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1914/15



the **Lighter**: the literary and fine arts magazine of Valparaiso University, December, 1971.

Editors

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Steve Suppan

Staff

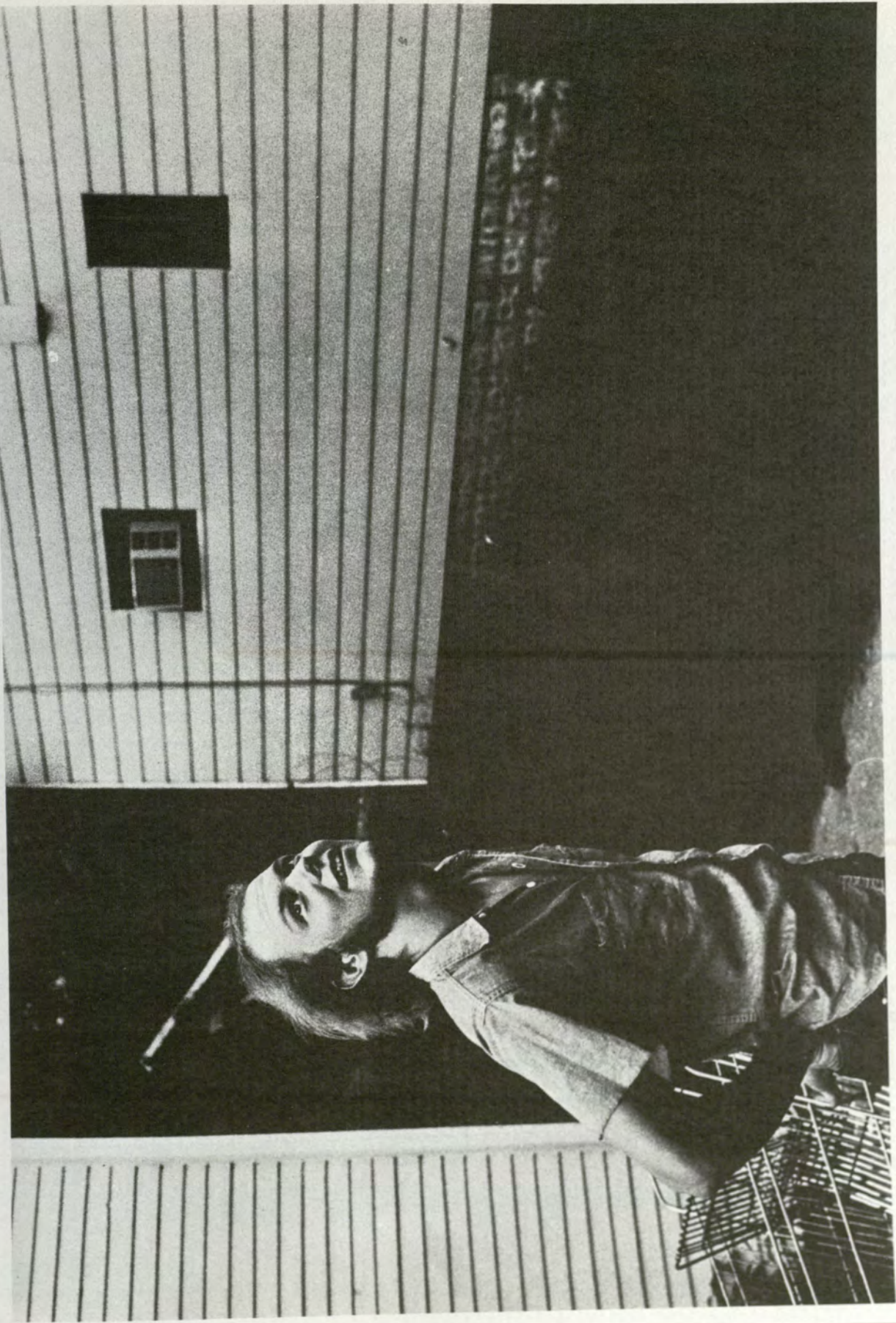
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Kathy Arlt

Faculty Advisor

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Cover

Judy Braham



Dave Heitner

For Eugene Pearson

Slain October 3, 1971

Ah,
Flit,
The leaf,
It falls,
The fall of a graduation,
Graduated through you and me.
And the school?
It graduates too.

Ah,
Slit,
The throat,
He falls,
A Bergerac without a sword.
How shall we define him, you and me?
By a timepiece, a pen
Or a graduation to Thee?

Ah,
Fine,
The spring,
It lingers,
For the graduation,
A new crop fertilized,
Each independent bud speaks to its maker,
And buys time to bloom, to linger.

Steven Suppan



In This Uncontrollable Sleep

Robert A. Shepens esq.



hat I have seen today — cannot be. The mind doth manifest such strange and morbid hallucinations that vanish as quickly as conceived in opiate trances, but to linger as though each moment wished to engrave itself as death to the headstone upon my soul — may God or the Devil relieve me of such torture. It is with great pain that I scratch these words, wrenching from my mind those black images of Hell-on-earth that push stealthily toward my very being, quivering as evil forces at the exit of Heaven. It shall not possess my soul as it did his. I will not let that terrible evil live on. The revolution within my mind sickens me unto death and the senses that have so unerringly related the past events feel as though they wish to take their leave. The familiar sounds from the fireplace and the silence of the grounds merge into one dreamy indeterminate hum that brings upon me an uncontrollable sleep.

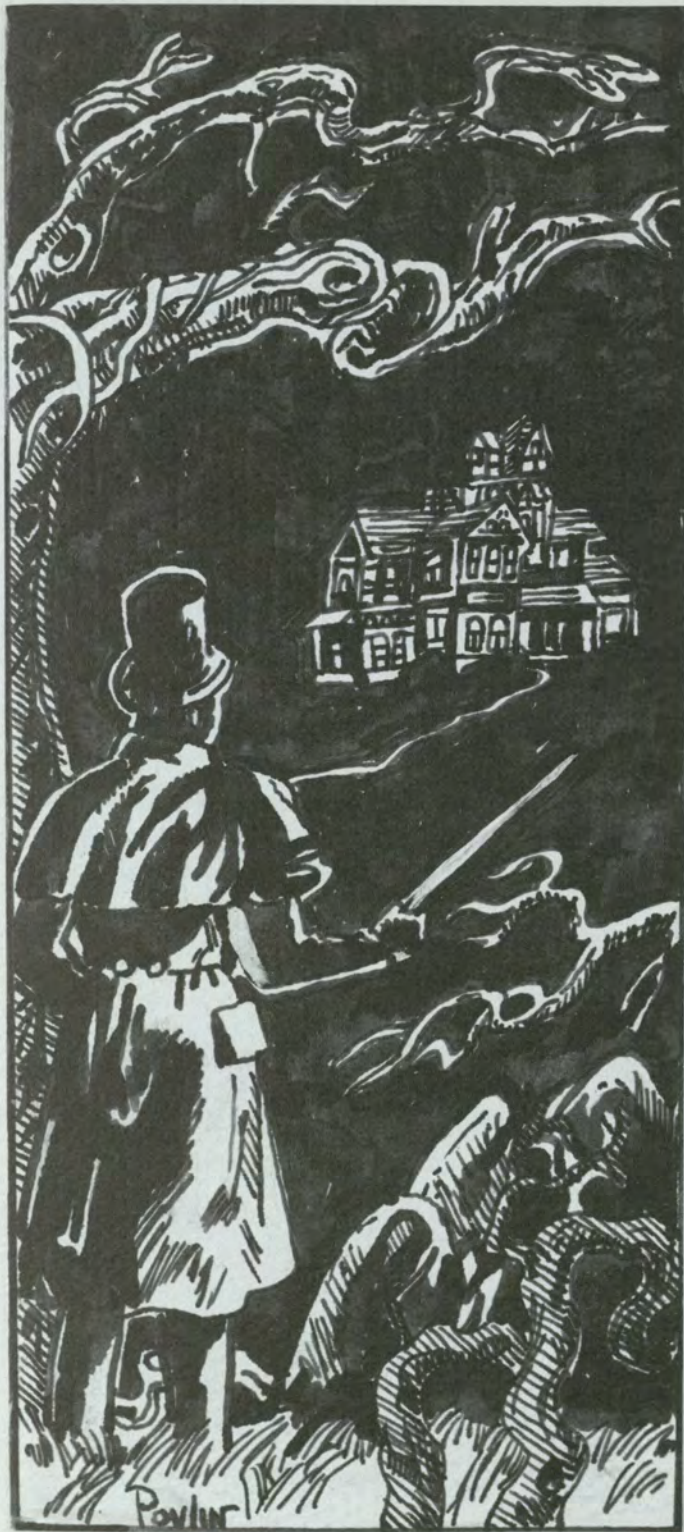
Six months ago, September 18, 1831, while travelling from London to Edinburgh on a much-needed fortnight retreat, my carriage fortuneed to dislodge a wheel near the hollows of Wellingtonshire. The area being of a somewhat rocky nature, and the blanket of darkness falling quickly upon the road, I ventured with my servant to procure the necessary tools that would insure our immediate continuance. Having taken the better part of an hour to reach a summit from which the nearest estate could be viewed, our eyes fixed upon a mansion of great size in the distance, engulfed in the gray clouds of a storm.

The ensuing storm and quickening darkness necessitated our hasty departure from the summit we now occupied, leaving little time to fully scrutinize the most peculiar stature of our expected shelter. The image of the great mansion embedded itself indelibly upon my consciousness, and with great difficulty I fixed my mind upon discovering the most direct route to the estate. The route I had established wound through the hollows of a sizable passage lined with dark caves and sharp cliffs. The darkness having then reduced our vision made it impossible to discern the exact nature of our surroundings.

We proceeded to descend the vaporous depths of the passage, each step being carefully executed upon the slimy narrows of a footpath. The storm that had before warned us of its presence with low rumblings had now deterred its anger to a death-like stillness. At the bottom of our descent, my servant observed a dim light leaking from the opening of a small cave. We paused abruptly and stood motionless as a low, protracted moan forced itself upon our ears. The hideous, intolerable sound shook my frame as though death itself had passed through my being. The moan, sickeningly human, had undoubtedly originated in the cave of our atten-

tion. We quickly proceeded to the entrance under the assumption that someone had been mortally injured. At the moment we reached the cave's mouth, a figure, screaming, sprang from the darkness and wrestled my servant to the ground ripping at his throat. My body, almost super-human from panic, tore the figure from my servant and pushed it back into the cave. Fortunately, the attacker had been thrown against a wall, fallen, and apparently rendered unconscious. Attending to my servant, who had not been injured badly, I heard what I believed to be a faint "help" drifting from the cave. Cautiously, we proceeded with the lamp from outside, into the darkness, discovering a man dressed in gentleman's clothing moaning in a liquid heap on the cave's floor. The light provided a view of the cave walls upon which were the remnants of chains used for torture, centuries past. Silver fungi and silken webs clung to moist rock and a void of stale air invaded my nostrils. Overwhelmed by the hideousness of the situation, I stood the man against the wall and chained his torso as to prevent another attack when he regained consciousness.

Silently, and at length, we waited for a motion of life from our chained attacker. Slowly the man regained consciousness and with weary lips uttered sobs of sorrow. Sanity returned to his composure, and he pleaded for us to free him and listen to his explanation. Having consented to listen only, we heard pleas of sickness before he, perspiring profusely, passed from consciousness. Fearing the man dangerously ill, we carried him to our original destination which we found abandoned. Having lit a lamp taken from the foyer, I hurriedly searched for a place to lay the man. Having finally placed him on a great sofa, I readied myself for a long night of tending to this ill, or insane, stranger.



The morning came slowly and the man still perspiring, had not moved from his original position. My servant readied a carriage in which I decided to take the stranger to the nearest physician. Two hours and an unpleasant journey later, found us watching as an elderly physician attended to the suffering man. The physician, astonished, identified the patient as Devon Howard, occupant of the abandoned mansion. The physician assured me Howard would regain consciousness and that I could stay with Howard if I wished in the adjoining room. Curiosity conquered my will to leave Edinburgh, and I agreed to wait.

Hours later, Howard's condition had visibly improved and he, as from a sleep of a decade, awoke calm, but weak. Amazingly, Howard could converse in a normal voice, showing no signs of the night's events. He inquired as to where he was, who had brought him there, and why. After identifying myself and specifying the events of our acquaintance, he apologized in a gentlemanly fashion and offered to explain himself now that he was obviously far from his estate. I did not understand his relief of knowing the distance from his home, but I was assured a later explanation. Inexplicably, I found myself fond of this strange person, and offered to help in any way I could. When told of my journey to Edinburgh, he informed me of an estate of his outside the city, and extended an invitation to stay there, if he could travel with me. Cautiously I agreed, but I insisted that we delay our departure for a few days while he rested (or showed signs of lapsing to insanity).

The journey to Edinburgh was pleasant. Our carriage had been repaired and Howard, not wishing to deter our departure, had purchased clothing in town rather than return the distance to his Wellingtonshire estate. No mention of

the strange night was made, and while inquiring into Howard's background, we managed only to speak of mine.

Our first weeks in Edinburgh were passed playing chess, conversing, and reading. I found Howard my equal at games and much my superior in literature. We grew very close and a mutual respect flowered between us. Piece by piece, Howard related to me his background, but stopped when I asked about his recent endeavors. Any query into events within the past year turned Howard's warmth into icy bitterness and was followed by a strange cadaverousness of complexion that quickly disappeared. I resolved to end my quest into his personal life and concentrate upon building a working relationship.

But my will was again conquered by curiosity. I found myself asking cunning questions in the hope that unknowingly, Howard might divulge his precious secrets. One afternoon after the fifth month of my visit, not realizing that I had been less-than-sly in my questioning, Howard requested that I stop. My queries had slowly driven him closer to his mental state the night we met. His eyes became somewhat reflective and his speech quickened as he began his long dissertation. I learned from his talk that there exists evil in this world that no man can understand or conquer. Some men are possessed by this evil for misdeeds they have done or from thoughts they themselves have originated. As I listened to more of his philosophy, I found myself agreeing, but with an overbearing pleasure to every mention of the evil forces that can conquer even the best of God's creations. With great effort, I cleared my mind of such morbid thoughts and endeavored to understand the direction of his speech.

After long moments of evil philosophy, Howard slowed his tongue and in a low, soft, apologetic voice, described

the events of the past year. His servant had been with the estate some twenty years, having attended Devon's father until he died, and had stayed on to serve Devon. His valet, being elderly, had taken to many idiosyncrasies, including that of pacing in his quarters for hours at night on into the early morning. During the last two years, Clinton, the valet, had become reluctant to perform the normal duties of the estate with his usual respect for Devon. Clinton had slowly grown a great distaste for Devon's company and spoke hardly a word to his master in the course of a day. Clinton would look upon Devon with piercing eyes and expressionless face whenever their company met. The servant, when asked about his conduct would only reply with a sullen "Sorry, Sir" and request to return to his duties. As the months lingered on, Devon would catch Clinton spying on him from doorways with a more intense gaze and marble expression. To Devon, it seemed as though the servant was always looking in upon his privacy, trying to see through Devon's soul.

The continuance of Clinton's manner Devon could tolerate no longer. He found himself nervously checking corners in all the chambers as he would pass through, expecting to find the servant staring icily at him, only to turn quickly away when he was discovered. The presence of the valet in the house was causing Devon to slowly lose control of his mind. Devon's speech stopped. He looked me straight in the eyes for what seemed an eternity, then cradled his face in his hands and more slowly than before, spoke of his last encounter with Clinton. During a stormy night, Devon had fallen asleep while pondering over a volume of St. Augustine. The tapers burned low and provided only a faint shimmer of light in the chamber. Devon had awakened with an uneasy feeling which arrested his sleep.

Through sleep-possessed eyes, Devon discovered Clinton in the open doorway of the chamber, the dim light falling upon his face — cold, staring, and grinning. Devon dashed from bed, grasped one of two crossed swords of the family arms from the wall, and with one swing, separated the elderly man's head from his body. Without hesitation, Devon pulled a sheet from his bed, wrapped the body and head, and deposited them in the crypts below the mansion. Relief then came to the murderer. He had removed the evil that had haunted his every movement.

For weeks Devon returned to his normal living pleasures, and no twinge of conscience bothered him. He then began to notice the lights of his lamp beginning to play strangely upon the corners of his chambers. Many times he would be startled by the forms that appeared to be moving in the far reaches of the huge rooms where light barely touched. With this, the haunting resumed. The house would creak and shudder through storms, and even during pleasant days, seemed altogether evil and menacing. Devon vowed not to be driven from the house by occurrences that could be rationally explained — so long as he could remain rational. Devon slowly became accustomed to the strangeness of the mansion. On stormy nights he would sit by low flames and stare into the darkness grinning and shuddering with the house when thunder echoed. During the day he would pace quickly but silently about the house, mind blank, and consciously aware of nothing. It was not until he looked upon the drawing made of Clinton by Elton Howard, his father, did he realize what had happened to himself. Clinton's evil spirit had not been destroyed when he was murdered. When Devon had buried Clinton, the spirit that possessed him transferred to the house and had now

started to possess his own soul. He tried to run from the house, but he could not. He was being held there by the spirit that half-possessed the house and half-possessed him. Devon's conscience wrestled against the evil in his soul and the battle brought on a weariness of his body. That night, the night I happened upon him in the cave, the storm brought the struggle inside Devon to the peak on insanity. He must destroy himself, the house, both, or flee far from the reaches of the evil possessing his estate. He managed to escape the house, but knowing that the evil would force his return, tried to chain himself in the cave where he attacked my servant.

I sat aghast at the morbid import of his words. He had first begun with a low, soothing voice, but nearing the end of his confession, he became frenzied and almost incoherent. I felt the urge to become frenzied also, as though the insanity of my friend was communicable, but I drove the force from my mind and returned to see Devon start from the room. Quickly, I pursued him and caught his coat as he tried to board the carriage outside. He cried and screamed, "I must destroy it — now — or it will claim us both!" after which he dealt me a blow with his cane that for at least an hour held me in a nauseous, semi-conscious state.

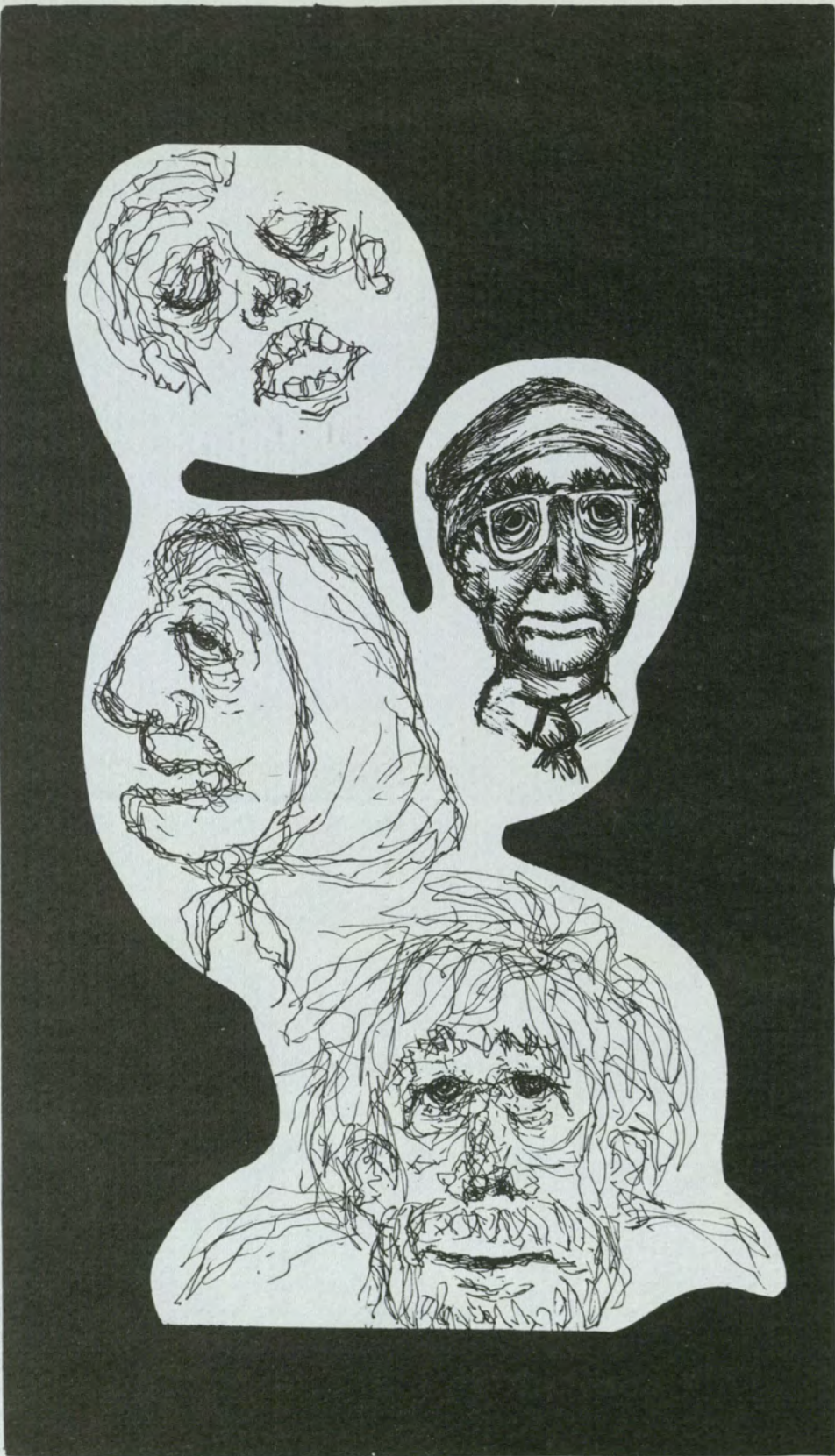
I unsteadily readied another smaller thus swifter, carriage that the one Devon occupied. He was traveling back to the mansion, summoned by the evil there that had finally found him; he was on his way to end his suffering by his own will. I could have let him go, but I had to follow him — to help him — and because something inside of me also summoned me to the evil. The four hour journey passed quickly, without conscious recollection of where I had travelled. As I approached the estate, the mansion loomed in the darkness of clouds that lay upon its roof. The

deathly stillness of the atmosphere about the estate was cut only by Devon's streaking form running from the mouth of the great house. He ran a distance from the mansion, turned back toward it, and with his arms spread wide to the heavens cried, "Be damned!" in long, long, and insufferably final tones. My heart sickened and my stomach tried to rebel. The house then exploded into flames, the flash from which seemed to have the energy of ten thousand suns. Devon, solitary, and in triumph, stood untouched, a full fifty meters from the blaze, when in an instant, he himself, exploded into a pyre. My stomach became uncontrollable. I felt the forcible entrance of something unknown to my soul, something that had fled from

another source, crippled, yet trying to live on. A dizzy madness surged through my being, then subsided to a trance upon my mind. I stumbled to my carriage and pointed the horses toward town, where I made my way into a room at this inn. Here, I am struggling to force from my mind this evil that has killed. I will be and *must* be successful.

As I have just awakened, soaked in my perspiration, screaming over and over "*must, must, must!*" I find that what I have written since being overcome by that uncontrollable sleep hours ago, I have not consciously penned. But the evil or spirit that had possessed me has fled, and I feel the realization of a life-time of heavenly sleep.





Laurie Anderson

Monody

against a whiteplaster ceiling flickering,
gilded mirror-glints singe

a face, green and bronze, twisted with
visions of the street
as the street could scarcely sympathize.

in the guttermud, pigeons and Jezebel gawk at the alley
sawdust trampled — in the ear and in the eye,
whatcha get is whatcha buy:
hope you're satisfied to last. Hurry
the time. Hurry

taxis grease and careen past, blindly the curb to scare
smudged vapors, serpentine around then, on, over
london bridge — is fallingdownfalling down falling
down

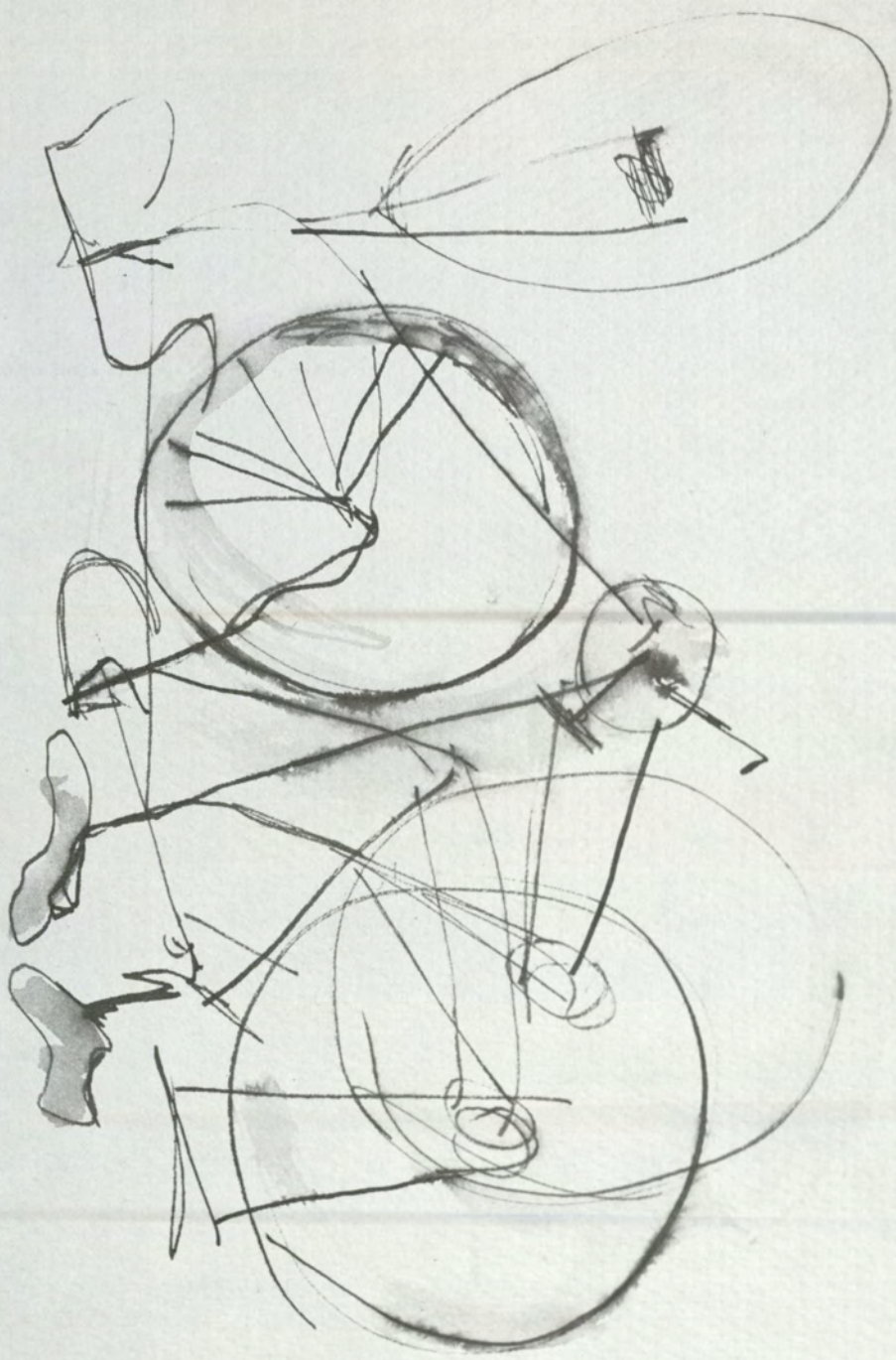
where red toy boats on Sunday sail
to songs of the swan.

Hurry the time — lighting of the lamps blears the sky
and, mocked on a window, fumes through a shutter,
lining idly behind where
hidden hands,
spiring on brine and heat,
grip and cringe
for metal point on bone to a
splintering noise:
now grinding dull: ebony hush.

Oooo plug him, plug 'im, plug 'im sirens boom,
while men and ladies, crowd, squirming to crush,
to see, da' da', the guy stretched out.

Anonymous





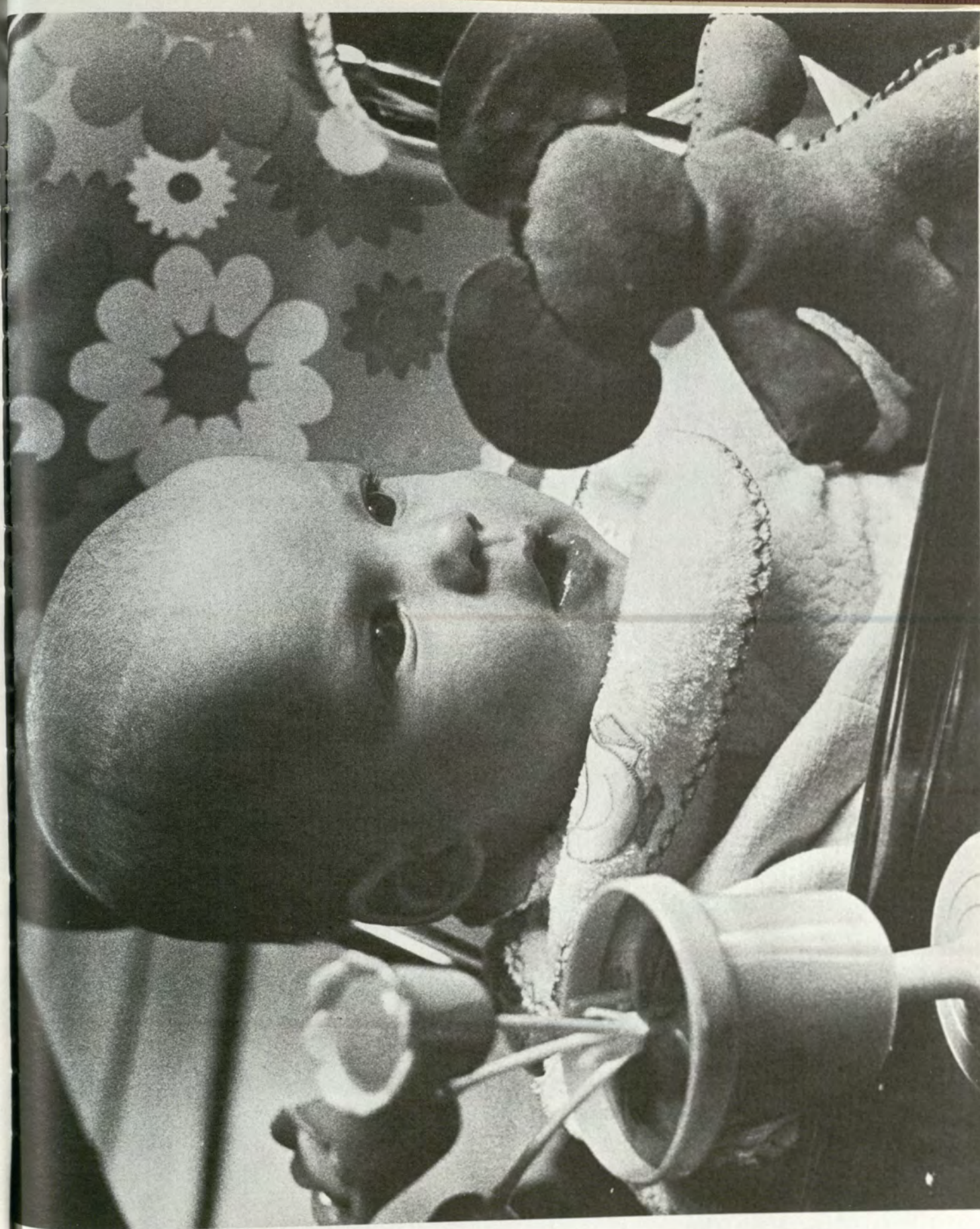
Little Cousin

It has been a year now
since you joined that holy union
with all goodness and evil -
waking with the energy of ten thousand suns
and reaching to the blurry softness
of lights and people.

You cried and we cried
and you spoke to us with your
eyes, your innocence so fresh -
and your heart, like an alms bowl
waiting to be filled with the goodness
from others. . .

I watched you discover (and with such joy)
those little things I take for granted
everyday -
you found those things and I
rediscovered with you -

I've been waking every day now
discovering as you taught me -
the softness and warmth of life,
like you now, lying still, reaching
everywhere in your crib —
happy birthday, little cousin





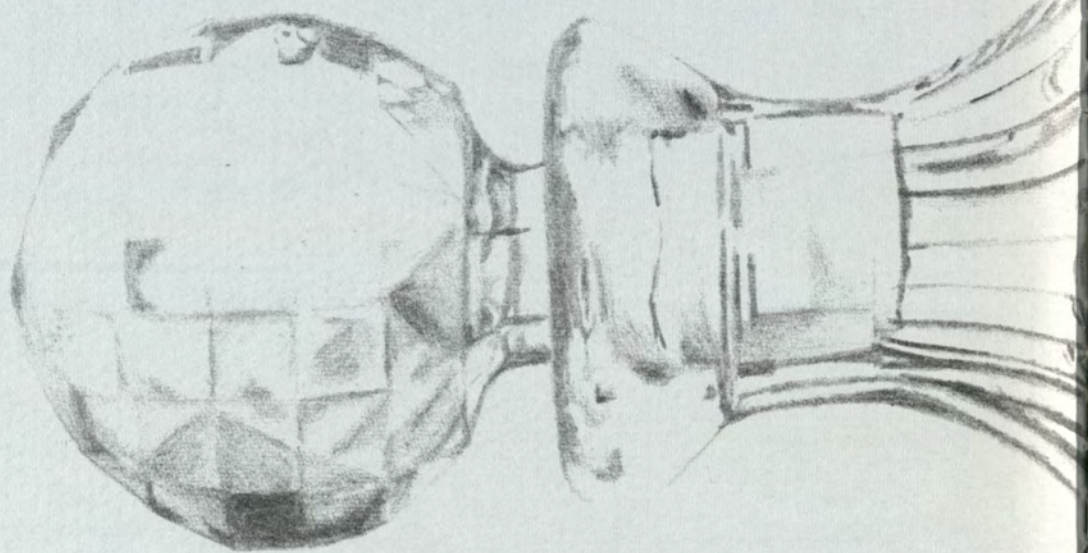
What sensitive men on autumn say,
O Rueful Equinox, life fades away!
When about me wrapt my lover lies
And furious burns life in her eyes.

Though leaf and seed from branch must fall
It's neither Death nor sorrow's call.
For as to wave the shore must give
It's in this act they eternal live.

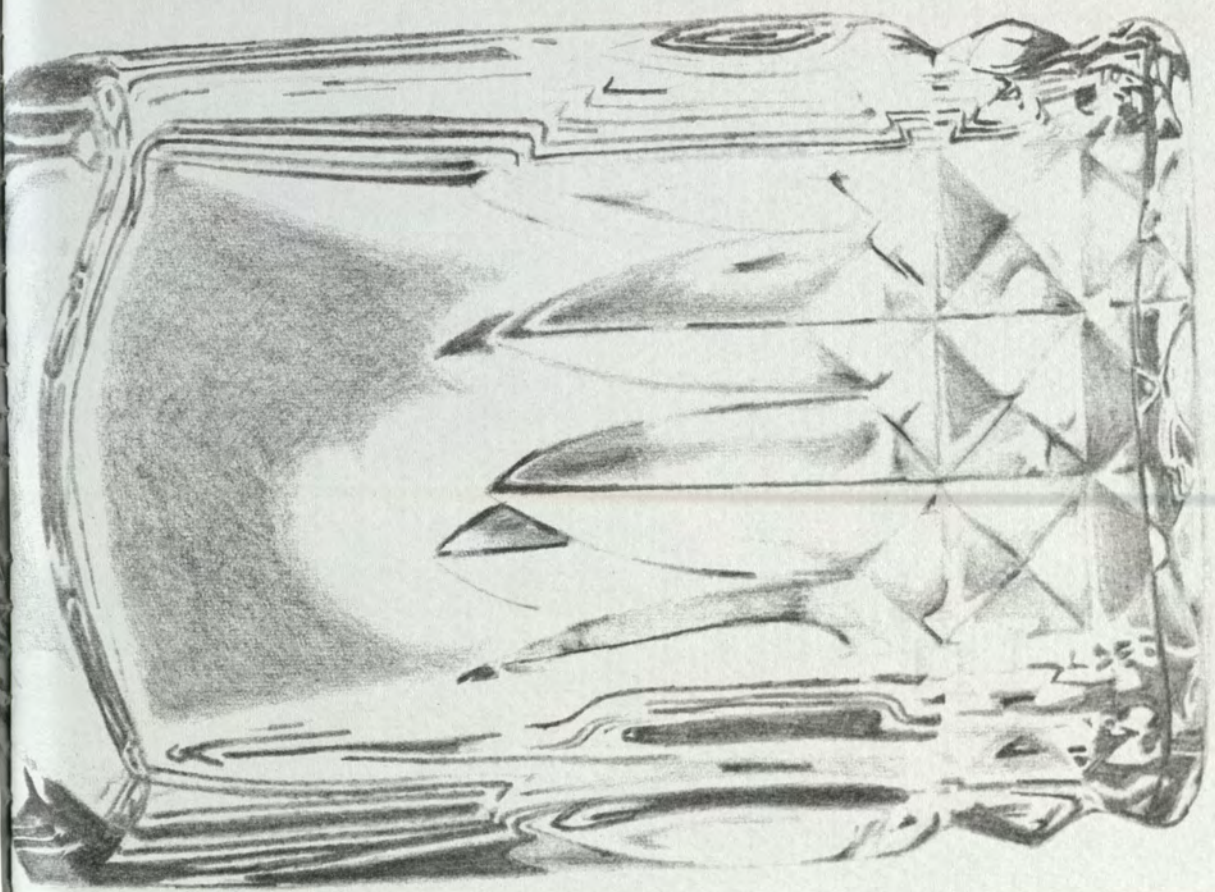
So as we lie in Season's ebb
My life into you I expend.
Through this course and by our due
Deeply taken our spirits renew.

So I leave me and go into you
And going into you I find myself.

Randall Kreuzscher



Curtis Hardy





The New American Blues

by Steve Suppan

Don was the hairiest sonofabitch in the eighth grade. He had sideburns and hairy legs. He always said he could never freeze to death because his legs were so hairy that they were sort of a long underwear. When it was hot and humid outside he complained that hairy legs were a pain in the ass because they itched. But in the summer, at the beaches, he always wore cutoffs, and girls like hairy legs you know.

Godammit, Don was strong. Together with Lipp, Don could wipe out any ten men in the school. Alone, Don could certainly wipe out any four. Even if he wasn't strong, Don was so hairy that he looked like a tenth grader. Few eighth graders will fight a tenth grader.

He was supposed to be in the tenth grade, but he'd flunked a couple of grades or something, which was strange because he was really good in shop class.

I hated Don, when I first knew him. When I was a 99 pound weakling and Don was a 145 pound jock, our sadistic wrestling coach, whose ears must have been put through a meat grinder, has us wrestle, just for laughs. Coach had this theory. If his men were tougher than anybody, they could beat anybody. We'd do things like running two miles in two feet of snow when it was cold enough to freeze the laugh on a hyena. Coach laughed all the way. Or we'd play leapfrog. All the men gather around the outer circle and on Coach's signal, we all leap towards the center circle enclosing our school's initials. These were the minimum standards to be met for all eighth graders desiring to go on to West Point.

I was a good wrestler. Tactically I was good enough to beat Don. But theatrically I was no match for him. He'd snap his jock and throw his hip out and stalk by me. "Come on leetle feesh. You want to take me down? You'll have to suck my cock, boy. . . Come on piranha, eat my meat and you'll get all the takedowns you want. . . Blow me leetle feesh. . ." He would do this all day! In the halls, in phy. ed. class, in shop class when he'd ruin my tools. All day he'd do this, thrive on it, live it, just so he could win. And I didn't dare touch him. But I couldn't rat on him. God, I didn't know what to do. One day he did it when some girls were in the wrestling room. It was so embarrassing. . . I couldn't do anything. . . these girls were giggling and I couldn't do anything. I began to cry.

Don laughed, "Piranha, eat me!" And then he took me down. I escaped, grabbed his head and rammed it into a concrete wall. He beat the shit out of me. Coach just stood around and laughed and did a few pushups.

But after that day Don left me alone, for a year. He didn't bother me and a couple of times he even said "hello" to me in the halls. One afternoon he appeared next to my locker, looked at the *Playboy* pinup on my door, and stated, "Let's get drunk tomorrow afternoon."

"Are you buying?"

"Sure."

"O.K." I never turn down a chance to drink on a school day.

There we were, on our backs, in a marsh, halfway to that blissful state of inebriation, with more beer cooling in the creek. The spring came late. It was still a bit too cold for mothers to let their children play without wearing jackets. Thank God Ma didn't let the brats run amok out there.

It wasn't exactly Marlboro country, but then neither was Marlboro country. Tattered grass in wet dirt isn't much of an eyeful for a T.V. camera. But this is where a farmer makes his living. And nobody looks for you there.

Underneath the groundswell I lay on was where foxes slept. I never saw them, but I saw many tracks. I don't think the foxes would come out except at night. The marsh was trapped between the end of a city and the beginning of a small airport. It was a perfect playground. So the foxes stayed indoors.

"Don, when I was a kid I used to play Army here. I was a grenade thrower."

"You were a grenadiere." He got up and returned with two bottles of beer. Plato would have been far wiser if he drank beer. "Sometimes I was a sniper, Usually I never got shot, but one time this big kid killed me in a tree. I was way the hell up there, at least fifteen feet, so I leaned against the tree like I was dying. He says, "Hey you bastard, fall!" I says, "You're crazy. If I fall, I'll kill myself." He says, "If you don't fall, I'm going to climb up there and break every bone in your neck. And then I'm going to take a hammer and play piano on your rotten knuckles." He cracked his knuckles. So I jumped. Luckily I didn't break anything. But this kid comes over and smacks me. He says, "Get back up there and fall. I don't want a goddamn paratrooper. I want a falling dead man." I told this kid to go fuck a Russian race horse and he beat the shit out of me. Probably broke more bones in me than if I'd have fallen out of a tree."

"Well, there's no justice in the world," I said, getting another bottle of beer.

"Sure there is. I learned a whole lot from the experience. I have principles about knowing when to play. Big part of growing up, principles."

"Here, Don have another beer. . .Who. . .I sure do like beer. . .Ahhh. . .You know, you're too serious. Principles will kill you my friend. . .I don't know why anyone who robs drugstores worries about principles." God, I shouldn't have said that, even if I was drunk. He hit me hard, but he was wild and I wasn't hurt too much. I think he was too angry to really hit me. "Who told you, little shit?" he shrieked. He was screaming, punching and slapping so fast that I could hardly hear him. I faked being unconscious. It wasn't too hard to do. There was little reason to remain conscious. Finally, he moved off me. I tried to regain consciousness gradually. "I'm sorry I said that, Don," hacking for sympathy and evidence of my defeat. "It's a lie."

"Don't fake the cough, Al." He was breathing very hard. "I'm sorry too. . .It's no lie. . .Al, look a rabbit!" A rabbit stuck his head out a bit from the burrow and popped back in when Don threw the football at him. We took turns driving the rabbit back into his burrow, all the while drinking beer. It wasn't a bad life.

"Tarzan. Ah-E-Ah-E-Ah-E-Ah," said Don. He stripped, ran to the creek and dove in.

"Don, you're crazy!"

Sensibly, he climbed out of the creek. Then he shinnied up a tree, from which a thirty foot rope hung over the creek. He grabbed the rope and flung himself out over the creek, sweeping back and forth, letting his toes frisk the water.

"Pass! Pass!"

"What?"

"Pass the football, idiot!"

I threw a limp pass, hoping to float it up to him at the top of his swing. But it didn't quite reach him. Don dove to catch it. He caught it! But as soon as he hit the water, it spluttered out of his hands. Fantastic catch, but he couldn't hold on to the ball. He came up bobbing and hacking in the water. "Come on in. The water's fine."

"You crazy bastard! Do you want to freeze to death?" I gave him my jacket as a towel. He hacked all the time he was dressing. I thought he'd catch pneumonia. He insisted on going home by himself. We were both pretty sober for different reasons.

Just as I thought I was becoming Don's friend, our principal announced that the school district was being divided and that there would be two high schools. According to the line of demarcation, I was to go to the new school and Don to stay at the old dump. On such chance happenings have empires crumbled. He didn't have a phone and I didn't have a car, so I didn't see him for more than two years.

On a rainy summer morning in late August I met Don again. I was working at an all-night gas station. At about 5:00 a.m. he drove in a hunk of green junk with "PIG" slobbered on the side in pink paint.

"I wanna buck's worth," he said drunkenly.

"Right," I said. I always say this because I think it sounds more business-like that "yes sir."

"All"

"You cocksucker!"

"What are you doin'man?"

"Just working in this dump to get money. . . Going to buy me a car that'll make the women fight to kiss my toenails! . . . And I'm waiting for school to start. I just want to score some C's and get out!"

". . . I dropped out of school. . . you know that, don't you? They kicked me out."

"Well, school isn't everything. I'd leave myself, except I don't want to hurt my old lady's feelings. They're all idiots anyway. That's the only thing I've learned at school."

"You know, nobody said good-bye to me. . . Just this old janitor, he said, "Hate to see you go. That's all."

". . . You don't look very well. Why don't you go home and get some sleep? Things will be better in the morning. Good sleep, hot bath, good meal, clean clothes. Make a new man out of you. . ."

"Ah. . . Right. . . Go home." He crawled into the back of the car and fumbled through some dirty socks and junk. "Home, home, here I am home. See this. It's a Christmas decoration and a Christmas feast. He threw a half-eaten pizza at me. It rolled comically into the street.

"Hey look, I don't give a shit a out this job. Regardez," I said in the only word of French I knew, "The sun has risen. Let's play baseball."

He stared at the rain and pouted, "I don't want to play. Besides, you'll lose your job idiot!"

"Nobody will drive in until 6:30. Anyway, to hell with the job." Don had just got a full tank of gas for one buck. "What better things do you have to do?" I'll play ball with anybody just to pass the time. It is very boring, working at an all-night gas station because nobody buys gas between 3:30 and 6:30.

"Yeah. . .O.K. . .I don't have much to do. I'll move the car." He kicked the "PIG" into gear and took off without paying for the gas. But miraculously he just took the car around to park it on the other side of the station. Then he crawled through the open window of the car and fell to the ground. The door was wired shut. I ran to get a ball, bat and gloves. I returned to Don staring at a bottle of Gordon's Gin. He dropped it with purpose.

"You idiot!!"



Margo Miller

He looked at me as if I were a plebian or some spiritual tenderfoot. It was his booze. I shut up. He reached into the "PIG" and pulled out a brown bag. He produced from it a very expensive bottle of whiskey. . . He held it up for all to behold and then he made a cross over his heart. Not being a Catholic, I didn't make the sign of the cross but remained reverently silent, trying to understand the meaning of the symbol. Clearing my throat, I said, "Lord Ass, I welcome this new day and declare it for the king!" Then I gargled some of that good liquor and spit it on the concrete. Don looked on approvingly and then declaimed in thunderous tones to the silence of 5:10 a.m., "Count Cocksucker, you are blind. When the sun does rise I claim it for the queens and their pimps on Hennepin Avenue." Then he gargled the liquor and spit it out. And he took out his last pack of Camels and pissed on them.

We ran from the gas station to the Little League park. From centerfield you can see everything that goes on in the station, because there's only a block of empty field in the way. Don batted first and fungoed a few way up there. They were so high and so beautiful to watch. Didn't even bother to catch them. Could hardly see them at 5:20 a.m. Don drank, then hit, drank, then hit. As it got lighter I began to make superb catches of fly balls. Ground balls, however, were a problem, because the morning swamp gas hadn't lifted from the field yet. It all looked like a low flying heaven and we were the poor man's celestial choir. Have mercy on the Lord.

When I came up to hit Don was pretty well drunk.

"Hey, I'm hitting like Babe Ruth."

"Fine," I said, taking his bottle and giving him a glove, "Let's see you field like Willie Mays."

"I can't field like Willie Mays in this rain. I'll field like Charlie the Tuna."

"O.K. fish, you do that," I said and took a big gulp of whiskey.

I hit incredible fly balls. He made spectacular catches, colossal, considering that any other human being would have had difficulty standing on the field, let alone running on it at top speed. What Grace! What a transfiguration!

"See what happens when you piss on Camels?" Run like a gazelle. . . Look! Look! I'm fucking Superman!"

"You're fucking Aquaman!" I shouted as he bellyslid through a centerfield pool of water to make a sportscaster *unbelievable* diving catch. But he kept on sliding, right into the centerfield fence. He didn't move. He didn't get up. He just lay there. But by the time I ran out to help him, he was sitting upright.

"I want some booze. Get my bag! Liquor will save me, my good man." I got the whiskey and the brown bag. In it was a bottle of rum. We shared it. Rum and rain. What a drink! And there was still whiskey!

"Hey, my lights are on."

"Green Lantern, you're too drunk to turn them off. I shall do the honors, kind sir."

"Don't bother. The car will stay put."

But as I turned towards the "PIG" to shut its lights off, the boss drove his car in, with the fishing boat behind.

"Don, all I had to do was to keep that job for four more weeks, and I could have got this car that'll have the women begging to kiss my toenails. I gotta have that car." The boss got out of his car and stared at me from across the field.

"Hey, don't leave me man. . .let's finish this rum. . .Don't leave me man."

I ran like hell, past second base, over home plate, getting soberer by the second, falling and stumbling less and nearly upright until I fell in a mud puddle. As I got out of the mud puddle the first thing I saw was the boss laughing at me. I started to run towards him yelling, "Don't fire me! I gotta have the job!"

But he didn't listen. He turned and walked back to his car. Just as I got up to his car he started it up. He unrolled the window about a quarter of an inch and said, "Bill will be here in half an hour. You're fired. I'll mail your check." He rolled up his window. He unrolled it to throw out a cigar butt. Then he was gone.

"Well, that was sweet. I certainly must live on borrowed time." And I went into the station to have a last candy bar on the boss. In spite of the whiskey, rum and rain, my mouth was dry. The candy bar must have been four months old. I nearly choked on it. I felt morose about selling them. Goddamn Western Civilization! It takes them 6,000 years to make a good candy bar and then you can't even eat it properly.

"Ah, . . .my last customer." I firked out there to this idiot like a vampire on the prowl.

"Fill it up. Check the oil and tires. Do you sell first aid kits? Oh, yeah, I need a map."

"Are you sure you want this gas? . . .I mean are you really sure?"

Do you know there's organic detergent in this gas? Do you want to burn something alive in your engine? Do you want those little enzymes to die just so you can drive to the store? Why, the might rust your engine, clog your manifold and blow you all to hell! What will your kids do when you're gone? Who will be Santa Claus? My friend, what you need is Bisco-Frisco candy bars. Eat twelve Bisco-Frisco candy bars and smash that mountain down! Bisco-Frisco candy bars went to Mount Everest on the backs of a yak herd. Just wait here and I'll get you four free boxes of Bisco-Frisco candy bars for being the 5,000,000th customer in this wonderful enterprise. Wait just one moment

. . .Hey, don't leave! I didn't check your oil. . .Can't even do your last customer in with Bisco-Frisco candy bars, reknowned throughout Americal!"

Gas is stronger than styrofoam. It's also prettier, and you can't touch it in the rain. You can't even touch it after it dissolves the styrofoam and slips and slides around the pebbles, greeny-yellow-blue depending on where the rising sun catches them. They hold on to the pebble for a teensy bit. And then they're gone, rolling on and on.

I melted 48 styrofoam coffee cups with that gas. At first I was amazed that the cups didn't hold gas. But it does make sense that they shouldn't hold gas. Gas is stronger than styrofoam and in the battle for atoms and bonds, it follows from survival of the fittest that there's little reason for those little molecules to stay together. So inevitably they drift apart in solution. It's kind of sad watching all those molecules evaporating and draining away. . .What a marvel, gas.

"Don is drinking all our rum," I said a while later, after thinking about where I could get another job. And I ran, ran, ran, to that good, good rum.

But Don had broken the rum bottle and the whiskey bottle. And all that good liquor had seeped into the ground with his blood. Don had slashed his wrists with the broken bottles. But strangely enough I remembered my Boy Scout training. I made tourniquets out of my ripped up tee-shirt a pen and my comb.

There was one thing I couldn't help and that was Don's superhuman strength. His big bleeding arms had driven the jagged whiskey bottle deep into his stomach. The blood slowly dripped from the bottle, occasionally gushing when he panted too deeply and his stomach heaved. Through the amber colored glass I could see a little pool of blood. It rippled over the open stomach muscles. The little muscle fibers were very still and only got excited when Don groaned or breathed to sharply.

I gently laid him on his back, so the blood would return to the bottle. He opened his eyes and looked at me wonderously. "Al, here we are. You're here. . . Stay here Al."

"Yes," I said. "You stay here. I'm going to call a doctor and an ambulance."

"Hey, don't go man."

"I'll be right back O.K.? We'll sing all the way to the hospital. Wombat a boo bah," I chortled in sub-bass. And then I took off. Twenty feet away I was at full speed. Don screamed.

He had turned over on the bottle and was wriggling on it, jumping around like a mechanical worm. Hacking and laughing he grabbed my leg and sang, "Let's sing 'I Want To Die.'" I wrenched him off my calf and pinned his shoulders to the ground.

"Stay there you goddamn sonofabitch!" His stomach heaved and the bottle rolled like a message from some stranded sailor in a rough sea. He went limp. The blood flecked his mouth, and I carefully wiped it away. The sea had calmed. And I ran like hell to call a doctor. But I didn't have a dime for the pay phone in the station. I reached into the cash register. Billy lays a hand on me. "Hey, bum. Get out of there. You don't work here anymore."

I remember every nanosecond of trying to destroy Billy. I remember my scream, how I turned on him, the fear in his eyes, the lax jaw of surprise, his teeth caving in and cutting my knuckles, his scream as he fell through the window, his stunned body lying among the shimmering glass in the morning sun.

Keep calm, Al. A Boy Scout is calm. I raised my voice only once when I called the doctor. I was very calm and dialed only two wrong numbers. I gave the correct address and number of injuries on the victim. And then I ran like hell back to Don. I kicked Billy as I ran over him and nearly fell in the shattered glass.

"Don, I called an ambulance and they're on their way. They're bringing a specialist, a singing doctor, just for you. So we'd better warm up the vocal chords. Ta ta do da . . . ta taa do do My Baby."

"Da da do do to die to die yeah yeah bop bop a loo." He stopped, but his heart was still beating I heard with my ear on his chest. And there wasn't more than four inches of blood in the bottle.

I wanted to pull the whiskey bottle out of his stomach but I thought I might kill him. I've heard stories about manslaughter charges brought against guys who tried to help this guy hurt in a car accident. So I just sat and waited for the ambulance and made sure that Don stayed still. I took off my pants and made a pillow for his head. There wasn't much else to do.

I probably looked like a war refugee to the ambulance drivers. Wet, dirty, my knuckles bleeding, sitting in my underwear staring at Don. They gave me a blanket and some hot coffee. That felt pretty good. The world really flashes by in a hospital. They gave me some orderly clothes and a meal, so I could wait decently.

The doctor said Don died of internal bleeding, though the external bleeding didn't help much either.

I was afraid to pull out the bottle. What would have happened if the blood squirted in my face? I might have done something stupid. I might have tried to put the bottle back in. Or I might have pressed his stomach to stop the bleeding. What if his guts came through the cracks in his stomach? What then?! . . . I'm kind of glad I didn't do anything.

Don's old lady came to the funeral parlor. She looked at him waxy eyed for about a minute and walked out. His sister came and she cried. I tried to console her. "There, there it's . . . uh . . ." Well what do you say? You can't say, "It's alright." That's ludicrous. Then language and all those ohs and ahs don't make sense and that defeats the purpose of language doesn't it?

Lipp came. Part of his jaw had been shot away, part of it in a fight and part of it in an accident. He couldn't help drooling out of the side of his mouth as he stared at Don for fifteen minutes. Those three and me were the only mourners in the funeral parlor. Only Lipp and I showed up for the burial. I couldn't understand why, because Don and Lipp were not the best of friends since Don had shot away Lipp's jaw while they were hunting. Lipp smoked during the priest's final incantation and threw the butt into some flowers as he walked away.

I wish more people would have been at the funeral. Don would have wanted it that way. When we were in the marsh he said to me, "Al, ultimately men, especially common men, want to be remembered. Their last chance to be remembered, if they're not famous, is their funeral. I want a lot of people to come to my funeral . . . Doesn't that make sense?"

"No, pass me another beer."

"I'll have one eye open when I die to make sure everybody sees me and I can see them."

"That's illogical. You can't even sleep with one eye open. How do you expect to die with one eye open?"

"It will happen by the will of God. If it doesn't, I'll have my will read, 'To my mortician I bequeath this needle with which to sew my eye open.'"

"You're not twenty-one yet. You can't have a will."

One good thing came out of Don's funeral. I got a job as a night attendant in the drive-in section of the funeral parlor. All I had to do was to take phone calls, arrange flowers near the deceased, and open the back door in case one of the mourners was so moved that he'd get out of the car to pay his respects in person.

During the twelve weeks I worked at the parlor, I performed this last duty only once. This big greasy guy wearing a dirty tee-shirt came in. I was surprised because most people dress up a bit when they pay their respects. But he grunted and said, "I wanna use the phone." Then he called up and ordered a pizza. He didn't even know the deceased. I don't even think he saw him.

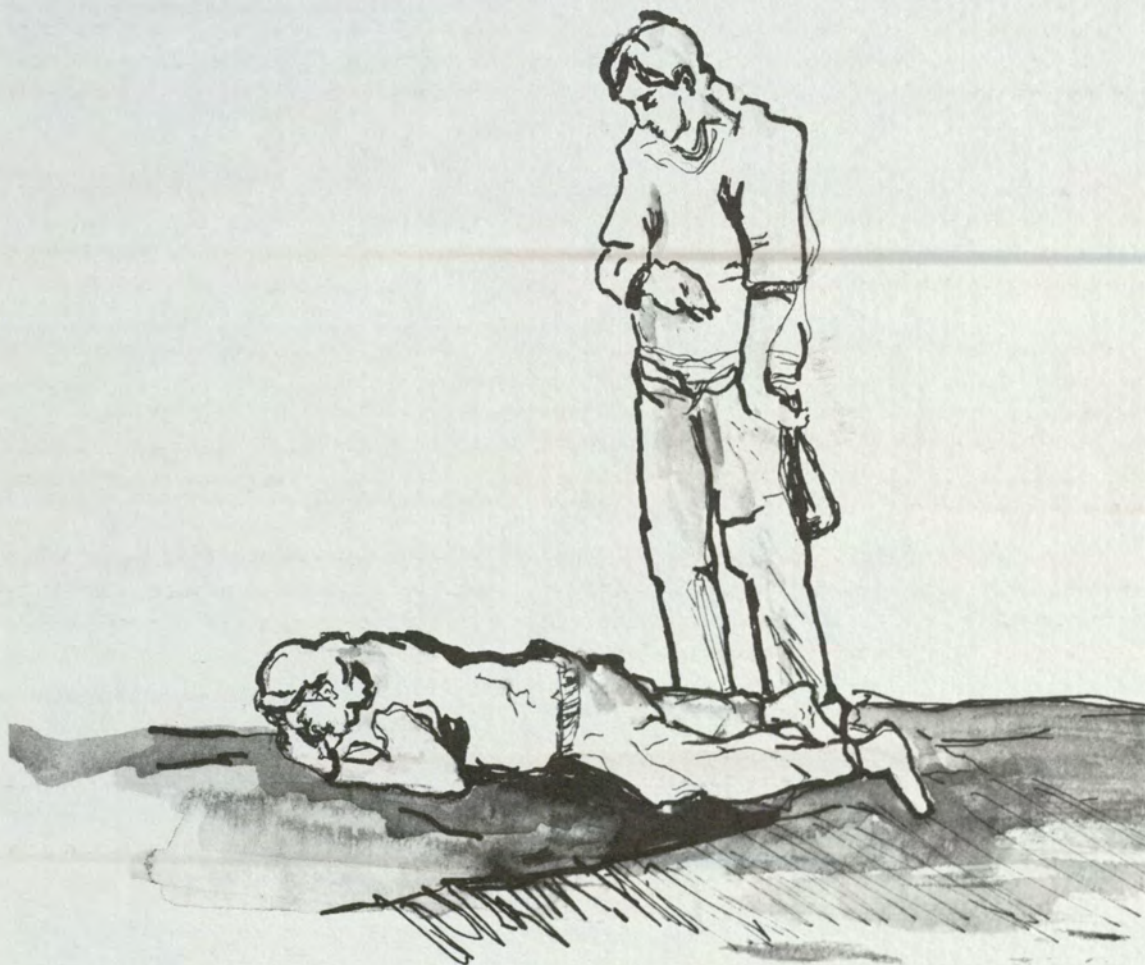
I quit the funeral parlor in order to avoid what the morticians call the Christmas rush. More people die during the holidays than at any other time of the year, except during the Fourth of July weekend drownings. They wanted me to work both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day night.

"Christmas is pretty important at our house," I said to the manager.

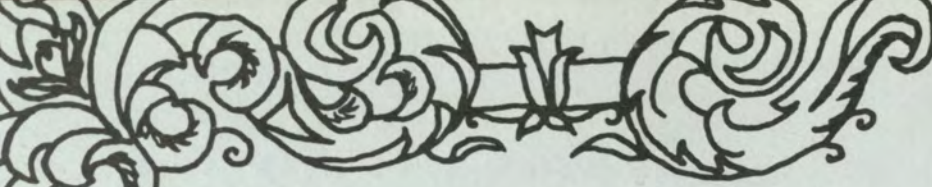
"Do you want to keep your job?"

"Not very much. Have a Merry Christmas," I said, walking out for good.

I had enough money to buy a car. But fuck it, what do I need a car for? My old man will let me use the car when I need it. I can get along.



Margo Miller




Daneus in Scribbledness

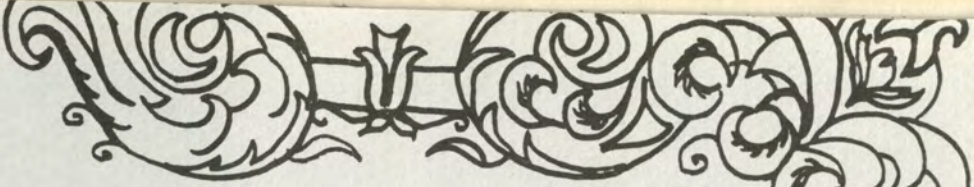
Once in wilders-scribbled land,
Dā-nē-us, long a-siding faeroic sport,
had past the vines and, dancing, floting,
near approached the denser wood
of drunken slumber, in a bed of leaves.

Here, near a water-falling, flowing spring,
the moonsaine gone, the night's clouds lingered,
serving well the other's cause:
to rend the sun illusion.
Here morning found Daneus rapt in leaves...

As morn rose, he delit
while, dizzy, passing into dreams,
of how he'd matched his clever, spritely wit
against the tricks of three quick, elv'ic friends -
and left them all bewilder-struck.

He, first, in rolling sleepy laughter,
had rempt of Lembran wandring thru the wood.
Ah! how he'd made that knave a jack!
left him wand'ring, wondring, "What is truth?"
who'd sought t'escape th'illusions of his mind..



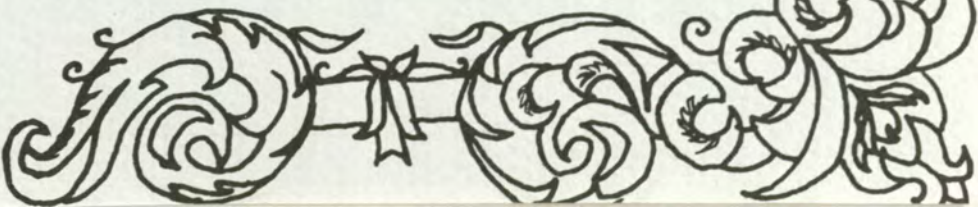



Daneus simply said, "Imagination
makes the shapes and colors good
within a wood called Scribbledness."
Then Lembran, seeing scribbles, lost the wood:
more clever than to make him lose his way.

Daneus drempt a longer fricken speech
to lolly Dramon stumpt in wood:
"To Tell a Fool who. Sought to know himself"
We are but faeries, as defined in Pomes;
We are as real as goblins, gods, and gnomes.


We live here in this wooden scribbledness,
Half-characters, half-lines emotionless.
There is an eye that watches over us;
Our motion is the working of its mind.
As scribbles we're to scribbles well defined.

His words had caught the poet's eye,
while Dramon sat unmoved:
he'd found himself, a scribble on a page.
Then as he wondered how to act,
Daneus danced away...






He dreamily danced, more deep'ning sleepily,
meeting Pandrake on his way.
As Pandrake knew of bright Daneus' tricks
and wondered at his wit,
Daneus quickly offered wise advice:

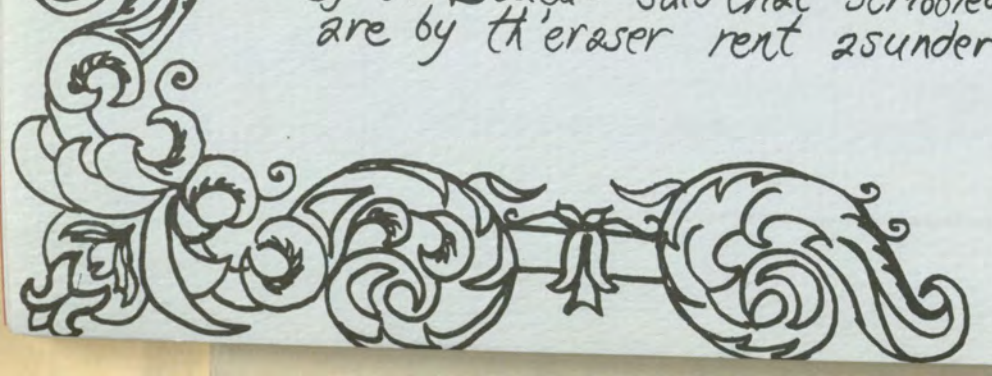


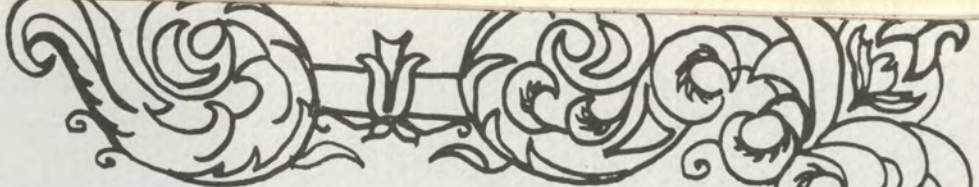
"Quick wit," he said, "is scientific art.
For Science breaks the whole into its parts,
and parts thus broken, Art is not surprized,
Do never surface wholly to our eyes.
Now, Art takes out of wholeness principle..."

"And, this removed, Art, too, o'erlooks the whole.
The wit will never understand the Arts
and much less Science, principle, or parts;
But from outside he speaks to dumbly show:
(In principle, the parts perform the whole."



Now Pandrake caught in this that wit
is wholly seeing from outside,
and so he sought t'escape from Scribbledness.
Of this Daneus said that scribbled's bounds
are by th'eraser rent asunder.



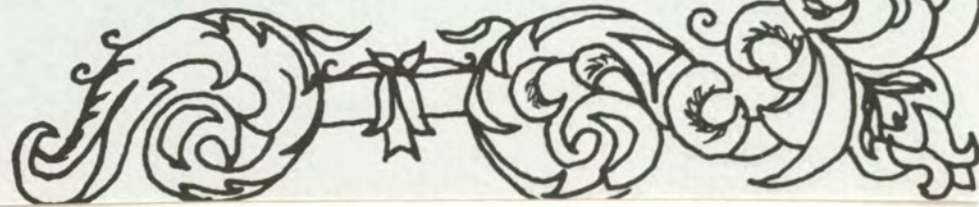



So Pandrake 'rased himself from Scribbledness,
Daneus' dreams, and from our tale.
At this more 'n ere Daneus gleef'ly laughed.
For none in any faerie tale he'd read
had even drempt a trick so fine as this.

So, thus contented, long he slept and past
and deeper 'til the darkness shined and broke
and once again was melted into dream...
In this Daneus met with Hospre
whose wit had brought him coins in O'ron's court...


With Hospre whose wit had first been fine
in lower courts and lost him coins;
whose wit Daneus thought (and soon was sure)
was lost in younger days:
such wit was found within Daneus' dreams.

Hospre, now mellow with life's cares,
also knew Daneus' tricks.
Rumors of the well-known rascal
oft had made his old heart chuckle.
Yet Daneus drempt his tone admonishing:



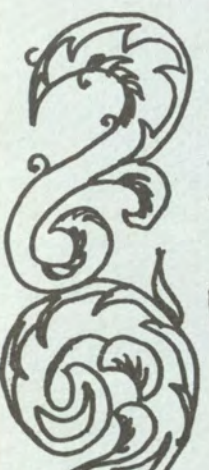


"Quick imagination is a gift," said Hospre.
"In youth it makes our games and pranks a joy.
But, squandered there, it finds our old days wanton.
Soon you'll find you've only this to satisfy
your thirst for fuller understanding."





At this Daneus merely merrily laughed
and said he knew already
how to satisfy a thirst...
and even if he feared he should forget,
he needed but to practice often.

Hospre continued: "Wit but gives expression
to what to the eyes appears.
It fools who is wise enough
to see its incongruence.
'Til one day the wit will fool the wit..."



"You'll wonder at th' imagination then,
and need to know much more than what you see.
As Lembran, who you've left in scribbled wood,
you'll learn the mornings' shapes and hues
are by the sky prince chosen carefully..."





"Of your lack of knowledge, understanding
has already crept into your mind.
For you are sleeping, you are dreaming;
Your imagination said these things...
Soon you'll wake, but will remember."

Daneus knew this **Hospre**, who'd brought to mind
such thoughts of lacking understanding,
was no use to him but only trouble.
So he sought a clever trick
to fool the wise, did wit out of his mind.

"You've not caught me," said Daneus,
"for I know that I am dreaming."
"I'll merrily pass to deep and blunter sleep,
and when I wake you'll be forgotten.
We'll've matched tricks, and you'll be beaten."

With these thoughts, Daneus' dreams dissolved.
The fading shapes and shades paraded
to the storehouse of such goods.
But suddenly, to his surprise,
Daneus jolted full awake.

Martin Haines

it rang loud and clear
announcing the death toll; it rang.
I sat, thought it might be a friend;
thought twice, and decided to come

but it rang loud and clear.

the door opened and there stood a black soldier,
and as I think now, black, very appropriate.

it rang loud and clear.

Joyce, a sister, somewhat beyond me in years
looks into me with dread-filled eyes

loud and clear.

experienced much too quickly to remember all
but the outline:

"Mr. Heitner, I'm Col. Adams
to inform you your son was killed in action. . ."
muttering on, loud, but now not so clear. . .
he sat with father, they talk, calmness like that
before the thunder - hot, dry and still
until - explosion

loud and clear.

tears, and old fond memories dig circles in your head. . .
it can't be true -

but it rang loud and clear.

Susan Heitner

