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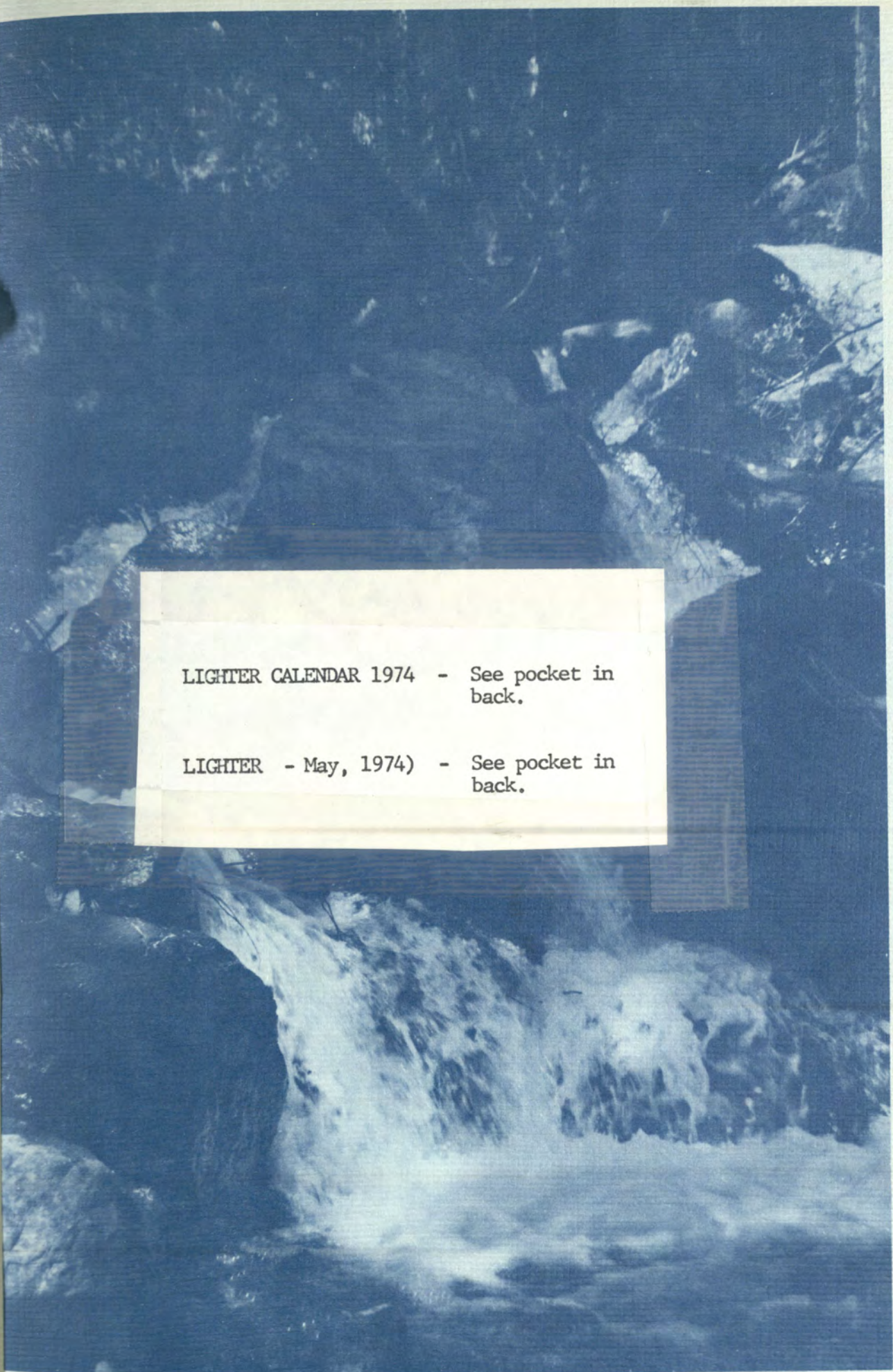


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The editors thank all contributors for sharing their works with them and invite comments and criticisms on the selection and presentation of material.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Mr. Streeltmyer:

I am writing this letter to you because of a thing I read in the las Lighter called "O Tempora O Mores," I'm not sure what that had to do with the rest of the article, but I want to talk about the article anyhow.

First of all, anyone in his right mind would resent the points that the author of the article brought up because a lot of them are just not true like the one about the Yellow Press.

Then what about his point about classic books? What's a classic book anyhow; why can't we read things that are interesting instead of some crummy old Roman writer like Doztoyefsky who didn't write about nothing but the stupid Germans anyhow? Why can't we read things like Micky Spilane and stuff like that — they get some real good articles in Playboy to plus some good art so we can study culture at the same time.

Besides, we have more interesting things to do around here than read books; We can always go to keggars or someplace: if we need to study something why can't we just watch tv and see how they play basketball or see a movie like Deep Throat and study sociology or something. We could listen to WVUR or WLS instead of going to music class and hearing all that junk by Beethoven and Motezart and all this other Greeks. Now don't get me wrong or nothing ** I'm an English major going to write for newspapers when I get out of here, so I know all about good learning and all that — but I don't like all this eggheaded stuff about how schools are bad and stuff — they're made for the people, aren't they? What good is some smart guy gonna be with his big words if nobody knows what he's talking about? Why, not too long ago I heard a couple guys talking about something, and one said, "I suspect by the time someone gets to college hell know what I mean when I say words like recondite or abstruse." For crying out loud, everyone knows those words are too hard for most people to figure out, without a dictionary so why should he use them if he has to talk to people. I know what he means by them words (I got a 2.0 in English 3 last year) but not hardly anyone else is going to.

Anyhow, I think that guy is crazy that wrote that article — the schools are pretty good and English isn't going down the tubes like he thinks — he's just crazy.

Sincerely,
K. Krishill



The Last Laugh is on Lucas

by Jim Wiatrolik

Custer Army Hospital
Levenworth, Kansas, U.S.A.

Hotel El Giza
Hussain Avenue
Cairo, U.A.R.

Dear Mr. Balleaux,

As I start this letter I realize that the chances of its reaching you are slim, for from all accounts I have of your history since you left the "employment" of the Army, you have been in transit almost constantly for the last decade.

Before you become nonplussed by what might appear as a strange letter's ingracious intrusion on your solitary travels, let me assure you that I have a somewhat sympathetic interest in your fate. I have inherited your position, your tools, and your work here at the clinic. Also, in a way I don't quite understand yet, I feel I have fallen heir to your spirit.

In the morning, when I cross the tundra from my barracks to the hospital, I often reflect on your description of the "... suspended wasteland of grass and heat rising on the dry scrub of the plateaus" that you once wrote of in one of your letters. (In my researches of your life I have managed to collect a number of such letters. This, I suppose, is an even more unwarranted intrusion on your private life.) With a sky so vast and the horizons so far on a clear day, I often feel that I have fallen prey to your peculiar phobia towards horizons. I have thought it curious that you chose the far more ancient and imposing vistas of Egypt for your most recent stay.

With your kind indulgence, then, let me procede to the matter at hand. It is one that I am sure you will find of interest, since it concerns your friend Morris Lucas.

It was last May, just after I had received my commission as first lieutenant from Major Tanktop and was placed second in command under her, that I was first introduced to your past here in Kansas. I was working in the hand room, manipulating the burned digits of a sargent major, when one of the enlisted technicians summoned me to the reception room to admit a new patient by the name of Larry Doeburg. Doeburg had suffered a head wound in the Argentinean Conflict, and had, as a result of the injuries, become a victim of locomotor ataxia (tabes dorsalis). He was consequently in a state of complete paralysis.

I wheeled the poor soul into the room and began the preliminaries before prescribing therapy. Upon examination I found that because of the recentness of the injury no significant atrophy had set in as yet.

I am sure that you remember that with locomotor ataxia there is no direct impairment of the primary apparatis necessary for locomotion. Only the tactile sense is attacked. However, since the impulses of the tactile field are lost, the patient must learn to rely on the other sensory impulses. Mr. Doeburg had literally lost all sense of touch.

I began the usual procedure in such cases by teaching the patient how to regulate his movements by relying on his visual perceptions. Young Mr. Doeburg proved to be a quite responsive and intelligent subject. In no time he was able to ambulate well enough with the aid of a cane.

CLUSTER ARMY HOSPITAL
LEVENWORTH, KANSAS
U.S.A.



LEON BALLEAUX
HOTEL EL GIZA
HUSSAIN AVENUE
CAIRO, U.A.R.

Larry, who turned out to be a former pharmacist from Texas, would often creep into the clinic just before closing to chat with me in the hand room. Occasionally we would talk on after the rest of the staff had left. As we sat facing each other across the fresh white muslin that made up the patient's plinth, under the neon lights and besides the steaming parafin baths, Larry's eyes shone like a prophet's.

On one such evening we began talking about Kansas, about its climate and rolling terrain, and how this often resulted in peculiar effects on its inhabitants. There were tales of Indians lost in dust storms, sucked up to the heavens forever in battle with the dust-devil gods. There were the lonely wives of the early settlers who were often driven mad by the incessant winds that blew across the prairies. He then began to tell me of an unusual "shrine" or edifice of some sorts built by a certain Morris P. Lucas, which was known as the "Garden of Paradise."

"Paradise," so it seems, is located just south of Mars, Kansas. Larry told me how Lucas, who had once worked in the cast-room here at the hospital, had started this fabulous garden some ten years ago, and how, with the native granite and clay, he had constructed imposing stone towers and statues. My curiosity was indeed aroused, so I questioned him further, but he only knew of it from a tourist brochure he had picked up while traveling west towards Manhattan five years before.

It was then that a most unfortunate incident occurred. I brought out the electric-stim machine and described to Larry how, in times of boredom here in the hand room, I would apply the two electrodes of the machine to my head, at low voltage of course, right over the optic nerves on the temples. In this way one can experience remarkable images of geo-spatial patterns with the eyes closed. Larry was intrigued, and begged me to let him have a try. I foolishly consented. He "ooed" and "ahhed" with each successively higher setting until he had the machine dangerously humming. Before I could stop him the setting was at maximum and Larry fell back off his chair, his head smoking. The damage to the nerves, I'm afraid, was total. Larry was not only permanently blind, but because of his ataxia, was paralysed for life. I know that because of the professional ethics that you once upheld as an officer and medical man, you might be prompted to chide me for what I am revealing to you. However, you must understand the tremendous curiosity triggered in my imagination at the conjunction of the mention of this "Garden of Paradise" with the following bolt of electricity that crippled poor Larry. One day while I was taking Doeburg vigorously through his regimen of passive-resistive exercises, I filched the three color pamphlet on Morris Lucas from his nightstand.

The next weekend I set out for Mars to find this Lucas fellow and his "Paradise." The town, like hundreds of other in this state, was a dusty farming community of about five hundred in population. The natives, with reluctant draws and spits of tobacco towards the south, gave me the directions on how to reach Lucas.

The garden was nestled in the fold of two great rolling hills. An arched stone portal, with the words, "A Good Place to Eat and Drink" etched into the rocks, stood at the entrance. Below was a wooden plack that said, "Busybodies Go Away - Admission 50c". I entered without paying.

I found Mr. Lucas hammering away to the beat of his portable radio on the roof of what appeared to be a stone house in the shape of a mushroom. He ambled down the ladder and walked



up to me. He was a big fellow, over two hundred pounds at about six feet. He had the air of a proud Dutch guildsman, with big hands and an amiable, pear-shaped body.

"Welcome to Paradise", he said, and extended his hand in greeting. "Over there is my sign – 'Paradise Garden'. I put that up so people don't go around shoutin', 'what the hell is this, anyhow!'" He led me down a green path and gave me a sort of tour.

"I've got four scenes completed, two temples, a mauseleum, and five more scenes in the works". Each "scene" that he showed me was a hand-carved set of wooden figures suspended on wooden beams and tree limbs. "This one I call 'Promethius meets the President.' Those two yaller fellows on each side are archangles. Promethius is the one throwing the pie". Each turn of the path brought me to more fantastic sights.

"This one I call the wizard of popular culture. The scale he's holding has a t.v. on one side and a crucifix on the other. That whale that's sort of driftin' overhead symbolizes big business. The oppressor of the masses and the over seer of all our culture."

The "Garden" was alive with these chimeras, angels, and gargoyles suspended in the hot Kansas air. Lucas, who by this time had completely immersed himself in the subject of his handicraft, had seemed to have forgotten about everything else until a filthy dog with only three legs hopped out of the bushes panting. "That's Hank – lost his leg when the floor in the Castle of Liberty fell through last month. Had to give up on that piece for a spell."

We passed another cement and wooden panorama, one with only two figures erected. "Is this one still being worked on?", I asked. "No, it's finished. Its called 'Daphne and Balleaux.'" The two figures were larger than the rest, and seemed to have been given more attention to detail. One was the figure of a woman robed in white. The other was a man juggling apples, leading her through an open door. Lucas offered no further comment.

As we reached the end of the tour, by a stone mauseleum that roughly resembled a Mayan temple in miniature, Lucas told me that Balleaux was a friend of his that worked in the hospital in Levenworth. It was the very same officer and therapist that was once you, Leon Balleaux. As far as Daphne goes, he said that he wasn't ready to explain until the Garden was finished. "And that," he said, "might take more than a few years."

And this, my dear Balleaux, is why I have come to write you. For Mr. Lucas died last week, leaving the Garden unfinished. I suppose that if the figure in the scene was indeed you, you might be able to explain Daphne and perhaps the Garden itself. I realize that the very reason for your sojourn across the world might have been motivated by a wish to forget the Garden and Mr. Lucas. However, there is also the question of Lucas' estate. It seems that Hank was left to you. If you are at all interested in helping an amature historian of sorts and a comrade in the service, please write and help me to unravel this mystery

Yours truly, OSCAR CARTER

It was getting late, and Abdul Hazar, proprietor of the Nasser cafe by day, mad bomber of European consulates by night, was growing impatient with this dawdling American customer. Mr.



Balleaux was only tolerated here in this quarter of Cairo, which was remarkable enough for any westerner. It was more than his fluency in Arabic and his face sun-darkened as deep as any Egyptian. It was his eyes. They somehow shone with the light of a derivsh, an opium smoker, or perhaps a mad prophet chosen by Allah. The Arabs left him for the most part in a respected isolation.

In peaceful times then the rich Europeans were welcomed here in Cairo, the cafe would be crowded with westerners in white suits and dark glasses, jabbering away over their coffee and cigars. Even so, Abdul had no need of tourism or crowds. He had a second job that he was late for, and the red African sun was stretching fat and lazy over the desert and across the great pyramids.

"More demitass, offendi?"

"One more, Abdul."

"Please offendi, it is late..."

Leon Balleaux handed him a coin and sipped his refilled cup. When the Arab finally shuffled off Balleaux took up the letter and crumpled it in his hands. That wind that was blowing through the date trees sent the ball of paper rolling off the table, across the dirt road that was Hussain Avenue, and off towards the deserted market.

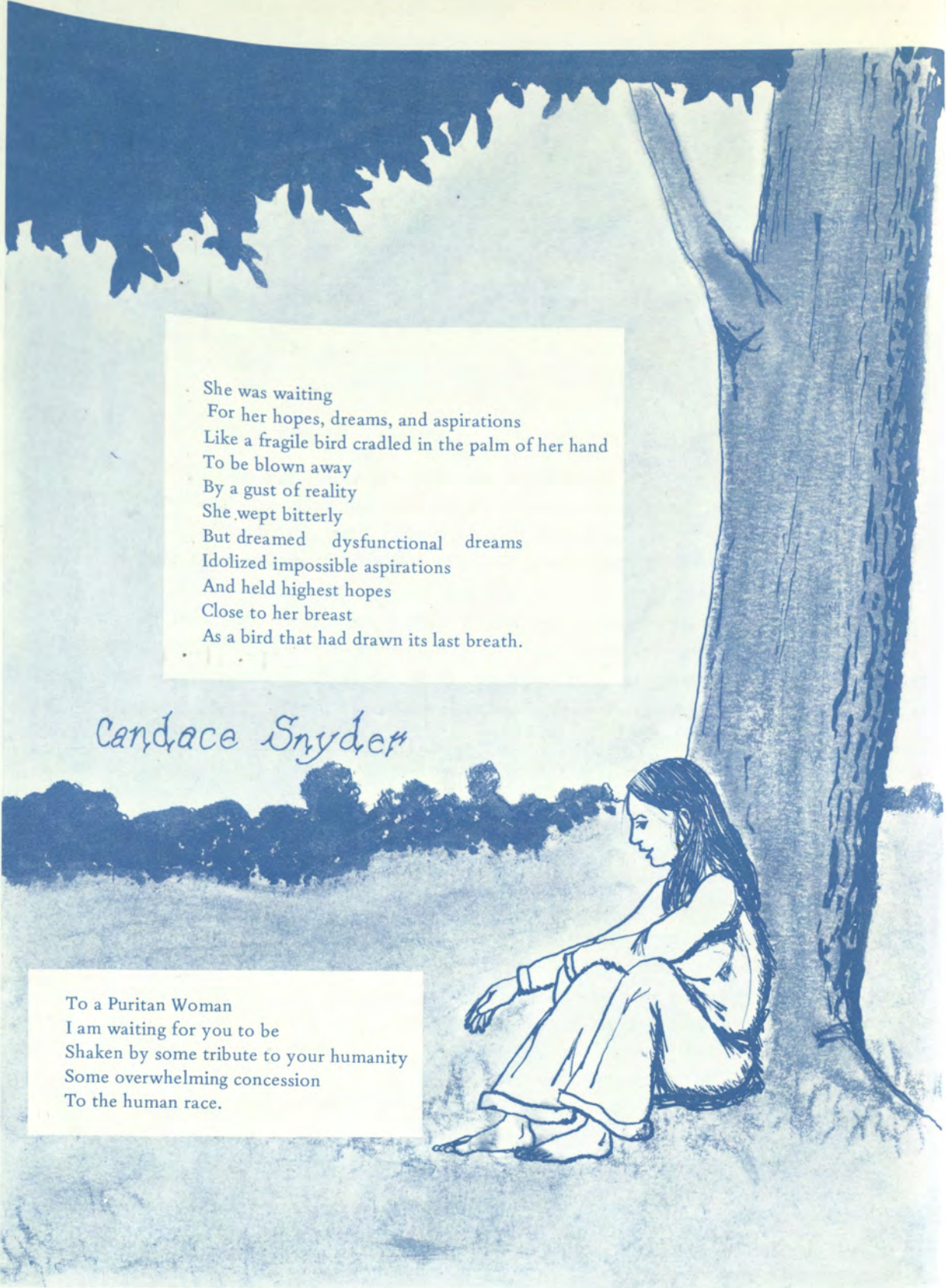
Balleaux once thought that this arid land was where he belonged. The letter changed all that. "The Pyramids," he thought, "monuments, mauseleums, the material proof of some vows completion. Lucas isn't dead, he'll find me out if I don't move on."

Balleaux had a recurring dream. He dreamt of a clinic of a hundred years ago, a scene of hardwood floors and tall windows. Bearded doctors bustle about gesturing with pince-nez, following the preparatory rites for grandiose healing. A patient on a cart is shuttled through in a funeral flutter of blue sick-room robe and wheel chair spokes to the center of the cavernous room. The doctors, strutting Groucho-like, form in a flurry of speedline a semicircle around the object d'art. The subject becomes a still-life for a group study by penguins. The sheet is drawn back. The patient is Balleaux. The doctors probe a large growth on his forehead resembling a peach melba cobbler. He wakes up.

Balleaux was sure that the letter would bring back the dream. Perhaps he could find another place where he could forget, another wasteland. It is only in such a place, where vision becomes the prime sensation, that a visionary can dwell. In a field of sight that stretches to the horizon, a horizon that vies with the sun for the sky's dominance, all sensation exists in the extreme. The vast expanse of desert is opposed to its microscopic contents, the sand that shifts around and up to the sun. It is only this that can make the pyramids appear less than they are. The wind provides the needed motion in its illusion of a relative direction. Balleaux, motionless, lets the wind spin his thoughts off in a white swirl.

Abdul stares off at the white figure walking away down Hussain Avenue as he clears the table. "Ah! poor crazy American! Why does he let that Daphne of his live. She is so old and lame!"

As Leon Balleaux walks slowly up to the El giza Hotel, he calls softly. "Here, Daphne!" His faithful two-legged dog scurries through the dust up to him. He gently picks her up and carries her into the hotel.



She was waiting
For her hopes, dreams, and aspirations
Like a fragile bird cradled in the palm of her hand
To be blown away
By a gust of reality
She wept bitterly
But dreamed dysfunctional dreams
Idolized impossible aspirations
And held highest hopes
Close to her breast
As a bird that had drawn its last breath.

Candace Snyder

To a Puritan Woman
I am waiting for you to be
Shaken by some tribute to your humanity
Some overwhelming concession
To the human race.

At Jack La Lanne's European Health Spa

Be naturally lovely
The mechanical way
With machines that rub, twist, grind, contort, wring,
and jostle
Your tissues to conformity
With no effort
Except electrical
Plasticized perfection.

THE POET'S REPERTOIRE

Mine are the bright hoops
That hover above the dull sands of matter,
Reflecting pools of color for the thirsty traveler.

And mine are the bones
That cleave to the scraps that skeletons scorn
In deference to the undressed profundities of form.

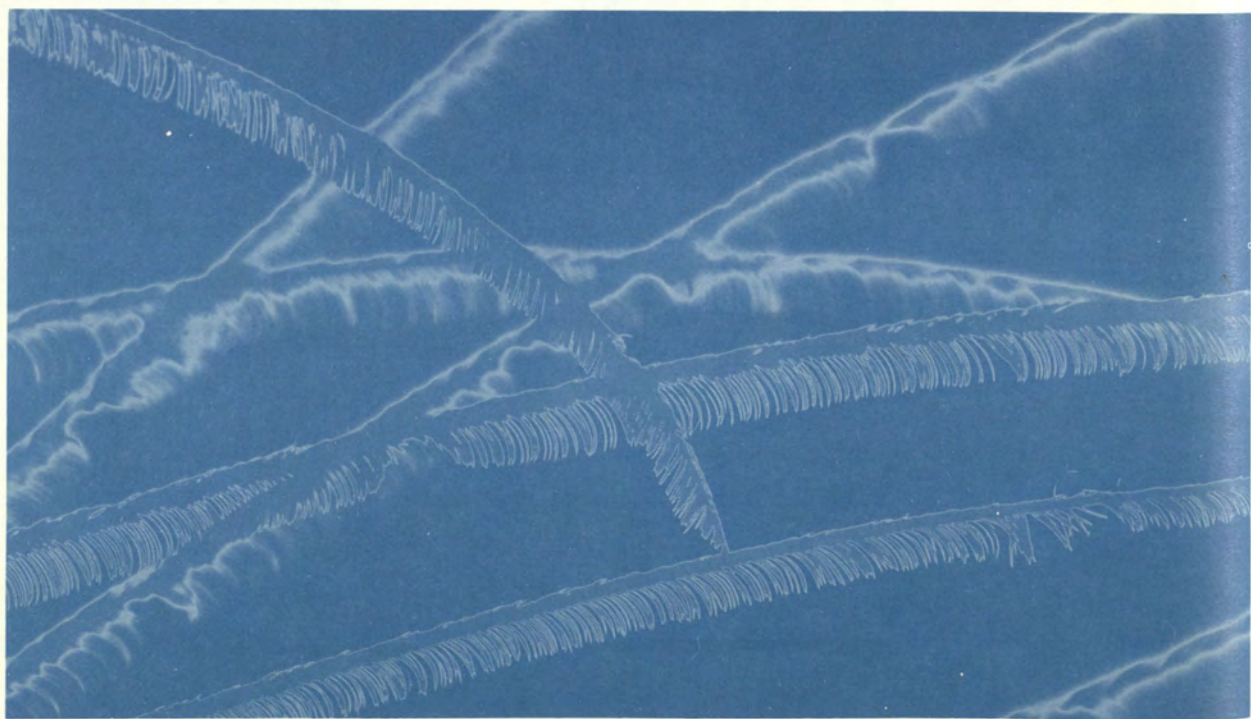
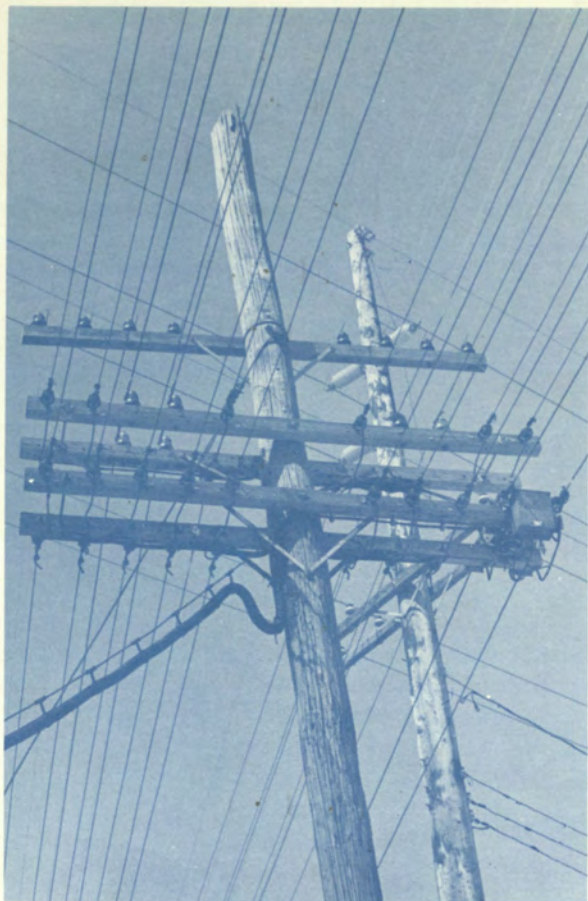
Leslie Rondin



In prisms of memories and mercury time
mothers and fathers all passed the blood lines
to the children who grew and traveled on dreams bringing
up laurel crowned heroes and white vested virgins seeking
for truths in the miracle sky or the moon-twisted ocean

a father's blessing, a mother's dream, a child's wish
and a few possessions from the past
and nothing more than another lifetime

M. Albertson



THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

*Even though snow jostling down with silent hesitation
Slants merely to a random, hectic stopping place
In the stiff clods of false-thawed field
Exhumed this February, and unsure of resurrection
In this college town unsure of sleep and spring;*

*Even though faith in anything –
Friends, loves, tools, seasons, God and His parts,
Or in a fluked climate's endless random sway –
Has never made a false spring true
Nor blocked the firming sun away
When it came to make this field new;
Still, the flakes do slant to a stopping place
From which, should the spring wind blow past –
Might they perhaps rise up in fertile mist?*

*Faith, knowing nothing, knows how to endure
And, doubting nothing, receives it all at last.*

–Wallace Gunch



the train

Dan Ramsby

A field, livid green, pressing against an enamel-blue sky, speckled with wisps of fluffy clouds. The brightness glowing. Cottonwood weeds floating over the shiny grass, like furry spaceships, surveying the close ground. The green and blue fading, becoming brighter. Red and yellow enamels staining the field and sky, spreading like a runny watercolor...

"Wake up."

The youth stirred. An eyelash stuck to his lower lid for an instant, then sprang free. In the midst of the haze, the youth saw a mustache close to his face. He was vaguely aware of the protruding nose above it. The lips, half hidden by the gray mustache, puckered.

"Wake up."

The youth felt the vinyl arm of the chair through his fingertips. Eventually he was aware of his body, pressing into the firm cushion and supported by the slightly inclined back. A bright light above him seared his eyes. It was embedded in the metallic, glistening ceiling and seemed like an eternally lit flashbulb. He shielded his eyes.

There was an aisle of chairs arranged in twos, each pair beside its own window, like a bus. Halfway up the long room, the chairs ended and there was an open area with card tables and



a bar. Two men and two women were playing cards.

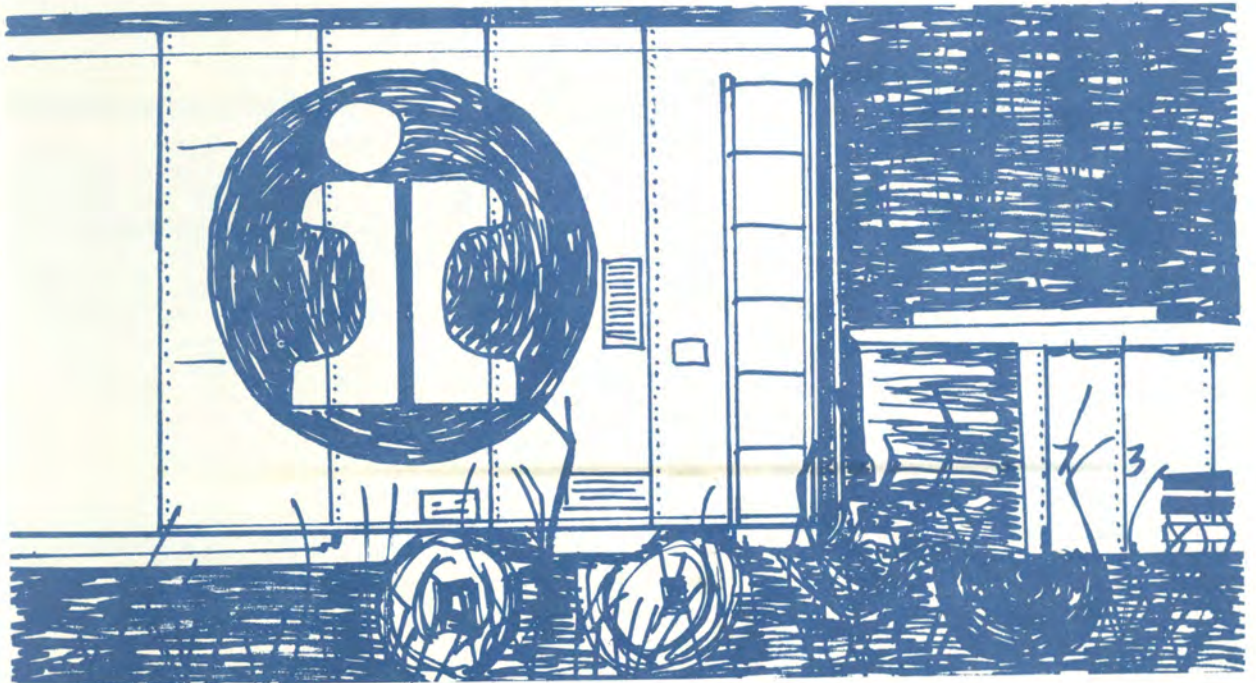
Finally the youth could feel his feet. There was a mild vibration under them as though the floor were being tickled by electricity. The youth turned toward the window. Outside, it was as totally black as a tunnel. Yet the youth could see tiny stars above the vague horizon. The specks of white seemed dull, more like paper cutouts than flickering lights.

The youth turned towards the man. The eyes, above the trimmed mustache and jutting nose, were gray. "Where am I?"

"Same place you were when you went to sleep, I should imagine." The man had a deep, resonant voice.

"Is this a train?" The gray eyes held him fixed.

"Good guess." The eyes pinched at the cor-



ners, smiling.

"Are you the conductor?" I'm afraid I don't know about a ticket." The youth paused, trying to work it out in his mind. "I must be coming home from college, and I'm on my way home. Where are we?"

"In the country."

The youth noticed the man's expensive gray suit and dark, silk tie. "You're not the conductor."

"Hardly."

"It's so dark outside."

"That's because you're in here with the light,"

The youth looked at the row of imbedded, frozen flashbulbs which cast a shadowless glare.

"Things always seem worse than they really are," the man said

"Yes, I suppose." The youth felt nervous. He shifted in his seat. On the other side of the aisle was an identical row of chairs, each pair with a window. Close to the front of the row, a tuft of blonde hair protruded over the chair backs.

"Is that a girl?" asked the youth.

"You should know." The man's voice held a hint of disdain.

"What do you mean?"

A chair scraped on the floor and one of the card players got up to mix a drink at the bar. The youth watched him for a moment.

"I'd like a drink," he said.

The gray man moved back to let him into the aisle. Hesitating a moment, the youth watched the card player walk back to the table. When he was seated, the youth got up and walked down the



aisle. The card players were already bidding when he reached the bar. It was their only conversation.

"One heart."

"Two clubs."

"Two spades."

"Pass."

The youth grabbed a bottle and splashed a couple inches of scotch into his glass. It made him more nervous to be standing up in front of everyone, pouring a drink, even though he was old enough after all and nobody seemed to be noticing him.

"The ice is behind you."

The youth turned to see the gray form beside him. "Do you have to follow me around?"

The eyes had flecks of green in the gray.

"Look there are other cars on this train."

*The mustache had a tinge of red at the ends.
"No, don't leave me." The youth plunked
an ice cube into his glass and swirled the yellow
liquid. It revolved heavily, thin shadows play-
ing through it. "Not yet." He sipped his
drink. "I - I don't remember anything."*

"You don't?" The eyes were amused.

*"No." The youth gulped half his drink with
a heavy swallow.*

*"You don't remember me or the train or the
young lady?"*

"No." He finished his drink.

*The man paused, frowning. "That's rather
obdurate."*

*The youth slammed down his glass. "Now look
here." He stopped. Then blurted again. "This
is all some fantastic joke cooked up by my father.
He knew I was coming home and he rented*



this car and got you all involved and..."

"Blotted out your memory?"

*The youth rubbed his forehead. "That drink.
It sure hit me hard."*

*"You'd better take it easy. You just woke
up."*

*"Yeah." The youth leaned against the bar
and gazed vaguely at the card players. They had
finished their bidding and three of them were si-
lently, intently playing their cards. One man
sat back and watched, smoking a pipe. In a mo-
ment the hand was played out and the score tal-
lied. Immediately and without comment, one of
the women dealt with one deck while the man with
the pipe shuffled the spare.*

"They must be experts."

*The man glanced at them nonchallantly. "It's
not hard to be an expert at one thing."*

The youth shifted his body irritably, trying to block out the man. He was too quick, too pat with an answer and seemed to put everybody down. So damned superior.

The girl with the blonde hair was seated in the second row from the front.

"Shall I go talk with the girl?"

"Do-what you like." The man poured himself a drink indifferently.

"I might as well." The youth looked toward the girl who was reading a magazine. She sat stiffly as though her mind were intent on something — something that disturbed her. She had a small build covered by a rather neutral green dress that neither added to her nor detracted from her. She crossed her thin legs and burrowed deeper into the magazine as though she knew that he was staring at her.



"One heart."

"Two clubs."

"Pass."

The youth took a deep breath and walked from the bar to her chair. "Hello."

The girl seemed not to notice but flipped the page of her magazine over.

"Um, hello, I said."

She looked up. Her eyes were large and deep blue and incredibly hard like two mirrors. Her blond eyelashes were almost invisible. "What the 'ell do ya want?"

The youth stepped back. The girl who seemed so demure and delicate spoke in a rasping cockney accent that twisted her red mouth grotesquely. He glanced back in shock at the man who was pretending to ignore them, a smile teasing his lips.

"Um — I just thought I'd meet you," he told

the girl.

"Oh, we've met, ducky." Or don't you remember?" Her voice was embarrassingly loud and her blue eyes pinched with anger.

"I'm afraid I just woke up, and..." He paused, realizing how foolish it all sounded.

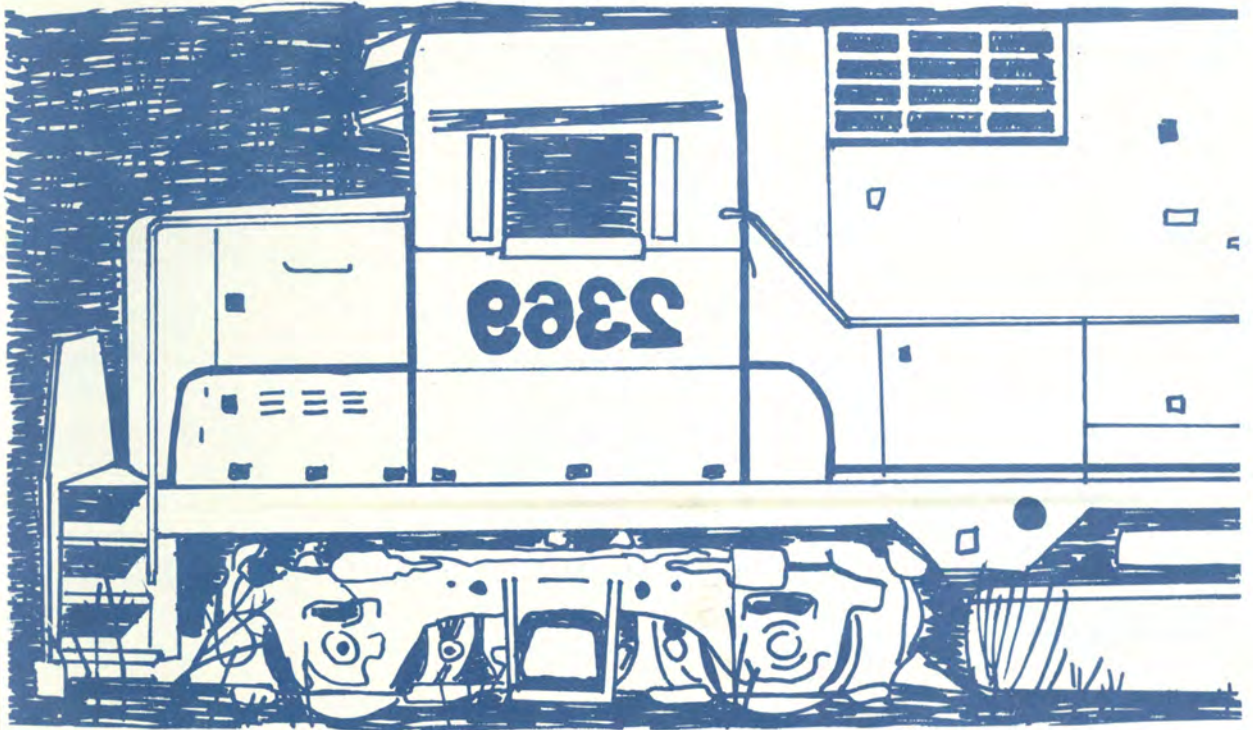
"And I don't remember much of anything."

"Convenient." She jerked her head back to her magazine and turned several pages rapidly.

"Look, I don't even know where I am or what..."

She looked up again. Puzzlement blurred her anger. "You don't?" Her linty eyes looked into his. The anger lines deepened. "You God-damned liar."

"Look, I'm not lying." He was getting angry now. He hated himself for not being able to convince this girl of the truth. "Who is that



man?"

"'Im? I don't know. Kinda uppity haint 'e?"

"All right. All right. I give up. Just — just what am I supposed to do now?"

Her blue eyes flashed. "You can go to 'ell, lovely." She yanked a page over, ripping it halfway out of her magazine.

The youth stood in the aisle a moment. Anger and embarrassment burned in his guts like acid. The joke wasn't amusing any more. He strode back to the bar where the man was just finishing a tall drink and watching the steady bridge game.

"One spade."

"Pass."

"Now look here," said the youth.

"Two clubs."

"Two hearts."

"Double."

"Damn good hand," said the man.

"Now look here," repeated the youth.

"Well, it serves you right, really." The implacible gray eyes fixed his once again.

"What does?"

"That brush off."

"Why?"

"Well, you sleep with the girl and then ignore her – don't even sit with her..."

"Sleep with her? I never..."

"I don't know what you call it. You two sneaking off to the sleeper..." His eyes smiled knowingly. "Don't remember, huh?"

"Oh, now look. Even my father doesn't have this much imagination."

"Sons never know their fathers – only their mothers."



"I didn't sleep with anyone."

The man for once looked puzzled. "You've been rather an enigma ever since you got on this train. You plop yourself down and seduce a decent girl and to top it off, you go unsociably to sleep and conveniently forget everything."

"But I didn't."

The man looked up. "Look." He glanced at his watch. "Why don't you make up to her. At least do that."

"Why?"

"Well, why not," said the man irritably. "You might as well do one decent thing, There's not a lot of time."

"Why not? What's the matter with time?" The youth was suddenly afraid.

The man straightened up and squared his shoulders. "Do one decent thing."

"I suppose I should." The youth hesitated, confused at his fear. The man seemed right. He turned towards the girl who had put down her magazine and was fiddling with an unlit cigarette. He walked over to her and held out his lighter.

Nervously she dipped her cigarette into the flame and sucked.

"Peace," said the youth.

"I suppose," she said quietly.

"Look, if I..." It was hard to find the words since he really didn't know what he was apologizing for. "If I did anything to hurt you, I'm sorry."

She glanced up. A smile tickled the ends of her mouth. "'At's all right. I guess I'm a bit of a bitch sometimes."

"Well, I'm glad we're friends."

She glanced at her watch. "Yeah, likewise."



"Can't you tell me..."

"What?" she interrupted.

"Can I sit down?"

She moved her magazine and the youth squeezed past her to sit next to the window.

"You're a puzzler, lovey." Her eyes were smiling and seemed to glow.

"I - I don't mean to be. I can't say I'm not a little confused."

"'At's natural enough."

"That er - uppity man - he said we - we talked before I went to sleep. Look, honest, I don't remember."

Her eyes looked kind, almost motherly. "I don't pretend ta understand ya, lovey. Hit's true what 'e said."

"I can't think of myself doing something like that."

"What's so awful?" She looked hurt.

"No, no, not at all – but then just ignoring you..."

"At warn't so pleasant." She smiled.

"I'm very sorry I forgot everything. I should like to have remembered that."

"You're a very sweet lad," she slipped her hand over his.

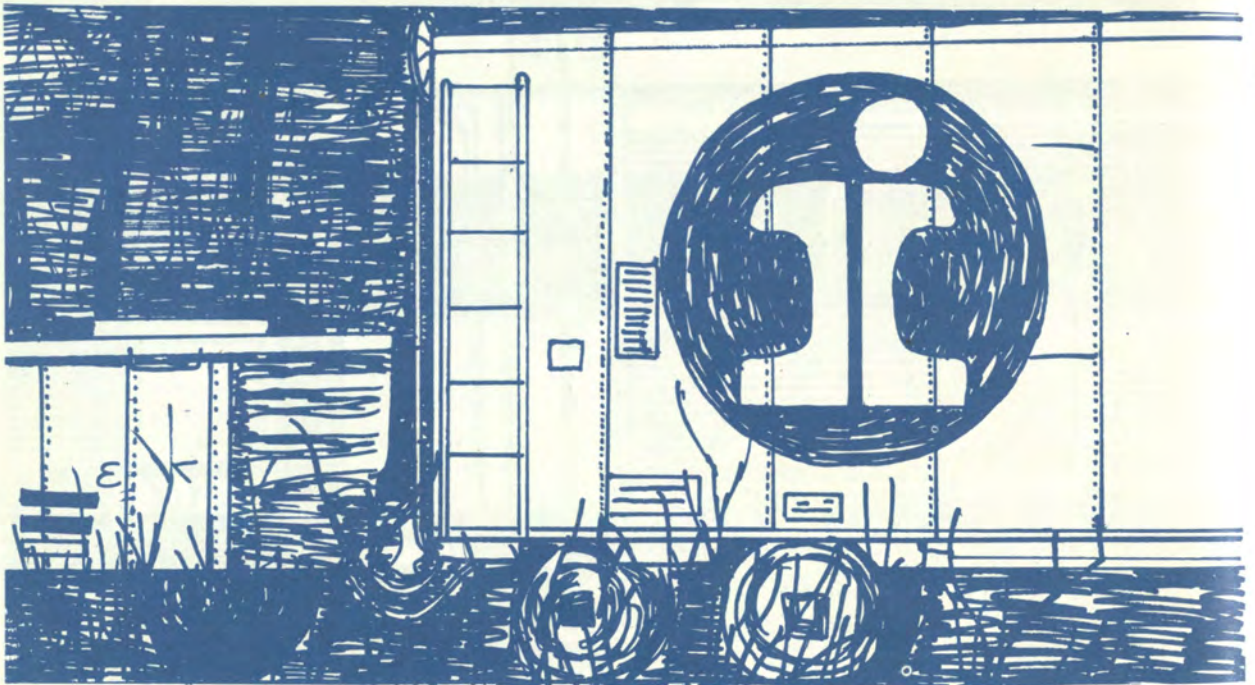
For the first time since he had awakened, the youth felt serene. The girl's hand was fragile; it rested on his like a small-boned bird.

"We're not going through that again?"

The youth looked up. The gray eyes stared down at him coldly.

"Now look 'ere," said the girl. "I've had about enough o' you, pushin' people about..."

The gray eyes narrowed. The ends of the mustache twitched with anger. "Just who do you



think..."

"I'll tell ya." The girl suddenly got up.

The youth let go of her hand. He was confused. He started to say something, but nervously snapped his mouth shut.

The two were in the aisle – her angry blue eyes and his scornful gray eyes.

Before he could think, the youth was up between them, facing the man. The gray eyes had no anger in them. They were calm and controlled.

"Look..."

"What?"

"Look..." The youth stammered. The eyes stared at him indifferently as though he were an animal in a cage.

"Well?"

The youth faltered. He glanced helplessly at the girl. Her eyes seemed to reproach him.

He felt as if he were shrinking inside.

"The train's going around the bend. We'll get to see the engine pretty soon," said the man.

"Already?" A look of hurt and shock spread over the girl's face.

"Yes, soon. Come here." The man crossed the aisle and looked out the window, leaving the youth.

The girl stood beside the man.

"What do you mean?" asked the youth, following her.

"One club."

"There, look." The man pointed up ahead.

Somehow, through the blackness, the youth could see the tiny, shining engine far up ahead, just beginning to turn to the right. It grew longer as it drew perpendicular to the rest of the train, dragging the other miniature, lighted cars behind it.

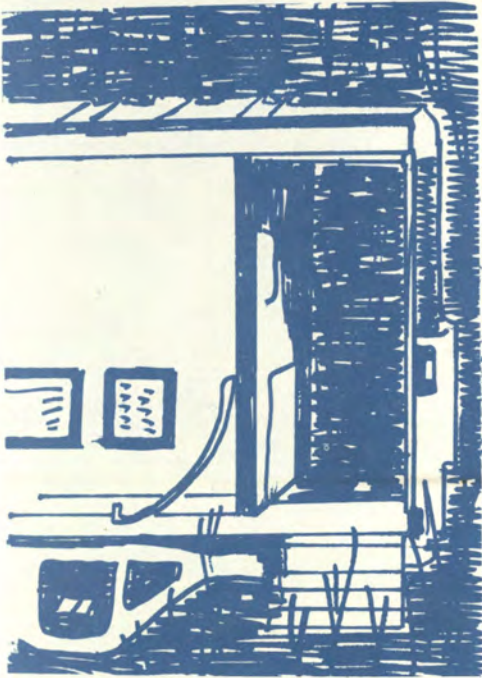
"One heart."

But at the same time another train was heading straight for it on the same track. The two were going to meet like an object and its mirrored image. The youth started. Instead of crashing, the two images of the engine converged into one another and all the cars were following like disappearing patterns in a kaleidoscope.

"Two spades."

"My God," cried the youth. He glanced at the man and the girl who looked calm with a solid determination. "What will happen when our car reaches that point?"

"Double and redouble."



morning
 ashen sky
black boughs
 yielding no shade
here inside
 my coffee pot broken
 my many books
 lying on the floor
half-opened all unread
 of what worth
beside your sleeping body

Plato's ghost Aristotle's shade
 in this stillness
demanding dim speech
 but echoes
of the rattle of human things
 bones without marrow
 your lips worn
 with wine and evening
whisper secrets
 even they had gladly known

Lawrence Rainey

To the Shore

*in the time of my youth
I galloped off
 in the bright dawn
 to the shore
 hooves casting sand
ocean waiting
 and now
 I think of them
things remote
and of no consequence*

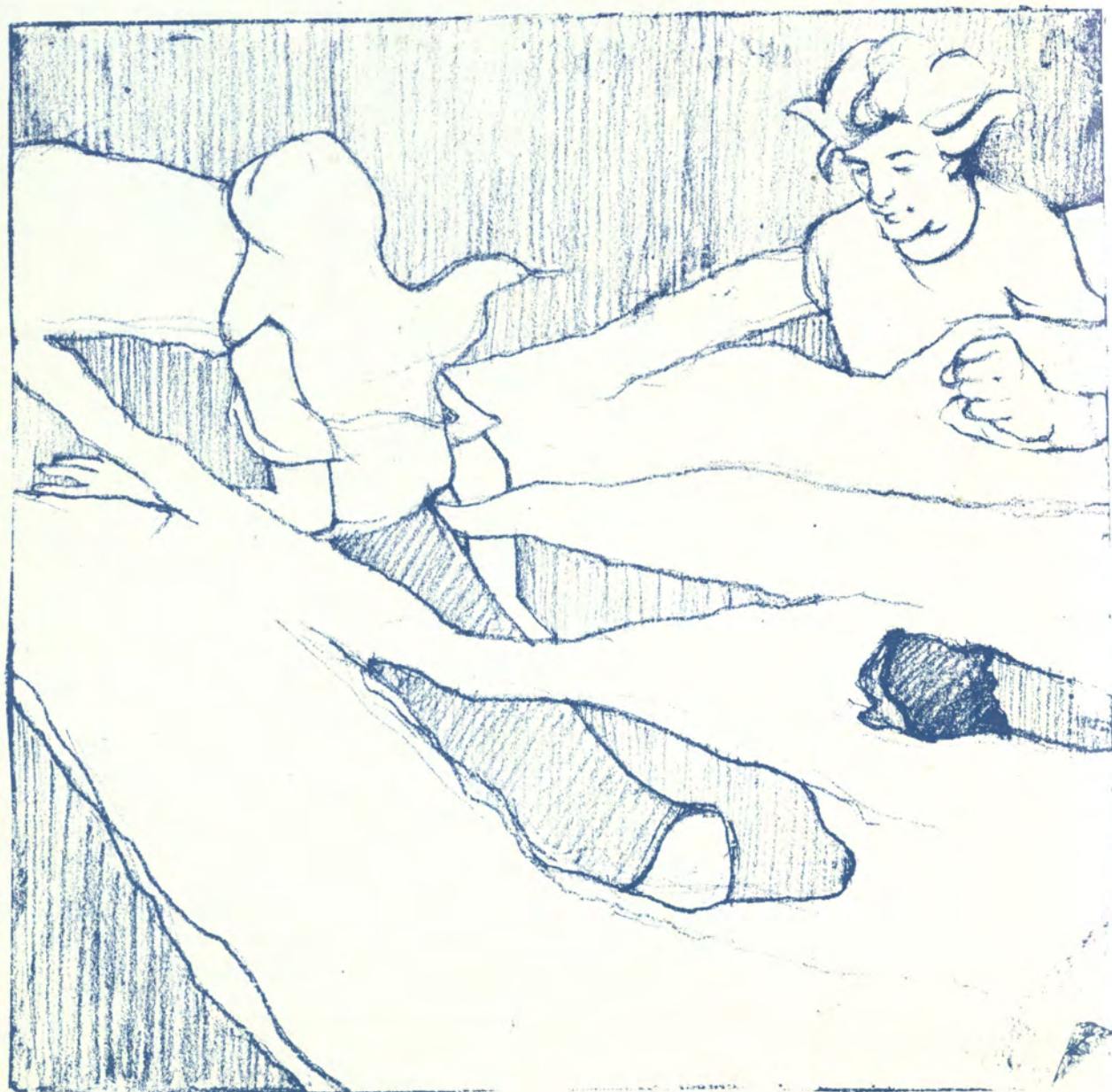
Lawrence Rainey



*We who do all things together but love
suspect the sun its gold
and claim the night the ferried-moon forsook
for darkness when no stars unlock
the coffers of the sky
we who dangle our lives on fishing-poles
go wading through the clouds
unmoist afraid of such baptisms
our fears become our reality
we can't believe a thousand golden coins
no pharaoh bent his knees to find
will shatter the very core of heaven
until gigantic sparks neglect the day
a wondrous fish consumes us poles and all.*

ARTHUR STEIGER

MUSIC DEPT.





EN PASSANT

(for Paul Heyne)

You can smell it coming —
almost —
but the ground is there —
the feet feel fine
and the eyes won't tell you a thing —
not them!!

Them move in roundtangular ways
and codifying the flowers
and hefting weights and measuring smokes —
but together,
the juice without the plug,
races along the river bottoms
of your psyche
and a tingle starts
somewhere
deep,
down under —

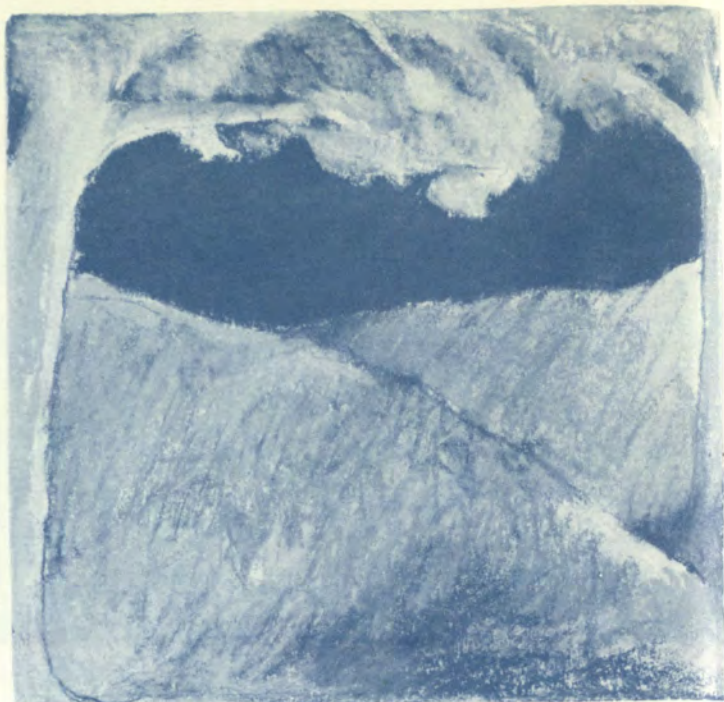
and you schock
back and forth
with tiny wave on wave coming in —

then the eyes start —
they fix as with a pin —
the ear-hairs stir slightly,
as a shaded fern
moves at rain, coming..
the feet stop —
the toes dig 10 holes
to be ready —
and the breath
sucks in stacatto bites of air
as if rationing might be necessary —

but all this
is Wagnerian anticlimax —
the line is cut —
and the ring of blade on stone
is already sending fat birds circling
from their nests —

as the eyes stare expectantly
and the lolling head
is thinking of trying a grin...

*J.T. Ledbetter
Cal-Lutheran College
Thousand Oaks, Ca. 91360*



Lawrence Rainey

this autumn day
 wind moves slowly
falling leaves reach home

my wooden house is still
curtains drawn back
to watch such things
 blackbirds sweeping over the fields
 a distant crawling train
to see them lingering
 the season lapsing

I came thus far alone
from the din of men
to spend some time
 in field and garden
finding my simplicity

yet countless days
have brought me nothing
 smoke in the wind
dream of light faltering

a man must tend
the eastern hedge
 and that alone
to cull from chaos
some decrepit border

yet to cull this silence

from root to flower
no simple task
 probing for words
 to meet the spectacle
so much boneless sound
 to make it flesh
 is not enough
bones and dangling limbs
make but bestial thing

let a man tread the fulvous field
 shadow on the yellowed grass
 wind loosed among the leaves
 nearby the eastern hedge
in this the true pleasure
root of all things

 idle dreams
that buy no bread or coffee
 pay no rent
fall barren on the asphalt street
 spark of flint

where then my simplicity
 some lingering step
 in field or garden
 season lapsing
winter just behind the horizon
 and where to find
some warm wool socks

*Joy as lasting as youth is to youth,
Trusty as day,
Will never betray us and never,
Never will stay.*

*Joy as transient as lights in the water,
Steady as surf,
Is never extinguished, never ever
repeating itself.*

*Always the same, renewed in faces
Never alike,
She always bears in her features traces,
Some birth marks from her Father'S graces
Till faces die
And caricature amazed embraces
The Person of Joy.*

Anonymous





REPERCUSSIONS

girls with first names with first letters of j
watching their skin as it

sucks out awareness from my eyes
girls with fingers that snap hard and fast in cold water causing
lusty bits of golden nectar
or are they probing dewdrops
splashing into down a dry parched refused throat

girls whose freckles muse
in relaxed conversation
over my wired-out curls
scraping close across pale shoulders
with highstrung voices attached

(listen within darkness
a wandering softness
settles under eyelids
no secrets to reveal)

girls with first names with first letters of j
stepping lightly into venus poses
under front-porch electric beams

less intense than moonlight itself
yet stars are seen to glow enormously true)
unfolding carpetlike into my mouth tongue lips

girls with the magic first letter
travel swiftly within my rushing blue-vein canals
tranquil shimmering pools of unbound reflections

confined protected
by the roofs of our mouths
god almighty your teeth are so tenderly warm

-pmc
26 may, 1974

suspended upside-dw suspended upside-down

JUAN

by Denise Wentzlaff

Using a pocket knife, Juan scraped the black, moist soil from beneath his nails. Once again, the day had passed too quickly, although Juan's bones and muscles told him otherwise. The sun had nearly disappeared as Juan stood admiring his work. The blackness of the rich soil, freshly plowed under and worked and reworked with spade, hoe, and rake, covered the entirety of his meager property. It had taken the old man, working from sunrise to sunset, nearly two weeks to complete his task, but such was his diligence that neither the throbbing pain in his empty stomach nor the sharp pains in his back and hands effected him.

The snow still covered the land when Juan had subsisted from his little garden, eating the fresh vegetables during the growing season and then the preserved items in the winter. Often, he had traded tomatoes with friends in return for meal or perhaps a few eggs. Juan had great luck in growing tomatoes and friends were eager to trade with him. But, that winter he decided that an exceptionally large tomato crop could be traded at the market. From that time on, all Juan's efforts were directed towards his crop. His dream was to trade the ripened tomatoes for a fat piglet which he would smoke for the following winter. No one in the small village in which he lived had owned a pig and to do so would surely merit respect, not to mention good eating, to the owner. Juan spent many winter days in seclusion, planning the particulars of tomato growing. Too often, his mind wandered, envisioning tomato rows, pigs and finally sausages, hocks, and roasts. Juan was pleased with himself as he inspected the soil for the hundredth time that day. The most difficult labor was completed, but he foresaw not one day of rest for himself until the harvest was completed. He suddenly remembered the visit which his neighbor Pedro had made to him that same afternoon. He had

been invited to Pedro's daughter's wedding on the next day. Juan decided regretfully that he would be unable to attend, although Pedro was his dearest friend and his daughter had grown up on his knee. The weather was too fine to chance putting off planting for another day. The crop would have to be planted the next day. Juan reasoned he would be unable to enjoy himself at such a gala affair if he knew his fields lay empty at home. Besides, one rain could harden the soil like a rock and all his labor so far would be wasted.

"Juan, come with us! Pedro's wife has taken seriously ill and death seems near. Pedro wishes the company of some friends who will sit vigil with him. He is indeed in very lowspirits," said one in the party of men standing over Juan. Juan was crawling between the rows of young plants, weeding and pruning. Barely hearing the words directed toward him, he replied that he would join them for the vigil before long. He continued his work as the group of farmers departed down the road.

The crop showed much promise. Juan worked in the warm sun daily, caring for each young plant as if it were a personal friend. Always, as he worked, he thought of the day when he would cart his tomatoes to the market. In his mind he planned the construction of a small pen which would hold his pig until smoking time. At sunset, when his eyes would no longer function well enough to perform the delicate pruning, he would sit on the back porch, his dog Chico at his side, to keep watch for rabbits who yearned to nibble on the tender young leaves and stalks of the plants. Now and then his head would sway and then suddenly fall limp from his shoulders, while his red eyes wearily rolled to the back of his head into a deep sleep. In this manner, many a night his bed remained empty.



That evening, when Juan could no longer prune, he sat on the porch intending to rest a few minutes before walking to Pedro's house. He rubbed his tense brow with his old weathered hands which trembled from fatigue. Slowly his head sunk to its pillow of knees and the lids of his eyes locked shut for the night.

Pedro's wife clung to life for six more days. Juan received the news of her condition and finally her death from neighbors who passed him toiling in his fields. He rested a moment from his labor, his eyes filling with tears when he thought about Pedro and his misfortune. Earlier, he had intended to pay his respects at Pedro's home where the wake was held, but somehow he had gotten the days confused. On his way to the wake, not more than a few steps from his own door, he met a friend who informed him of the large number of neighbors who had attended the funeral. Shocked and embarrassed, Juan returned to his field, reasoning that perhaps his work in the hot sun had effected his calculations. He resolved to quit early that evening and get a good night's rest. Nights came quickly and the dust laden old man dropped dizzily into bed.

The fallen leaves crushed beneath Juan's worn boots as he pulled his wooden cart toward the market one morning. Chico trotted eagerly beneath the cart, its wobbling wheels stressing beneath the heavy load. The cart was carefully packed with the tomatoes of Juan's crop. He had inspected each as if he were a scrutinizing housewife at market, squeezing, comparing, and condemning. The brimming cart of red tomatoes basking in the morning sunlight provided a striking contrast to the foliage at the roadside which boasted its newly acquired russets, oranges, and browns.

Despite the early hour, the market place was already bustling with hundreds of people,

buying, selling, trading, or just enjoying the sights, sounds, and poignant aromas which the market produced. Slowly Juan pulled his cart through the crowds. Children ran wildly from stand to stand and across his path. Dogs followed, barking, tails wagging, excited by the commotion. Not much had changed in the market place since Juan was a small child who then came with his father every week. The faces were different to him, but everything else seemed the same. Chickens still hung by their feet, observed by experienced cooks who envisioned them floating in pots of soup. Fresh vegetables of all kinds were still piled beneath colorful canopies, as were homemade wares proudly displayed by the craftsmen. Sellers yelled back and forth to one another, while thrifty customers bargained for prices. Such bargaining often drew crowds as it often resulted in flared tempers, red faces, and clenched fists.

By now the cart of tomatoes had become quite a burden for Juan, but through the milling crowd a familiar face was a relieving sight. Juan carefully set the cart handles to the ground, making sure no tomatoes fell from the stack. After instructing Chico to remain at the cart, he walked toward the familiar face, stretching and rubbing his weary hands.

"Juan, old friend Juan," said the man, rushing toward Juan to embrace him for a moment.

"I've come to bargain Phillip, and such a treasure as you've never set eyes on." Juan backed off toward his cart, pulling Phillip by both hands, almost afraid he would refuse to consider the barter. Phillip's eyes opened wide as he saw the cart of luscious red tomatoes before him. He knew they would certainly sell quickly and at a good price.

"Your words are true, Juan. Choose what you want from my stock. The trade is a good



trade." Shaking hands, Phillip motioned with his other hand to two children sitting near his stand to unload the cart. Anxiously, Juan rushed to the pens to choose the pig for which he had toiled so long. His eyes flashed abruptly from pen to pen, from sheep to chickens and finally to pigs. Two fat, dusty pink piglets stood snorting and pawing at a few bits of straw laying stubbornly on the dusty earty of their pen. Juan leaned forward into the pen, thinking perhaps this sight of two lovely pigs was merely a trick his old eyes were playing on him.

"So its one of my pigs you wish, eh Juan?" laughed Phillip. "Take your pick, neither will bring you trouble."

Speechless, like a child awe-struck as he examines some insect or moth, Juan pointed to his choice. He ran for the rope in his cart, forming a noose to put over the pig's head. Squealing, the young pig was reluctant to leave the security of the pen and the company of his friend. Without mercy, Juan tugged at the rope, forcing the frightened pig out into the crowd. Chico, barking violently at the new addition to their troop, further frightened the pig. Clutching the pig around its belly, Juan attempted to lift him into the cart. The pig squirmed and fell to the ground. Juan dropped to the ground, too, in an attempt to grasp him up once more. The terrified pig pulled out of the noose of the somewhat stiff rope and ran determinedly back to his pen. He stood for a moment gazing jealously in at his friend, then turned just in time to see Juan running down between the pens straight toward him, dangling the dreaded noose in front of him. The pig wheeled and darted off toward the middle of the market place. Juan, by this time quite exhausted, ran feverishly after the pig, swinging the rope over his head in an attempt to lasso the fugitive.

The sight of an old, frail, withered man, running flat footed on legs whose knees refused to cooperate, drew the attention of everyone. It wasn't long before the children discovered the sport and chased the pig frantically, disrupting carts of vegetables and old women. Juan thrust his rope into the air before him, sending the crooked noose shakily towards his pig. Amiss! Losing his balance, Juan fell to the ground, his face covered with sweat and dust. Chico found great enjoyment in the chaos and continued running in pursuit of the pig. The old man climbed slowly to his feet, tears streaming from his eyes, forming dust cakes in the cracks of his weathered face. The hours, days and months in the dirt under the merciless sun flashed before him. The bodily pain and lonelinesshe suffered in that time was revealed to him. He hobbled through the dispersing crowd and out of the market place. Some distance down the road, he could see Chico standing at the edge of a thicket barking.

Juan waited many hours by the thicket. His attempts to go after the pig were futile. The ground was marshy and the vegetation dense. Poor Chico was covered with burrs and mud from his many trials into the pig's hideaway. Now and then, the leaves would rustle or a twig would snap and Juan would urge Chico back into the thicket, always to no avail.

Through the darkness, a tired old man and a dog walked back to the deserted market place. The crowd had long since gone, leaving only a few wooden stands and a solitary wooden cart in the middle of the road. The empty cart seemed more of a burden to him as he walked slowly down the road towards home than it had that same morning. Pedro had never visited him after the death of his wife. Chico walked between the wobbling, squeeking wheels, his head hanging heavily between his weary shoulders.






Sister

I looked at you really close when you
borrowed a cigarette after dinner today,
and I remembered a long time ago in our
Candy Club Room
when we both said we would never smoke.
Somehow it reminded me of those tea parties we
used to have,
where Mom would give us milk and sugar
and a drop of coffee for color,
and we'd sit down at the kitchen table
discussing our 'husband's' and 'children's'
behavior,
pretending we were really grown up.
Your name was Mrs. Punkin Pie, and mine was
Mrs. Ice Cream.

Janet French



travelling towards Sienna evening
headlamps on the wetblack asphalt
villages on the hillsides
black poplars in the fields
memories turning

in the park grey morning
finding a statue of Byron
seated in marble writing
'I have lived, and not in vain'

a man ploughs a field
oxen lumbering
over the land
slit by the blade
a thousand years the plough
the earth a thousand times

to live in vain
live in vain
petals fall without our aid
ours the reaching empty hand

on cobbled streets between old houses
I walked with her at my side
as moonbeams splashed above the river
staining it amber over the bridge
we paused beneath the cobalt sky
to take the moment naked in the press
of lips to lips the human smell of flesh
the wind drove straightly
the night was still
beams of moonlight spilled upon her neck
and pondering face river flowing
ours the night we held it gently

ochre moon clouds stumbling
lamp-posts gazing at the streets
withdrawn inside the doorway
invitation waiting
the wind murmurs and moves
a figure stirs upon the street
the stairway twists dim as ash the room
her on the bed the hour past alone
fingering coins still moist

give loose give loose
the eye is eager for beauty
the ear seeks song
to catch a shade
trap a blackbird
no task for men
give loose I say give loose
this poverty assumes no value
with such works give loose

the statue's stillness
remains meager
bare is the pillar
bearing no shade
the tongue is parched
among the dust and ashes
to know to know
sunflower in the wall

Ken Raabe


NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S CAVE





Taped Narrative with occasional sound effects.

All action mimed with silence or accompanied by low-noise when appropriate.

Set: 3 crates  against dark backdrop

(INTRO-MUSIC)

(live:)

Hey Neb! Hiya Neb!
Good old Neb! etc.)

Top box

Supplication —

Cast:

Neb
Mirror Image
Marduk
Dagon
Four characters

Costume: white face,
crown with serpent,
fish half-mask,
bull horns and tail

Property:

Sun and Moon disks,
mounted on a rod and
spun around an axis
in its center:
Passage of time.

Ritual face-slap
with drum-roll-like
accompaniment - live
Yay and applause.

Morning Toilet

Business with mirror
image - 2nd figure
mirroring Neb's
movements

Crown on stick —

Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, before people began to unwrap their food or even to write everything down properly, there lived a mighty king named Nebuchadnezzar and everyone in his kingdom, which was called Babylonia, thought he was one heck of a king and a fine fellow too.

He did everything a king was supposed to do and he did it with style; he had a big golden throne that he sat on all day; he watched parades from his balcony; he had people's heads chopped off out on the patio; everything he did was... well, it was just right.

He was a king's king. Infact, his subjects and sometimes visitors to the court would very often call him that, of "King of Kings" among other wonderful things, especially if they wanted to get his attention.

"Peacock of the Universe," they'd call him; "Cleaner than Clean!," they'd say.

Ahhhh, he'd like that a lot, and when someone addressed him in this way, he'd invariably say "Yes? What do you want?"

Well, this would go on all day sometimes and before you knew it, it would be bedtime.

"Not bad..." thought King Neb. "Not a bad way to live. Not bad at all!"

The only drawback to being king of Babylonia was that every spring-time you'd have to be publicly humiliated by the priest of Marduk, Bull-Calf of the Sun; then all the kingdom would give happy little sighs and be refreshed for another year, and the sun would continue to come up and stay out later and later every day and the rain would fall and warm winds would blow, the crops would poke through, people would be born and die, water would continue to run downhill.

"Oh, I can live with that!" said King Neb, and year after year he did, and everything went off without a hitch. (back on throne / top box)

He was a neat kind and made frequent use of a large collection of metal cutting devices and gilded combs and brushes. He was a figure in the public eye, or, more exactly, he was always being seen by people.

Where ever he happened to be, whatever it was he was up to, that's what would be going on; he'd be being seen by people, his subjects, he'd never... be somewhere seeing something - Nope - first and all-encompassing, he'd be being seen. This was what he was used to and he enjoyed it very much. When he was young he would spy into the mirrors (trying to come upon them by surprise) in order to steal a peek at his splendor. Later he would regard himself with great awe for hours on end. It was what he was familiar with, it made him happy.

When the people would sometimes see him, maybe catch a glimpse of his crown bobbing along on the other side of a hedge at the hanging gardens, they would whisper to each other and shrink back or press closer



a bit and, in general, be enormously impressed.

Neb thought he walked the ground with a tread that made the old earth shake. The things he like to think about! He liked the things he thought about so much that he thought about them everyday. He'd think, "Why, this is the largest and most important country in this part of the world! And me. . .I'm the king! Look at all these people asking me what's up!"

Gesture paralleling thought.

Supplication

movements reflect change of atmosphere

Well, for years he had only been able to hear enthusiastic praise, hailings, greetings, impressed breathing and admiring silences; that's all there was available for him to hear. As time passed, though, people began to get used to him, especially since anybody that felt like showing up at the ceremony could see him get his face slapped every springtime. He began to feel uncomfortable if people stared at him in silence for any length of time. His ears began to pick up unfamiliar tones of familiarity during conversations, phrases that didn't make sense to him because they were hard to up with anything for comparison.

"Hm m m. . .What are you up to? Treacherous and unfamiliar doggy!" he'd thunder at the slightest indication of constrained emotion or the merest hint of nonchalance, "Aren't you enthused about your king and your country any more?"

Terrified Supplication

Dragged off and head-chopped

After a few more incidences, usually ending in disaster for the thundered-at, there developed a particular style of addressing the king; but in a very short time its tone of authenticity had deteriorated drastically through constant ringing -ing -ing.

Morose Neb

mirror-image stuff

Oh, King Neb could feel that something was the matter. He could hardly eye himself in the mirror with his old objective humility anymore. He felt his very splendor threatened, but he couldn't tell you what it was that threatened it.

Quick Tapped War

"What'll I do??" cried Neb.

He got in a couple of wars and that made him feel a little better,. But he found that being a victorious conqueror didn't get things back to normal for very long. Folks got used to having him around.

mirror-image stuff

His image scowled and sulked at him in the mirror and didn't look a bit grand. He'd get so mad he'd grind his teeth and the people in the court would wonder, "What's up?"

All lip-synched

"I wish these people would stop telling me what to do!" said Neb to an advisor.

"But Neb, baby!" said the advisor. "You're telling them what to do, they're not telling you !"

"It's the same thing," said Neb. "They are telling me to tell them what to do by always doing what I tell them to do. Whatsa matter? Aren't you enthused about your king and country?" And so on and so on.



peering

— He began to develop a bad set of constant fears, mostly about people who hated him and didn't think he was at all glorious; he began to peer around corners before entering a room. He began to avoid mirrors; his appetite fell off, his hair went uncombed, his beard grew, his breath stank, he glared a lot, his attitude about life became very sour indeed, and his breathing came in little snarls. Everybody noticed that things had gone down hill.

Well, the year went round and it was soon getting mighty close to springtime, time for Neb to be ritually humiliated — and he knew it too.

Neb leaps over advisor.

— A group of his surviving advisors came into the throneroom to cheer him up a little and remind him of the ceremony.

“I am beset !” said Neb, staring off into space. “Here I come! Yow! There I go! I can catch up with me, but if I do, I might just punch myself in the mouth! How come I have to have all the fun?”

Mirror movement again

— The advisors looked at one another and didn't know what to say, but King Neb didn't mind, as he bounded off his throne and was busy shaking his fist at himself in the huge hall mirror.

“You're out to get me too, eh?” roared Neb at himself, “Well, I'm going to get you for that if it's the last thing I do! Oh, Yeah? Yeah!” And stepping out of the way, he swung mightily, frightening himself right out of his wits.

Pelting off down hall; Image moves off backward illusion of placing distance between

— “Yow!” said Neb, “Yow! Yow! Yow!” And as he ran down the hall, he glanced back over his shoulder and thought, “There I go.”

Neb in air going thru window.

— Before the huddled advisors had time to say “Hey, its time for you to be ritually humiliated!” he gave a wild shriek and crashed through the throne room window, and raced away down the avenue away from the palace on all fours, roaring and snapping at the people on the sidewalk, and pausing to bite anyone who wished him a pleasant afternoon.

running in place close-up.

— He caught a commuter train which hurled him deep into the suburbs in no time at all. Where the track rubbed up against the closest dismal looking forest, Neb yanked on the emergency cord, crashed through the train window and galloped off into the dense vegetation.

Tape of train Neb holding strap Swaying back and forth with train's movements.

— He pelted through the greenery for three days and three nights without stopping, until he had to collapse from exhaustion. He had lost his crown and his reasoning ability and he had cuts on his knuckles, but he felt sure that he had successfully escaped from himself and the throne of Babylon; yet the fact that he was still there taking up space soon came before his eyes and into a deep depression. He became so dejected that he began howling and sorrowing as if it were a painful and unhappy thing to be anywhere at all.

Sun/moon disks spun three times.

Sun/moon disk spun Neb is transformed

— Well, he found a cave to curl up in and he stayed right there in the forest. He became very shaggy-looking, lost the use of his thumbs,



grew moss on his back, and skulked around this cave for years and years with mouthfuls of wild grasses and bull-rushes and a sorrowful expression on his face, coming out only to find food and to howl at the moon.

Repetition of movements.

— As time went by, Neb continued to spend each day exactly as he had the day before, same howls — and roars, same expression of sorrow.

Dagon enters standing still.

— After a while he caught the attention of Dagon the Fishgod, who noticed him one night howling away, and who thought that this was very interesting behavior in a human. He would float in to visit Neb every once in a while, just to watch his routine.

Dagon on top box

— One day, during the seventh year of Neb's shagginess, Dagon, lord of floating objects, was sitting on a rock in Neb's cave, having a one-sided conversation, when who should walk in but Marduk, Bull-Calf of the Sun.

All lip-synch OR Telepathy

— "Marduk! You old rascal!" said Dagon. "Hey, how ya been? You're looking good! How are you these days?"

Marduk sniffed and looked a little haughty, "Oh. . .supreme. . ." he replied, with a toss of his horns. "Hello, Dagon. How're they bitin'?"

Dagon chuckled, but his dorsal fin seemed to flare up a little, "Heh, heh. . .good old Marduk! Say, you look like you've put on a few pounds; all that rich living over at Sun's, eh?"

"Heh, heh.", replied Marduk. "Same old Dagon. . .Well, how's eternal life treatin' you, Scaly? You look a little peaked. You know, if you ever need any help with any of tides or anything, just gimme a call and me and the boys'll be right over to give you a hand!"

"Listen Bright Eyes," retorted the Fishgod, getting a little red around the gills, "The day I need help from you and your lot of. . ."

"Now, now, Dagon: don't get sore," interrupted the Bull-Calf, "I know you're powerful and well-thought-of and highly regarded and you do important stuff. . .remember your water pressure. What brings you to this neck of the woods any how?"

Dagon clamed down a little; "Oh, I drop in on this shaggy hermit here everyonce in a while, usually at the fullmoon when I'm swimming on the high flood. . .he's quite a character, always making little noises, roars and howls. . .not a bad sort for a human, though. . . At first I though he was a dog down there howling away at my sister, all shaggy and woebegone. . .he's a funny old fellow, isn't he?" Dagon chuckled a little.

Marduk seemed a bit distracted and replied "Did you know that he's the king of Babylonia?"

"What?! Him? The King of Babylonia?"

"Yes. And he used to be very dignified and walked around like this. . .and passed his days surrounded by trembling subjects."



“Ho! That’s rich!” laughed Dagon. “Those humans too much!”
Marduk gave a little snort, and joined in laughing, “Yeah! You said it!”

And they both had a good laugh.

Finally Dagon asked, “Say, if he’s the king of Babylonia, why does he live out here in this cave and go about on four legs and eat bull rushes and other wild grasses?”

“Beats me,” replied the Bull-Calf, “I think he’s a sorehead. He ran off one spring just before face-slapping time and no human has seen him from that moment on. Even I, Marduk, the Sun’s Bull-Calf, had a tough time tracking him down. All this dense shrubbery makes it hard for the old rays to penetrate. . .by the way, how did you get here, Fishy?”

“Oh, I’ve got fine mist waiting for me outside. But you mentioned tracking him down. Why would Marduk go to the trouble of sniffing down this wretched looking fellow? Because he used to be King of Babylonia?”

Marduk seemed a little embarrassed; “Well, since Neb took off like he did, he’s thrown the cycle of the seasons out of whack. And the people are starting to give my priests a hard time.”

Dagon found this amusing.

“Nothing serious,” Marduk quickly added. “It’s only that a few irregularities have begun to pop up.”

“Oh Yeah? Like what?” inquired the Fishgodd.

“Oh, little things, little things. . .

Leaves turning black in the autumn instead of red and gold. . .water running uphill. . .and they’re had a couple of bad alkalai storms.”

Dagon could scarcely conceal his delight: “Have you talked to the windgod” he asked with a note of concern in his voice.

“He sez there’s nothing he can do; the timing is off or something; the wheel is out of kilter.” Without a king to lower there is no wholeness in Babylonia. Things are incomplete. Nope. The king must be seem to be a human.”

“Well, why don’t they set up a new fellow, and you can slap his face?”

“It’s not as simple as that. His former advisors say they have no precedent for the king crashing through the window and running off on all fours. They say it might be a test of their loyalty. They think perhaps he will come back. They have adopted the old wait and see. And they are beginning to like operating the country without him. . .”

“What do you think is going to happen?”

“Think? What do I *think* is going to happen. I didn’t travel ninety-three million miles to stand around and wonder if the



clown was ever going to decide to go back! I'm here to take him back!"

"Like that?"

"Well. . .I'll have a talk with him first; he'll be OK."

Dagon was getting a big kick out of Marduk's dilemma: "Maybe he'd rather stay out here and howl at my sister. I don't mind. In fact, I've gotten to like the old bird. Why don't you leave him alone? Why don't you come as a revelation before the assembly of advisors and tell them to get themselves a new boy?"

"Look, this is important stuff here, this ain't no pleasure cruise. This king's going back whether he likes it or not!"

"Yeah? Well, maybe he will and maybe he won't."

Marduk gave the Fishgod a dirty look and went over to where Neb sat, quietly lamenting his physical presence.

Neb does not
respond.

"Neb! Neb, hey it's me! Marduk. Your old pal, the Bull-calf! You remember me! Don't you? Look, I want to talk to you a little, eh, ask you a few questions. . ." Neb stared dumbly and heaved a great sigh. Marduk continued: "You can't be enjoying yourself out here in this crummy cave. . ."

Dagon interrupted and said, "Enjoying yourself ain't everything, Bull-Calf!" Marduk went on, ignoring the remark: "Listen, let me ask you this. . .Do you really want to remain the way you are now? Wouldn't you rather change?"

There was no response.

"For instance, have you ever thought of moving around on the ground in a different way — or maybe in some other way of being different than the way you are now? Are you pleased at having the experiences you now have regularly or would you like to alter some of these experiences? What about it Neb?"

There was a dim light growing in Neb's enfeebled brain. . .something, some fragment of understanding was floating around, just out of reach. . .

"What about it Neb? How do you feel about what you find yourself doing out here in the woods, roaring and howling and carrying on all day and all night? Doesn't your throat get sore? Neb?"

And Neb's right front paw slowly moved to his throat.

"Don't listen to him, Neb! He means you no good!" Dagon broke in.

"You could change all that, Neb! You could change it all in an instant, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye!"

Within Neb's brutish brain a thought stirred in its sleep and finally turned over, mumbling, "Why would I do that? I think it's very appropriate for me to howl and roar. . ."



Suddenly Dagon moved between Neb and the Bull-Calf. "Come on Marduk, knock it off. Look at him! He's content right here being wretched. Lay off him! He's not going anywhere he doesn't want to go!" "Outta my way, Fishface, or you'll find your self floating belly-up in a big bowl of chowder!" yelled the enraged Marduk.

"Watch it Marduk! This is Dagon the Fishgod and not some punk moonbeam you're talking to. . .you'd better be careful of how you wag that cattle tongue of yours!"

The temperature in the cave shot up a few degrees.

"Why you miserable little smelt!" Marduk bellowed. "I am the awesome blasting furnace. I am Marduk the Firestorm!"

"You are a side of beef!" replied Dagon, beginning to get really angry. "I am Dagon the Engulfer! Dagon the Gulper-Upperr!"

"you will be Dagon the Fried Fish in a minute if you provoke my horrible awfulness. I will fry you and dry you and absorb you whole!"

"Oh Yeah? You and who else?"

And the two deities leapt at each other with fierce snarls, and each turned his terrible power against each other. (The Fishgod squirts a small but powerful flashlight into Dagon's eyes, which are sensitive to light. They battle fiercely.)

Well, the air was torn by explosions and hideous shrieks and the cave soon filled up with blasts of steam and Marduk and the Fishgod went at it more and more ferociously.

(They escalate to using a sparkler and a plant sprayer in place of the squirtgun and flashlight. The battle should rage for as long as seems appropriate.)

Neb, bewildered by the chain of events leading up to this enormous din and confusion was utterly terrified by its mounting fury. Both gods had completely forgotten about him in their fervor to de dominate over each other. There were Blinding Fogs and Continuous Flashes of Lightning. . .it was too much! Poor Neb stumbled around on his hind feet, trying desperately to feel his way out of the vapor-filled cave, and bashing himself in the head in the process. As his ears rung and his head spun, his hands found the mouth of the cave and out he staggered into the sunlight.

"What? " said Neb, "What am I doing her with this mouthful of wild grasses? What is this stuff on my back? How come I'm so shaggy and raggedy? And why does it hurt my back to straighten up? Where is everybody?? What am I doing out her in the woods?? Hey! Where's my crown???"

Wall illusion

Transformation



And he puzzled over these questions for a moment and then walked to the nearest highway and thumbed a lift back to Babylon, which was where he felt he belonged.

Returning hero
music.

— (Some music comes up at this point and the story continues without words. Neb getting a lift in a truck. Arriving in Babylon. Being greeted enthusiastically. Admiring himself in the mirror, very majestically. He comes before the priests of the city to take his place in the old ritual. The priest's hand stops just short of slapping him in the face and the play stops with a brief tableau. Lights down if there are lights.)



IN A SWIVEL CHAIR

View of a prison with invisible bars
As a miscast spirit hovers among stars
Laughs at those who claim to be christians
Professors drunk inside their single dimensions
Ask any question that concerns any hope
Receive nothing but an urge for a long piece of rope
Anti-christ flashes a smile, he knows
Institutional glitter is part of his show
Suck out my brains, annihilate thought
Or is there more to the price of education bought?

Cuff it all
as you cuff me
and I cuff you
let us begin
anew

*— P. Martin Callaghan
14 Jaunary, 1975*

Another loss; Another change

Margo Harvey

*... And love, grown faint and fretful,
With lips but half regretful
Sighs, and with eyes forgetful
Weeps that no loves endure.*

Swinburne

She mechanically hung up the phone. Her eyes stared out the window, but she saw nothing. Had her eyes focused on the scene below, she would have seen nothing extraordinary. It was a clear and sunny day, so activity continued at its usual pace. Boston was never still and this block was no exception, especially on a day like this one. Children ran after puppies. Mothers walked their babies. Young couples strolled or relaxed in the sunshine. Businessmen hurried back to their afternoon work.

Ethel's one window, although wide open, was not enough to bring the outdoor sun and light into her third floor apartment. Her home was small, or at least, seemed small because of the large furniture and the numerous knick knacks covering every free space.

Ethel moved slowly, almost unaware of her motions. She picked up her purse and her keys. She reached the door, but hesitated, bracing herself before facing the sun, the smiles, and the youth of the city.

It wasn't that she feared the city. This was her home. She'd grown up here and considered herself as much a part of the block as the big old tree preserved in the center of the park. She could remember the block as it was before the park existed, before the enormous houses were converted into apartments, and before the young people had overwhelmed the neighborhood.

She quickly opened the door, knowing that she mustn't prolong her departure. The door was closed and locked before she heard the noise and realized that an encounter with her neighbors was unavoidable. The hall was dark and narrow. She could try to hide her expression. But what a trial to face their chatter and smiles and, worst of all, the strained politeness. Ethel knew she was only being treated with the respect an eighty year old woman deserved, but she didn't want that. Not today.

"Isn't it a beautiful day, Miss Norton? I'm

so glad you're going out. A stuffy old apartment is no place to be on a day like today."

"Linda insisted on eating lunch in the park. You should, too."

"I must go. Please, I . . . I have an appointment."

"Oh, how nice! Are you going to lunch with Mr. Willis? You really should take a picnic."

Ethel walked faster trying to hide her fear and concern. In the street, the sun hurt her eyes and she had an excuse to blink hard.

"Good afternoon, Ethel."

"Where are you running to, Miss Norton?"

Bewildered eyes followed her down the street. Today everyone felt friendly and would've been willing to pass a few moments with the old woman. Today they could have been patient with her usual gossip, requests, or complaints.

She did have an appointment with Reuben Willis. Like so many times before. It was almost hard to think back far enough to remember when the daily visits had begun. But she did remember. How could she forget?

The phone had rung that morning, just like today. But what a different voice had greeted her!

"Ethel? Ethel Norton, don't tell me you don't recognize me. It hasn't been that long, now has it?"

"Reuben, is that you? Where are you? you come home at last, Reuben?"

So it had begun again. She'd met him for lunch and he'd confided in her.

"She's lonely, Ethel. Ma's never been strong. Dad was her life. Dad and me. She's sick now. She just needs someone to care for her. It's up to me."

"But, Reuben, what happens to your business your life in New York? Last time you said you could never leave it. Can you be happy here?"

"I don't know. I'll have to be. Don't you see, Ethel? She needs me. I had to come."

On that day, Ethel had found new purpose for

her own life. She'd become old Mrs. Willis' nurse during the day while Reuben worked at his new job. Ethel hadn't given up her leisure out of any love for Mrs. Willis. She was as experienced as any nurse, for she'd also cared for her own aging parents until their deaths. But she didn't like it. She didn't even like Mrs. Willis because Mrs. Willis didn't like her. Perhaps the older woman had known what Ethel had always tried to conceal. Neither had ever mentioned Ethel's feelings for Reuben. But Ethel knew, and Mrs. Willis seemed to know, that Ethel did what she did only because she loved Reuben. She couldn't remember a time when she hadn't loved Reuben. As children, Reuben had been her brother's constant companion and Ethel had tagged along whenever the boys would allow it.

Ethel's pay for her nursing came every evening when Reuben returned from work. He used to walk Ethel down the street to her own apartment. Frequently they dawdled even though both knew a whining Mrs. Willis would be waiting up for Reuben. Those few minutes were their only time to be together. They both needed them. These moments served as Reuben's only daily relaxation. If he wasn't at work, he was trying to satisfy his mother's demands.

Their favorite pastime was reminiscing. Although her apartment was only five doors down, the two could find memories wherever they looked. Of course, the neighborhood had changed since the days when they were the care-free children of aristocratic parents. But some of the spots remained and the things which were gone could easily be reconstructed by means of their memories.

"Remember the time Thomas and I dared you to climb that old tree? You couldn't take the jeers so let us lift you up. You climbed to the top just to show us a girl could do it."

"And then you left me stranded up there until mother made Thomas come rescue me."

"I'll never forget the flash of your eyes! You were furious, but back the next day begging to go with us. I often wondered how you tolerated our pranks."

Reuben never was able to comprehend her willingness to tolerate their boyish teasing. He didn't notice when she started growing up and stopped following them. To Reuben, she was just Thomas' little sister, or the sister he'd never had.

She'd been so proud of the two when they had gone off to the war. She'd never forget how handsome they'd looked in their uniforms: Reuben tall and blond, and Thomas tall and dark. Reuben had kissed her the day he left. Just a kiss on the cheek, a brotherly sort of kiss. But she remembered it.

The young men had grand things planned for their lives after the war. They'd start a business in New York and make their own fortune. Ethel had her own dreams. She too planned for the day when Reuben would return. She, of course, would have, by then, become a woman. Over and over, she practiced the lady-like way she'd greet Reuben. Her womanly manners would surprise him and he'd be forced to see her finally as something other than a little sister.

But it hadn't happened that way. None of them had planned on Thomas' death. Reuben went alone to New York to fulfill their ambitions. He used to visit his parents occasionally and he usually stopped by the Norton house to talk about his big business venture and to ease the loss of the family's only son and brother. Ethel listened enthusiastically to his plans. She observed and understood the light in his eyes as he talked of his love for New York and his work. Oh, to be part of that dream!

The depression was what brought the big change for the Nortons, as well as for the Willises and the other "blue-blooded families" of the neighborhood. The big homes became apartment buildings. Some of the families couldn't tolerate the loss of prestige. They'd moved to other places, trying to forget the loss. But the Willises, the Nortons, and several others didn't want to lose their homes as well as their wealth. So they'd remained in the only home they had ever known.

Ethel had no choice but to remain. Her parents were old now and needed her quiet strength. She'd never had to work and had no hireable talents to offer. The years passed. Both of her parents died and, for three years, she remained alone, without any purpose in life. Then Reuben's call had come and, once again, she found a reason to live.

Old Mrs. Willis finally died nine years later. Ethel was there to take charge of the funeral arrangements as well as to console Reuben over his loss.

After nine years, their friendship had become a habit. Reuben, alone now, needed someone to care for him. She learned to starch his shirts the way he liked, to prepare his favorite dishes, and to arrange his apartment the way he liked it. Was it only yesterday she'd tried again to change his chair so he could look out at the park every morning as he read his paper.

"Ethel, what are you doing? I'm an old man and can't be expected to change my habits now."

She'd sighed and moved the chair back where his mother had always kept it.

The neighborhood had never stopped changing. The growth of the nearby universities had

caused great floods of young people. A large highway rerouted the business traffic away from the area. The big supermarket had stifled the corner store's business. Many of Ethel's friends has grumbled, packed up, and deserted their lifelong homes. Other had died. The remaining group was small, but they were loyal.

Every day Ethel and Reuben met for lunch. Afterwards, they gathered with their group of friends for a session of memories intermingled with neighborhood gossip. If it was summer, they'd sit in the park in order to observe all that went on. No event, however small, missed their sharp eyes. They felt it was their duty to take careful note of everything which occurred on the block.

More and more frequently it became necessary for the group to hold their gatherings at funerals. Hardly a month passed without taking along at least one of their old acquaintances. Out of loyalty to the past and to each other, the group attended each funeral.

For this reason, Ethel had come to dread the ringing of her phone. It only seemed to bring news of another death. Each day she could see Reuben weakening and she wondered how much longer the eighty-five year old man could hold out. So the phone call that morning shouldn't have come as such a shock.

"Miss Norton?" the nurse on the phone had said. "We've been told that you're a close friend of Mr. Reuben T. Willis. We thought you should know - he was admitted to the emergency ward last night. It's his heart."

Ethel was jolted back to her present task when the huge hospital loomed before her. Such a big place. The thought that Reuben was waiting for her, needed her, perhaps for the last time, made her speed up her lagging steps.

Inside the door, she stood still for a few minutes. There were people reading, smoking, talking softly, staring. Nurses were rushing here and there. People entered the building or hurried out. Although Ethel stood directly in the doorway, no one seemed to notice her. They moved around her, letting nothing interfere with their personal business. Slowly she moved toward the receptionist.

"Mr. Reuben Willis. What room, please?"

"Willis, Reuben. Oh - just a moment. Let me get that phone. Now. What is it you wanted?"

"Mr. Willis."

"Oh, yes. Let's see. Room 415. The elevator's over there."

The elevator seemed small and cramped. Her thoughts ran wild. Another loss; another change. She tried to calm herself. After

all, He might be conscious and she could never let him see this weak, worrisome old woman.

The elevator stopped. The hall looked so long and still. She asked a nurse for directions to his room. The nurse pointed in the direction and rushed on before Ethel could ask how he was. Her greatest fear was that he'd be unconscious, unable to know she was there.

The room was dark and still. She stood by his bed, watching for some movement, however slight.

"Reuben, Reuben. I'm here. Don't worry about a thing. I'll take care of everything for you."

She reached out to touch his hand. The coldness shocked her, though she'd known as soon as she entered the room what she would find.

Somehow she moved away from the bed, down the sterile halls, and down the streets to her home. She didn't notice the cars, the people, the sunshine. She didn't think about the past. She headed straight for her apartment. She entered her home. She locked the door behind her. She pulled the window and the curtains shut. The room was closed and dark. She sat down and softly rocked her chair.



all my life is moved in magic,
(comes to wind and goes to fire
(I have found you once again)

(could ride forever higher
(found at last in first desire)
(ride on streams of stars and then

(the sky turns tender, settles into plunder
(you wrap yourself around me and
(we tear the cold asunder

(but for a moment only
(for all things found (must end)
(I hold you tighter and the wind

(grows once more cold with wonder:
(as two together are as lonely
(love is finding what we cannot mend.)

Chinda Gerhard Scheimann





Winged

*She soared into the heaven's wind
with ruffled feathers tingling.
A cry of joy pierced the now setting sun.
Deep eyes proud,
she shifted her golden span,
swooped, dived, spun, and drifted
against the purple sky.
Her delight and rapture were distinct,
even as the flowing wilderness.
She was of what man can only dream.*

Kit Nagel

Linda Gebhard Scheimann

What brings you here? You were not made
for the dull disposability of partings,
goodbye's limp laughter, the swift demise
of years of trying;
truth floats off
light as fleece and fine as feathers;
love chills in the closing of time.

A day, a year, so much no longer
to remember:

the lithe arm

quick warm steps evading
your eyes' clear glint of freedom—
You are clever as a seasoned captive,
bold as a child:

sometimes I have thought you would not die.

Yet now a hand, a warm shadow then,
lights flicker and smooth already the memories
as you grow better and better, colder and colder
in parting;
like all the others
you slide yourself to smooth and secret spheres;
only the ice of your spirit remains behind.



A. Meyer

