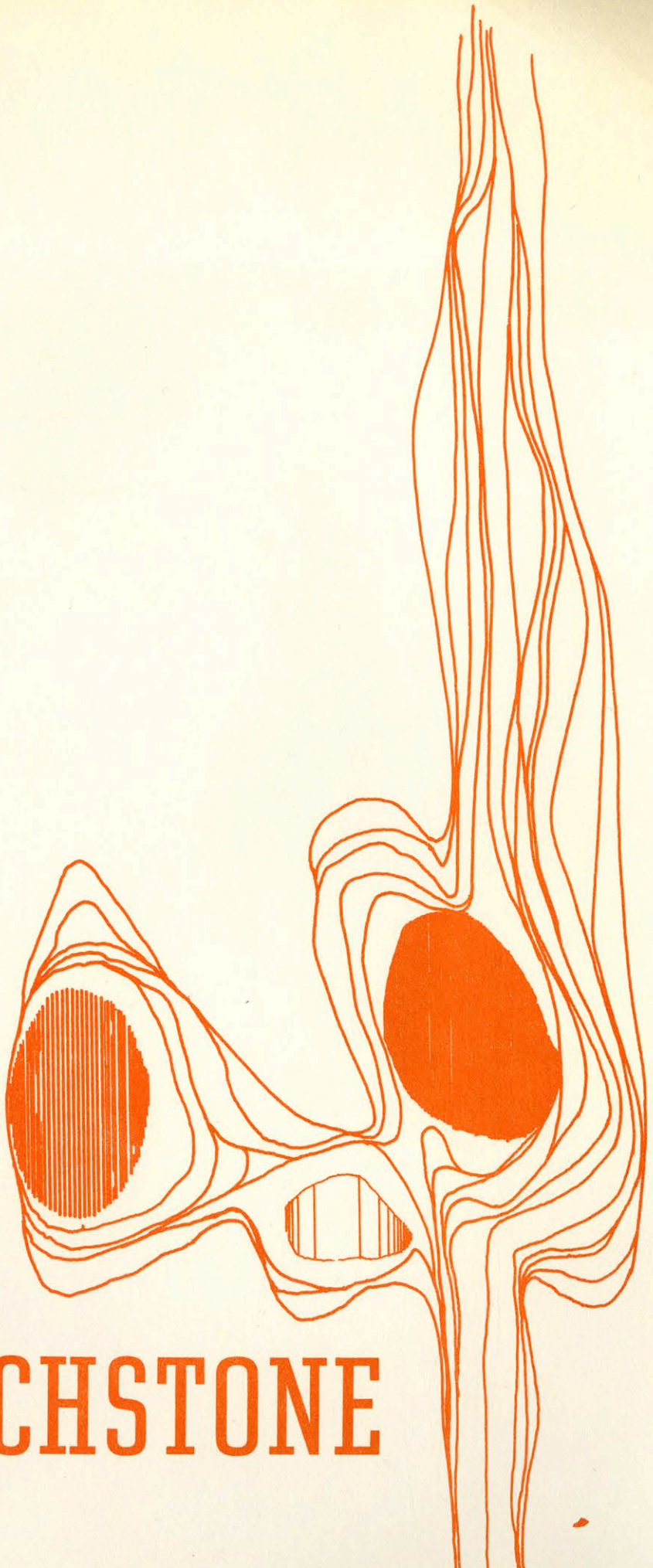


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Free—Late on a Summer Afternoon

J. L. REYNOLDS

HE SET the ash-tray on the table, next to the telephone, turned the padded rocker around facing the table and sat down. He picked up the receiver and held it against his ear with his shoulder, started to dial (had his finger inserted in the slot for operator), then hesitated, slipped the receiver back on the hook, flipped a Lucky out of a pack lying by the ash-tray, and lighting it, leaned back in the rocker dragging at the cigarette.

He had not seen her in four years and had heard nothing from her for two years. Had it been that long? It did not seem so long. Everyone, since he had been back, asked him about her. Where was she? What had happened between them? But he had always shrugged it off, saying he did not know, that it had been all over for a long time, that they had just gradually quit writing. He imagined that the more intuitive saw that he wished it was not all over and that it was she who had stopped the writing.

He took a long pull at the cigarette, stubbed it out, then again lifted the receiver off the hook, dialing the operator and waiting.

"Operator."

"Operator," he said, "I'd like to place a long-distance call, person-to-person, to Miss Kathleen Carruthers, in Tyler, Texas."

"Would you spell the last name?"

He spelled it for her.

"Do you have the number, sir?"

"Uh—no, I don't have the number. It wouldn't be listed under her name; it would be under Doctor Lawrence Carruthers."

"Well, do you know the area code?"

"No. No, I don't know that either."

"All right, and your number there, sir?"

He gave her his number and waited, nervous, while the operators collaborated. It seemed a bit like waiting to talk to an ideal voice he had built up from his memory and encased in a fragile glass case to protect the perfection from the dust and cobwebs of the years; he was slightly aware

that the glass could be shattered when she answered but he wanted to either shatter the glass or wipe clean the dust that had accumulated on the outside.

"Hello?"

The voice had not changed. It was as if he were calling her six years ago. Sweet hello, perhaps the Texas honey spread on too thick, the O drawn out and slurring to a rising pitch as she held onto it at the end. Then the operator's voice, flat and impersonal, breaking in: "Long-distance for Miss Kathleen Carruthers."

"This is Kathleen. Just a moment, operator."

Where was she going? To close a door for privacy, or to get an ash-tray? But she didn't smoke. She hadn't smoked before. He tried to imagine her smoking, but it wasn't in the picture. He took a deep breath, told himself to cool it, and coughed.

"Okay, operator," he heard the sweet, slightly childish voice.

"Hello, Kathy?"

"Yes?"

She sounded beautiful with her honeyed voice, but in the past, when he had called her, the voice always lost its practiced calm when she recognized him. There was no recognition now, only a curious expectancy.

"This is Lyle." Still no recognition. "Lyle Hunter?"

"Oh, well, Lyle! How in the world are you?"

It was painfully evident from her limited enthusiasm that she was, indeed, surprised, but her gladness was something less than ecstatic. She had apparently all but forgotten him.

"I'm fine," he said. "And you?"

"Oh, I'm just fine too. This is such a surprise! Where are you?"

"I'm in Kansas City." Silence. "I saw Susan Baker the other day, and she told me that you were still in Texas, so I thought I'd give you a ring. She said you were teaching school."

"Well, not exactly. I taught history at

a high school in Austin—for one semester—but then in the spring I went to Europe and was over there for almost a year. I just got back several months ago, and—oh!—I got your card from Stockholm when I got back, so I must have been over there when you were but neither of us knew it. Mother didn't forward the card because she knew I would be coming back pretty soon. I was so surprised to get it. I hadn't heard from you in so long, and I was mad because I didn't get to see you when I was over there. But— isn't it funny?— I didn't know you were in Europe and you didn't know I was over there. That's ironic, I guess, isn't it?"

"Yes," he said, "I guess it is. Cruel irony, except I'm never too sure what irony means. I didn't know whether the card would reach you or not because I didn't know where to send it for sure. I sent it on an impulse. I think I had been drinking. I wish I'd known you were over there when I was on leave; I'd have hunted you up. What are you doing now, Kathy?"

"Well, I'm— I'm getting married next month, Lyle."

"Oh . . ." His Adam's apple bobbed and he leaned back into the chair. "Oh," he said again. "Congratulations. I didn't know, of course."

"Thanks so much," she said. And now she was saying something else, but he could not concentrate, could not get it straight. She said she was getting married. That's what she said, all right; and sounded happy about it. He had not expected, although he knew he should have, exactly that.

The conversation spread out, controlled by extreme politeness and gravity. The politeness, the surface talk, as of two old friends meeting at a party and finding that the gap between present and past left them without a basis for real communication, the "old times" waxing thin and leaving their present relations empty, was not what he had wanted or expected from her. He suddenly wondered how much money he was wasting on this polite exchange of pleasantries. They said good-bye, beaming good-byes, wishing each other all the happiness in the world.

He dropped the receiver on the hook, hating himself like he would any stupid fool. Sometimes he took pity on stupid fools, but you couldn't take pity on your own weaknesses; that was not allowed and would be just one more weakness. He

took another Lucky out of the pack and lit it. He put the ash-tray on his thigh and swiveled around in the chair. His face was tanned, the cheek bones prominent and the jaw muscles flexing from the steady tense grinding of his teeth. He placed the ash-tray back on the telephone table and stood, rooted in the same spot, for a moment. With the cigarette drooping from his lips, he paced aimlessly about the apartment, wandering from the living room to the kitchen, looking at the telephone, putting his cigarette out only half-smoked, and finally sitting down in the rocking chair and swiveling around to the telephone again. He dialed a local number.

"Hello?"

"Hello," he said. "Is Susan there?"

"Yes. Just a minute, she's out by the pool."

"Oh, then don't bother her," he said, but she was already screaming, "Sue! Some guy!"

"Hello?" Susan's thin, shrill voice sounded anxious to find out the identity of this mysterious "some guy."

"Susan, this is Lyle."

"Lyle! Hi. Whatcha doing today? I was just sunning my skinny bod by the pool. It's so hot!"

"Yeah, terrible, isn't it? And this my first Midwestern summer in four years. It must be tough living in an apartment with an air-conditioner and a pool. Say, I just made a long-distance call—to Texas."

"To Texas! Who'dya call? As if I didn't know. How is she?"

"Fine. She's fine, I guess. She's just great. Seems to be very happy."

"Well? You going down there to see her?"

"No. It seems she's getting married next month."

"She is? Really? I didn't know that. How do you feel? Did it kind of hit you below the belt, as they say?"

"I don't know," he said, "how I feel. How should I feel? You know, since you told me about her, about how she talked about me when you saw her, she's sort of been on my mind. It was sort of hard to shake off the idea that maybe . . . But I guess I'm cured of her—ghost. God, that's corny. I don't know what I thought I was doing. I just wanted to see what it would be like to talk to her. Jesus! I must have really expected her to be thrilled." He

attempted a laugh that sounded more like a cough.

"Lyle, maybe what you need is a drink. I'd ask you over for a swim, but I got this date tonight and I have to run."

"Susan, you go on. I think I will have that drink. Everything ought to turn out all right at the bottom of a few glasses."

"I'm not in that big a hurry. I can talk some more. Well, so that's that, huh?"

"Yeah, well, I didn't mean to bother you. I just had to talk about it to someone, I guess. Go on now and get ready for your date."

"Okay. Have a drink but, you know, take it easy. Anyway, I'm sorry I misled you. You sure you're all right now? I don't think it'll bother you long. You'll be okay. Why don'tcha call Mary up tonight? Or I could probably get a date for you."

"Thanks. Maybe I'll call her, but I don't think I'm in the mood for a date now. I think I'll just get drunk, not because I need to, but just because it seems to be the right thing to do. Later, Susan."

He looked around, his lethargic gaze searching the corners of his apartment. A lonely place. Furnished. He had liked it after coming out of the army. He could afford it as long as he kept that job on the assembly line. That lousy nowhere job. The privacy of the pad was what he treasured after the impersonalized army life. A flop where he could have a stereo, beer in the refrigerator, and a place to read and try to write. Only it had been more beer and listening to records than the writing. He had not even done much reading since he had been back, just an automat eight hours a day, then boozing and looking for someone to bring back to the pad in the nights when the privacy lost its attraction.

He looked at the stereo, then at the bookcase. He realized he would only read the same sentence over and over if he tried opening a book. In fact he did not want his mind taken off his built-up sorrow. It was full. It was a full feeling, not the emptiness of time-wasted hours; but he had to get her out of his mind for good. He was feeling again, but too much. He needed something to take the sharp edge away. Mellow the ache, water it down a little. What was Poe's theory that he had read somewhere? That sadness, the feeling of loss was the most perfect beauty that

poetry could ever reach? But it was hard, too hard when you were alone, with nobody around to watch the beauty of your sadness and share in its poignance.

There was a pint of Haig and Haig he had bought at the airport the night he returned from the service. He had had a drink with his brother and sister in a quiet celebration of the occasion. It was still more than half full; he did not really like scotch, especially when he had to drink it alone, so he had not touched it since but had brought it with him when he moved into the apartment, hoping he would need it when he entertained a young girl some happy night. As things had turned out he hadn't needed it. He took the cap off and poured it halfway to the brim of a pear-shaped glass. He filled the glass with ice—he had always drunk scotch with water before, but now he thought that, symbolically, it would be more appropriate and to the point to drink it on the rocks.

But he could not drink it; it was far too strong, burning his mouth and making him stagger from the first hard swallow. A good belt. He added some water from the faucet but there was still too much scotch in the glass so he let it sit. Whether he needed it or not it just did not taste good. He would drink it when the ice melted. He walked back into the living room, his hands in his hip pockets, thinking he would feel great in a few days, maybe. He would be okay again; he would bounce back if he could think of something to do right now. He did not want to feel sorry for himself.

He sat down in his overstuffed chair, sinking back and throwing his legs out, plopping them down on a hassock. He sank deep into the cushions, his arms resting limp on the arms of the chair, his head leaning against the back of the tan leather softness. After several minutes he jerked up and jumped out of the chair, continuing his pacing over the rug.

What the hell? he thought. He went over to the record rack and knelt down to select a record. He hesitated, then selected a Sarah Vaughn, placing it on the turntable. He turned the switch that started Sassy revolving, then he stretched out on the couch, lying on his back with his hands in his pockets.

The music started, scratchy and familiar. Sad, brooding, remembering songs. She could sing them. She could really sing

them, all right. He lay still and listened, then he was thinking. He was thinking and remembering the last night he saw her. Thinking of the night three years ago when she had told him, told him that she didn't love him any more. She had told him, told him again two years ago: "Lyle, I just don't think I feel the same. I think we should stop writing because we couldn't be friends now." But he hadn't believed her. No, he hadn't believed her, but, he thought, she proved it to me this time.

The music streamed through his consciousness again. The elegiac music sounding like a funeral dirge introducing the throaty Negro lamenting voice singing the words:

"My mind is in confusion;
My soul is in torment;
I've lost the grand illusion
That love is heaven-sent."

He jumped to his feet and rejected the record. As the mechanism automatically shut itself off, he knelt down to get another. He put on a Brubeck. He started the mechanism again and waited until the record plopped down and the arm had placed the needle on the edge of it and the scratching began and then the drum and the piano coming on fast and wild. When he heard Desmond's sax he lit another cigarette and moved away from the stereo to the window.

He looked down at the rush-hour traffic of Troost Avenue. He wiped the beads of perspiration from his forehead. It was nearing six o'clock and the sun would fade for a few hours more. A cigarette hung from his mouth as he stood, shoulders bent, hands on hips, watching the summer evening settling down before him with sounds of horns honking and onward moving tires humming and squealing on the hot asphalt pavement.

The Sacrifice

JAMES LIVERMORE

Whetted steel
reflecting blindly in the sun.
Impersonal images
slide
down the glassy surface.
Laughing gods
accept the whimpering.

Age corrodes,
blunts,
and leaves intact.

I must break the knife with my heart.

Shadows

JOE MICHAUD

got to get away - run - run - run - run -
run - run - got to - one more block - just
one - alley's dark - run - run - got to get
away - no more bill - no more toby - leave
me alone - got to be alone - alley's dark -
house - porch light-21 - corner - cinders
- alley - dark - walk now - cinders
crunch - don't fall they hurt - there -
on the back stoop - sit and rest - all
alone - sit and think - tom - where's
tom? - why did you go away, tom? - you
shouldn't have left - the stoop is cold -
mom said cold stoops cause piles - tom -
we used to sit on stoops at night - drawing
pictures in the stars - why did you leave
me, tom? - so quiet - only the sounds
floating up from the docks - longshoremen
working under the lights - cranes - netfuls
of cargo - rising out of inkiness - pulsing
into the floodlights - eerie light - not
moving - shadows like black gaping
wounds between ship and wharf - we sat
at the front window and watched the
docks through dad's binoculars - pretend-
ing we were spies - but not alone - spying
is no fun alone - but tom is coming - tom
is coming back - that was him tonite at
the dance - i saw him walk in the front
door - i saw him search the crowd for
me - but he couldn't see me in the dark-
ness - the light over the door blinded
him - i saw him leave - he's looking for
me now - he's looking all over town -
maybe he thinks i'm at cindy's house -
he's over there asking - but he'll come
here - we always meet here - rendezvous
at the stoop - they'll never pick us up
here - we're too clever for their agents -
he'll be here soon - pretty soon

cool - shadows - triangle of light -
piercing the alleyway - can't reach me -
no moon - just the stars - cold light drop-
ping through the void - if i stare they
come nearer - but i can't touch them - i
can't reach my hand into the void - i don't
even know where it begins - there's a star
for every one of us - tom - which one is
mine? - sit over here, tom - i'm cold - sit
next to me and tell me again about the
star that comes down for you when you

die and takes you away and takes you
'way up there into the void where even
though you're all alone you're never lonely
because every star knows every other star
forever - tom! - tom! - tooom! - please,
tom - come over here - don't hide in the
shadows, tom - don't try to scare me -
mom doesn't want you to scare me - she
always says it might affect me - oh tom,
don't be mean - here - you can have the
top - spin it on the road - spin it on the
ice-capped puddles - spin it on the stars -
don't lose it in the shadows - tom - let it
go, tom! - no, don't go after it - no, tom
- stay here - the shadows'll eat you up -
shadows do things

shadows - mom
says shadows don't mean anything - but
mom never goes into the shadows - we
went into the shadows, tom - we always
went into the shadows - always together -
and we always came out - always together
- but you went alone - just once you went
alone into the shadows and the shadows
crunched and whirred and screamed and
i - i -

getting cold
tom - hurry up - you know where i am,
tom - you don't have to look everywhere -
you know i always wait for you on the
back stoop - this cement is cold - i wish i
had a cushion or a board or a paper bag
to sit on - cold in the shadows - warm in
the light - cold in the shadows - warm in
the light - cold in the shadows - warm in
the light - cold in the - why is it cold in
the shadows? - were you cold in the
shadows, tom? - why didn't you stay with
me - i was warm - it was nice under the
streetlamp - it was a lake of warmth - but
you went into the shadows - you went into
the cold - why did you go into the shad-
ows? - did you see a star in the shadows -
a star spinning in the shadows - spinning
in the void - spinning in the cold - spin-
ning - spinning - tom is spinning in the
void - tom - don't spin away - tom, come
- tom - please come to me

no - you can't come - mom says you
went away for a while - mom told dad it

might affect me - mom said never to go out alone at night - but i ran away from bill and toby - i ran away from the dance - i ran away to find you, tom - you went away and i have to run away to find you - i know where you are, tom - i know why you don't come - i know your star came that night - spinning through the void - spinning through the shadows and you went to meet it and you never came back and now i'm in the shadows and my star will come too - see the star - see it glinting on the ice - see it glinting on the piece of glass - see it, tom - see it spinning - down - down - spinning - there - black and warm - almost painless - my star - glinting in the cinders - my star - spinning down the shadows - spinning down the void - wait, tom - i'm coming - it's cold, tom - so cold - it's shadow cold - it's void cold - but soon - warmth - tom - me - together - sit - stoop - hold - warm - tom - wait - coming - c o m i n g - c o m i n g . . .

"Jim! Where are you? Jim!"

"There he is, on the stoop."

"Jim, what's the matter? you sleeping? You're not drunk, are you?"

"He's gonna catch his death of cold. Let's get him home."

"Look, Toby, look! That big stain on his jeans. My God! Look at his wrist! It's blood! Pull the car into the alley. We'll take him to St. Mary's. Jim, come on, man, hold on. See, I'm wrapping it up. It's gonna be o.k. God, what a gash! Come on, Jim, it's me, Bill. You're gonna be all right. Say something, Jim! You're just groaning, Jim. I can't understand. . . .

cold - cold - slipping into cold - slipping into void - star - cold - star - cold - void - crunching - steps - tom - so cold, tom - hold my hand, tom - cold void take me spinning - stars spinning - your star - my star - our stars spinning - twin stars spinning void - so cold

"Jim, hang on!"

hanging in void - cold void - cold hanging - tom - is it you, tom? - i came to find you - in the shadows - cold - slipping away - tom - hand - tom - slipping - slipping - crunching - whirring - louder - louder - shadow crunching - whirring. . . .

"Help me put him in the back seat. You should have heard him scream just as you pulled the car into the alley. There, on the seat. I'll ride in back with him. Move out, Toby, hurry! There's no telling how much blood he's lost. He's groaning again. He must be slipping in and out of a coma. Jim! it's me, Bill." Are you cold, Jim? We'll get a blanket. It'll be o.k. Hang on, Jim. I know why you did it. Crazy fool. Don't you know that won't help? There's nothing you can do about it. Your ma told me to watch you too. Why did you run away? Why? Why?

jim - jimmy - it's all right - tommy's come - tommy's calling - tommy's come - holding - warm hand - through space - light - black - light - black - light - black - light - star - void - star - void - down the void - roaring void - rushing void - rushing - head - rush - pound - void - rush - head - pound - rush - tom - star - void - star - spinning - pounding - rushing - head spinning - pounding - rushing - head - star - i'm a star - rush through void - tom's a star - rushing through shadow - coming - hold my hand - i'm coming - tom - together - never leave again - together we're stars - in the shadows - spin down the shadows - tops spinning - ice of the night - cold - ice cold - ice frosted in the blackness - ice void - spin ice - rushing void - black rushing - stars rushing - ice star - spinning - star ice - spinning - ice spin - void spin - star spin - star spinning - spinning - spinning - s p i n n i n g - s p i n n i n g - s p i n n i n g - s p i n n i n g . . .

The Judgement

BOB KIRK

HEAR now the words of the First Ones, the ancient records preserved from a time when our race was young, before the Age of Madness came upon our ancestors:

"We watched in silence, for the time which Men said must come after all other times have come and gone was at hand. The armies of evil were massed on a great barren desert in all their terrible power. At this time their sun had been halted to witness the thing which was to come, and burned endlessly in a sky like a brazen shield. The desert itself, in terror that the battle was at hand, shrank away so its farthest reaches clutched the sky in fearful embrace at the edge of the world. All was stillness; then came the Lord and his host, with a blare of trumpets, and the sky was filled with his legions.

"Now there had been those among them who said that the tumult of the battle must surely be so great that none on Earth could survive, so that it must come after nothing else was. But it was not thus at Armageddon. . . .

"And in the ending which Men had prepared for their time, and in the god they had chosen, we were greatly pleased; so that later, when we remembered, we often said that should this god ever return he might enter and be well among us. And he was like unto us. But he was not of our people, for none could ever say that there was a time when he had been with us, and we are a wise and ancient people.

"Now the battle was done, and those who were to be judged took their places, forming a huge multitude, for in this number were all the Men of Earth, but foremost among them were the Men of the forces of evil.

"Yes, they were Men, for I would not have you believe that these were the warriors of Hell who fell to their knees and groveled in fear on the sands of Armageddon. All the princes of Hell and their

general, Lucifer, and all his armies were no more, but in their place stood the Men who had ascended to the very thrones of darkness, and the underlings who served them.

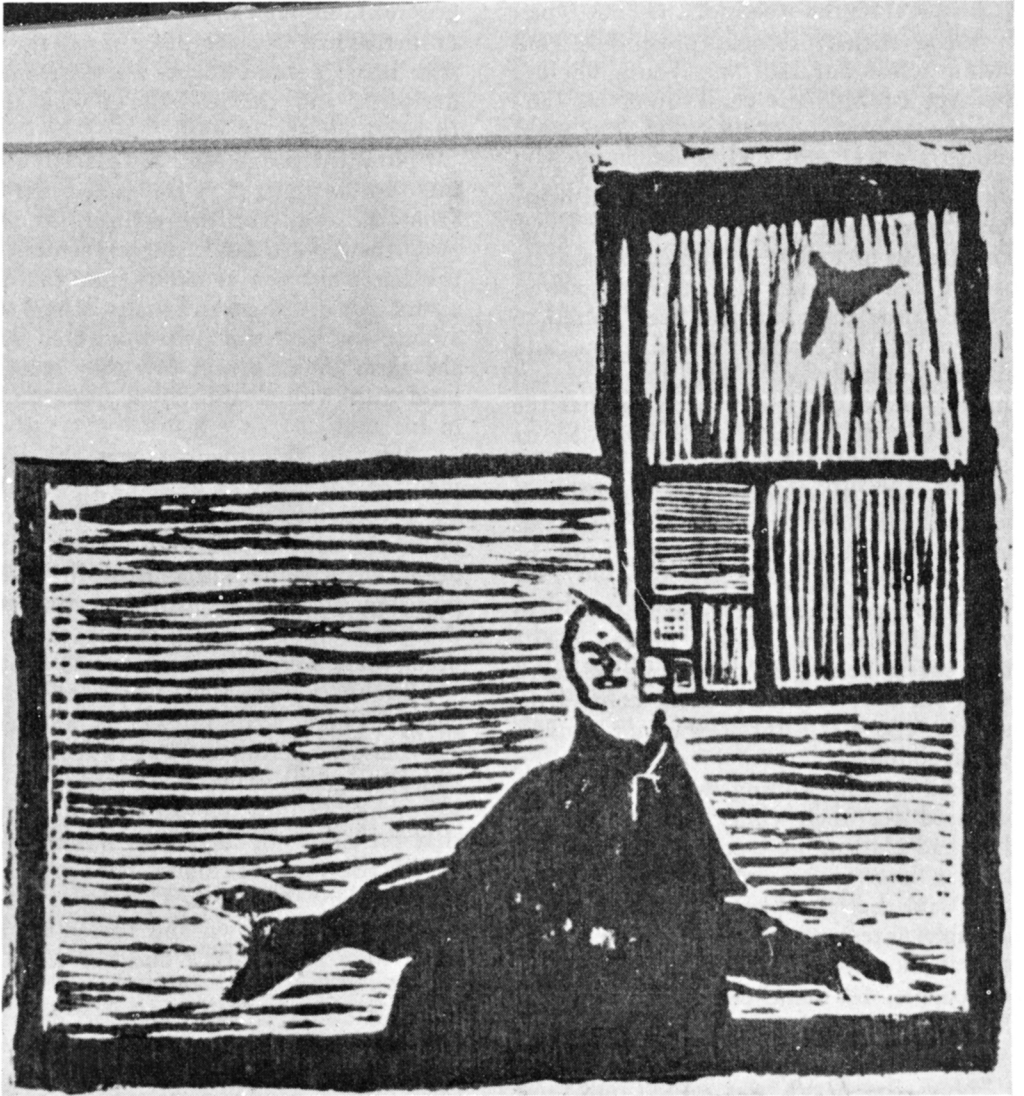
"Now the judge took his place, and the first to be judged were called forward from the ranks of the vanquished army. And these were not the blasphemers, nor the liars, not the covetous, not the adulterers, nor did these and many others stand among the host which had covered before the glory of his army; but they stood behind and waited also to be judged, each in his turn.

"Now in this manner was the judgement of the army of evil: Each was called by a voice like a mighty wind and came unto the throne of judgement, and his deeds were made known to all, and his punishment therefor. In this manner were thousands judged, and in all their evil deeds there were likenesses, one to another.

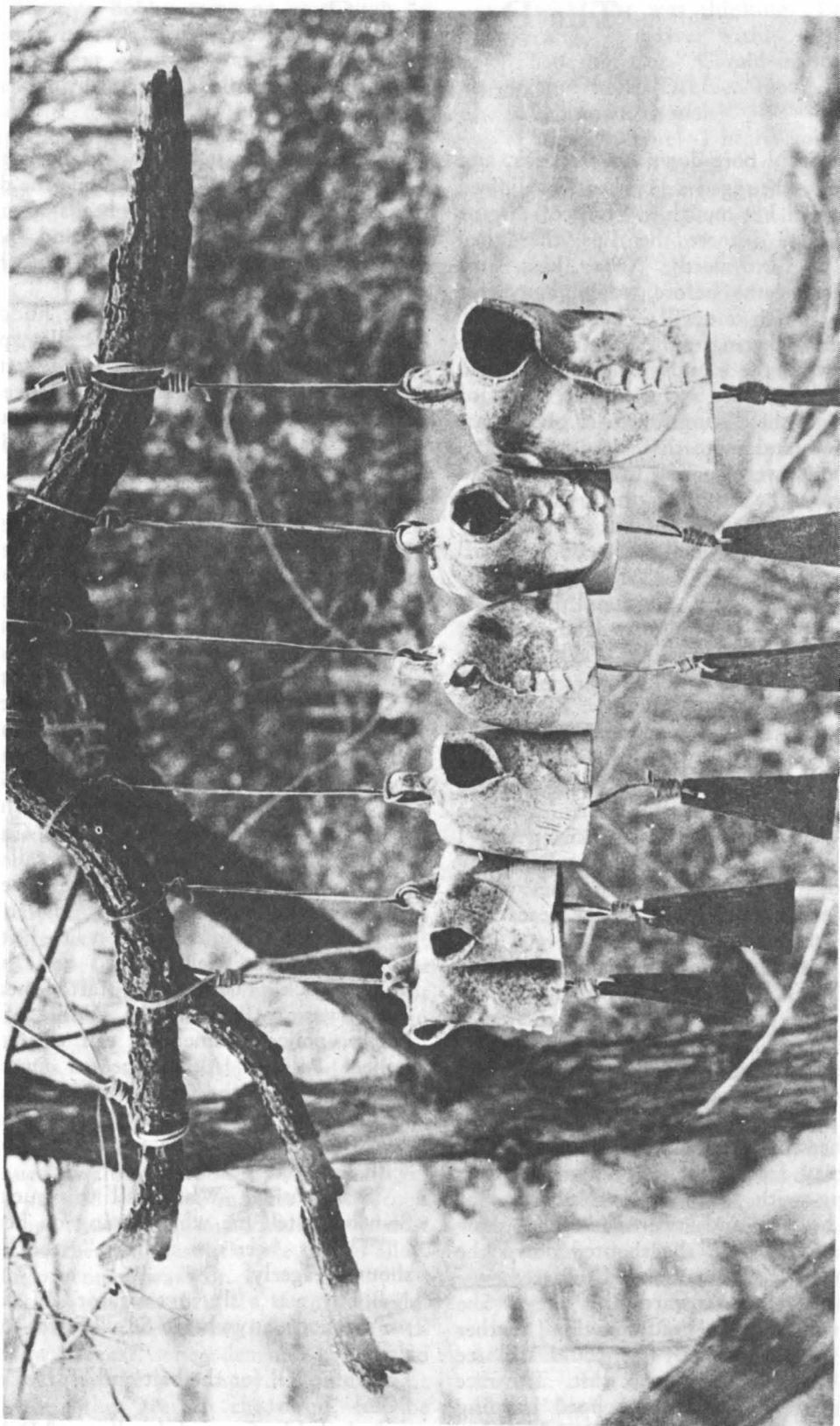
"But there were Men of all kinds among them. There were murderers and monarchs and emperors and rulers from a later time, and the torturers and hangmen who were their willing servants. And we saw that the sin of all these men was this: that in all the ages of Man's time upon the Earth, they had taken those thoughts which were their own and forced them on other Men by the rack and the whip and the gun.

"And all those Men who had destroyed in their world that which was the very lifeblood of it, and all the meaning of existence, were swept away into terrible fires.

"Now the multitude who still stood in that place trembled with fear to see the end of those evil Men. But the judge looked upon them and to them he spoke but one word, and that word was Mercy. So they were led away rejoicing in everlasting life, to a place beyond our sight. Thus it was after Armageddon, in the last weighing of the lives of Men."



WOODCUT—By DOUG NOLLER



Ceramics by DOUG NOLLER
SUE'S CHIMES

The Detective Game

KAREN SELLS BROWN

THE SUN bore down on her back, and Judy shrugged a little and swallowed the dust in her mouth. A hint of disgust at the taste distorted her lips; then they moved to form words. "Okay, kids. Just one more game before we go home for lunch. Which one will it be?"

Their bickering welled up in her face along with the clouds of dust. She had just made another awful mistake. Out of the shouts she distinguished six games that she knew and more that were unfamiliar. The shouts were coming to blows. She had to salvage the situation quick.

"Let's take a vote then. How many for—" let's see, a good short one . . . "Red Rover, Red Rover?"

Two hands, and a general moan. It didn't work. Ten minutes left. A quiet one, maybe. "Detective! We'll play detective."

Another cloud of shouts, "I'll be the detective!" Bobby stood a head above the clamoring children, saying with more authority than Judy had been able to muster during the last hour, "I'm the fuzz." Gerald pulled at her skirt with, "I haven't been anything all day." Cindy whined, "Judy, let me." The words stretched out and hung on the heat. Decision was impossible.

Judy drew a line in the dust with her toe. "We'll have a race," she said calmly. "The first one to the alley can be detective."

The line was crooked, and Gerald had edged into the spot closest to the alley. Alice pulled Cindy back across the line to give herself an equal chance. Eighteen dust-gray faces watched Judy, their eyes burning with heat and excitement. She raised her arm and lowered it with a show of energy. "Go!" she shouted down the line, but the race had already started.

Judy walked toward the alley. She watched Bobby's head moving further ahead of the others. She could still see Gerald's legs churning up dust. The race was decided. The girls stopped running and turned to meet her. Alice flung her

damp arm across Judy's back, laughing in her face, and Judy watched while the dust on her cheeks glistened into beads of mud. Cindy pouted and dropped behind them, kicking dust up onto the backs of their legs.

The rest of the children were huddled around a patch of shade in the alley, produced by the one limb of a scraggly tree which reached out over a high fence of rotting boards. Bobby strutted around the outside of the group, imitating a siren interrupted by shouts of "Here comes the fuzz!" and his triumphant laugh.

Judy pushed into the center of the group and was immediately surrounded by plots of crime and eager murderers and thieves. "Shhhh!" she whispered in the midst of them. "That plainclothes policeman over there can hear everything you say," and she waved her arm in the general direction of Bobby without looking to see where he was. In a whisper she asked Cindy to be the victim, but just then Gerald insisted loudly that he was the murderer. "Now Bobby already knows it, silly," Judy scolded. "You be the victim and Cindy can murder you. Now remember all the rest of us are witnesses, and we have to tell the truth, but we can only answer yes or no. Only the murderer can lie. Everybody ready?" They nodded and Judy nodded back. The shouting started, nearly overpowering Judy in the middle of it. "Help, police! Somebody call the cops! Police! Police!" A head peered out of a window behind the fence and disappeared again. Then Bobby started up the imaginary sirens, and strode up to the group with his chest puffed out.

"Stand aside! What's all this ruckus? Somebody tell me what's going on here."

"There's been a murder," the kids shouted eagerly.

Bobby was a sly investigator. "I don't see the body anywhere. So who was murdered?"

Debbie fell for the bait and blurted out, "Ger--"

Judy held a finger to her lips and Debbie

remembered the rules, too late. "You know that's not a fair question," Judy said to Bobby. Bobby went on as though he hadn't heard. Perhaps not.

His next question was directed toward the murderer, and eliminated half the kids either way. "Was the murderer wearing shoes? I'll need to know that in case I find footprints." He was stalking around the edge of the group with his eyes on the ground and his hands clasped behind his back. There were sidelong glances at Cindy's feet. No Shoes.

Cindy finally broke the silence. "Who are you asking?"

"You," Bobby answered.

"Yes," Cindy said quite coolly, as a matter of self-preservation.

"Is the murderer wearing brown shoes with yellow socks?" Bobby asked, still facing Cindy.

Cindy bent her head down to rest on her knees, as if thinking how to answer, but catching Gerald's feet, brown shoes, and yellow socks in the downward sweep of her eyes. When she raised her head to answer, the corners of her mouth were turned up slightly, and she said, "Yes," slowly and deliberately, relishing the lie.

Bobby pointed an accusing finger at Gerald, with some flourish. "Are you the murderer?" he demanded.

"No!" Gerald shouted with defiance.

Judy, the trusted arbiter, got the next question. "Was Gerald the murderer?" Bobby asked.

"No, not Gerald," she answered. Well, Cindy, she thought, the truth sometimes covers better than a lie.

"Then Cindy is the murderer because she lied." Bobby was simply stating, but Judy put up a finger for the sixth question anyway.

"Yes," she said, a little bothered at being made a betrayer, even though Cindy had brought it on herself.

"Now, about that body," Bobby continued, walking around and around in his puzzled detective manner. Judy took off her tennis shoes and knocked the dust out of them into a little pile in the alley. The pavement was hot.

Bobby turned abruptly, facing Gerald. "Was the victim wearing brown shoes with yellow socks?" he demanded. Gerald gulped, and he was angry. He looked at all the other feet in the circle, but he knew he was caught.

"You have to answer the question, Gerald," Judy prodded. Get this game over with, she was thinking. Let's just hurry and get it over with.

"That's not fair," Gerald insisted. "He must have heard Debbie. How else could he have known so soon?"

"That's not true! I heard you way off before we even started, saying you were going to be something. And Judy nodded at you. The murderer turns out to be Cindy, so I just figure you must be the victim. I wasn't cheating. You just have to keep quiet or you give yourself away, and I don't even have to do any work." Silence followed. 'Methinks the lady doth protest too much,' Judy thought, but she didn't say anything.

Gerald argued his own case ably enough. "Bobby, I don't believe you," he said hotly. His face was red, and the hair on his forehead was curling with sweat. "It's Debbie's fault. She ratted on me. Judy, it's not fair!" he insisted.

Judy slipped her feet into the tennis shoes and stood up without tying them, but she moved slowly. Debbie had started crying. Judy swallowed and tried to shut out the noise. The pit of her stomach felt hysterical.

"Gerald," she began, "Debbie's just a little girl. She didn't understand the rules of the game. See, you're making her cry. Now, just be quiet about it. The game's over now anyway."

Judy tried to force some authority into her voice along with some extra volume. "Okay, kids, it's twelve o'clock. Time to go home for lunch. Does anybody know what happened to the kickball?"

Then she turned her back on the rest of the kids and concentrated on Debbie. With a protective arm around her she stopped crying, and Judy daubed at the tears with the edge of her skirt. She stood watching Debbie walk down the length of the alley and unlatch the back gate, waving back to her before she disappeared.

All the kids were leaving, running along the alley or across the lot. None of them looked for the ball. Gerald and Bobby were arguing in the alley still. Judy was trying to figure out how to break it up when Bobby spotted two Negro boys who had been waiting for him at the front of the lot. He went off with them, and Gerald shuffled down the alley away from his house, still angry. The kids never really

went home for lunch, but it was part of the limit that Judy tried to place on her involvement with them that she didn't worry about where they went after they left the playground.

Judy walked across the lot looking for the kickball she had brought with her. She passed by the weeded corner at the back where the junk collected faster than the weeds could grow to cover it. Glancing along the bottom of the massive brick wall of the house next door, she spotted the ball near a pile of broken brick and rubble. Picking it up, she wondered if it were worth saving. It was bashed in on one side, a piece of thick brown glass lodged in its skin. Perhaps one of the boys would be able to fix it. Judy jumped over what had once been front steps onto the sidewalk and headed back to the agency for lunch. Meanwhile she tried to think about what they would do in the afternoon when it was already so hot. She gave up and tried to forget. A beer truck pulled up in front of Harry's corner market just as she passed, and the driver went into the store. A stench of rotten vegetables flowed into the street. Judy was surprised that even this much of life could go on in the impossible heat. Disintegration seemed inevitable.

Ellen was waiting for her at the agency, sitting in the shadow of the doorway. Judy hurried across the street, suddenly realizing that she was late. Cool and slow, Ellen came down the steps to meet her.

"Third floor's an oven, and the packing plant's coming in strong," Ellen said without greeting, "so everyone's gone up to the Roach for lunch."

"Well, run along to your air-conditioned hole. Just order me a grilled cheese and save a stool. I'll be up as soon as I can repair my whitewash."

Ellen looked her over with a show of disdain, noticing the cover of dust, the perspiration, the muddy smears on her dress. "Yeah, it's a great day for lily-white beauties," she laughed. "Coke, too?"

"Sure."

Judy's knees felt weak going up the stairs, and inside it was too dark to see. She groped up a narrow stairway to the second floor lavatory. The tap water was warm when she splashed it on her face, but the dust smelled better, like after rain. She yanked out some paper towels and dropped them in the sink, turning off the

water. She squeezed out a towel and rubbed it gingerly across her forehead. It was too rough all the same. It cooled her face for a second while the water evaporated, and her skin felt tight.

Out of the hot silence came a voice from the street below. "Cool it, here comes the fuzz!" Bobby, still playing the game. Then the sound of running in the street, glass shattering, a car turning the corner too fast. "Stop, you nigger-loving little thief!" Harry bawled. Leaning out the window, Judy saw a pair of white legs disappear behind the church next door. A six pack of beer lay broken in the middle of the street. The police car stopped just short of it. There was a dog in the back seat. The beer truck was still parked in front of the store. What on earth did they expect, leaving an open beer truck in this neighborhood?

Kids were collecting on the opposite corner to watch. They were huddled together, tense with excitement, trembling. Then suddenly from behind the knot of men at the door of the market Gerald darted across the street toward them. Judy ran down the dark stairs into the street.

The kids surged into the street when they saw her coming. She waved them back. Gerald came out to meet her, babbling. "Judy, you know what I did? I saw Bobby and those two nigger guys swiping beer off that truck. I told them they shouldn't do that, but they didn't stop, so . . ." She caught his hand and pushed through the crowd to the sidewalk, and the kids moved out of the street.

So Gerald was the big hero. Judy began talking to the kids, trying to get them to go home. "Show's over, nothing happening." Trying to keep Gerald quiet, to get him to go home, too. The men on the opposite corner continued to talk. The kids finally decided for themselves that nothing else was going to happen, nudged each other and drifted away in twos and threes. But they had their words for Gerald, the kid who snitched on one of them, the kid who called in the cops.

Judy continued talking to Gerald, using the same words she had for the others. "It's all over. Nothing else will happen."

"But they haven't caught 'em. Dumb cop's not even lookin' for 'em. He could find 'em easy with that dog. Anyway, I'm the witness. I saw 'em doing it!" He was excited.

Sure, I know, Kid. So go home, Gerald. Stop asking for trouble. She started walking away from the street with him toward his house. "Please go home, Gerald. Your mother will be waiting for you for lunch. She'll want to hear all about it. Run on home now. See you at two."

She had turned him off; the words didn't fit, didn't mean right. He could see that. She was untouched, unassailable, so reluctantly he left.

"Y'oughta go after 'em," one of the men was saying to the policeman. "We could identify 'em," Harry added. "That kid could probly even tell ya where they live and you could just go after 'em."

"No, I suppose it's no use," the cop said. "I could get the white kid all right, but the colored kids are from the project. We'd never find 'em. And you'd identify any couple of black kids I came up with, just 'cause they were the right color. Better just forget it. You didn't lose anything anyway."

The beer man was quiet through all that. Then he just got in the truck and drove away. The cop left too. Judy went on to lunch. She could hear Harry and his cronies still fuming behind her. She noticed two six packs of beer standing at the corner of the church. Heat was rising up out of the sidewalk in waves, and the Roach was an oasis.

The 'Roach' was the local appellation of a shack known to the outside traffic as Rosie's Grill. The name was said to have been directly derived from the specialty of the house, and it seemed appropriate if not entirely accurate. It smelled of sour greasy hamburger, but it was beautifully cool. The stools were full, so Judy pushed her way through the aisle to the booths at the back. Ellen was sitting with Carl and Dave, a couple of guys who worked with a day camp program for the kids in the project. Judy's grilled cheese sandwich was waiting at the fourth place.

"Welcome, O lily-white goddess of the playgrounds," Carl teased, moving over a little for her.

"Your whitewash seems to be wearing thin already," Ellen said.

"True, but I never even got it fixed. A couple of guys from the projects and one of the boys from my playground have gone beer-swiping together."

Carl looked over his glass at Dave.

"Shall we go down and bail 'em out now or wait till five?"

"No, the police didn't get them. The real trouble is with Gerald. He saw them and went into the store and told Harry. Harry called the cops, of course, and stayed inside till they came. Anyway, Gerald couldn't be satisfied with doing his good deed, but had to publish it far and wide. What do we do now?"

"Did you recognize our guys?" Dave asked. "Maybe we could get to them before they get to the kid."

"Nope. I didn't see them, but I wouldn't have known them anyway."

"So we just sit tight and let life go on," Carl said. "God, what makes these kids think life is a Sunday school?"

Judy twisted her mouth up as though her grilled cheese sandwich tasted like dust. "I just wish he didn't have to find out this time. There must be an easier way."

"Yeah, I know," Dave said, "there ought to be something we could do."

"Sure." Carl sounded cynical. "Life gives you any problem, Kid, you just come to your friendly neighborhood social worker. Ain't nothin' he can't take care of for you."

"Come on, guys, be serious," Ellen said. "Don't you see how hot the situation could get? A fight between these kids could touch the whole neighborhood off just like a firecracker. You've got to stop it somehow."

"Oh, there won't be any riot in this neighborhood, Ellen," Judy assured her. "The whites are too far outnumbered, too scared to do much. It will just set us back that much further, but there's nothing we can do."

"But, Judy, there's got to be something we can do. We aren't getting anyplace as it is."

"It's true," Judy admitted, giving in to her discouragement. "We're not doing much good."

"So what did you girls think? That you were going to make the world over in a summer?" Carl asked.

"Even the littlest things count for something," Dave said. "I'm not willing to relinquish my ideals either, but Carl's right. We do have to stick to realistic goals."

"That's it," Carl said softly, smiling. "You do what you can do, and you learn to accept the rest."

"Okay, Carl," Judy said, to preface some kind of argument against the unsailable position. "Take this game 'detective' that we were playing before lunch. They like it because it's their game. It mainly teaches them not to volunteer information, not to rat on a buddy. It's a strange set of values for us to be teaching them." Judy had raised her voice. She was indignant.

"Sure," Carl answered her, "but you can't rob the kids of what they've got to use to get along, just to survive in this neighborhood."

Ellen laughed. "I can see it all now," she said. "Some prim little Sunday school teacher made up that game to teach the kids a decent respect for the cops. And they liked it, a great success!"

"Really, Carl, it's a sick neighborhood," Judy continued. "Maybe we don't have to reinforce its values."

"Judy, I want to say you're judging again, though in a way it's just a realistic analysis. You want to make an improvement, change it for the better. Somehow, though, the people always have to feel we're on their side, that we can accept them the way they are. Maybe that's enough of a change in itself."

"Maybe," Judy said doubtfully. "Still, I understand Gerald better now. Someone taught him some ideals and forgot to tell him that they don't apply to life."

"Well, chances are he's about to learn that too," Dave said.

"So good-bye and good luck, ladies," Carl said. "It's one already and we've got to get the show on the road. How'd you get so lucky you don't have to face the kids till two?"

"We're supposed to be briefing all our volunteers, remember? Say, put a note on the door of the meeting room, would you, in case any of them show up?"

"Come on, Judy, who are you trying to kid? I mean it is a little hot today you know. . . ."

"A little hot!" Dave whistled through his teeth. "A hundred and ten in the shade, and she says it's a little hot!"

Ellen went on, coolly, in the same vein, "And the children are so dirty, you know, and they don't seem to appreciate anything."

And the boys have filthy mouths," Judy added.

"And altogether it's just a little messier

than we supposed, and I just don't see how we could possibly come today," Ellen finished.

"All right, we will operate in the realm of possibility," Judy assented. "Forget the sign, fellows. You better get going." She stood up so Carl could get out.

"Listen, Judy," Carl said, "I'll just be running the movie this afternoon. If you have any trouble, send one of the kids up to the agency after me."

"Thanks, Carl." Judy sank back into the seat again. The place was clearing out now. It was quieter, and she was beginning to cool off.

Ellen was already talking. "What are we going to do to keep cool this afternoon, Judy? That park is just too hot for anything, no shade and no water. I can't take any more of it today."

"I thought you looked great, cool as a cucumber, when I came back," Judy protested.

"I came back early. The kids were only too willing to go. It was that hot. Also, I lost the baseball. I hit a home run for the first time in my life, and by the time I ran clear around the bases, I forgot to watch where the ball went."

"Someone should invent a baseball that rings every time some kid tries to steal it," Judy said. "You saw the kickball, too. One severely wounded and one missing in action; the casualty rate on balls is high in this business."

"On workers, too," Ellen said. She really seemed discouraged.

"Why don't we just combine the playgrounds this afternoon," Judy suggested. "I was wondering how I was going to handle all those kids without help anyway."

"There'll be twice as many kids that way, remember."

"Sure, it was just a matter of moral support. I have some shade in the afternoon, you know, from the house on the west side." Judy was making a plea as much as an offer.

"Okay. I'll go over to the park at two and bring the kids over to your lot."

"Fine, with two of us we can have a craft project, and we can all sit along the wall in the shade for the whole afternoon."

"You're kidding yourself again, Judy."

"Laniards!" Judy suggested with a smile, and they laughed. It was decided then, and they went back to the agency

to collect the materials from the craft room. They didn't plan anything else, and split a grape soda from the pop machine before they left.

Gerald met Judy halfway to the playground. He was still eager to talk about his exploit. Judy let him carry the box of gimp, and listened. She supposed she should say something about how life was not like a Sunday school, but he was so fresh, and there was no easy way. The sweet taste of grape lingered, and life was not so bad after all that afternoon. Bobby and his friends were evidently lying low. Laniards were the most popular of all craft projects with the kids, and any craft project was popular. They considered it getting something for nothing. The younger kids had to be helped, and Judy and Ellen both felt more competent and constructive than usual. The kids were kept busy all afternoon, though some of the laniards were unnecessarily long. At five, Judy and Ellen shut up the box and went back to the agency, leaving most of the kids still sitting against the wall twisting the gimp together.

They had to wait to get up to the craft room because the stairway was full of kids coming down from the movie. Judy gave Carl an OK sign as they passed the room where he was rewinding the movie, and he seemed relieved. When they came back downstairs everyone was gone but Dave. He was waiting for Ellen in the office, because they lived out in the same direction. "If you want to go on home, Ellen, I'll fill out the reports tonight. My bus doesn't leave for a few minutes yet anyway."

"Well, if you don't mind. . . ."

"Attendance this morning?" Judy asked.

"Put down fifteen. Thanks, Judy."

Judy walked to the door with them and locked it behind them.

The reports were easy, just a little piece of drudgery after the work was all over. Location, time, attendance, number of volunteers—zero, activities, effectiveness. They had been bluffing these things for half the summer now and she didn't need to concentrate. She was really waiting for Carl to get back from bussing all the kids back to the projects, hoping they could go someplace cool for dinner, with good food besides, so she didn't hurry either. Ellen finished the afternoon report the next morning.

A scream brought the typewriter to a

standstill. Judy didn't move until she heard Bobby shout accusingly, "You ratted on me!" Gerald was still running and screaming when Judy got to the window. Bobby caught him just in front of Harry's market. So Bobby was going to do the dirty work alone. Well that would be sufficient. Two Negro boys were leaning against a light pole across the street, ignoring the scene, but the odds were evidently more than even. The noise had attracted a crowd already, but they were singularly quiet, unable to take sides, as if they were watching the inevitable. Nothing Judy had been told about breaking up fights could possibly be applied to this situation. The cause was too real to be reasoned away, her physical authority nothing against the odds, and the crowd which should ordinarily have been dispersed to eliminate the audience was simply not present as a motivating factor. Bobby was sitting on Gerald, beating his head against the pavement, saying over and over, "You ratted on me!" There was nothing Judy could do to stop him, but she couldn't let it go on. Why wasn't Carl back by now? She reached for the telephone, still horrified, watching the beating progress. She dialed the police. Her voice sounded cool and far away, but she heard all the necessary information repeated very near at hand by the desk sergeant. She put the phone down. The Negro boys had left. Bobby had the upper hand without them. Judy went outside into the street. The same cool, far-away voice was saying, "Bobby, stop. Sure, Gerald ratted on you, but if you keep beating him, it's just going to be worse for you, too. Bobby, you don't know what you're doing any more. Bobby, stop! Gerald is going to understand about ratting now, but you must stop." The cool far-away voice stopped, and Bobby stopped, and Gerald was whimpering. His eyes were black, his nose was covered with blood, a huge knot on his forehead oozed blood. The whimpering seemed further and further away, and hot blood was running through Judy's head. Bobby was staring at Gerald's head where the blood was oozing out, whispering through clenched teeth, "You ratted on me," the sound coming closer and closer and hotter, until Judy thought she would faint. The police came, flashing a red light around and around in the street, and pushed the crowd away. Bobby stood up. His clothes were

red with blood. A policeman led him away and the crowd split for him to pass. There was a long gash in Gerald's stomach and he was still whimpering, far far away. Judy was cold.

She ran down the street, three blocks to the tenement house where Gerald lived. She found his mother easily but she didn't want to open the door. She was very young to have a ten-year-old son, and pretty and immediately worried beyond belief. Judy was suddenly aware that the cool far-away voice was gone. It was her own voice, sharp and urgent, explaining what was happening to Gerald, why his mother must come with her to the hospital so they could sew him up before all the blood ran out. They ran together, fast, through alleys, across the playground, up the last half block to the market. An ambulance had already arrived, and Gerald was being lifted onto the stretcher. He was very dirty and gray against the white sheet. His mother watched with tears on her cheeks, and they were washing down through the dust. "Still, he did the right thing," she whispered. "Why does a good boy have to get in trouble?" A policeman

drove her to the hospital right behind the ambulance.

Judy watched the dust settle back into the street. The bus was back, parked in front of the agency, and Carl was coming toward her.

"Just a minute, let me lock the door before we go," she said. It was the far-away voice again, coping.

"Hey, what happened, Kid?" Carl wanted to know.

"I ratted on my kids." She was nearly spitting.

"So you blew the whole summer's work just because you were scared?"

"Yeah, I knew I couldn't handle the situation, so I called the cops in on them."

"You did what you could do. Nobody can do any more than that."

"They won't trust me any more, any of them."

"Don't worry about it, Kid. You were never one of them anyway. They knew it all along without any proof. They accept you anyway, because they need you. You can't be one of them and still do your work. It's the differences that make change possible.

Knell the Day!

KAREN SELLS BROWN

Long, loud, and solitary sounds the bell;
The night has come and day is at an end.
The bell has ceased and still its echoes swell
Into the silence till the night sounds blend
Into an orchestration for its song,
A mournful lay of ending, past, and death,
A dirge for day which dies into the throng
Of night sounds gasping for their birthing breath.
Oh, how impotent then the bell's dead wail
Suspended still upon the damp night air,
The imperfect disc of moon so pale
It seems a cloud, mere whisp of mist too rare
To intercept lost purple rays of sun,
When, diamond-bright, the stars prove day is done.

Song of Containment

KAREN SELLS BROWN

My softest touch froze into stone
on the dark side of the moon
A marble dancer veined with blue
sang love songs out of tune
I heard the ball of earth below
say Don't come home so soon
And since I was alone last night
went walking round the sea

I spread my wings a butterfly
and flew into the sun
The golden flame emblazoned me
I cried I am undone
The colors of my velvet wings
the sun and I were one
And since I was alone last night
went walking round the sea

I fell upon a rocky hill
barren still and dead
Vaulted down the desert slope
into the river's bed
And flowing gently pained to see
the valley growing red
And since I was alone last night
went walking round the sea

With petals soft upon the air
yet rooted as a tree
I sought to be a velvet rose
invaded by the bee
Soft petals to enfold him close
and opening set him free
And since I was alone last night
went walking round the sea

The Natural

RAY FREEBY

Momma.

What, son?

Jimmy hit me, Momma. Jimmy hit me for no reason at all.

Oh?

MADNESS

Momma. Momma, I didn't do anything to Jimmy.

I'm sure you didn't, son.

MADNESS

Why'd he want to do a thing like that, Momma?

CRUELTY

INQUISITION

ANDERSONVILLE

I didn't do anything to him, Momma.

COLISEUM

WARSAW

I didn't even expect it.

BLITZKRIEG

AUSCHWITZ

Momma.

MADNESS

SENSELESS

SENSELESS

Momma!

What, son?

I'm gonna get Jimmy, Momma. I'm gonna get him good.

Poem

KIRK LOVELL

cellophane-covered politicians
rape the newspapers with
artificially homemade truths
and ponder the rising expense
of insinuations.

love rears its ugly head
while children play doctor
and the physician looks on with scorn
and continues to play child.

the neo-politician thumbs his nose
at the commode-minded society
and then conceals his top secrets
with toilet paper.

Poem

KIRK LOVELL

i think i shall go.
traveling with the wind,
the smoke, the winding road.
where the mind travels,
the feet stand still, fly with
fantasy, dreams, ideas.
come with me the spider waits,
off to the hidden webs,
the unknown road, the beyond.

The Rocky Mountains

ROBERT SHELOR

This beauty is impenetrable
Full of red, green, blue haze.
God
must have had a ball
making this.

The Brightest Dreams

BOB WATSON

Our love, the brightest dreams I ever had,
Is over now; you found somebody new,
And somehow I suppose I should be glad:
I'm young, free, single. Still, I think of you
And never find an answer, and am sad
To know that we cannot again be true
As we were true before. The things we had,
Our dreams, our love, each other, all were new.
How could we know the flame would burn out of
Too long spent dreaming a childish game of love?
We dreamed about the world we hoped would come
To us. (We knew, of course, it never would.)
My nights are dark, I miss my dreams; yet some
Time this will end. . . . Still all our dreams were good.



WOOD GRAIN STUDIES—By ALLEN KERSHNER

Japanese Tanka

MARY PETERSON

A spacious sapphire
Resting on black velvet trees,
Warm and radiant,
Priceless, belonging to June—
Jewel in jewel box, Twilight Sky.

Night of the Grasses

ANNE LUEBCKE

So naive.
Defiantly running
Through the shattered leaves
An escape in the darkness
Night as it passes
Sanctions and blesses.
Stopping to kiss
Slaves of our passions
We heard and obeyed
The lure of the grasses
Sprawled in the comfort
Of uncertain love
So the night deepens
And hides as it passes
Two motionless figures
And their night of the grasses.

My Lavender Rainbow

DOROTHY YOUNG

In my lavender rainbow
While living not alone,
My days are filled with memories
Of thought ideas unsewn.

Pink sunlight is my company
Softly living with me at home,
Leaving dusts of vapored rain behind,
Never going too far alone.

Cool dawn brings back my mind to me;
I can see a summer day,
Then clouds erase the blue sunrays
To vanish scenes away.

Green lanterns light the way for me
In tunnels that I know,
Through windows only dreamed about
In my lavender rainbow.

Sweet Dominion

M. M. MARKS

I

SWEET DOMINION
SOIL QUEEN
CITY DWELLER
PRAIRIE AGGRESSOR
who is guilty?—
YOU or i, DEAR HEART?
Countless
pieces
of broken glass
fading headlines
beer in crumpled cans
never swallowed
cigarette butts
unlit matches
paper plates
bubblegum
bottle caps
coffee grounds
lying where there once was grass
lying
where there once
was grass

II

SWEET DOMINION
listen to YOUR drums
as they pile
pile
pile!
PILE
your fire drums:
oil drums?
gas drums?
sweet dominion
shall i lay my coat at your feet
and let you pass?
sweet dominion
do you need
my once clean coat?—
both of us are foul now
both of us
are foul
now

III

dear dominion
 dear lover
 dear wife
 IT has happened before
 many times
 but not to us, my songbird:
 when Noah sailed
 the mess was washed away
 and all was pure again:
 The Junkyard of Eden
 had rotting apples
 to line the pearly barbed wire
 fences
 then was abandoned
 the mess disappeared
 and all was pure again
 sweet dominion
 IT *has* happened
 and will
 IT will happen again my life
 the eruption
 the pyration
 the abrasion
 the petrification
 the glaciation
 the rejuvenation
 IT will happen
 again
 my life

IV

sweet dominion
 what shall we do?
 shall we cleanse ourselves?
 sweet dominion
 the last drain is clogged
 the sinks all dirty
 sweet dominion
 the soap is gone
 perfume contaminated
 sweet dominion
 cold candle
 it is our end
 fade away
 be forgotten
 bid no sweet adieu
 I will arise
 and leave your floor
 behind
 and search MYSELF for MY own realms.

Stolen Summer

M. M. MARKS

The summer circus is surveyed and sold
For cotton candy by the cliff and moon;
The tents are folded and tossed in the back of a truck;
In the cab the drivers continue drinking Bacchus
Beneath the seat of the truck that stole the summer.

The summer swimming pool is put away
Inside a crate and saddled in the truck,
And bounces like a baby on a beachball
In the sand, as it is smuggled off that evening,
After being bought for windy waves and rain.

And next, the summer grass is covered up
And paid for by the price of prints of feet
And holes of worms and bees and three-leaf clovers;
And the drivers take a break from Bacchus to buy
And take this grass away and steal the summer.

And the truck makes many stops, but stays at each
For but a moment, and the drivers drink,
And Bacchus passes out, and he is dumped
Beside the trail; and the drivers speed and shout
That they have won, and soon forget the summer.

And the truck makes one last stop, at Pluto's toll-gate,
And the drivers are drunker than hell as the truck is searched
And confiscated, and ferried across the river,
And the drivers ask Pluto for pardon, but are jailed,
And the season is filed forever as Stolen Summer.



Photo by DAMON PITHIAS SWAIN III

Grey Winter Day Rain

TIM KRAL

and now a velvet fog fingers
gentle darkness cool and windless
Time is quiet soft unflowing
The past sleeps with tomorrow
and today grows old
but lingers

Seasons

TIM KRAL

I can smell the dry rot of Autumn.
An overshoe waiting for Winter's leap

Trees with their yellow red and gold;
All dumbly spangled and obscenely bold.
I know the future wilds white axes
Laughing, and have seen pale death enfold

Already is fragile of
summer a mask rain

Poem

BEVERLY ANGELL

Distant and softspoken owl
braving to answer voiceless stars,
I, too, perch precariously on an ice-laced limb
 that is my life
calling to the brilliances

offering breath that is my soul
to who will warm me.

Poem

BEVERLY ANGELL

Secure in my concave rock
whistling pines about my head
mulch of needles and cones to
break my inevitable fall;

not quite at the peak
 where
the balanced rock reigns supreme

but part of the mushroom of God.

If You Had Spurs, Would You Jingle?

E. J. BARNES

Pin-sharp, pea-sized, perennial culture!

You deserve an epitaph:

Cross your heart and hope to die . . . a stitch in ten saves the big, red hen from crossing the freeway intersection of color-blind, stop and go racial dissipation, of flagrant violation . . . Do not pass go . . . pass Gaugin instead . . . How well do you read . . . stop sowing your seed. Planned Parenthood calls upon you to disseminate . . . into the magnificent biurinal diagram of an Aspirin tablet . . . Big Red Chief only still five plug . . . Sewage disposal must mean reposal . . . prosper peacefully, brother to brother. I'm only glad I don't have a nose as big as yours . . . John Glenn and the White Knight went skipping through pills . . . picking up lots of daffodils . . . Your blue heaven is now, in effect, a hell . . . Hello, Folly, Hello, Polly—Anna, where you been so long in front of the aplomb gamma bomb . . . I only wish a dove as white as the Trinity would fly into my kitchen . . . Go west, young man, Go Goetz, young can . . . just like little dogs . . . if you lead a life, live one . . . open Simba, close sesame seed . . . LSD is a cursed instrument that ticks out the wrong time . . . lime and lemon seal your kind of heaven . . . on a bicycle built for Hell's Angels . . . There's safety in numbers and so count noses in Viet Nam; don't count the dead . . . Leningrad in the spring is a city of many upturned Stonehenges and heroes . . . Leander went thataway along with Gene Autry, the Jolly green Giant, and the Hully Gully Holy Ghost . . . I wish you a Merry Christmas, I wish it to you free, as long as your credit rating doesn't come near to me . . . number please . . . give me the AAA . . . Good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night . . . Is an Eliot the same as a zealot . . . It's floating in my head, it's all floating in my head; after all, I'm only a party of my culture . . .

Haberdash: hack-up your Biblical seances and give me some gravestone refinement to leave a mildewed melodrama at your death.

All the millions upon millions of Eunuchs. Said Gabriel—let's put them crisscrossed, hatched-colored, a fine network working for us.

Tick-tack, paper-back. Return: C.O.D.

A torn tissue

A lost word

A forgotten tear

Ashes always

And eternity is put to notes—unrecognizable muffled sobs

This is the prelude to dissatisfaction—a rising to meet a source as undefinable as the wind

Swinging sadly in slow motion—a prelude in stops and starts

Begin again the eternal wasted music

Over a torn tissue

A lost word

A forgotten tear

To ashes torn notes

(I wish I had more coffee I wish I had more coffee I wish I had more coffee)

"Do you want more coffee?"

"No."

"What do you want then?"

"Nothing."

"I wish you'd tell me."

"Nothing." . . . (More coffee more coffee more coffee. . . .)

I'm sitting in a green-glass bottle while the galaxies are whirling.
My green vision overwhelms outerspace, all-pervading, all-powerful oblivion,
as I envisage with bottle-bottomed eyes
I could grow a green substance in my garden were it not glass.
Were I and it not glass, blown fine from buffeting outer-influences which
do not concern me as I know life in a bottle
I once knew red and Jove and gabbros—outside of myself or the bottle
(I am glass—green myself)
and meltings, trees, scarfs—bottles, bottles, green grass, glass green,
bottles, bottles . . .
Sandstone silicate bottles—colors of melting crayon poured into
hyperbolic, hypothetic bottles—manufactured as people are made
Instantaneously more marching, marching bottles, people, headless bottles—
Shattered, molded, melted, massacred—shot into spun-glass fragments of
bottles, pieces, chips,
Flying, sharp-cutting through thin veneer—
Of more bottles coming everywhere . . .
And so I'm in a bottle, hiding in green—
The garden I will grow

Go home, toad
You make me sick
You and your old pond reek

I saw in you today a pocket egg
to break
And if I do unyolk
your golden power,
I shall find only the shell of me

3 Poems

E. J. Barnes

What Did You Say

A zenith of twin-pack verisimilitudes
brings with it
Economies of nomenclature
which normal nouns
and parricidal phrases
will not package
as advertised

The Rainy Day

EILEEN ROESLER

HARRY DETWILER needed a hand on the farm, but when he had first run the ad, he hadn't even known the colored family had moved into town. Maybe if he had known, he wouldn't have advertised in the newspaper. Maybe he would have gone into town and been careful about whom he hired. Maybe not. All he knew was how much he would be needing a man in the next couple of days and that not one had been out looking for work.

He slammed his calloused hand down on the kitchen table and shifted uneasily in his seat. "By God, I wish we'd get an answer to that ad. As soon as the rain lets up, that hay'll need mowing, and I can't do all that work by myself." He leaned back toward the window, reached for the curtain, and looked out for the third time at the black mud the four-day rain was creating in his yard.

Mrs. Detwiler pushed a cup of coffee in front of her husband and asked, "How much longer will the ad be in the paper?"

"Two more days," he answered, grimacing at the bitterness of the coffee in his mouth. "But if I don't have a man by then, I'll have to run it again."

The two were quiet for awhile, listening to the rain outside and the humming of the timer on the kitchen stove. Mrs. Detwiler looked back at her husband. "Could be one of them fellas from the factory will be needing work. Two of them quit, you know, since them colored boys got on there."

"I don't care who comes. I need someone quick. I'd hire about anybody right now."

He pushed himself from his chair and left the room.

"Sandy still got your newspaper up there?" Mrs. Detwiler called after him.

"Guess so."

"Well, you get it back from her. No need her hogging it all morning. It's your paper, ain't it?"

"Guess so," he said again, walking back through the kitchen to the cluttered stair-

case. "You still up there, girl? Hurry up with that gol-durned newspaper. I've been waiting on you long enough." He bit his lip and bowed his head a little, already sorry for his harshness. I'm going to get that girl some books, he told himself. A girl ten years old needs books. But the thought was chased away by a burst of thunder and Harry moved his worn body on through the dark hallway to the living room.

Upstairs Sandy was sitting in front of the worn dresser that stood against the otherwise bare wall in her room. Her long dull hair, the color of the dead tree in the front yard, hung down in a jagged frame around her pale, slightly freckled face. Her legs were folded under her, her large boyish frame bent over the crumpled newspaper on the floor. For a long time, newspapers had been the only thing available on her father's farm to read, and every day she had practiced faithfully on the crumpled, day-late papers that came in the mail.

The whole world was quiet, thought Sandy, except for the usual nervous barking of her dog. The rain was still out there and Sandy acknowledged it with a sullen frown as she resumed her reading. The bark of another dog then joined the first, and Sandy, determined to quiet the animals, finally pushed herself up from the uncarpeted floor and leaned over the bookshelf, pressing her face against the cool glass of the windowpane. In spite of the noise she was making, she tugged at her window, opening it with a loud scrape, and bent out as far as she could without getting wet. There, in the yard, she saw a tall, heavy man whose skin was nearly black climbing from a rusting pick-up truck. He was holding his coat at the collar to keep the rain off his neck as he skirted the puddles in the Detwiler yard. This was the second day in a row that Sandy had actually seen a brown person. Before that, she had only seen them in the newspapers, but the little girl who had enrolled the day before had seemed so

much different from them. She had seemed quiet, and fragile—like a slender stalk of corn before harvest, only brown.

“Puppy!” she hollered. “You be quiet!” Then, embarrassed, she quickly ducked back into her room before the brown man could see her, hurrying then across the room and down the steep staircase to tell her mother.

Her eyes, large now and somehow bluer than before, were no longer jerking as she burst into the kitchen and toward her mother who was standing in her usual place at the high, worn counter. “Mother, somebody’s here. Who is it?” At the words, her mother let go of the large mixing spoon and let it sink back into the thick batter. Curious, she pulled back the faded curtain that covered the narrow kitchen window and moved her small eyes across the yard until they stopped on the man’s bulky figure. Suddenly, and almost instinctively, her initially casual glance intensified, and the loose skin on her face seemed to tighten into a thousand taut fibers, as she nervously dropped the curtain from her fingers and ran to the living room, wiping her hands on the sides of her worn dress. “Go answer the door. Someone’s coming,” she said to her husband, and then whispered so that Sandy couldn’t hear, “It’s one of them niggers that just moved into town.” The three of them lined up at the door, and Mr. Detwiler had it open before the stranger even knocked.

The wet figure stood there in the doorway, clutching a newspaper under his arm and obviously alarmed at seeing the door already open. Sandy hoped it was today’s paper that he was carrying so that she could see it before it came in tomorrow’s mail. The stranger parted his lips to speak, and Sandy forced her thoughts to be quiet so that she could hear him talk.

“You H. Detwiler?” He held the newspaper out as if to explain his question. The tall farmer, still only half awake, nodded yes. “I’m Ollie Holborn, and I come to find work.”

At the words, Mr. Detwiler’s eyebrows tugged closer together, and his lips flinched into a single, tight line, as he glanced at his wife for an answer. But Sandy felt a wide smile pushing itself between her own full cheeks at the thought of having someone different—someone not in the family—coming to their farm every day.

She moved closer to the Negro to see what he would look like up close. His skin was smooth and brown, the color of chocolate icing before the sugar is added, and Sandy could easily see his big white eyes jump nervously back and forth between the boundaries provided by his black skin as she watched them blink with the weight of the raindrops on his lashes. His bulky black hand raised itself to wipe the rain off his face, and Sandy noticed for the first time that the underside of his hand was nearly as white as her own.

Sandy’s mother acknowledged the black visitor with a nervous nod and scuttled back into her kitchen like a scared mouse afraid of a screaming woman. As Ollie watched her leave, the skin around his eyes became tight with nervousness; and none of the things running through Mr. Detwiler’s mind would come out so that all he could produce was an embarrassed stutter. He had rehearsed the interview in his mind since the first day the ad had run. He would be very composed and very businesslike, he had thought. He didn’t like a slipshod job. But in a few moments he had forgotten the words, and was left with a dull, anaesthetic sensation that penetrated his whole mind. All he could produce was a stutter, and all Ollie could do was look down. He knew Mr. Detwiler was nervous by the way his eyes reached out to him helplessly, and at the same time his tongue fumbled over the rudimentary courtesies.

Sandy became impatient with the silence. She frowned hard, stamping her foot to release the excitement welling inside her. “Let’s sit down,” she said, and Mr. Detwiler relaxed.

Sandy sat on the floor in front of her father’s chair, facing the Negro so that she could watch his thick lips as they formed the peculiar words he said. She thought it would be fun to be a brown person and have her own special name like Negroes did, and she began to create all kinds of names for white people, but none of them sounded very good. She had heard the name *Negro* before and even knew how to spell it because she often saw it in the newspapers. Her father didn’t always pronounce it right. Sometimes he said “nigger,” but Sandy had always been sure to correct him and hoped that her father wouldn’t say it wrong now—when there was one right in their own living room.

Mr. Detwiler said, "Have you ever done farm work before? It's hard work, you know."

"Once," the Negro said. "I worked for awhile during harvest last year. And I'm strong. I can do the work."

When Harry Detwiler had advertised, he had never thought that a Negro would apply for the job, and now he didn't know quite what to do. He only knew that Ollie Holborn was strong and experienced and in his front room asking for the job. He knew, too, how much he would need a man in a couple of days, and the tension was squeezing itself into his throat so that he couldn't swallow.

The Negro interrupted the farmer's thinking. "Mr. Detwiler?" His voice was cautious, but low and friendly. "I need the work, Mr. Detwiler. I got four kids. The oldest one's about the age of this here little girl, and I just lost a job at the factory."

He saw Mr. Detwiler raise the eyebrow over his left eye. "I know what you're thinking. But I'll be a good worker. You'll see."

Sandy quickly perked up, sitting very straight. "Your little girl go to my school?" He nodded. "Now that *she's* come, we're evened up in my grade. Two boys to two girls. Before that, it was only me against two town boys." Ollie laughed softly.

Sandy heard her mother calling nervously to her father, but she didn't pay any attention to him as he got up and walked into the kitchen. Noticing the empty seat her father had left, she scooted off the floor and into the worn rocking chair. She felt very grown up alone with the guest in the room and was even beginning to lose that palpable lonesomeness that had come four days ago with the rain. Rainy days, especially when they came on Saturday, were unwelcome in Sandy's world, because her mother had set those days aside for Sandy's cooking lessons. Her mother would make her stand at the kitchen counter for a long time until the calves of her large, bony legs ached and throbbed, and she would have to sit down at the kitchen table and pretend she was filling the sugar bowl. But today was different. Her mother had forgotten the cooking lesson. Her father was letting her sit in his chair. And she could almost feel

the importance of the day sitting right inside her stomach.

"Is that your dog outside, little girl?"

"Oh, yes sir. But he's a very good dog. He didn't mean to bark at you, I'm sure."

Ollie laughed and Sandy could tell that he had white teeth, too, but his lips quickly closed over his teeth again, and she couldn't see them any more.

"We used to have a cat, too, but it died and we buried it in a paper sack." She pushed some of her stringy hair behind her ear and looked toward the kitchen, expecting a sign of disapproval. Her father still had not returned, and Sandy knew it was safe to go on.

"Puppy is my only friend. I don't have any brothers or sisters, and it gets lonesome here an awful lot. But Puppy and I do lots of things. Sometimes we run to the top of the hill, and sometimes we go to the pond and sit, and sometimes we explore or play Treasure Island. I'm always the pirate."

The brown man was listening to her, and Sandy was glad. The rain outside had stopped, but she didn't notice it—in fact, she had forgotten about everything except the brown man. She wished he would say something back to her, but he just sat there listening to her from behind his black face.

When she finally ran out of things to say, she noticed that her mother's whispers were audible in the next room, and Sandy wondered what she was saying. She looked at the visitor to see if he could hear it, too, but he was looking down at his hands, and Sandy couldn't see his face. She wanted to make sure the two had an amiable departure to compensate for the hostile welcome Puppy had given the Negro.

"Want to meet my dog?" she said.

"I'd like that," he answered, smiling widely again.

Excusing herself, she left the rocking chair and walked into the kitchen. Her mother was still whispering, but Sandy could now hear what she was saying.

"I don't care if he *does* need work. I'm scared of him, and I don't mind telling you. You never know what he'll do, and I don't want to take a chance."

Sandy stopped at the doorway and looked at her mother, her freckled face blank and her mouth slightly open. Her father was saying, "But what about his family? They gotta *eat*. And he's got a

girl Sandy's age and three others younger than that. We could just keep him on for awhile. Nothin' permanent. Just see how he was. Maybe he'd be okay."

"And maybe he wouldn't," Mrs. Detwiler said, "and then what!"

Sandy took a step back so her mother wouldn't see her. Her eyes were wet, and she could feel her heart beating. She remembered the little girl that had come to school, and she remembered the worn dress that was faded and starched very stiffly—with glue, she had thought, to hold it together. She remembered the curly hair that even from a distance had looked shiny and funny, like the wire pad she used to wash the pans, and she remembered how frightened and lonely the little girl had looked, peering blankly from her wide eyes.

Mrs. Detwiler was still talking, louder now than before, but still somewhat hushed and nervous. "Just get him out of here before something happens."

"But what about the mowing? I've been advertising for three weeks and everyone in town knows by now I've been needing a man. I can't do it alone, and this man's strong and willing to work."

Mrs. Detwiler's voice was bitter. "Okay, you hire him. And first thing you know his little girl will be playing with Sandy, and then none of the school kids'll have anything to do with her. And what if more of them come a-lookin' for work? Pretty soon we'd have a swarm of them, and then for *sure* there'd be trouble. Just look. He's already been fired at the factory."

"He didn't say *fired*," Harry said.

"Then why didn't he stay there? He's no good, I tell ya. Just get him out of here before something happens."

Harry Detwiler turned away from his wife without arguing any further. As he turned to leave, he saw his young daughter leaning there against the wall, and for a brief moment he wanted to grab her and shake her hard and say, "What'd ya listen for? Why'd you have to come and listen?" But seeing her eyes were already wet from the tears, he knew he wouldn't. Instead, he stopped for a moment and looked at her, angry at himself for giving in and at Sandy for listening, and partly for reasons he didn't even understand. He put his rough hand on Sandy's shoulder for a moment, and then ran it along the

side of her face, pushing a strand of hair behind her ear. They looked at each other for only a few seconds before Mr. Detwiler turned away without speaking and walked toward the living room.

Sandy tried to swallow, but it wouldn't go down. She could hear her mother's heavy nervous breathing and turned to watch her hurrying back and forth in the kitchen. The batter was still on the counter, unfinished, but Mrs. Detwiler had forgotten about it. Watching her, Sandy could feel a slight stabbing in her chest, right through the middle. It was a penetrating stab, and for a moment Sandy thought maybe she'd never be able to breathe again. But the breath finally came, and when it did, it was sharp and deep and relieving all at once. Sandy walked back into the kitchen, her eyes wide and sad and remembering.

"Are you going to make the brown man leave?" Her mother didn't answer but turned instead to leave the room. Sandy followed her as she walked through the back room and out into the yard. "Mother?" she said again as the big, stern woman pulled at the cellar door. "Why are you making the brown man leave?"

Her mother swung around to face Sandy directly. The skin on her face was still taut, and her eyes were intense as they lashed out at Sandy. Her face, in fact her whole body, was red with anger, and her eye twitched as she began to sputter to Sandy. "Don't call that nigger a brown man."

"But why?"

"Because he's a nigger, that's why. And he'll always *be* one. Niggers are dangerous, and you ain't to speak to him no more. You hear me?"

"But who'll we get to help on the farm?"

"You let your father 'tend to that. That nigger wouldn't work if we did hire him. He'd just cause trouble, and besides, the neighbors would—" She suddenly broke off and looked away from her daughter's unbelieving face. A long silence intervened, and the electric air and the oppressive clouds enveloped the two as they stood there separated by much more than a child's disbelief. The woman hurried on down the cellar stairs, leaving her daughter alone in the heavy air.

The rain had stopped and only a few lazy drops lost their balance and fell from

the branches. Sandy could see Puppy across the yard and whistled to him. The sound of her whistle and the dog's bark in reply were the only sounds in the yard. The sun wasn't out yet, but Sandy could see it there behind the aborted cloud—almost imperceptible but glowing dully just the same, and she wondered how it could be daylight at all when the sun wasn't out.

Sandy walked through a large puddle the rain had left in her yard. She sat down on her wet swing and looked at the ground for a long time. She didn't feel important any more. She only felt the lonesomeness rising again inside her. Looking up, she saw the brown man coming out of the house and wished that her mother had not been home today. Maybe then she could have talked to the stranger for a longer

time. He crossed the yard, walking slower now that it wasn't raining, and headed toward the old truck.

Sandy felt the stabbing again in her chest and was glad that it was a quiet stab, and that she was the only one who knew it was there. She saw the brown man hesitate a moment, glance through the yard, and find her sitting there so quietly on the swing. He lifted his hand and waved to her, and she could see his white palm nodding to her clear across the yard, but she pretended not to see him and called to Puppy instead. The man climbed back into the truck, and Sandy heard herself saying very softly so that her mother wouldn't hear, "He didn't get to make friends with Puppy," and then she let one very quiet tear slip on down her face.

Poem

SHERRY MILLER

Over
Like a sudden rain,
Or a sickness.
Gone
Yet with its traces,
A multitude of scars.
Me
I stand alone again,
But free.

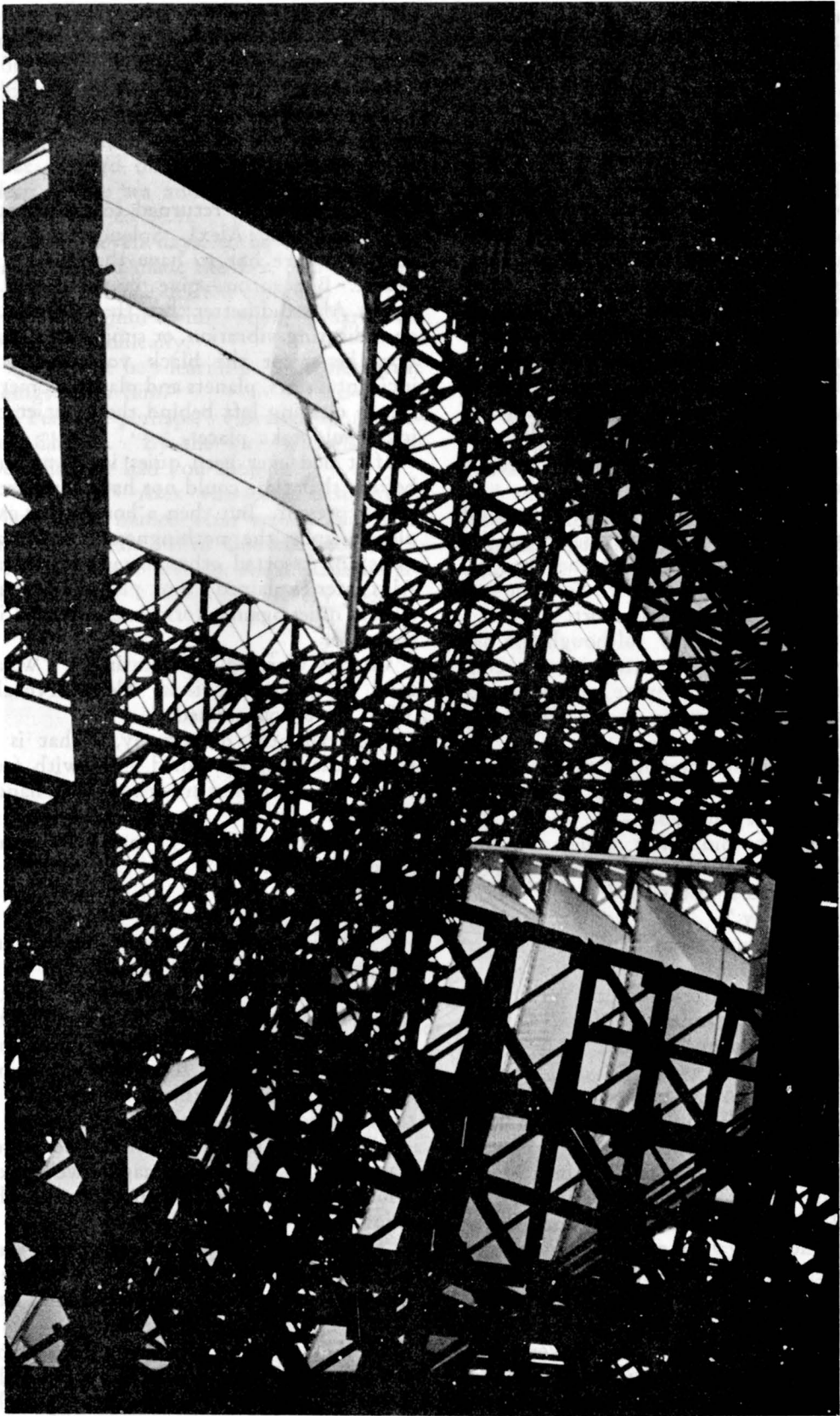


Photo by DAMON PITHIAS SWAIN III
COMPLEXITY IN VOIDS AT EXPO '67

Seven Days Make a Week

RON STREETER

SOMEWHERE out there, and long ago, oh long before you and I were born, somewhere out there is where it all began. Somewhere there, where Halley's comet has not yet flown, essence formed and man was born.

During that time of long ago a nebula, Charles by name, came moving through the void of outer space. Throwing off concurrent rings of matter, Charles created stars and planets as his mass gradually cooled and contracted.

A friend of Charles, and a nebula of like proportion, was in the same general area at the time and in fact they had arranged a meeting. The friend's name was Alexandryocal—Alex for short.

So on this great day (although the day had not yet been invented in this continuum of time and space) they met to exchange views and to create what they would.

"Well, Alex old boy, here we are again," the nebula vibrated. "And what's new under the sun with you?"

"There's nothing new under the sun, Charles—you of all nebulae should know that, but that's just why I asked you to come this way."

"Oh? Do you mean to say *you've* discovered something new?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact I have. Remember we once vibrated of taking some time off—to do nothing but sit back and watch the worlds go by?"

"Of course, Alex. It was to be a respite from the never-ending job of creating life. But go on; what's your plan?"

"Well, here's the idea. We create—for one last time—someone to do the work for us. We've been wasting our time zipping all around the galaxy creating these worlds and creatures. What we need to do is take in a junior partner!"

Now this was such a great idea that Charles flipped his great mass over on his long axis (nearly causing a tidal wave on a far-away planet) and began elating at such a rate that as he moved about the void his fifth magnitude stars glowed with

a silver fury. He returned to his friend.

"Wonderful, Alex! Splendid! What fools we were not to have thought of it before. But go on—give me the details."

But Alex did better than that. Without an indicating vibration, or similar explanation, he swept the black void clean of incidental stars, planets and playful comets. In the clearing left behind the great coming would take place.

If it had ever been quiet in a vacuum before, that time could not have compared to the present. But then a horrendous explosion split the nothingness; conflagrations and assorted other miracle stuff (as Alex later explained) took place and when all was quiet again a form had appeared in the void.

Charles vibrated exasperatingly, "What kind of monster is that, Alexandryocal? What have you created?"

Alex vibrated defensively, "That is a biped; the peds are called legs—with feet attached. The others are arms—with hands attached."

"And what in galaxy's name are arms, hands, legs and—?"

"Feet?"

"Yes, feet!"

"Well, if you'll calm down and not scare the poor devil to death, I'll tell you."

And so, Alex told Charles the facts of life. This was a creation for creating. The arms and things would let him move and such. In the end the form was a creating thing and would let them take eternity if they wished to watch the worlds go by.

"Well then, if he's finished let's get started on resting up. I imagine we'll need a lot of strength to straighten out all the trouble he'll cause!"

"Your faith in my work isn't very gratifying," Alex vibrated, and then blew the final life into his work. "Come, let's drift away slowly."

As they left, the form came to life and as time passed he created. He created the heaven and the earth. He called the light he created day and the darkness he made night. Where the waters were he named

them oceans and the earth between the waters he called land and he made animals for both. And then he made a man—a thing with two legs called feet and two arms with hands. And a brain besides. He gave man dominion over the things that crawled on the land and that sank deep in the sea and he called man King and his son to be.

Later—seven days, to be exact—for he and man had made the day, two somehow familiar nebulae drifted close by.

“It took him awhile, Alex,” Charles vibrated sardonically.

“Yes, but he’s learning. I predict great things from him.”

“Perhaps, perhaps,” vibrated the doubting Charles. “By the way, what is he to be called, or had you thought?”

“Oh yes,” Alex vibrated reassuringly, “he’s to be named after an old friend of mine, a nebula called Godfrizenzee.”

“I suppose it will do, Alex,” Charles allowed. “Yes, I think that is very good.”

“Yes, Charles, God is Good.” But before the nebula left Him to do His further work there was yet one task left undone. The void darkened and strange vibrations filled the darkness as each of the two nebulae and Godfrizenzee listened to the final “OK” of the nebulae’s superior.

“Well, Alex, you were right. He did agree.”

“I was sure he would, Charles. And did you receive the vibration that indicated that we might have started something new?”

“No, what was that?”

“Why that Godfrizenzee might take off one day in Seven!”

“Oh yes, to be sure. Well, shall we go?”

“Yes, let’s.”

And with that they left Him behind and they glided away to that Bermudan Island of all such nebulae somewhere there in outer space where it all began so long ago.

Prelude III

JOHN GOTTSCHAMER

in the gravel pits
behind the bushes on the other side
of the pond
that’s going to
dry up again this year
Is really OK
but who the hell
will ever notice
’cept me
’cause I saw
you—*hunching*
and when the
moon winks you’re going to
be
sorry

Thoughts on Attending the Funeral of Matthew at Oxford, England, on November 30, 1852

RONALD T. BEAN

DEATH'S powerful black fingers reached into the casket and held Matthew's head in a viselike grip, flattening the old man's temples and making his cold stone-grey eyes protrude. The purple veins on the old man's wrinkled forehead had lost their bulge, the very spirit drained from them. Matthew's parchment skin had lost its golden glow, making his taut skin look a cold ice grey. The darker wrinkles coursed their way about Matthew's face like a Baroque latticework. Death sat triumphantly over the darkwood casket, rejoicing the unhappy death of my dear beloved friend, Matthew.

Matthew had died an unhappy death—that was clear in the apparent chaos in his once beautiful face, a look that no undertaker could erase, a look, perhaps, of terrible realization. Death had conquered, and he, knowing so, smiled. Someone indeed had attempted to make Matthew look happy and satisfied, having passed on to his greater reward, but the grief bore through, much to Death's delight. No superimposed smile could cover that fact.

The scent of the sympathetic lily that wafted through the air above the simple casket hardly covered the musty odor of the lifeless. The darkened St. Mary's was the mother of all the emotion that was borne heavily in the hearts of those who participated in its departing attempt at compassion. Dark blurs of oaken walls escaped inspection by the attentive sober mourners. Only a simple illuminated cross at the head of the ill-placed coffin exuded any warmth.

Matthew's face had been meticulously cared for. He was washed and clean-shaven, the first time I'd seen him that way. The sparse few white hairs had been thoughtfully trimmed and carefully arranged in an obviously artificial manner. The dirty, cracked fingernails that were typically Matthew's were now clean and trim—very proper indeed. Matthew's small grey head projected stiffly from the

white starched collar, intensifying the coldness and gray of the old man's wrinkled skin. The shiny smooth black silk of Matthew's final suit reflected the dim light that his face could not, making horrid contrast. The few flaps of yellow parched skin on Matthew's neck antagonized the lily-white collar. Pointing to his collar were his bony hands crossed on his chest, high-lighting his long skinny fingers and blotched skin against the night black of his funeral suit. Matthew wore this aura of artificiality and isolation, and one could see that this tiny contemptible body, now drowned in the black sea of smooth-flowing velvet and silk, was never meant to enter such a dismal state. As they closed the lid of the bronze casket, evicting the light that Matthew so well lived for, the hysterical laugh of the conqueror filled the hanging still air.

Oh, how those very veins would swell when the old man talked. His temples would throb with excitement and the flints in his wild eyes would scatter sparks that lit up his face in such a way as to reflect his true happiness and satisfaction in life. His unkempt hair and unshaven face added a force and vitality to his conviction that he was alive. As he would talk, his hands would wave frantically and his skinny arms flail violently through the air—and through those beautiful pale cracked lips (so often swollen with thoughts he never had time to express) came words beautiful. His thin frame would move almost convulsively, following the motions of the speech he was putting his soul into, and one wondered how such a frail-looking person could sustain such action. Matthew could not have stood more than five feet tall in his brown worn ankle boots, but as he talked, he towered above me, and this decrepit, wondrous man, who was as old as the tattered, faded, embroidered waistcoat he wore, became a giant in thought and speech.

I met Matthew not long ago, during a

walk through the Botanic Gardens beside Magdalen Bridge. I had been musing the recent decision for Oxford to become the subject of a Royal Commission, when I noticed the splendid array of color that blended in a multi-colored harmony. There was a grand profusion in colour. Long green-stemmed roses of reds and yellows were overseers to the oranges and champagnes of the crocuses. The green of the searching ivy wound its way through the purples of tulips and the chaste whites of the lily of the valley that were peeping from behind the less delicate plants. Rows and rows of beauty engulfed all who entered, and permeated their minds with a perfumy sweetness of thought. I, entranced by a white garden spider swimming atop a crystal drop of dew on the red petal of a rose, never noticed the strange fellow approach until a stranger voice arose, so suddenly, that it seemed to come from the earth itself.

Love, now a universal birth
 From heart to heart is stealing
 From earth to man and man to earth
 It is the hour of feeling!

Having had my thoughts pierced, I looked down, quite surprised, and saw Matthew for the first time. The Popelike exactness of his rhyme and meter enhanced the otherwise ragged appearance of the poet. As I watched, he raised his finger, as to stop me from talking, for my mouth must have been hanging quite open. He continued, with the same exuberant enthusiasm that had so startled me amidst my tranquil state.

One moment now may give us more
 Than years of toiling reason
 Our minds shall drink at every pore
 The spirit of the season

Now the old man stood finished, and burst into a titanic smile, his large white teeth glistening a mouthful. His arms came to rest at his side, and he stood anticipantly silent, arching his huge grey bushy eyebrows, and waiting for my judgement.

On my smile, we became friends.

Matthew's advanced age fascinated me, for surely he was the oldest man who ever wore grey hairs. He boasted of living through the reigns of George III and George IV, William IV, whom he affectionately called Silly Billy, and now Queen Victoria. He'd seen many changes and reforms, some which he'd agreed to force-

fully and others, disagreed violently. For instance, William Godwin had oft spurred the old man into his own world of intellectual discovery. The last I'd heard of Godwin was in a discussion about Alastor. His *Political Justice* and the old Godwinian philosophy were still branded afresh in his brain. This philosophy with its idealistic virtues which carried in Wordsworth and Coleridge with its high tide had now receded into the low tide of history. Matthew swore to man's innate goodness, and the essential corruption of the institutions, but most importantly, Matthew was convinced of the perfectibility of man.

His favorite was the result of the Oxford Movement. Matthew had argued with the greats Newman and Keble, and Pusey, that parliament, which up until that time had been the effective government of the church of England, had no right to discriminate that its members be of that faith. And in 1832, the year of Matthew's triumph at Oxford, the unity of church and state was divided by the introduction of any Christian to the Parliament. Matthew urged that man should value the most important traditional aspects of the church, especially the liturgy and the apostolic succession of the bishops, and the early vow of faithfulness to the early church. I listened with much respect as these twenty old movements were still creating history. Matthew even carried a copy of Newman's *Tract 90*, extolling his comrade as a genius. So inspired, I spent many nights of research at Bodleian, preparing myself for an intelligent conversation with my mentor.

On many days, after seminars, did I come to the gardens and find friend Matthew alone, alive and happy, and in love with his wonderful world. Where he went when I left him each day or where he came from, I never really knew. I liked to fancy that he never left the gardens, sleeping under the constellations, no doubt extolling their solemn beauty to the deaf marble ears of the park's statues. Oftentimes, entering the park, Matthew would see me carrying a book of Dryden or Dr. Johnson, and he would start up, shaking his tiny body and yelling:

Books! 'Tis a dull and endless strife
 Come forth into the light of life
 And let Nature be
 Your teacher.*

*Admixture of two stanzas—tables turned.

And when I'd explain that it was my reason for coming, he would just give me the cat's smile.

For many hours we talked with our hearts open. Matthew's resources were limitless—he would talk of God, and nature and man. As the wind would play amidst his few wild hairs, making them dance, Matthew's excited mind would probe into the beautiful and uncover and discover. He would start afresh each day with a greater vitality than the day before, as I sat and watched him enhance every word with unfaltering emotion.

One of those spring days, when thoughts turn from the harsh realism of life to the phantasmagorical idealism, I found Matthew seated in a grove of maple, looking quite glum and misty-eyed, contraried to the prevalent overwhelming mood of beauty in spring.

"Old man," I asked, "what ails you?" And he thoughtfully began:

I heard a thousand blended notes
While in a grove I sat reclined
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

I sat spellbound and bid him continue:

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul thru me ran
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man

God, the wonderful old man explained, is all about us in Nature—omnipresent, he called it. The very greenness of the forest and the very colour of the flower were a part of what he called the Divine Reality.

"Realize Nature" he would say, "and realize God."

I learned to accept Matthew, during the time I knew Matthew, as a friend, a priest to his religion of feeling, and at times almost as a god.

I chanced one day to ask him about his age, for my overpowering fascination tormented me. An infectious smile spread over his ruddy cheeks, and with a crooked finger he'd pointed to a grove of elm and began in unbroken verse:

The blackbird amid leafy trees.
The lark above the hill
Let loose their carols when they please
Are quiet when they will

With Nature never do they wage
A foolish strife, they see
A happy youth and their old age
Is beautiful and free

The last words brought quiet. Mat-

thew's misted eyes watched those birds afar and stood still, as if straining to hear the last bars of the avian song. After this eternal moment of silence, he turned to me again, donning his serious philosophic look.

Thus fares it still in our decay
And yet the wiser mind
Mourns less for what age takes away
Than what it leaves behind

Since he spoke those verses, Matthew became ageless. After evenings of inspired thought of the day's encounter with Matthew, I realized Matthew as a product of Nature, not time.

Our discussion of age had inevitably introduced the subject of Death, for in my way of thinking, with age, comes Death. I asked the old man to explain the impossible—Death. He laughed, showing his gleaming white teeth, longer than his usual laugh; his ever-widening eyes stared at me with strange surprise. At first he didn't answer, but sat pensively, holding his shriveled fist against a languid cheek. Long moments of weighted thought passed before Matthew withdrew his fist and looked up with an obvious look of consternation on his down-turned mouth offsetting his jovial brow.

"Tomorrow, dear friend," he said, "and I shall have your answer, answered by a master that can tell you more beautifully than I ever shall be able." All the while he was absent-mindedly tugging at his waistcoat.

A man that Matthew considered his master was something I could not envision. A long and anxious night passed, and morning found itself early among the azure dome. I got to the gardens early enough for the dew to wet the tips of my shoes as I cut across the grassy turf towards my reverent destination. Matthew stood with no human companion, reciting verse to a row of attentive maples. I saluted him with a cursory greeting, looking about for Matthew's alleged friend. Instead, my searching eyes beheld a sheaf of yellowing parchment papers in Matthew's sere hand. Whilst the while, Matthew turned his sunlit face toward me and greeted me with the full warmth of his personality. He talked awhile of the long-buried idea of Coleridge and Lamb's pantisocratic Pennsylvania, talking with the same flourish that either of the founders may have. Then there was the French Revolution and

Bonaparte, until I no longer could hold my peace. My apprehensive nervousness succumbed to forced courage and I burst out amidst a derogatory remark about the march to Moscow.

"My dear sir, my answer, did you forget?"

No, of course not; Matthew would not forget. He handed me the sheaf of papers (it was then I realized they were letters). He gestured me to read them, as he immersed himself into the awaiting arboreal audience. I paged through the sheaf of letters from an American friend, who initialed each letter "Walt W." I thumbed through the pages confusedly until I came across several paragraphs feebly underlined in faded red ink. I remember reading it aloud.

The smallest sprout shows there is really no death

And if ever there was it led forward life, and Does not wait at the end to arrest it And ceased the moment life appear'd

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses And to die is different from what anyone Supposed, and luckier.

I read and reread the letter and it was not until Matthew comforted my uncomprehending mind did I understand. Matthew thought of himself and man as indestructible. He could not die, for Death was merely that nonentity before birth. It was up to man to grow upward and outward, or as Matthew said, to grow materially and spiritually, rather than disintegrate. Death is merely a transition. Satisfied with an answer I really didn't understand, I smiled recognition. And in a moment, we were again praising the beauty of an overpassing flock of migrating brown-breasted birds.

Green summer was now turning to brown fall. The dying leaves began their annual dance in a grand multi-colored effort to cover the ground with a patch-quilt for the bleak winter. The maples turned a rusty brown, serving as a reminder of the blushing oak. The reaching spring buds had given way to the bare sagging boughs of fall. The carpet of trodden grass had lost its brilliant green and no longer reflected the rays of the chilling sun. The dull blades no longer stood in their uniform attendance to their solar sergeant. Nature's respite was taking its toll. The profusion of deathly colour had a morbid beauty. That fall was a grim

reminder of the things that must fall. With the advent of that first leaf's descent, I noticed a creeping inattention and lack of liveliness in Matthew's vigor. Matthew's verse became broken and his meter became imperfect.

With the last leaf's burial, Matthew stopped coming to the naked gardens. The customary walkers and occasional lovers had left to hibernate during the long winter. Only an occasional red squirrel would dart between the sterile oaks in search of fallen nuts, and run off with its prize into the lonely barren field.

Weeks later, when thoughts of Matthew had started to hibernate in the Fall of my mind, I received news from the University that Sir Matthew, an old professor emeritus of the University, had passed away after a short sickness. It seemed only I knew of his long tortured decline that had inevitably led to his death. The academic funeral, sponsored by the benefactors of the University, was held in the dead of winter.

That very grim face, lying tortured in the casket, reflected the dying thought. I realized that Matthew had surely been conquered by his nonexistent foe, Death, and that last horrible realization reflected in the sad stone face. So Matthew lay there inside the casket, still in his realization.

One silky black stallion turned his head to watch Matthew's casket being lifted by the astute pallbearers on the black plush-trimmed hearse. The riders took their castles on the coach, and the mourners their processional places, as we started to proceed toward the University cemetery. The hollow clapping of the horses' hooves on the aged cobblestones echoed in the narrow street with a rhythmic syncopation.

A stray spire overlooked the sombre cemetery. The drizzle hung a foreboding shroud of mist over the grounds. Dozens of lonesome graves were decorated with winter frozen flowers and only an occasional union jack added colour to the melancholy yard. A short elegy by Professor Gordon at the grave no doubt brought thoughts of Thomas Gray to the learned minds of the attentive faculty.

The dirt covered the last sight of any remembrance of Matthew and slowly the grave filled as the procession unceremoniously plodded away.

I watched the rustic gravediggers fill and tamp down the dirt of the grave with

their rusted contemptible shovels. The dirty, ill-dressed rubes walked away reciting their store of anecdotes, laughing a crude, loud laugh that echoed on hundreds of deaf ears. Alone, I walked about, giving a rather detailed inspection of Matthew's eternal bedding. The drizzle had changed to a light rain and was collecting in small rivulets about the fresh grave. A tarp lay at one end of the grave and was collecting the water, so I kicked it aside.

I then spied a small granite headstone that had been covered by the sacrilegious tarp.

I read the short epitaph, and a remorseful feeling of loss flooded my soul and brought a solitary tear to my eye. I understood the words as being Matthew's own last words, the ones I never heard.

It is with sad farewell I will leave this world
For some other dimension to find
I have loved, learned and serv'd
That I may leave with peace of mind

That single tear suspended in my emotion dissolved. Perhaps Matthew's sad face had after all been that of a sad farewell to the world he so loved, rather than the terrible realization I had so imagined. Matthew had not died, but rather joined the totality of being, to which the soul of man must eventually return.

As I walked from the graveyard, I looked about me, and for the first time in my short existence, I looked about me, aware of the great spirit of Nature, and for the first time in my life, I wished to understand the essence of Her, an essence, of which, to this day, I still search.

PATRONS

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*The silent tyranny of void
extinguishes us
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