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- The cover photograph is by Shane Carrico.
- "Getting Rid of a Cello" by Jordan Betz received the 1991 Janus–Fulton Sun Award for writing.
- Damon Sacra received the 1991 Janus Award for Graphics.

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Getting Rid of a Cello

Jordan Betz

Winner of the 1991 Janus-Fulton Sun Award for Prose

The dead lady called my father last Thursday afternoon. Her flight from Dallas was delayed. She would be late. That's what she said. Mrs. Tice had agreed to buy both of my father's mint sets of 1952 Topps Baseball Cards. She gave Dad the vault code for the box at 1st Citiwide where she was sending the money. While her friends collected minks and homes, Mrs. Tice collected baseball cards.

My father collected baseball cards, too. Actually, he didn't. The only cards he had were those two sets. In 1952, Topps brand chewing gum entered the trading card market and revolutionized the activities of the male species of young Americans permanently. Dad's friends spent their summer afternoons flipping, waxing, and trading their favorite players. My father spent his at cello lessons. His mother was determined that one day, my father would be a great concert cellist. Dad never liked the cello. In fact, he hated it. After morning and afternoon lessons at the conservatory he would return in the cab to his buddies playing fuzzball in the grass alley, or trading ballcards on their front porches.

On August 20th, 1952, for his eleventh birthday, Dad asked for a set of baseball cards. His mother asked him if he wouldn't rather have a new bow or a two-year supply of rosin. She finally agreed to get him the set of cards, because Dad threatened to gnaw his right thumb off, thus making it impossible for him to hold the bow for lack of an opposable digit. Besides allowing Dad's head to be pulled out of her womb, ordering that set of cards for my father's birthday was the best thing she ever did for him.

The 1952 Topps Baseball Card set, numbering 1 to 576 in mint condition, is worth about $85,000. That's a pretty good return on a $2.45 investment in 1952. All children assume when they send for something in the mail, if it is not there the next day, it will be there at least by Friday. My father had not read carefully, so he did not realize that the set would not arrive for four to six weeks, if at all. After two weeks and no ballcards, Dad began to write Topps religiously.

The cards didn't arrive until Halloween. A full ten weeks after he had ordered them. Either by mistake or out of sympathy, Topps sent two full sets to the eleven year old who wrote twice a week on Wisconsin Philharmonic Youth Orchestra stationery. By this time, Dad's friends had abandoned their dog-eared Enos Slaughters and Bob Fellers in shoe boxes underneath their beds or in their closets and turned their interests to comic books. Dad put his cards away without even opening the boxes. He did not realize that one day those two 10" by 3" by 4" boxes would be worth ten times their weight in gold.

Mrs. Tice, the dead lady, had connected with my father through her commodities broker. Every serious baseball card collector in America knew my father's name. He owned the only two sets of unopened 1952 Topps in the world. Not even Topps had two unopened sets. She wanted to fly up to Duluth to buy the cards. She offered $200,000. My dad cared nothing for the cards except the good stories he could tell about them, and hell, he could tell the stories without them. He

accepted. Arrangements were made for Mrs. Tice to fly into Duluth on TWA flight 246. Her flight was due to fly out of Dallas August 20th at 11:30 a.m. She called to say that she would be late. There was an unexpected layover; something about engine coolant. This was at 1 p.m.

TWA flight 246 to Duluth exploded on take-off. Mrs. Tice's name was on the passenger list. My father swears it was her on the phone.

"She gave me the vault code at Citiwide — of course it was her," he insists.

I believe my dad. I don't have any reason not to believe it was her on the phone at 1 p.m. except that she was dead. My only question is, where was she calling from?

Dad tells me not to tell the kids at school about the dead lady because they will think we are nuts, or else liars or have socialist sympathies. I haven't told any of them, but I'm telling you. When a dead lady calls your house an hour and a half after she dies in a plane wreck, you've got to tell someone — someone who won't think you're nuts.

My dad doesn't play the cello anymore. He never became a world-class cellist, but he still has one. He takes it out every once in a while. I can see on the neck where his fingers have worn the finish off of the rosewood. He still has incredible dexterity in his left hand. When Grandma died last year, he wanted to bury the cello with her.

"She's the one who liked it," he reasons.

On Saturday, the day after his birthday, I went with my dad to Dunavant's Drugs on New Haven Street to get a copy of the New York Times. We found an obituary on the second page of the society section right next to a discount air-travel ad. She was a widow, with only one child: We couldn't imagine why she would collect museum-quality baseball cards. My father thinks maybe, if her child was a son, she would have given that son two boxes of baseball cards for his birthday in the summer time instead of a cello.

The elevators at the 1st Citiwide Bank are slow. We were in no big hurry, just kind of curious. We had never been up to the security vaults on the fifth floor. It looked like a penthouse. The ceiling was fifteen feet above our heads. There was hardly anybody there except an older man hitting on a blond securities assistant.

"How may I help you?" another woman, whom we hadn't noticed at first, asked.

"There should be something in securities 72037 for George A. Richards," dad replied.

"What is your vault code, Mr. Richards?"

He handed her a small envelope from which she took the code. We walked over to drawer 72037, and opened the lock. My father reached in and took out a check for $200,000 in his name dated August 20.

In-Flight Secrets

Mark Sobolik

Winner of the 1991 Janus Award in the Poetry category

There's one guy
Who's real embarrassed
Because he has to go to the bathroom
And he has to walk past everyone else on the plane
From his seat in first class.

Avoiding our glances,
He doesn't notice the other passengers
Who are more concerned with their own secrets.
They are busy trying to maintain some privacy, sitting as they are
In awkward proximity.

A youngish woman,
Twenty or not-quite-thirty,
Uses the in-flight magazine to shield
The love letter she's been composing ever since Pittsburgh.
She glances out the window.

A guy on business
Tries to get her attention
When she finally looks up from the epistle.
His left hand, ring hand, hides under his overcoat as he
Smiles and introduces himself.

A teenage boy
On his first air trip
Is getting high on single-serving highballs.
He pushes the flight attendant call button above his head, smirking, thinking,
"Who checks ID at 23,000 feet?"

A young couple
Is playing gin rummy
With the papery thin airline cards.
She's thinking about how to tell her new husband the news
Should the test come back positive.

A baby
Scans the rows behind her.
Six or seven otherwise bored passengers
Think that the baby is smiling only at them, and smile back. The baby thinks
They're acting childish.

The captain's speaking.
He's sorry, but he has to turn on
The fasten seat belt sign because of turbulence.
His voice sounds almost calm. He's looking at his co-pilot, who is
Biting his nails.

A woman in a wig,
Disguised as pregnant,
Looks understandably impatient
As she wipes her brow and adjusts the illicit package taped to
Her real stomach.

Almost everyone
Holds on to a false sense of
Security. They think that their secrets are safe
From me. But I am, without a pen or paper or a purpose,
Writing about them.

Photograph by
Damon Sacra

Winner of the 1991 Janus Award in the Graphics category

The Couch

George Mahn III

It sits in the middle of the room,
like a single evergreen in the middle of a snow covered field.

With its plush cushions and exquisite
red, white, and green candy striped pattern,
It shares the vast, empty room
with only an old wicker chair holding a blue cushion
and a new t.v. entertainment center.

For three years, ever since their wedding,
she's waited for this.
They never had the money before —
a blanket on the floor was enough.
But she didn't mind.

Yet three years is a long time
for a woman to mother a child
and love a man who has helped her none.
A blow beside the head,
or in the shoulder,
has always been her reward.

But this new thing
brightens the room;
brightens her face;
brightens her hopes
for a better marriage,
a better life.

The wool is further pulled over her eyes —
to suffer a little longer.

But underneath it all she knows
exactly where she stands —
that it is only a matter of time
before her marriage ends
and the heartache begins,
for she has been told;
She just doesn't listen.

Even so,
If she read this, she would cry.

DARWIN

J. David Morgan

To be the rooster,
or to be the hen, I ask this
question once again.
To learn to use
what I have
learned that
others may
learn and
learn and
learn. Or
to learn
to twist
what I
now know
so that
I have
money
to blow
and blow.
Be reason
a tool,
its work
is most
cruel!

And it
gives me
no time for
breath...

EVER SEEN A COW JUMP TO ITS DEATH???

The Boy Who Loved Animals

Scott Smith

Hal often wondered why he was put here. Not just on earth, but specifically here in Carlisle, Arkansas. There was no other place he wouldn't rather be, he thought as he pedaled his bike down Third Street. There's just not much for a twelve-year-old boy to do when he's the only twelve-year-old in the town. Community, rather.

Hal was an extremely bright boy, but very restless. He didn't speak until he was eighteen months old (which had scared his parents), but his first words were a complete sentence. He said "I want some juice, Mama," and she nearly had a coronary. When he was three years old, he could already read the Arkansas Gazette, although he couldn't understand it. Hal was very smart, but a little strange.

By the time Hal was five, he had killed his first "froggie." He didn't really enjoy watching Sesame Street anymore; he could speak Spanish and count to one-hundred in both it and English. He found killing froggies quite enjoyable. He discovered that there were plenty in his dad's garden. But little five-year-old Hal didn't just kill the frogs, he "played" with them before crushing their delicate little skulls between his fist and his palm. It didn't bother Hal when they tinkled on him as he held them squirming in his little hands. Hal even had a routine, almost ritualistic in manner, that he followed when he killed the froggies. First, he would throw them up in the air and try to catch them, and usually wouldn't. Then, he would pick them up, tie a string to their left (never the right) leg, and swing them around his head ten times. Finally, when the little creature was on the verge of death, five-year-old Hal would place the froggie in his left palm and hammer his right hand down. He thought this was about as funny as anything, and laughed until he cried every time he performed this barbaric rite. But now, at a big twelve years old, Hal was bored with killing froggies.

As Hal rode his bike lazily over the hot concrete road, he thought about the animals he had killed since then. He had given each animal a name before he killed it, which somehow made each kill more special. He didn't know why, but didn't really care. Over the past seven years, Hal had killed three stray dogs (Mike, Trey, and Alex), two chickens (Rick and John), and one of the three pet rabbits Old Man Rickert kept out in a cage in his back yard (Stan). Stan was Hal's favorite, because he did it in the middle of the night last summer. Summer

was always best, because there were never frogs when it was cold. Or too many stray dogs, for that matter.

Hal had snuck out of his bedroom window at two o' clock on July 6th and shimmied down the old oak tree (the one his mom had never let him build a tree house in) next to his room. He took back roads (it seemed they were all back roads here in Carlisle, especially at that hour) over to the Rickert place and carefully opened the cage's squeaky door. The rabbits were tame, and they came to Hal easily. Hal picked one up and carried it out into the woods behind Rickert's property.

The rabbit was soft and calm in Hal's hands. Hal loved the feel of the rabbit's soft pelt, and the creature's vulnerability made Hal giddy with excitement. "I love you, Stan," Hal had said, and then said no more. When he got to the spot were he had killed the strays, Hal set the rabbit down gently and took out his mother's two-pronged meat fork he had swiped from the kitchen drawer three months ago. A week after Hal stole it, his mom had asked him if he had seen it, but he lied to her and said no. She didn't press the matter, and had bought another in time for the next pot-roast.

Hal petted Stan for a moment, feeling no remorse for what he was about to do, then walked around behind the rabbit. He raised the fork above the back of Stan's head, and plunged it deeply into the animal's shaking body. He the thrust the fork through the animal and held it there until the rabbit stopped convulsing. Hal drew the fork out of the ground and Stan's body, and left.

When Hal had finished reminiscing over his time spent killing the past seven summers, he thought about something bigger than Stan, Michael, Trey, Alex, Rick, and John. He knew that something bigger was in store for him, but he couldn't figure out what. Hal pedaled on home, wondering.

Hal could smell dinner cooking as he walked through the front door, probably beef stew, he thought.

"Hal, is that you?" his mother called from the kitchen.

"Yes ma'am. What're you doing?" Hal asked, but already knew the answer.

"Cooking supper," she replied. "Come in here, I have a surprise for you," she said. There was obvious excitement in her voice, and this peaked Hal's interest.

"What is it, Mom?" he asked.

"Well, I haven't told your father yet, and you don't need to either. I want to be the one to tell him."

"Okay, I promise. What is it?" he asked again, his interest flowing.

"Well, you are going to have a little brother or sister soon. I talked to Dr. Flagg today, and he confirmed it. Aren't you excited?" she asked, glowing.

"Yes ma'am. When is it gonna come?" Hal asked, felling flushed.

"Around next April" she said.

"Gosh, Mom, that's cool. Now I'll be a big brother," he said. "Can I name it?" he asked.

"We'll see," she said, noticing how excited he had become at her answer. It must mean a lot to him, she thought.

Hal had already bounded out of the kitchen and up to his bedroom. He laid down on his bed and began to think.

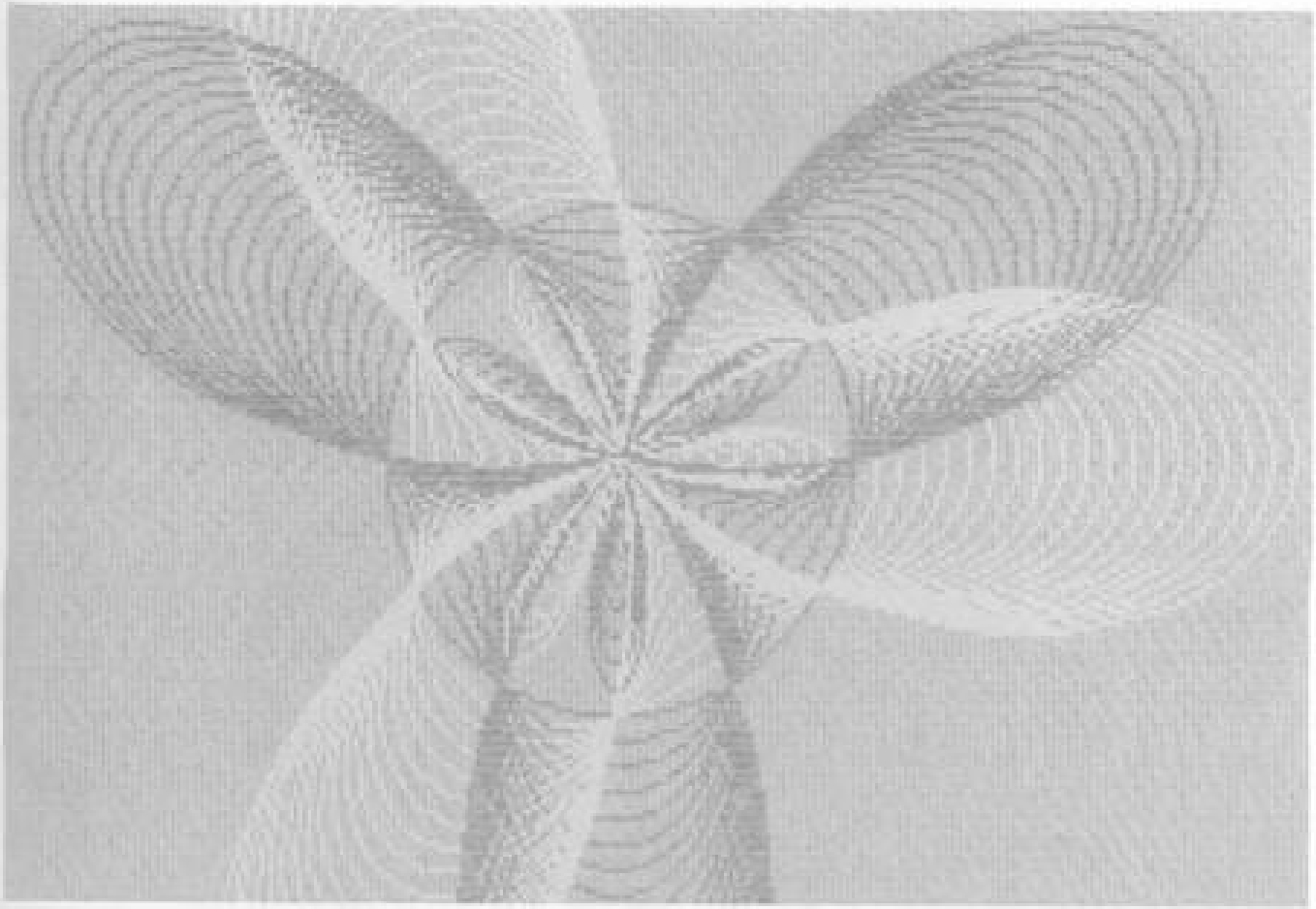
Geometry

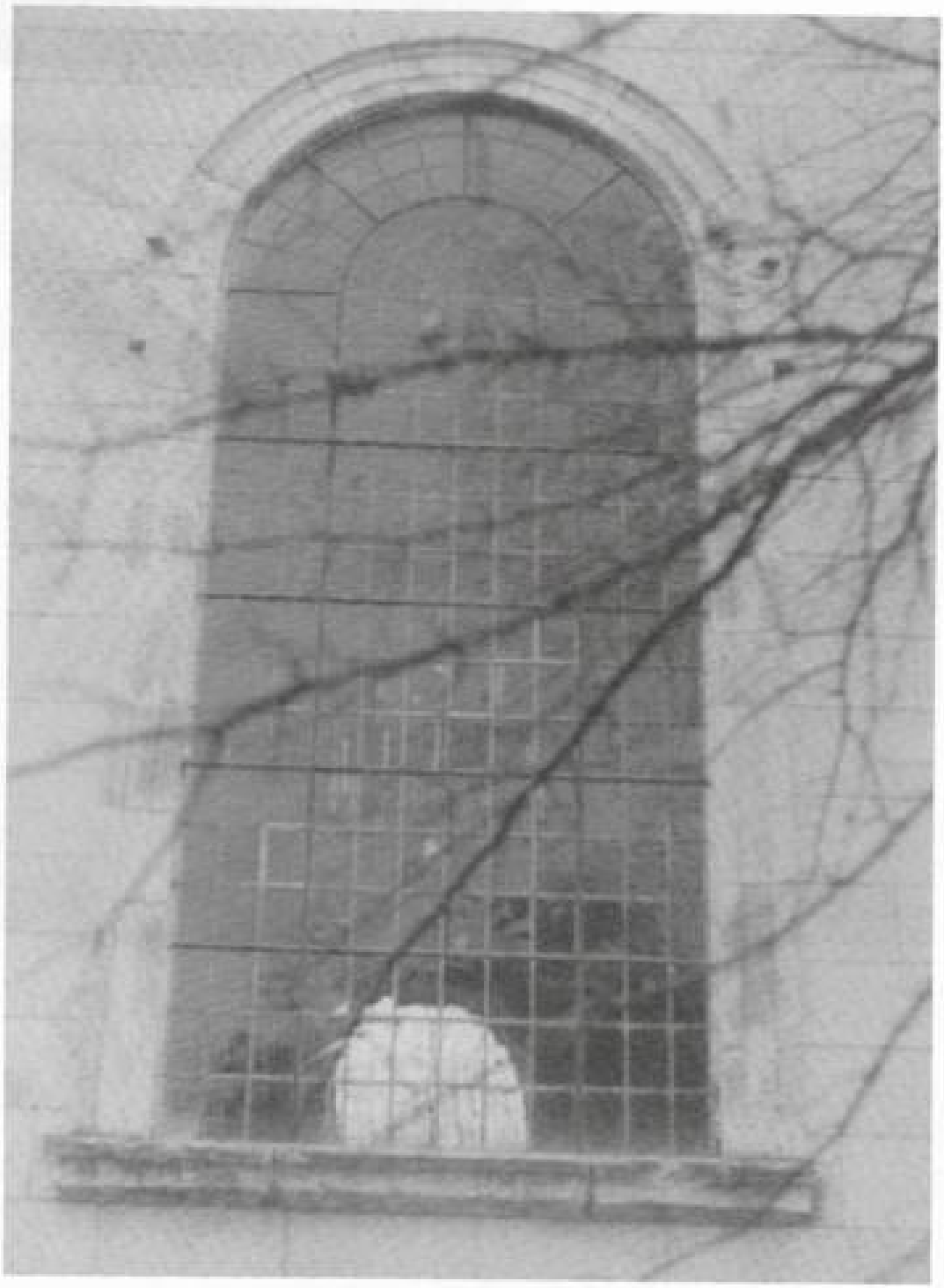
Taylor Linneman

Time stuffs the culture into human socks,
the desk held with flaming fire from a tangent clock;
Benefitting well intentions measured from afar,
armed with Euclid heroes being what they are;
Facing the racing with the mason and the prude,
the temporal and the corporal set sights above the moon,
tweaking down the critics' sound by singing them a tune.

It is said degrees divide a circle square,
pencil out the portions and let the ruler keep it fair;
Dedicate all history to this abstract that's here,
then throw away the paper, trade a circle for a sphere.

Illustration by
Griff Kerstine





"Looking Inward" Photograph by
Rebecca Erickson

Dear Mr. Vonnegut,

Scotty Pitcock

As I put down your novel,
As I've put down so many
Of your Cole Porter-silly writings,
I once more feel strange. Strange, and small.
I'm thinking of life on other planets.
And Pall Mall cigarettes.
And old men, in general, who weep.
And this girl I want to kiss.
Most of all I'm thinking of you.
Trying to picture you, Mr. Vonnegut,
Trying to imagine what you're like.
The Hero I keep coming up with is a vision
I've grown to identify in all your pages, that is,
All the ones I've read so far.
He's sour and hilarious. He's quixotic, and weak.
(I'm tempted to say half George Carlin, half Holden Caulfield.)
But the Hero, like all your others, is a nobody.
Someone I wouldn't look back on, in the street, in the real world.
Someone I get to understand, or at least invade, thanks to you.
But I don't want to agree on how we're all robots, not for much longer.
I don't want to hold up your paperback for much longer.
I know that there are people praying for peace
In your world, just like they would in this one,
And it seems you're trying to make me laugh at them.
And there were Nazis, Mr. Vonnegut,
And it seems you're trying to make me laugh at them.
I guess I'm writing to say that I can't do this anymore, tonight.
Your paragraphs, pictures, and punch lines have exhausted me, again.
See, when I read your books, I do so because I know the stories
Will go everywhere. (Don't get me wrong; I think they should.)
And then there are the endings; these are always my cues
To reconsider, as though they were somehow true,
All that's tragic, stupid, common.
And funny.
Horribly, horribly funny.
Good night, Mr. Vonnegut.
I will see you, soon.
Maybe without even knowing it,
I'll see you.

. . . into darkness

Craig Brownell

Our world warms
Our technology explodes
Our morality lags
Our greed blossoms
Our anger seethes
Our sight dims
Our hour draws nigh
Our world plummets . . .

Photograph by
Damon Sacra

The Road

Rob Whitfield

Heat simmers off the ground, a baking oven in mid-July.
You think you can see the end of the world.
The wind blows…
It blows a hot slap across your face.
It stings…
The specks sting like a hornet in your palm.
The perspiration drips off your brow.
Finally you taste the warm salt on your lips.
There is no relief…
The sun beats on your skin, striking your memory of the old leather belt that your father used to wear.
Your mind is helpless…
Trapped in an iron jail walking senselessly across the plains.
Cracks in the ground, dust, wind, helpless,
Water…Water… Water…

The Payment

Travis Fite

The lake route to Mansford was a long twisted road that ended just beyond the big bend at Proctor Creek. Bartow could already see the bridge leading into Mansford County. He would not have to travel much farther. As a doctor of medicine, he was accustomed to riding long stretches at one time, but this ride was perhaps a too-long ride for his liking, and he could feel it. The ache in his lower back was now a dull throb and his legs had been asleep so long that he no longer noticed them. The thought of staying back at home sounded better than when he had begun.

The door of the office opened and Bartow walked in with a bag in his hand.

"Been waiting for you," said the man at the desk. "What took you so long?"

"I just got word this morning," Bartow said. The man with the badge picked up his coat and walked toward the door.

"We better get going. He probably ain't doing so good by now." Bartow followed the man to one of the rooms above the feed store. The room was dark and hot. It seemed empty except for the outline of a bed at the far side of the room. There was a foul smell of leather and sweat. Bartow stood in the doorway for a moment taking up the last breath of fresh air.

"Sorry about the light," said the man. I'll try to get you a couple extra lanterns."

"That will be fine," Bartow said.

"Will you be needing anything else?"

"Just some fresh water so I can wash up and maybe some clean linens."

"Haven't got any linens, but I can get some water." The man quietly left the room.

There was a man on the bed who was unconscious and breathing slowly. He had on all of his clothes except for his shirt which had been removed after the shooting. Bartow cut the blood-soaked cloth that was tied around the man's stomach. When he did, the man gasped and swallowed hard, but he did not wake. The red circle around the man made his skin look chalk white. He could not lose much more blood, Bartow thought.

"Here's your water," said the man with the badge. He set it on the table next to Bartow and stood there for a moment. "You reckon he'll live?"

"I don't know," Bartow said.

During the operation, Bartow felt nervous. He trembled through the entire procedure, partly from exhaustion and partly from fear that he might end up making the wound worse than it was. His thoughts raced trying to recall some of what his father had taught him. It seemed like such a long time ago. What part of the intestine should be clamped instead of sewn? He could not remember, so he sewed it. He cleaned the wound with alcohol and wrapped the man's stomach with the cleanest bed linens he could find. He had done all he could do. After a few hours, the man with the

badge came back.

"You done a good thing," he said. "Even if I do have to lock the fella up."

"Why would you want to do that?" Bartow said.

"It's my job. He's guilty of horse theft," said the man. Bartow looked at the man on the bed.

"He won't be getting up for a while, if he ever does."

Later the next morning Bartow awoke to someone pounding on the door. He felt tired, like he had not slept in days.

"What is it?" he said. The man with the badge was pounding with his fist. Bartow moved to let him in.

"Think you better come on over," the man said. "He's awake and wants to see you."

At the top of the stairs the sheriff unlocked the room so Bartow could go inside.

"I can either go in with you or wait out here. It's up to you."

"I'll go by myself," Bartow said.

The room was brighter now and Bartow could see the man's face clearly in the sunlight slanting in from the window. He could see that the man's face was misshapen. One of his eyes was closed more than the other and his left cheek was badly scarred from the ear down to his chin. Bartow did not notice all this at once, but looking at the man, he only knew that his face was grotesque. He had not noticed it before.

"You the doctor?" the man asked softly.

"You better let me look at those bandages."

"That's okay, Doc. You done your job."

"If I don't change the bandages you'll get infection for sure." The man put his head back.

"Do what you got to do."

Bartow unwrapped the bandages and began checking the wound.

"Jesus Christ!" the man yelped. "What the hell are you doing?"

"Everything looks fine," Bartow said after he wrapped the wound again. "You ought to be able to get up in a couple of days so long as you don't go running around."

"Thanks. The last thing I want is to stay in this place another day," he groaned and put his head back. "The sheriff's got me in a bad way."

"How's that?"

"He's going to try to put the whole thing on me. I ain't even the one they want." The man closed his eyes for a moment. "But that ain't no concern of yours. You just fix people up. I suppose I owe you a lot for pulling that bullet out of me."

"You pay me whatever you can."

"I ain't got nothing left, except my saddle."

"I don't want your saddle."

"Go ahead, take it. It's the only thing I got."

Bartow did not want to take the saddle. Taking a man's saddle was like taking away a man's dignity, and dignity was about the only thing left of the man.

"Just try to get some rest," Bartow said. He left the man alone in the room to rest. The sheriff closed and then locked the door.

"How is he?" said the sheriff.

"He'll be all right," Bartow said. "What's going to happen to him?"

"Oh, he'll go to trial, and then if they decide he's guilty of murder we'll keep him for a while, or send him over to the marshal and let the government take him."

"Kinda seems like a waste, doesn't it?"

"Yeah, you might say that. I hate to see you come here just for this. You might have spent your time better somewhere else."

"He says he's not the man you're looking for," Bartow said, embarrassed that he let his thoughts out.

"Hell, that's what they all say." The sheriff was rolling a cigarette. He finished and lit the end with a match from his pocket. "Come on, I'll at least buy you some breakfast before you go back."

About a month had passed and Bartow's business had picked up back at home. But one day an occasion arose when he had to travel out of town to help his friend Tom Worthington. His wife was about to give birth and needed medical attention. The baby, taking after his father, turned out to be too big for a regular delivery, so Bartow had to operate. He stayed with the Worthingtons for two days before deciding that it was safe to leave

Mrs. Worthington to her husband's care. Tom Worthington gave Bartow a sack of potatoes and another sack filled with peaches.

"I'll be in town here before long, to settle things up right," Mr. Worthington said, looking Bartow in the eye. "But for now take this." He shook Bartow's hand rapidly.

"Thanks, Tom," Bartow said. "But you needn't..."

"Just take it," Tom said gruffly. "I'll be in town soon."

Bartow did not say anything more. He nodded at Tom and mounted his horse. Tom started to walk away but turned suddenly.

"Bart," Tom said. "You're a good man."

"I'll see you in town." Bartow replied and then rode down through the pasture.

It was a cool cloudy day when Bartow left the Worthingtons' place and later on that afternoon the sky began to look rain-threatening. Bartow knew that he must make good time in order to get back to town before the rain began. But no sooner did he think this than it started to sprinkle. The sprinkle turned to light rain and that was not so bad. He could live with light rain.

Bartow rode on for a while trying to make some time. Then the light rain turned into a downpour. The rain was hard in his eyes and the cold drops pounded his cheeks and lips. Riding into a clump of trees that ran next to a small creek, he followed the creek for about a mile trying to find shelter from the rain.

By this time his clothes were soaked and there was water trickling into his boots. He did not like for his feet to be wet. He decided that he must stop soon or else he would not make it through the night. Just then, as he climbed down from his horse, he spotted what seemed to be another horse not far from the creek. Yes, it was a horse, but with no rider. The horse was saddled standing still as though waiting for something. It did not move when Bartow approached.

Bartow took hold of the horse's reins before noticing that his hands were red from blood, fresh blood, thought Bartow. His heart beat faster. Wiping the blood on his pants, Bartow pulled on the horse's reins but the horse would not move. It just stood there looking forever forward; the rain was coming harder.

"Getty up," he shouted. He tugged against the horse with all his weight, again without luck. The horse would not move. Then as he was about to leave, he heard what he thought was a man's voice. A little way further up, a man lay next to a tree partially hidden with his head propped up on a root.

"What are you doing?" The man said weakly struggling to keep his head up. "That's *my* horse!"

Bartow moved cautiously over toward the man. The blood was pounding in his ears. The closer he came the more he could see of the man's face. It was a familiar face with a scar that ran from the cheek to the ear. It was a man he knew, but he really did not know him. He only knew the face, a horrible face.

"It's you," the man said. "You're that doctor."

Bartow looked at his face. Taking it in, he remembered. The man was bleeding badly where he had been shot in the arm and in his side.

"Fine situation you're always in." Bartow lifted the man gently from the tree.

"They tried to keep me, but I got loose." The man coughed. He was shaking all over. "They can't keep me," he said again in a whisper.

"Be quiet now," Bartow said. He tried for a while to stop the bleeding. But it was no use. The man looked up at Bartow for a long time moving his lips, but he spoke no words. Then he choked for the last time and his eyes rolled.

The next day Bartow rode into town. He was pulling a horse with a man strapped on its back. On the back of his own horse was a sack of potatoes, a sack of fresh peaches, and on the other side of the sacks was a new saddle.

The Grandson

Rob Whiffield

"You remind me so much of my Daddy."

Tilted hat, Sunday drives, fresh suit,

Musk…

SLAM!! "Honey I'm home! Hello there, how's my princess?
You sure look lovely today. Where's Mother? Is lunch ready?"

Ham sandwiches, cold milk, pound cake.

"He had such a kind heart, and he spoiled
your Mother just like I've spoiled you.
You would have loved him—
I miss him."

"You know, Son, you remind me so much of my Dad."

Tilted hat, broad shoulders, strong hands, fresh suit,

Spice…

SLAM!! "Hey boys, how ya doin?! How was practice today?!
You sacked the quarterback?! Well that's great!
You know in my day—"

Hunting, fishing, fellowship.

"He was a casanova just like you, and he spoiled
your father just like I've spoiled you.
You would have loved him-
I miss him."

"Shattered" Photograph by
Rebecca Erickson

Dear Mister

Stephanie Oehler

teacher Man of the veiny white
hands bitten-down fingernails stuffed
pepper sleaze
making me think believe love
that I loved love you
tight tight TIGHT squeeze ouch
prayers Catholic school girl skirt
rosary in your pocket ha!
really?
brown brown sharp squinting
staring
at me? giggle
Mister!
No I can't call you Mike Mister
you're a Mister
smiling? under beard scratch
on my cheeks flowers buttons cigarette
taste Man-moans closed-eye cries
I love you too Mister
trade ya my class ring for your
wedding band too big for your skinny
finger
that cheap Man smell still
in my sleep father figure? my daddy
never whispers like that Mister
you think I'm grown up and I
do too until I am and I know that
I wasn't
you KNEW that Mister old Man
just like you KNEW me mysterious
pretty smart smart DUMB seventeen
you KNEW that and I couldn't see
the DUMBNESS of seventeen while
I was drowning in the middle of
it
Mister were you animal hard
and Man-moaning while my hair fanned
out in the milky bubble bath water
of seventeen watching you through
iridescent eyelids
pulling PULLING my face towards
yours
I didn't open my eyes to look
Mister did you
love
me

Edgar Goes to the Library

Mark Sobolik

Edgar goes to the library almost every day. He knows by sight the three or four old men who also come every day to read the local paper because they just can't see spending a quarter on something they're just going to throw away. Edgar never looks at the daily newspaper. He does usually nod to one of the old men as he walks in.

Edgar also knows the cute, round lady at the information desk. She knows Edgar, too. She's stopped asking him if she can help him locate a particular title or author. She used to say, "Can I help you locate a particular title or author?" every time she saw Edgar. But Edgar started using a line he picked up from an embarrassed first-time-visitor.

"Just looking," Edgar would say.

Now, the information lady always says, "Just looking today?"

Edgar smiles. He doesn't go to the library to chat with the cute round lady at the information desk.

Edgar also knows Mrs. Shapiro. Mrs. Shapiro actually lives two doors down from Edgar, but Edgar doesn't know that. He knows Mrs. Shapiro because every Thursday, Mrs. Shapiro comes to the library and checks out eleven romance novels. Edgar doesn't know they are romance novels. He only knows that they're all paperbacks and they all have a watercolor painting on the front and the paintings all have a woman with her breasts partially exposed. Most of them have embossed, foil-stamped titles on the front with the watercolor painting. Edgar likes the shiny titles. He likes some of the watercolors, too, but he can't figure out why Mrs. Shapiro seems to like them so much. But Edgar goes to the library a lot and sees lots of other women about Mrs. Shapiro's age check out the same books so he's sure it's okay. Edgar doesn't go to the library to look at the books with the shiny titles.

Edgar knows the people who only go to the library in the summer. The first summer he noticed them, he thought they must all be teachers. He thought they probably taught the children during the school year and then came to the library every day in the summer to get more stuff to teach the children after the summer was over. One summer, there was a two week period when it wasn't hot at all. The teachers stopped coming. Edgar figured out that the people who came in the summer weren't all teachers. They were just all people who didn't have air conditioners in their houses. But Edgar doesn't go to the library just because it's nice and cool in the summer.

Edgar goes to the library because he likes books. He especially likes to look at books. He usually picks out a big book and goes to one of the big library tables and sits so he can look over the top of the book and see the big shelves with all the books on them. He likes the different colors of the books. He's always careful to remember that, for instance, he took the book that was between the yellow book with the blue title and the blue book with the white title. That way he's sure to put it back in the right place. He doesn't want the old man who puts the books away to get mad. The old man who puts the books away works very hard and always looks tired.

Edgar likes to look at the different sizes of the books. He watches people come and take some books away and watches the old man come and put some other books back on the shelf. He likes the way the rows get bigger and littler. Sometimes the old man sighs and moves some books from the high shelf to the lower shelf. The old man has to have the books just so. Sometimes the old man looks very tired and sits down on a stepstool and straightens the books on the bottom shelf. But Edgar likes to look at the books even when they aren't straight. He likes the little changes in the shapes of the rows of books. He likes the little gaps that are left when someone chooses a book

and takes it up to the big desk to check it out. But Edgar doesn't go to the library to check out books.

Edgar also knows the children. He watches them play with the computer. They're so little, but they know how to play with the computer. They play with the computer for a while and then they select two or three of the big skinny books with the line drawings on the covers. Edgar figures the computer must teach them how to read. Edgar wishes there had been a computer when he was little. Maybe it could have taught him how to read. Nobody knows that Edgar can't read. He goes to the library almost every day and sits for a long time with a big book.

Photograph by
Aaron Reed

13 February 1991

Stephanie Oehler

Jimmy Buffett beats a backdrop
For the Merchant of Venice
Through a wall of concrete block

Margaritaville in iambic pentameter
My fingers drum out a ten-count rhythm
While I hum-sing a soliloquy
Dragging out the How now?s

Putting Portia to rest for the moment
I take a break and flip on "The War"
Volume down, roommate snoring
To the rock-a-bye of Ruby Tuesday

Peeling the paper from a Mars bar
I return to Fifteen Ninety Six
And read by the blinks of soundless warfare.

Thoughts on Thoughts

Janet Eiken

Thoughts were clearly present throughout the room. You could see all the light bulbs going on, and hear all those bells ringing simultaneously. Thoughts were jumping about so much that you could almost taste that Big Mac on your mind. And putting your fingers to your temples, you could feel the thoughts gushing, hunting for an immediate outlet, lest they be lost inside themselves. Suddenly, they sprang out, just like lava from a volcano, and made themselves known. Finally, the thoughts were free and flying, just like Jonathan Livingston Seagull, as the bells kept ringing and the light bulbs kept brightly shining, and the brain waves overtook one another, as if on a freeway, a freeway of thought.

Millstones

Craig Brownell

The first strong wind of autumn came today
Blowing leaves into swirling eddies along my path
Where yesterday there were none.
The caterpillars foresee a long, harsh winter.

The first strong wind of this age came today
Blowing ozone into swirling eddies around Antarctica.
Tomorrow there will be none.
The caterpillars foresee a long, harsh winter.

Everything in the Universe progresses in cycles.
After the dead of winter, life always springs
    forth again.

I wonder what will flower here
    after we are gone?
Will the flower be beautiful by our standards,
Or will it grow black and twisted,
    fighting for survival in an evil, blasted land?

We shall not know
For our strength will have turned to dust
    in the millstones of time.
Our bones shall lie among the ruins
    of our uncivil-ization.
All we know and love will be gone,
    without a trace.

The atoms comprising our bodies shall
    breathe life into
The new residents of planet earth.
We are the dying grass on the dying prairie,
    about to be snowed under.
Our bodies shall return to the mother
    that spawned us.
I hope she forms something beautiful
    from our heavy ashes.

Photograph by
Kiki Shafé

Focusing: Afternoon in a Suburb

Scotty Pitcock

Summer spent away from home
at amusement parks lakes in living
rooms by TVs with family too-often
silent relatives
Sitting on a low curb in front
of a big two-story house one
with tall pines and soccer balls
and wet grass and cats and hoses
Watching complete strangers jog by mow lawns
chat in circles in their driveways
Some laughter
Sound of a leap from a nearby diving board
a splash
Watching two cars
pass over the span of an hour
Other kids coming band of them
Yes they are the ones
Counting bicycles and faces
Coming this way they all pass by

But one
The girl stops to smile and to say What
are you doing? (lip-gloss or something the smell of grape chewing gum
many pieces)
Nothing Oh What are *you* doing?
Nothing Oh

Her natives slow but still progress (some look back in pseudo-hatred)

Not getting up not wanting to keep her
from the pack yet still trying to place so many things
by her voice
The voice of
Tonight there will be a fireworks display

I've heard
then quickly and carefully
I'm going to be staying here for a while

Both now
inspecting each detail of the street's
pavement that's suddenly so fascinating
and warm and irresistible and focused

Every bit of it

Prometheus

Ethan Whitehill

One summer
Vacation afternoon
While third class
Bulk rated
Computer sorted
Mail order catalogs for a
Current occupant
Collected in a decaying
Coffin bearing
My address
Rubber soles
Carried my body
Lightly up
A mountain trail

The next morning
While homogenized
Pasteurized
Alphabetically fortified
Milk soured in
The magnetic message
Board displaying my
Every move In
May
I awoke
To witness
From within
A titanic fir cloak
The foothills below
Like fingertips
Warmed in foggy breath
Strike
Flint shards to
Ignite
The horizon

That evening
While vertically held
Tinted Technicolored
Detergents appeared
Between regularly
Scheduled prime time
Programming in my
Simulated wood-grained
21" hearth
I saw the mountain
Adorn itself with mourning black
After the daytime heat
Had turned streaming tears
To vapor
Once again.

Life on Westminster Campus

Janet Eiken

To be a Greek or be a geek —
It is so hard to choose;
To turn my cheek and be a freak —
I cannot win, but lose.

To be alone or like a clone
Of others to impress;
To walk in line in dress so fine —
For frat house life, I guess.

To skip a class or show up last —
(Be fashionably late;)
Be done on time or push deadlines —
And then accept the fate.

To go to school and follow rules
Or get a job right then;
To learn the ropes and increase hopes
Of meeting lots of men!

Our college years bring out our fears,
Our time not wisely spent;
The good old days have lost their way
We wonder where they went.

Private Writing

Mark Sobolik

Scott Ankeny has forty-four acres just outside Bend, Oregon. He keeps about a dozen sheep and likes to play with his border collies. About twice a month, he drives his late-model Range Rover along the perimeter of his land—he loves to watch the subtle changes in the seasons while he checks the fence—and then heads into town for "supplies." Today, he will stop at Radio Shack after he's done at Safeway. He needs some floppy disks and thermal paper for his FAX machine. In the supermarket, he runs into the wife of a sheep rancher he knows. She tells him their fence is all fixed now, then she chats about the *New York Times* book review.

"I decided I can't wait for the library to get Irwin Savage's new book. I ordered it from the book club catalog."

Scott Ankeny is friendly but indifferent. "It's probably a good thing you did. I understand the county library is really rolling over on acquisitions. They're publicly maintaining their stand on censorship, but they know darn well that Savage's books will just get checked out and not returned. Or worse yet, they're afraid of another burning party like last June."

The woman winces like she's just tasted something bad. "Oh, those holier-than-thou's just make me *sick*. You know, the stupid thing is, publicity like that just sells more of the books they want banned."

"Undoubtedly," Scott appreciates the irony. He's been writing novels for six years now under the pseudonym of Irwin Savage. He had originally used the nom de plume because he didn't think his stuff was that good. He was saving his own name for a work he was really proud of. Then, one day he went to another author's signing in Portland. It was a young guy who had researched his brains out for a lawyer novel. Scott listened to the comments of readers while he browsed the shelves at the trendy northwest Portland book shop. Of the fifty or so fans, only two told the young writer that they appreciated his work. All the others either told him that "it wouldn't happen that way," or asked him for legal advice.

It was just after his second novel, and Scott was meeting Howard Bay, his publisher, that afternoon in San Francisco. He decided on the flight down that he would continue to write as Savage and avoid the public altogether. He thought hard about the relative merits of fame. He just couldn't get past the fear that he would let his readers affect him artistically as well as personally. He met with his editor at his agent, Jack Neville's office. They looked at some old head-shots from a modelling agency. Scott had arranged to collect photos of deceased unknowns so they could select one for a book jacket picture. While they were looking them over, a copywriter was tapping out a fictional bio for Irwin Savage. They all edited and approved it before lunch, deciding that Taos, New Mexico was the best place of residence for the manufactured personage of the now-famous novelist.

Before heading back to his property, Scott Ankeny decides to drive by the public library in Bend. He's curious about the demonstrators he's been reading about in the *Oregonian*. He hopes there will be some book burners there today. He's working on a chapter in his CIA novel and thinks that a little anger might do him good. It's just getting dark when he gets back to his place in the foothills of the Cascade mountains. Both of his answering machines are blinking impatiently. He keeps a separate number for Scott Ankeny, reclusive rancher. He stares at the two machines for a moment, considering which messages to check first. It seems like the phone never rings all

the he's there alone, but every time he goes out, people would just miss him. He pushes the button on the machine for Irwin Savage's private line:

<beep> Hi, it's Jack. Listen, you're going to have to get down here. The State of New Mexico is trying to find Irwin Savage. I got a subpoena this morning from the U.S. District Court. There's one here for Irwin, too. Your publisher has already issued a release saying that they don't know where Savage is. I need to talk to your lawyer before nine tomorrow morning. Some idiots in Taos threw a bunch of bottles at the house of some Hollywood actor who's never there.<beep>

Scott and Jack Neville meet in Chinatown the next morning. Jack won't stop sweating and smoking. Every minute or so, he tries to look out the greasy windows of the basement-level noodle joint. He's afraid their attorneys won't find the place.

Jack puts out a cigarette. "They're going to insist that somebody appear. This isn't like a freedom-of-the-press thing where we can protect our sources. They want *you*. They want the 'artist.' This is an *obscenity* issue. Bay Publishers knows they're going down, but they want you to pay. They won't take responsibility for 'intent of content' or something like that."

"How the hell could those 'right-to-decency' maniacs have gotten a suit together, anyway?" Scott is sure this will blow over.

"Don't you see, Scotty? They're the reactionaries, not the perpetrators. That fanatical senator is the one that got this case to the federal court. Christ, there's already a movie director in jail, and two major New York publishers have had to dissolve their fiction labels. The court has sanctioned censorship. Those radicals just think of themselves as enforcers!"

"Has anyone been hurt? I mean besides that photographer in the midwest?"

"I thought you took the national papers, Scott. A guy in Pennsylvania just had his car blown up—all he did was ghostwrite the memoirs of a rock star."

"Gene Powers? Is he okay?"

"In the hospital. But Savage is the one they want now. It doesn't even matter if Bay is convicted. The militants have already sentenced you. We're just lucky they don't know who *you* are."

Scott Ankeny begins to share his agent's anxiety. He looks toward the door of the Chinese restaurant. "Look, I don't think they're going to show up. I don't like being here. I want the three of you to meet me at my place up there. I'm catching a flight to Portland *now*."

"There's a hearing tomorrow morning. We can't leave."

"Just tell my guy to postpone—he's trying to locate the author."

Scott leaves his car at PDX and hires a Cessna to take him out to Bend. He had a dream on the flight from San Francisco that all his sheep were dead. He knows he's just getting himself worked up by Jack's reports of violence, but still, he just can't seem to get back to his ranch fast enough. It's the only place he feels safe.

It's nearly midnight when Scott gets out of the cab at his ranch house. It's an exceptionally still night and he finds himself almost whispering when he thanks the driver. Inside, there are no phone messages. He's reading the mail, now; pours himself a glass of wine. He hears a car out on the road. Then another. Very unusual, especially so late. There are headlights heading up his private road. Scott Ankeny turns off all the lights in his house and looks out the huge windows at the front of his studio. The glass is shattered by a flaming bottle. It lands on his word processer and the house is quickly engulfed. Scott says a few words of good-bye to Irwin Savage.

It Matters (if you think it does)

Liz Blackwell

Why should I?
Because we said to.
Why did you say to?
Because you really should.
But WHY should I?
Because we said so.
Oh . . .

Why should I care what you think?
Because if you don't, you'll be alone.
What if I am alone?
You'll be unhappy.
Why?
Because we wouldn't approve, AND you care what we think.
Oh . . .

What if I DON'T care what you think?
Don't you?
No.
Why?
Because that gives you power over me.
So?
So! You might use it to make me what I don't want to be.
So?
So, self-betrayal is far worse than solitude.
Oh . . .

Illustration by
Stephanie Oehler

Sunset Orange Sacrifice

Kirk Johnson

Sticky, citrus, slices
stingy fingers—
nails cut to the quick
pain seeps in
on a fresh cut killing
Killing eating an orange
peel torn
juicy juices squirt
fresh fruits of splendor burst

On a sunny day
cool breeze blowing
squeezes carrying scent of
a strong orange flower
of nature's undead gifts—separated from its life

Kicked back on a broken bench
clouds blowing by
friends passing on
world silenced
Only ORANGE left
only PEEL left
GONE . . .

Breeze burns cold, sun sinks shallow, crazy feelings:
God?
America.
LOVE
Tradition.
loving life—living life—losing life—
GOOSE BUMPS . . .

Sweet Virginia

Steven Lyerly

Ahhh—Sweet Virginia
Your taste on my lips
Setting my mouth aflame

Your smell fills the space around me
I see your gentle curls, holding shape in air
How very beautiful they are

I long for every moment when I can be with you
I can not go for long without encountering your love
Your excitement, rushing through my body

You are so giving
You give yourself fully to me
I take all of you inside me
And discard the waste
It almost depresses me
The way I use you up
And walk away

But you know that I'll always come back
You know that finally, some day
You will be the one to take everything from me
And discard the waste.

Who Can Really Say, At This Point?

Scotty Pitcock

Will set down the paperback he'd been reading. The July afternoon, the lawn that had been mowed yesterday, the calm feeling of the backyard. These all persuaded him to just sit back in the sun for a while. There was nothing to really care about, and he liked this feeling. Sure, there were many things, all important things, that Will had to always carry with him, but he didn't need to care about them right now. He was the sort of man who liked to sit and read when there was nowhere else to be. But even reading could get tiresome.

He didn't think he read often enough.

He closed his eyes, leaning back to lift his face to the sun. Will could taste the warm air, neutral and not quite humid, as he *breathed through his nose. The* rays of sunlight touched his face and arms with a heated, while still mellow, force. He could have let the sun invade him in this way for hours.

This was how Will had always wanted to spend a summer vacation when he was younger. Maybe at a beach somewhere, but staying around the house would have been all right too. Any place with good air, and good sunshine, could have done it. Yet there never was a summer vacation like this. There had been family trips in the car, and then summer camps, and then part-time jobs, and then a trip to Europe during the final year of college. But never a summer of this, of just sitting in the sun with a book or something.

Keeping his eyes closed, his body motionless, he tried to remember all he could about that tour of Europe. Will had gone alone, at twenty-four, staying about a month. But hell, thought Will, it was some month. He even thought about minor things, like the planes and the hotels.

London, then and still now, was his favorite. That first, longest part of the trip. The early zenith. There was much to remember of this phase.

One evening Will had spent an hour wandering through a drug store near Piccadilly Circus, *searching for some allergy medi*cine. When he'd finally found it, the girl at the cash register had told him that she'd kept the store open for an extra ten minutes just so she could watch the look on his face. The face of a helpless, harmless tourist.

The face that can say only, "I'm lost."

They both laughed. The name Constance was on her name tag, and while she counted Will's change back to him, he told her, aloud, that she was beautiful. All the laughing stopped.

He spent two weeks with her.

Constance had these eyes that made her look foreign, and intelligent. Whenever they went to dinner, Will would look up from the menu and watch the beautiful eyebrows lift up slightly, and then quickly go back down, as she read. Green eyes in action, he thought.

Will considered himself lucky to be able to sit back in the sun now with the memory of Constance's record collection. For hours each day, while she was at work, he explored the two full closets of old records. Once he had discovered one that had actually been signed by Lester Young, and so he made Constance play it all the time.

And Billie Holiday sang on it.

In the fall she was going to quit the drug store and try to get *into a university in America.* Will had told her that she had a good shot, because her grades from a year and a half of night school were excellent. "And besides," he'd said, "there are all sorts of ways to get money to study on."

Then Will heard the radio that was playing inside, in the kitchen, suddenly become quieter. His eyes opened. Water was running in the kitchen, and a voice cried over the faucet: "Willy? Are you out back?"

"Yes. Come on out, Jennifer."

She walked out on to the

patio, still carrying her purse, and plopped down next to him on the picnic-style sofa. Smiling, pulling a cigarette pack out of her purse, Jennifer said, "Aren't you just burning up out here, Sweetie?"

"Not really." Will was looking for a book of matches that had been next to the paperback a little while ago. "Where have you been all day?"

"Oh…well, first I went by that garage on Sixty-second. And they said that your car should be ready on Friday." His wife paused here to let him light her cigarette.

Will blew out the match and said, "That's terrific."

"Then I went by the bank, and then by Karen's to pick up Marcus." She exhaled her smoke and smiled once more at him. "My Goodness, Willy. It's like an oven out here. Let me fix you a drink, inside."

"I'm fine, Jen. Did Marcus have a good time over at your sister's?"

His wife dropped an ash on to the white cement of the patio. "Well, that's what he told me. He said he had a great time. I just dropped him off at practice. Oh Willy, you should have seen him! He had on that red-and-white uniform, and Karen let him wear these adorable little grey sweatbands that she never uses. He looked so cute, Willy! Perfectly adorable!"

"Why wear a uniform to practice?" said Will.

"Team pictures."

"I see."

Then they said nothing for a few seconds, while Jennifer smoked and Will folded down a page of the paperback to mark his place. Watching Jennifer ash again on to the patio made Will think of Constance, but this was just a flash of a memory. (Difficult to explain, for Constance didn't smoke.)

Jennifer placed her hand on his knee and looked into his face. She also sort of gazed into his hair. She was about to stand up. Before doing so, however, she said, "Well, then can I bring you a drink out here?"

"No, I'm fine thanks." He looked at her, casually standing in the frame of the back door. Nothing was said for a minute. He was waiting for her "Are you sure?" to come. He was, for some reason, dreading it. But Jennifer was only looking him over, perhaps as if she would know whether he was "sure" or not just by inspection.

Jesus, he thought, all of these old, old games.

What she did say was, "Are you enjoying the book, Sweetie?"

Will picked up the paperback and studied its cover, only for a moment. "You bet. Let's you and I fly to Europe tomorrow."

She dropped the cigarette softly, and then stepped on it, saying, "Now, are you still in *Winesburg, Ohio?*"

Will was sure now that he didn't read enough.

He watched his wife Jennifer lean against the frame of the door, looking out over their backyard. "Yes, that's the one." In Europe there had been many great book stores. And Will was thinking about how there would be plenty of time to read over there. And probably lots of sun, as well.

But she had missed the proposition. He would have to give it another shot. This time, though, it needed to sound like a great idea that one friend springs on another, out of the blue. Not like a great idea that a husband springs on a wife, out of the wherever.

"Hey Jen, how would you feel about flying to Europe tomorrow? Wait, it doesn't have to be tomorrow. But soon, I mean. The sooner the better."

She shifted her focus back to him, from the fence of the backyard, and delivered a loving smile. The loving smile that strangers cannot identify, the secret smile.

"You're a cute one."

"I'm serious, Honey. C'mon."

"But Marcus has a game next week, and you know I can't get away from work for the next

couple of months. At the least."

He turned his position on the sofa, to face her more directly. A part of him, most of him, wondered whether she had taken him seriously. Yet either way, if she had or hadn't, he would look stupid in asking. He could only play along, persist.

And at this point the radio inside began to air a news broadcast. There were quiet "top stories" coming from the kitchen.

"Well, when's the earliest that you would be able to go?"

Jennifer sighed, matter-of-factly, and thought. Her husband added a quick "Just you and me though, Jen, because Marcus can stay with your sister," trying not to interrupt.

All too nonchalantly, she said, "Honestly, Sweetie, who can really say, at this point?" Then both of them sort of nodded at each other, saying with their faces: "Enough discussion." And Jennifer dropped her purse on the sofa and went inside.

Back in his solitude, the sunlight, Will thought about Marcus' base running. He was all right in the hitting department, but his base running needed work. He couldn't lead off the bag. Consequently, he was always getting thrown out at first and second. Always picked off by the pitcher. But the boy was seven, and he loved it. Who could complain?

The pack of cigarettes had fallen out of her purse when she'd tossed it on to the sofa. So he picked them up and lit one. Stretching his feet far out in front of him, he thought: It's not that she doesn't want to go, she just doesn't want to leave this place.

Inside, she was talking on the phone. Will could tell by her voice that she was talking to a friend. He heard Jennifer say: "And Karen let him wear these little grey sweat bands, on his wrists, she has never used them anyway....Oh, it was!"

He was now trying to figure out, in his head, how much more a plane ticket would cost this time. He knew that he wouldn't go by himself, but he was wondering how much it would cost if he ever did. On business, for instance.

The old maps had to still be tucked away, somewhere. Maybe on the bookshelf, inside a foreign language dictionary. He knew he could find them. Perhaps Marcus would want to have a look at them.

And by the way, why was it so impossible for Jennifer to get away from the desk for a little while? A summer vacation didn't seem so wild a request. What harm could come about by simply bringing it up with the boss, anyway?

Yet Will knew that she wouldn't do this. Even if he could get her to promise him that she'd just suggest the whole deal, Jennifer still wouldn't do it. Why? Because.

Because why? Because there's such a thing as timing, and Will could now see that this plan lacked it, completely. Inside, the dishwasher had started, and from the kitchen called Jennifer, over the noisy sound of running water:

"Willy! After supper I want you to tell me about the book you're reading!"

He tapped a long ash off the cigarette and picked up the book, putting it down beside Jennifer's purse. And in getting up from the sofa, in leaving the sunlight, he felt happy about the days to come. A summer where the reading would get done. A summer without a plan, without a set of goals to accomplish. Loafing through the afternoons.

When Marcus gets home, thought Will, I'll start the spaghetti. So, weeks would follow before he thought again about Europe. Or its planes and hotels. Or about where Constance was, or how she was doing. The eyes, the records, all of it.

Photograph by
Stephen Coppin

Help the World

Janet Eiken

Hide your eyes
Or help the world:
Disease and famine are everywhere.

Hide your eyes
Or help the world:
Your time is running out.

Hide your eyes
Or help the world:
We all fear the coming of nuclear war.

Hide your eyes
Or help the world:
Everyone is counting on you.

Hide your eyes
Or help the world:
Don't just ignore those who aren't like us.

Hide your eyes
Or help the world:
Don't think that time heals all wounds.

Hide your eyes
Or help the world:
Cheer is for the ones who care.

Hide your eyes
Or help the world:
IF YOU WON'T HELP, WHO WILL?

Prayer for the Highway

Taylor Linneman

Like a locomotive wheel, feelings feel the real,
hearts are just bound to break;
I'm off and on my way, rolling night and day,
highway's been calling my name,
sometimes, almost always, I remain.

I really wish that I could say, "I wish I could stay,"
but April's turning to May;
If you don't see me in a while, thank you for a smile,
talking about an old friend,
the rolling, almost always, ends.

When you hear this Highway song,
think past where we've gone,
please remember my name;
I'm reeling night and day, finding things to say,
the highway's remaining the same.

He Was a Friend

J. Erik Juergensen

I look out the window and
the fields pass by.
The people around me are
dulled by my own
serenity.
I pondered his life
in our time, and tears
began their well-worn path
across my face.
I turned away, I
could not explain.
When he died it hurt
bad. Because.
He was a friend.

Death is a Tenth Grader

Scott Pitcock

You might think of Him as something
Like a heavy woolen overcoat.
One we'll all wear on eventual,
Endless summer evenings,
Who can only save us from mosquitoes.
But I'm here to tell you
Death is a tenth grader.
He's sitting here next to me
On the bus rolling,
Secretly, a joint.
Rolling a little white rectangle
That had been so neatly folded
Between pages 100 and 101 of
An algebra text.

Anyhow, I'm a freshman.
Trying to keep quiet,
Trying to stay level-headed.
Trying to ignore His tapping
On my jean-jacketed shoulder.
And inside, I'm pissed off
Because Death has the window seat.
And because He's a grade above me.

Meanwhile, (I don't know why, but for some
reason, I suppose)
I'm trying to picture how
Death would tease Christ, or how
Death would pick on Buddha, or how
He might steal lunch money from Caesar,
Or snap towels in His Locker Rooms at Giza.
And to think He's right here!
Right here next to me!
Man, what next?

Next comes the *real* shocker.
(I mean the news-weather-sports, the everything.)
It hits me when I look up
To that big mirror above the driver.
Seeing so many other open textbooks
Sitting in the laps of so many other
Relaxed (even stoned?) bullies.
And they all look down at their work
And continue to work, diligently,
At every other window seat.
Next to every other student.

And it's like, I just,
(How do I put it into words?)
I have this feeling that they'll just keep on working.
The angry feeling I always get, realizing there's nothing
I can do about it.
I'm younger.

his day

P. Wailer

looking down
green grass fills my view.
I toss a flower and a tear
death no longer has its fear.

he is lowered,
ropes and belts slowly working
many people I know standing, watching.

I have many more flowers.
Aim, take a shot, a game,
my rose lands on his now bronze name.

Hazel Eyes

Rebecca Erickson

The eyes behind the reflective sunglasses were concentrated on the smooth pavement ahead never deviating to check the rear view mirror. The person to whom the eyes belonged wove her 180 SL Mercedes in and out of the Kansas City morning traffic with the radio blaring.

The green light on the dash blinked 10:55 AM. "Damn construction!" the driver cursed under her breath. The last thing she wanted to do was be late for the luncheon meeting with Senator Radcliff in Topeka. Stepping on the gas pedal, she thought, "Oh, well! I'm the only woman on the board, and they're just going to have to wait." She was arrogant, but correct. Politically, the board did need a female to discuss the revisions in the Kansas child support laws. Lynn had two advantages: she was a well-known figure in the political community and she was a woman. Lynn had used everything in her power to get to the top, and as far as she was concerned there was no limit to her future.

No one would have guessed or believed her childhood as a smudge-faced tomboy growing up on a desolate Ohio farm in the township of Marysville. It was her Irish heritage that had given her the courage to leave home and make it on her own. As far as she was concerned, her first fifteen years never occurred. She had repressed them. The only things she had gained from that period of her life were the basic shrewd survival skills which were now disguised with silk blouses, pearls, and business suits.

Lynn was familiar with cars from watching her stepmonster guzzle beer and tinker with the junkyard heap in the front yard. He used to demand, as if he were performing surgery, a wrench or screwdriver from her. However, today Lynn was oblivious to the digital heat guage which steadily rose. Under the polished reflective black hood of her car, antifreeze solution fountained from the neatly punctured radiator hose. The molten cylinders fused, and the engine came to a lurching stop.

Realizing that there was no immediate cure possible, she acted as damsel in distress until she was rescued by tinted windows and California plates. "Looks like you could use a ride," the Californian said flashing all teeth and no lips. "Any place in particular you want to go?"

"Nearest gas station," she replied while intently adjusting the seat belt securely against her abdomen. The closer range allowed her to scrutinize the driver: middle age, very handsome, and no ring. She made witty comments so he would turn her way and allow her to analyze his hazel eyes. The eyes always revealed the person. His eyes were an eerie light green with brown speckles radiating from the small reflective pupils. She had seen eyes like these somewhere . . . somewhere in her past, but she could not recall where. The memory tottered dangerously on the very tip of recognition. Instinctively she shivered as if someone had scraped a fingernail across a chalkboard.

"Cold?" the driver asked as he leaned to the middle of the car reaching to flip off the cold dry blast of air.

Startled both at his sudden movement toward her and at her body's uncontrollable disclosure, she forced the air out of her mouth accentuating the reply, "No." Fear like she had never remembered feeling before lined her stomach squeezing and twisting. A deep internal pressure built in her chest. Her heart punched violently in rebellion to this foreign pressure. The hair on her arms rose instinctively.

She did not understand why her body was acting this way. When she first realized that she was not in control of her own body, she mentally resisted the fear until her mind was finally forced to relent and join her body in its terror. When this happened, Lynn lost all the composure that she had previously had. Her mind rapidly shifted through several disheveled thoughts. Something

was wrong. The situation was wrong. His eyes were wrong. She wanted out.

The car sped by two exit signs, and Lynn's body began to tense. "Why don't you stop at the next exit that has a gas station?" Lynn assertively demanded in her 90s woman voice. They were out in the middle of Kansas where the rolling hills rolled on forever and exits were scarce—but people were even more scarce.

"Those eyes . . . those eyes," her thoughts tumbled like waves toppling one over the other searching violently for the answer. Suddenly, she was nine years old in the torn back seat of a 65 Nova screaming, hitting, and kicking at the high school boys. She savagely grabbed handfuls of hair and broke a couple of noses, but she herself was immune to pain. She did not remember how many there were or what they looked like, but she did remember wildly clawing at a pair of hazel eyes. Even as an adult she did not remember what happened after that. All that she remembered were the distinctive hazel eyes.

Suspension of disbelief

Tim Fowler

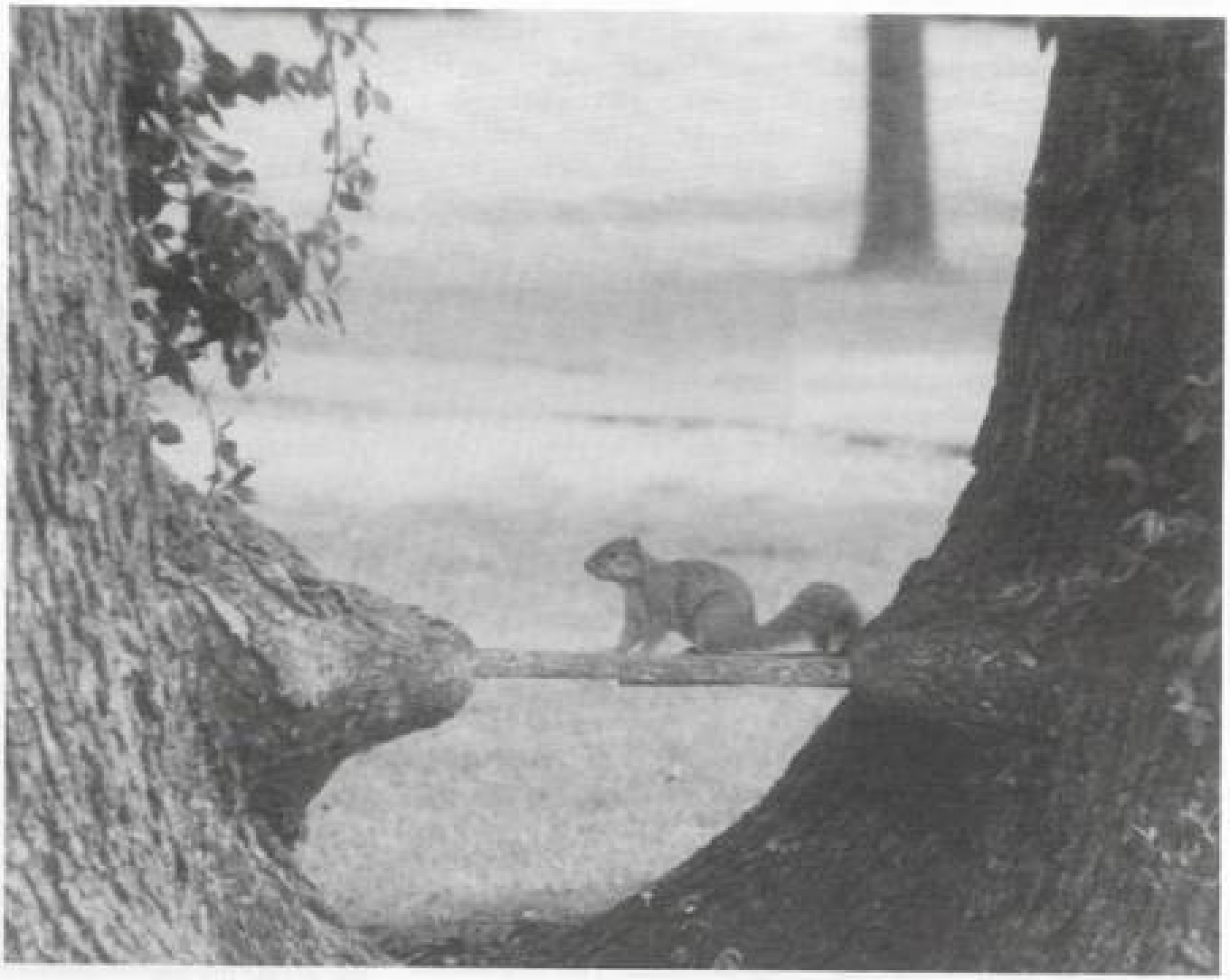
time dripping slowly
as i lift a page
ask me a question
i come up for air
reality left twisting
unattached behind me
my body cut free
from my intention
my senses dumb
to the murmur nearby
a paragraph my world
this phrase my life
can i get back to
the world i left behind
when i started this book ?

graded

P. Wailer

his breath told his age
old hot dogs, and jazz
his nook filled with books,
    naturally.

a failed writer, a teacher
coffee cup a part of his desk
he disliked my style
and i his age.



Photograph by
Stephen Coppin

Hidden Beauty

Julie Avakian

It wasn't the place that was beautiful. No, the place was just a fire escape out an apartment window. There were potted plants around to give it a slightly more natural look, but that was pathetically overcome by the neighboring brick building barely 20 feet away. In fact, the only remarkable thing about this landing was its view. If you looked very carefully, you could see the tree someone had planted and abandoned; small and scrawny, but alive.

The girl sitting on the landing couldn't really be considered beautiful either. Somehow her features just didn't work together. If you saw her on the street, you might think it was because her nose was slightly too long, but that wasn't it. Maybe it was her tired posture, as if the iron railing she leaned against was her only support. Or perhaps it was the way she held herself, her arms wrapped tight around her to keep her warm. Whatever the case, she wasn't really pretty at all.

But there was something, one glance and you could see that. It could have been the way her hair started to fall from the clip she used, or the way the cool wind gently brushed those tendrils from her face. Or possibly the expectant set to her lips, and the tilt of her head.

Following her gaze outward you glimpsed a truly beautiful sight, a giant full moon as if from under water, with the thin rippled clouds the waves above. No, it wasn't the silver light bathing her face that was beautiful, rather the vision of it reflected in her eyes. Through her eyes you saw the depths of her heart and the height of her dreams. You saw her hope. Then you saw her lips move as she whispered the lullaby "Baby's Boat is a Silver Moon." And she was beautiful.

What Women Wear to the Symphony

Jordan Betz

Until a week ago, *George and* I lived in an efficiency in midtown. I've got a new place now after he got hurt and all. Our apartment always kind of worried me in the first place, with the city being what it is, but also, because our door was made out of hollow particle board you can punch all the way through without even really being mad. I've got some stuff I wouldn't want stolen that I kept there: A typewriter, my Uncle Edwin's silverware from when he was in the Navy, some Patty Page 45s, a copy of "Yes, We Have No Bananas" backed with "Too Fat Polka," and other things in general that I'd like to hold on to. George has nice things; a computer, a rowing machine, an espresso machine, but his parents are rich and he doesn't pay much mind to that kind of thing the way I do. They disinherited him after some things that he did. I don't think they're too serious about it, because after George got out of the hospital he went to his parents' condominium in Arizona to take it easy for a while. I'm supposed to go out there, like I told him I would, but I have to work to keep current with bills and everything on my new place.

The reason I moved in with George is that I didn't go to college. I thought I would, but didn't because my dad couldn't afford to take on the debt when it was time for me to go. He was trying to keep his shop above water. I could have *gotten quite a bit* of money from the college I was looking at, but my dad said he's never taken a handout from anybody and wasn't about to *start. Handouts are like stealing*, he says, which in my estimation is mostly right. It's someone else's money that you don't have any right to because you didn't earn it. In a way it's not so bad, because they only offer if they think you would be an asset to the school, you see, which is kind of like earning it. An honest man doesn't take something for nothing, though, like my dad says.

George helped me get a summer job in midtown. That was the agreement if I moved in with him. Work was only a few blocks from the apartment. More often than not we'd go swimming at the pool across the street in the afternoon before we worked. Normally, you had to belong to the pool, or live in the apartment complex, but George usually knew the lifeguard from the neighborhood, and could talk our way in. After a while they didn't bother asking us anymore.

When three o'clock rolled around we'd jump on the bus, or walk the mile or so to work. We phone solicited for the St. Louis Orchestra for six dollars an hour plus bonuses. I had been earning $3.90 at the Gas-N-Mart, so when George said he could get me a job at the symphony I jumped. For the most part, the callers were college kids home for the summer. When I went in with George one afternoon to interview there was a girl I decided I would have to do something about.

II

George lived in a hotel in New York City until his family moved here. It's on 39th street just east of Park Avenue, he tells me. His granddad did well enough in the stock market to start the Tuscany out there in the late 1920s. This is how his family had money. After the crash, he made good money in the bear market, which some people might think is devious or taking advantage, but smart is what it really is — being able to see the big picture, like George says.

A few years back Mr. Brooks decided to sell the hotel instead of dropping these millions into it to refurbish it. So, they came to St. Louis to revive the old Park Hotel with the money Mr. Brooks made on the sale. He sank quite a heap into putting in an all-night restaurant and new lobbies and fixing the rooms up quite a bit; he brought some life back into midtown. Still, I couldn't understand why Mr. Brooks didn't put the money into the Tuscany and keep up what his father started. I guess he got tired of the hotel business, because he shut the Park down after about ten years of building up a pretty good reputation for the place.

As George says, "opportunity knocks for whomever is willing to

listen." So, he started throwing formal parties there after the close. "College kids would rather get drunk in suits than do just about anything," he explained. He hired everything on his dad's credit — musicians, caterers, doormen, bouncers — and then made good on the bills before his dad ever saw them. George told me he cleared almost $800 once. "I've got a bankroll a circus dog couldn't jump over, he said."

This is how he got cut off the way he did. His father was out getting a newspaper one night when he drove by the hotel and saw people going into the hotel in evening clothes. He went in and found George behind the bar serving drinks. Mr. Brooks ordered a scotch and water. When he finished it he left George a $2 tip and told him he'd better find another place to live. George got a month's rent and deposit from credit card advances and found the place in midtown that next day.

We hadn't been there two months when the Visa people started calling regularly, threatening legal action if George didn't pay the full amount off by a certain day. At first he would tell them this outlandish stuff and get the dates pushed forward. He'd explain how the kleptomaniac maid had stolen his card and had run the bill up, and how his dad, the lawyer, was suing her for her ass. We got to know the Visa representatives on a first name basis. After a while George would tell Ira, or Donald, "check's in the mail" and leave the phone off the hook.

The whole thing about living with George is that he was a hell of a good guy to room with. We could sleep until ten or so, get up, watch "The Price is Right." He usually made a big breakfast; omelets with lots of cheese and vegetables, tomatoes, cinnamon coffee, the whole thing. He charged all our food to a grocery right by the hotel. His father set up an account there for the Park, and never cancelled it. He always kept the apartment picked up, and never expected me to do much. See, he liked to kind of take charge of what needed to be done, and keep everything straight.

I was in charge of the bills, though; he didn't want anything to do with that. But, if I'd figure them out, he'd write the check. George made good money at the symphony. He was one of their best callers, so, if he was late, or didn't show up occasionally, they didn't say much because he made so much money for them. He had a philosophy that made him successful: "Romance, Alex," he would tell me, "the customer wants romance." Still, he was businesslike about the whole thing, but this only went so far. It was all an act he put on.

Mainly though, the thing about him is that he treats you like a man who has important things to do. He has great confidence in you.

George's weakness is girls, which eventually got him broken up like he is now. It isn't any good to lose your head over girls the way George does. I've tried to talk sense to him, but he won't have any of it. It's not that he's particularly disrespectful, which he occasionally is, but he can't go without their company once he gets the idea in his head.

Once we were down at the Majestic Cafe where we liked to unwind after our symphony jobs were out for the evening. We were talking about people we talked to on the phone that evening; people who didn't want tickets because they were belly dancers, or piano players from the river showboat who couldn't take a seventh night of music a week, or former subscribers who didn't like the contemporary pieces. Although you don't like to talk about ladies at a bar, because your words can get on the reckless side after you see the bottom of a few glasses, and make you talk in a way you'd regret if the girl was actually there, eventually you do get on to talking about them. George was telling me about this girl he met at one of his parties, and how she was a diabetic artist. He told me that once she painted him nude. I can tell you he didn't see her for her pictures. They saw each other for several weeks before he began to tire of her and quit going to see her. He stopped calling, but occasionally, after he'd had some

drinks, he'd take a cab to her apartment and stay the night. He hated her by this point, you see, but he had to go to her. He couldn't help it. He went to see her one night after she'd had an insulin reaction. She told him he couldn't stay, but he wouldn't listen to her, and slapped her around a little. She got a police restraining order to keep him out of the building.

From what I can tell, the fact that George was a writer was what got him into trouble. He was a writer in the sense that everything was words to him. Other people dance or play the piano. They see the world through colored lenses. The way people walk looks different to dancers than it does to us. They can imitate others' walks and tell you things about people through their movements. They are in tune this way. But it's not just that George writes. He fashions things around him as words. Events aren't so much things that happen as they are arenas for words. I saw a girl occasionally over the summer whom George didn't get on well with for some reason. When I'd have her over they would flip it back and forth all night. For instance, one night I had some champagne I wanted to chill so she and I could drink it later. As I was walking out the door to get ice, George said "why don't you put it between Rissa's chilly thighs and save the buck?"

This is not so much a story as it is me telling you about some things that happened to George and me while we were living in midtown together. A story involves certain words, like a tune calls for certain notes. This is just events — things that happened. If someone else, say George, or one of the girls from the symphony, were doing the telling it would be a different story. It would have different events and a different outcome. They would slant the words to make it a different story.

III

As I said before, I was sweet on Nancy, the girl at the symphony, from the beginning. I met her on the parking lot after my third day of work or so. We struck up a conversation about calling and the way to get a foot in the door with the clients. "It's not magic, it takes a while, you know, you'll learn to sweet talk 'em," she reassured me.

"Where's George tonight?" she asked.

"He's finishing a story he's sending to a contest. It has to be postmarked by tomorrow, or no trip to Hawaii.

"Our resident man of letters."

"Something like that," I said as her mother pulled up in front of the symphony.

"Well..." she looked at the car and pulled her hair back over the top of her head.

"Your carriage awaits you," I said. She laughed and put her fingers on my arm. She bobbed her hand up and down as they drove off. On the bus that night I thought about the way she glided to the jeep, white stockings peeking out around her ankles, and how in the three days I had been around her I had never once seen her walk.

We got to be pretty good friends at work. She'd write me little notes on index cards, and drop them on my desk. I finally asked her out after George bet I wouldn't. The deal was that he had to ask Marni out, another girl from work, so we could double. It seems to me a first date usually goes smoother with another couple. George had ideas about what these girls would think is romantic. We decided beforehand it would be the thing to do to take them to the lagoon in front of the city art museum. We'd take candles, bottles of wine, glasses and look out over the water, watch the ducks — set the scene.

Summer evenings are hot in St. Louis, but often times there's a breeze coming off the lake. This kind of atmosphere can put the words in your mouth. All you have to do is open and close your mouth at the appropriate times. They ate it up I can tell you, because after we got down to that water everything went as planned.

Nancy and I sat on the edge of the lagoon trying to coax the ducks out of the water with spots of sourdough bread. We sat there drinking wine, talking symphony, and related things, like the beautiful dresses some ladies who go wear. Nancy told me about a dress she wanted to wear to the symphony. I told her I'd like to see her in it sometime. George threw the ducks bread he had dipped bread in his wine. Marni thought the ducks might get drunk and drown. They were lying back on their blanket with their heads toward the water when George started reciting poetry. I've seen him work this move before.

"I knew a woman, lovely in her bones
When small birds sighed, she would sigh back at them;
Ah, when she moved, she moved more ways than one

The shapes a bright container
can contain!"

I threw one of my shoes at George and hit him in the stomach after a few lines.

"Very good — good humor," he said, and he went on:

"Of her choice virtues only
gods should speak
Or English poets who grew up
on Greek
(I'd have them sing in chorus,
cheek to cheek).
How well her wishes went! She
stroked my chin,
She taught me Turn, and
Counter-turn, and Stand;
She taught me Touch, that
undulant white skin;
I nibbled meekly from her
proffered hand;
She was the sickle; I, poor I, the
rake,
Coming behind her for pretty
sake
(But what prodigious mowing
we did make)."

We listened as he swayed half drunk through his words — not like a poet, or a high school teacher, but as someone who had seen the words happen — someone the words belonged to — like a dancer owns a dance. I'd heard him say the poem once before, and I asked him if he made it up. He said yes, but later he told me it's a poem by Theodore Roethke called "I Knew a Woman." He showed it to me in one of his books. At one time I tried to memorize it because of the way he said it and brought it to life. I don't fool much with it anymore.

Nancy wanted to go on a walk, so I took her hand and we got up. We walked up the hill to the statue of St. Louis. Saint Louis was a king of France, either the eighth or sixteenth, I can't remember which. He sits on top of a huge, iron horse, ready to charge into battle. The sword is a slightly different color green than the rest of the statue because the original one was stolen. They replaced it, and it was stolen again, so finally they had to weld one in place. This is what I told Nancy as we stood up by it. She probably already knew it because she is from St. Louis, too, but she let me go on about it the way girls will let you do when you are first getting to know them. I told her maybe we could go to the symphony with her wearing that dress she was talking about. "It's a date," she said. Then I couldn't think of anything else to say. She looked up with these big eyes of hers and put her hands on my waist. I kissed her then and she let me and we kissed for a while.

We could hear Marni laughing as we walked down the hill to the water.

George was drinking wine out of one of her espadrilles when we got back to the lagoon. I have seen him do it before. It is one of his moves — one of his corny romantic maneuvers. He dreams them up, writes them as scenes, and acts them out.

IV

This last part goes fast and I'm reluctant to tell you, but it is what I set out in the first place to do. Really it's just another part of the story. We had run out of wine at the park, so we walked to the Majestic to get a twelve pack and took it to the apartment. We watched part of a Madonna concert on MTV and had a couple bottles, but Marni was pretty silly by this time, and getting on my nerves, so I asked Nancy if she wanted to go to bed. It was dark in the hall because the light had burned out and we hadn't bothered to get one yet so I walked behind Nancy with my hands around her hips as we shuffled our way to my room. George poked his head in after a few minutes later and asked me to help him get Marni to bed because she had passed out. We carried her into George's room and dropped her on the bed. George turned out the light and said he'd see me in the morning.

Nancy and I were almost asleep when we heard Marni.

"You Bastard!" she screamed, "You Fucking Bastard!" She was crying and hitting George with her hands when we got to George's room.

Nancy helped Marni get dressed and tried to calm her down. She said, "Alex, help me get her to the car, she can hardly stand." I held Marni up in the elevator, got her in the back seat, and watched them drive off.

Nancy left without saying anything else to me — not a word. I don't hold it against her, because, really there weren't words for it. George was drunk and I didn't want to deal with him, so I told him he'd really fucked up and went back to bed.

"G'night to you too, you bastard," he said into his pillow as I closed his door.

It wasn't more than an hour when they burst through the door, smashed it to bits, the three of them. One of them was Marni's brother and the other two were friends of his, I guess. I didn't ask. Marni's brother pinned George on the bed

and grabbed him by the throat. "That's how you treat my sister? You can't get what you want when she's awake, so you get her passed out drunk? You picked the wrong girl, champion!"

They beat the hell out of George; bruised several ribs, beat his head against the bed frame, stomped on his hands. I couldn't do much because there were three of them, but I did what I could to get them off George. They got a piece or two of me, but I can take care of myself pretty well from growing up where I did. One of them said, "Marni said just the small one." The brother said "Here's for the tall bastard roommate," as he hit me dead in the eye. I could have blocked him, but I figured he felt I had it coming. He kicked George in the head one last time before they all left.

The building supervisor came up a couple minutes later to see what went on. He looked around for a minute and asked me what the hell happened. "Why don't you get some new doors in this place?" I told him.

We didn't tell the Brooks or my dad the real story. The story was that we were robbed, that some guys beat George up because he wouldn't give them money. The supervisor scared them off with a shotgun.

Marni quit the symphony, and George was trying to get well in the hospital. Nancy and I didn't speak to each other at work except about the orders. Everyone in the office wanted to know what had happened. I called Nancy from the Majestic one night to see if she'd meet me for a drink. She was on the other line when I called and said she'd call me back at the bar. After an hour or so, I figured that if she didn't want to see me she had her reasons. We touch each other's lives so briefly, you see. Part of what we're doing is learning how to treat each other. You have to know the appropriate times to open and close your mouth. One way or another you have to keep your thing together. Sometimes it's best to let well enough alone.

In August the college kids left the symphony to go back to school. Now it's just the people who have been there for years and me. It's a second job for most of them. I'm getting pretty good at selling by now, making those bonuses, sweet talking. I got a letter from George two days ago. He is going to Hawaii to receive an award for his story in three weeks. It's going to be published next month in a journal in Oregon. He's getting a trip and $500 out the deal. He says I can come down to Arizona any time I want, because he's decided to stay a while, six months maybe.

V

I took my dad to the symphony last week for his birthday. I got him to put on a coat and a tie — he looked good — happy. We had coffee and shared a pastry during the intermission, looked at the women in their beautiful dresses, waited ten minutes in line for the bathroom. He fell asleep once or twice during the performance, but he hung in there most of the time. Afterward he said, "Alex, the music is so beautiful. It can lull you to sleep, but you can almost still hear it. I remember times when your mother and I were young and we would dance. I wasn't a dancer, but I could put my feet in the right places when I danced with her. There aren't words for that music tonight."

When I try to say Theodore Roethke's poem in my mind I can't remember the words very well. All I can remember is George's pauses and the ducks in the lagoon, Nancy's dress she talked about, King Louis charging into battle. I try not to think of that much. Some people don't think much of George after all this got around. Word always does manage to get around. I don't blame them. But you have to understand it's hard to quit being friends with someone at the drop of a hat once you've lived with him and known him for some time — really, no matter what he does. It's not worth the time to think of what happened, or even what might have happened if things went differently. I've got other things to think about; what my father will do about his shop, college, lots of things.

Sometimes I prop my feet up on the window sill and look out at midtown. It's fall now, so sometimes I see geese from the park flying south. They fly in V-formation and call back and forth to each other. They have hundreds of miles to go, but seem content just in the getting there. I understand each has a job to do on the way. The elders lead the flock, certain younger geese learn the way to take their place someday, others scout for food. Sometimes they run into problems with weather or scavengers. One way or another, they make it all those miles south, to where it's warmer, and almost summer.

Good Morning!

Tim Fowler

my breath like kerosene
brain drumming loudly
still flesh, beaten numb
nicotine lingers in the air
smoke stranded, orphan of the night

glass of water, two certs
one aspirin, vice or versa
kick on some shoes
grab a book, find the door
struck blind, grab my shades
reality filtered to fit the mood

grass and ground throw my feet
cold pavement offers false security
late for class, plod faster
wait . . .
yesterday was friday.

Scared mother...

Kathy Hardy

Scared mother yet still a
Child. Old enough to play but
Can't afford the consequences of life.
Glamour, sex — you think it's all
Rolled together until the day never
Comes and you are left alone with nowhere
To turn — except within.

French Love Made in Penny Seats

Kirk Johnson

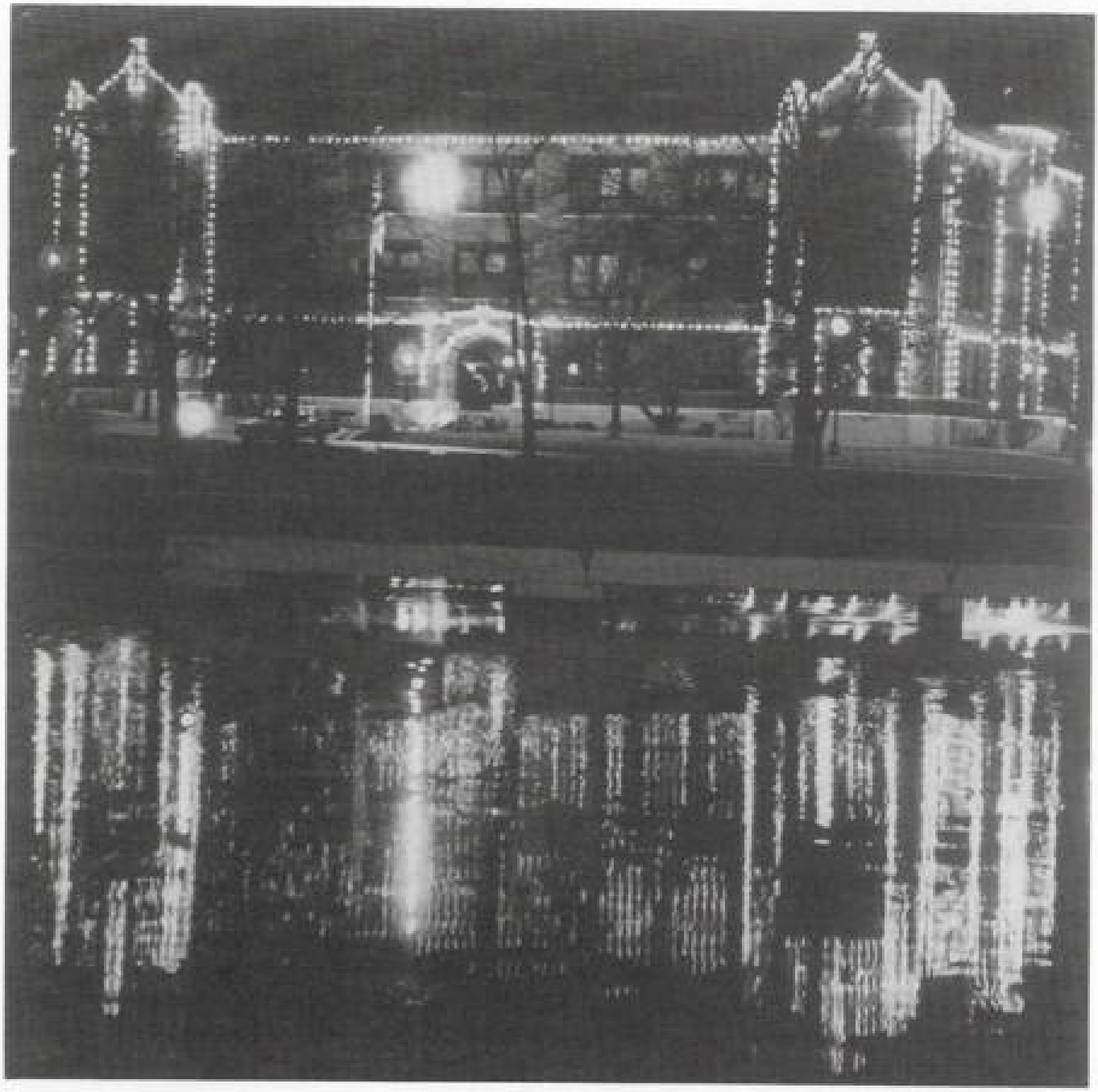
Soft dancers performed a human display
of notes that grew from far away.
Light leaps that balance did provide
A force that distance could not hide

A young couple sat in penny seats.
He leaned to place his love on her cheek
and met a smile that could not be swept,
from a fortune of beauty and grace adept.

Watching as dancers engaged in a move,
the couple was caught in a mental groove.
Seeing each other in every turn,
of dancers whose work made a hot love burn.

The curtain rose its height again.
The music blared, a dancer ran
across the stage and found his mate,
and in their minds arose a fate
of a life they saw together.

Photograph by
Shane Carrico



Good god?

Liz Blackwell

He was a fairly ordinary guy, at least by the standards of most. He was a bit of a slob, a shade lazy, yet perfectly entertaining at his best. That he was (from, of course, a human perspective). The ants, however, saw him in a much different light.

The ants lived in the alley where the stairs to his apartment were. His laziness, frowned on by many people, led him to toss his garbage out the window and into the alley from time to time. His garbage, though, was manna to the ants.

It really is an interesting tale, the way the whole thing came about. When he moved into the apartment, the ants found that some force had suddenly thrust itself into their lives. And, they could not explain it. This was most disturbing for many of the ants (particularly those who liked to feel in control of things), so they began trying to explain just exactly what this thing was that had interrupted their lives.

As time progressed, the ants gave the force a name, Good. And in describing the nature of Good, they began to say: "Good is good." But really, none of the ants got anywhere with it or understood what Good was like any better.

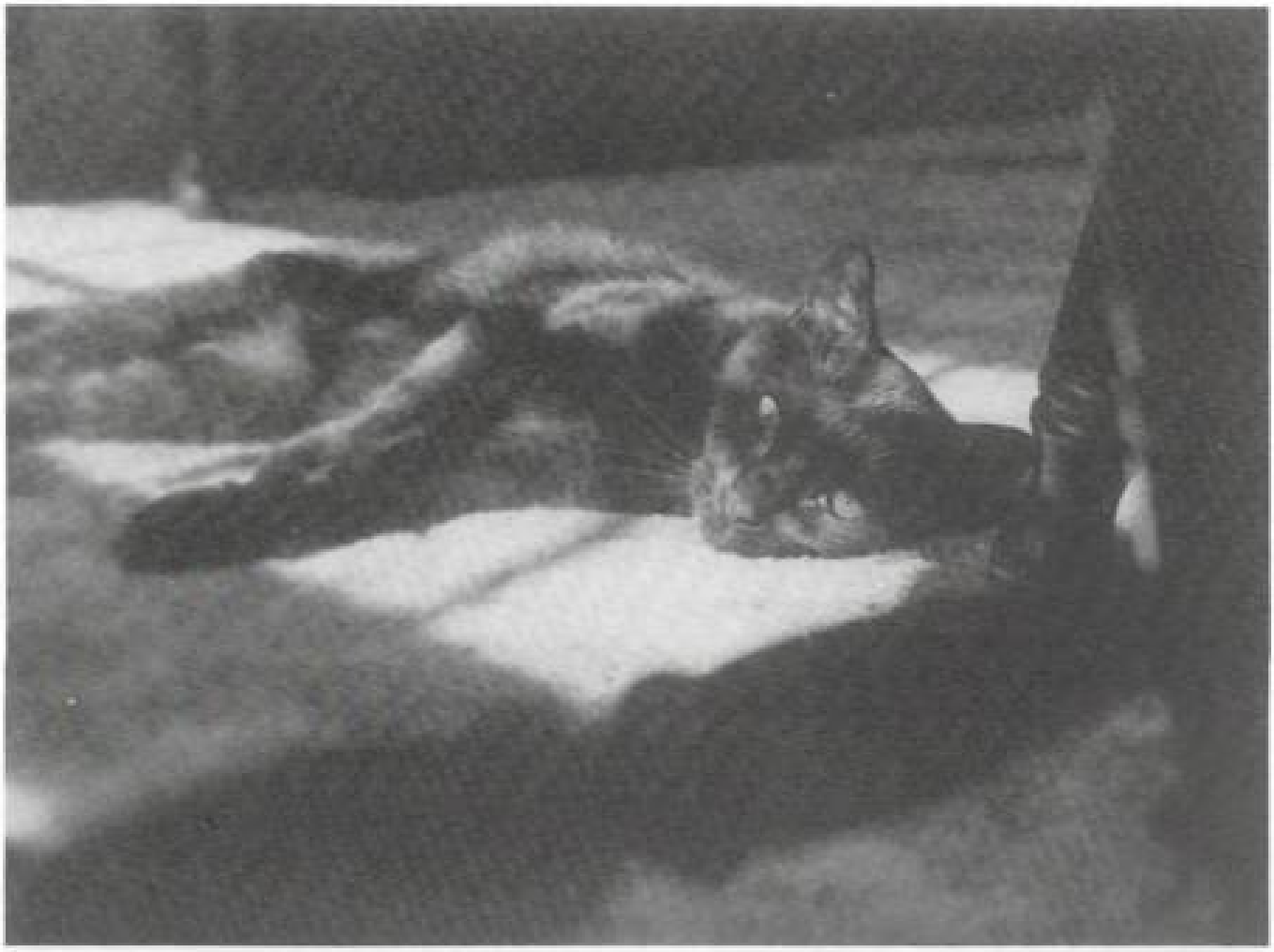
Occasionally Good was not good by our standards. However, since it had already been established that Good was good, the ants had to change their definition of good, and struggle to explain how the things that Good did which seemed bad were really good. Sometimes Good came home drunk and, in his staggering around, would trample on the ant hill. The ants began to look for patterns to explain why Good would do this.

As is often the case when people really want to find something, the ants were able to find the patterns they were looking for, whether they really existed or not. They said: "Good only does this after we have done or failed to do [such and such]." So they passed laws saying that no one could do or fail to do certain things. Worry and despair swept through the colony as the ants hoped that they were right about what Good did and did not like.

As time passed, the ants established a great number of laws. They decided that Good would like it if they told other ant colonies about him. So they did. Sometimes, however, the other colonies flatly refused to believe what our ants said about Good.

Some had had a very different experience with Good, and some had never seen or heard about him before. But our ants thought the other ants should believe what they told them about Good, after all they had experienced him and he was very real to them. So they killed the other ants when they refused to believe. Oddly, all of this was going on because of a fairly ordinary guy who hardly even knew that the ants existed. But to them Good was good.

It's been awhile since Good moved out of the apartment, and the ants are beginning to look for new patterns to explain why Good has stopped feeding them. And just the other day I heard a man say: "Son, you shouldn't let money be your god." And the son replied in jest: "Father, then whatever *should* be my god?" Then the father replied "Your god should be God." And somehow, for some reason, I was reminded that "Good is good." And I wonder, what is really good, and what should really be our god?

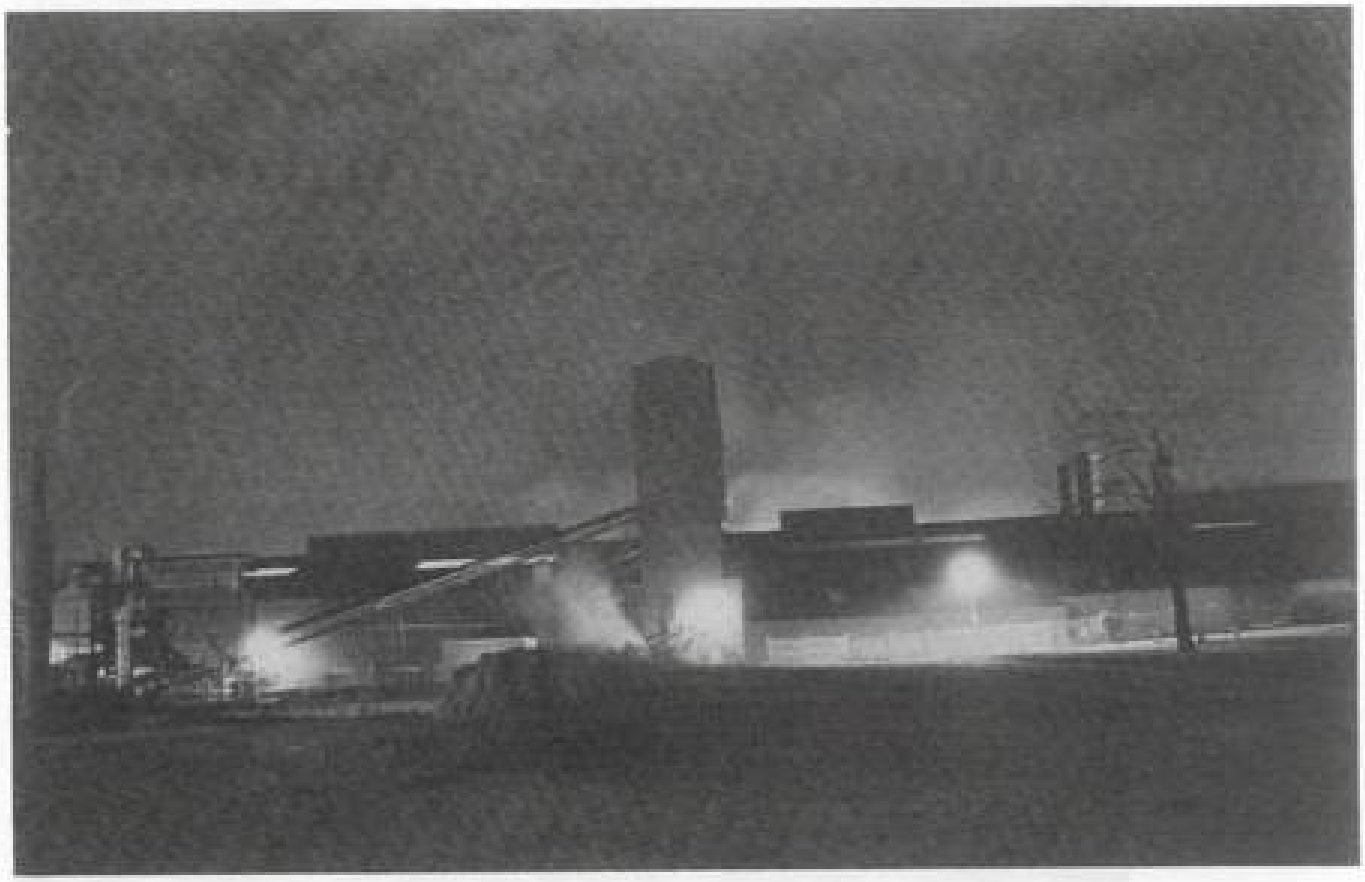


Photograph by
Aaron Reed

Quiet Place

Tim Fowler

lamps muddy the black,
cries break the still,
people never linger in the dim.
minds drawn safely to the obscene,
shouting signposts of man.
while what has importance waits
quiet, subtle, patient.
but hurry on to matters and meetings,
and pass by the quiet place.
of speaking wind and knowing tree.
attend to what cannot wait.
press hard the stone uphill.
for when men pause,
to feel and be the land around,
true life waits in dark pools,
a quiet place at night.



Photograph by
Shane Carrico

Photograph by
Dan Hough

Fade To Black

Tim Fowler

lights on and off
flash before me,
voices echo through
a dazzling feast,
reality created by
my persistence of vision.

stay up late,
tape it one day
watch it another,
other lives on display
to watch while
I waste my own.

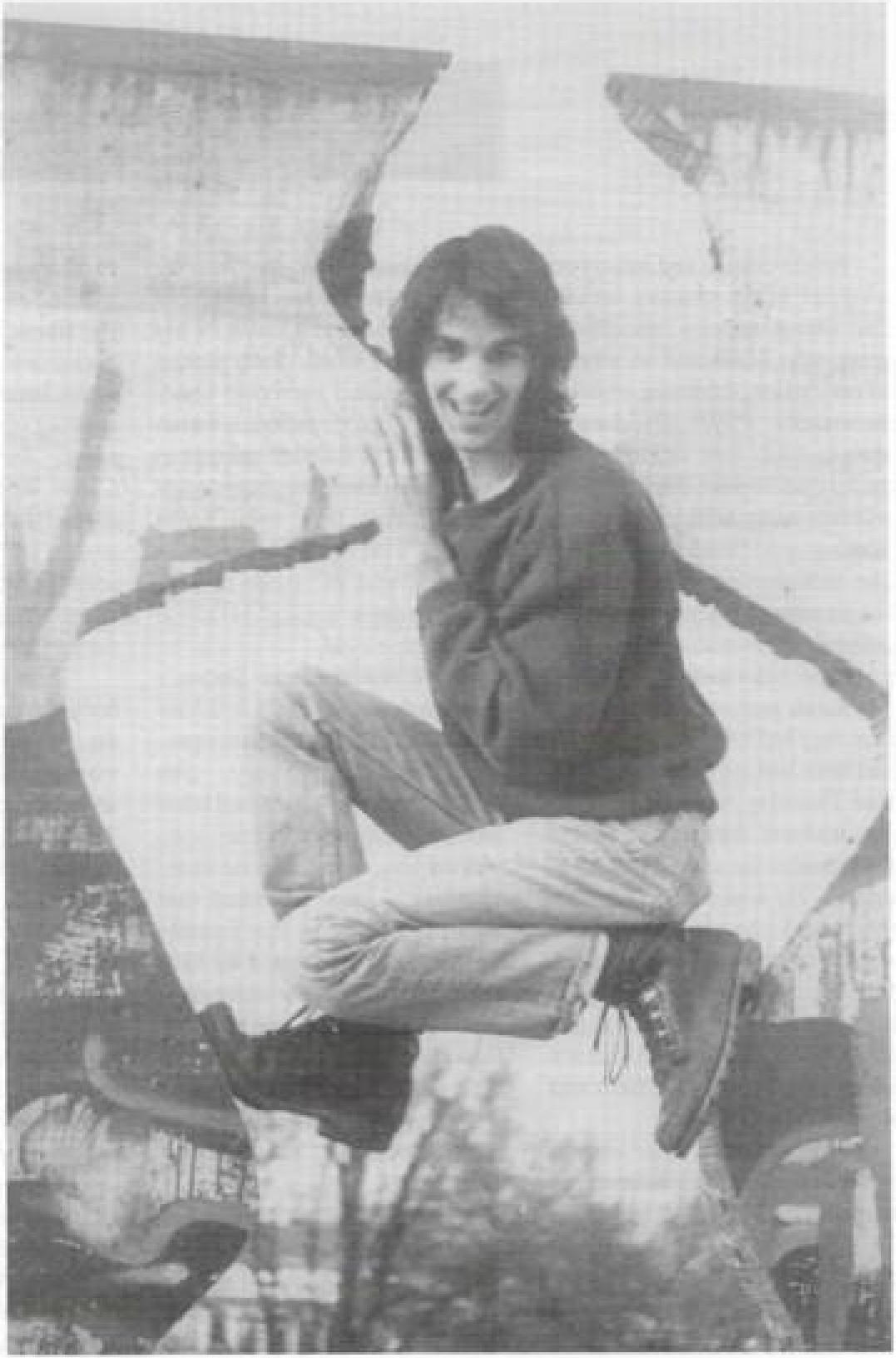
nothing to do
nowhere to be,
drain your mind
kill the senses
fade to black
turn off the tube.

Psychedelic Paint Job

Taylor Linneman

Standing only a notch below five-
feet while aged below the
Ability to possess a driver's license
that would enable travel
Without the escort of parental guidance
that should regulate her usage
Of paints that keep the old — young,
and the young — abused.

Haphazard, uneducated application
of the color wheel with the
End result — a disastrous psychedelic paint job
fooling only her ego and drunken peers.
It's possible she got the idea from one of
Phil Lesh's tie dyes — you know him:
The bass player from that new top forty band —
the "Dead"! My appreciation of
The fine music enables and invites me to
sarcastically slander those who still think
This band might be a new band on their first tour,
catering to kiddies who bought their
Tie Dyes at Marshall Fields, or maybe Mommy
bought it for them?
Meanwhile, poor little notch below five-foot
gets caught in a rain storm that
Sends her home for the last of Sesame Street.



photograph by
Kiki Shafé

The Kind of Love That Kills

Rebecca Erickson

Bright orange and red colors whipped in the country breeze. The sparse country churchyard group was blanketed in vibrant colors. Inside, solemnness stifled the visitors. Physically, Sarah's upright back was supported by the far middle pew. Mentally, she was in a sudsy bubble peacefully floating up to dangerous heights. The minister preached. Harsh beams reflected from the deeply polished redwood coffin. The mourners sang quietly.

Sarah remembered the first time they had met. Shawn's Place had been less crowded than usual that Thursday night. Sarah did not realized that it was earlier than usual as she scanned the small crowd. He was slumped against the initial-carved bar, thumbs hooked in his front jeans pockets. She recognized his angular non-stop jaw from previous nights at Shawn's. The only difference about tonight was that there was no woman at his side.

With only one other woman in the entire bar, he sauntered up to Sarah. "Hey, hon. Name's John. Let me buy y'a beer." He grew disinterested in their conversation as he peopled the bar door for new prey. Sarah knew his type, but she could not restrain herself. She disliked his arrogant womanizing, but desire burned deep inside her branding his name on her heart. She was secretly drawn to his tan and muscular build which were a result of his construction work. John picked up his beer and started to break off their conversation. Sarah blurted out in a casual attempt to keep John's attention. "My daddy had to fire five men from Johnson's oil rig last week."

"Oh, really?" some interest began to show throughout those cloudy blue eyes.

This one night at Shawn's began John and Sarah's relationship. John slowly began to appreciate Sarah's generosity. She pursued him, and he pursued other women. However, when John was willing, they had good times together. John admitted that Sarah's picnics in the country were fun. She also paid the bills on their trailer with her waitressing job. Sarah was convenient. However, John wanted a more daring and scandalous woman.

Sarah and John lived together for six months. They danced. They loved. They experienced. Sarah was desperately devoted. John was her dream. All she wanted now was a ring and children, but John continued to play the field. Sarah began to see less and less of John. He began spending, at the most, two nights a week in their trailer. One night she told him that she wanted him to marry her. He replied, "I need a beer."

Sarah's girlfriend came by to gossip one afternoon. The women drank beers in lawn chairs while soaking up the warm spring sunshine. "Sarah, John's been seeing Claire Beaumont." Sarah was silent. John was her man. Everyone knew that. People always asked her about him at the grocery store. Sarah was Kingsville's authority on John.

Three nights after talking with her girlfriend, Sarah saw John for the first time in a week. A thousand phrases of hatred, passion, and tenderness fought on her lips. This was the man whom she both loved and hated. Later, sitting at his funeral, she knew he was the only man that she would ever love.

The singing stopped and people filed out of the church giving their sympathetic condolences to Claire Beaumont and John's mother and stepfather. The only attention Sarah received from the townspeople was their sharp-bladed looks and back-stabbing remarks. Sarah wandered down the aisle and was met outside on the church steps by the same two uniformed men who had escorted her to the church. They lead her down the wooden steps and opened the back door of the police car for her.

Illustration by
Stephanie Oehler

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