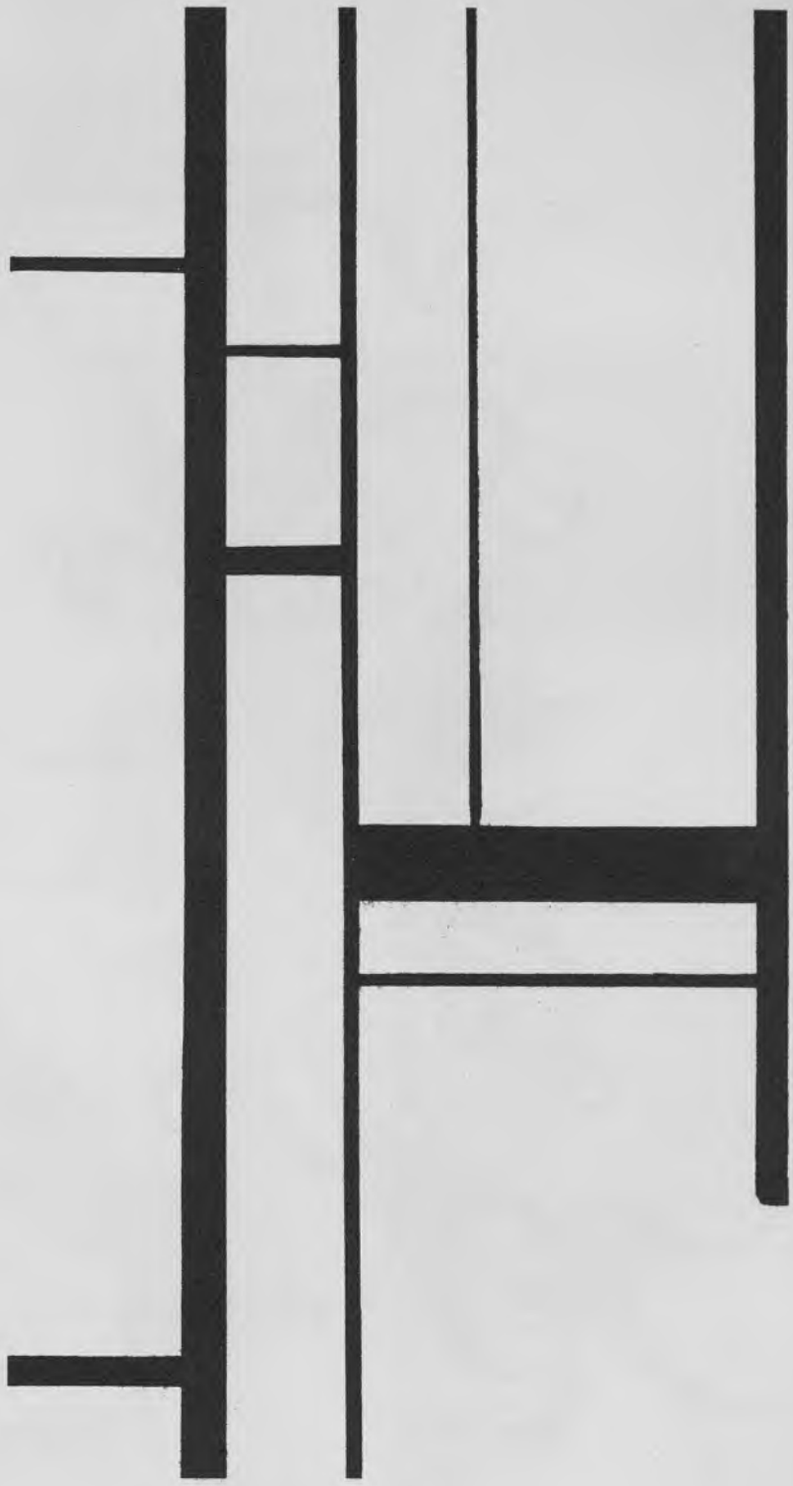
APOGEE



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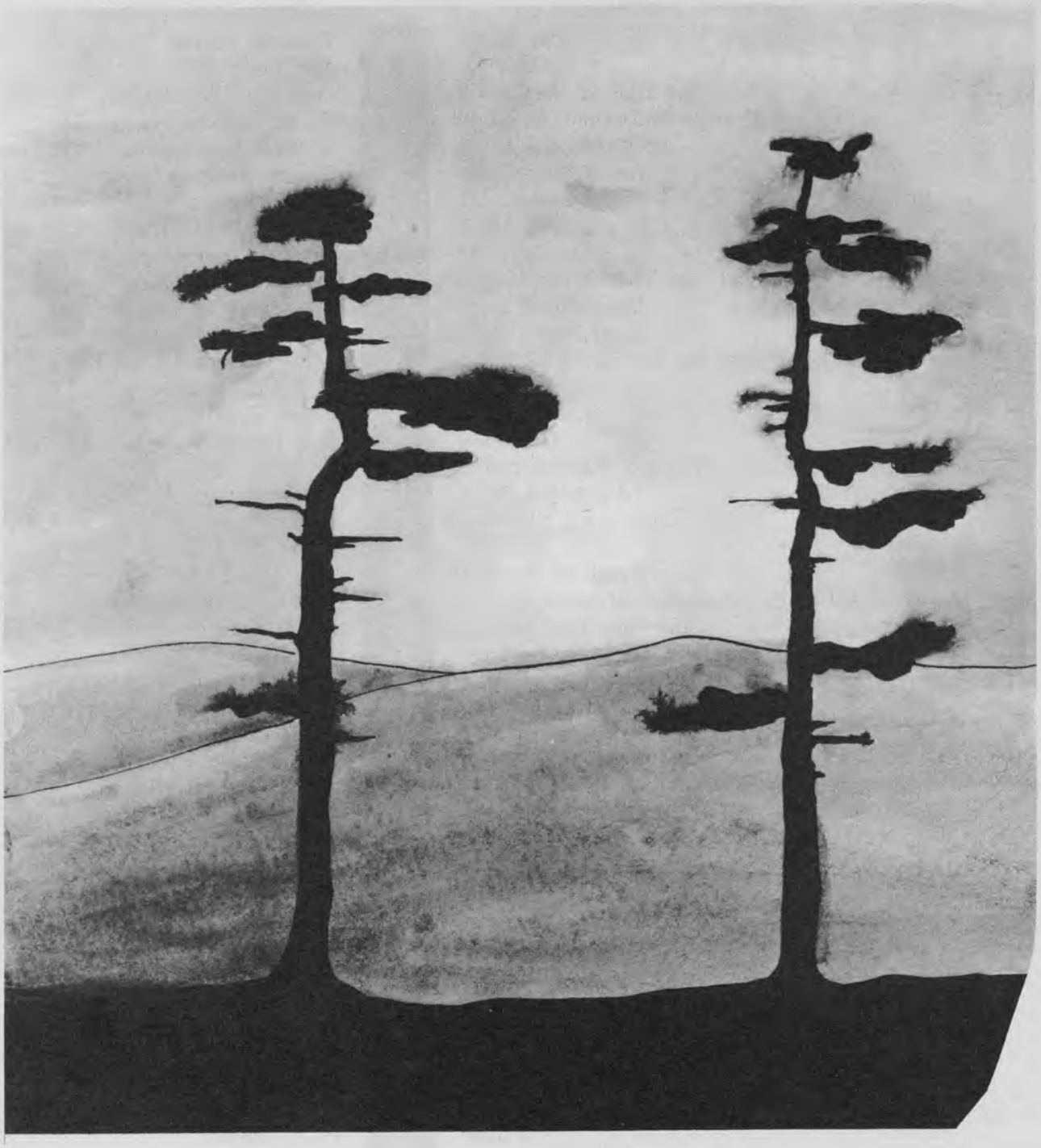


TWO PINES —FRANCES GARRIS

WATERLACE

Those dripping pines
Sagging with the weight of dampness
In a hilly region soft with fog,

That quiet coldness on a morning
In time,

When deer lie in windfalls
And the forest does not move,
Does not talk,
But watches through the smoke
Of waterlace on all the earth.

There are no roads in time
Winding with the coil of snakes
To encroach that hidden country;

There is no motion
But wind and water,
Gentle, touching with wetness,
As hands closing together in sleep.

—JIM SLOAN

THE HUE OF THE LAUREL

—CATHERINE POINDEXTER

I have been practicing medicine in the Smokies now for about thirty years, ever since I finished my training. When you work in a place like this, away from everything convenient, life is hard for a while. The people and country grow on a person, however, so much so that it becomes impossible to leave.

I had served so long in Clayborne County that I wanted to leave someone to take my place, preferably someone of my own blood. I would have, too, had it not been for an old fence post hole. When my brother and his wife were killed in an accident several years ago, I inherited Jim, my nephew. At the age of seven, when he came to live with me, he was a black-haired, pale, yet agile child and a wizard with horses. When he became a young man, I bought him a roan mare named Snowbird; she was a real blue blood. I have often said that I could always tell when Jim was coming home because of the pattern of Snowbird's gallop. It was decisive and lacy as a Chopin waltz.

I had planned to leave the mountains a doctor—a better doctor than I have ever been, for Jim was the right kind of material. He was gentle, patient, intelligent, and had the desire to heal—a great deal of desire.

My dreams were cut short one bitter November night, when Snowbird, in a fast canter, stepped in an old fence post and broke her leg; she threw Jim against a slab of rock in the mountainside. It is strange, but the laurel never seemed as bright after the accident and the little creek that runs beside my house never seemed to sing as it once did. But I am an old man.

Well, enough of my reminiscence. Last month we had a terrible storm, one of those summer thunderstorms with all its fury and fire. At about nine o'clock in the evening, on the night of the big blast, my phone rang. One of my expectant patients named Ellen Wright, who lived in a remote section of the country, was in labor. Before I could answer her excited husband, the phone went dead. Just as I was saddling up to ride to the rescue, my hired man Fred ran up and shouted that the bridge was out. A river separates us from the Wright farm and I was too old to swim through fifty yards of swirling water. If I could get a boat—but the wreckage of the bridge would prevent a crossing.

I stood outside a long time that dreadful night watching the trees writhing in agony and listening to the chant of the wind. Then suddenly a flash of lightning would illuminate the yard, and I could see the dog asleep just inside the barn door. I was worried about Mrs. Wright because it would be a difficult birth, and it was her first child. I felt helpless and very afraid. Suddenly, I heard a sound that awakened some half-forgotten emotion. A horse was coming up the road, running as though the gates of hell might open under his feet at any time. He had a run I recognized—a brisk, rhythmic, three-beat pattern like a waltz. A young man was riding him like a jockey. His hair blew in the wind and he sat lightly and easily in the saddle. I tried to yell and tell him that the bridge was out, but he rushed on without pausing.

The next day, as soon as possible, I got a boat and paddled to the Wright farm. When I burst into the room Mrs. Wright was sitting in bed looking tired but unruffled. She said that a very lucky thing had happened during the night. A young doctor had come to their house, lost in the storm, and had delivered their seven-pound boy. She said that he had raven hair that accented his paleness and that he limped when he walked. His hands, according to Ellen, were the gentlest, coolest hands she had ever felt and they seemed to siphon the pain away. It was strange, though, for the next morning when Mr. Wright had gone to wake the doctor for breakfast he was gone, and the oats that he had left for the horse were untouched. As I walked home that afternoon, after leaving my boat, I noticed that there were no sharp-cut horse's tracks marring the muddy road. And suddenly the laurel by the roadside caught the glint of the sun.

FRANCIS McDERMOT ON MAIN

A tattered shadow
Winds its way
Serpentine
Through shrouded
One-way streets,
And shraggled soles
Rise and fall
Imperceptible—
Seeking the silence
Of balm-swept Gedde.

Lusty illumne
Of dirty cotton clouds
Merse
With billows of putrefaction
And descend
Stilling—
The furtive folly
Of natted hulks
Who shuffle—
Wizened raw flesh
On jagged concrete.

Glazed orbs sunk in
Dreams of solace
Once held the beauty
Of west-wind seas
And marveled moist
At the blood-red splendor
Of florid shimmer skies . . .
Now rot
In withered hollows
Of unremembered radiance.

Pallid and empty
Those who knew—
And didn't
Pause . . . and heave
Their weary sighs
Upon his sallow breast.
Weaving whispers
That pass
Then stumble broken
Into the night.

Now as the rain falls gently
And willows sway undisturbed
On the grassy plains of Lycia
Earth and soul are met
In the murky opulence
Of fetid streams
Which unrelentless ebb and flow
Gathering the tears and time
Of children
Sleeping on its banks.

—P. M. LEMONS

AN OCCASIONAL STING

—Michael David Hoke

In the barber shop today I met a buddy from high school I hadn't seen in three years. He was lean and hard, his skin was leathery dark and his hands at a glance resembled claws. His eyes were wide and piercing, a dramatic result of the Vietnamese conflict. The boy had never been without a quip or a smile in the old days. The man never smiled once today.

He's the same age as me. In the ninth grade we cut class one day and got in trouble.

I asked him if he had seen any action. He didn't brag or shoot the bull. In eleven months he killed over thirty men. I believe him.

I got to comparing. While I've been learning about dysteleological surds, he's learned to crack bones and rip out bowels. I studied Shakespeare as he studied the M-14. While I had practiced putting and the correct tennis grip, he had practiced cutting down imported elephant grass.

Longfellow said something about the long, long thoughts of youth.

I said good-bye, and he said he was going back in a few weeks. I gagged out a "good luck" and left.

A few steps away some Millis Dorm intellectuals were discussing what kind of liquor and prophylactics to buy for the weekend.

SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE —SHERRY SULLIVAN

SONNET #1

When Sisyphus defied the gods in hell,
They gave him work on a production line;
And every day in fact'ry did he dwell.
To him a never-ending job they did assign.

Thus every day he worked from eight to four.
Eight hours every day with no relief,
And every day was like the day before.
A punishment like this defies belief.

A man cannot conceive the great despair
Our Sisyphus must have with each new morn;
For always and forever he is there,
Regretting every day that he was born.

God spare us all the fate of Sisyphus.
What greater hell could be than living thus?

—Don Andrews

THE SHAFT

A haunting mist surrounds this rocky reef
    And, as we once stood here, now I alone
    Think of those hours and minutes lately grown
Into eternities of mocking grief:

A loneliness so heavy no relief
    Is found in words or music of light tone.
    Tears blur the eyes to bright things I am shown,
As brutal winds destroy the old belief.

But from this barren crag a view comes clear.
    The solitude of a gravely wounded heart
        Produces keen perception of mankind's

Symphony — heard only by a delicate ear.
    Pain and anguish are the parents of all art,
        And suffering souls the brothers of deep minds.

—Michael David Hoke

SHE LEFT ME

She said good-bye before she left—
    She wanted to annoy me.
Few understood the meaning of her leaving . . .
    They cried and wondered why she left.
For God is good and God is great(?)
    And yet the good-bye was still so bitter.
She knows I killed her,
    An act so pure and sweet.
They all know,
    But do they understand?
Damn.

—JACK DRISCOLL

TO SYBIL: AS THEY WERE HAPPY

I remember those days
as they were happy
And we saw green upon the dunes.
We ran as children to the sea
where the waves washed
the sand from our feet,
And we laughed as the seaweed
tangled around our legs
(A frightening feel)
And we picked the stubborn weed from
our bodies and laughed
As we ran simply down the
youthful beach.
The sun danced brilliant
upon the waves
Hypnotizing and blinding.
But we were happy
and built our castles
Teasing the sea to destroy
them,
And laughed at our childness
As the sea inevitably came,
But we always built more
Until the sun drove
us from the sand
To the cooling shadows
of the house on pilings.
And we lay on a blanket
talking and mostly
listening to the wind;
I found a strand of seaweed
clinging to your thigh,
Dried, but still clinging
And we laughed
As I softly pulled it away.

And the night came with coolness
in the wind and heat
in our bodies.
We walked upon the beach
with the stars now
playing music on the
sea,
And we listened and heard
a discordant sound
but didn't seem to
mind.
We were happy by our
savage sea
And climbed the dunes
together panting—
Each helping the other
to the top and
sliding gently down the
other side,
And walked slowly back
to the darkness of the pilings.
I gathered the blanket
in my arms and
We frowned when I lifted
the seaweed that had
clung to your thigh,
And tossed it aside
not noticing
As we forced a laugh
through our teeth
and turned away.

—DAVE GILBERT

THE HAPPY LAND

—Jim Sloan

To P. M. Lemons
For writing the myth
That appears by seasons
And rarely lingers after youth,
For between the up and down worlds,
As we have learned,
Live shades of understanding
So dappled, so delicate
As to be waterlace or window rain.
In our tears are sounds,
Rushes of air behind the clouds,
Lost and standing, forever new
As green notes of music with April hue.
The river rocks once skipped,
The falling buildings of another time,
The rail fences which become a little
Shorter every year.
Tell little boys
The lateness of the hour;
And now, today, tomorrow
The earth that should be known
Is silent but for the listeners
And the listeners have grown old.

The stars faded with the red slash of sun through the haze of industrial smoke, and the white line of turnpike stretched ahead across the rolling Pennsylvania hills. As the hum of the car gradually awakened him, he became conscious of his cramped position in the back seat. His mouth felt dry and his stomach queasy after a night of motion and exhaust fumes. Glancing up in the dim light, he saw his mother and father sitting silently, lost and thinking to themselves. The dirty sky lightened as he lay and glanced upward through the slant of window. At his feet the dog trembled and whined, her legs moving. He knew she was dreaming, probably of some rabbit chase. He laughed to himself, then thought that in the city where they were going there would be no place to run. He was quiet and still for a long time although he was awake. The two silent silhouettes began to change position and he heard them talk of stopping to eat. Soon the constant speed of the car slowed and he know they were stopping.

The breakfast was mostly quiet; he asked questions about where they were going and he was answered, but there was not excitement in his mother's voice.

"Will there be some woods?" he asked.

"Oh, I'm sure there will be some," she had said.

He let the dog run in a field beside the restaurant and chewed a piece of dry grass, looked at the hot hills of late August. The sun was hot and his shirt stuck to him. They started again and crossed a big river at Harrisburg. No more did he look ahead now, the silence of the day and the heat of the car brought the drowsiness of monotony. He felt in himself a contentment with his thoughts. There was no need to play or talk; the place, the time let his awareness satisfy. He knew there was sadness and discontent in them all. He felt his father's quietness as an unsureness, not of their direction, but of his mother's feeling about moving and leaving to go to another place—a place which he reasoned she did not like and was afraid of. A chill of unhappiness drew the sides of his mouth down and he felt a part of living, living with change.

He knew what he would miss because he thought of big cool rooms in a big house, wide fields, the hard indifference of his uncles and cousins, and the air. The smell which reached him now was acrid and thick with people; he felt afraid to breathe it. He thought he would get sick if he took a deep breath and let it inside of him.

"There's history here," his father spoke then as though he were finishing a thought he had had the day before.

"Southern armies burned and pillaged this area one hundred years ago on the way to Gettysburg."

He looked out across the shimmering hills and burnt grass and imagined the dust of armies and the sound of many men.

* * * * *

Evening came slowly, falling gently, the sun descending and fading like a flame in the smoke of towns. The whirring engine, the pulling stop to pay tolls, the endless road led on. The night with its lighted motion, magnified in movement, held the noise of people and cars within its canopy. He knew then he was trading the dewy evening grass and chill for the hot, dry pavement, the cacophony of city sounds. Looking to the sky, he saw the reflection of city lights in pale opaque reflection dimming the stars, cancelling the moon and putting it in a box of dust. The smell was of salt and burned-out carbon — no dampness from the river bottom, no faint pungent earthiness or upland wind. He knew the change, but left it for the swirl of sight and sound around him—lost it in the intensity of growing. For him the coil of expressways held a story, just as the clouds told him of rain. Not knowing why, he felt himself stepping from one form to another, saw a loosening and a lessening, predicted a sadness that would remold and teach him another way. The betweenness was already upon him; he was alone in its tumescence. The dog sat still looking away from him and quiet; his parents busily stilled their thoughts and lost them in road maps and directions. His eyes closed briefly and in the blackness he tried to remember all of the things he had known. When he looked out again, the thrust of buildings hid the sky.

BLIND MAN'S RAIN

—Nancy Nash

The silvery drops of rain beckoned to me with a gentle call that came when the glistening drops became one with the earth. Fascinated by the vanity that they created, I walked outside.

A grey dampness crept slowly over me and I wanted to run to safety. Had I not always loved the rain? What was I afraid of? I tried to rid myself of this fear, but still this unfamiliar sensation remained with me.

The wind swept me along like a fallen autumn leaf being pulled from the safety of the tree. I looked about me—searching for something unknown. A change had occurred —the rain now seemed harsh and the oneness had vanished. The drops no longer seemed to unite with the earth; they raced forward, meeting the ground head on.

The beads seemed to defy the earth, to reach up and pull them down from the freedom of the vast sky. They screamed as the impact came . . . a long wail as if they had been destroyed and realized the destruction. Millions of screams pierced my head.

WHY DON'T THEY STOP? WHY CAN'T THEY STOP? Suddenly I was screaming with them . . . silence. The sweet sound of nothing caressed my ears until in the distance the floating notes of a song drifted into my numbness. It was a warm, happy song-melancholy with out being sad—cheerful, without being gay.

I opened my eyes to the world. A blind man in a tattered raincoat was sitting on a bench, whistling the tune I now heard clearly. He smiled—I knew it was at me though his vacant eyes could not search me out.

"Hello," he said. I could do nothing but stand silently. "Isn't the rain beautiful?" he asked. Inside I shouted . . . YOU FOOL — HOW DO YOU KNOW? . . . YOU CAN'T SEE THEM . . . YOU DON'T KNOW THAT THE RAIN MAKES THE WORLD HIDEOUS? . . . I remained still.

He continued . . . "the beauty of rain is that it isolates man from everything except himself."

I spoke . . . "But you are by yourself all the time—you are blind— you see nothing."

"It is true I am blind, but I do see. It is just in a different way. I see the rain as a time of thoughtfulness, a time when you are confronted with yourself. You are alone . . . being alone is the best way to discover yourself. But the rain doesn't come often nor should it for you can find yourself in solitude, but you can't see it to build character.

"The mirroring of yourself creates your feeling towards the rain. When you are content with yourself, you look upon the rain as nourishment for the earth. But when you are confused or dejected, you strike out at the rain calling it vile or dreadful."

Suddenly he quit talking and smiled again —a smile that expressed more than his words. It encompassed the whole world and seemed to embrace life. He understood — it was as simple as that.

I turned and walked away, noticing that the rain seemed to embrace me — welcoming me to the world or was it just me? The silvery drops seemed to glide towards the earth . . . the earth opened her mouth to drink and so did I.

To the Little Girl On Aluminum Crutches

Three came in (girl angels),
Two as complete
As made by God,
But one crippled
As made by God.

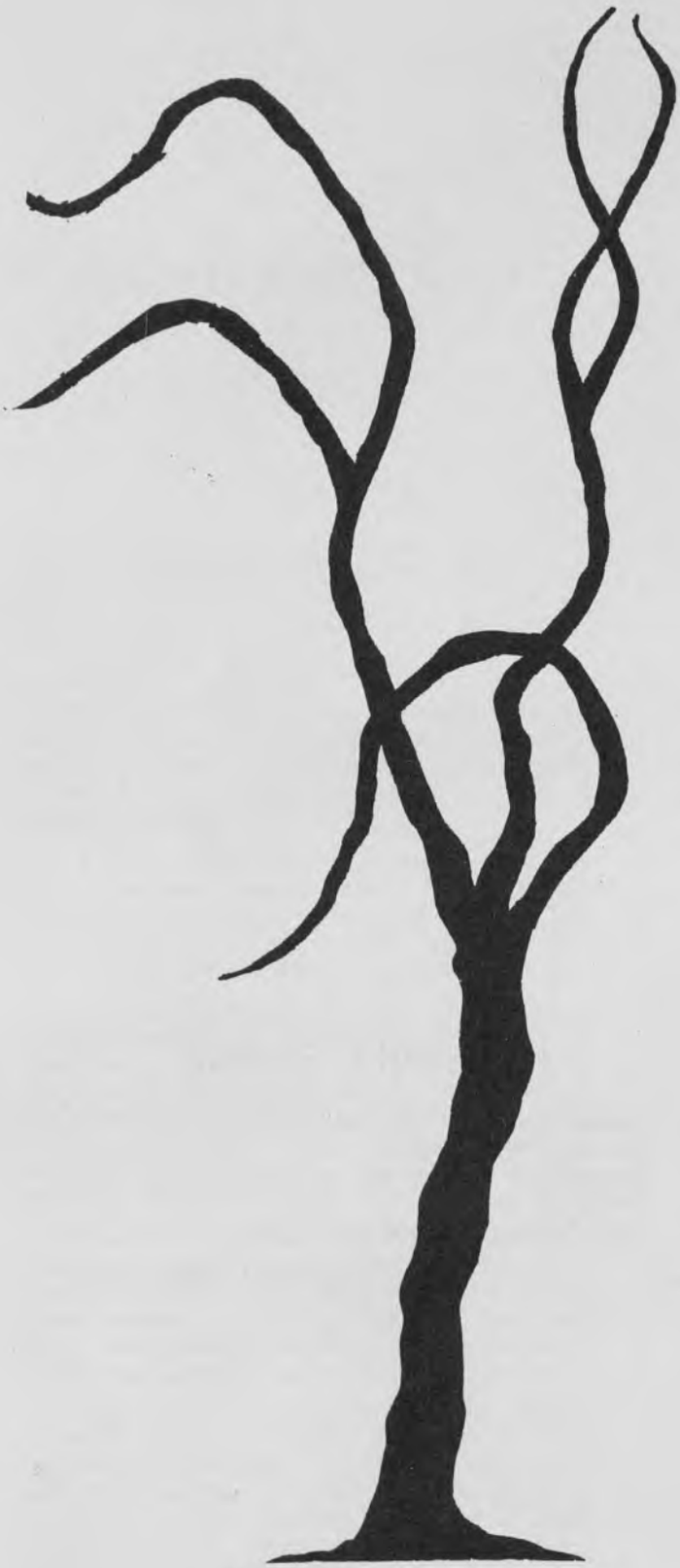
Two silvery aids (man-made),
Used to correct
A mistake made
By Almighty God.

—Dave Gilbert

FACTORY SCENE

Under the silent observant hiss
Of puny white lights
Saber-saws chatter and gnaw,
Skilldrills scream,
And Inspectors hunt for a flaw.

—Leif Eriksson



CHUMLY

—Roger B. Stuart

"Young Beauchamp Cholmondeley, you have proved your prowess in the field of forensics, and your ability in the rhetoric is above reproach. Henceforth, by my own decree, your function shall be as Royal Page, responsible to me, serving all of Castle Magdalen and its environs." After years of apprenticeship and diligent training, the King had finally recognized my qualifications. That my predecessor had died and that I was the only applicant for the position, dampened my delight somewhat, yet my revelry reached no repression, but increased in rigor as those words recurred to my ears. Ah, but I was a happy one!

Imagine, my own father's son, Royal Page to the Castle. I knew I would joy in the job, yet the work was not without a drawback. As the induction of increasing numbers of Royal Servants progressed, our once comfortable kingdom was rendered so crowded that the peoples began living jointly. It was my grave misfortune to have been given quarters with the Royal Headsman and Tormentor, the local Lord High Executioner.

It was on one particularly snowy late-December night that I first unnerved myself enough to approach the Headsman to inform him that I was to share his dwelling. I shivered ferociously as the snow melted through my scant apparel. A Page's uniform, the most ungodly-gaudily bespectacled and wonderfully snug leotard affair, though pleasing to the eye, plays havoc with the normal bodily functions. Fitting better than a glove (in point of fact, I believe the glove was designed after it), a leotard leaves definite evidence that circulation has been appreciably curtailed. This evidence is generally in the form of "purpled" extremities, a kind of badge of brotherhood.

The Headsman's home, being opposite the courtyard guillotine—a present of a French admirer—was quite simply located. As no one answered my rapping, and the door was unbolted, I entered. The interior was singularly dismal with but little lighting. All around on the walls were hanging articles of destruction and other related endeavours. My attention, however, was arrested by a great oaken box in one corner. My hesitation in opening it was exceeded only by my dastardly curiosity . . . there I opened wide the box. A disgusting odor permeated the air, and several score of flies deserted its contents. I had to put a candle to the opening to discern what was inside, and . . . oh! . . . reaching in and grabbing the stiffening folds of something once soft, I brought forth from the box what appeared to be the putrefying remains of a . . . dirty undershirt. My curiosity being somewhat satiated, I repaired to the bed chamber and was soon fast asleep.

A hot, heavy breath pulsating into my face awakened me, and I found myself staring into the ominous, deep-set eyes of whom I thought to be the bed's owner. I felt a sinewy hand on my shoulder, and before I realized what was happening, I was dragged from the bed into a standing position against the wall. My sanguineous opponent then addressed me with this brief soliloquy:

"What war ya doin thar?"

Understanding that to inquire as to the reasons for my presence, I retaliated thus:

"I, my good sir, am the envoy extraordinary of the King's Royal Plenipotentiary Force and Diplomatic Corps of the Ambassadorial and Ministerial Assembly whose procuratorial powers in all matters of proxy are paramount."

A long silence ensued. Then, the Headsman affirmed my statement:

"Ya mean yer a Page?"

"Yes, I am a Page, and a good one, too."

"Wot's yer name?"

"My name, my good fellow, is Beauchamp Cholmondeley."

"At sounds like a district . . ."

"A-ha, very good. And what is your name?"

"Doxo, Doxo Leveson Gower."

"And that sounds like a motto."

"Wuh . . .?"

Rather than parley with the gentleman, I decided to state my reasons for being there:

"Doxo, I am here because I am going to live with you."

His fingers toyed nervously with his axe handle. I tried another approach.

"Sir Gower, the King demands . . . er, the King suggests, I live with you."

He said nothing — he only stood there and stared. Then, slowly, he approached until we were face to face.

"I don wan ya ta live ere."

"Oh, come now good sir. Why not? You have nothing to hide, do you?"

He thought for a moment, then:

"I 'ave a skel'ton in the closet . . ."

"Oooooooo yesssssss, I might imagine!"

"Now, ya get outa 'ere, else I'll tear yer bowels out an hang ya wit 'em by dat rafta."

I carefully weighed the pros and cons of the situation and, had the rafter not been so terribly high, I might have chanced it.

"Now, sir, either you condescend immediately, or I shall alliterize you in onomatopoeic simility and metaphoric verbalition, or I may hyperbolize you with oratoric rhetorization."

He did not quite grasp the meaning of my utterance, I dare say it is rather deep, yet tried to bludgeon me with this threat:

"Yeah, well I'll 'ang ya by yer ears 'an peel yer skin offa ya."

"My dear sir, that would be simply unmannerly and nothing more. Is that all?"

By then, I think I had challenged his most evil intents, and, my star being in the ascendant, I prepared to ravage a crushing repartee upon him when . . . I was struck with an idea.

"Doxo, Is this not the Yuletide season?"

"Mule side, wa . . .?"

He did not understand.

"Rather, is Christmas not coming very soon?"

"Krissmus . . .?"

He was catching on.

"Yes, you know, Christmas."

"Yeah. I think so . . .?"

I explained anyway.

"Well it is. Why don't we at least spend Christmas together?"

"I dunno . . . you trick'en me?"

"No." I assured him. "We shall only be friends and live together during this season."

"Umm, well . . . awright, I guess."

"Good." At least that was a start.

As we prepared for bed, I could not help realizing that, without regard to the most obvious differences, he and I were quite alike. Yes, I spoke differently from him, and his ways were different from mine, but we were actually very similar. Although he had his axe, and I knew he feared my oration, without them we could be quite like brothers. I could not, however, ask him to relinquish his power without "giving up" mine in return.

"Well, sleep tightly, Doxo. Perhaps, if you make a wish, it will come true in the morning."

I wished for the loss of the axe . . . and for the morrow to dawn brightly.

LAMENT OF YESTERDAY

Lost Men

I think I shall stay home
And call the dirge of weary souls
Lost from time and sacredness and themselves.
Cry for them a mournful dirge happy in the peace.

I think I shall stay home.

Home of my inward longing nights.
Of cruel sleep-walks in your backyard;
A graveyard of a thousand grasses;
Grasses trodden over with the steps of weary souls.

I think I shall stay home.

Lest I think of your happiness
And my sadness.
My sadness.
My sadness.

I think I shall stay home.

As the stream goes by;
Lazily afflicted with the woes of since past times.
Barren banks of a cactus heaven
High with the stench of sun-baked hours of a tired mankind.

—Bob Donovan

WHEN I WAS YOUNGEST

When I was youngest sitting 'neath large grove trees
Birds played brown green grassy games gay and flighting,
In the breeze of restless limbs
As the stream goes by—lazily.

Tired from over-flowing the shore
And I sat 'neath large grove trees smiling
In swaying wheat and laughing at myself.
As the stream goes by—slowly.

I had a good time those days
Lying 'neath large grove trees
In my Gramma's pasture where horses shuffled past;
As the stream goes by—gurgling.

To be a "rambling wreck" of a vagabond wayfarer
Bumping the rocks of happiness and bright colors
And many years have passed since those days
And the stream still goes by—lazily, slowly, and gurgling.

Yes, all at the same time as my days have
Sitting 'neath large grove trees.
Fun, games, trees, horses, and you, gay bird,
That's what I remember most when I was youngest.

To Him Who Would a Maker Be

When shafts of lively verse shoot through the brain,
And forceful thoughts flow from a prodding muse,
My friend, take up your beckoning quill and scroll,
Forget the mocking ones who are not tuned:
Unsympathetic with your skill of rime.

Write of the problems, joys, and perils of life.
Of Friday night's conquest, the passions tell.
Oh, say no names, but tell the story so
That all who read will also sense the throb
Without the aftermath—effects of cause.

Write of anxieties of troubled youth
Explain them best you can, and if the words
Are poignant in their meaning and their sound,
Then words like balms afflictions will make whole.

Don't be ashamed to write of God or love.
The two are just the same, so many say.
And in your rambling lines of questioning thought
You just may hit on one outstanding truth,
Which will sustaining, lifting prove to be
To even those who'd scorn the form it's in.

"Say, who donates this profusion of advice,
A gift of little value, oftentimes?"
Well, simply one who's felt the arty itch.
Whose verse perhaps will never volumes fill.
But one who knows the satisfying sound
Of lines borne long, writ well, and softly said.

—Michael David Hoke

SHADOWS

—Avis Swallow

. . . Bleak, That's the only way to describe life . . .
bleak, lonely, cold — the wind finding warmth and spiriting it away, leaving a shiver behind.

He sat as he often did, leaning against his pillow, covered with a sheet, quilt, bedspread . . . sitting huddled against an imperceptible draft that chilled his being.

People came and went, phones rang, the halls became noisy and quieted again: evidences of the world happening around him; he a part, but not a part. Quite, quite alone, actually . . . as he had always been.

He liked it at night—very late at night when the halls lost their life to echoes, and he could share his loneliness with the silence. Late at night he could understand it all.

He picked up his guitar and strummed a few notes—making them last to haunt his memory; he repeated them again and again . . . . He threw the guitar from him in a gesture of impatience, and hurriedly dressed to leave what had become a private prison.

As he walked, he sought to become one of the many shadows about him. How lucky shadows are, he thought. They fade away when the day's glare becomes too strong — too painful.

The smoky bar seemed a haven to him, and he went to a back table. Soon the voices took on warmth, and the world became a thing to enjoy. A girl slipped into the chair beside him. A wonderful girl . . . so bright, and smiling, and warm . . . her hair held a faint trace of perfume, and when she led him away from the table he did not argue. Her skin was so white, and her eyes . . . .

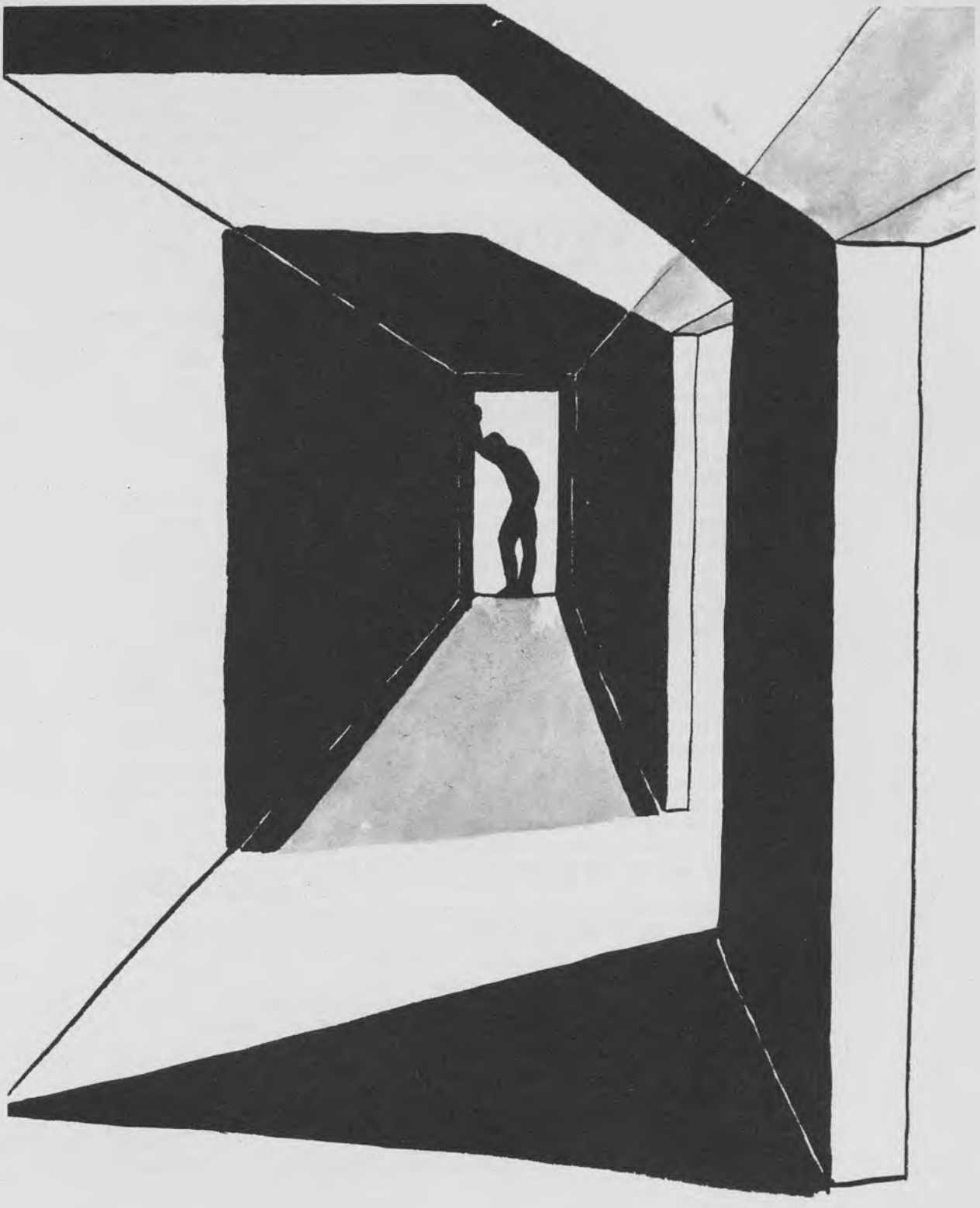
His clock said five A.M., and he stumbled finding the bed. The covers were rumpled, and his guitar lay where he had flung it. He slept.

The hall was noisy. Guys were wrestling —flinging themselves into his door, and laughing . . . He sat up and leaned against his pillow; the sheet, the quilt, and the bedspread still over him. His head hurt.

. . . Bleak. That's the only way to describe life . . . .

Bleak, lonely, cold—the wind finding warmth and spiriting it away, leaving a shiver behind.

He got up and went to class.



ANGUISH —WHO

WRATH OF WHOM?

Dawn.
The glowing ball of fire
    warmth,
        and day rises
Above the ocean, the town, and the people.
Life is life once more
As the masses come out of their brief "semi-retirement"
That lasted only as long as the night.
On the city streets—
    streets that look like long, black threads
        from the silver jet above—
            soaring over white and red tile rooftops,
One can see the heat rising in little waves,
    from the tops of automobiles, buildings,
        and the caloric pavement of the streets themselves—
A typical, hot, summer day in a deep south metropolis
But it will be different; things will change.

Warning.
The news is spread—
News of gigantic winds, torrents of water,
Winds and water combined into Nature's masterpiece—
    the hurricane.

At yacht basins, flags are raised—
Raised over scores of boats tethered to their holdings,
Tethered more tightly now—for sailors know
How fragile those barnacled oaken timbers can be
When tossed against the pilings by winds well over
"A hundred and twenty miles per hour"—quote the weather bureau.
In the suburbs, men rush out with hammers and ladders
And frantically try to seal their homes from the oncoming tempest—
    David and Goliath.

Supermarkets are flooded with women
Buying cartloads of canned goods.
Women who have never liked sardines buy them
    and

Prepare to eat them now.
Candles, lanterns, and flashlights are purchased;
Franklin's Kite is temporarily grounded by the tide of distrust.
People rush home and night finally falls.
The people wait.

Storm.
The balmy breezes change to damp winds.
The sparkling blue calm of the sea becomes a lathered, restless
cauldron of angry water.
The coconut-laden palms are whipped mercilessly.
Their fruit falls and is carried instantly yards away.
The rain drops begin.
They sound as if a drummer boy were using the window panes for his
drum.
Inside, the people wonder if the two-by-fours will save their plate
glass picture windows.

The windows rattle—
hit by debris, branches, pine cones
and the ceaseless wind.
An empty house stands unprotected down the block.
Through three forgotten windows, the storm steals in.
Trapped by four cement walls, the wind panics
and smashes those same four walls
to free itself.

Rubble is left—
a true Florida room.
Another dawn,
But this one is undiscernable.
Not bright
but gray;
the storm remains.
Finally a midday, it decides to leave.
It can do nothing more here.
It has many more stops to make before it can die—
Santa Claus.
All is wrapped in unearthly silence.

Aftermath.
Man moves again on the now cluttered streets.
Huge trees lie groaning on their sides—
drowning in the water in the streets—
water that once gave them life.
Electric wires and telephone cables are draped over autos.
It's better to walk!
Glass litters the sidewalks—dead fishes, the beaches.
Sand and salt are encrusted on everything—
pure rain will wash them off—gentle rain.
Some mourn;
they have lost an acquaintance—
a loved one.

Was it worth it?
What did it prove?
Who did it?
A rumbling, shrouded giant deep in the earth
or
A loving gentle man who walks upon clouds?
The wrath of whom?

—KRIS BRIEGEL

CHILD'S CONCEPTION OF UNIVERSE

—Sherry Lynn Shaffer

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

—P. M. Lemons

It was late September, and the Shenandoah Valley was a kaleidoscope of brilliant color. Autumn had come early this year, and already the quail were beginning to covey-up, preparing for what the old-timers referred to as a "roughun." Even now the deer were gathering in the valleys around Blue Spring Run, and the wild turkey were busy gorging themselves with hickory nuts which lay in abundance along the lush flatlands of the river bottom. The sky, normally a deep, vivid blue, was growing an angry grey, giving the mountains and valley below a sinister, almost ominous hue.

It was still early when Lance arose from what had been an unusually restless night. The sky was dark, and a heavy mist was clinging to the willows in the meadow just below the barn. Somewhere in the darkness a bobcat screamed; its shrill cry piercing the chilly silence causing Lance to jump a little, and then as if remembering something or someone long ago, he smiled to himself, his face taking on a pensive almost wistful sadness. The room was still, save for the slight rasp of someone dream-sleeping on the big double bed across the room. Shrugging off his reverie, he forced himself to look at the young woman to whom he had pledged his undying love a few short hours ago. A slight frown crossed his face as he recalled their gentle love-making, and a faint suggestion of her perfume compelled him to reconsider her docile passion of the night before. "Hell with it," he muttered, shaking his head, as if this gesture somehow absolved him of her presence, and cleared away the cobwebs of guilt lingering in the shadows.

J. Lancelot Stone, taciturn, gentle and wellbred, "A young man going places" his college yearbook read. And that he was, only twenty-five years old and already managing editor for a leading outdoor magazine. Quiet, introspective, with hair the color of burnished copper and cloudy blue eyes that combined the sensitivity of a poet with the petulant, good looks of one who knows where he's going but couldn't care less if he got there. As president of several reputable organizations, he had distinguished himself as a scholar and a gentleman.

He was born in Winchester, Virginia, on a small farm just south of the North River, and after a happy but uneventful childhood, his family moved to Washington, D. C., where he graduated from high school and from there to small but respectable college in Perigee, Tennessee.

It was there he began to realize he was different from the others. He loved poetry and warm spring nights. He was alone and except for an occasional beer with his roommate spent his days in solitary wondering; his nights with a girl with chesnut hair, who had now become a faded dream, remembered vaguely on rainy afternoons.

Had it not been for a misplaced desire to succeed, he would have in all probability become just another name in a nameless world. But as fate would have it, his literary talents earmarked him for the college newspaper and consequently for a career in journalism. It was because of this he now found himself on his grandfather's farm high in the mountains of southern Virginia. He was on assignment to collect data on the deer population and thought he would do a little hunting himself while he had the chance. The woman was an afterthought—a last-minute invitation which was surprisingly accepted.

"God," he thought, "it's been a long time." As he stepped outside into the cold morning air and gazed longingly at the blue-black hills stretching for miles against the horizon. And clutching his rifle, he made his way quietly through the pasture and into the dark forbidding pines just beyond the river. A cold wind slapped at his face and the dew was heavy on his boots as he struggled along what was once an old logging road now covered in broomsage and laurel. Off in the distance a fox barked twice and overhead an owl made her noiseless trace somewhere in the night sky.

Once as a boy Lance had hunted squirrels in these same woods. For days on end he would wander the hills carrying his old twenty-two, until dirty and torn he became one with the wilderness, his body melting into a maze of green and yellow. He was a young man then, hard and supple, and in his innocence knew the secrets of the wind. Now his breath came in gasps as he sought to remember the secrets which lay hidden from him under the rotting leaves on the forest floor.

After walking steadily for almost two hours, Lance stopped to rest under a tall cedar, too tired by now to care if he saw a deer or not. Eating a candy bar, he sat watching the first streaks of sunlight make their way slowly across the dawn to the west. It was the silence that made him aware that something was wrong. It was a loud, foreboding silence, the kind one hears before a loud clap of thunder. Then he saw it. From out of a thicket a large buck had suddenly appeared as if cast there by a spell. Standing there, old and gray, his neck swollen with rut, he stood taut, searching the air for a sign of danger.

Lance, tense, gripped his rifle tighter and slowly, cautiously, raised the 270 Winchester, its smooth, firm stock reassuring against his cheek. "Careful now," he warned himself, "you've done this a hundred times. Take it slow and easy; don't blow it." Slowly, almost imperceptibly he drew a bead on a spot just behind the deer's shoulder, his finger reacting to the cold metal trigger. A light rain was beginning to fall now, its cadence shrouding Lance's ragged breathing and causing the old buck to stand poised, alert, as if the rain carried a message of death lurking in the old deer's world. The shot was a sharp slash in the frigid air, and Lance could hear the dull thunk of metal tearing into the deer's flesh as it echoed and reechoed off the mountains and down into the valley below. For a minute it seemed Lance had missed, for the old buck just stood there unmoved, his massive head staring blankly at Lance, as if to say "What are you doing here?" And then he died. His body, small in death, was undistinguished on the forest floor.

It was raining harder now, as Lance finished skinning his trophy; the warm, thick stench of blood was heavy in the air causing him to grimace. "It wasn't the same this time," he thought. There was no pleasure, no thrill, only a nebulous anxiety pecking somewhere in the back of his mind. A fear almost, but it wasn't fear; it was the nagging apprehension of a trespasser. These same woods, which Lance hunted and fished as a boy, these same pines once warm and reassuring were now a cold, impersonal blue. It was like becoming a stranger in a dream, between two worlds and alone in both of them. Silently he lifted the old buck onto his shoulders and started back down the mountain, the rain cold on his face.

IN TUNE

Yellown lights calling,
Building fast images
Of warmth, sleep,
False confrontations
And silver septral fondness
For some vague highways
Slick with rain.
They lead and lead
By nose rings hooked
To silk thread.
She who is dark in a ditch of dreams,
Silent until the silence,
Watching for a dawn,
A weary lapse of tension
That melts to tears
Cold like western snow
Or hot on certain nights.
A gossamer thread that will not
break.
To wake with
Wetness on the pillow
As salt in the blood.
Yellown lights calling;
Building fast images
On some vague highways
Slick with rain.

—Jim Sloan

MAN

The night air was warm, and heavy with the odors of the swamp. The frogs and crickets sounded out the tunes of love and the never-ending struggle of life and death. The moss hung low to touch the stagnant pools of water. Beams of light cast grotesque shadows of dead and decayed trees across the muck that held tight to its unwary victims.

Through this land, a small section of Hell, came an animal of great size. It stood erect as it struggled to avoid the certain death that would eventually come. This animal was man, a human creature with intelligence, a creature that knew no bounds against exploitation and conquest. It was because of this knowledge that man found himself pitted against another of his kind in a struggle for survival.

Man had gone beyond the point of useful creation through power; he had crossed into the forbidden realm of destruction where only devastation, famine, and death met and held him in an unbreakable grasp. It was in this bleak and dark world that man had chosen to enter and never to return. It was here in this world that man stood.

The instrument of death and destruction had been used by man against his fellow man. At one time it had merely been a chemical equation, formulated by men who wanted to bring peace to the world, but to gain peace, man must conquer, and to conquer, man must kill, and to kill, man must hate his fellow man.

Now man stands alone in the face of his fellow man, awaiting the blow that will end his struggle. And the blow is struck. It is struck by man against man. It is struck because the man hates, not because he wants to hate, but he must hate in order to kill, and he must kill in order to survive.

..... AND GOD CREATED MAN .....

—Doug Combs

BUTTERFLY
(more or less)

A yellow lace
butterfly
flits across the meadow
of dusty light and half sound
she pauses
at the crossroads of
each flower
and in suspended
animation
pseudo-lives.

Now's tomorrow becomes yesterday
and still she
saunters from
flower to flower
never staining her wings
with the
warm contentment
of (satisfied)
(desire)
In pursuit of
elusive nothingness
she flits
into
i n f i n i t y
and is
shrouded by the
deepening
mist

—Tim Webb

STORY OF LIFE

The caterpillar tried its best to escape
From the lonely life it knew
And from its cocoon
It left one day,
Only to find
That life cannot really
Be all those beautiful dreams;
For even butterflies die of loneliness.

—Betty Carter

MISTS OF MORNINGTIDE

The dew drifts silently
from a mysterious nowhere.

With gentle tenderness
it veils the little green things
of the good earth.

It rests there inertly all night

Till the morning comes to lap it up
into nowhere again.

—Sherry Lynn Shaffer

AN ANGEL CRIED

—Linda Meyer

Julio stepped up to the Lord, happy and excited, to receive His blessing. He had been assigned an important task. He was to accompany the Lord's own son to earth, and there he was to remain, proclaiming peace and good will. He had been given three words with which to accomplish his task, and he was full of exuberance and hope.

On the night that the great star was to shine upon Bethlehem, the sky was deep, and the air was clear and still. At the hour of the birth, the sky suddenly became brilliant with the radiance of heavenly light. Julio sang and jubiliantly shouted his message to all—"Peace on Earth!"

* * *

Not long afterward, Julio began to accompany a young man around, hoping to convey his message through a human being. In his travels, he found himself one evening in a brightly lit room, full of glittery, laughing people. Noting a serious discussion in one corner of the room, he unobtrusively stationed himself at a spot where he could hear the conversation.

"Their armies and armaments are growing larger and stronger," one young man exclaimed. "If we don't conquer them now, we may never have another chance!"

Shocked, Julio urgently whispered, "Peace on Earth."

"That's true," the other man replied. "We cannot live peacefully with such war-mongers."

"Peace on Earth," Julio scolded. But no one listened—no one heard.

* * *

It was a bright summer morning. The birds flew about their tasks singing. The field was green, the orchards ripe, and the sun shone lovingly over the scene. The peacefulness was suddenly shattered by the roar of trucks, shouts of men giving orders, and the sound of many young soldiers marching. The sounds were ominous — deadly. The faces of the thousands of men were fearful, their minds aghast at the thought of what they were doing. They were no longer talking. They had taken the initiative, and now they must act. Under the roaring and rumbling of the machines and the shouting of frightened men, a voice could be heard wildly crying, pleading, begging, "Peace on Earth, Peace on Earth!" But it was too late.

Soon the roar of guns joined the other sounds in breaking the beauty of the day. A youth sat in a dank, dark hole, shooting, killing other youths, while smoke and death filled the air.

Suddenly a piercing scream shot through the thick air, followed by a roll of thunder. The sky exploded with a terrible, fiery beauty. An agonized cry broke from the young soldier's lips. His body was thrown into the air, to land with a lifeless thud — broken and mutilated. Then there was nothing.

A heavy, stifling blanket of stillness settled over the once beautiful green field. And far off in the darkness, kneeling before a wooden cross, an angel sobbed heart-brokenly,

"Peace . . . on . . . Earth."

STUDIES IN MINIATURE

The Diamond That Sparkles Only in the Light

Alone, companionless,
You are fine in your
Singular beauty
Yet among relations
I find you ugly.

The Sun in Pools

Happy showers
Leave silver pools
Upon sidewalks . . .
The morning sun
Falls into them
And I,
I dip my hands
Into the sun.

Is It for Color?

Plump, pink peonies
Perching on capable toes.
Why do so many
Black ants come to visit?

A Painted Lady

The years of her youth
Must have been blossoms too frail
For the strong sunlight. Now
Their dried petals quiver in a breeze
With false ecstasy.

For One Who Died Peacefully

Her life was full of calm beauty,
A large and perfect globe.
Each day a smaller globe
That spun peacefully within it.

—L. S. PALMER, JR.

THE AFTERNOON GIRL

—Jim Sloan

"Hey Richard, run and get some water, we're thirsty."

He heard his uncle and he immediately jumped off the hay wagon and ran to the thermos jug under the shadow of the rock. The tractor and baler had stopped and the four bronzed, sweating men sat watching him as he strolled off, his canvas tennis shoes making a hollow scratching sound in the stubble. The sun was high above and a few fleecy clouds in the west held no promise of rain. At the edge of the field he entered the tall, cool grass and watched for snakes. A small familiar path wound through willow trees to the river. Above him the mountain bluffs loomed, the dark pines on its sloping sides sighing with the dry wind. The sleepy drone of the insects blended with the rush of the river and he waded into the cold ripples and picked his way across . . . the stones turning under his feet. Once across he crawled up on a large flat rock and lay on his back, letting the sun burn his face. He was still for a moment, listening, not watching, hearing the muffled voices of the men and an occasional loud laugh. He heard the crows making loud raucus calls in the forest above. To him it was all quietness, a day of harmonium in hot summer, a retreat beyond the moment. Rising slowly, he slipped off the rock and bent to a small pool among the green ferns. He filled the jug with the water that broke from a spring, and then bent and drank. The water made a cutting coldness in his dusty throat and he splashed it on his face and bare shoulders. Turning to go his eyes caught a movement down stream. Below him in a quiet pool under an overhang of gloomy mossy rock, a white form slid into the river and remained suspended in the limpid green shadows of water and pine. He stood quietly, as still as the hot air, feeling the sweat beading on his neck. It was a summer shimmering figure floating before him, and he felt himself moving forward and along the bank into the tree shadows. From the laurel pockets, he saw her gently spread the water and spill her long hair over the green. Her whiteness, wavering in liquid detachment and suspension, gleamed in fantasy. Her unawareness of him increased his caution and the wonderment he felt in her nakedness transcended all else. For some time he lay silently watching, studying the reflection. The purest lustere held her skin and reflected his discovery. He moved then, back into the forest, rustling leaves and padding down softly on the needle path . . . .

* * * *

On the great porch at night, he sat and felt the night coolness descend in dampness on the meadows and all before him. The black shadow of ubiquotous mountain jutted its bulk to the star-line and ringed his world . . . held in the night sounds . . . echoed the insect songs and the far away bark of a wondering fox. The whippoorwills made wistful cadence in the forest thickness. He heard the night go quiet then, as he had heard it always, its blending fall complete. A white lace of mist formed near the lulling river and hung in thin shavings over the bottomland.

There was an unusual sweetness in him tonight, an anxious peace and newness. The afternoon girl in the river seemed warm and fleeting. She called to him of soft blankets and hot sun with wind. In the strangeness and completeness of her young symmetry, he saw the laurel bud in spring. A puzzlement formed on his face . . . a curiosity of that form in green suspension . . . its seemingly incomparableness to all else the seasons had shown him. Tomorrow the men would not work in the fields and he would walk down the dusty lane and follow the river to the bend where the spring flowed from the rocks and watch again.

"Richard, Richard." He heard her plodding footsteps within the dark house, waited patiently for the old form to appear in the doorway. The grandmother voice said, "You should be asleep; you worked hard today and we must get up early tomorrow." He looked

at her solidness in the darkness which seemed to be componded with no definite shape. Her eighty years made him think she was the hills, constant, steady and at times indifferent. She was the earth and her rough wrinkled hands had a softness, he remembered that. But her age was respect and the absence of change; he wondered if she was ever smooth and white and bare.

* * * *

The axe rose and fell in deliberate strokes splitting quickly the pine slabs. From the woodpile he carried armloads of wood into the house and stacked it in the kitchen by the stove. When there was enough inside, he chopped some more until he had enough for the evening. He knew he would not be back until late. The heat of the day was rising when he started down the lane and followed the creek through the meadow to the river. The sun had burned away the dew and the air was still, save for the coolness rising from the water. He walked steadily and loosely through the scrub bush and sycamore, the cow path opening through the tangle. At times he would stop and listen, trying to hear his own steps, but losing it in the stillness beyond the whir of locust, beyond the farm sounds, beyond the intermingling of other summer days. He crossed the river in the shallows and unhesitatingly crossed an open flat, climbed a pine bluff and came down the other side to where the white water broke rushing from a small gorge and stilled. The spring was just ahead and he slipped precariously over the gray mottled rocks and down to where he had been the day before. Hot and sweating, he lay there relaxing his muscles, smelling the damp moss and cold earth.

There was nothing in the pool where she had been the day before. He waited, felt the sun moving, felt the sounds of the day gain momentum till the sun was high, and when it began its last curve down, he knew she had come. Watching the dark gloom of pines, he saw her step out, poised, alert, then hardly rippling the surface, wade into the shallows, glide into the placid green water. It was the same scene and there was something old and something new about it. The afternoon of his youth was waning in the always coming awareness of imagination and feeling. He moved quietly into the laurel and down to his vantage point to watch. Before him her body rolled in blushed whiteness in the green silk water and she held her head back to look up, letting the hair drain its heaviness on her shoulders. She heard him then as he moved, her body tensing and her eyes searching the thickets. He crouched before her on the rocks and they knew awareness, felt the exchange of revealing secrets, knew the slipping spell of innocence. His eyes widened and she laughed, a sound that combined the forest and the water and the sky.

"Are you from the farm?" she asked.

"Yes, and you are from the mountain." He said it with sureness as if he already knew. They sat together in a patch of sun which filtered through the trees; they lay on their backs and watched the yellow rays illume the pine bows and make dappled scarvings in the blue. When he looked at her there was peace, and there was mystery and she knew his thoughts and smiled. In their lost embrace the years of youth culminated and built and gently tapered off in realization. The first hunger and first taste burned indelibly in their oneness, and she looked at him, answering his insistence.

* * * *

The dusty shadow of twilight came down thinly with a gradual reddening on the far mountain. Walking back slowly, he came in heaviness, his feet aimlessly following the direct path of that morning. There was no harmony to hear; there was no silence conceived in loss which told him of his days and of his age. He felt gladness for his knowing. The red glow on the land wrapped him in thought, and the transformation was complete. The rising mountains knew the dark figure moving slowly would be a stranger to himself for a long time, and a stranger forever to the morning and the afternoon.

SIDESTREET —ELLEN MORIARTY

INCIDENT AT THE DMZ

—Patrick Austin

It was a cold, uneventful day. The usual daily clamors of humming engines and grinding metal were replaced by something comparable to the stillness of the desert buzzard as it sits and watches its prey, waiting for the one moment when its victim breathes its last breath, helpless to ward off any attackers. No trouble was expected. Yesterday's mission succeeded in leaving eighty-three bodies lifeless. It was believed that these were the same group that had attacked the base late last week. No one could tell for sure.

In the light of the blazing noonday sun, frayed tensions rose. A mission was at hand.

"Seek, find, and destroy!"

These words spun in our brains as we set out. We realized no game was being played. A job, along with our lives, was at hand.

Two miles down the dingy, smelly, joke of a road leading into the steaming jungle we encountered an old woman sitting on the side in the thirsty dust which seemed to hold her rigidly in a fixed position. Her prune-wrinkled features were magnified by her lank and puny body. Clutched in her arms was the lifeless figure of a young child hardly two years old. The solemn, moaning wail of the woman was distinctly a sound too forceful and too pleading to be interrupted. It seemed to resonate and fluctuate as if it were attempting to create a scale unknown, yet enticing to the human ear. The performance captured us all as we listened, knowing not whether we should try to give comfort or continue on our mission. The imploring moan began to lessen in intensity as we approached. Two burning, blue flames peered at us through a mass of wrinkled and dirty flesh.

We handed her some food. She stared at it for a long time unable and unwilling perhaps to make an effort to eat it. The heat was unbearable in her sun-drenched dust pit. Still she did not move. She seemed to be an inanimate object set on destroying the definition of inertia. It was if she had already chosen her grave, content to have her body decay with the wearing forces of nature as she sat idly watching.

A whirling mass of green steel flew overhead like some enormous insect, gobbling its food as it snorted and bellowed through the warm air. It plopped its fat body down in the barren earth of a nearby field, creating dusty whirlpools from the decaying soil.

We climbed into the belly of the monstrous machine and motioned for the medic who had been attending the woman. He sauntered haphazardly to the monster which already had begun to growl and churn as its huge steel arms rotated, sending another gust of dirt filled wind into a thousand dancing whirlpools. We thought we heard a dry moan like the sound coming from the old woman. The insect slowly lifted, convincing us that it was only the rushing wind. The machine sped swiftly cutting the wind into small slices as we left for home.

WHIRLWIND

It came. It was powerful.
The quiet now is deafening.
And the rubble it left is dramatic
and fascinating
In an offbeat way.

There is time to think . . . now.
The blind flashes of power
And the thrilling gusts of tons of
natural force
Have left Wide-Eyed Time

To consider . . . To remember . . .
To laugh over the fun
To ponder the mistakes
the terrific storm!
There are long thoughts of the storm.

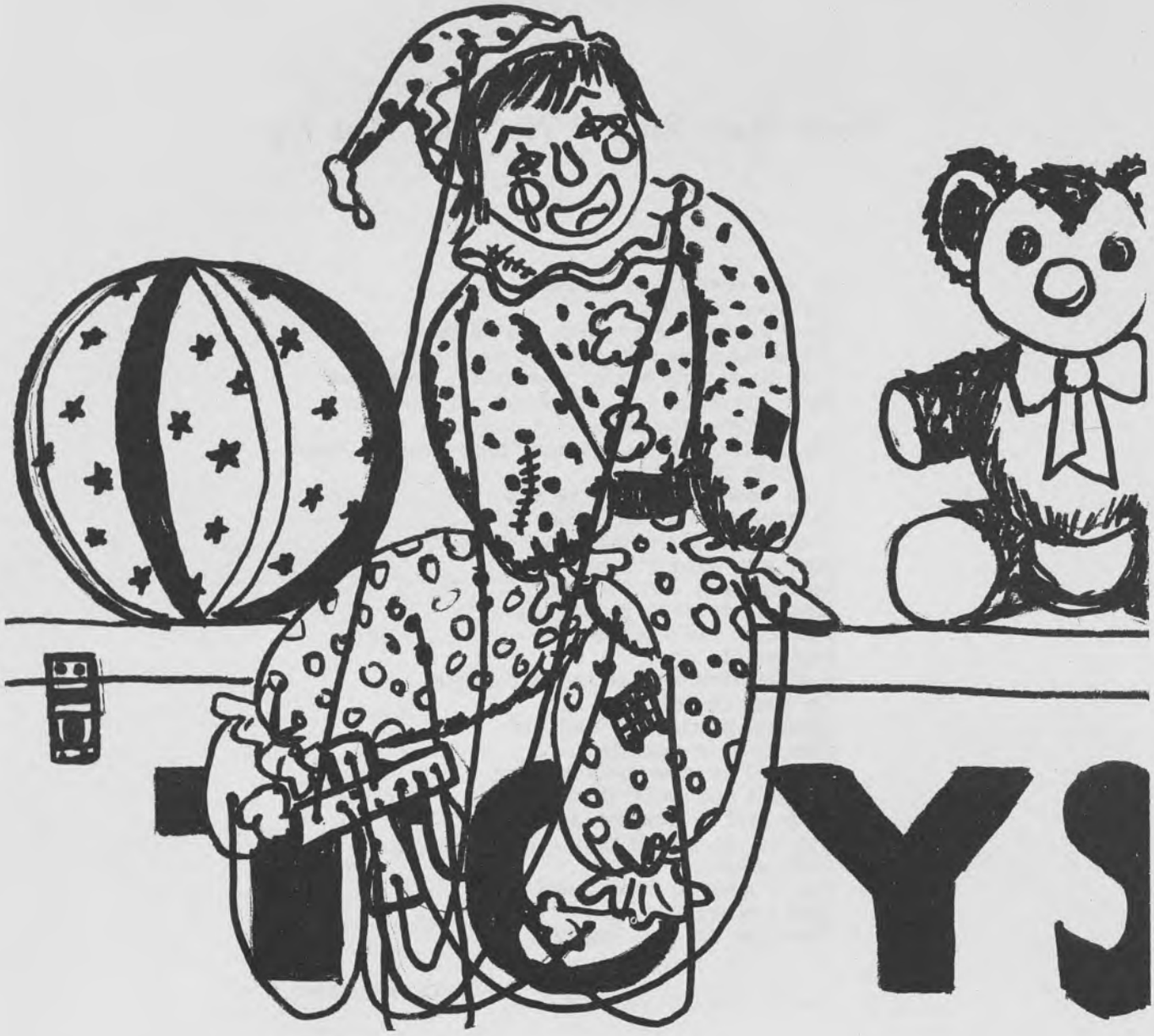
Among them a faint hope,
A hazardous fleeting hope that
The wind will stir again
rousing the things that lie still
Ravishing . . . Exciting . . . Mystifying
Watch for the cool breezes.
Give them time to build.

—Michael David Hoke

Four Way Stop / No Way But Up

A man never lives so well
As when he dies.
That glorious triumphant day of dark
When the skies split and you can't see.
You die on your knees; your eyes in your head
Burn like coals and your heart pumps water
    through your veins.
Then your brain spins and throws out all those
    dirty thoughts
That have served you so well
In your time of straining.
Your Bible lies beside you
And your money is slowly
Scattering to the wind and
Huge birds circle picking up
Five-dollar bills while rats
Spit on the ones.
And the little bastard angels defecate
On your Crown,
Causing smudges of ugly sin
That drip in your face.
You fall on your belly kicking
    hard and eatin' dust.
Your soul is escaping and
You try to hold it to
Your mind;
But it slips so easily away,
And you watch it rise—
Then you die . . . laughing.

—Dave Gilbert



PUPPET

—Avis Swallow

STRINGS N' THINGS

—Avis Swallow

It was Laura Ruth's seventh birthday, and she stared at me in awed delight.

"He's mine" she said as she hugged me . . . "my very own puppet."

I felt loved. The man in the shop had been indifferent toward me. He took me out of the box in which I had ridden from the factory (it had been so dark in the box, and I had been jostled so!) . . . and he straightened me out (my arms and legs had gotten tangled in the strings) and he buffed my nose with his shirtsleeve. I didn't like that, but I smiled at him anyway. I smile at everyone (one does when one has a single expression painted on). He hung me on the wall, and made a sign saying "Clown Puppet for Sale" that he put in the window.

And there I hung. It was excruciating. My head fell forward onto my chest, and my feet just dangled in mid-air. I found myself angry with him. After all, he wouldn't like it either.

I wonder if people know how silly they look sometimes. One enormous woman in a feathered hat, wearing one of those fur things with the beady eyes and the pointed nose biting its own tail (I dislike them. They have very bad tempers, and in general, have nasty dispositions.) pointed at me (How rude!) and tried to get her little boy to adopt me. Thank goodness he wanted an airplane. I could tell that he would have been vicious with me. I'm really not difficult to break.

Actually, I was quite pleased when Laura's mother entered. Puppets can always spot a puppet lover. The witch puppet and the old man puppet and the Little Red Ridinghood puppet began to whisper about finding a home, and all of us tried to look our best (I wish I didn't need help to get my feet untangled!). She almost adopted Little Red Ridinghood, and I felt that I would cry, but I smiled at her and she finally said, "I want that clown." I was so proud that it didn't even make me sad to say goodbye to my puppet friends.

She was gentle with me, and pretty soon the cover was taken off my box, and there was Laura Ruth! She had rosy cheeks, and blue eyes, and long yellow hair — a puppet-lover sweet enough to make a puppet a people-lover.

She took care of me. Every night she would put me in the chair by her bed, and I would never shut my eyes . . . I'd just watch over her all night. When she was awake I'd dance for her, and walk, and sit. The best times came when she'd hug and tell me that I was the "best puppet in the whole world!" Then she'd say "I love you!" In the world of puppets, that is quite a compliment.

It got so that she didn't play with me very much. She left me sitting on the toy box, and she didn't even seem to notice that all my strings were tangled. My clothes were stained too, and the dust on my nose made me want to sneeze, but I couldn't, because puppets simply *don't* sneeze (it's a matter of personal integrity).

One day I was really hurt. I could hear through the wall and she said: "You're the best in the whole world! I love you." Two tears made a patch down my faded red-spot cheeks. She had another puppet. She didn't love me any more.

A few days later, she came and laid me down inside the toy box, and closed the top! I was shuffled, and tipped, and pushed. Then I was just left with a thud. The other toys didn't seem to mind; they were used to having fun among themselves, but I didn't say anything. I just smiled sadly. Laura Ruth was gone an awfully long time.

A beam of light struck me in the face, and two widening brown eyes sparkled at me.

"Mommy, what is this box?"

"Well for heaven's sake . . . those are Mommy's old toys, Cindy. Let's see what we've got here."

Laura Ruth took me out of the box and straightened me. She dusted me with the corner of her apron, and this time I didn't mind. She smiled at me, just a little sadly for a moment, and said, "Little clown, this is Cindy."

The brown eyes laughed the laugh of a puppet lover, and I was happy. "He's mine," she said as she hugged me . . . "my very own puppet."

I felt loved.

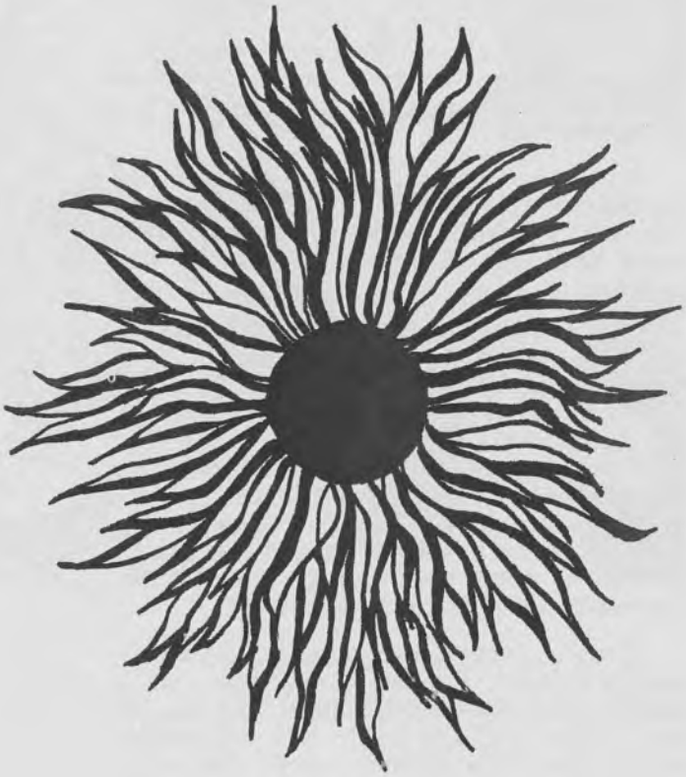
DEATH AT SUNRISE

The moon glared down upon her; the cold bitter night gave no mercy. She edged closer to the cold dark boulder, seeking not only warmth and protection from the wind, but strength and courage to face that which was before her—death. Yes, it was coming. No longer did she deny the fact. At first she had thought that by some wondrous miracle her life might be spared, but all hope had been taken from her. Now all she sought was as much comfort as possible for her last few hours or minutes.

She thought back over her life. It had been short, but it had been pleasant. She had been happy, very happy, until her friends were killed that cold day in November. As she had looked at their poor broken, bleeding bodies, she had realized that she would follow soon. She had hoped that it would not be this soon, though now that Tom was gone what reason was there for living? When would all this stop? When would all of this merciless killing cease? Can man find no other way to satisfy himself?

It would not be long now until the new day would break. Suddenly something happened inside her. As she watched the slowly rising sun she also felt a rising within herself. She would die like a queen. This was Christmas Day and she must feel that she was proud to die for the cause. She ruffled her features with dignity and with a stately "Gobble, gobble," she walked back to the barnyard.

—CATHERINE POINDEXTER



I SHALL KNOW THEE

I shall embrace you with words,
For my love would be forbidden.
I shall sing anthems of silence,
For my sounds would commit us.
And still you will know me.

I shall make markings along the beach,
And hope that you will come before the tide.
I shall build and leave a castle in the sand,
And this child's game will attempt to speak.
And still you will know me.

I shall walk alone in the roaring mist of dawn
While my shadow still lingers in the darkness.
I shall search for my soul along the windy shore
While in sympathy my path is trimmed in white lace.
And still you will know me.

But I shall know you in the hush of night
When our hidden shadows draw silently together.
I shall feel the warmth (of your body)
that shakes off this lonely cold

When we stand together in the marked path by the sea.
And then we shall know each other.

—WILLIE SHAW

TO BARBARA

I could love thee more, and yet

I tremble as a fawn,

Seeking in the darkness

A substance in thy pallor.

You are so pale . . . so delicate,

And I find myself afraid,

Clinging as mist

To the autumn of your love.

Once as children
We laughed,
And hand in hand
We ran with the wind.
Our lithe, young bodies
Sweet with sun,
Found meaning in embrace.

I could love thee more, and yet

I sorrow at your touch,

Longing for the warmth

Which has faded with your smile.

You are so pale . . . so delicate,

And I find myself alone,

Groping in a memory

Cold upon your breast.

—P. M. LEMONS

PORT OF GLASS

(for astronauts passing)

Monstrous lines in his eyes
Fled around the globe of blue and green
To hidden visions caught in a prism of vines,
So refracted and noticed in a shot of light
Before the translucent, gold shavings of brightness,

The grays and greens dissolve
In a blur of half-sight of a happy land
Within that soft space of darkness.

And down over the swelling hillock
In a color cove of blooming iris,
A dew-drop tear arrays the fountain.

—Jim Sloan

CAVES

Serenely cool and void of light,
The caver crawls with steadied might.
The world is gone save that of bats,
Of carbide lamps, of cold hard-hats.
Murky, muddy, melted clay
Without a sign of light or day.
Silver springs and moving things.
With silence still, the unknown rings.
Wisps of time and space are found
Inching like a worm unbound
To search the depths below the ground.

Echoes catch the sounds reflected.
Gritty slime by men inspected
Open eyes to worlds unseen
From chasm crests to meadows green.
Seek not a world, the world above,
But sanctify the world of Love.
Impose upon yourself to ask,
"Is living really just my task?"
Behold the answer not above
Nor in the coldest, tasteless cove,
But warm within the kiss of Love.

—P. A. Hoyte

Lion—A Major Character in the "Tragedy of the Wilderness"

In his small novel, *The Bear,* Faulkner has created what easily might be called the "tragedy of the wilderness." In stating this we must then state what then is the tragic flaw of the wilderness. A land so bountiful, full of fresh water and tall timbers seems to have no flaw. But herein does lie its flaw. Because of this bountifulness men came to realize that by trading or buying the land they could profit from its resources. So the wilderness, in its willingness to give of its resources, brings about its own destruction. Who then are the characters of this "tragedy"? As Ike says, in the second chapter, he would be the humble spectator of what seemed to be "the last act on a set stage." As director there was Sam Fathers, the man of mixed blood who lived until all was right for the last act of the "tragedy," and then gave in to death, not wanting to see what was to come. There was also Old Ben, the obstacle between the old land and the new, who proved to be Ike's professor in the education of life. And, of course, there was also Boon, the grown man with the mind of a child, who loved an old blue dog. Finally there was the old blue dog himself—Lion. The dog with a name to fit the quality he possessed to enable him to be fit for Sam's casting in the "tragedy." He was the right one—"a little bigger than smart, and a little braver than either." He, like Old Ben and Sam Fathers, was an image of the wilderness.

Lion entered the "tragedy" as the murderer of a young colt, but Old Ben is suspected of the act. Thus, Old Ben and Lion were matched from the start—an old bear and a blue dog who both could send little hound dogs yapping through the air with a casual slap of one paw. They were two animals who loved no one. They sensed nothing but the part they were to play in this last "act." Even throughout his repeated starvation by Sam Fathers, Lion illustrated his determination, refraining from charging at the door only as long as the land was that which they wanted it to be—a wilderness.

This imagery of will and determination in the novel gives to Lion, characteristics almost human. In the care of the man-child, Boon, who treasured him as a respected friend, Lion neither slept nor ate with the other hounds. And when Boon humiliatingly missed Old Ben at such close range, he sent Lion to Sam, feeling unfit to be near the great dog. Immediately after Lion's capture had spread through the nearby area, strangers came simply to have a look at the blue dog as if he were, as it seemed, one of a great breed. Yes, as a dog Lion was out of the ordinary. The hunters sensed it and Sam Fathers, from the start, had known it.

Moving deeper into the last act of the hunting story, the novel advances more slowly, with the dignified grace of a true tragedy. Lion has faced Old Ben once before, and finally the long-awaited day approaches. Old Ben will be facing a force of nature such as himself—the blue dog, Lion. The hunt is described in minute detail as Ike sees it in all its majesty. The consequent death of the dog, as well as the bear, is an historic, almost sacrificial scene so representative of their untamed home. In an almost "loverlike" embrace they plunge to the ground as Boon rushes in to put an end to Old Ben's long reign over the wilderness. In one of the most symbolic descriptions in the whole novel, Faulkner presents one last glimpse of the three characters together. "For an instant they almost resembled a piece of statuary: the clinging dog, the bear, the man astride its back, working and probing the buried blade." Thus the two animals and the man form a monument to the wilderness which will soon be destroyed.

Lion's death, after the momentous end of Old Ben, is one of dignity and awe, as Faulkner again projects the blue dog, with his body mangled, as almost human. Boon refuses treatment until the great dog is sewn up. Again the strangers come to take a quiet, respectful look at the dog who helped to put an end to Old Ben. Almost a hundred of them standing in the sunlight and talking of the hunting game while Lion lay motionless, with Boon always at his side. Then, after one cold glance at the woods, with no apparent observance of the many people around him, Lion closes his yellow eyes with the assurance that the woods are still there, if only for a while. He dies at sundown with as much or more dignity and sadness an any character ever created for a tragedy.

Even after his death, Lion's position as a major character was not forgotten. Still the men remained. Men who would have to walk back to their camps in the dark remained to see Boon carry Lion away and put him in a grave while General Compson spoke words over him as if he were a man. And later, Lion was joined by Sam Fathers, the great hunter who knew the end had come. They were together; and in the earth from which they had come, and to which they had given their lives, they were at rest.

Thus, Lion's life came to an end in Faulkner's novel. The large blue dog is unreputedly a major character in the "tragedy of the wilderness." As a symbol of the free and wild land, Lion was the only dog brave enough, and determined enough, and dignified enough to be chosen to play such a part in an unforgetable "tragedy."

—Barbara Taylor

Criticism of RABBIT RUN

—P. M. LEMONS

Foreword

An artist is defined as a person who does anything very well with a feeling for form, effect, etc. He is also someone trying to communicate, whether it be a nebulous illusion or contemptuous disbelief. He is a person with something on his mind, and a need to communicate this something however pretty, however profound, either with another person, his God, or perhaps only with himself. From the dawn of humanity—when man became man and realized—he has sought to make known his presence. He has sought to be understood, while not understanding. And even at the very beginning when the first man worked painstakingly and crudely carving on the wall of his cave the exploits of a day's hunt, there has been someone — someone to say, "You know, I think it would look a lot better if you did it this way . . . ."

Thus criticism began and with it a loss of innocence and perspective: honesty became acquiescence; truth, an obligation. And now, more than ever, does criticism affect the mode and thought of art. It is almost as if man has forgotten that criticism, unlike art, is not an end in itself, but a means to embellishment and understanding.

Criticism implies objectivity; it also suggests an appreciation. In my criticism of *Rabbit Run* I can pretend neither my only assumption shall be that Mr. Updike was fully aware of the contingencies and exigencies of his intent and was cognizant of every implication. To do otherwise would be a gross injustice to the author and a flagrant presumption on my part.

* * *

Rabbit Run is not, I think, an evaluation, explanation or exposition of twentieth century life in urban North America, but rather a commentary of the effects wrought by an upheaval of spiritual and moral values and an insurgence against the nebulosity of purpose. (It might be contended that Mr. Updike, because he is an avid church-goer and family man, had no such intention, but in view of the context of the novel, this is hardly a valid argument.) Neither do I think that the perindicative of a man *per se,* but like Camus' Merseult is a distinct personality alienated from the mores of his society and unable to come to grips with reality. He is caught up in a world of absurdity and indifference, and cannot (through no fault of his own) ever quite reconcile his apparent estrangement. To say that the novel is existential is a gross understatement. Mr. Updike, it seems, however is not so much concerned with the inevitability of world occupied with Harry Angstroms, but rather is solicitous for a world which would allow it to happen.

Rabbit is by no means a prototype (consider Holden Caulfield and Prufrock), nor is the theme of *Rabbit Run* unique. The impact and beauty of the novel lies in Mr. Updike's uncanny manipulation of words and phraseology.

The second sentence—two words—"Legs, shouts." informs the reader that this is going to be a novel unlike any he has ever read. Two words, and Updike conveys Cummings-like the image of young boys playing basketball more effectively than ten pages of narration. Three sentences later, the description: "So tall, he seems an unlikely rabbit . . ." gives the novel an informality and almost child-like naivete. Updike is at his best perhaps with description—but not description in the sense of clarity or elucidation. After reading a description of Rabbit's mother, one would not necessarily recognize her on a subway, but he'll never forget the attitude she evoked. Taken out of context (excepting Rabbit), all of Updike's characters, although credulous have very little descriptive depth.

Updike uses description not only in the sense of portrayal but also in relationships as well. For instance, one gets a beautiful insight into the sexual responsiveness of Janice when Rabbit is playing golf with Eccles. "Come on sweet, he pleads with his wife, there's the hole big as a bucket. Everything is all right. But no, she has to stab in a panicked way; what was she afraid of." In a subtle intermingling of phallic imagery and monologue, Updike clearly issues a forthright statement on Rabbit's sexual dilemma.

Rabbit's libido dissatisfaction is enhanced further by his relationship with Mrs. Eccles. Although it is clearly evident that Rabbit projects most of Lucy's mannerisms into a sexual fantasy, Updike's use of words leaves one wondering just how Mrs. Eccles feels about the whole affair. Rabbit's problem, however, is shown most clearly and effectively when Rabbit is reunited with his wife. He is sexually frustrated and attempts a pathetic, almost comical, seduction. The imaginative agony and almost perceptible quality of promise, of fulfillment, is readily identifiable. No man, unless a eunuch, can help sympathizing with Rabbit's predicament.

Although Rabbit's problems, his anxiety, his obvious estrangement stems from a sexual base, it is almost as if Updike is using sex in an unusually synonymous context, with the soul and the libido as one. Even his running towards the end takes on sexual overtones; it is a type of ecstatic release and has an orgasmic quality about it.

Rabbit Run is an excellent example of how literary techniques, word usage, sentence structure, etc. can create a mood, an effect or even dimension. And although motive is a bit vague, the general response is more than adequate. Although beautifully written, there is a passage where Updike is describing the garden in which Rabbit worked. Its beauty, notwithstanding, one receives the impression that he is writing rather than creating.

Tiny Alice: Enigma or Paradox?

"All that life may see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream."

—Poe

Tiny Alice consists of five principal characters: a lawyer, a cardinal, a butler, Miss Alice, and Julian. Each exists in time and space, and is an entity unto himself, and yet each has a relevance apart from reality with vast dimensional implications. The Cardinal, perhaps more than the others, can be realized literally for what he is—shallow, pompous, self-satisfied, and figuratively for what he represents: corruption, the failure of the church, and even more important, the reality of religious illusion as a manifestation of ultimate reality. The lawyer, the butler and Miss Alice, on the other hand, have an almost extra-terrestrial, if not metaphysical significance—an unholy (?) trio whose intermittent affairs in reality are governed by an apparent super-being or force.

Miss Alice: "The years of it . . . to go on? For how long?"

Lawyer: "Until we are replaced."

"Replaced by whom?" one asks. And if the big house is merely a replica of the small house and Alice as Julian exclaims is God, ("I accept thee Alice, for thou art come to me. God, Alice . . . I accept thy Will.") then is this God a subjective delusion for the house remains and the trio leaves. So, is there a power transcending God? Or is the world filled with little houses not unlike the one housing Julian's God?

Another point in question is who or what is Miss Alice? She eats, drinks, makes love, exhibits emotion, hate, fear, love — yet she states emphatically to Julian, "accept what's real. I am the illusion." Which seemingly implies that Alice in the house is real, or conversely that all reality is illusion—a temporal facsimile of what might have been or can never be. Another question in question is what is the relationship or correlation between Alice and Miss Alice and their connection with Julian. In scene three of Act Two, Miss Alice's seduction of Julian takes on all the characteristics of a Leda and Swan in reverse. That is to say, it has once the flavor of an actual seduction (considering Miss Alice's other escapades) and yet the magnitude of some profound meaning.

The butler and the lawyer evidently do not have the same metaphysical proportions Albee attaches to Miss Alice. Their existence whin and their character significance without the play has a more tangible quality. The lawyer has his past, and the butler, his almost homosexual overtures. Unlike Miss Alice, they enhance rather than obscure the tangible (and I use tangible for lack of a better word).

Julian, ah Julian! Who is Julian? He is by far the most human, the most easily identifiable character. He is the audience's only link, the only means by which an inference can be drawn. For he, not unlike the audience, is merely there—shrouded by mysticism and question—his is an unknowable response. He, is after a fashion, an absurd hero. And . . . if I might draw one conclusion, it would be that man is alone. Life is loneliness and the mind can know nothing, not even itself. If there is an ultimate reality—this last house within the house—it too is an illusion a part of and apart from the mind. Can an illusion exist in itself?

There are (to add to the confusion) the hair fetish, the chapel burning, Julian's Christ figure, Julian's dream, the lawyer's dream and the butler's place as a personage and a symbol.

—Afterword—

I believe that in the course of an artist's life, he will sometimes grasp a shadow, whose significance and implications are unknown even to himself—such a shadow is *Tiny Alice.*

—P. M. Lemons

THE GREEK

—FRANCES GARRIS

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