Ozarks. My first action was to secure a mule. You probably can not see why that was a problem, as there are plenty of members of the low breed horse family that would be more than glad to make the trek.

After ruling out all those who are supposed to care for the nation's welfare at Washington, I made a complete survey of practically every stable and farm in Texas and Arkansas (forgive me for mentioning both states in the same sentence). During this time I was wondering how the many fertilizer plants in America were making a living. I finally found the mule I wanted. She had the distinction of being the only mule this side of the Great Divide that could play a "juice" harp. The reference to the Great Divide does not mean the great divide in politics.

Then came the tedious task of naming my mule. Just any old cognomen would not do. My mule had a background. The man I purchased her from (for \$3.47 and a plug of Day's Work tobacco) informed me that she was directly consanguineous to the famous mules of Missouri. After some deliberation I named her Senorita Jawnita Dalfrimple.

After weeks of packing pots, pans, and philosophy, Senorita Jawnita Dalfrimple and I started out from Ft. Smith to make the long journey over the Ozarks to Little Rock. About noon the first day the wind began to blow as strong as a garlic eater's breath. Never before have I witnessed such a storm. The mountaineers informed me that it blew the mortgage off one man's house. It blew up a well and sent it swirling over the mountains to Van Buren, where Bob Burns' Grandpaw Snazzie chopped it up for post holes. The gale turned four trees wrong-side-out and left three rabbits on the outside. An old hound dog ventured out in the storm, and the wind zipped him inside-out and his hair tickled him to death.

An old man named Williams had four hundred bushels of corn in a crib. The wind got so strong that it blew the corn through a knot hole and shucked it. A cow was hurled into the air and her horns stuck in the trunk of a tree. After that, her owner had to climb a step-ladder to milk her.

Following the storm, the Senorita and I went on our way. She kept me amused by playing the "Donkey Serenade" on the "juice harp."

Three days of traveling found us at a farm house. It was on the side of a mountain so slanting that the farmer would dig a hole, jump out of the way, and let the potatoes roll down to the back porch. I don't see how they ever farmed up there, because the land was so hard that the farmers had to plant spiral asparagus so it could screw out of the ground. However, the land had its good points. It was extremely fertile. The mountaineers informed me that they would plant a grain of corn and jump out of the way to keep the stalk from hitting them under the chin.

We had supper with the mountaineer that night. It consisted of sow-belly and beans, "chittlings" and corn-bread, and corn "likker". After supper the hermit of the hills told me how he tested his "likker". As the beverage oozes from the still, it is placed in a hollow stump and covered with a goat hide. They allow it six months to "meller". At the end of that time they throw in an anvil. If the anvil sinks, the whisky is not fit to drink, so they use it as fuel in the lamps. If the anvil floats, the "likker" is "perty perit". If the "likker" eats up the anvil it is "gol durn good drinking".

The next morning me, my mule, and my hangover resumed our journey and in three days crossed over the last ridge of the Ozarks. A little riding and we staggered into Little Rock, where we were met by a cheering mob.

I haven't seen my little Senorita Jawnita Dalfrimple since I turned her over to the Society for Keeping the Mules That Have Journeyed Over the Ozarks. However, the manager of the Society writes me that she has given birth to a bouncing baby mulelet.



Love Me With Thine Eyes

Speak to me with thine eyes.
Tell me from those depths of quietness
The secrets born of silence—
Things not uttered, but understood always.

Tell me from those limpid pools, of rest
Amid bowers of shade. Recount days
Of happiness, days blest
With your sweet presence.

Tell me from those orbs of liquid light
To go and do, and not return anon
Till it is finished; till I have done
My part to make a wrong a right.

Flash a desire, pierce me with thought,
Fill me with the essence of Love's demands.
Teach me with aught
Of such wisdom as seems best to impart.

Love me with thine eyes, hold my hands
With their brightness, and keep my heart.
Speak to me with thine eyes.

—Weldon Wright.

At San Fernando Mission

The workmen plodded in to pray,
And I, weary with my worldly grief,
Came in to look upon the walls
For beauty. I found relief.
The soothing tones of organ swelled;
My heart gained sweet repose,
And looking up my spirit fed
On any saint I chose.

Down on her knees a woman scrubbed—
Small boys cleared the saints of dust;
Here in this hallowed place,
Throw down my cares, I must.
No rosary had I nor Catholic faith
As I stood there that day,
But as my hands clutched wooden pews,
I humbly knelt to pray.

—Gladys Burrows.

Dogwood is forgotten moonlight held captive by the
darkling pines.

The Locket

By Bessie Rodgers

"I see that they're still looking for that John Gaston and his gang. He's about the cleverest hold-up man we've got now," said the elderly man as he folded his newspaper and glanced at the well-dressed youth sitting beside him in the bus. "Crooks like him ought to be hung so's decent people could be rid of them. What this country needs is tougher laws dealing with crooks. We're too good to them now."

The youth smiled faintly and nodded his head. Then, bored, he looked out of the window. The old man continued, "I don't guess you can blame the man himself—entirely. His home was probably of the lowest type, and I know that his home training didn't amount to much. It couldn't with a boy like that."

Again the old man paused, and again his companion said nothing.

"Homes nowadays are about the worst places to bring up kids. They don't get the attention that they should. Too many crooks running around the country now is the cause of its uncertainty, if you ask me." With this pronouncement the old man took his pipe out of his pocket. As he started to fill it, the bus gave a sudden jerk and the pipe dropped to the floor. When he leaned over to pick it up, a tiny, golden locket slipped out of his pocket and rolled into the aisle. Quickly, with an odd, wistful smile, he picked it up and said, "It seems funny for me to be carrying this around, but it's all I have left of Mary, my wife. She died just a few weeks ago. Here," he said, handing the locket to the youth, "look at her picture. She's beautiful."

Politely taking the trinket, with an expression of forced interest, the young man glanced at it. Suddenly his eyes narrowed. He brought it closer, held it long, with a fixed stare. Then he spoke in a hushed voice, "Yes, she's beautiful—very beautiful—" He handed back the locket and turned quickly to the window, his face taut.

The old man, lost in his dreams, talked on. "It's the only picture that I have of her now. It was taken on her wedding day. It's the way that I like to remember her. She broke so when our boy disappeared—kidnapped. It was twenty-three years ago." He sighed. "You wouldn't remember the case. It was all over the papers. They thought I was rich, but before long it was all gone—everything." Then he straightened and smiled sadly. "You'll excuse me for going on like this. I'm a little blue. You see, today's my boy's birthday, and sometimes I feel like he isn't dead—that maybe I'll find him. That's why I carry this locket. He had one almost like it when he was taken—the same picture."

There was a long silence—a silence of choking thoughts for each of them.

Then, before either could realize it, the man in the seat in front of them had jumped up and was pointing a small evil-looking pistol at the passengers. "All right," he snapped, "hand over the cash and sparklers. And make it quick."

He jerked the locket from the old man's hands and gave it to another dapper pale-faced man who had also risen and was beginning a systematic search of all the passengers.

"Please," the old man begged, "don't take that. It's valuable only to me. I'll pay you for it. Anything—Please!"

The dapper bandit paused—held by the strange, grim look on the face of the old man's companion. Ever so slightly the young man nodded. Nor did he move or show the slightest interest when the thief, without a word, put the locket back into the old man's hand. The thanks, almost sobbed forth, were drowned by the bandit's harsh, disgusted, "Aw, dry up, grandpa."

In another moment the thieves had jumped out, and the bus was in an uproar that kept up all the way to the next station. Only the youth sitting beside the old man was silent. He, too, had lost some money.

"You know," began the old man as they turned onto the bus lot and came to a stop, "if those crooks hadn't given me back my locket I'd say that they were Gaston and his gang. They're supposed to be around here somewhere. But John Gaston never would have done a kind thing like that."

"No," replied the young man slowly, "I don't suppose he would have. But it couldn't have been John Gaston. He's dead." With that he gripped the old man's hand, leapt from the bus, and was gone.

Across the Hills

Across the hills the violets grow
Among the trees and rocks below.
They soothe the place where now they are,
In winter bare, until from far
Came birds and winds to lay the seed,
God-tended here for some sweet need.
They live, they grow, they bloom, they fade,
And much the same were people made,
To live and love for Spring—Across the hills.

—Audrey Lee Blanton.

Redbird: an ember on spring's hearth.

The wind made a faint sound against my ear like a dull thought of yesterday.

Revenge Is Sweeter

By Janie Merle Muckleroy

I was mad! I was hurt! I was suffering! What girl would not have been? To see one's own Prince Charming choose another for his bride was unbearable. I well recall how pride came to my rescue.

I had been a school teacher. I had had the privilege of spanking several of my pupils. What glory I had taken in my ability to dodge spit-balls! Suddenly I had been jerked from my pedestal. I was now the blushing mother of the charming little bride-to-be. Virginia, my daughter, was a slim little blonde of about nine years. Her blue eyes seemed to dance and smile with the sky blue ribbon around her hair. Her hair! Those golden curly locks were the envy of the neighborhood. (Notice that I do not exclude myself.)

Sam was to be the preacher. He was chosen because of his liking for chicken pie. I can think of no other reason. Guy, my real brother, was best man for the groom. The very nerve! I vowed to get revenge.

The boys moved toward the barn. This was to serve as a church-house. They were to arrange bales of hay in rows for seats.

Looking back over the experience, I live again every detail of what then happened. I can see very clearly the expression on the face of the bridesmaid. She looked first at the hand made dress and then at me. I suppose a tow-sack dress did seem beautiful to a five-year-old girl. Betty, you see, was only five. I can still hear that old cow-bell ringing. It seems as if it were last Sunday afternoon that we girls walked with stately mien toward the barn. After seven years I can still feel that lump of self-pity rising in my throat.

We were soon seated. What a picture we made! I buried my eyes in my handkerchief. It was a new one with a red flower in the corner. Then I began to cry in earnest! My tears came not because I was acting the part of the bride's mother but because I envied the bride. In spite of my wounded pride I stole a glance at the groom. He stood smiling at his audience. Where had he got that horrible turned-up moustache? I wanted to slap him.

There was a moment of complete silence. Then a whole family of rats started running across the rafters. Any other time the boys would have given them a merry chase. But a wedding was a wedding, rats or no rats! The bride sat on an exceptionally fat bale of hay. I cannot say that she was a blushing bride. It would have taken more than matrimony to make her turn redder than the half box of rouge smeared on her face. With confident composure she poked shoes, feet, legs, and all through a crack between two bales of hay.

I finished wiping my eyes in time to see Preacher Sam raise a broom-stick into the air. It came down with a thump on a very dusty bale of hay. With the cloud of dust there arose an unharmonious chorus of "Here Comes the Bride." I, the bride's mother, ended the stanza with an unnecessarily loud sneeze. If only I might catch his attention! But Billy the groom pretended not to notice. All right, smarty cat! I suppose you think I care. I became a martyred heroine in my own thoughts.

Not knowing what to do and feeling that he should do something. Sam again raised his broom-stick into the air. This time it disturbed a wasps' nest on the rafters. Billy was very anxious to protect Virginia from the stinging red devils. But as for me, they could sting me to death for all he cared. I kept my seat and continued to dream of the time when Billy would ask for forgiveness. I kept choking an impulse to shake some sense into his head.

After a few minutes the wasps settled down and the wedding continued. Virginia was persuaded to stand by the groom, and was instructed to say "I do" to all the questions asked her. While Sam thought up some original questions, I reviewed all the reasons why I hated Billy.

The last "I do" had been said, and the bride was being kissed. I closed my eyes in disgust. He didn't have to kiss her twice, and she didn't have to act like she liked it. Then someone suggested that the groom kiss the mother. Billy turned very red. I wonder what color I turned? In spite of my confused state of being, I managed to utter a protest. I didn't know what to do. I half hoped he would kiss me. No! What should I do?

There was nothing for me to do. Billy had refused to kiss the mother.

My first reaction was one of relief. So, he had refused to kiss me. I guess he thought he was too good for me. The smarty! I would show him a thing or two. All my hatred for him was renewed in double force. Revenge was what I craved.

* * * * *

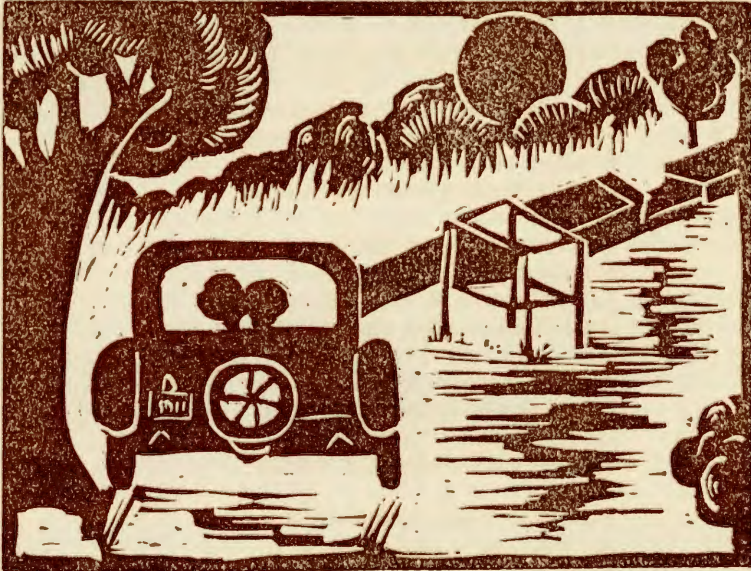
Seven years later (we were freshmen in college) Billy kissed me—for the first time. Revenge was even sweeter than I'd thought it would be.

Twirler

They gasp; they sigh
As I pass by.
Their voices shout,
There's praise throughout
The crowd that gives a hand—
I am a twirler in the band!

sound judgment is a pretty good thing to have around.

I shan't go into detail about this early evening job. I, personally, have sworn off it. When you arrive, I suggest that you take your "suitable companionship" over that little Bridge of Sighs, and up toward those stone benches. All girls like moonlight on water. And, when they stand on a bench to see that guy's lake, you have to make sure they don't fall. Beavers said he wished those benches were higher. If a guy's going to hold, he might as well hold tight. The higher you are, the tighter you hold—out of pure courtesy, of course.



Like I said, though, you shouldn't work this early evening stuff too often. That goes for the financially embarrassed guy, too. I've been that way lots of times, but I just slow down and study my chemistry and trig till a better day comes along. A little bird told Mary that drugs is what a guy ought to have. And all I had was an air-conditioned pocketbook. Ah, what a crool world!

All you "tonkers" sit up and take notice! I don't mean you. I mean the guy right beside you. My book says that anyone who goes to a honkey-tonk is lowering himself or herself into the depths of iniquity, sin, disgrace, etc. My philosophy says, "You have to try everything and value everything in comparison." I say, "Lead on, Macduff."

Sure, Macduff—short for Standley Hudson. Now, don't get me wrong. This Hudson worm is O.K. I saw him playing "ring-around-the-rosy" at Egg Nog Branch—just to make the kids feel at home. He told me an hour ago that he was across the river the other night. You needn't get excited—he lives over that way.

There are some more angles to this thing. I shall try to cover one more of these corners—as lightly as possible. This thing I am starting on now is taken from my personal files—the ones I made in my search for data on my subject. It is confidential, so don't tell anybody but your best friends. And tell them to tell nobody but their best friends. You see what I mean? Here it is:

You can have lots of fun at parking places if you know this rule: "When in Rome, do all that the Romans will let you do."

I shall leave that lonely country road to your tenderest memories. May they rest in peace!

Ode To the Love Bug

The birds are in full flutter
The flowers are in full bloom,
It's the time when young folks utter
Or think kindly of the moon.

Next come the little butterflies
Flitting in the trees,
Life is a wonderful thing—
And then you're stung by the bees.

This is a ditty of many sides
It speaks of lots of things,
Relating tales from love
To life and sharp bee stings.

But then there is no difference
As you can clearly see,
Between the agonies of love
And the sting of a bee.

~~—Robert Grayson~~
James Graham

My True Love

It was love at first sight! Never before had I felt such an "itchy feeling around my heart that I couldn't scratch." My new-found love sat peacefully in the kitchen, reeking with an aroma of cherry blossoms in the springtime. Her very presence set my heart a-tingling and my pulses a-racing, and I knew at once that I could never part with my darling. She looked at me with misty, dreamy eyes, red but not from weeping, eyes that would melt anyone's hard heart—mine included. Dainty frills graced her sweet person, and although I knew that we could never get my mother's consent,

In the twinkling of an eye,
I ate that piece of cherry pie!

—Wilhelmina Meriwether.

Understudy

By Weldon Wright

Lila Bourne sat before her dressing-table. From out on the prairie came the long, dismal howl of the Limited. A coyote yapped in answer. Lila paused in brushing her hair and shuddered. The sound of the train rushing east, emitting its weird bellow, always gave her the creeps.

This young wife of a ranchman gazed at a rather beautiful reflection in her mirror. Her eyes, she thought, were blue and pretty. An observer would have pronounced them a trifle hard, and bordering on a shade of green. The hair, as she brushed it, flowed out from the brush in soft brown waves. She gazed at the effect with a self-satisfied air, letting her glance rove on down the lines of her body.

Not bad at all, she almost whispered. Ten months hadn't changed Lila Cherril much. Not even being the wife of Steve Bourne, the cattleman.

The train sent another nerve-tingling note through the air. And Lila dropped her brush.

Every day for the past ten months she had heard that whistle. She dreaded the time for it to make its way past Center Junction. But she dreaded its passing more. Everything seemed sort of empty when it left. The one going west did not bother so much. Its echoes did not reach her ears with the same lonely sound.

Well, it wouldn't be long now. By this time tomorrow she'd be waiting at the Center Junction station—a one-room shack—to flag the east-bound. And by the next day she'd be among pleasant noises like dance music, and horns, and subways. And she'd be meeting people, and bumming cigarettes, and, of course, talking shop.

She would miss Steve, naturally. You can't live with a man for ten months in a God-forsaken hole without getting used to him. She supposed that, in a way, she loved him. At least, ten months ago she did. But if she'd known then what it was going to be like, none of Steve's wild horses could have dragged her to Center Junction.

It would hurt Steve, too. He loved her, even as a wife. The man who loved Lila Cherril, though, could do it much better where there was something doing.

She remembered how it all came about. It was right after "Footloose and Fancyfree" had closed down. It wasn't much of a show, but it was doing all right for her until something better showed up.

Steve forced her into getting married. It was pretty hard sledding right then, and she must have been easy to take in. Anyhow, it all seemed so safe and peaceful to hear Steve tell about it. The big house, and all the cows—thousands of them to bring money. It looked good when the landlady was sniffing and the agents were all telling her

to come back tomorrow. There weren't even any character parts on the small stage, and she had done a lot of those.

The show was on its last legs when Steve stepped in. He saw the rest of the performances, though—sat through every one of them just to see her. And the part wasn't so bad, either. She was in the front line on the left end—always a good spot. And one time she rated small caps right under the star's name for a little specialty. If she'd had any support, it wouldn't have been cut out. It was easy to see now—LILA CHERRIL in black letters about three inches high—right under a Winchellite. She did have a piece of the billboard, but it was gone now.

Next to the last night, Mr. Rosen, the bigshot, told her about Steve.

"Cherry," he said—he always called her Cherry—"The wide open spaces is right outside the door waiting for you." Mr. Rosen was always kidding her like that. Time after time he'd stopped her on the way to the dressing room and told her she was going places. He wanted her to call him Benny, but she never could get around to it. Somehow or other, he didn't seem like a person to be called Benny. And one time he asked her for a date, but she put him off. Miss Grey had her fingers on him then, and any girl knows better than to cop a man from the star.

Steve was standing just outside the door with his hat off. He had flowers too—something you couldn't get on a prairie a hundred miles from nowhere. He was tall and good-looking, and had a funny way of talking—sort of slow and easy. Even now she couldn't tell whether he was mad or not, sometimes. But he usually meant what he said.

The rest of the girls made passes at him, but it didn't do them any good. He didn't beat around the bush with his talk. In two weeks, she didn't know what to do about him. There was something in his eyes that you could depend on.

And he had ideas, too—big ones. He went to college four years, some A. and M. kind, and knew all about how to make money out of cows.

While he was seeing her every night, he would tell her all about it. His uncle had given him a ranch way out somewhere, and he was going to make lots of money with it. Lots of times she'd rather have been dancing than listening. But Steve liked to talk, even if he was a good dancer. She was almost ashamed to admit it, but he was nearly a meal ticket then, so she didn't mind listening so much.

But all that stopped when they got to Center Junction. For one thing, the cattle were not doing so good. There hadn't been much grass, or something. Steve didn't say much about anything these days. He was still awfully good to her, but something was bothering him.

Well, anyway, tomorrow would be the last day of it. That letter from Kitty had settled it. She had almost memorized the lines by now. It said

"My Cherry,

How's the wild and wooly west after ten months?
Are all the cows giving milk?

Everything's on the up around the old burg now. There's a new one opening every day. Mr. Rosen was asking about you not long ago. He's in big time now with the real stuff. No more hip-swinging for him, he says.

I'm not casted yet, but you could make the grade. You were always good in that kind of stuff.

Could your pretty cowboy spare you for a season?
Mr. R. says he'll spot you.

Kitty."

So Mr. Rosen was doing the stage now. And he'd said she could act. Well, she could—only Steve wouldn't like it.

She had already planned what to do. Tonight when Steve came in she would tell him she was going away for a few days. He wouldn't mind that. Steve was good about things. And tomorrow she'd write him a note telling him she wouldn't be back. He'd find it, but she'd already be gone.

Steve wouldn't make any fuss over it, but he'd feel awful bad. She almost hated to do it. But anything would be better than staying—even with him.

Steven Bourne came in at dark. He was tired. Everything had gone wrong during the day, and the cattle were not doing as well as he had expected. He brightened up at the sight of Lila, and tried to make conversation. She responded only half-heartedly to everything. Steve thought that a change might do her good. He wondered if she'd object to a trip. If she went to town for a few days, it would help her get on her feet again. He thought she had been looking bad for the last few days.

When the trip was first mentioned, Lila looked up quickly. She saw at a glance that he meant it—and didn't know about Kitty's letter.

It would be better to start playing it up now. She'd object not too strongly for awhile. That would be part of the act. It was a good build-up for the curtain tomorrow—only there wouldn't be any curtain call.

In spite of Lila's objections, Steve persuaded her to go. He would come in early and take her to the train.

It was going to be easy. An amateur could play her part from now on. She'd turn on just the right amount—not too much, so he wouldn't feel any worse after he read the note.

The next day, Lila packed—everything. There was a large trunk, and two bags. She would tell Steve that she was making the trip a long one. In fact she wouldn't mention coming back. Steve didn't like lies.

She cooked their supper, and was careful to make everything just right. She cooked the things he liked best. She might as well make the most of it, since it was the last

meal together.

Lila had already written the note. It was hard to do to make him understand everything. It was short, but she thought it would carry out her plans.

"My dear Husband,

I won't be back from this trip. Tonight when you get back from the train, you will know that I was putting on an act.

By next week, I'll be getting paid to do it.

Please don't try to get me back to this place.

Lila."

That was all.

The hard part was finding a place for him to get it. And she had hit on the very spot. He always smoked a pipe after supper, so she put it in the pipe bowl. He would find it after he came back, and she'd be on her way.

She didn't think he would try to get her to come back. That wouldn't be like Steve. He always respected other people's opinions.

When Steve came in, he was full of talk about the trip. He told her he didn't mind her staying for a long time.

Now was the time for her to begin her big act—and make it good. It was going to be fun in a way.

The supper had to be a success somehow. Of course, he couldn't suspect anything, but sitting across the table from him was pretty hard. Talking about cows, and the trip, what he'd do till she got back—all that wasn't hard to act, but it made her feel funny.

Getting into the car was easy. She didn't have to look at him while he was getting the bags and everything. He had to go back into the house for something—probably to shut the doors.

Lila looked at her hands. They were brown, but not bad looking. There was an old woman to wash the dishes. She pulled out her compact, and made last-minute touches. Her friends would like her smooth tan. It was just like coming back from a vacation.

The drive to the station was not a silent one. Lila talked incessantly. Steve made occasional noncommittal remarks, but he listened attentively.

The sun was still high. Supper had been early, and the drive was not long.

When they reached the station, Steve got out of the car and put the bags on the ground. He left Lila and went inside to get the tickets.

He was still unsuspecting. So far the act had gone across pretty good. She wondered how he'd be acting if he knew she wasn't coming back.

He came out of the station and told her that the train would be here in a few minutes. No sooner had he got the words out than it whistled a mile away. It didn't sound like the whistle Lila had grown tired of.

Steve knocked the ashes from his pipe and picked up

her bags. The station agent was flagging the limited to a groaning stop. Lila said her goodbyes hastily, and kissed him before she stepped up on the platform.

The train moved slowly away, gathering momentum as it went. Lila stood and waved until Steve diminished to a speck.

Well, it was over, and she had done a good job. He would find her note before another hour and know the truth.

Somehow or other, the satisfaction of putting on a good act was not there. Something was wrong. She didn't know exactly what it was, but everything hadn't gone over. Steve was—but she couldn't have fallen down on her lines. And then she knew! Steve had been smoking his pipe at the station.

Somewhere

Somewhere just beyond,
Somewhere just ahead,
Just over the mountain,
Just past the hill,
Just across the river,
Just after the plain;
Somewhere—tomorrow,
Somewhere—forever,
Just into the future,
Just the next time,
Just another moment,
Just then I'll find
Somewhere a dreamland,
Somewhere my search ends.

—Carl Brown.



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