

# RED CEDAR REVIEW

---

3

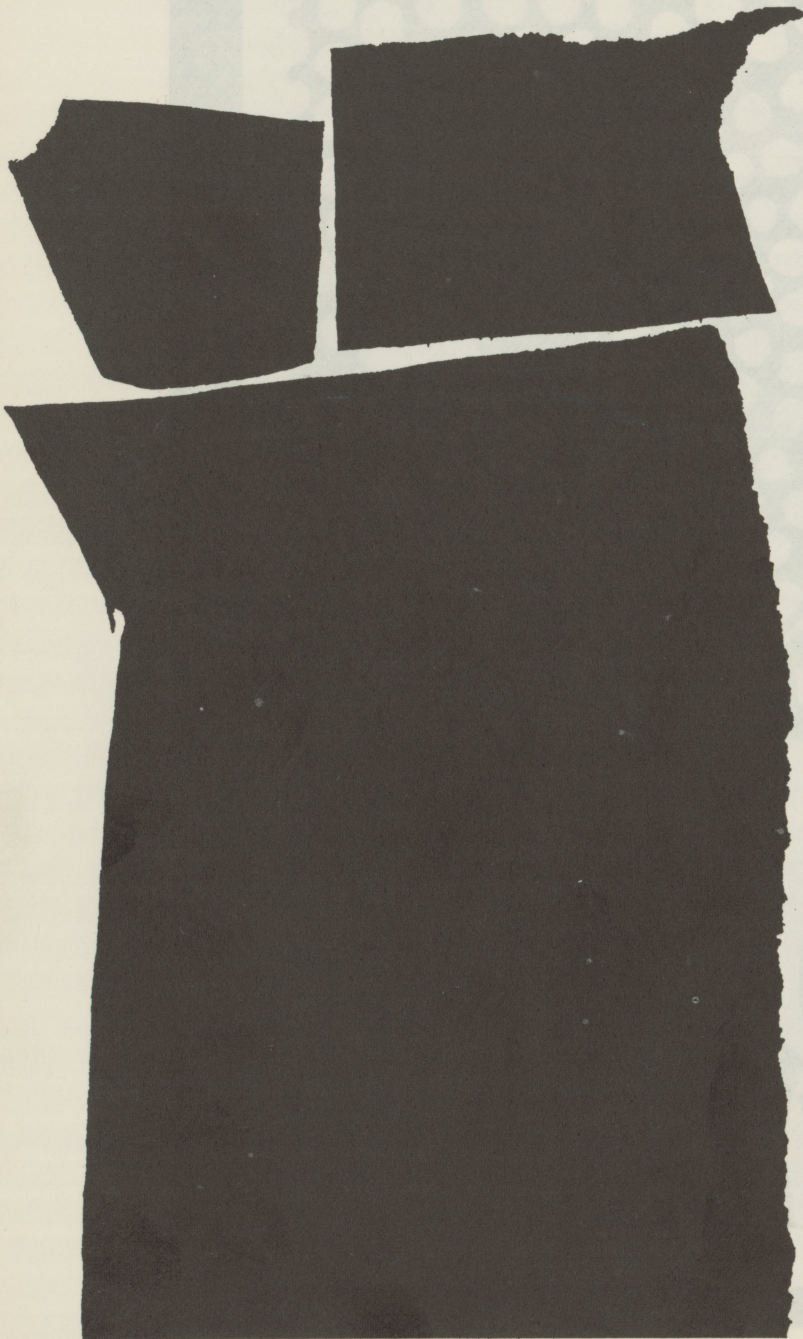






BURCH BLOCK PRINT "THE SAME SUN EVERYDAY"

# RED CEDAR REVIEW



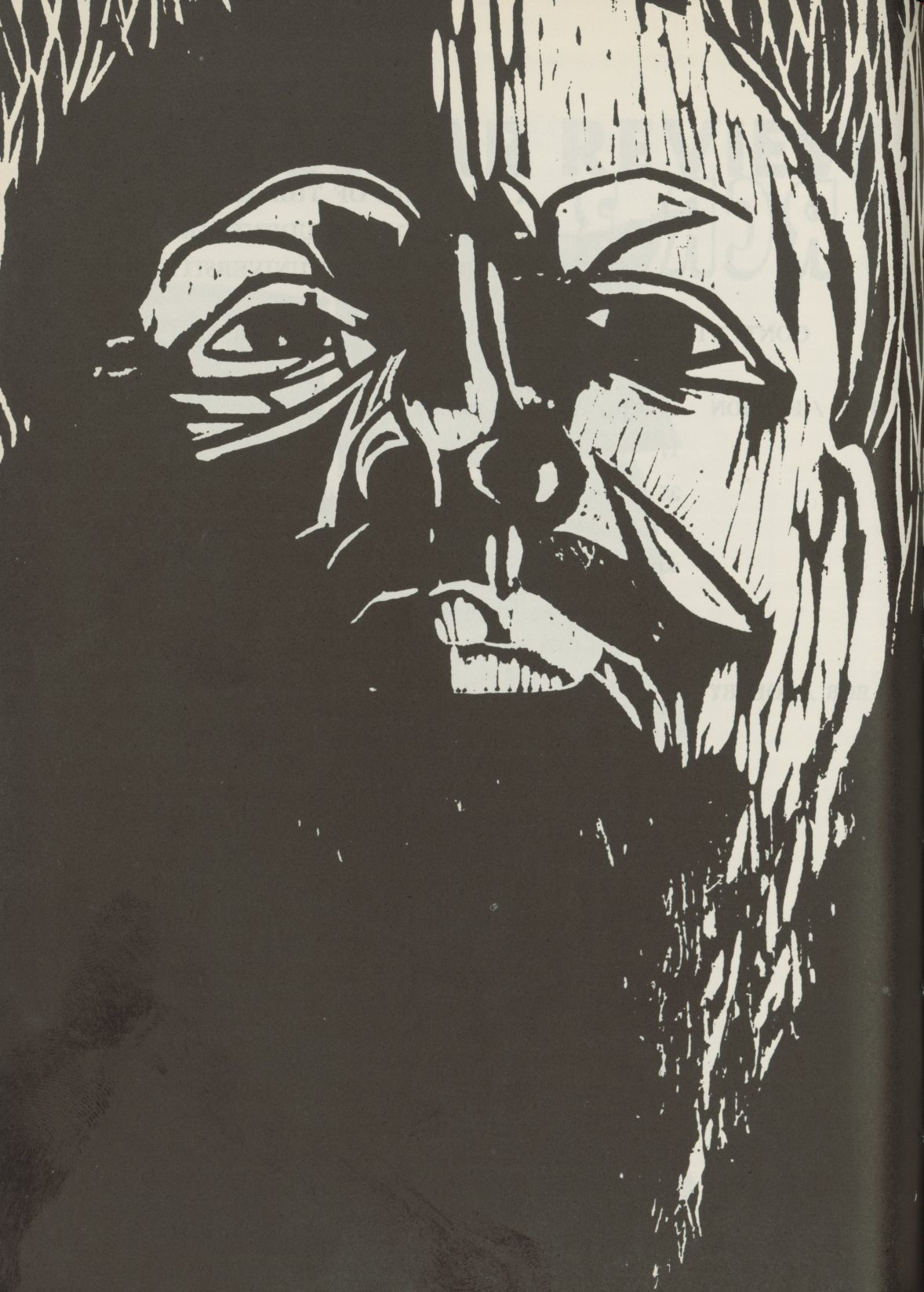
LAURA NASH ETCHING

# RCR-3

A MAGAZINE OF THE ARTS  
PUBLISHED BY STUDENTS OF  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

CONTENTS / VOLUME THREE : NUMBER ONE / Spring 1965

- RCR / FICTION    5    Pax Africana / GEORGE PETRIDES
- 17    The Search / LAURENCE TATE
- 35    The Great Truth—Explanation of An Elegy / 397123  
      (MIKE STEELY)
- 43    The Essence of Ovel / JOAN CAMPBELL
- 51    Treehouse Treehouse Treehouse / B. J. CHAPIN
- 69    Veil Of Dirty Glass / SARA FISCHL
- RCR / POETRY    13    The True And Horrific End Of Egan's Folly /  
                             RONALD ENGLISH
- 15    Running Through The Meadow After Milkweed  
      Down / D. AMI LAING
- 31    From The Sidewalk / PEGGY CASE
- 32    Tamed / KENNETH REGENBAUM
- 33    (untitled) / VICTOR LAPUSZYNSKI
- 40    Two Poems / MELVYN BUCHOLTZ  
      Wasps  
      (untitled)
- 48    A Poem, Or Something / JAMES CASH
- 65    Concert / JAMES HARKNESS
- 67    An Evening Boy Running / MARTHA ALDENBRAND



PAX AFRICANA  
by George Petrides

i

Imara followed the track at a steady jog, the dust exploding in little clouds under his tire-tread sandals as he crossed the dry land. The little clouds hung over his footprints for a moment, then fell slowly back. There was no wind. The heat of the plains raised shimmering curtains across the distant hills. Mere specks against the sky, outstretched wings turning circles in the rising air, vultures with sharp shrewd eyes searched and stared over the plains and hills. The brittle whirring wings of grasshoppers to either side marked his progress as he moved along the trail.

Imara's thin arms swung economically close to his body, his metal bracelets jingling musically as he feet thumped the hard ground. Minute droplets of shining sweat gathered about the hairline of the proud face. He was a splendid figure. Only a slender leather thong about his waist detracted from the fluid flow of graceful motion.

His keen herder's eyes noted the short broken grass and how it snapped with little popping sounds beneath his feet. There had been no rain for a long time now. In three days running he could find no water. Even the plains animals had left — perhaps to the west. His cattle must follow them soon.

The heat lifted the dust high above the plain in tight little circles and spirals that spun and wandered uncertainly before his eyes. Somewhere, beyond the heat clouds, were the cattle.

Imara looked over the burnt hills where he would have once seen greening grass and the sere slashes of color that were the wild animals. Now the hills were drying and the dust lay thick on the trail — thicker than any time he could remember. But now there was not a trace of those better days and he wondered how long the land must lay under the dust. He watched the hills a few moments

longer, letting his thoughts drift back into the past, then reluctantly focusing them again on the present. The rain must come soon or the dust would kill the land.

The dying land stretched out before him but he forgot his uneasiness when he saw a large flat-topped acacia throwing its shade across the trail. He would rest here and then set out on the last run to his cattle.

The shade was good and Imara stretched his back luxuriously. He must rest. High in the branches of the acacia a colony of clamorous weaver birds fluttered at the long necks of their carefully woven grass nests. There were at least a hundred nests, all built far out at the tips of the branches where they would be safest from tree snakes. On occasion, an egg or youngster would roll out the entrance and fall into the dust. The birds and nests swayed back and forth with the coming and going of the excited colony. The golden birds paid no attention to the kneeling form of Imara beneath their home. He placed his short spear carefully within reach and arranged his blanket beneath him. The ground was warm and good to the touch. He lay slowly back on the blanket and looked up into the tree. The birds still rushed to and fro and the limbs were bowed by the weight of the nests. He watched the sunlight flashing through the waving branches and then closed his eyes. A sudden uproar at the top of the tree made him look up again. Two frantic birds were fighting over the same nest. He closed his eyes and went to sleep. He slept well until dusk when the chattering of the colony stopped and the nests hung still in the heavy evening air.

He woke easily and sat up. His stiff leg muscles creaked as he jumped to his feet. It would take several miles of easy running before his legs became limber again. While gathering up the blanket, he looked over the country he must cross tonight and arranged the map in his head. He sighed deeply; there were many hills to cross and the night would be a long one. He noted once more the notch in the hills where the sun was setting, bent down for his spear, and stepped off down the dusty trail.

The waning sun softened the land and a wonderful coolness settled over the plain where the harsh browns of the day turned to flashing gold and yellow. The hollows appeared to sink deeply into the ground as they gathered up a purplish haze. The tops of the eastern hills still burned with a quiet orange glow as the last rays climbed up the cooling slopes and left the plain to the pale stars. The moon would not rise for an hour yet but Imara knew that night did not wait for the moon. And just as the sun's rim left the hilltops the night sounds replaced the silence of the day. First, the night-jars left their hiding places and swooped and swerved above the trail catching insects with loud snaps of their beaks. The franklins and guinea fowl churred shrilly in the thickets, settling for the night. Great flights of sand grouse and doves flew low over the plain with whistling wings. Then there was another silence as the birds grew quiet and paused for the new sounds soon to be heard.

Imara had covered several miles since he had left the tree and he watched the trail carefully because now there was only starlight to show him the way. The moon would be here soon. Then its light flooded the plain and the grass glowed gently under the moon's whiteness and the shadows grew black and deep. The sounds again, rustlings and scurrings in the brush as the small animals began to leave their burrows. There was the roar of a far off lion. Then the echoing laughter of hyenas drifted across the hills and the jackels soon joined the chorus. Imara put new miles on the trail taking him to his cattle.

The cool air bathed his limbs and the sweat and dust seemed to lift from his tired body as he traveled further into the night. Stars and the moon kept him on his path, for the trail often vanished on the hard ground. By keeping the notch where the sun had set off his right shoulder and a group of bright stars dead ahead he never wavered or hesitated. Imara had a purpose and his cattle were only a few miles away. There was only a low range of dark hills to cross and then he would find the herd in the large donga where he had hidden them several days before. The spear grew heavier in his cramped fingers as he thought of the hills ahead. His legs, too, had not limbered up as he had expected and they felt thick and lifeless as they struck the rough trail.

There was no wind. The line of hills appeared as dark waves of an ocean he had seen long ago. The black night sky was littered with stars and the moon waxed white then faintly golden and the plain was beautiful. But Imara had a purpose and would not see the beauty but only the dangers. All around were the night noise and his mind automatically sifted them through, selecting the ones which could be dangerous and those which meant nothing. Lions and hyenas whimpered and grunted far off, but the throaty saw-cutting-wood rumble of a hunting leopard was much too close. Then the leopard was suddenly quiet and Imara knew that it was stalking and close to making a kill. The night was very quiet now and the brush sounds were only a whisper. He walked slowly and kept his short spear close. He stopped and waited. His heart began pounding and he had to breathe deeply to quiet it. Nothing broke the silence. The leopard must be having trouble maneuvering his victim into position for a quick kill. Imara slowly turned his head and looked with hard eyes at each shadow and saw only that each might disguise the leopard. He held his right wrist tightly with his left hand to keep the bracelets from jingling. For minutes nothing moved. He could feel the sweat begin to trickle down his temple. Imara waited, his breath coming softly from his mouth. He would have moved along some time ago if there had only been a few sounds near him but all was shadow and silence. Then there was the rush of breath and the scuffling noises which told of the kill. The night slowly came to life again and Imara moved off down the trail that led to the long line of low hills.

His pace was faster now; it would take him only a few hours to cross the final barrier. He knew the trail well. It ran along the crest of the hills and

then sloped gently off into a great valley. The moon rode low over the hills and its golden color had given way to a paleness. It must disappear in the first high rays of the unseen sun very soon. Then the dark shadows faded and the once sharp silhouette grew faint and the morning had begun.

His feet thumped the ground quickly as the path left the ridge leading over the hills and began to wind through the heavy brush which covered its north slope. He came to a small clearing made by a slide of red rocks and ochre earth that had come tumbling down from the bluff above. It had careened along for about fifty yards and then the brush had held it back. By climbing up on the slide he could see the valley as it reached out before him. He was happy. Soon he would be able to leave this trail and look for the hidden donga to the east. It was not long after Imara had jumped down from the red rocks and scrambled along the rough slope to the valley that the sky paled and the first whistling flights of doves and sand grouse flickered across the sky. Wild animals had not left this part of the country yet and Imara noticed the first stirrings of dik-dik and bushbuck. The cattle would be grazing to take advantage of the dew-wet grass. He found his part of the valley quickly and set out along the game trail that skirted the donga. The dust was down because of the dew and Imara felt refreshed by the clear moist morning air. His sandals thumped a steady pud-pud and the metal bracelets jingled gaily. The donga was there, as he came to the edge of the big hollow in the plain he slowed to a walk; he did not want to startle the herd. The brush was thick in this spot so he clambered up a small tree to catch a first glimpse of his cattle. The fatigue and hard lines on his face softened. He looked a long time, watching his cattle grazing quietly in the middle of the meadow. The sun suddenly rose over the low line of hills and flooded the donga with a burst of light. It was good to see and Imara straightened his cloth as he prepared to meet his cattle. It had been a long time. If only he had been able to find water. But there was none within fifty miles of the herd. He was very tired. Still, it was good to be with the cattle again. He left the tree and walked to his herd in the sunlight.

## ii

The days went by one by one and Imara and the herd were kept alive by the dew. He could think of nothing to do except wait for the rain which must come soon.

He had taught the cattle to respond to several whistled commands and each came at the call of its name. Yet the days were long and Imara's eyes rarely left the cattle. Still, it must rain soon.

Imara left the shade tree under which he had been resting and walked toward the herd. It was collected around the only other shade in the bottom of the donga. The trees had been rubbed shiny by the cattle. They had no bark and the ground beneath them was packed hard and dry.

Just a little more than halfway across the open space Imara noticed a long line of army ants winding its way across the hot ground. He stopped there and squatted beside the rushing column, one hand on the hearding spear which he jammed into the hard earth. The sun was hot on his back and the glare from the pale dust forced him to squint narrowly at the ants. His other hand busily put little sticks in the path of the ants. There would be sudden confusion at first, but then the soldier ants would rush back and forth, their antennae bristling, giving orders to halt the column. After the frantic line had backed up into a furry mound, three or four soldier ants would get behind the stick and push it out of the way. The march resumed. Nothing could stop them. He would liked to have stopped them. The line was three inches wide and a hundred feet long. It would rush along until it found food and water or died in the dust. The journey might last for days. The line seemed endless and the soldier ants never failed to clear the path, so presently Imara tired of the game and pulled himself upright with the help of his spear. He carefully inspected the rim of the donga for he was dangerously near the lands of the Masai and the knowledge that a raiding party might discover him and his cattle made him very cautious. He had kept the herd in the donga for several days and never let them graze on the hilltops where they might been seen. Besides, there was much more dew in the bottomland.

Later in the afternoon Imara began to guide the herd to a hollow in the donga where they would be safest for the night. He called them by name and they obediently followed with quiet lowing, tails switching at the swarms of flies. The herd settled for the night.

Imara lit a smokeless dung fire with the flint stones which he took from his blanket and heated a small bowl of posho. He shook out a handful of the dry posho flour into his hand and spit into it many times. Soon it was moist enough to roll into a small ball. He pounded and slapped it between his hands for several minutes and then dropped it into a well-used metal pot. Another tiny package which he removed from his blanket contained sun dried meat. He shredded several pieces into the steaming and nearly baked posho. After several minutes he shook the soft ball into his hand and tossed it back and forth to cool it quickly. He ate slowly in order to draw out the frugal meal. He must wait until morning to get a drink from the dew on the grass. Wiping the bowl clean with his fingers and extracting the last scraps of posho, he put the bowl away among the folds of the blanket. Next he banked the burning dung with dust and hoped that it would still be hot enough tomorrow night to fan into flames. He was happy and quickly got up to perform his last duty of the day.

Walking around the herd, he noted with satisfaction that it was not too restless. Only the rushing wings of the night-jars and the rumbling stomachs of the cattle marred the silence. It was all right now. It would be a quiet night.

Later, when the moon rose, Imara wrapped himself in his thin blanket and his head grew heavy and still. As the familiar night sounds began his eyelids slowly closed

*and . . .*

he was again raiding villages for cattle and women. He was an inexperienced warrior who had blooded his spear only once and that first time he had nearly drowned. That was his first raid. One on a small village of the Semliki. A proper target for them to gain experience and confidence. The grass was golden with sunlight as they had left the compound with the girls smiling and waving and Tebi his best friend had called back to him, "Now we are warriors, eh, Imara?" and had been soundly smacked with a shield for speaking on the trail. He had almost laughed out loud as Tebi's head hung with shame. I shall have to be careful, he thought, and a thrill of excitement made him shiver as he waited for the night ahead. He remembered when they had crossed the river upstream from the village and were close enough to smell the cattle and the smoke from the fires. They were to attack at first light and kill the men as they came stumbling out of their blankets. The doves had just begun to coo and flutter their wings as they had silently crept up on the compound and quickly fanned out to rush the huts from three sides before the dogs barked. "KAZIII!" he had screamed as they rushed forward out of the early morning twilight and caught a man almost at once and without thinking Imara was stabbing him with his spear. He didn't scream or yell but just dropped to the ground and that was strange. Only two men escaped but they didn't bother to hunt them down because they had found the women. After that it was over quickly and they were driving the cattle and women off towards the river after firing the huts and the smoke had made the cattle panicky and confused as they got to the river. It was there on the riverbank that he noticed that there was still blood on his blade and wanted to let the blood dry thinking that when he returned he could show the village that he was now a warrior and had killed a man. So he had swum the river, one arm high above the water, holding the spear and the other thrashing the river to keep him from drowning and the older men laughing and he knew that he would never forget their laughing. But then on the other side of the river they had bedded the cattle and waited for nightfall when they could cross the plain under the comfortable darkness and as soon as the moon had popped above the hills the cattle were bunched and pushed down the trail. That had been a long night and they had many miles to cover before morning or another raiding party might see the dust raised by the cattle. They barely made their own compound. The sun was already streaking the plain with light. After they had marched triumphantly into the village under the hot eyes of the girls, he raised his spear high to show everyone that he had killed a man and then he had run up to his father shouting "Mimi na kazi, Baba! I have killed. Look at my spear!" and suddenly the entire village was clustered around him laughing and

laughing and laughing until a few had tears in their eyes . . . he looked at his spear . . . the dew on the grass had washed his blade clean. He, like Tebi, now hung his head with shame for his foolishness

and

tossing in his sleep he recalled those tugging memories

and

he remembered his days in the bachelor compound where he lived before he was allowed to train as a warrior. Then there had only been games and talk and laughing during the hot hours, and the girls and sweet banana beer at night. And that night when he and Tebi had wanted the same girl and joyously fought until neither could move because they were so drunk and tired and neither could get up for the girl

and

A strange sound woke Imara as the morning sun heaved itself above the edge of the hollow. The blanket fell from his thin shoulders as he sat up. He could not find the direction of the sound. Reaching for the spear he twisted out from under the blanket and jumped up. He was very tired and his legs were still stiff from his long run. The grass felt wet beneath his feet as he stepped away from the blanket and looked around the hollow. The cattle were quiet and stood in a tight circle with heads lowered near the ground. There were not grazing and soon the grass would be dry. The morning birds were silent and only a slight breath of air brushed the top of the grass. Then he saw that the cattle were facing the sun. It was a deep red and he lifted a hand to shield his eyes as he looked toward the rim of the hollow. And then Imara knew why all was silent and still.

Blurred by the red light of the sun, ochre cloths flapping like flames in the breeze, were six ramrod straight sillouettes. Imara held the spear in his hand, his mouth dry, heart beating wildly. He waited, entranced with the strange and dreaded sight placed before him. Then without a sound the statues leapt into motion, spears above their heads, running quickly to surround the herd. Imara's frozen mind and body did not want to move until he saw that it would take several minutes for the raiders to surround the herd. Then he was running to the cattle, screaming their names and whistling shrilly. He would have about a minute in which to panic and scatter the cattle. But now the ochre cloths were among the cattle too and the blur of brown grass and dust and crashing bodies confused Imara. He was lost in the struggle. At least they wouldn't get them all. A shout. The butt of a stabbing spear knocked him into the dust.

### iii

The Masai squatted in a small silent circle around the unconscious herder, waiting for him to stir. They were patient, in no hurry. They would wait for their enjoyment. Imara twisted his head and groaned. One of them slapped

him twice across the soles of the feet with the flat of a blade. Imara jerked his legs at the new pain, all the time tasting blood in his mouth and wondering why the hot sticky weight was on his head. He tried to shake it off. Imara did not hear the quick laughter as they watched him struggle out of unconsciousness. His eyes opened, not focusing. The pain still came in waves and even with his eyes open he couldn't stop the waves from sweeping over his head. Something tugged at his mind. He tried to push it under the pain. Nothing mattered except the pain. Now half Imara's mind was dreaming while the other half fought the battle. He was not even conscious of the slow awakening. Then he remembered. His eyes focused and they were staring into the laughing eyes of the Masai. His body stirred and he lay there gathering his wits and summoning his strength. He raised his head, looking at each painted face in turn but said nothing. He knew. The man who had slapped his soles looked at the others. Imara saw the unspoken laughter in his eyes as he turned his gaze back to Imara. One made a sign with his hand and the spear slashed down and neatly severed Imara's heels from his feet. Imara watched the spear but the waves took him way before the pain returned.

He woke once before he died. He was alone, lying sprawled in the dust, but raising his head painfully he saw the vultures gathered around him. He knew they would be there; huge birds, filthy necks jutting out of the ruffled feathers. Others were swooping down out of the hot air to join the others. They were not afraid and Imara stared at them for a long time. His metal bracelets jingled faintly as he tried to raise himself but his head fell slowly back into the dust of the little hollow on the plain.

## THE TRUE AND HORRIFIC END OF EGAN'S FOLLY

BY RONALD ENGLISH

Egan stopped eating  
fed on nipples of prised light  
that hung in the mothering air

grew lean, bright again  
six days in the gleam  
& steady hum of his office

At the window a leaf tapped  
or shattersun broke the room,  
    danced from a faroff  
    rattle or sway  
or a bird drew taught,  
    blew up in hot open song  
or a wall stood itself  
    in strainglow, lived its colors  
    and shadow breath

Egan saw the motto on his wall  
    'Alchemy is its own reward'  
smiled,  
    pushed all the buttons at once:  
Mains vats storerooms engines —  
    BPLOOIE

Turned to his shiver eyed boy:  
'— ah, Willy, I'm going to Tibet  
where the monks

    Stay high,  
    spin wheels for joy.'



## RUNNING THROUGH THE MEADOW AFTER MILKWEED DOWN

BY D. AMI LAING

I'm running through the meadow after milkweed down.  
One of my pockets is nearly full already . . . my goodness  
    my goodness . . . would you look at all the people standing around  
    the edge of the meadow staring at me. Standing and staring.  
They'd better come out from under the trees into the sunlight,  
    because down never travels into the shadows.  
    "Come on out. I don't need it all.  
    Let me share it with you!"  
Here's a fellow with a funny shirt. Buttons on the collar? That's dumb.  
    "Don't you know how warm it is in the sun?"  
Good — here he comes out from under his tree.  
Wait — he's stopping to put up his umbrella.  
    "Is it going to rain?" No. There's not a cloud in the sky.  
There certainly is a lot of down in the air now.  
That's too bad . . . Look . . . No matter how hard he tries he can't catch any.  
    It's that shadow cast by the umbrella that he carries.  
    (Down never travels in the shadows, you know)  
"Say, you'd have better luck if you put that stupid thing down."  
    (How can such a small umbrella cast such a large shadow?)  
It's so easy to catch in the sunlight, see I've got two pockets full.  
Well, here's a funny man. Trying to catch down in a bottle!  
    "Pardon me, but the neck is too small . . ."  
Look how it sparkles in the sunlight,  
    "Sir, why don't you take off your dark glasses.  
    It really is very beautiful glistening in the sunlight."  
Down always glistens in the sun.  
    (It never travels in the shadows, you know)  
Oh well, It doesn't look like anyone here will get any but me.  
Too bad.  
Too bad.  
They'd only have to make small concessions - - -  
small concessions compared with milkweed down.  
    "You dumb ass! Don't you know without it you can't make a wish?"  
There certainly is a lot of down in the air now.  
It's nice that my legs never get tired.



## THE SEARCH

by Laurence Tate

It was the ninth day out of Hawaii on the cruise from San Francisco to the Philippines. In the main lounge, a large crowd was watching the evening movie; the shadows of various heads bobbed along the bottom of the screen. On the end of a back row a man turned his eyes from the screen and looked around him. The others were absorbed in the musical comedy, relaxed in their chairs legs crossed and lighted cigarettes in their hands, casually dressed, their eyes iridescent bubbles that reflected the images on the screen. In the dim smoky light edges blurred; faces glowed, looking as rapt and benign as if they were bathed in the light from a sacramental fire.

Sweating heavily, he felt his clothes sticking to his body. He turned wearily back to the screen, across which dancers in voluminous red-and-yellow shirts swirled like painted butterflies. It would improve, surely, — he thought of slipping out. But where could he go? Not back to the solitary cabin — not that, and — there was nowhere. He did not want to leave. He was no different from the others. He saw the screen as an optical illusion; if he stared long enough, it would suddenly reveal forms and correspondences thus far concealed from him. His haggard face was tense with concentration.

"Soon," he thought,

*He looked over the brochure once more, at the photographs as bright as ice cream flavors. A Pacific cruise, of course. Floating endlessly on a calm sunlit sea, he would forget the dark memories. He imagined placid pastel afternoons, cool drinks, warm winds, and sleepy hours basking on the sun deck. He might take evening walks secure under starlight or watch the sea at noon when the sun sparkled like a thousand mirrors on the undulating foam. No noises would jar him: bells, footsteps, harsh voices, all would be muted and serene, as though the sea and sky acted as great spongy sound absorbers,*

*the soft padded sides of a huge cradle in which the ship rocked back and forth, back and forth, to sleep.*

“soon”

A shrill relentless bell shrieked like a huge alarm clock. A voice from a speaker barked: “Man overboard, starboard side!” There was a moment of silence, except for the sound of the projector whirring on; everyone stared, incredulous. Some turned to the screen, as if the answer somehow flitted among the moving colors and shadows. The lights went up and excited, bewildered, vaguely frightened voices broke the silence.

“My God,” he said, “not now.”

He searched the blank pudgy face of the man next to him, who had the air of someone wakened from an intense dream and unable to remember which bed he was in. The man said nothing, and he turned away. People twisted in their chairs and talked everywhere in clusters; some stood up, indecisively. Fragments of speech reverberated around him: “. . . no drills scheduled,” “I can’t *believe* that . . .,” “Say, where’s . . . ?” “Then who . . . ?” “accident . . .,” “. . . some child,” “Good Lord, not . . .” The crew members present got up and filed out, their faces grim.

“John, I think you’d better check on —,” said a woman in front of him. A big man whose mouth was twitching rose and walked toward the exit, joining a confluence of men as grave as the crew had been. The woman sat looking after them, her pale hands trembling at her neck. He sat staring at the woman. Noticing, she gave him a quick sickly smile. He tried and failed to smile back, got up and left the lounge.

As he emerged on deck, the two men behind him were talking. “They’ve turned the ship around,” said one of them. “We’re going back to some kind of marker.”

Absently, the other said “I haven’t seen Bill tonight . . . You know — do you think?”

“No,” said the first, “don’t be silly.”

Searchlights already scoured the water for a long way out from the ship, although the marker was not in sight. A noisy crowd milled along the rail toward the bow; the bridge loomed up, all alight and swarming with tiny figures. The speaker clicked on: “Will the persons who saw the man go overboard come to the bridge at once. Repeat, anyone who saw the man go overboard, report to the bridge at once. Thank you.”

Intending to join the crowd, he happened to look back and see, in the dimness toward the stern, two kneeling men working over some indistinguishable object. He walked toward them. Crewmen, they wore life jackets, and he gradually made out that they were arranging blankets in a long wire basket with ropes attached. As he approached, he saw they were only boys, seventeen or eighteen; their tanned clear-cut faces stood out in the dimness. There was no air of emer-

gency in their movements: the wire litter might have been a bassinet for a sleepy infant. They were so absorbed in the job that they didn't notice him until he was almost upon them. Seeing him, they started and stared at each other.

"What are you doing?" he said.

"We . . . don't know a thing, sir," said one his face gone sallow, his round eyes fixed on him.

"Well, you must know something. Is this for —"

"We do this anyway, just in case."

"That's right," said the other, fidgeting and casting uncertain glances at the first. "We don't know anything. Really, we don't. This is our job in case —"

"Well, what about the chances of survival? Do you know —"

"They don't tell us anything," the other broke in. "They give us the job to do, and we're just doing our job, we . . ." He gestered vaguely at the litter. It seemed for a moment the boy was going to cry.

He surveyed the sailors for a moment. "Well, thanks anyway," he said. He turned and walked back toward the bow.

He moved into the gathering at the rail and stood behind two adolescent girls. "I see a light!" cried one, and nudged the other furiously. "Don't you see it? There, there! There, stupid!" she screamed, pointing at a glimmer of light that floated in the darkness far ahead like a filmy eye watching the ship. The eye seemed to blink, then to pop open with a fixed glassy luster like a dead man's stare. It followed them, growing larger and larger, all the way back to the spot where the man had gone over.

When the ship's engines stopped, the crowd's confused chatter ran on. A click, a hum, and a solemn voice: "It has been confirmed that there is a man overboard. A lifeboat will be lowered here, and the ship will cruise in a figure-eight around the marker. We ask everyone's co-operation: if you see a sign of life in the water, report it to the bridge at once. It could be very important." There was a pause, filled with the hum of the speaker. "There are man-eating sharks in these waters. If you see any sign of life, report it at once."

The two girls moved off into the crowd, and he moved to the rail. He stood there motionless, gazing at the sea. Flying fish leaped like arms arching out of the water; whitecaps gleamed like teeth in the dark open mouth of the sea. Someone had thrown a paper cup over the side; he saw it floating and mistook it for a face. Above and beyond the glare of the lights, the night was as black and rigid as the inside of a coffin. In a few minutes, a lifeboat was lowered and rowed out to the marker, its occupants scanning the dark glossy ocean criss-crossed by the searchlights. The ship circled the marker slowly. As the search wore on — a half hour, more — he was jostled many times by the eddying crowd; voices swirled around him, but he scarcely noticed.

"Why, Mr. Smith!" said a trilling voice beside him. "It's so nice to see you out and around again."

He turned; a round doughy face was looking up at him. "Oh, Mrs. Terrell." He forced a wan smile.

She seemed struck by the appearance of his face. "Oh, I can tell by looking at you . . . You poor man — you've really been sick, haven't you?" Her large blue eyes showed real concern.

He couldn't think. She was waiting, and he said, "Fever . . . I've had . . . some fever."

"I *do* hope it wasn't serious . . ."

He saw his gaunt face, a tiny reflection swimming in her eyes. His silence became awkward. "No, . . . no. It's kept me in my cabin a lot, but . . ."

"Well, are you sure? It might have effects you don't know about yet. Especially out here in the tropics. You know, I had an uncle who caught some kind of tropical fever and — well, that isn't important. But you *are* feeling all right now?"

"Y-Yes."

"Well, that's all that matters, that you're over it. I was saying to Howard just last night, isn't it a shame about Mr. Smith? I was afraid your whole vacation would be ruined. When you stopped coming to meals I asked the waiter, and he said you weren't feeling well and didn't want to see anybody — I said to Howard then, isn't it always the way? You work and save for a vacation, and something like that happens." Her head bobbed and her hands fluttered as her voice flowed along like a lullaby. "But at least you weren't completely bedridden."

He was startled. "How did you —"

"Well, one of the officers said he'd seen you walking on deck sometimes, late at night, and I was so relieved to hear that. No matter how bad it is, it's always such a help to be able to get out now and then. I know from experience that — well, anyway. I'm sure it was bad enough, but at least you haven't lost the whole time. . . . When exactly did this start? I remember in Hawaii you didn't seem to join in very much. It was sometime in there, wasn't it?"

"Yes," he said,

*The sky was a great crystal hothouse over all the green glittering island. The sunlight, a clear warm syrup, oozed through the busy streets and out onto the sand, where it bathed the bright-colored umbrellas, the rows of blankets, and the honey-brown bathers in rich smothering indolence. Out on the water, supple tanned figures balanced like buoys on the cascading surf. Down the beach in both directions, huge pink-and-white hotels rose up twenty stories among the palms, looking as if they had been carved out of taffy. Glass-fronted curio shops stretched along the beach-front street, with little wooden idols and grass skirts displayed in their windows, and a large group of old people carried cameras and chattered from shop to shop. They all looked alike, fat or desiccated, except that the men wore loud sport shirts*

and pants and the women wore bright summery dresses that made them look like decrepit butterflies. Every little while one of them squealed and pointed to something in a window, and a cluster of them scurried inside to get a closer look. Others took turns taking each other's pictures beside a sign that said, "Waikiki." They stopped at the beach to stare at the surfers, at all the slim young bodies luxuriating in the sun. Then they walked back to the bus, some hobbling and puffing from the exertion. The driver had said that, if they got back in time, he could take them by the pineapple cannery, where the pineapple juice was fresh and cold and far better than anything you could get back home.

"Whatever happened to Mr. Smith?" Mrs. Terrell was saying as she boarded the bus. He sat alone in the back, watching the others return. He had been waiting for a long time, and was sweating profusely.

"it was . . . bad then."

"Well, thank heaven you didn't have to miss Hawaii completely. And you'll be able to enjoy the rest, now that you're over your fever. I'm so glad about that. I saw you at the movie, and I was going to come over and talk to you right after, but . . . well . . ." Her arm made a small gesture toward the sea; she cast her eyes down for a moment, and was silent.

When she spoke her voice was lower, more solemn: Isn't this a terrible thing? . . . It just isn't something you think of happening in this day and age. After the announcement, you know, I was sitting there saying to Howard, 'Don't worry. It's got to be a drill.' I was so calm, everybody said, but I just couldn't believe it could happen. Well, then I was afraid it might be a child or someone I knew or — well, I don't know who — that was the worst part of it. It —

"That was?"

"Yes — oh, didn't you hear? It was a Filipino — one of the workers they're shipping home. I'm not very clear on it, but they fired them or — oh, I don't know about it. You can ask Howard."

"How did you know —"

"Oh, it was Mr. Getts. He talked to one of the officers and found out. He couldn't find his son anywhere, and you can imagine how worried he was. They couldn't find him or the Mackie girl — you know, the one he's always with . . . But the officer said not to worry, it was a Filipino. Mr. Getts was so relieved — he was just sick worrying — and the Mackies too naturally. Well, everybody. But they finally found them somewhere. I don't know . . . where they'd been, but their parents were so happy to see them they almost hugged them to death. They were all crying, and it was touching to see . . . really

*As he climbed the steps to the shuffleboard deck, he looked up at the stars; the scattered points of light looked dim and glassy like a skyful of dimstore jewelry. The night, in spite of them, was very dark. The faraway sound of Hawaiian music trailed him up the stairs, emanating from the party in the*

ballroom. The ship would dock in Pearl Harbor the next morning, and the passengers, garlanded in celebration with leis of artificial flowers, were waltzing around the smoky room — dodging the cardboard palm trees set up for the occasions — to the music of a real Hawaiian band. After dancing twice with Mrs. Terrell, he had excused himself.

On the deserted deck, he strode along the rail toward the stern, wiping his face and neck with an already damp handkerchief. His hands were trembling so much that the handkerchief seemed to be fluttering out of his grasp, finally he closed his fingers around it and held it before him as he walked, as if he had trapped a butterfly and was squeezing it to death. The music faded behind him; when he reached the back rail, he could no longer hear it. He relaxed his grip and leaned on the rail, staring out over the lower decks at the faint trail of the wake. A breeze flowed around him, blowing away the perspiration and traces of smoke, a cool silken current bathing his hot tense body. He stood there a long while, watching the wake dissolve in the shimmering darkness. Something in it attracted and soothed him, and stirred a memory. He turned at last and, folding his crumpled handkerchief neatly and putting it into his pocket, strolled aimlessly along the back rail, toward the canopied darkness by the equipment room. Soon he would go back — but there was time.

He stopped abruptly. From a dark corner under the canopy, he heard little grunts and sighs; something moved in the darkness. He peered ahead and made out two bodies writhing on a mat. He turned instantly and walked away. A board creaked under his feet. Behind him, a rough startled voice said, "Listen! What's that?" and at the same time came a little shriek. He recognized the boy's voice, and heard its growled obscenities all the way down the stairs.

"touching"

He turned away. "Oh, stop it!" he whispered fiercely to himself.

"Excuse me?" Mrs. Terrell said.

"Nothing."

A voice came over the speaker. "Chaplain Gibbs, to the bridge. Chaplain Gibbs, to the bridge, please." The crowd on deck was beginning to trickle back inside; there were a few empty spaces at the rail. A tall man smoking a cigar emerged on deck, looked around, and approached a young woman beyond Mrs. Terrell at the rail. "How's it coming?" she said.

"Looks like we're going to take the match. We just made four spades doubled."

"Wonderful," she said. The man puffed on the cigar. "Did they find anything?" he asked. Mrs. Terrell began again and drowned out the rest of the conversation.

"I don't know exactly what the officer said, but from what Mr. Getts said — now I'm not — well, they're fairly sure the man jumped."

"Jumped?" he said. His eyes flickered toward the sea, then back to Mrs. Terrell.

"Well, I'm not sure of that, but I think that *is* what Mr. Getts said they told him. And that does put the matter in a different light." She also glanced toward the sea, grimacing slightly. "Really, it's horrible to think about, even so, with the — sharks . . . and everything, but it isn't as bad, at least. If that's what the man wanted, he'd have done it sometime or other. — But still, the poor man — it's awful just to think of him out there. I *do* hope they find him. You know what they say, no matter how much they may *think* they want to do it, they always change their minds when it's too late . . ."

She put one hand on her chin. "I wonder whether he could swim. I suppose all these people *would*, being in the islands the way they are. Well, then we might find him. I don't see how a person could just let himself drown." She stopped, considering something. The two girls appeared from somewhere down the rail. They were looking up at the bridge, pointing to an officer with a pair of binoculars. They shouted something up at him, but he did not seem to notice. They moved to the rail and stared intensely at the lifeboat, exchanging whispers. One of them yawned.

"You know, the more I think about it, I'm just sure that poor man changed his mind. He couldn't just let himself go down without struggling. I can't.

*It was after midnight in the big wooden house. Shutters were fastened, doors locked, lights extinguished. Throughout the interior, carpets and curtains sealed out sound, light, and fresh air, and the trapped air stagnated and hung like a shroud on the walls and furniture. Dark and hermetic, the house was like a many-chambered sepulcher.*

*Up in the bedrooms, the floor creaked. As the echo was swallowed up in the walls and carpets, it creaked again, and a disc of light appeared in a doorway at the head of the staircase. It glided down the stairs and paused at the bottom.*

*He swung the flashlight toward the parlor door and saw the shadows scattering before it. He peered ahead and smiled at the materializing shapes — the objects, solid and familiar, and the dark fluid shapes that swayed and beckoned as they vanished. Crouching in recesses where it was driven by the light, the darkness smiled at him, shimmering seductively; he crept toward it. The light fell on the bowl of roses she had arranged before going to the hospital; the brown petals lay on the tabletop around it.*

*He stepped through the doorway and turned to the right. A strong light flashed in his face; he started, and realized he was standing opposite the mirror. The flashlight bored a tunnel of glare in the darkness. It burned into the mirror, corroding its clear silvery surface to expose depths as dark*

*and crystalline as the bottom of a well. The light seemed to be searching for something, some secret concealed in the perfect lucidity and perfect void projected back into the darkness. And the searching light caught, just for an instant, the reflection of something looming behind him: something dark, something monstrous, something waiting. He stood motionless; the blood was an icy chemical in his veins. Suddenly the shadow disappeared, and he was staring at the image of an aging face, grey and gaunt, with wild dark eyes and lips, caught in the distortion of an arrested scream, drawn back over teeth in the likeness of a horrible humorless smile.*

*He ran from room to room, turning on every light in the house. He left three days later for an extended vacation.*

believe that, I just can't. It's human nature to want to live."

"Yes," he said wearily, "I suppose you're right."

"Oh, I'm sure I am. I don't care how much time we lose. They can't give up trying if there's any hope at all of finding him. Oh, I'd hate to be the captain, having to decide when to stop looking. Mr. Getts said it's all up to the captain, but usually . . . about an hour, I think he said . . . What time is it?"

"Nine-forty-five."

"Oh, goodness, is it that late? And they're starting the movie again at ten." She looked around at the emptying deck. "I guess they knew what they were doing. You know, Howard was going to the Teachers' Convention one time, in Milwaukee, and right there on the boat — on Lake Michigan — a man just ran and jumped overboard in the middle of the night. . . . So I guess this sort of thing happens more often than we think. For you and me, this is exciting, you know, and — well, just horrible, . . . but for the crew and people like Howard — who *have* seen it before — I guess it's something you can be more sophisticated about. I don't think *I* could ever be that way, though." She shuddered. "Just the thought of it . . . But then, the captain has had a lot of experience, and somebody has to be calm. I guess they can get used to it, even though you or I couldn't. I don't know . . ."

The darkness seemed to crest above the rail, waiting to break over the ship, crushing him and Mrs. Terrell and all the lights under a mountainous foaming deluge of night. "I suppose they can," he said, his voice low and far away. "Some people can always do it . . ."

*He sat by the bed, staring emptily around the hospital room. The blue-green of the walls seemed to filter through the dim air, diffusing and darkening until the air was as dense and glaucous as the depths of the sea. The room might have been submerged in an immense aquarium, where cold-blooded things swam unseen.*

*He looked at the woman in the bed, and hoped she was sleeping. But her open eyes were fixed on the ceiling, as they had been for hours. He coughed and, very slowly, as if her head were moved by remote control, she*





turned her face toward him and stared. She did not blink; her eyes seemed lidless, like those of a fish. She gazed at him for a time, but did not seem to see him, although he could not tell what she saw.

He tried not to shrink from her face, but involuntarily moved back in his chair. He looked at the wrinkles like scars across her forehead, the bags like pockets of pus under her eyes, and her hair, grown gray and stringy, straggling wanly around her face. From her mouth, a little dark hole in the blob of flesh under her nose, came faint sucking sounds, regular and somewhat not human. Under strips of tape needles pierced her pale bluish arms, which looked as if they had frozen to death. Soon she turned her face back toward the ceiling.

He tried to remember how beautiful she had been. The memory would not come; it lay buried under the woman in the bed and could not escape for as long as she lay there crushing it. He thought back on the wedding, on all the prosperous years in the oversized old house, before and after the children had scattered across the country. He looked then at the woman on the bed. He had married that gray idiot spectre, lived with her, slept with her. She had been young and beautiful, yes — but not really, because he had known. Always, always he had known.

But some people can't get used to things at all. No matter how long . . . how hard . . .” His voice trailed off to a whisper and died. A moment passed as Mrs. Terrell was saying something he wasn't listening to. “And we really had better hurry,” he heard at last.

“What? . . . Where?”

She seemed irritated. “I just told you. To the lounge. All the good seats will be gone. Oh, I know I won't be able to really enjoy it — under the circumstances — but it is the first decent movie we've had on the whole cruise. They'll let us know if they find the poor man . . . even though it doesn't seem now . . . Well, we'd better go and find Howard.”

He was looking at the sea. The men in the life boat were no longer looking around, but watching the ship, awaiting a sign. Passengers still lined most of the rail, but one by one they were disappearing, as if someone was picking them off with a silenced rifle, from out in the darkness somewhere. “I don't think I'll go back,” he said.

“Ohhh —” said Mrs. Terrell. “Well, I surely understand. I'd stay too, of course, but I promised Howard I'd meet him in the lounge. He went down to watch the bridge tournament. What a shame you couldn't be in that. And we must spend some time together in Manila. If you'll just let us know your plans —”

“Manila?” he said.

“Yes, of course . . .” She smiled blankly.

"It's just that . . . I'd forgotten." He sighed and stared into space. "Someone told me once . . . that Manila was the dirtiest city in the world."

"Excuse me?" She drew back a little.

He looked at her curiously. "Why do you want to go to Manila?"

"Well . . ." She laughed nervously. "Are — are you serious?"

"Certainly."

"Well, really, Mr. Smith, if — if you'll just look at the brochure, I'm sure that can tell you much more than I —"

"But what if the brochure is lying?" Mrs. Terrell's hands were still. She looked at him with her mouth open. He turned away and looked over the side. "The sea is very nice tonight," he said after a pause. Mrs. Terrell stared at him. "Yes," she said in a moment. "Yes, it is . . . Well, I really must go. I *do* have to meet Howard. It's been so nice talking to you." She hurried away to the movie.

Shortly, a bald-headed man shuffled up to a woman at the rail. "Did you hear about that guy?" he said, nodding toward the sea and scrutinizing the woman's face. Apparently satisfied, he continued, "It was suicide — you know that already. But you don't know — he actually told 'em he was gonna do it." He stopped and studied her reaction. "Honest! Everybody knows it by now. Right after dinner he started telling everybody he was gonna jump, and nobody believed him!"

"Really?" said the woman.

"Really. Then they were just killing time on deck, sort of watching him, y'know, and all of a sudden he just ran and jumped over. Didn't give 'em time to do a thing. Isn't that something?"

"God Lord," said the woman. "Do they know why?"

"Well, they aren't sure. For some reason he didn't want to go back to Manila . . ."

"Yes . . . Well —"

"His friends said he was the quiet type. Kept to himself, hardly ever said anything. When he started saying he was gonna kill himself, they didn't know what to think. I mean they couldn't make sense out of him, and they thought — y'know . . ."

"Well, they just had no way of knowing," said the woman.

"That's true," said the bald-headed man, frowning. "All they could do was watch him, anyway. They couldn't expect he'd really do it. . . . And the funny thing, he was only twenty-five."

"Really?" said the dowdy old woman. "That *is* a tragedy. So young." She shook her head. "If *I* were twenty-five again . . ."

The bald-headed man had left several minutes before. Most of the others had followed him inside when it had begun to rain. The lifeboat had been signalled back, and the life-jacketed men had come on deck and disappeared

toward the bow. The bare deck gleamed wet under the rain; the darkness was bathing the ship in its warm misty breath. The searchlights paled in it, growing steadily fainter, the rays from a dying sun. There was increasing activity up on the bridge. It was almost ten o'clock. A man had said the chaplain was going to speak at ten. The audience would be waiting to hear the prayer before the movie started again; they would be sealed in the dimness down in the lounge, which was two decks beneath the last activities of the search, hidden deep, like a crypt.

He was walking along the rail toward the stern, his eyes fixed on the sea. He met a crewman, huddled under a raincoat, who stared at him curiously. Drops of warm rain caressed his face as he walked. At last he stopped at the rail.

Ribbons of light still swept the sea, but between the lights shifting areas of darkness remained. As he watched the sea, he seemed to see into it as into a great dark mirror. Submerged within it moved shadowy black shapes, gradually rising like bloated corpses to the surface, where they would be caught and held, forcing him to see that each corpse was inescapably his own.

The bald-headed man had sketched it but, looking down at the dark water, he could see it all: a nondescript young man, hardly more than a boy; deep-brown wiry body, much too thin; long matted black hair; teeth yellow and rotting out; perhaps a pimple on his chin; dark expressionless eyes; faded denims, a cheap sport shirt or none at all; sandals of some sort; a nondescript young man, lying in a hammock or squatting on a straw mat, thinking. His friends said he was the quiet type—yes, he would be quiet, living for how long—did the duration matter?—with the black water closing over his head, with the lighted ship steaming away into the night like the last candle dying away in a vast dark cathedral, with the sinking and the nothingness, knowing that for him no other end was possible. He could see him barefoot at the rail, staring at the waves, alone as the others laughed and talked, calling him to join them. He might want to go to them, but he knew the futility of it. He would set his face and reveal nothing, a man sharing a dark and liberating secret with the sea. He must after all have seen liberation as well as oblivion in the ocean. Liberation from what? From being a nondescript young man with a pimple on his chin, perhaps—who could know? He had reasons—that was sure. One could not conspire with the sea for trivial reasons. No one could renege on such a conspiracy, no matter how many dodges he tried. No matter how long it took, the sea would always claim its own.

And tonight the secret had overpowered its possessor. It had willed to be told, like all secrets; and he could not keep his covenant of silence with the sea. The secret was too momentous to die in silence. He had striven to tell everyone—all the sleepwalkers—of the dark conspiracy, of the nothingness and the liberation, of the ultimate horror and the ultimate peace. And none had understood. They had not talked in whispers with the sea and the darkness.

They could not feel the decks dissolving slowly — so slowly it could not be detected for years, a lifetime perhaps — under their feet. They had their concerns, their dreams, their compromises, and they could not understand. They had thought he who bore the greatest secret to be overtired or ill or a little off his head. They had stared at him, placated him.

That night the young man and the others were on deck, lounnging and smoking, seeking some breeze as they sweated in the muffled evening. The others sat on crates or cans, talking, but he paced and looked at the rail, his face set again, again silent and in league with the sea. The others again called him to join them. He looked at them, and shook his head, and smiled. Then he bolted away toward the stern, toward the rail. Running, sweating, knowing, his feet slipping on the wet deck, the others shouting, pursuing, lights shining, all too far behind as he ran toward the darkness, his long shadow getting there first and crumpling against the rail, followed instantly by the scrambling, ecstatic, liberating leap over the rail into darkness.

*Cowering in the many-terrered darkness, the child had finally fallen asleep. His face was placid now as he dreamed a familiar dream. It always found him in a playground swing, swinging higher and higher into a shimmering twilight sky. The playground, the world was deserted as he swung compulsively higher until the extended chains were almost parallel with the ground. The wind nicked him lightly on all sides, cool and affectionate; then, at the highest point of the forward curve, he discovered that the swing had somehow disappeared, and he began the long slide down the wind toward the grass. There was never any impact, though, because he always woke up before he could land.*

He wondered if the young man had felt the same mingling he had felt: of spirituality, as if he were going to dissolve into the rushing air before he had time to fall the whole way; and of the bloody corporeality of the leaden, plunging body; or if that strange mingling occurred only in children's dreams.

## FROM THE SIDEWALK

BY PEGGY CASE

Plant a wall behind the new roses;  
sound of the delicate wind  
and your memory of summer  
almost blaze reflection.

Fan on the wind-tail  
and a sudden wandered weed  
after the sun-stroke years;  
a trestle built for roses.

Delicate wall in the faded glow;  
a sound from summer  
swoons light of the green  
round a crack in the rose.

## TAMED

BY KENNETH REGENBAUM

"You have no right!"

He stood trembling, his hand by her face,  
Her sand-swept form poured tired on the beach;  
The wind felt a great shame —  
Still it could not help itself:  
And battered her wet where she lay.

Reaching over, he stroked that face  
So white, and clay is soft as curves  
That stretch a person for a moment in the sand:  
"You have no right!" — And touched her hand.

Her body shook thin,  
Or was but the wind brewing the sandy swirl  
By her lips so thin? As this once a little girl!  
Again he held her close to him.

As climbing then with pail and spade  
Upon this place once stroked the sand,  
She'd made a swell that twice had stayed  
The broken breathing by his hand.

Her lips cracked red,  
Twin broken gaps as smearing wine-drops by her cheeks;  
And fingers held the oceans back  
That gripped her round to scale those peaks.

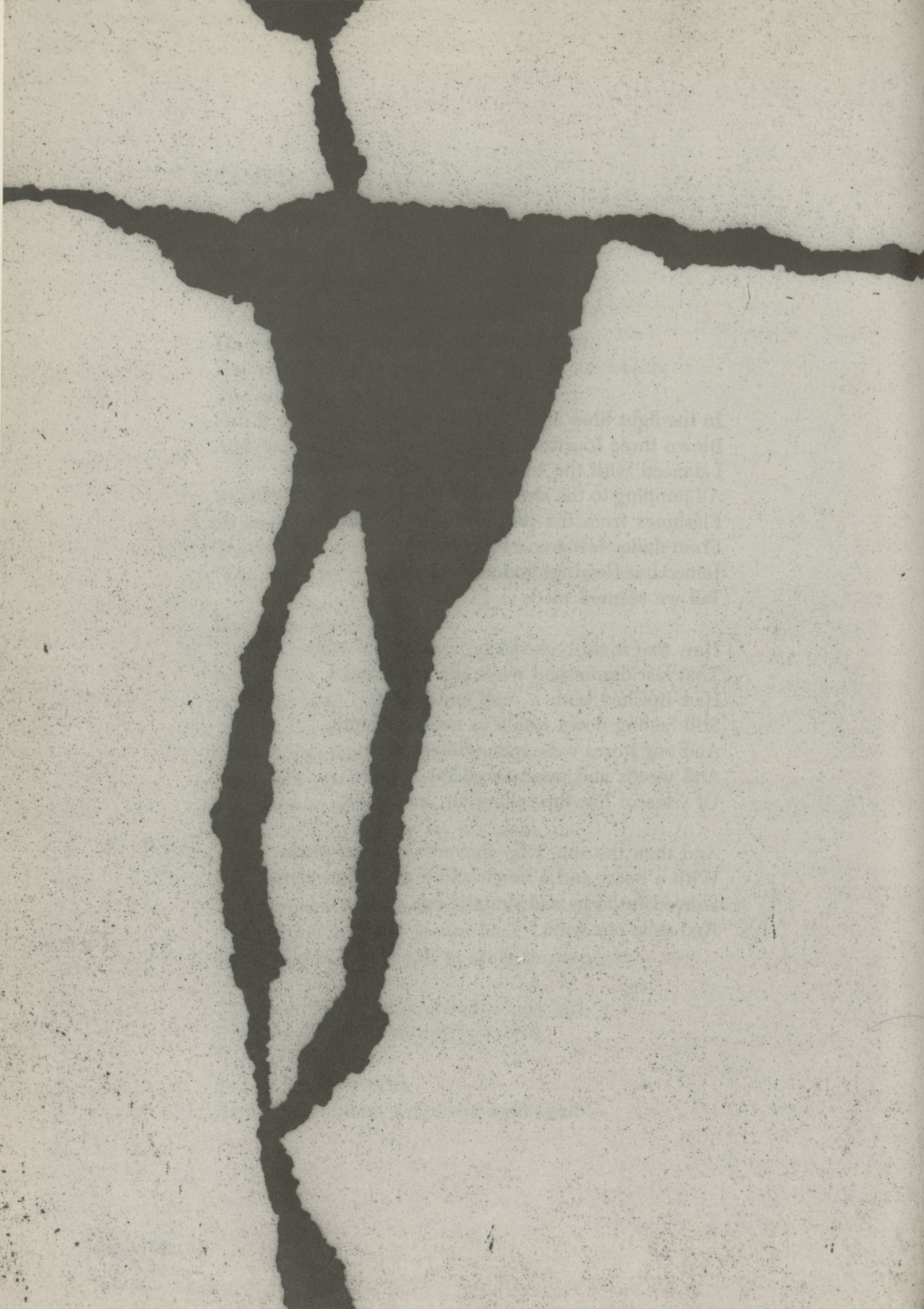
Thus held he trembling that whole girl  
From sandy storm to waters tamed,  
"I have the right!"  
So howled the world,  
As the wind alone swept the sand again.

BY VICTOR LAPUSZYNSKI

In the light blue light of a new grown moon  
Blown three fourths full by a monthly wind  
I danced with the weeds in a flooded meadow,  
All jumping to the rhythm of my wild wind cousin.  
Flashings from the pond water's moonlight  
From under low tree's branches  
Joined our flowings and our rollings  
Till we seemed mad.

How that night rocked long in stocks of wine  
That fast diminished while the wind and I  
Had finished both a cask and reeled,  
Still feeling down inside us need for more,  
And our stores were going down,  
And weeds and pond asked for a share  
Of wine of his, the rolling air, and mine.

And then the sun, who shoved away the moon  
With a boast and a laugh and a claim for some,  
Shoved in on us and drained our casks  
And stole our wine.



## THE GREAT TRUTH — EXPLANATION OF AN ELEGY

by

397123

(Mike Steely)

### I

To whomever the dubious fortune may fall of rediscovering this Great Truth:

I do not wish to spend any space or time on my life and the reason for my death (I've always been more concerned with death and the reason for my life), since it can be read in the biography of many of the world's great poets: a life dedicated to expression of ideas through symbols represented by word-symbols in an attempt to communicate in this way with some wary mind; but that is the downfall of poetry — people are too wary of it. There I fell with it: a hopeless, unreformable idealist possessed of a genius too advanced for his own generation and unable to restrain it, whose material was squelched by a fearful society. In that ultimate poem, "The Great Truth," I have attempted to sink myself to the abyssmal level necessary to be understood. However, in order to assure myself of communicating in this, my most important observation, the Final poem, and to insure myself against any possible misinterpretation or just plain missing, I have provided after the poem a guide to a few of the major symbols and meanings.

### II

## THE GREAT TRUTH — AN ELEGY

Discovered and Composed

by

397 123

(Andros Kiriotik)

in Two Heretic Stanzas

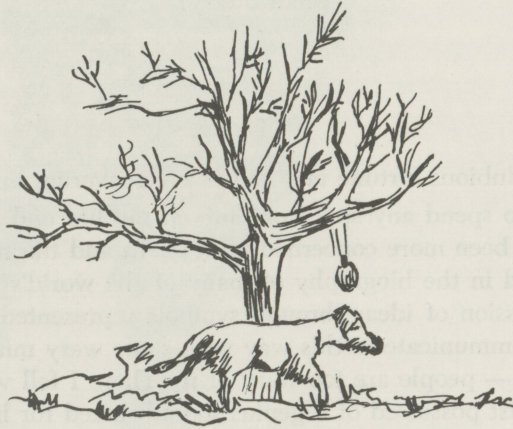
of

Free Verse

Consecrated to the glorious memory of her  
most serene and renowned Highness, the All-  
Mother, written in the wake of her passing.

III  
life  
is but a  
little tree

IV  
Piss on it



V  
Readers' Guide to Kiriotic Literature

The number on the title page above the name is representative of society's mechanization and man's anonymity in it. Notice the number is split, as is the name below it. This is because we seem to be living in a schizophrenic society, torn between its instinct for self-preservation and its tendency to destroy itself. It also seems to divide its members, tearing them between the ease of being effortlessly absorbed and the wish to remain an entity.

Heretic Stanzas: heretic in their content and attitude toward life. Because of its self-preservation instinct, society finds it necessary to protect itself from this attitude by either making the possessor more "socially aware" or by somehow preventing him from becoming too noisy (as by squelching the sale of his material). This society is merely a mass of people acting as a mass. The irony is that each individual composing this mass has this compulsion to protect

something that is dooming him by its tendency toward self-destruction, or its "death wish."

In the Consecration, "All-Mother" is a literary allusion to the mother earth in Greek mythology; thus: life.

Wake is used as a triple pun: first, it has the obvious meaning of the common colloquialism — in the wake of, or, following; second, the wake is a celebration by the Irish after a funeral; finally, to present the image of a huge mother swooshing through a crowded room or down a crowded sidewalk leaving a wake of squashed and mangled bodies.

Note that in stanza I, "Life is *but a little tree*" . . . so insignificant.

Stanza II contains the the *double entendre* of being able to be taken as the colloquialism denoting frustrated resignation, or it may be taken as a suggestion.

The tree, representing society, is barren in the illustration. It is, however, dropping an apple on the dog's head: A symbolic rejection by society of those too critical of it. I also intend by it a dig at science (represented by Newton's discovery of gravity), the only thing in the world I found completely incomprehensible, which bothered me tremendously until I discovered it was all meaningless anyway.

I leave with you this final admonition, delivered to me by the good governor of this great state: "Book smart ain't so smart." May my final destitution stand as a monument to the veracity of those immortal words.

## VI

Coroner's Jury

Dear Sirs:

I am here submitting to you the note he left. When I heard the shot I ran up the stairs and opened his door and found him lying there with the note pinned to his ear (with this very safety pin). If it can be ascertained that the note is indeed his, then with the lack of any other clues at all I suppose it surely was suicide.

Since there are no known relatives and I am his landlord, I took the liberty of going through the file he kept in the room, which was voluminous, in the hope of finding something that might possibly aid him in the final cleansing of his conscience by getting his back rent paid. While thus pursuing, I discovered that he was a poet. In spite of being his landlord, and his room right above mine, I knew nothing about him; it's not smart to get too curious about your clientele when you're renting rooms like mine. I rarely saw or heard him except as often as I found it necessary to remind him of his debt. I have now read many of his poems and some of his correspondences and have found things about his life that have a direct bearing on this note he left and as to whether or not his attitude was suicidal.

In the first place, the number 397123 above his name was that bestowed upon him at the university he attended in his youth and he seems to have resented this depersonalization; one of his letters indicates that he painted a sign with the number on it and wore it around his neck, fastened by a chain, in protest. Finally the embarrassed administration made him remove it and this forced submission was a traumatic experience from which he never quite recovered.

Heretic Stanzas of Free Verse: heretic because while attending the above mentioned university he had a class in poetry writing; the teacher considered any free verse heretical. This restriction on his self-expression left a trauma with fears and inhibitions he was never able to completely overcome.

The Consecration is a parody on the one in "Heroic Stanzas" by John Dryden, for whom he had no great love or respect; it appears that while back at this university he failed a class in it which he was required to take.

The All-Mother mentioned in the consecration is merely "Hall Mother" with the "H" left off; this was another characteristic of the university he attended with whom he seems to have had a few run-ins and whose wake I believe he would have been happy to celebrate.

"Life is but a little tree":

A few years ago he lived in an apartment overlooking the town Hall. On a small patch of grass in front of the hall is a fir tree surrounded by rivers of pavement and forests of buildings which seem to be scoffing at the tree's, or nature's, smallness. Every year the people would come out and decorate the tree and stand around it in freezing weather singing songs and praying; but it did them no good, for the tree never gave them anything back. It seemed to symbolize life to him in this way, and he began to call it the "tree of life."

Stanza II:

One day he did it and was picked up for indecent exposure.

There are many other things throughout his life indicating that Andros Kiriotik was a very frustrated individual. Numerous of his problems can be traced back to resentments acquired from misguided direction during his formative college years, but they knew no better then. His major problem seems to have been the universal one — lack of communication; he became too serious about it. He dedicated his life to understanding and to being understood and appreciated by at least *someone*, and finally took his life in desperation.

I hope you gentlemen will forgive my lack of formality, and my speculations on his death, but in reporting on Mr. Kiriotik I became rather involved since I have long felt the same way, but I "got smart" and gave up poetry a long time

ago. Right over my head all this time without me knowing it; I would like to have been able to talk to him.

Respectfully,  
Michael C. Richi

## VII

Dear Sirs:

I have just found out that as a distant cousin I am the nearest of kin to an unknown poet named Andros Kiriotic who recently committed suicide. Consequently I was left with a large stack of unpublished manuscripts, poems, and correspondences. I know absolutely nothing about poetry so I figured the best thing I could do would be to send it to someone who does, who publishes it, and maybe you could find something you like. I suppose the most significant would probably be the last one since it is his final poem and also the only one on which anything has been written that I know of. Of course, it is a little lewd and lascivious but the way things are these days one would think it had to be this way to get published at all.

Sincerely yours,  
Mary Jane Johnson

## VIII

### MC CALLS

We are sorry we are not able to accept your manuscript, but it is not the sort of thing we want. This does not mean that it is not good enough for another magazine to print. Thank you very much for submitting.

## Two Poems / MELVYN BUCHOLTZ

### WASPS

Their door had been unlatched  
Sometime before;  
I used to sit on the porch  
Watching them  
                    streaming uneven  
Now and then, between clouds  
Through broken wood that was both  
Their floor and roof.

Yesterday, after the rain  
While looking for buttercups  
To put under my chin,  
                    smelling the steaming clover  
I found a robin  
Floating like a fly on its back with one  
Lame wing  
And took him home to where they lived.

Today I had been thinking about  
Their carefree, wild pattern  
                    out then  
In; past one broken beam — their roof  
And door,  
And me in my young shock opening  
The unlatched door  
Seeing them calmly moving, slowly  
From their grey hive  
To his staring, empty eyes  
Propped up on one dead wing —  
Wind whistling lost with some  
                    song  
He used to sing.

If the night were not  
So full of spinal reminders  
That twist the air of appealing  
And endearing voices,  
Making lithe and gargoyled  
The figures that slide like  
Long fish through glass panels  
But clear and receptive  
To the touch of warm faces  
And fingers  
We could turn the ends of  
Our hands in and  
Ecstatic,  
Stroke the palm of the charred  
Sun.



## THE ESSENCE OF OVEL

by Joan Campbell

*it grew-from a frightening vivid red to a soft warm pillow pink, grew out of a period an exclamation, grew suddenly encompassing and oh god so overwhelming, grew numbing and blinding the senses, grew of its own for its own, then trapping the vital; feeding upon it, grew defying man and beast, god and devil: grew until it could no more-until it ownly was*

*pop*

*you lose! you couldnt do it, you cant, cant, cant . . . it flopped up and down, the tongue went up and down*

*whatcha mean? i aint either, i aint! do ya hear me, do ya, do ya . . .*

*nope cant. i cant hear ya, i cant. its in my ears . . . see even in my ears, so im the winner, im the winner . . .*

*butcha cant. im the bigger. im sponse to win! cantcha see that, cantcha see, uh . . .*

*nope cant. i cant see ya, i cant. its in my eyes . . . cantcha see that, cantcha . . .*

*dont go dont . . . please wait . . . gimme another try . . . i can do it this time, see, see . . . im doing it . . . oh come back come back . . . pop . . . wait, ill try again, wait, see its in my eyes 2, see now i cant see, oh come back come back to me, its just like yours, just like yours, see, see my ears . . . oh come look in my . . .*

*"Your move."*

She started to move one forward, decided not to and attempted to move another backwards, but finally touched neither and instead chose a third and moved it up and to the side.

*"Your move."*

He didn't hesitate but moved it forward all the way.

*"Your move."*

She accepted his move shyly. She held her hand slightly above it and paused. She replaced her hand on her lap and fingered the class ring on her left hand, then . . .

*the door slammed and feet ran up the stairs, another door slammed and springs bounced and the wood creaked and ached*

. . . finally moved it over 2 and waited.

"Your move."

Instinctively he knew his move and made it.

"Your move."

Her thumb played with the ring until only the gold band showed. She moved it over 2 again, wanting desperately to move over ownly one.

"Your move . . ."

"Aveln, have you seen your brothers?"

"No Mom."

He made a wrong move but never saw it.

"Your move."

She never saw her chance so never took it.

"Your move."

"Can't you 2 finish your game another day?"

"Okay, okay. Your move. Take your move first."

"Let's finish this tomorrow or . . ."

"Stay," she fingered the ring. "Please wait."

"Boy, you just won't give up. I've been here all morning."

"Well, I thought maybe we could." She slid the ring up to the knuckle but couldn't get it over.

"Say, is something bothering You?"

"Why, of course not."

"I hope not. It's just that we're 2 different, you see what I mean?"

*the difference of yours and mine is 2, oh god make it be only one  
if i were god, if i were god; one and one is one*

"Sure."

"Okay, I'll be seeing ya. And don't worry, at least you have a chance at this game." He tapped the queen on her head with his king. A castle toppled over and onto the floor.

"Aveln, they were upstairs. As soon as Ovell washes his face, he'll be down. Here's the book."

"Funny." She thumbed through the new and sterile book. "Same book they used when I was in school." She paused at a page of story problems. "Difference is there's no answers in this one."

"Good thing for that, what good would it do if . . .

*somewhere it exists*

*the difference between the beginning and end*

*the sum of zero and infinity*

*it's somewhere*

*but where*

*is it somewhere between stubby hands and wrinkled hands, life and death,  
a tear and a smile or merely between five and three a godless 2*

. . . he had all the answers?"

"I don't know. I don't know."

"Okay Ovell, I'll give you an addition problem and you give me the answer." Her left hand, third finger kept her place on the page.

uh, huh

"2 and 3 are . . ."

5

"2 and 1 are . . ."

3

"One and one is . . ."

2

you're wrong, it's one

whadya mean one, it's 2

one

"Wait a minute. Where did you come from?"

same place he did

"Well, go away for now, Ovel. I have enough trouble with one of you and I'm in no mood for 2. Okay, once again . . . one and one is . . ."

2

one, you're wrong again

who you calling stupid, stupid

"For the last time, your brother is right. One and one is 2."

its one

"It's 2! And I should know, I'm older."

why

"What do you mean why — it just is."

does that book say so

She looked down at the page of problems. "So you know the answers aren't in the book, but I know the answer."

he balanced his elbows on his knees and his chin in the palm of his hands —  
so i say its one, jus one

"Look, if there's an apple on the table and I take and put an orange there 2, how many things do I have on the table?"

2 things but only one

"Ovell! What are you doing, can't you see you'll confuse your brother?"

nope, jus wanna help um

"Help him! Now look Ovel . . . how many fingers . . ."

one

"One! Ovel, can't you see. Can't you see 2 fingers . . . one here and one here?"

but there both fingers, the same one

"Yes, they're both fingers but there are 2 of them . . . see . . ."

nope

"Try this, if a man stands here and a woman over there . . . how many people the there . . . one here and one there." Her gold glittered ownly because of the streak of light from the window shade, it had a tear.

one

"Why, Ovel, oh, why?"

they go together

"What do you mean. I can't understand you, Ovel."

they fit together like a puzzle-a beautiful picture puzzle . . .

"I just don't understand you. How'd you get so goofy? Try this . . . if I call for you and then your brother, how many little boys will there be in front of me?"

jus one

"I ask you, Why, Ovel, why?"

caus were the same

are not

are to

"Wait, wait a minute. That's because you're twins, Ovel, that's not the same. You ownly look alike, but there's 2 . . . 2, see . . . one here and one there."

one, jus ovell and me, like holdin your hand or a lost kitty

*and the soft nightttime hiding behind leafy greenness just as afraid as human-ness to come out from behind fleshy paleness-afraid until one dared first hold out a moist hand and say, im not lost so let me find you, im not lost so take my hand-and the difference is one, ownly one*

"Listen, Ovel, listen carefully. You know how much you and your brother love bubble gum."

he only likes the sugarness, i likes the pretty ugliness, the pinkness that goes so fast

"Yes, I know, but when you go to the store . . ."

"Okay, now you know that the bubble gum is one penny, one little red ball is this much, see . . ."

he touched the moist penny-uh,huh

"Now see, if I give you another penny, you can buy one more. You won't have one but 2, Ovel, 2 red gum balls. See, do you understand?"

no

"Well, here . . . go give the 2 pennies to the man and see what you get."

he walked slowly over 2 the high glass case and pressed his nose against the pain, but didnt know it

"Well, little fella, what can I do for you?"

he pointed to the redness

"Ah! So that's it. How many do you want?"

one

The man opened the case and took out one red ball and put it in a small bag.

"That's one penny."

he held out his moist hand

"Why, you have 2 pennies. Here's another one." He plopped the ball in the bag and it landed right beside the other.

"Okay, Ovel, how many red gum balls do you have. Look in the bag."

he looked

one

"Okay, enough's enough. It's not cute any more. You're not in the least bit funny. You're going home and going to be spanked. We'll see how you like that, Ovel. Then we'll see."

holding the bag under the arm she held, he took out the redness with his free hand, looked, licked

plop, plop

he tugged at her coat

see,

one

pop

## A POEM, OR SOMETHING

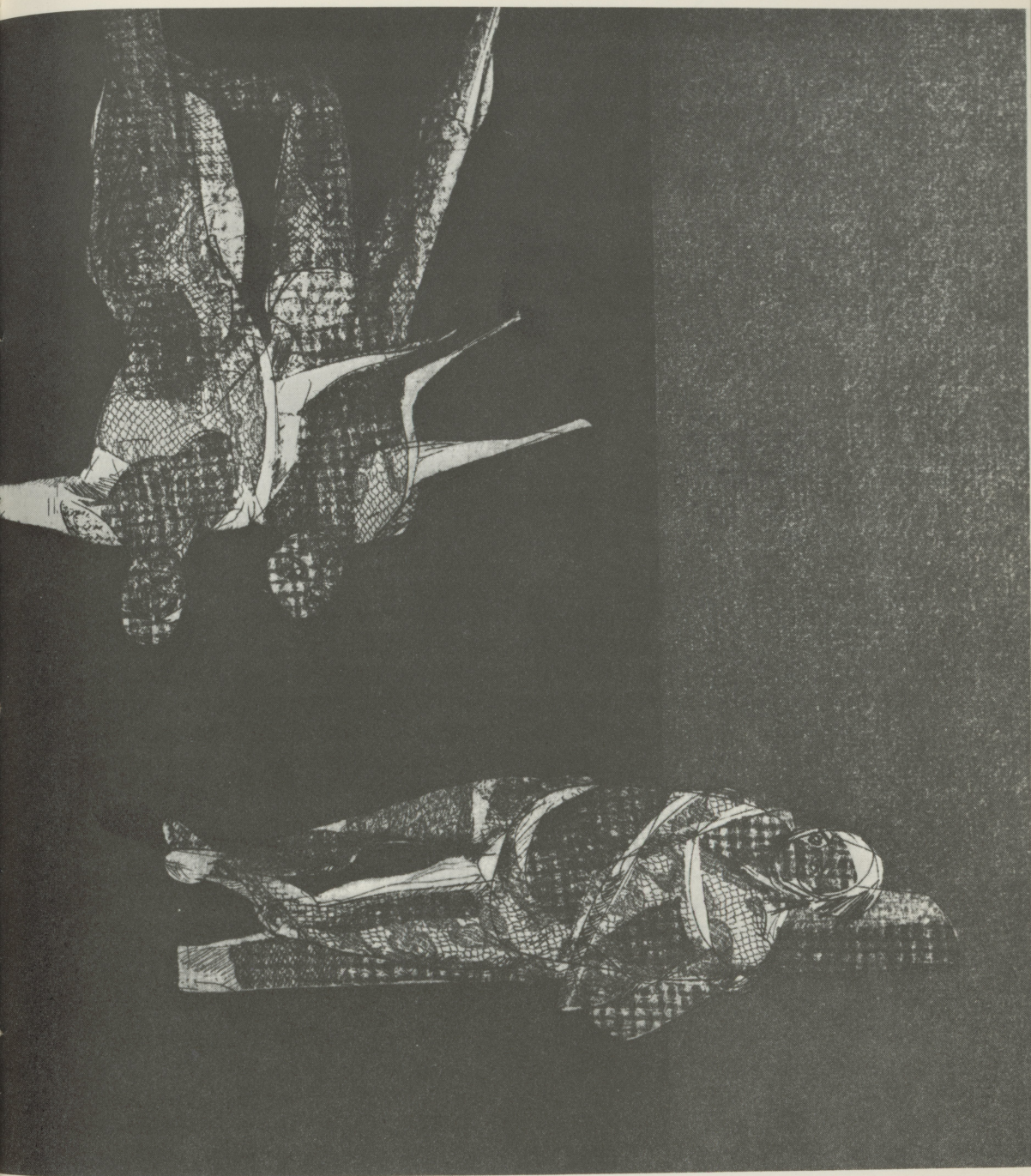
BY JAMES CASH

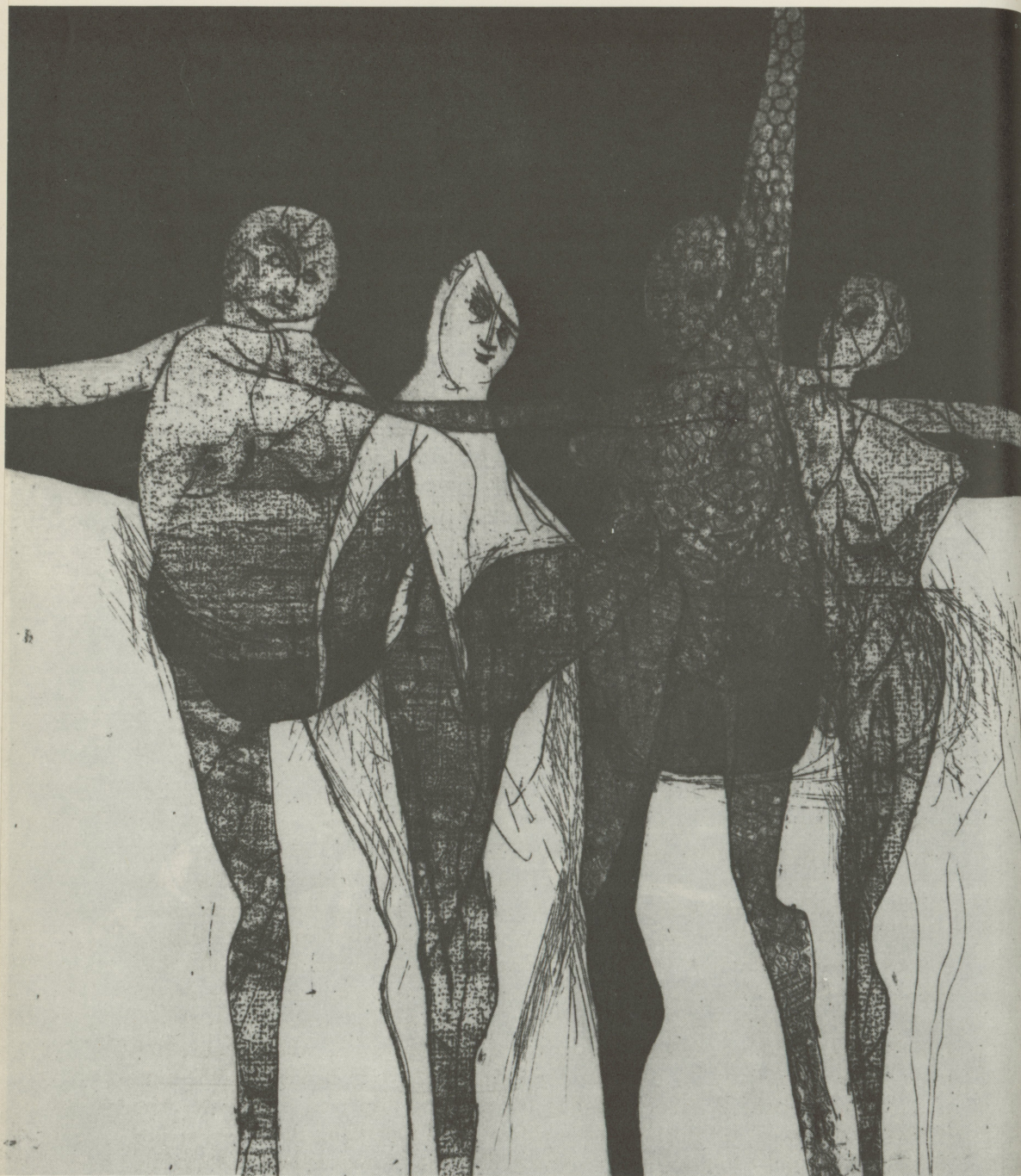
In a black cold alley  
A clown wept a moment,  
Then shattered his  
Laughing face  
With a brick from a broken edifice.  
But I have known men  
Who sip tea in parlors,  
And chat politely without offense,  
And chuckle at some small grim joke.

A tree of night  
Oozed black blood and tears,  
And a dwarf in the  
Upper branches  
Crouched like a toad and tried to fly.  
But I have known men  
Who sip tea in parlors,  
And chat politely without offense,  
And chuckle at some small grim joke.

A broken man  
With dull white eyes  
Hunched his shoulders  
From a sidestreet wind,  
And held out his palm to nobody there.  
But I have known men  
Who sip tea in parlors,  
And chat politely without offense,  
And chuckle at some small grim joke.

Seven dusty men  
Sipped tea in a parlor;  
And one slid from his chair  
And died;  
While the others chuckled at the small grim joke.  
But I have known men  
Who reach out of their skins,  
And touch a shaking shoulder;  
Then blow away the dust of decay  
Of this dusty decaying age.





## TREEHOUSE TREEHOUSE TREEHOUSE

(a one act play) by B. J. Chapin

characters in order of appearance:

realtor (prologue, scene i, epilogue)

old man, who resides in house B, whistle-carver

young man, who resides in house A, poet

middle-aged woman with parrot, who resides in  
house C, operatic yodeler

### PROLOGUE:

A fat, cigar-smoking realtor wearing a Panama and double-breasted suit walks onto the stage and announces he is promoting a new subdivision. (see separate coinciding dialogue, iii.) As he talks flamboyantly, several laborers enter stage from different directions and assemble three obviously pre-fabricated treehouses, which are structured congruently. The laborers then wheel on barrows filled with sacks of "cement," which, in reality, only contain slabs of already poured-and-dried concrete pavement; they distribute the slabs as if they were landscaping the area occupied by the treehouses. Next: they elaborately sprinkle the pavement using over-sized watering cans. One of the men produces a sign which reads: "Keep off the Grass," which he hammers into the pavement. A dull, chipping sound can be heard, which causes the other laborers standing by to cover their ears with their hands. As the sign is securely in place, all laborers gallop off stage in dispersed directions. The realtor, who during this time has been sidewalk superintending the labor, laughs heartily at the departing men. He walks to the houses, moves house A slightly

apart from B and C. Then he locks a huge padlock onto each house, eventually connecting all three by chain and padlock. Proudly and erectly, he struts in front of the houses and rubs his hands together, examining for callouses. He gestures during the following prologue with a gigantic mallet, which the laborer pounding the sign dropped as he scurried off stage.

(the dialogue on iii to coincide with the above action.)

REALTOR:

(broadly) Welcome to Prometheon, folks! Welcome to the greatest little hunk of territory this side of the Mason-Dixon line! (confidentially) Why, it was only yesterday that I said to myself: if it weren't for the Dixon-Mason line, this here would be the greatest little hunk of territory this side of . . . (freshly) I wonder, I wonder what you folks would give to live here. Why, I'll bet you'd give the shirts off your backs, the shoelaces off your shoes, the ties off your necks . . . (intensely) why, I'll bet you'd risk your very lives to own one of these little homes in the woods . . . Yes, sir, these houses are homes, places for people who want to be themselves, want that feeling of sanctity, yet want to get away from it all back there in the city . . . (dreamily) see that beautiful blue sky up there? Ordered it all by myself, heh heh. And that sun, too! Built these homes, too: yes, sir, they're real houses (catches himself) — er, homes, that is, real homes . . . (looking all about him) sky and sun, trees, grass (stares at concrete) — well, you know progress. We'll cover the grass later. (reflects what he said, apologetically) That is, the grass will cover us later. Right now, is there anyone of you who's interested in owning one of these little gems: low down-payment, long-term arrangements, sky, sun, trees, gr — (looks at concrete again) — anyone? (he suddenly becomes compulsively demanding) Listen, when J. Farthington Jonson promises you a chance of a lifetime like this, you know its gotta be good! Why, I built it with my own knuckles, my own sweat and sacrifice! . . .

(to coincide with the action of ii)

*scene i*

(an old man drifts onto the stage from u.r.; he scrutinises the houses carefully, examining the nails on the boards with a magnifying lens. x's to d.l.c. addressing realtor)

OLD MAN:

Say, young feller. (tugs at realtor's tie) Say, I wonder if you could tell me something about that house there in the

middle (points to B). I wonder if you could tell me if those nails were pounded in straight or crooked?

REALTOR: (grinning compliantly with confidence, then heaving his shoulders businesslike)

Those nails were pounded in *lovingly*, my good man. Why, when I held that hammer I said to myself: remember the sort of person who will be living here. Remember that careful, precise workmanship is a lost skill most places today. But not here, no siree, not here. (x's to c.) This is skill, my good man. You won't find it everywhere.

OLD MAN: But I simply wanted to know if those nails were pounded in straight. Young feller, I only wanted to know if those — (growing excited)

REALTOR: (x's to d.l.c. — puts friendly hand on old man's shoulder) Pops, relax. Those nails were pounded in straight. The sun's shining, isn't it? Look, pops, when J. Farthington Jonson sets out to do something, he does it right. I ordered straight nails, and straight sunshine, and I'll give you a straight deal if you'll sign here. (produces paper from pocket)

OLD MAN: Well, I don't know. It seems risky, somehow.

REALTOR: C'est la vie, my good man. Life *is* risky if it's life.

OLD MAN: (pondering) At least, it's quiet out here. I'll say that much: at least it's quiet out here. But what about whoever moves in next door? It's quiet now, but it may not be for long! I need plenty of peace in my old age. Got nothin' to do 'cept listen to my soul rattlin' whilst I carve whistles from cedarwood.

REALTOR: I wouldn't sell to a person who didn't walk on tiptoes when he passed your hatch. Relax! No problem!

OLD MAN: (taking pen, signing name) Those nails had better be straight. (x's to c., examines nails in boards again) They just don't build houses like they used to anymore. (He takes key from above hatch on peg, starts to insert key into padlock)

REALTOR: DON'T DO THAT! (screaming) I'm sorry, sir, the key is for hanging above your door, on that straight nail there. It's a decorative feature of J. Farthington Jonson's homes. The key to your home is the key to your heart: open the lock and you might as well throw away the key. You know how it is with people today: they're careless with everything

they own. Everything they touch. No, sir: I say, leave a lock locked, and you won't have trouble losing your belongings.

OLD MAN: (checking to see if he still has his lens then nods in agreement) Say, young feller, you're quite the businessman. Why, you're downright professional! Ethics. (snorts) That's something that got flushed down the kitchen drain before plugs were invented. Ethics . . . (extending hand) Well, thanks again. Now I'm going to move right in and make myself at home.

REALTOR: (grinning sociably) Yes, yes. Do that. Just make yourself at home. By all means. Without a doubt or regret. Just make yourself at home.

(the old man enters hatch, squats, and carves at a piece of wood. A young man has entered from d.r., regards the houses with interest, realtor notices him, walks briskly over, shakes hand of young man)

REALTOR: J. Farthington Jonson, young man. What can I do for you?

YOUNG MAN: (squinting through dense spectacles)  
Max Taffs, poet, who yearns for a decent seclusion, where I might write with as much seclusion as possible.

REALTOR: One of them poets, eh? Say, do you do stuff like "The Time of the Ancient Mourner?" I remember when I had to memorize that for eighth-grade commencement. Sad, though. Awfully. (shaking head as if he felt a moment of melancholy)

YOUNG MAN: No, no. Sorry: I happen to be avantgarde myself. You take meat and potatoes, I'll slurp the gravy when it's cold.

REALTOR: (looking a bit dismayed) Oh. Well I like gravy myself. (guffaw) Say, can I show you a cozy little number that's exactly what you're probably looking for? (marches militant over to house A). Here it is: number one, first in line. Home-sweet-A.

YOUNG MAN: (correcting him) Sweet home home. You're rather mundane about distributing future leases, aren't you? (shrudders, imitating realtor: "Home-sweet — A!")

REALTOR: (laughing nervously) Now, now, don't get ruffled, young man, . . . er, Taffs, . . . er, sir, that is: now don't get ruffled. Follow me: let's take a look-see, a peek-a-boo into the greatest little hide-away you've ever seen. (x's to r.c.,

taking young man's arm as he leads him) Let me tell you, I nearly threw away the map when I built these homes. They're secluded, all right. There's the key, on that peg there. Only don't unlock the padlock.

YOUNG MAN: But how may I enter into seclusion if I'm barred at the entrance?

REALTOR: You're not barred at the entrance. Why whatever gave you that silly idea? The hatch is open, see for yourself! It's always open, always has been, always will be unless . . . Well, at any rate, once you're inside, you're all alone! (sees poet's frustration, takes poet's arm, walks about stage with him comforting him as an adult with a small child) Look: I promise you seclusion, even with a key which you hang above the door on that nail there. You see, once you start opening padlocks, you've disrupted the key to your home, to your heart. (confidentially) You know how it is with people today: no respect for their own belongings, careless about their possessions. No, sir, I say, leave a lock locked. That way nothing will escape, including bedlam.

YOUNG MAN: (brightening) Yes. Yes, how beautifully spoken: that way nothing will escape, including bedlam. I think I'm going to find it altogether tranquil here, that is, providing no one moves in next door.

REALTOR: Oh, but someone already has. He won't disturb you though. At seventy-five, he has nothing to do but carve whistles all day long. Nothing to worry about! Nothing to worry about at all!

(young man enters hatch and takes out pad of paper, begins to write. A large fat middle-aged giggling woman with a parrot perched on her shoulder enters u.l. she approaches the realtor congenially.)

WOMAN: Hello, there, Mister — uh, Mister, I don't believe we've met —

REALTOR: Jonson! J. Farthington, ma'am. What can I do for you?

WOMAN: (giggling) Oh, I'll bet you say that to every girl that comes along! Oh!

REALTOR: (embarrassed) As a matter of fact, I guess I do. (recovered) Now then, can I help you?

WOMAN: Well, I've been looking all over for a house somewhere away from the sirens, and screaming children, and smog. I just long for some nice clean air where I could wake up in the

morning, feeling so refreshed that I might sing a little melody. Would you like to hear me sing a little melody?

REALTOR: NO. (more softly) Er, that is, some other time, Miss —

WOMAN: Tomlinson. (offering hand) Just call me (giggles) Tommie.

REALTOR: Er, yes, Miss Tomlinson, some other time. (woman giggles again) Now then, I must warn you (looking at parrot on woman's shoulder) that no parrots are permitted out here in Prometheon. But there are plenty of sparrows if you like birds. (he regards parrot fastidiously) We have to discriminate now and then in order to keep the neighborhood clean. You know what I mean?

WOMAN: Oh, but Polly's such a good little parrot. And you'd never know she was around. Both she and I prefer peaceful living. We're pretty much content to just absorb life without creating much commotion. (giggles) Aren't we, sweet Polly love? (giggles)

PARROT VOICE: (imitating woman) Aren't we sweet Polly love? (shrill parrot laugh)

WOMAN: (cooing) O you love dove — woo, woo, woo! (she waits in anticipation of the echo which doesn't come, shrugs shoulders)

REALTOR: (hastily) Well, perhaps we could make an exception in this instance. For an additional fifty dollars, the parrot can stay, if you keep it inside and don't let it run all around the neighborhood. I wouldn't want people thinking I lease to just anyone.

WOMAN: Oh, no: we wouldn't want you leasing to just anyone, would we, Polly-pear? Oh!, you are kind, Mister Jonson. I just adore kind men, Mister Jonson. (giggles) May I have the key?

REALTOR: It's over the door, ma'am. I'm relieved we agree on the housing code, now that we do. The key, yes: but don't use it on the padlock. The door is already open.

WOMAN: (amazed) Why what will they think of next! Men, especially clever ones, I adore. I simply adore clever men and you're such a clever man, Mister Jonson. (offers hand, bidding adieu)

REALTOR: Thank you, Miss Tomlinson. I'm sure I am. Just remember to keep that parrot inside and there won't be trouble outside. There's peace awaiting you inside that little home, Miss Tom-

linson: your own peace, your own little home. Think of it.  
Built by J. Farthington Jonson.

WOMAN: (impressed) You must be awfully strong! I simply adore —  
REALTOR: Good-bye, Miss Tomlinson. Gotta be going: got another

little heaven sprouting wings across the woods-aways!  
(he x's from l.c. to d.r., pauses as if he has forgotten something, returns to house B, in which the old man lives; realtor produces lens from pocket, examines nails in boards; grins smugly, exits stage right. (all treehouse occupants are sitting on low stools inside open hatches: poet, reading softly aloud his poetry; old man, carving whistles and blowing softly; middle-aged woman, cooing to parrot and crooning operatically, yet subdued)

(CURTAIN)

*scene ii*

(curtain opens on woman who is sweeping her board stair-slats with a broom, parrot on shoulder; she yodels operatic melodies softly, at first, then increases in awful volume; the young poet is awakened, appears groggily at his hatch entrance, concludes it must be the old man next door making the noise; he descends stairs, ignores woman, pounds on old man's treehouse; old man appears at hatch with knife)

OLD MAN: (muttering audibly) A man can't carve in his own quiet home any more. Hello there! Is it you making all that racket and you've come to apologise?

YOUNG MAN: As a matter of fact, I was about to accuse you of the same, dear neighbor. Must you be so reckless with your delight of a hobby at this ungodly hour?

OLD MAN: Now see here. I'm not delighted with my hobby, because I only have a hobby for lack of anything else to do. But I DO enjoy having nothing else to do.

YOUNG MAN: Therefore you delight in your hobby.

OLD MAN: The profundity of youth is abhorrent. Adominable. Astoundable.

YOUNG MAN: Abundant.

OLD MAN: Oh, no, you don't. Not with a knife in my hand. And me standing inside my own protective little house, leave me to my carving in silence. Boys shall be boys . . .

YOUNG MAN: I shall, but I warn you: if any of your carvings blow in my direction, I'll take your key and — (shaking finger threateningly)

- OLD MAN: (shrieks horrified) No, no! They won't blow your way. I'll, I'll — swallow them first!
- YOUNG MAN: Fine, then. Well, good meeting you, dear neighbor.
- OLD MAN: The same I'm sure, only I'll swallow them first, if it's all the same to you.  
(they reenter their houses; just then, the still singing woman, only occasionally singing with no actual sound, decides to sweep the stair-slats of her neighbors; she does, with yodeling that gradually grows more intense in volume; she is on the bottom slat of the old man's house when the young man lunges out of his hatch, brushes aside the woman who is on the bottom slat and knocks her flat on her face, as he ascends to the old man's hatch, shouting inside)
- YOUNG MAN: Come out here, you despicable, filthy septuagenarian! You crickety, rickety, lousy old man who sings like a dying cricket!  
(woman stops singing, stares at poet)
- WOMAN: Cricket, did you say?
- PARROT VOICE: Cricket, did you say?
- WOMAN: (giggling) Oh, pardon my interrupting, but I couldn't help overhearing. Cricket, you say! Oh, my. The funniest thing happened not too many years ago when I was a young girl. I remember one time I lay down upon the ground in my sand-box when I was seven or eight or was it ten. And a cricket's wife came up to me and scolded me for spitting on her husband. (giggles helplessly) She said he was so flabbergasted, he forgot to sleep with her that night!
- PARROT VOICE: He forgot! He forgot! Oh my, he forgot!
- WOMAN: Well, he DID (giggles to the parrot)
- YOUNG MAN: But that's very interesting, intriguing, and very definitely soul-searching. Your soul, that is, not mine. And did you ever see the cricket again?
- WOMAN: Oh my, of course not! I drowned him when I spat on him. That's why he forgot to sleep with his wife. (giggles again)
- YOUNG MAN: Oh. But this is wasting time, and besides, it's altogether irrelevant. What was I doing before — oh, yes! OLD MAN, I'M GOING TO TAKE THIS KEY OF YOURS AND INSERT IT INTO —  
(old man shrieks again, tries to wrestle key from poet! meanwhile, the woman, ignoring all that's happening, continues

to sweep around the quarreling, tussling men while she yodels with even more gusto; the voice of the parrot sings along; the singing is so profuse, the fighting men and their fight suddenly become unimportant, and they realise the source of the noise; they stop, staring at the woman; the woman continues for a brief while, then notices the men staring at her and stops)

WOMAN: Why, why, why, why, why, why, why, why.

OLD MAN: Haven't you anything else to say?

YOUNG MAN: (angrily) Where's your key?

WOMAN: (tremblingly) Oh, no! Please, no! Oh, I tell you, I was only singing a little melody. Why, I was only singing a little melody because it's such a lovely day. That is, it was lovely until you inquired about my key. You'll never find it. Why, I hid it so that it can only be seen, not seized.

YOUNG MAN: Let me see. Where might a lowly creature such as you with nauseating tonsils that scratch at little melodies in your larynx hide a key! I'll bet I know. I'll bet it's right . . . above . . . your . . . HATCH! (starts to snatch key woman snarls at him furiously)

WOMAN: No! NO! NO!! Please, dear God. Have mercy on this — BEAST! He has his own key. He probably even has his own sweet little melodies. He just wants something that belongs to someone else.

OLD MAN: This situation calls for senility, I'm afraid. Now then: dear woman, and dear neighbors of mine, stop all this! Stop that crying immediately, dear woman. You remind me of my niece, who bursts into torrents every time she doesn't get her way. What's your name by the way?

WOMAN: Agnes Tom — Tomlinson. (sobbing, choking) And I don't want things to go my way! I just want to feel influential. I just want to feel omnipotent and omniscient and — have things go my way.

PARROT VOICE: Going my way, anyone? Going my way?

YOUNG MAN: (suddenly slaps thigh) Tomlinson, Tomlinson. You remind me of my mother, whom I used to call Tommie, affectionately, of course. How old are you, if I may ask?

WOMAN: (blushing) Well, fifty-five.

YOUNG MAN: Yes, YES! You ARE my mother! My mother was fifty-five.

Well, it's a small world, indeed. Just think of it: my own mother living within earshot distance.

OLD MAN: (muttering) That's what started it all. Incidentally, what is it I wanted to discover? Oh, yes. Tell me, has there ever been a time in our short acquaintance in which you've regarded me as your uncle?

WOMAN: (pondering) Well, only when I thought of myself as your niece. As a matter of fact, why — yes! Of COURSE! You ARE my uncle, because . . . I'm your NIECE! Why, what a coincidence!

YOUNG MAN: It's a small world indeed.

WOMAN: I never dreamed that I'd someday live in the same neighborhood as my son and uncle. We must celebrate! To you, my son (lifting high the parrot) I shall rename my beloved parrot Parnassus! May he inspire your poetry, even though every other word he utters is an obscenity or cliché.

PARROT VOICE: Hell-and-damnation-that's-what's-in-tarnation!

YOUNG MAN: We have to overlook bad habits, mother. That's part of growing up.

OLD MAN: (crying) What about me? What about me? What can you offer an unselfish old man?

WOMAN: My voice, dear uncle, which has unlimited resonance. And may it eternally inspire your whistle-carving, even though every other note is dissonant.

OLD MAN: We have to over-look bad habits, niece. That's part of growing old.

YOUNG MAN: Well, well, what a happy reunion! Now we can each enjoy our own private happiness knowing we share each other's also! And nothing has been changed at all.

OLD MAN: Nothing has been changed at all.

WOMAN: Nothing has been changed at all.  
(they all laugh, join hands, and return to their separate houses while the parrot shrieks joyously: "nothing has been changed at all, at all, at all.")  
(CURTAIN)

*scene iii*  
(kettle drum rolling; a darkened stage with lone spot on moon in u.r. corner; a huddled figure, that of the poet, moves out of his house, down the slats, and stumbles over the mallet which was dropped in the prologue, and left to lie throughout scenes i and ii; he grabs his foot as if in extreme pain, then

angrily and suddenly picks up the mallet and proceeds pounding the mallet upon the sign "Keep off the Grass;" the sound of the drum increases in intensity; as the noise is tone-deafening, the poet drops the mallet, yet the mallet pounding is continued by the distant drum; the poet reaches for his key above his hatch as the old man and the woman, who have been awakened by the ear-shattering sound, appear. Simultaneously, with only a split-second separating otherwise synchronised movements, the old man and the woman reach for their keys also. In the background, new sounds are heard; train rumblings, birds cawing, sirens screaming, dense humming, and the drum rolling; the players take the keys, run gaily down the stair-slats, and insert the keys into the padlocks; the sound of crashing cymbals accentuates the lock openings, and the players all join hands, dancing gaily around, shouting "release."

YOUNG MAN: (shouting) This demands a poem in honor of our release!  
Sing for your friends, bard!

Mary had a little lamb,  
a little lamb,  
a little lamb . . .

WOMAN: Oh, no! You musn't, you can't, you shan't! I won't let you.  
Why can't you sing something new?

PARROT VOICE: Sing something new, sing something new.

YOUNG MAN: But this IS! Release, RELEASE!!!!!! (with exuberance)

Mary had a little lamb  
Its fleece was white as  
JAM!

ha, ha, ha, Ha, HA, HA,  
HA, HA, HA, HA, HA, HA!

OLD MAN: But son, JAM ISN'T WHITE!

YOUNG MAN: And neither is the fleece! (roars) RELEASE, RELEASE!

WOMAN: (starting to cry) Oh, I feel so frustrated! It disappoints me  
so to see talent such as yours going to waste on old ideas.

PARROT VOICE: Sing something new!

OLD MAN: BUT SON, JAM ISN'T WHITE! (as if he hadn't been heard  
the first time)

WOMAN: And neither is the fleece. Or geese. Or snow, black snow!  
(laughs shrilly) Flitter, flutter little black snowflakes falling

faintly on burnt black wedding-dresses. (laughs hysterically)

**YOUNG MAN:** Hey! Hey, you there! You shouldn't be poetic. That's MY profession. (assuming falsetto) What a marvelous idea, my dear: you in a black wedding dress with a bouquet of coal! hee-hee-hee-hee. (begins cawing) Now, hush, Parnassus who used to be Polly, the parrot, and still is, love dove. Dove?! ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha.

Woo, woo, woo, parrot. Perch like a pear in a parrot-tree, juicy ripe! Woo, woo, woo, woo, ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha.

**OLD MAN:** Everybody C-L-E-A-R the tracks! There's a train coming, boys. And it's rolling fast. ALAS THE TRAIN IS ROLLING FAST, lickety-split, lickety-split, lickety-split, lickety-split. (climbs atop roof of one of houses, shouts oratorically):

ALAS THE TRAIN IS ROLLING FAST

AND SMOTHERS ALL THAT WAS THE PAST  
(starts to repeat as poet intervenes)

**YOUNG MAN:** (cawing) How dreadful! What a shame! What a down-right, dreadful, dirty shame!

**WOMAN:** I'M supposed to be poetic. What does he think he's doing stealing my phrases! COPY-CAT! Max, dear (wailing) tell him to stop. Tell him I'm supposed to say the train is rolling fast and spills soot on already black wedding-dresses!

**YOUNG MAN:** BEGRUDGE THE SMUDGE MY AWFUL DEAR  
YOU'RE WEARING SOMEONE ELSE'S EAR!  
(tweaks her ear rudely)

**OLD MAN:** (rushing up to woman) GIVE ME BACK MY EAR, GIVE ME BACK MY EAR!!

**YOUNG MAN:** It's MY ear! Don't you people know whose ears you're wearing?

(the noises suddenly cease, with a tag-along drum roll; old man across to woman, touches her ear; woman touches ear of poet; poet, both; the realtor walks onto stage; stares nonchalantly at the three figures, as they're touching each other's ears in a frozen position; he laughs smugly)

... EPILOGUE

(iii-18)

**REALTOR:** They laugh and cry and confuse themselves, because they're all alike. They're all animal cookies shaped from the same cutter, in the same little box with a string, and sitting on the

grocer's shelf. . . . I don't know what's wrong with people these days. They just don't take your word for anything. Why, I warned them! I tried to tell them they'd lose their privacy if they unlocked the padlocks. Obviously, they were bored. They wanted new ears, to hear things like someone else, just like my wife wants to wear everything in style that comes along. (laughs) They just can't be content with what they have. No siree, last year's hat has a feather — who wears a feathered hat this year? (seriously) Keys in the padlocks rattling the chains. Those poor anguished fools never knew there were chains until they unknowingly rattled them. I should have melted the locks free from release, with no space for a key to fit. (he realises what he has said; grows excited) Hmmmm. Why I might have become famous for the preservation of man's privacy. Say, I wonder if it's too late? J. Farthington Jonson, listen to yourself. What's wrong with you? Don't speculate, give it some guts! With a feather, heh-heh. (alertly) Why, I know where I can get a feather. (he leaps to the parrot, quickly extracts a feather and swiftly goes to each lock, touching the feather to the locks. The parrot screams shrilly in agony throughout the ceremony. And the last lock contact made with the feather electrocutes the realtor, who held the feather. Smoke fills the stage, encircling around the realtor. The other players, old man, young man and woman, laugh loudly, then subside chanting "Rest in Peace," reaching a peak, then low to nothing at all.)  
(CURTAIN)



## CONCERT

BY JAMES HARKNESS

*The deluge of sound poured on and on;  
I never knew what she found in the shining current of it;  
I never know how far it bore her.*

*Willa Cather "A Wagner Matinee"*

Then walk to the River  
Where down the sun's orange path  
Will reappear the matinees of days you knew,  
The paths you made upon the strand.  
You'll hear the laughing of the morning  
And the weeping of the afternoon,  
Then later, from another land  
The jingling of the camels halting,  
The sinking of the caravan.

Too soon remembered to be understood  
Juxtaposed against the turkeys now  
That peck into the pebbled mud  
Around the splintered plow.



## AN EVENING BOY RUNNING

BY MARTHA ALDENBRAND

Beyond the fields of wheat, behind the oak, the sun  
breaks the membrane-tight horizon, sticking black-  
webbed in the spider-spun oak of taunting gargoyles  
and sea-born nettles, sends the evening boy racing  
to pillows and sheets rumped and left when dreams of flowers  
had drugged him to follow a gentle moon and sweet-bed wind.

Daylight is the nightmare, not the nectared wind  
calling sightless senses to taste his skin: the sun  
uncovers all, the thorns beneath a rose's flowers.  
But thorns are hid when veiled vapors swim the black  
through heavy-misted air to send the blood racing:  
then oak trees have no bark; there are no gargoyles.

The knotted, twisted oak, shaking its daylight gargoyles,  
transforms the nightly murmur to howling, screeching wind,  
swirling abrasive dust through fields of wheat, racing  
through rows of tender green, threshing bread for the sun.  
The wheat is brown, scorched and dry; it yearns for black:  
endlessly waving, shrinking from heat, once it was flowers.

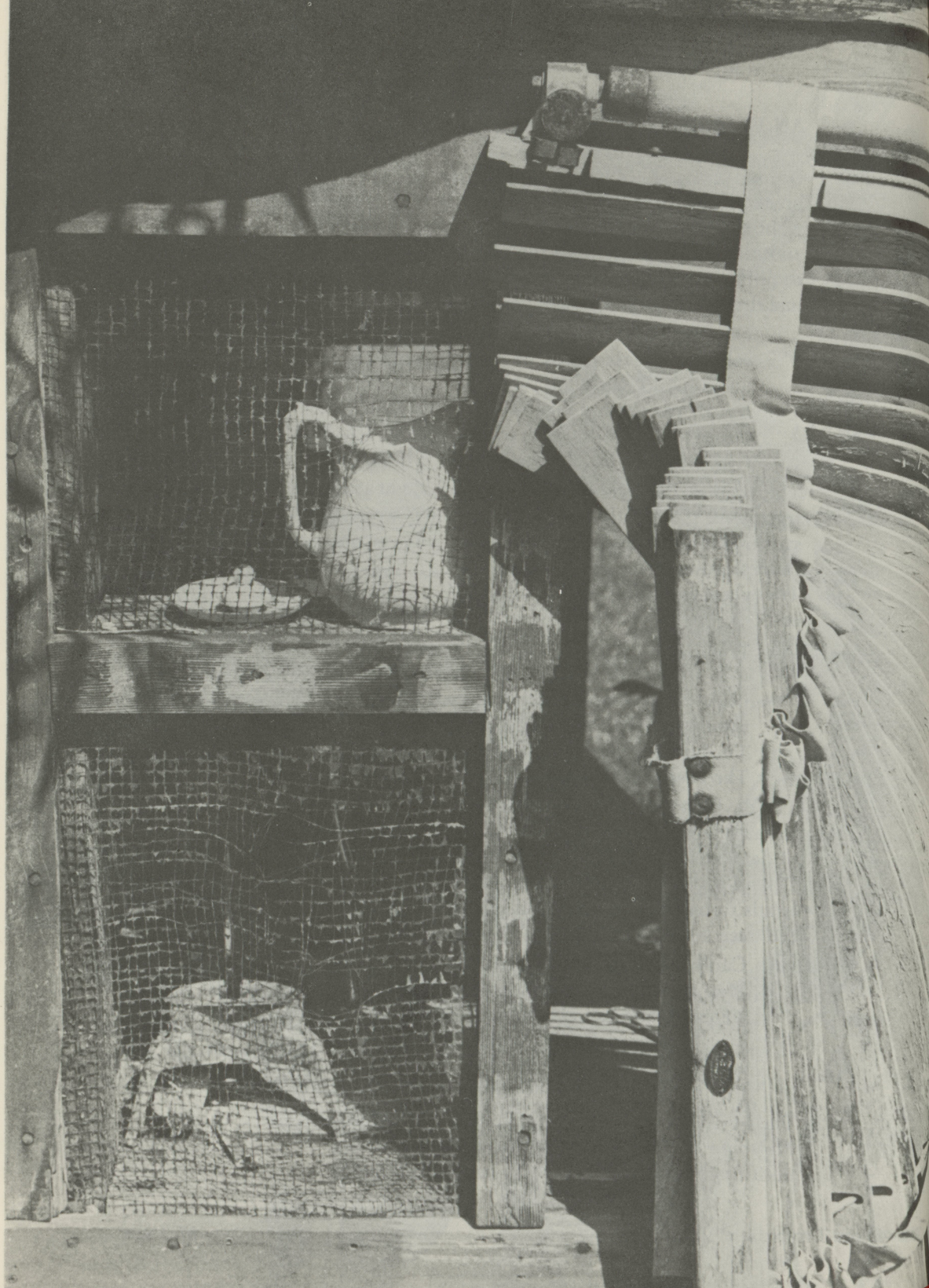
When sticks of wheat are brittle, and dead its flowers,  
men come with scythes, men with faces of gargoyles,  
pocked and pimpled men, men with moles of black —  
the smell of hair and rancid sweat stains the wind.

The heat pours, the sweat drips — the spit of the sun.  
The evening boy hoes at the earth, his brain racing.

The daylight reeks, the wheat scratches, the boy is racing  
toward the night, flailing hands to cut the flowers  
of dead wheat, death-dried by breezes of the sun,  
flailing hands to cut the heads of monstrous gargoyles,  
hands torn from the knives of wheat thrown to the wind,  
the once sweet wind. Bring the gentle black.

Carry me to the house until the day is black.  
Men of yellow lightning send my head racing,  
spinning, and my cheeks are scraped by razor wind.  
My stiff-haired nostrils smell dusty flowers.  
And God, Mother, lean away! Men are gargoyles.  
The mother-moisture of cool night is raped by the sun.

The boy cries to the spiny gargoyles baked in the sun,  
Melt into the languorous incense of black flowers  
until the only movement is my heart-wind racing.



## VEIL OF DIRTY GLASS

by Sara Fischl

The old city was completely surrounded by a tall white stone wall. Inside it the streets sloped downward forming a sunken maze. Each street had a biblical name like David or Jerusalem. Two women walking down David Street disappeared and then reappeared from a shop after shop. The eager shopkeepers would drag them in crying, "Come see, come see — all the beautiful things of Jerusalem," and taking them by the wrists force carved olive wood crosses, thorny crowns and tangled rosaries into their hands. The prices changed from time to time but the crosses and crowns and rosaries never did.

A short dusty man in the front of a shop selling antiques stood beckoning to them, his arm pulling through the air with the ease of an oar through water. Inside, the walls were colored by the green of tarnished copper pots. Rugs, national costumes and irregular shelves of small things like old looking spoons, vases and jewelry made patterns in the sea of green. The floor was crowded with larger pots, rolled up rugs, and cardboard boxes of more and smaller things.

"Monsieur, I am looking for a bell." The middle aged woman spoke, her words floating separately at first like dead dandelion seeds in the wind and then together like smoke around a light.

"Jerusalem has everything, everything just for you," and the shopkeepers eyes began slipping across the walls.

In the front of the shop the young woman stopped to look through the lower shelves. She knew these weren't antiques but it didn't matter — each shop had to have a way and here it was antiques. She picked up a spoon and explored the hollow at the end of the long stem with her fingertips. She tried to hear what the middle aged woman was telling the shopkeeper about the bell. Was it, no, no, this is not right, it must be beautiful and high — I live in the mountains

and the bell will ring in the mountain air; and then did she repeat, no, no, this is not right?

The young woman looked into a round brass plate and her reflection was smiling. “. . . in the mountain air.” She heard new footsteps in the shop; a young man’s image fused with her smile for an instant as he passed behind her. She replaced the spoon forgetting where it had been originally. Then she turned quietly.

He was wearing a fading blue turtleneck sweater that seemed to melt like wax onto the pair of gray slacks that gripped and relaxed against his legs. Her eyes could not possibly have missed the guide’s badge that hung crooked just above where his heart would be. He stood with most of his weight on one leg so that the sweater folded like thick loose skin on his hip. The young woman remembered statutes of Greek gods, their bodies young and perfectly balanced. He had the same grace, the grace of the gods, and yet at the same time the grace of some wild animal, and his eyes were restless. He was distant and eager and she imagined him again as an animal just before it swoops down and delivers a death blow. This god-like animal began to deliver her death.

He shifted his body back onto both legs—the young woman’s heart beat loudly, then quieted—and began moving deeper into the shop. The dimness of the shop and his agile body fused. He seemed to carry all that he passed with him, even her thoughts. He stopped. The dusty man excused himself, worked his way forward, spoke briefly in Arabic, and returned smiling to reach for another bell. The guide turned and disappeared with the same grace and the same restless eyes that both fascinated and frightened her.

The bell was brass and very plain. Its ring was clear, almost bright. It was as if someone had found a lightswitch on the wall and switched it on and all the tarnished copper was suddenly polished and shining. The shining slowly faded as the bell was packed tightly in a cardboard box.

\* \* \*

And the next morning the young woman was awakened by the hammering of stones somewhere outside her room: stones-hitting-stones, stones-hitting. It was an unsteady beating and yet it was growing regular to her ears. She could not and did not try to anticipate its rhythm; she stretched and went limp under the clean linen. The beating was like a universal pulse entering her mind and her body. Then it seemed that the pulse entered all minds and all bodies and all were the same pounding stones. She listened and her eyes began to close. Today they would go again to the old city and then perhaps to the Mount of Olives. The pounding suddenly stopped. She threw back the sheet, swinging her feet onto the cool stone floor, and ran to the open window listening. And just as suddenly it started again.

The young woman washed and dressed hurriedly. Then she grabbed her purse and sunglasses and, passing through the warm rectangle of sunlight on

the floor, opened and then closed the door softly behind her. She walked down the stairs instead of taking the elevator and met the middle aged woman in the lobby as they had planned the night before. She was late but as she explained the pounding of the stones she knew everything was all right.

They left the hotel and walked slowly toward the old city. The middle aged woman saw him first and went directly to him.

The guide was sitting on a ledge by the stone wall.

He was wearing the same blue turtleneck sweater. The young woman stood back while the middle aged woman made the arrangements for the day. He would be their guide.

The middle aged woman, the guide, and the young woman walked until their three pairs of shoes were all the same color, the color of any shoes that stayed or walked there for very long. Sometimes the middle aged woman would speak: — "How bright the day has been with the sun reflecting off the white stone everywhere," holding each word, caressing it gently; but most of the day passed by in a kind of mummied silence. The young woman saw houses and roads and the wall. Everything was bright. She must remember its brightness.

But the brightness like the ring of the bell was packed in its own earthen box and its shadows died and the street lamps came, making feeble attempts at ressurecting the day; but the ringing had been suffocated and the brightness buried in its nightly grave.

"It has been such a magnificent day. I can't thank you enough, young man, for your services." The middle aged woman smiled as she handed the guide the correct number of bills and a little extra. "And now I would like to be alone and rest." She tapped the young woman's arm lightly and walked slowly up the steps of the hotel.

It was evening and they had walked many miles and they were hungry; so the guide and the young woman had dinner together sitting on cushions around a red leather hassock. They ate rice with nuts and drank beer. He was from Jerusalem and had worked in Germany for "about three years." He talked freely with her, at least he seemed to be with her for at times he was somewhere else and the voice she was hearing must be from an old memory or a dream she had had or was having.

"Have you had all that you desire?" Surely the question was directed at her and she nodded, pulling the corners of her mouth slightly back. He caught the attention of the waiter by the slightest movement of a finger and paid for the dinner.

"Would you care to visit a friend of mine? He has a very nice family." And again she nodded not knowing why.

They left the restaurant and went out into the blinding darkness. In places the night remnided her of the day; the occasional lighted corners unveiled

its memory. But the friend with the nice family was not at home. They turned back up toward the ring of light at the top of the slight hill.

It was then that he had fumbled for her hand. She was startled but not surprised. She might have reached toward his. She could not remember. They walked connected by their hands up closer to the edge of the ring. They had to bend into the hill and their bodies were like two old women helping each other with the climb. His hand grew tighter around hers.

It was then that he had pulled her to him. He kissed her hard and then harder. He quivered around her. She could not remember. He came more forward to take her again but she would not yield her shoulders to his pulling, gripping fingers. What was she saying? Was this the god or the wild animal that having swooped down now took her consciousness and flung it back at her very being like the crashing of a whip across the tender flesh of a child? She wanted to run outside all walls, through the rings of light to the middle aged woman's words and the sound of the bell and the pounding of stones and not of Her heart and Her ears and Her throat. And the night shattered with a young and trembling, "No, no please," that she surely had conceived inside but did not even feel as it pushed and gasped realizing its own independent life.

His eyes never came near hers again. He told her goodbye and did not walk her all the way to the hotel.

The steps of the hotel were long and steep and they seemed to grow with every motion she made. The hanging lights burned her eyes as she entered the lobby.

The middle aged woman had been worried. It was ten o'clock. She waited for the young woman to speak. It could not be told. What had happened was lost in her memory, at least she wanted it to be, lost from the middle aged woman and from remembering.

And the next morning they drove past the wall on the way to the airport. The houses and roads were the same. The middle aged woman did not talk; she only watched the moving land and sky as though trying to make them part of herself. The young woman's eyes felt hot. She could not see her reflection — the sun was shining on the dust on the window. She could barely see the land and the sky. There were fingerprints in the dust on the window. She saw the fingerprints, holes in a veil of dirty glass.

And then she closed one eye and looked through what must have been his thumb.



