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When a man's verse  
cannot be understood...

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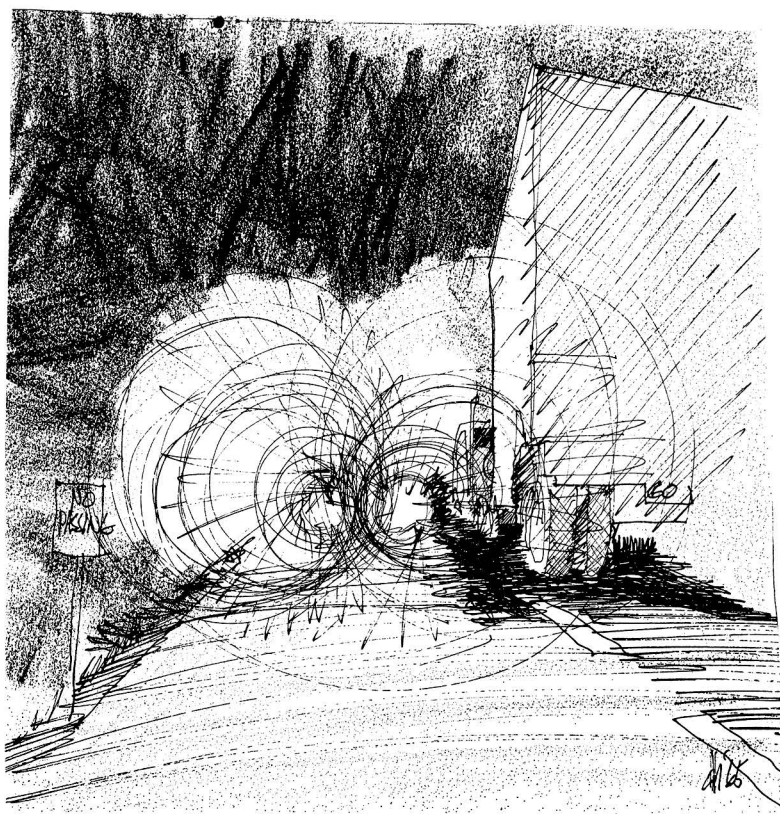


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Illustration for lead story and poems by David Haines



## TEA WITH LEMON

KAREN SUNDE

Margy couldn't tell whether it was the falsely delicate rays of June sunshine or her own nervous apprehension, or both. But whatever it was, it was sticking her bodice to her spine and sending maddening trickles between the generous rolls



where her waist should have been. Her steel heels stomped along the steaming concrete, betraying only a slight quivering at the ankle. The remainder of the stance—the forward slung hips and shoulders—filled out the nearly perfected sophomore slouch. An inherent setback in her struggle to acquire a fashionable carriage was her neck. It was not the long skinny kind that was so easily extended out and up like a buzzard's. It was short and stumpy, allowing her to look only straight ahead or at the ground if she wished to avoid a stiff neck.

(Damn silly, anyway. Dark cottons are for fall. So damn silly to think I have to be sober and dreary. It'll be dreary enough without my help. . . .)

A few large shade trees drooped over the walks and onto the roofs of stately, old houses. (. . . Everyone so anxious to build right down to the lake shore . . . got fooled, though . . . put messy old ore docks down there . . . sure got fooled. . . .) The spikes clomped ten thousand pounds per clomp on down to the middle of a block where the eaves of the houses overlapped each other and palatial dignity was reduced to a few moss roses peeking along the edges of foundations. The clomps hesitated while Margy pawed her purse for a make-up soiled handkerchief and energetically swabbed her glistening face. She began again and the clomps lost their ring as they ascended five wooden steps and pounded across a wide porch that sagged with the heat and the additional strain.

(Might as well get this over with—the sooner, the better. . . . Must try to remain calm, poised . . . after all, it's been more than two months. . . .) A light tap started a rustling far beyond the door, and then a tired squeak as the door opened and revealed Mrs. Kremer.

"Why, Margo, darling. I'm so glad you could come. Do come in, dear."

"Thank you, Mrs. Kremer." Margy blinked through the murky hallway into a sitting room that was little better. Mrs. Kremer was gradually transformed from a white face and hands into a slim figure in severe black linen. Margy almost started as she noticed the familiar aristocratic tilt of the nose. . . . How many times had she seen Peg looking like that? . . .

"I hope I didn't inconvenience you, dear."

"Oh, not at all. Summer school's kind of slow any-

how. . . . It's good to get a sort of . . . break . . . you know. . . ." Margy fumbled, choosing words only after long searches, and immediately regretting her choices. (. . . Shouldn't be talking about school. Well, damn it. What does she expect me to talk about? . . .)

Her eyes followed Mrs. Kremer's gliding figure as she moved about, setting tea and a tray of fancy cookies on the table in front of Margy. Margy squirmed, feeling the insistent itch of upholstery through even her good girdle. Mrs. Kremer's sickening perfume settled into the stuffy air, and with the dead heat, was nearly unbearable. As the murk cleared and the room became a merely dim room, Margy's glance surveyed well-known objects: the fireplace, the desk, the bookcase—and hesitated as it reached the piano, then plunged ahead. (. . . Thank goodness . . . it's not there. If Peg's picture had still been on the piano, I think I would have died, simply died. . . .) The piano was closed and the music had disappeared from its rack.

"It's been so long, Margo. Ever since . . ."

"Yes, I know, Mrs. Kremer. Time just seems to fly on without our . . ." (Stop. How stupid. Why does everything come out stupid? . . .) She glared into the flowered cup, hating Mrs. Kremer for inviting her. (. . . Why in the world . . . what did she want, anyway? . . .)

"I have been wanting to talk to you for some time, Margo. . . ."

(Here it comes. . . .)

"There is something that has never been explained about . . . about Peggy's accident and . . . Well, this is silly. I'll just go and get it. Something I'd like to show you. Won't you excuse me for a moment?"

"Yes, of course." The swish of black linen barely reached Margy as she stared at the piano with the closed keyboard, hearing the ripples of Tchaikovsky's "Spring Song" under fingers that found anything this side of "Rhapsody in Blue" just "too crude for words."

"Peggy, Peggy! Will you cut out that playing and come? The fellows have buzzed."

"Good Lord, Margy. When are you going to learn not to come bursting into a room like a herd of elephants?"

"Well come on, Peggy."



"Oh, let them wait a little. Honestly, you'd think you'd never had a date before—even just to ride around."

Margy winced and watched her roommate go right on with her playing, offering only a slight sniff of her aristocratic nose. Peggy didn't let her forget for a minute how she had even gotten this date. Why if Peg hadn't agreed to go along . . .

Dainty hands hit the end chords with finality. "Now, I suppose we can . . . Lord, what is that you're wearing?"

"It's just my plaid . . ."

"You look like a house in that thing. Do you want Doug to think I got him a perfect slob?"

Wince again, but Margy was used to it. After seven months she had pretty well acknowledged that Peg was a top-notch gal about campus and that her roommate was a first-rate slob. Peg never dated any one boy for very long, but she never was without a date—they still came flocking.

With a bored toss of her head Peg swung around and off the bench. Her classic page boy floated patiently back into perfect order. "Better get a scarf . . . Jim's convertible is sharp enough to be seen in."

Margy shuddered a little at the exciting thought: "A convertible, a real convertible."

The day had been warm, and at twilight the intoxicating promise of spring hovered in damp March air. Even though Peg's manner was one of cool sophistication, Margy couldn't contain herself as the little party went tripping over the freedom of dry walks. "Jim, we can keep the top down, can't we?"

"Sure, I guess. It's a little chilly, but we have to take advantage of these first warm days. They separate convertible owners from the boys."

"Okay, Margy, in you go." Doug had vaulted into the back seat on one arm, displaying the excitement of sloughed-off winter drudgery that filled the campus.

"Okay, Doug, but not quite that way." Margy eased her self-conscious bulk happily into the seat beside this red-haired bundle of boyish energy.

Jim's sure foot revved up once for good measure before he shifted into gear, slipped them gently into the boisterous string of escaping students. A dark curl flopped good-naturedly onto his forehead. He winked a twinkling brown

eye at Peg as she settled back next to him. (. . . A nice guy. Too nice for Peg, really. Oh, well, he'll learn . . . unless she tires of him first . . . probably not too soon . . . a convertible is a nice thing in the spring . . .)

"Hi, ho, there! Get a horse!" Doug stood, flagging to the souped-up Ford they were speeding past. A chorus of shouts, and a volley of playfully shook fists followed him. Margy chuckled, remembering Peg's description of this strange animal: "He just explodes all over the place, in every direction . . . always having fun."

Margy strained to be heard over the wind that tried to swallow her words as soon as they emerged from her throat. "Hey, you. Sit down before you fall down!"

"What's that? Oh, yes, m'lady. Certainly." He bounced down and the two sat laughing at one another and at the wind that tore at them.

Speed had increased steadily as they shot down the hill, leaving cloistered halls far behind. Homes now strung into neighborhood businesses as downtown and the lake loomed ahead. Traffic jogged between stoplight and stoplight spotted with honks and squeals. Civilization seemed to accept spring passively, but the blood of institutionalized youth remained stirred by the wind that had raced to meet them.

"What's on the agenda tonight, Doug?" Jim tossed the question to his buddy expectantly.

"Let's see . . . It's a good night for "Kick-the-Can" or "Hide-n-Go-Seek." Everyone laughed. It was going to be creative. The mood was right. "But I got a better idea. Something I heard about down the Ratskeller this aft." Doug put on a mysterious pose and set about selling his story to the eager group. "You know that crummy old carnival across the harbor—the thing that folds up during the winter?" All nodded. It was a slumming spot during the late spring and summer. "Well, it seems there's a gal that tells fortunes for them during the season, and just hangs on as well as she can during the winter. Some of the kids have been over to see her and say it's loads of laughs. . . . What say?"

Margy could no longer suppress a squeal. "Oh, Doug! That sounds just neat, just too neat for words. Don't you think so, Peg?"

"Well, I suppose—if the rest of you really want to go. . . ." Peg wrinkled her nose distastefully.

"That's it, chicken. Loosen up a little. You've got to face



the other half one of these days." Jim smiled down at her. "Sounds like a great idea to me, Doug. Full speed for the bridge, mates."

The carnival was just across the bridge and along the water front. Street lights dwindled as they approached the clump of buildings, and a shore fog hung in the warm air. In the distance fog horns moaned into the black stillness of the spring night, although no ore boats were moving. Tacked-on insulation flapped against the creaking buildings that continued for a block or so before becoming mere shacks thrown pitifully into battle with the raging winters. The street was a rutty lane and garbage barrels bordered it, but even they echoed with emptiness after the long months. Near the end of the lane, a few odd constructions resembled concession stands. Torn awnings slapped the frames that supported them. A large sign was still propped against a wall; its chipped paint still revealed gaudy yellow and red letters: KNOCK DOWN THREE AND YOU WIN A TEDDY-BEAR—THREE THROWS FOR ONLY 25c. A scrawny dog darted in front of the headlights and then behind the sign, yapping his startled protest at the disturbance.

Margy huddled close to Doug and shivered. "Jeepers, it's creepy."

Peg shifted uneasily in the front seat. "Are you sure this is the way, Doug?"

"Yup. Madame Rosalind's hut is the last one down there. See the sign?"

The beams caught a huge hand with hideous divisions painted across the palm. YOUR FORTUNE FOR SILVER was lettered beneath the hand.

The car rocked through the ruts as it pulled up next to a few jutting arms that were all that remained of a hedge. The hedge surrounded a small yard whose mudholes were cluttered with rusting food cans. A gust caught an old newspaper and rattled it insistently. As the huddled group paused at the entrance, the sign above them creaked in the wind.

"My God, what a hole." Peg spoke in a low voice as she drew her trenchie tightly around her.

"Anybody want to chicken out?" There was no note of uncertainty about Doug's voice. He was still the clown.

"Oooo. It's so scary. I'll never forgive myself if we don't go in now." Margy gazed at the rough wooden door of the

shack. Light leaked through the cracks and revealed poles about the yard that must support a tent in the season when the wind doesn't rip at canvas. Doug led the way and rapped on the door. Nothing. Again. Still nothing . . . again . . . As Peg was about to sigh with relief, the door creaked back and two dark eyes regarded them suspiciously, then, noting the campus attire, smiled. The eyes seemed to lead the person, and the tired and weathered face became a toothless grin.

"Ah, my children. Have you come to the Madame to have your palms read? Do step within and you will soon know the secrets of your futures."

Margy was wide-eyed with wonder as they followed obediently across a tiny room, but Peg could barely suppress a laugh. Everything about this old hag and her shack was junky. Covered boxes made furniture and the smell of burnt grease from fried potatoes was heavy in the air. Strings of hair hung over her shoulders—gray except for two inches of black along the bottom. Only her compelling voice and penetrating eyes held their respect as she seated them about a small table.

"Okay, girls. Let's get your palms read." Jim's voice was eager. The new experience had stirred him.

"Oh, yes, please. I'll go first." Margy stretched her hand before the Madame. Madame Rosalind stared intently at her face, then bent to study her hand.

"My dear. In this lovely hand I see . . ." Margy was transfixed. Even the fellows seemed carried away. Only Peg smiled with sly derision at the intent little scene. Margy's fortune was interesting, exciting and general enough to apply to nearly anyone. Madame Rosalind glanced up once at Peg and then went uneasily back to her work. When the Madame began to speak about men friends, Peg laughed right out loud. The others were disturbed by her outbreak, but the Madame just talked faster and louder.

"Come on, Peg. You next." Margy was thrilled and wanted to share her feeling.

"Oh, Margy, I don't think . . ."

"Please, Peg, please."

Peg glanced at Jim for support, but received none. "Oh, I guess. Just a short one."

Madame Rosalind took the hand as weakly as Peg offered it. Then dry lips pursed tightly. Her jaws were set as she



dropped her gaze to Peg's palm. "Ahhh." The gasp was nearly a cry. She dropped Peg's hand. Peg could no longer hold back. She burst out laughing.

"What's her fortune, Madame? Please, what did you see?" Margy pleaded eagerly. Doug was beginning to chuckle, too.

"I cannot say. Ah, I cannot tell you."

"That's pretty safe, isn't it?" Peg managed to choke out the words between her bursts of laughter. Jim looked at her questioningly. "Oh, don't you see, Silly? She can tell that I don't believe, and so she'd like to convince me. Come, tell me, old one. What is to befall me?"

The old woman looked at her pitifully. "I cannot tell you now. You will pay me and I will write your future on a card. You must promise not to read it until you are at home."

Both fellows joined Peg's laughter. "All right, all right, old woman." Jim smiled kindly. "We're sorry if we've insulted you. Here. It was worth it."

The woman put out a bony hand and closed her fingers around the five-dollar bill. The laughing group turned to leave. "Oh, wait a minute. My fortune. You said you'd write it down." The Madame looked sadly at Peg.

"Yes, my dear. Here. Thank you." Peg took the smudged envelope and tossed it in her purse. Then the jolly group bounded out through the hedge and into the car—escaping. Jim revved the motor for real this time and they shot away toward the bridge. They talked loudly and laughed hard—too hard—as they tried to shake the crawly feeling off of their wholesome young bodies.

"Quite an experience, huh, girls?" Doug was eager that his creative genius be acknowledged.

"Oh, Doug. I've just never done anything like that before, just never!" Margy was delighted.

Jim swung onto the bridge and swished by a line of cars in the right-turn lane. "How 'bout the envelope?" Peg asked mysteriously. "Shall we see what my fate is to be?"

"Oh no, Peg. Don't. She said that you weren't supposed to." They rolled down off the bridge and Jim pulled around a lumbering warehouse truck. A flash blinded them momentarily, then a deafening crash, then quiet, except for whimpering . . . whimpering . . . whimpering . . .

Mrs. Kremer swished back into the room. "Margo . . . Margo. Are you all right?"

Margy jerked her head up to look at Peg's mother. "Yes . . . yes. What's the matter?"

"Well, I don't know, dear. You just looked so—strange."

"I was just thinking. I'm all right."

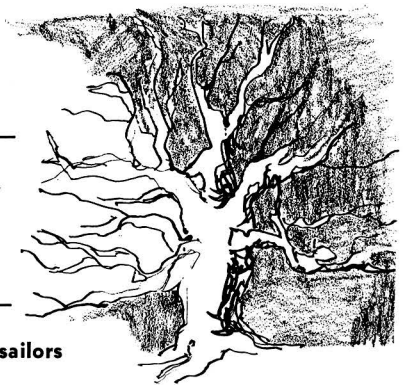
"Fine. Here is the thing I wanted you to see. I thought perhaps you would be able to explain." Mrs. Kremer handed her the smudged envelope. "It was in her purse. I . . ."

"Oh, yes. This was just . . ." Margy opened it carefully and took a small green card from it. The card was written on with pencil in a shaky hand:

MY POOR DEAR. YOU HAVE NO FUTURE.

## MY TREE

Ugly and twisted but big and strong  
My oak tree is lonely, it hears the wind song—  
I sit in its branches the sun blows and burns  
And in a brown cradle I feel the world turn.  
My big-city heart that longs to stretch  
Is smothered in sky and let loose to catch  
The breath of new leaves in its nostrils stiff.  
I fear to fall when the wind sways us  
But I see sixty storms in the knotted display—  
I hug my tree and I quick realize  
How soft maids can hug scarred, pit-faced sailors  
with patches for eyes.



## WINTER MIDNIGHT

This is the midnight of the year.  
The timeless time of autumn gold  
Has come and passed. The clear  
Warm summer nights of old  
Are suddenly hard and thin, and brittle  
Crystal stars flicker fitfully  
Down from a hazy sky, where a little  
White moon, far away, wistfully  
Recalls the nights when crickets  
And locusts sang among the birches.  
But now a bitter black wind whines through the thickets  
Of sleeping lilac and restlessly searches  
Through piles of dead leaves for a door into summer.

John Brand

## WINTER DAWN

Sometimes I think the dawn of a winter day  
Is like a big, gray, playful phantom that creeps  
Upon us, quite unseen, to romp and play  
And frolic in the dead leaves.  
I never see him come; the dawn  
Is always hidden by the houses and the clouds.  
Suddenly, it is light, and on the frosted lawn,  
Something big chuckles and leaps into the air.

John Brand



## REQUIEM

Flaming, flaming, flaming, from out of the blasted sky,  
The delicate aircraft falls with a whine,  
Falls into the sea by our gray battle line,  
Drops into the sea to die.

It cartwheels down from the sky to the bay  
With flickering redness where engines should be,  
The very same bomber whose bombs in the sea  
Darkened the masthead with spray.

A tower of water climbs into the sky;  
The angry gunfire is stilled for the day.  
The white spray of water subsides to the bay—  
A dozen men like us have died.

And the wake of the cruiser curves over the waves  
And scribes a white line on the sea.

John Brand

## THE OXFORD CLERK

When at night the buildings crack,  
And the mind's upon the rack;  
Thinking, "is't a ghost I hear,  
Some dark evil I should fear?"  
Perhaps some young and brilliant clerk  
Trying to eat and still to work,  
Being up late on some vast book,  
Laboring a point of Logic, took  
Leave of sense for lack of food,  
Gave vent to anguish, lost his good.  
Now judged to wander every night  
At that same hour upon the flight—  
The self-same staircase—where he died  
To be heard but never spied,  
An omen to scholars reading late  
Of what could be their awful fate.

William Williams

### TO A CHICKEN

Tell me now, ye crafty chicken  
Why cross me road must ye be flickin',  
Know ye not there's danger there  
Which well could give you quite a scare?

Why wait ye not till I have passed  
But 'stead ye flit in quick and fast?  
Says I, I think you've got the nerve  
As if you're daring me to swerve.

Keep ye that up, my feathered friend  
And it might well just be your end.  
Fed up I am with chicken shoooin'  
And flittin' soon you may be ruein'.

Arthur C. Streeter

### NO, DARLING, WAIT

When first I beheld you, a rose among pearls  
While April's soft moonlight, a spectrum of swirls,  
Played hide and go seek in the depths of your curls,  
I told you I loved you, but feared myself late  
And all that you answered was, "No, Darling, wait."

Again when I found you, an orchid in June,  
You sat by a brooklet and hummed me a tune.  
I asked you of marriage and could it be soon?  
You started to leave me, but turned at the gate  
And all that you said then was, "No, Darling, wait."

I sought you in Autumn, a lily in white  
Till nature's cold quilting embracing you tight  
Had lulled you to sleep where I found you that night.  
I stood there in silence and wondered at Fate  
For all I could hear then was, "No, Darling, wait."

Arthur C. Streeter

## "IDENTITY"

Here I am;  
I stand alone on the sand  
And look at the sky  
And wonder;  
Who am I?  
I know only this:  
That I stand alone  
On this endless shore of time  
Not knowing who I may be.

I know I am something more  
Than a pebble among the pebbles,  
Or a raindrop in the sea.  
And yet,  
Here I stand  
And look at the sky,  
And wonder.

I know not from where I came,  
Nor where I am led.  
I know this:  
I am me  
And I am unique  
Because I am me.  
There is no other being  
Who feels the things that I feel,  
Or thinks the thoughts that I think.

Few people know that I exist,  
Nor will others ever know,  
Or care  
About me.  
And of the others  
What of them  
Will be known or remembered  
By others to come?

What is there  
That wants or needs me?  
Nothing and no one.  
I do not even exist  
As other creatures exist.  
They are only specks of dust  
In a desert of conformity.  
I am me.

D. McCandless

### ON A THOUGHT

Far below, in uncovered depths  
Of the mind, inside my brain case  
Lies a thought of great endeavor  
And of great sagacity.

But lo! I'm clamp'd, my mind is stilled  
By thoughts of animal instinct,  
And locked in a cage, incensed with rage,  
My thought lies fully buried.

Oh, why, when God created man,  
Or, more, his mental being,  
Did he man's greatest gift bestow  
And stifle all its usage?

My thought still lies as ever it has,  
Covered, maybe rotting.  
I pray I'll get it out some day  
And answer to my calling.

Richard Overall

### PRISONER

Cloudy, misty to the touch.  
Cold unto the eye.

Steam among us  
Wafts its tongue  
And whispers,  
"Let us die."

P. H. Rawlings



### OPEN FIELDS

A sun content to float  
warm, soft, clean  
Over lonely open fields  
cool, soft, green

There are no people.  
There is life and beauty.  
There is God.  
Is it lonely?

A sun that fears to stop  
hurried, angered, red  
Over tall and graying cities  
cold, hard, dead

There are people—enemies.  
There is stone and asphalt.  
There is Money.  
Is it lonely?

P. H. Rawlings

### AFTERTHOUGHT IN STORM

Savage edge—  
Suicidal air  
Hurling life from itself.

Scream—  
The pain of death,  
The gnawing against its mother earth,  
The last offense against the unseen enemy—

Until . . .  
Rebellious swells of air  
Are calm,  
Are dead.

P. H. Rawlings

## THE ALPINE ROSE

Somewhere in a crevasse a lonely flower grows.  
Pushed up through a mile of rock, it's called the Alpine Rose.  
A budlet small and tender, it takes an hour of sunlight  
And makes an unseen harvest a beauty no one knows.  
Men search in the heated wastelands and trek the icy floes.  
They don't know what they're hunting, the searchers lined in rows,  
But they roam caverns deep and dark, and climb great  
    mountain heights.  
To find their morsel of delight they'll go where no one goes.  
Somewhere in a crevasse a lonely flower grows.  
Pushed up through a mile of rock, it's called the Alpine Rose.

Larry Clark

## LIFE

Once on the vast, windless plain of eternity  
Spirit saw non-life, willed,  
And there was life.  
Life oozed, rooted, crawled and walked  
Until a small fragment of the plain was green,  
Pulsating and responsive.  
Life met life  
And there was life.  
Life met death  
And became again non-life.  
But there was more life  
And it did not matter.  
My life oozed, rooted, crawled and walked.  
My life meets life  
And there will be life.  
But when my life meets death,  
Must it become again non-life?  
Or will I yet live?  
Or will it matter?

Richard Frank Gillum

## REQUEST

I am blind.  
Very soon  
I will go  
to a place  
where there are  
nurses and doctors.  
They will help me  
to see  
again.

Love,  
Grant me this:  
Before I open  
my eyes  
to the world,  
take me  
by the hand  
on a  
hill.  
Stand  
beside me  
quietly.  
For when I open  
my eyes,  
I want to gaze out on  
the meadows and fields.  
Free from  
human destruction.  
Untouched.  
And let me see  
what I can of  
this earth  
as  
God  
created it.

And Love,  
let me look  
at your  
face,  
And in your  
eyes,  
That I may see  
the eyes  
that have seen  
for me  
in love  
for so long.

Carol Heinen

### SCARED RABBITS

When the sun goes down,  
And the alley cats prowls,  
And the moon don't show,  
So the wolf won't howl,  
And the rabbit sticks tight  
With a grip on his skin:  
That will be the night  
For the war to begin.

The rockets come skimmin'  
In the cold black night,  
Like a mad-dog pack  
With a mad-dog bite,  
Bringin' small gifts  
That we all know well:  
Einstein's equation  
For world-wide hell.

Oh, the world's slap-happy,  
And it's free from fear,  
'Cause "the end ain't comin'  
'Til the end gets here."  
So we'll all just laugh,  
And we'll all turn in,  
'Cause it still ain't time  
For the war to begin.

Arthur C. Streeter

### THE STELLAR WANDERER

Land-fall,  
As amid the flaming roar,  
Prismatic dawn echoes her light;  
As lightly sets the force of atom  
The metal shell of man.

Tired,  
She has visited the stars,  
As aimless was her wandering,  
She knows no tales but solid fact  
To give man his dream.

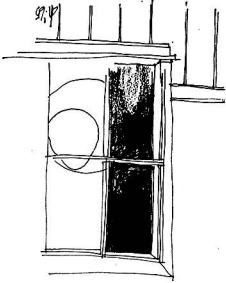
Pity,  
When her days are done,  
To the scrap pile man will send  
The unfeeling, unknowing god  
Who was but the first step  
On man's long star-road.

Standing,  
Silently her tale is told  
To the gently whispering air;  
Her fins implanted on Mother Earth  
Her metal very cold . . . .

Richard Overall



## THE WINDOW



Silently  
I sit at my window  
Looking out.  
Sometimes seeing nothing.  
Sometimes seeing  
    the panorama of life  
Before me.

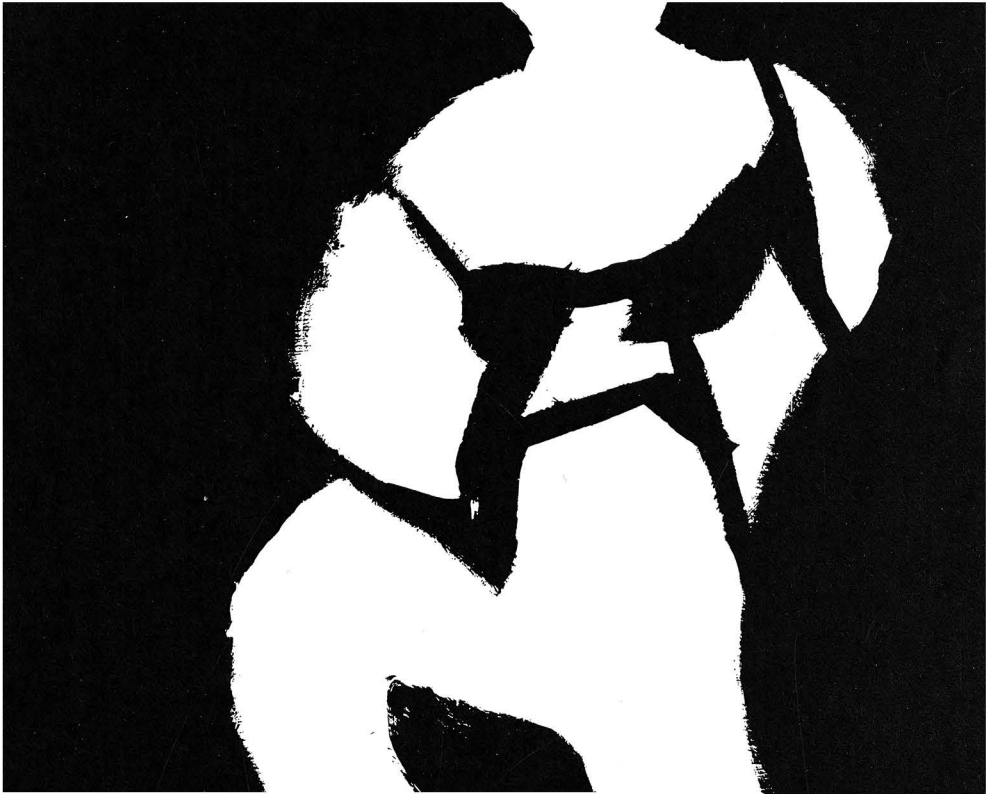
In a numbness  
Holding me  
Too hurt for idle tears  
I feel empty  
and blank.  
My feelings are all wrapped up in a light bundle  
    of puzzlement  
    at life  
    at reason  
    at purpose.

But I know  
this moment  
    in which I am caught up  
    and  
    set apart from life  
will pass.

And—  
I will come to know  
The day  
When I can see this  
as part  
of the balance of  
    sorrow and joy  
    in my life.

And—  
I will have gained  
the realization  
that the hurt only goes  
just so deep,  
and is mellowed by time  
    —like a fermenting brew—  
    into a pleasant remembrance of  
the happiness  
    once held  
and not the pain  
    once felt.

Carol Heinen



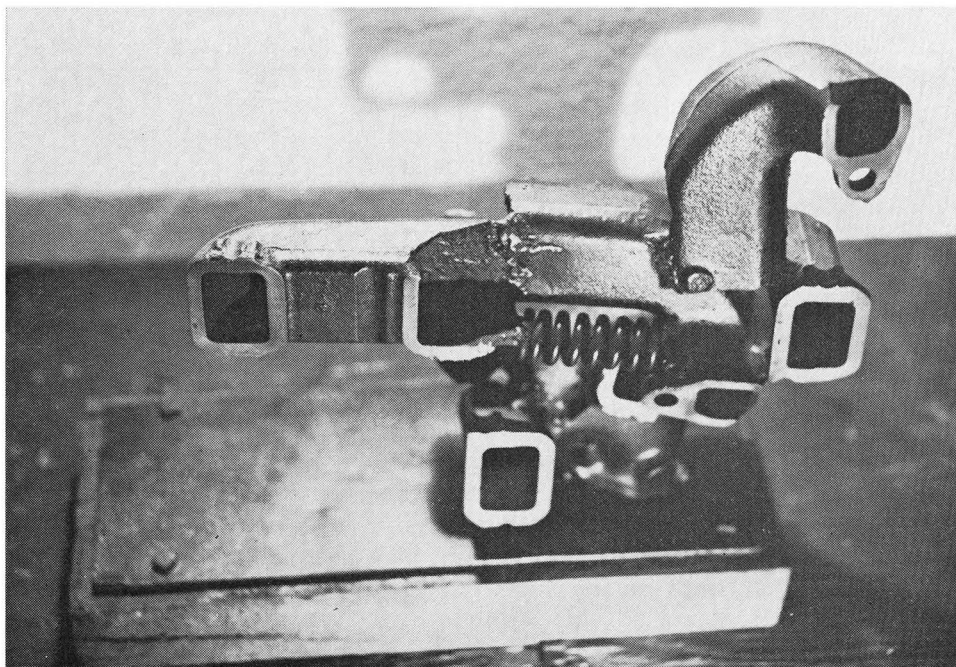
BIKINI FIGHT

Glenn Zwegardt



STONEWARE

Glenn Zweygardt



PROMISCUOUS IRON

Glenn Zweygardt



# The Room

BOB KEEN

The prison of Petzlau stood on the crest of its hill. It rose square, modern, and efficient. No sounds were heard beyond its grey wall.

One evening, two shadowy figures arose near the prison, glided down the hill, and were gone.

Later, Petzlau screamed, its siren rending the air, yelling at the world its failure as a keeper of men. Its shrill agony poured forth for long moments; then, the sound diminished slowly and the tone lowered, till it seemed growling a quiet promise of revenge. And all again was silent and grey.

The prison's administrator stood by a window, watching the prisoners exercise under double guard in the courtyard below. He spoke to a guard near him. "This escaping cannot be tolerated. We shall take the remaining prisoners of the group from which the ones escaped and put them in the room. We shall make an example of them, so that all

our prisoners may see what will happen to those left behind, if any more escapes are made." The guard nodded in assent.

The ten remaining prisoners of Group D, including two brothers, were prodded by three guards with bayonets into the small underground room. The prison administrator, in uniform, greeted them politely. He was always polite to prisoners when dressed in his uniform. "Gentlemen," he said, "be seated." The ten men sat on the floor. "You are put into this room because the two men of your group escaped, and you will remain in here until you are released. However, it is unlawful to put prisoners under such special detention without an admitted crime warranting such action, so I must ask you to sign confessions."

The two brothers looked at each other for a moment, and the elder rose. "Sir, how can I or my brother have had anything to do with this escape of which you speak? We arrived here just yesterday."

"If you are innocent," said the administrator, "you, of course, will not sign the confessions." He motioned to one of the three guards to begin the confession taking, then turned and went from the room, shutting its solid door behind him. He couldn't bear to see men suffer, not with his uniform on.

The indicated guard rose from a chair, the only one in the room, and pulled a sheaf of printed confessions from his coat. He said, "Who will sign a confession?" One of the ten men looked into the guard's eye a moment, saw something there, and rose to sign. Then he looked around at the other prisoners and immediately sat back down. The guard asked again for confessions. Getting no response, he singled out the one who had risen and placed him close to the wall, facing it. The guard pulled a freshly sharpened pencil from a pocket and placed the eraser on the wall, the point against the man's forehead. The guard explained to the man that he had to hold the pencil up with his head until he intended to confess; that if it dropped otherwise, he would be beaten to death. The man was ordered to step back so that he had to lean his weight forward against the pencil in order to keep it from falling. The point pressed deeply into the thin forehead flesh. "Now," said the guard, "you are sharpening a pencil to sign your confession. How long will it take you to get the pencil sharp?" One of the other guards, leaning against the wall, snickered. The guard with the confessions

returned to his seat. After three minutes, the prisoner let the pencil fall and signed.

When the guard asked again for confessions, four more rose and signed. Then he turned to the remaining five men. "Perhaps the pencils are not sharp enough to suit you? Well, that can be taken care of." Again the snicker. One of these five faced the wall for six minutes, the other two for eight, before they too signed. The guard turned upon the remaining two men, saying, "Ah, the two innocent brothers. If you think you cannot sign these confessions because of your innocence, then you shall have to become permanent pencil sharpeners." Both were placed against the wall. The guard returned to the chair.

Five minutes later, both were sweating heavily. Droplets fell from their noses and chins. Their eyes had protruded, the neck veins were swollen, and their arms hung limp down in front of them. The guards grinned at one another.

Twenty minutes had passed when the fingers of the elder brother's writing hand began to tremble and twitch. They started wriggling, faster and faster, until they convulsed into a knotted fist. And the clenched hand pivoted violently on the wrist; then the forearm writhed at the elbow. Finally the entire arm jerked and jumped spasmodically, so that his whole body shook. But the pencil did not drop.

The guard watched him for some moments, then rose and jerked the pencil away. The elder brother fell limply against the wall. The guard turned him around and thrust a confession at him. He signed.

The younger brother did not sign. When he collapsed an hour later, the pencil still did not drop to the floor, but remained embedded in his forehead. The guard went to him, clasped a limp hand around a pen, and signed for him. Then the guard rose and walked to the door. The other two guards joined him there, one picking up the chair. "There will be no talking," he announced to the prisoners, "and you will be watched at all times. Anyone caught speaking will see the rest of the group beaten severely." The guards left, and the door clanged shut behind them. The room's lights remained on.

The elder went to the still unconscious younger brother and pulled the pencil from his forehead. He leaned back against the wall, waiting for his brother to waken. He looked around at his fellow inmates, as they were all doing. Eight

knew each other by sight. He also knew them, at least for what they were: men imprisoned either for political reasons, or because they were their father's sons. When he had finished silently accounting for the others, as they for him, he looked around at their cell. All its details were seen easily, for the room glared with stark light from the bank of spotlights on the ceiling. He supposed the room big enough to have imprisoned seven men with some crowding; ten men cramped it. He looked up at the unusually high ceiling, squinting against the lights' brightness. It seemed so high that a man, standing on another's shoulders, could still not reach it. He guessed that it had been planned that way, for set in the ceiling was a small, barred window, the only opening in the room. He supposed that through the window a guard watched. The elder brother looked at this window some moments, then turned back to his brother, who was becoming conscious. The elder helped the younger lean back against the wall, motioning him to keep silent. Then they all waited, silently.

Somewhat later, the window in the ceiling was opened, and the guard above dropped food down to the floor of the room. As he swung the grill shut, the guard said, "The food is bad because the two men escaped." One of the prisoners went over to the pile and, after briefly examining it, turned away in disgust. After the first man, others rose at intervals, prompted by hunger; they too turned away. Last of all, the brothers went to the food. The meat was almost wholly spoiled and the bread was filled with worms. They especially were revolted, since they had not become used to even the normally bad food of the prison.

Inevitably, however, the food was eaten. When it was gone, more was dropped down, with the same words.

The lights in the ceiling remained on. They were never turned off. They never burned out, and even if one had, it wouldn't have made any difference: there were so many of them. And so time did not pass in the room; it ceased to exist. With the ever shining lights, there were no days, no nights, no hours, minutes, or seconds. The feedings afforded a relative kind of accounting. They knew that it was between the sixth and seventh feedings, though they did not know the day or hour, when a rat momentarily peered over the rim of the room's drain, and then disappeared, evidently deciding against entering the light.

And they knew it was just after the twelfth dropping of food when the door opened and nine guards entered, carrying short rubber hoses with steel cores. One of these guards said, "Stand up!" The ten men stood. "Now stand on one leg," said the guard, and ten feet were lifted. Then the guard said, "All of you must hold this position until one falls. The one who falls first will watch the others beaten." The nine guards relaxed, leaning back against the walls, waiting. The guard above said from the ceiling, "You will soon be beaten because the two men escaped."

An hour later, when these words came through the window a fifth time, the ten men were swaying and tottering, as though a strong wind were blowing through the room. Soon after, the face of one of the men grew suddenly red, then went white, as he struggled to remain upright. A guard laughed and shouted, "There goes one!" as the man fell to the floor. Another guard said, "And there go all of them," as they rushed upon the nine standing men. The rubber hoses swished through the air, back and forth, rising and falling, until the guards were exhausted. The glaring lights showed the men bruised and bleeding, groaning upon the floor. And the guard at the ceiling said loudly, so that the men heard, even through the pain, "You have been beaten because the two escaped."

After this, as beating became more frequent, the ten adopted the beatings, rather than feedings, as the way of counting time. But when the beatings became too many for memory, all time was lost.

Once, after the food was dropped, and the guard had repeated the usual words, one of the men arose and stared up against the lights' brilliance at the ceiling window. He raised a fist at the guard there and cried out, "Answer us! Why are we locked in this room? This group had nothing to do with the escape, and you must know that. Why do you say it's because the two men escaped? Why? Answer!"

The guard above said, "You have been warned against speaking." Almost immediately, the door opened and nine guards entered. They went to the nine men who had been silent, and the rubber hoses started whopping against bodies. When the guards left the room, nine men lay moaning on the floor. The tenth sat in a corner, sobbing quietly, his eyes still squeezed shut and his hands clamped over his ears. He did not even hear the firm words of the guard above,

"You have been beaten because the two men escaped." There were no more breakings of the prisoners' silence.

The beatings continued. Sometimes the guards would just enter and without a word begin thrashing the men with truncheons. Other times, ten guards would come in, each carrying two hoses. Each guard would ask a prisoner to select the one with which he wanted to be beaten. After the choice was made, the beating would commence. And after the guards left the room, always would come the voice from the ceiling, "You were beaten because the two men escaped."

The sounds of the room were screaming and groaning, the noise of hoses against bodies, and the voice of the guard above. To the ten men, it seemed that often these sounds mixed and blurred to become one, and the sound lasted then for seeming days or even weeks.

The prison administrator did not appear often in the room. When he came, wearing his uniform and accompanied by a bayonet-carrying guard, he would step in and stand just inside the door, as if not wanting to contaminate himself with further entry. He would say politely, "I trust you remember that you were put in here because the two men escaped." Then he would turn and leave, followed by the guard. Only once did he enter the room without his uniform; he left, peculiarly exhausted. The men in the room lay about on the floor, their minds almost insensible, their bodies twisted, their faces contorted with excruciating agony centered in their sexual organs. And the voice from the ceiling repeated, over and over, pounding through to their pain-dulled brains, "This was done to you because the two men escaped."

And thus hatred for the escaped was conceived. It began deep in the unconscious, a small cancer that their reasoning could not deny. The mind-destroying malignancy grew and fattened, feeding on their beatings. When the guard above would speak of the two escaped men, the prisoners' eyes began to gleam and their lips draw back so that the teeth showed. As the hate became larger, the look in their eyes became permanent, and guttural sounds would issue from between teeth clinched when the two were mentioned.

The hate grew until it blossomed and became open. The snarls increased in frequency and were not confined to mentions of the two men, but were sometimes directed



toward each other. When the ration of food was small, some of the men would fight over it, growling at each other. And the guard above would laugh, and say, "There is less food because the two men escaped."

As the hate grew and their minds became less, the prisoners divided the room into sections. They erected invisible walls so that the room was lined with cells. The lights could not show them, but the boundaries were clearly defined and were real to the men. Each prisoner inhabited his own territory and guarded it with stares and, if needed, growls, against any intruder. The brothers were put together in a section, though not by any of their own efforts. They were simply isolated by the others. These areas were abandoned, of course, when the guards came to beat them; but, when the guards were done, the men crawled back to their own areas to cry and groan. The men scrambled from their territories when the food was dropped, but otherwise left them only when they went individually for water. Once, when the man who occupied the territory nearest the area where the food was dropped had gone for water, another man rose and went to the deserted, more favorable position. The man getting the drink immediately returned and sprang at the usurper of his territory. The two joined in battle and rolled about, clawing and snarling at each other. The guard above laughed. Some of the men watched avidly, others without interest. The fighting did not last long, for the two starved and beaten men were soon exhausted. After they had stopped and regained some strength, they crawled back to their original areas. The younger brother, who was sitting with the elder, had turned his head away from the two men when the fight began. When it was over, he turned to his elder brother and drew attention to a spot between them on the floor. Here he had scrawled, hidden from the guard above, the single word, "Beasts."

The elder brother nodded his head. The younger then wrote in the floor's filth, "Not me," and when the elder looked at him in puzzlement, wrote further, "Kill myself first." The elder brother shook his head violently—no. So the younger brother scratched out, "Why not?" His brother thought a while, then wrote, "Hope to get out of here." The younger scrawled, "Death is the only way out." The older inscribed, "Not for me." And so the younger wrote slowly, "Animals can't kill themselves either." The elder looked at

him a moment, an odd expression in his eyes, and then began to scratch out with his jagged fingernail, in big letters, "C-O-W-A-R- . . ." He stopped there when he glanced at his brother's face and saw the small white scar in the middle of his forehead.

When the prison administrator next appeared, the bayonet-carrying guard with him was young, and seemed new, for his hands and eyes were soft, and his face showed repulsion at the sight and putrid smell of the filthy, bearded creatures before him, with long welts and scars showing on their bodies under their few tatters of clothing. When the administrator made his customary pronouncement, he was greeted with snarls. The younger brother too felt a growl welling up in his throat, and he checked himself, appalled at what he had been about to utter. As the administrator turned to leave, the guard at the ceiling shouted a warning. When the young guard, who was following the man out, whirled, one of the prisoners was rushing at him. He instinctively lowered his weapon to fend off his seeming attacker. The running man slammed onto the bayonet, the steel biting deep into his chest. The rifle twisted from the young guard's hands as the man fell to the floor. When the guard wrenched the bayonet from the body, blood fountained from the wound, then suddenly ceased. The man lay completely still. The administrator said, "Guard, after this use your rifle butt in subduing an attacking prisoner. Now will you get rid of this thing?" He indicated the body. And so the younger brother left the room.

The young guard's eyes had grown hard, his mouth cruel, and his hands calloused from beatings when he again came into the cagelike room. Above the room, all the prisoners of Petzlau were lined, ready to march by and peer down through the little window. The guard dragged in a man, who cringed at the sight of the naked, filthy things staring at him. When the guard left, the man remained, and the voice from the ceiling said, "This is one of those who escaped, who caused you to be put into this room." And the prisoners above began to file past the window, slowly.

The hate dwelling in the cage looked upon the figure and in looking, became pure and animal. The leader of the rush at the man was the elder brother, who sank his fangs deeply into the soft flesh of the man's throat.



## MARCUS BROWN

MICHAEL HAYDEN

### Chapter 1

Dad says Mrs. Barton is no Emerson or Thoreau, but philosophize she does and to an extent where we just click her off mentally at every show of enthusiasm or sudden rise of voice. But that was before last April tenth. Since then, since the summer sun had turned the asphalt road to putty. Since the snow had made it brittle and cracked it to the gravel road and the wind had smoothed the cracks. Since then, she has remained as inquisitive as always, but the yarns she spins are losing dimensions and all our ears have welcomed the relief.

Dad's favorite anecdote is always to compare her to the busy-bodyish neighbor lady, who, once she got started, would not turn off. She even occasionally followed Mother into the john, and as poor Mom would sit on the stool and stare awkwardly at the runners in her nylons, our neighbor would sit on the edge of the tub and elaborate the problems of Gladys Smith's cousin's 900-calorie diet. Frequently, she would insist how terrible it must be to have five boys who always leave such a ring in the bathtub, and poor Mother would just stare at the floor. I mean where else do you look when you're on the john?

Now don't get me wrong—Mrs. Barton isn't the suburbia spilt-level trap type, for one could hardly be with a half acre of lawn and all those shade trees. Nearest thing to spilt-level in town is old Jim Fiman's two-door garage. One door he raised about four feet above the other, so he could drive in an old '49 Buick he bought for twenty dollars, spilt-level indeed. I guess those cottonwood trees and that old sidewalk where I've broken my mother's back unnumbered times is sort of a trap too. Sixty years is a long time to have that same dust in the doorway and those same icicles hanging from the corner rain gutter.

It's like they say, "Country folks don't get drunk; they just like their whiskey." Well maybe so, but I've seen those

same bottles in the big city. In fact, once when we went to Chicago and we saw those slums and all that stuff and I saw this bottle in the gutter and two men were just sitting there and looking at the ground. And I asked Mother why people don't look at the sky and she said she didn't know, and you know I don't think she did. I like the sky; it's so bright and friendly and whenever I see it I think of big things like jet planes and geese and the sun. I wonder if those city people ever think of geese—and the sun.

When I was a little boy, six to be exact, I liked the west best of all because the sun always goes down over there. Sometime I'd like to follow it and really see if it's fire like they say. I know it's not 'cause it's so friendly and it makes me playmates out of shadows that throw the ball just when I do and run after the neighbors' cats with me and grow longer at suppertime. They always try to slip away from me and they disappear when they turn the street lights on. I tried to catch one one day but I hurt my fingers on the ground and I told Mother and she laughed and said silly boy.

That was when I was a boy. I'm nine now and people call me young man all the time and I like the north best of all. Because that's where the wind comes from and those geese I was telling you about. Every spring they set on the lake and I ask Dad where they are going and he says, "North, son, they're going north." They sure must like it up there. There's just one thing I can't figure out, what happens when you get north, I mean where do you go, I wonder where north of north is? I'll bet the geese know; if they'd ever quit honking for a minute maybe I'd ask 'em; not that I don't like their music but if they'd just stop to answer a young man's question maybe we could be friends. Gee, it would be great to talk about suns and the north and the sky and those clouds rolling over our TV antennae. But no one cares about the geese and, besides, they're gone 'cause it's winter and Judy says it's only two months till Mrs. Barton's first anniversary. Dad said once that it didn't make much difference when you're fifty-two and it's the second time around. But he's always saying things like that that I never understand. Judy says that it means that she's been married before, but I doubt it, unless he had a pretty fast mental clicker or a lot of that Red Cross cotton that comes in little balls. Of course he might have used bubble gum, but I still doubt it.

Judy says he was an alcoholic and drank that hard liquor

in bottles. I wonder if he ever looked at the sky. It seems like no one ever does. I'll bet if a man didn't smoke, didn't eat too much and looked at the sky every day he'd live a lot longer. One for the outside of you and one for the inside and one for your soul, and if all of them is in good shape a man can't be too sick, can he? Reverend Trotter says if a man's soul ain't sick, then he'll live forever; it seems so easy to look up but everybody's chin seems so heavy.

Some day I want to be a guy who goes around and gets people to look up and smile and hear the wind. And see those leaves that fall in the courtyard around the courthouse and come with me and dive in the little piles the caretacker makes up between the trees. I told my brother all this once and he laughed and told Mom we had a "catcher in the sky" in our family. She said that he was letting his sixteen-year-old intellect get the best of him and I think I would have agreed with her except, if I ever knew what intellect meant, it evaded me at the moment and I went back outside. I wanted to find Judy and play hop-scotch but I stopped instead to watch Lucky chase his shadow and I waited for Mother to call me to supper. The piles of leaves swirled in the courtyard and the caretacker cursed a little to see his efforts undone, and more than that, he cursed because it was too windy to light a fire. I smiled 'cause tomorrow the leaves would still be there and Judy and I would play hop-scotch and that owl in the belfry would swoop down through the trees, if we were early enough to see him.

The whistle blew and I went in for supper and the caretacker went home and the leaves were alone, for the trees are dead in the winter. I felt sorry for the leaves and suddenly I wanted to bring all of them in so they could sleep in my warm bed. But then I knew I couldn't and I stopped a tear halfway down my cheek with the back of my hand. I smiled, for I knew the leaves would not be alone with the wind and maybe even that ole owl in the belfry.

## Chaper 2

A lot of people always ask me why and I say because and they say no, no I mean why and I say that's it, just because. Because I love Peggy Ann and spelled it out in those rocks around the jungle gym, and because Mrs. Hatfield caught me and said that it was preposterous for a nine-year-old, and I said I didn't give a flying fart. Because all that, that's why Dad had a conference with Mr. Dooley and they sent

me home from school and all that crazy stuff that happened to me around February 14. But, I'm back now and it's pretty quiet this afternoon, except for those power company men across the street cutting down some cottonwood trees. They say they were blowing into those people's TV antennae, but I know the truth; they just hate trees, that's all. Mrs. Hatfield says they have discovered cells and their reproduction and they know all about how a tree lives. She even says their roots diffuse water to receive something called mineral ions. They know all about trees, all those people like Mrs. Hatfield and scientists and those power company men. They know all about how the roots are always cracking sidewalks and how bad they ruin people's televisions. But, they don't know, not really; they'll never see that hole in the sky out our window. They'll never miss that shade that falls across the window screen when I'm staying in after school with Mrs. Hatfield. It surprises me sometimes 'cause before I can see the first shadow crawling up the old brick wall outside it sneaks in and slips across Mrs. Hatfield as she sits at her desk right under the flag. I like Mrs. Hatfield; she's old but she's done a lot of teaching. In fact some of the older kids call her Mrs. golden Hattie because they say she's been teaching for fifty years. But I know she hasn't and I still like her.

About that shadow, it won't be there tomorrow and I won't be able to tell when to go home. 'Cause whenever it falls across Mrs. Hatfield's desk she always looks up at the old wooden clock over the door and slowly takes off her glasses and says, "That's all, Marcus; you can go now. I'll see you tomorrow night." But somehow I get a hollow feeling in my stomach and feel like maybe tomorrow Mrs. Hatfield won't be there and I'm always thinking about that shadow and old Mrs. Hatfield. One time I had a dream that I grew up and was a big executive and I came back to Torrance in around twenty years. I was pretty smart and was going to show these jerkwater townspeople how ole joe college had really made good. I walked around with my chest out for awhile and nobody really seemed to notice, and you know my chest even got tired. So I quit and decided to be just like normal people. One day I visited the graveyard up on the hill and most names I didn't even recognize, but I stumbled over a small marker and broke it partially off and I reached down and picked up a piece and it said

"Hatfield, Margaret A., 1881-1953." On the piece still in the ground it said "The old cottonwoods are gone and those who saw the cottonwoods are gone." I cried in my sleep and Mother shook me and said, "Mark, Mark;" that's what she always calls me, and I woke up and I wasn't afraid any more. But, I'm afraid now 'cause those men got the top cut clean out of it now and I told Mother I'd stay until it all fell down. So, I'm just sitting here writing "I love Peggy Ann" in some sand in the gutter, but don't worry; I cover it up real quick every time somebody walks by. It won't be long now; they're pulling it down with a big truck and winch and it is almost time for the whistle.

I wrote "I love Peggy Ann" in the sand again, and I think I'll leave it there tonight because the street light is on the other side and it'll be dark over here. So I went home and I don't think anyone ever saw it except those two old branches that rolled across the street when they finally pulled it down. I was starting up the hill when I heard it fall; there was a real loud crash and then it was still all over town. I watched two squirrels chase each other through the courtyard, and I asked why and somehow it echoed back because, just because.

It was exactly eight o'clock when Dad answered the phone right on the second ring. There was a long silence and I thought somebody had found my message in the sand, but it wasn't that at all, no not that at all. "Coronary thrombosis," it said on the epitaph card. Mom said it didn't hurt at all and they found her still at the desk, with her glasses on, and she was smiling, Mother said. I couldn't help but think the cottonwoods were gone, and I thought about Mrs. Hatfield and a lot of big things like that and I thought some day I'll grow up and know why, but all I heard was because, just because.

It seems like everybody is always going downhill, and I said, "Let me out in the middle of the road so I can stop them," but something inside said I couldn't go and I cried. My brother got married last summer and his wife had this baby about Christmas time. My grandmother said I'll bet it's really a small one, born so soon, but it weighed over nine pounds and she acted real surprised and everything. Dad said he knew all along. He's always saying things like that, and I asked him what he knew, and he said it wasn't a nine-year-old's business and we let it go at that. I don't think



they like the baby so well, 'cause they never talk about it much like they did when my sister Kate was born. Sometimes they talk about Liz—that's my brother's wife—and Mom gets mad and says how Liz has ruined her boy and how she cornered him into it. I've never known what it is, but Dad just rubs his chin and says they were both at fault, and he lets it go at that.

My dad is good at being passive and things like that, but then Mom's criticisms are no better, so I guess his is the lesser of two evils. I think Dad's is the nicer lesser, except when he's not so passive and breaks yardsticks over my seat. He started that last summer right after the wedding. He says it's like a long-term investment; it takes twenty years to develop, but it really pays off. He says he missed the first account, but he'd double the interest on this one and, believe me, my seat knows all about that double interest stuff.

I don't know why, but I feel like it keeps me from falling down that hill and every time he hits me I want to spread my arms a little wider so I can catch more of them as they go by. Somehow I can't ever get out there astraddle the dotted line. It seems like there's always big signs beside the road which say no trespassing—this is private property of the United States of America. Who owns it but the taxpayers, and Dad always says we're taxpayers. We can't even get on our own property.

It's like we all put up a sign to keep someone else out and pretty soon everyone had put up a sign to keep everyone else out and everyone else had put up a sign to keep them out. There is just never anyone there, just those big signs and those people on the other side of the fence going downhill. Oh yes, there is another little sign in the middle of the road. It says "No U-turns." I don't know what it means but people just keep going by and don't pay any attention, and I just sit there by the fence and watch the sun go down. I think about Terry and Liz and their little baby and wonder what it is, but I don't want to know—not really. 'Cause if I find out I might not want to cross the fence any more. I just sit there and watch the geese and think out things like that, and I said "I love Peggy Ann" again and I heard Mrs. Hatfield's voice say that was preposterous and I said I don't give a flying— "I'm sorry, Mrs. Hatfield, I'm sorry!!"

It's been a pretty hectic week, at least that's what Mom always says when things don't go her way, and they sure haven't gone mine. Monday we had a big deal at school for Mrs. Hatfield; they took us all down to the auditorium and some men came out on the stage to make some speeches and Mr. Dooley introduced them all. I was just sitting there holding Peggy Ann's hand and Billy Budd was holding her other hand. She said both of us were so masculine it put a lot of strain on her nine-year-old femininity, and I'm still wondering what that is. Well anyway these men began to dedicate things to Mrs. Hatfield, like loudspeakers and all that, and they told us all how much she had done for us, and they carried on and on with these wishy-washy speeches and pretty soon everybody began to cry, and all that stupid stuff. Well now, Billy Budd was trying to hide his eyes so Peggy Ann couldn't see him cry and Peggy Ann was sniffing in one of those little white hankies with flowers around the edge. I was just sitting there trying to count these little holes in the auditorium roof, when Miss Hyde—she's some lady that's taken over since Mrs. Hatfield passed on—grabs my trousers and starts to lead me toward the door, but it's 'way in the back of the auditorium and I stumbled about halfway back. I fell down and made all this racket, and everybody stopped crying all of a sudden and when they saw me lying on the floor and Miss Hyde tugging to pull me up by the trousers, they all started to laugh, but then Mr. Dooley said, "Let's have it quiet," and I went out in the hall with Miss Hyde and they went on with their wishy-washy speeches.

By the time we got to the hall Miss Hyde's face was redder than a whole sack of Boston-baked beans and she was pretty excited and all. She sat down on a chair and said, "Mr. Brown, come here. What was the idea of all that, Mr. Brown?" "Of all what?" I asked. "Of all that looking up and not paying attention." She pulled me over toward her and said, "You've got an awful lot to learn, Marcus, an awful lot." I was sort of tugging to get away from her when, "Come here," she said. I hopped up on her lap, you know, sort of like kids do to Santa Claus. I wasn't expecting a gift or anything, but I thought maybe I could fake her out, but it failed. She jerked me across her lap and I'll bet her hand still smarts from that little episode, not that that

lower region upon which I generally sit is any tougher than the rest of me but I still bet it smarts.

Ever since, I've been wondering why they always punish the undeserving. It's like a saying I once heard: the old devils live forever, but the Lord wants all the good people, so he calls 'em early. It's sort of that way with Mrs. Hatfield. You know, if there was just her and me praying for all the other people that had died, there wouldn't be all that wishy-washy stuff in the auditorium, and me and her wouldn't have any excuse not to have science period so I guess we would have it. Anyway, we could have those prayers like we used to have before they banned that stuff, but that ain't the way it is—the Lord never calls those old devils, just the good people, that's all.

Well all week I've been staying in with Miss Hyde and she don't say much and just sits up there and looks down, and I just sit back in the back and wait for five o'clock to roll around 'cause there ain't no shadow or anything any more. I'm sure glad it's over, the week, that is, 'cause tonight Bobby is going to stay with me and we talk about big things, like girls and love and those kind of things. Bobby don't talk much about geese and the sun and I act sort of different when he comes, 'cause he cares about girls and love, and I guess that's the thing in the fourth grade 'cause that's what Bobby's in and he knows all about those things. We'll go to the show and after it's over he'll want to go by Mary Ann's and see if she is still up. I'll say no, we have to go straight home 'cause Mother told me, and he'll say "You're just not bringing your folks up right, that's all," and we'll go by Mary Ann's—we always do.

While I'm waiting for Bobby to come up—I always say up because we live on the hill and Bobby lives down by the lake. That reminds me, one time Bobby and I were talking about his big brother who lives in Utah, and Bobby said, "My brother is down in Utah." Well, we live in Kansas—see—and I said, "It's not down in Utah, it's up in Utah," and Bobby sort of smiled and said, "Ya, but he's in southern Utah." While I'm waiting I've been high jumping 'cause it's about spring and everybody high jumps in the spring. Now I'm just sitting here in the pit. It's just over the street from our house, and I'm watching Pop drive up the hill. Pop's my grandpa, and you know what, he is a real great guy. People say, "What's so great about him?" and then they tell

me all this stupid stuff. They say is he great because he always brings candy in his pockets to my sister Kate and she always runs to the door and says, "What ya got in your pocket, Pop?" But, let me tell you about Pop; that's not why he's great—no sir, not at all. Pop's a fisherman, that's why he's great, and I tell people that and they say, "What's so great about a fisherman?" and it sort of hurts me. See, it's like this: Pop has worked real hard all his life but now he's retired and he goes fishing; he don't fish for food—heaven knows him and Mamo couldn't eat all those fish in a million years.

When old Pop is a-fishing he finds a oneness with a lot of things, like trees, for instance; now there's not many people who find a oneness with a tree. Well anyway, as Pop's out there finding a oneness with trees and geese and those things and learning to adjust to the moon and the wind and that darn old moss that always gets on your line, he's storing up a lot of things. Pop will never be like Mrs. Barton 'cause every wave is different and every year when the ducks go south the sky changes and when the geese are flying and the prairie chickens are calling to their mates there just ain't time to worry about that old dust in the doorway. There's another thing about Pop; like I said, all these years he's been storing up things like every fish and every summer rain and even every wild rosebud he sees a-bloom-ing. After a while a man stores up a lot of things, and that's the way it is with Pop. I mean, after a man's got enough stored up he don't need any more living and when the Lord calls him he just smiles and says, "Sure I'll go, 'cause I've been there and here and everywhere. I've planted all my apple seeds and they're all a-growing," and then he goes on with the Lord like a good man should. That's the way it's going to be with Pop—he'll just smile and say, "I've been there." They all ask me why he's great and, I mean, what can I tell 'em when I say because he's been there and they say where's there? All of a sudden I cried right there in that high jump pit and I said, "God, I'm sorry that I can't climb that fence and walk right past those big signs and help Terry and Liz have regular babies, and all that stuff. But I just can't," and I said, "I love you, Pop, I love you."

\* \* \*

Well it's 12:30 now and I think Bobby is asleep because he hasn't said anything for a long time, and I'm just laying

here thinking about some things. We went to the show all right, just like I said, and then we started to go by Mary Ann's. But, we were walking up this alley, sneaking along like the Indians in the show, when this funny thing happened. We were just sort of standing there and we heard these footsteps around Hillman's back door and we couldn't see anything 'cause the car was in the way, and we could just hear these footsteps, that's all. We waited a long time and still we couldn't see anyone and Bobby said it might be a ghost, but it wasn't a ghost, no siree, not that at all. It was Jim Perkins—he's the sheriff. He came out with his flashlight shining and he was talking to Mrs. Hillman. "I know he was out here," she said, Shirley Hillman, that is. "I can't haul a man in for nothing." "I still say he's a threat to the community; why, we can't let him walk our streets; he's a physic or something like that." "I'm sorry," Jim said. He's a big man and we could hear his voice easy out by the alley where we were. We both got down on our hands and knees when we heard 'em talking and we were both pretty scared 'cause we thought maybe physic was another name for ghost. At least that's what Bobby said, and I believe him 'cause he's in the fourth grade and he knows all about girls and love and all that. We were listening to Jim and Shirley talking when she asked him to please take one more look around. Jim said sure that he would—Jim's a real likeable guy; he gives me rides to school in the morning when I'm walking and lets me listen to his cop radio and he's just a swell guy. So, he starts out back toward where Bobby and I were hiding; I thought sure he'd see us 'cause it's still early spring and there's no leaves or anything. Just a few buds on the lilac bushes and there just isn't anybody who can hide behind a bud on a lilac bush. But he never saw us, at least he told her everything was all right and he'd have to get back to his beat, which meant the whole town, and we all knew it, but he still said beat just like a big-time cop or something. So we came on home and never went by Mary Ann's; in fact, I forgot all about it until just now and I'm sure glad we didn't 'cause I was pretty well scared.

Bobby and I didn't talk much about the race tonight; I guess we kinda forgot it in the excitement. Let me tell you about the race. We have this little scheme, Bobby and I, that is. It's sort of complicated, but this is the general plan.

There are three girls in Bobby's class and all their names start with J. We call them the big three, Jeri, Jane, and Jenny, the three prettiest girls ever to have their names carved in that old cottonwood that stands in the schoolyard. But don't worry. It's not alone with all those "moments under its branches and all those hearts and arrows in its bark." Someone once said that, that which comes by way of the mouth passes on, but that which comes with the aid of the blade shall forever reside, and I guess it's sort of that way with that old cottonwood. Well anyway, back to the horse race, I don't know why we call it a horse race—there isn't a single horse in it—but whenever I imagine the track I think of Churchill Downs or some big place like that, so I guess maybe that's why it's called a horse race. Here's what we do: we pretend that Jeri, Jane, and Jenny are after every boy in the fourth grade—they really aren't but we don't care. Each girl flirts and sends notes and all that stuff that women do to trap men, and after each girl does this all week, Bobby and I take a poll Friday morning at recess to see who is the most popular girl in the fourth grade.

After we've asked all the boys whose opinions are inclined to agree with ours, at that particular moment, we move that girl who receives the most votes up one length in the race. At the end of each six-week period we put a mark below the leader's name on that cottonwood in the schoolyard. Jeri has 1 and Jenny has 3 and poor Jane hasn't scored yet, but it's only two weeks until the next "photo finish," and I hope Jane wins. But I still like Peggy Ann the best, but she's only a third grader. It's sort of like the Kentucky Derby, if you're a two-year-old. You can't run, and all you can do is wait for next year and hope, and then you'll probably break a leg or something and have to be shot.

It's ironic but that's sort of what happened to my sister-in-law, Liz. She always wanted to be queen at the state college, where her and Terry went to school, ever since she was a freshman. Only seniors were eligible and all she could do was wait. Terry said that she would get so excited when they went to the pageant for the queen that she would bring blood in the palms of her hands because she pressed them so hard with her fingernails. When she finally got to be a senior, her and Terry watched the pageant on TV from the hospital; their baby was born that day. All of a sudden I felt sorry for all those horses that fall and can't get up and

have to be shot. I felt sorry for Liz at the same time, but then I guess I wouldn't have to tell you that, we can all tell a horse when we see one.

#### Chapter 4

I saw the judge yesterday; he called me chubby just like he always does. It's a funny thing about the judge, I mean all that money and everything and still he has all those egg stains on his shirt and he smells like a whole pack of dead rats. They say he even brushes his teeth at that fountain in front of the bank, if you're early enough to see him. Not that he wouldn't brush them if you weren't there, but still you have to be early to see him. It's sort of senseless, I mean how does anyone know if the judge brushes his teeth on those days when no one is there to see him? You realize that there aren't any crowds in front of the bank at 6:30 a.m.; people just don't give that much of a damn to see the judge brush his teeth. I mean gee, I wouldn't go down. Now if he'd brush them at 3:00 on Saturday afternoon he'd have quite a gallery, but he doesn't, and I still wonder if he brushes 'em when no one is there but I guess I'll never know 'cause if they aren't there how could they tell me?

Yesterday when we were playing "Mother, may I?" at recess I was standing there not getting much action 'cause Billy Budd was the mother and he and I aren't bosom buds or anything. So I was just looking around and getting a little tired when I noticed that I was last and no one was watching me, so I just took two giant steps. Still no one noticed, so I just took two more and before long I was first and no one ever knew about those giant steps. Now don't give me away because tomorrow I get to be the mother because I won, but still it hurts a little. I mean I did cheat and all. I get mad as hell when I catch Billy Budd or Ronnie or Mary Taylor trying to cheat and it just isn't fair. If one of us cheats all of us should and then if everybody cheated there wouldn't be any game left. I mean, if I could take two giant steps without saying "Mother, may I?" I'd take 'em and pretty soon everybody would be taking 'em and we wouldn't need a mother or anyone to run the game, and if we didn't have a mother it wouldn't be any fun.

If you're climbing up that hill it's pretty easy to help someone else up, but if you're just sitting out there by those signs and watching, people keep going right on downhill

and you sort of feel like you're going with them. There's a lot of funny things about two giant steps.

Well back to the judge, he's an awfully old man. I guess that's his excuse. He's filthy rich, really, he's filthy and he's rich; you might say he just fits the bill. He stinks real bad and when people come in church they never sit by the judge, they just leave that pew empty and no one ever sits there except some flies in the summertime. Of course, there isn't any flies in the winter and I couldn't help but feel the judge was a little lonely. That's what I was about to tell you, I set by the judge Sunday in church and it wasn't that bad at all, I mean, I never held my nose or anything. I almost asked him if he really brushed his teeth in front of the bank, but I didn't. I guess it really doesn't matter, no one ever asks me where I brush my teeth, so why should they ask the judge, huh?

When I saw him yesterday, he smiled and said, "Chubby, how'd ya like the sermon?" I said that it was a little difficult but being Easter and all I listened especially close—it seems like everyone does on Easter. The church was so full that some woman had to sit right in front of the judge and she made all this noise and stirred around about like my sister Kate. Reverend Trotter said, "This is the day which the Lord thy God hath made, rejoice and be glad in it." Then he smiled right down at that lady in front of the judge, but I don't think she smiled back because her ears didn't move and they usually do when you smile. But maybe she smiled just a little and didn't make her ears move, but I don't think so.

After church the judge walked out beside me and he even put his hand on my shoulder. I felt kind of proud and all, it was sort of like the judge and I were friends. I guess the judge doesn't have many friends, so maybe I'll be one. I told Mother that I set by the judge in church, and you know what she asked me, she asked me how much he put in the collection, that's what she asked me. I told her five dollars. He really put in a quarter but people are always down on the judge so I told her five dollars. She said he must have decided not to buy a new suit for Easter but give to the church instead. I don't know what kind of a suit you can get for five dollars—maybe a couple of pair of jockey shorts or something. But she said it anyway and I laughed a little when I thought of the judge in those jockey shorts. Like I said, everybody is always down on the judge.



It isn't nice, and Mother always says if it isn't nice, don't say it, but I'll say it anyway. (I'm not bringing my folks up right, remember.) Like I said, it isn't nice, but sometimes I think the judge is a mole. I mean, he even looks like one, sort of; his eyes are real sensitive to strong light and he's squinting or something all the time. His fingernails are even long—not that he's been doing much digging or anything, but they are still long. Another thing, did you ever notice how moles are always making tunnels and pretty soon the tunnels get old and fall in? Well, the judge is always making tunnels that fall in, too, and every time one does, somebody is always getting hurt. One fell in last Wednesday after the six o'clock whistle had blown and it hurt Mrs. Coffman right bad. Mrs. Coffman is the postmaster and she is really a nice old lady. But the judge must never have been a Cub Scout 'cause he doesn't care about old ladies. I guess that's why it happened to Mrs. Coffman. They generally close up the post office about 5:30 and there isn't anyone usually there except sometimes the janitor, but that's all. Well anyway, Mrs. Coffman had stayed to work on her stamp collection—it seems like she'd get tired of stamps after she's looked at them all day. But I guess she doesn't 'cause she stays late to fill out all those big black stamp books that sit on top of the safe. That's what she was doing when the judge came in to get his mail. It's sort of like brushing his teeth—he does it when nobody can see him. He could get his mail right along with the rest of the folks, but he waits until after the whistle and everybody has gone home and there's nobody there except maybe the old janitor, and even he was gone last Wednesday.

Well, the judge came in and saw Mrs. Coffman sitting there at that table by the safe just looking at those big stamp books. He went on in and opened his box and got his mail, except last Wednesday he didn't have any mail, and he shut the box and started on out. Now Mrs. Coffman looked up from those books when she heard the judge's box shut, and she saw the judge standing there looking through the bars at the parcel post window and she smiled and said, "Good evening, Judge" and then she went back to her stamps. The judge never moved, he just stood there by the window and he was staring real meanlike, and old Mrs. Coffman was still looking at her stamps, but she never heard the judge's footsteps or the door slam, so she looked up. He

was still standing there just staring through those bars and some streaks of sunlight fell through the windows and hit his face and he was squinting like a mole in those caved-in tunnels, I reckon. Well then she said, "Can I help you, Judge?" and the judge still didn't say nothing and she got up and went over to the window and asked the judge if he was all right. Everybody knows the old judge is sort of sick and they say his health is about gone. When she got to the window the judge reached through that little space under the bars and grabbed her sleeve and still the judge didn't say nothing, so she tried to pull away but he grabbed the neck of her dress and ripped it clear down to her waist. He wouldn't let go of her sleeve, so she pulled it clear off. She just stood there with her slip or something torn and the pieces of her dress on the floor. The judge pulled on those bars but he couldn't move 'em, and then he got back and charged at the bars and when he hit 'em he just fell back on the floor. Moles can't be elephants, but I guess the judge doesn't know that. Pretty soon he just walked out the front door and catty-corner across the street with his cane. The sunlight was hitting him pretty hard and he was squinting and everything. Mrs. Coffman just stood there after the judge was gone and she started to cry sort of like she wanted to understand the judge or something.

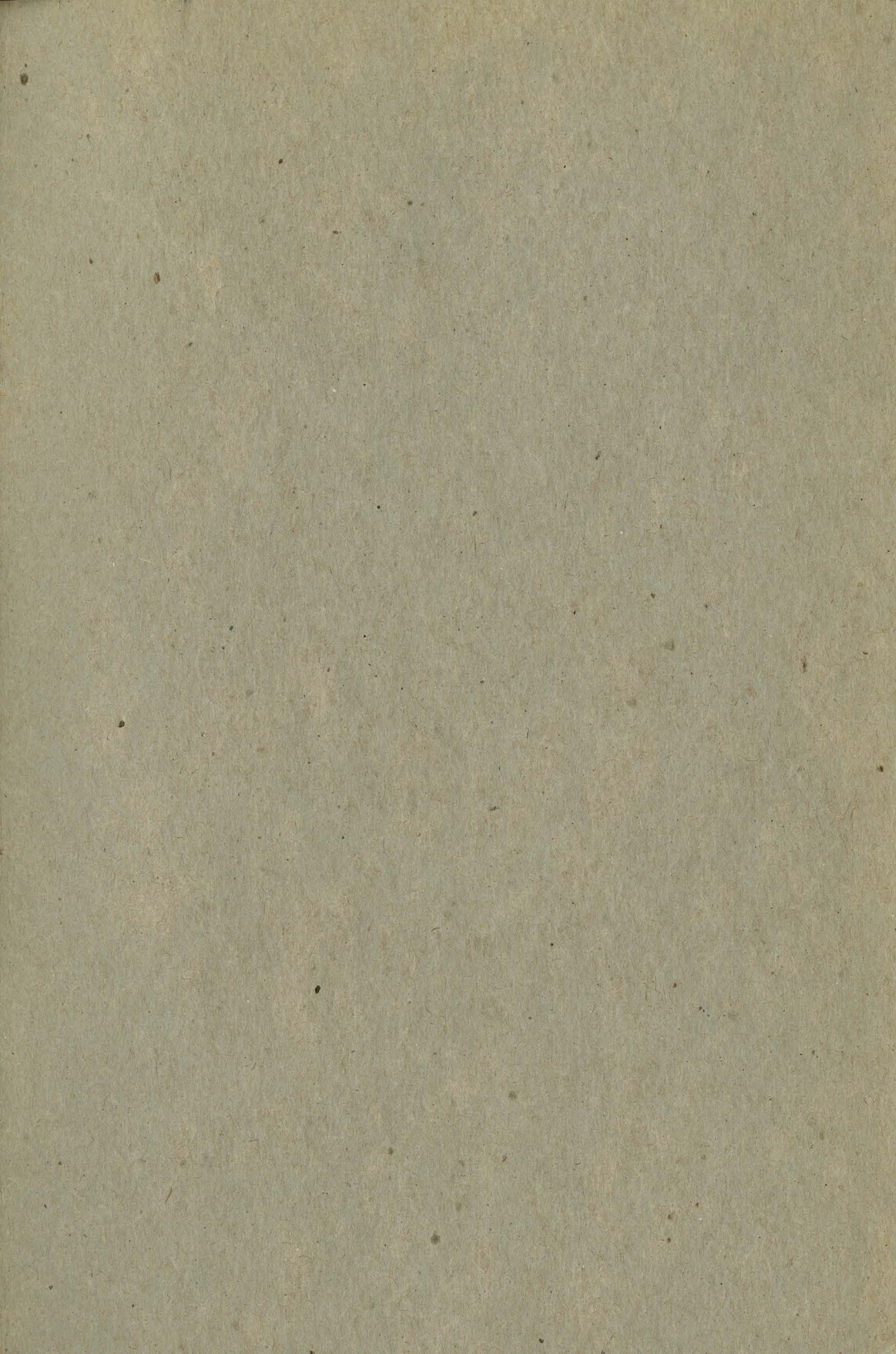
After awhile she started to really cry and she picked up those pieces of her dress and wiped her eyes with 'em and she closed those big stamp books and went on home. Next day when she came to work she opened those big books and found that some stamps had been ruined by tears, and another one of those tunnels of the judge's had fallen in.

I've been thinking about the judge a lot lately and I believe I still want to be his friend, and I cried a little, not enough to ruin any stamps or anything, but just a little. I said, "God, please help the judge," and I sure hope that he does 'cause if he doesn't I don't know who will. 'Cause he don't have any friends or anything, and what can I do, I mean—gosh, I'm only nine and I can't even stand out there and keep 'em from cutting down all those trees. And help old ladies smile when they have to sit in front of the judge in church. I can't even save the leaves in the courtyard. Then I set down on those steps that come out of the post office and bowed my head and even cried a little and I said, "God, please forgive those two giant steps."



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