

JANUS

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janus

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About the writers

by James F. Muench

Kelly Carlson is a freshman from St. Louis. She is a member of Kappa Kappa Gamma, and is undecided about her major at this time.

Dana Farlin is a freshman from Minier, Illinois. She is a Biology/Chemistry major, and a member of Kappa Alpha Theta.

Tamila Farmer is a senior from Manila, Arkansas. She is an English/Psychology major, and a member of Kappa Alpha Theta.

Mike Locke is a former student at Westminster, now residing in Kansas City.

Laura Main is a junior/senior from St. Louis. She is graduating early with a major in Computer Science, and is hoping to find a good job when she leaves. She is president of the Westminster College Independent Association, and suspect would love to be director.

David Moore is a former student at Westminster who is now living in Kansas City.

James F. Muench is a demented sophomore from Leawood, Kansas. His second biggest thrill was watching the Waltons sort gooseberries. His biggest thrill was writing these biographical sketches. He is an English major because none of the other departments would take him. He is a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon, and also a member of the Missouri State School for the Habitually Insane. He works for Radio Shack during the summer and plans to install a cheap stereo on the Space Shuttle to enable the astronauts to listen to Dr. Demento. He is also the winner of first prize in the 1984 English Department Writing Center Award for his essay, "Feet".

Calvin Phipps is a junior from Ponca City, Oklahoma, and a Psychology major.

Marla Poor is a freshman from Union, Mo. She is undecided on her major. She is a member of Kappa Alpha Theta, and her pledge mother is Lynn Malone. She adamantly hates see-saws, and she is presently boycotting the Wiethop Trucking Company.

Scott Rector, a junior from St. Louis, is an English major. He is a member of Delta Tau Delta, which he says compels him to love throwing frisbies. He enjoys living dangerously and his nickname is "Vito".

Lora Threm is a freshman from Chicago/Cleveland. Her nickname is "Rong-way", which is not surprising considering she can't decide where she is from, and also because she is always getting lost. She is an English major, a member of the Westminster College Independent Association, and a "Friend of Boris".

Dave Wiethop is a senior from Cape Girardeau. He is an English major and is extremely proud of his senior thesis, on which he received an "A". Dave is a member of Phi Gamma Delta, and says he is trying to get rid of his Southeast Missouri "whine". He swears he is making an honest attempt to speak through his mouth and not his nose.

by
Kelly Carlson

Janus

by Kelly Carlson

Sisters

Her silken skin, shadowed by auburn hair,
Her slender, tall silhouette clothed in white,
I see in her, this pretty maiden fair,
A vision of beauty new to my sight,
Picture of loveliness ne'er seen before,
Though she lived under the same roof as I,
It comes to me that I know her no more
Than a distant friend, and it makes me cry
To let myself know, on her wedding day,
That my sister has never been to me
A special someone childhood stories say
It is her natural duty to be,
But I think more of her than she'll e'er know;
I only wish that I could tell her so.

Dr. H.

The door opens exactly at 4:30 p.m. every Thursday. She walks with a brisk stride down the three steps leading from the kitchen of her house to the waiting room of her office. Her "Good afternoon" to the waiting parent and teenager is a crisp one as she waits for the boy, who hesitantly walks before her into her office.

Dr. H. sits in the same easy chair every time she enters her office, where she listens to her confused young patients. Her large dark eyes seem to drill into her subject's head, trying to extract his innermost feelings. She never says very much, just sits and waits patiently for the tears of frustration or anger to surface in the person sitting across from her in the high-ceilinged room which is filled with several pieces of furniture and dozens of small nicknacks to occupy nervous fingers. Amidst the tears of her patient she quietly questions, "What are you thinking?"

Her body communicates an air of confidence as she sits and waits for a response. Her long slender legs are delicately crossed, and her hands rest comfortably in her lap. The only features which convey the fact that she is listening are her eyes. They dart quickly back and forth as if she is reading at a rapid speed.

The person sitting across from her rocks slowly back and forth in his large rocking chair. He reddens with embarrassment and wonders what the hell she is thinking about him and what he has just revealed to her about his inner self. He wonders when she will speak and what deep, probing question will come out of her face, which is masked with an absence of expression.

When she does finally speak, the words come out in a quiet tone that still hints of a Spanish accent. He

tries to listen to her questions, but cannot resist letting his mind wonder about her. Her life is wrapped in a veil of mystery. Why must she be so secretive about her past? He will never learn where she grew up in Mexico or when she will get married. Yet, he must trust her. He must put his total trust in someone he really knows nothing about. He only knows that she cares about him. He can tell her anything in the world, and she will not be shocked or angry or amused. At the end of the fifty minute session she softly says, "It is time to stop."

She slowly gets up from her chair and follows him out of the room. She only nods briefly at the questioning parent. Then Dr. H. briskly walks up the steps and closes the door of her personal life. The door will open again next Thursday at 4:30 p.m., and maybe next week the clouds of mystery that surround her will dissipate a little more.

Freedom of Choice

by Kelly Carlson

Stage Directions:

Setting is James' bedroom in the dormitory on the campus of Harvard University.

Walls are covered with modern art prints. Long desk in foreground of set; covered with papers, art books, sketch pads, oil paints, and charcoal pencils.

Regular lighting focused on room.

4:00 p.m. on a Friday (the last day of April).

Characters:

James

Scott

Tom

Mr. Blassie

Dr. Witherfield

Scene One:

James slowly enters room. He is holding torn envelope in his right hand. He has worried look on his face as he sits down at the desk and reads the letter silently.

Tape recording of James reading the letter is turned on as he begins reading to himself.

James: (on tape) Mr. Blassie (pause) the purpose of this letter is to inform you of your eligibility for law school. In order to be accepted into law school you must have an average of 3.7. As of now, your average is 3.5 as a result of a grade of C in Professor Scott's torts class. In order to raise your average to an acceptable level, you must make a 95% on your final examination in that course. Examinations will begin on Monday, May 12. All students accepted into law school will be notified at the end of the spring semester in order to prepare for the fall term. Sincerely yours, Dr. Arthur J. Witherfield, Chancellor, Harvard University.

(James throws letter on desk and leans back in chair)

James: What am I going to do now? (sigh)

(Scott runs into the room)

Scott: Hi, James, how's it going?

James: I've seen better days.

Scott: Hey, what's the matter with you? I know finals are coming up, but you'll live. If you fail, you fail.

James: That's easy for you to say; you don't have a famous Park Avenue lawyer for a father,

a guy who is going to see red when he finds out about the mess I'm in.

Scott: What mess?

(James gives him the letter, and Scott quickly reads it.)

Scott: Whew! This is one time I'm glad my dad isn't a friend of Witherfield's.

James: This is about the hundredth time I've wished he wasn't. I probably would have never made it to Harvard if it wasn't for Thomas Blassie's "connections".

Scott: Would you have been happier if you had never stepped onto the campus?

James: I wish the words Harvard and law were foreign to my vocabulary.

Scott: (picking up a sketch from the desk) It's like I keep telling you James, you should just have it out with your old man. Tell him law just isn't your bag. Anybody can see by these things (raises sketch) that you were born to be an artist. (throws sketch onto desk)

James: (straightening up in chair) That is a feat which is a lot easier said than done. My father would probably disinherit me if I quit law. Ever since I was born he has expected me to be a lawyer. He always gets what he wants.

Scott: Yeah, your old man is a tough character. (pause) Well, you do what you want, but I think you should just tell him that you don't want to be a lawyer. If he cares about you he'll respect your wishes.

James: I don't think he cares enough to sit by and let his only son walk away from a family practice that started with my great-grandfather.

Scott: It's a difficult situation, James, but you're strong enough to handle it.

James: Thanks for the vote of confidence.

Scott: No sweat, I'm full of advice, besides other things, (smiles but then grows serious) but then I'm not going to inherit 20 million either. Just remember, you're the one who has to live with your decision. Your family's total happiness doesn't depend on your choice of a career. (he turns to leave, pauses, and turns

around) but yours might. (he leaves)

(James stares at letter, lights fade out)

Scene Two:

James' bedroom. On left side of stage black curtain will be drawn back, and Mr. Blassie's office will be seen in back of stage of left of James' room.

Two days have elapsed since Scene One. Mr. Blassie is sitting at his desk. James sitting on his bed painting. Father calls James; phone rings twice before James reaches for it.

8:00 p.m.

James: Hello?

Mr. B.: (briskly) Hello, James, (pause) how are you?

James: (stiffly) I'm fine, sir.

Mr. B.: How are your studies going?

James: Fine.

Mr. B.: I talked to Chancellor Witherfield this morning (pause—James gets visibly tense). He informed me of your situation (reaches for memo) in uhmm . . . Professor Scott's course. (pause) What do you have to say about it?

James: Nothing, sir.

Mr. B.: Well, you have a lot of work ahead of you to raise that average. I want your name on that acceptance list.

James: You could get it there even if I couldn't.

Mr. B.: I think it is about time I stopped having to bend the rules for you. James, you have to start being self-sufficient. Lawyers must be able to handle themselves under pressure. I am confident that you will make the grade.

James: What if I don't want the grade? (said sarcastically)

Mr. B.: We have discussed this before, James. I do not want to hear anything about your so-called "artistic talent".

James: Father, I'm not interested in law. I like to . . .

Mr. B.: Now see here, James. (pause—then coolly) I will say this once and then I will consider the matter closed; if you leave law you leave home (pause) permanently. Good luck on the test. I will give your mother your love. (pause) Good-bye.

(Mr. B. hangs up, lights dim on his office, and curtain is pulled across left side of stage. At same time James slams down the phone in anger.)

James: I hate him. I hate him and his damn law. (He yells the line and pounds fist on the wall.)

(Tom enters room. He hesitantly knocks on open door and James turns around.)

Tom: I thought I felt the house move.

James: Sorry.

Tom: Want to talk about it?

James: My father . . . (sits in desk chair)

Tom: Scott told me about your problem. (moving to sit down on bed)

James: Well, I've received my ultimatum.

Tom: Bad?

James: Leave school and I leave home (pause) permanently.

Tom: You've got to be kidding!

James: Oh (drawn out) no! I'm serious. If there's one thing you can count on from my father it's that he always means what he says. He's not the type to pull strings to get his son into college, and then stand by and watch him quit.

Tom: No more cars, yachts, vacations in Europe, free handouts . . . I don't know James, your career as an artist could be a very expensive one. (pause) Couldn't you do art as a pastime? Law isn't what I would call a creative career, but if it gives you wealth and prestige . . .

James: (under his breath, in a sing-song but sarcastic voice) Who could ask for anything more? (leans head down and clasps hands over his neck — looks up when Tom speaks)

Tom: I guess my advice sounds pretty shallow.

James: It's not that money is so terrible. It's just that I need something more. I can't find my happiness in a pile of green paper. I've been surrounded by money all my life. Sure, it has made life easy, but easy isn't happy.

Tom: And art makes you happy?

James: When I draw, all my senses come alive, (pause) I feel alive. Tom, if I had to sit be-

Freedom of Choice

Kelly Carlson

hind a desk five days a week, all the life inside of me would drain away. My body would be an empty shell.

(Tom gets up and slaps James softly on the back)

Tom: You're in a tough spot, James, but it'll be all right. You can make the decision (pause) the one that's right for you. (he exits through the door)

James: But how can I be sure what's right for me?

(lights fade out)

Scene Three:

James is at his desk. All of his artistic materials are pushed to one side of the desk, and open texts and notebooks are strewn over the desk top. He is studying intently. There is a knock at the closed door.

James: (looking over his shoulder) Come in.

(Tom enters and sits on bed)

Tom: Hi, how's it going? We missed you at dinner.

James: (turning to sit backwards in his chair) I had a lot of things to do, and I wasn't very hungry.

Tom: You've really been cracking the books hard the last couple of days. Does that mean you've made a decision?

James: No, I haven't decided anything yet. I just want to keep all of my options open.

Tom: Do you think you can get the grade you need?

James: I know I can. I know this stuff so well (he motions toward the books) that I could recite the court cases in my sleep.

Tom: Well, from what I hear about Scott's class you have to practically memorize everything in order to get a decent grade.

James: Trust me, it's memorized. (he smiles) I guess the only thing left to do now is get a good night's sleep so I'm ready at 8:40 tomorrow morning.

Tom: (smiling and rising from bed) I can take a hint. It's late. I better let you get some rest. Good luck (pause) with everything.

James: Thanks, I'm going to need it,

Tom: Good night.

James: (as Tom goes out the door) Night.

(Lights fade out slowly and then go up quickly. New light is filtered)

(James is in bed. Filtered light dimly fills the room. James is tossing and turning with dreams. Tape recorder operated off-stage supplies all dialogue which gets faster and faster as the scene continues.)

James: The purpose of this letter is to inform you . . . In order to be accepted into law school you must . . .

Scott: I'm glad that my dad isn't a friend of Witherfields . . . You were born to be an artist . . . Just have it out with your old man . . . Just tell him that you don't want to be a lawyer . . .

Mr. B.: I want your name on that acceptance list . . . Leave law, you leave home . . .

Tom: You can make the decision . . .

Mr. B.: Leave home, leave home, leave home . . .

Scott: Just have it out, have it out, have it out . . .

James: In order to be accepted, to be accepted, to be accepted . . .

Scott: You don't have to be a lawyer, be a lawyer, be a lawyer . . . Have it out, have it out, have it . . .

Mr. B.: Leave home, leave home, leave, leave, leave . . .

(James sits upright in bed very fast; the sound of an alarm clock going off by his bed has awakened him; he is all sweaty; he slowly puts head in hands; lights fade out)

Scene Four:

While alarm clock is going off the curtain is pulled back to reveal Mr. Blassie's office. Lights come up on his office only. A phone begins to ring in unison with the alarm clock. Mr. Blassie is at his desk reading. As he answers the phone the alarm clock is turned off.

Mr. B.: (into phone) Yes (in flat voice; listens to reply) send him in. (he rises and buttons his jacket; he walks around his desk towards the closed door)

(James enters room, father and son shake hands)

Mr. B.: Hello son, it's good to see you.

James: Hello sir.

(Mr. B. moves back to his chair and motions for James to sit down; James does so; he is notably tense)

Mr. B.: I did not expect to see you until this evening.

James: I just got into town. I haven't been home yet.

Mr. B.: Well, I know your mother is anxious to see you.

James: Yes sir. (he shifts in his chair)

Mr. B.: Chancellor Witherfield called me yesterday. (pause) Son, I'm proud of you. I knew you could do it if you put your mind to it. I guess you're looking forward to some vacation time before starting law school in August.

James: I really haven't thought much about it, sir.

Mr. B.: Have you sent your notification of acceptance to the dean yet?

James: No sir, I haven't.

Mr. B.: Well I suppose there isn't any hurry. When do you plan on sending it in?

James: (taking a deep breath; he looks down at the floor and then directly at his father) I'm not sending it in sir.

Mr. B.: What are you talking about?

James: I'm not returning to school for the fall term.

Mr. B.: James you must be joking. You cannot be considering forsaking a prestigious and prosperous law career for some wild artistic fantasy. That's what we're talking about here isn't it, your artistic dreams. (last line is said sarcastically and anger is visible on his face)

James: (growing angry) It is not a fantasy. Art is what I'm interested in, and I'm good at it.

Mr. B.: I'm good at tennis, but I don't want to make a career out of it.

James: I should have known better than to come here. (he rises) I can't talk to you, I never could. All you care about is your precious reputation and family name.

Mr. B.: Is that what you truly believe? You think that I am so superficial to only be concerned

with my standing in the community?

(James only stares at his father; he is standing halfway between his chair and the door)

Mr. B.: (in more calm voice) James, this law firm is very important to me. My grandfather started his career in a cramped office on 63rd street. Our family has built this business up to be one of the most impressive law firms in the state of New York, if not in the country. All of it could be yours, but you want to throw it away. I just can't understand you.

James: That's the whole problem, you can't understand me. All you can understand is opulence and power. Those things aren't important to me. Doing what I want to do is important.

Mr. B.: What if what you want to do leaves you penniless and in the street? (sarcasm heard in his voice)

James: Then I'll draw sitting on the sidewalk. (equal sarcasm in reply; he continues in a serious voice) Dad (pause) I love you and mother very much, but if your love for me depends on what career I choose then I guess I'm going to have to live without that love. (he turns, walks to the door and opens it part way)

Mr. B.: Wait, James (pause) please. (James stays at door but turns around to face his father) Son, I don't want you to walk away. Your mother and I do love you. It's just that ...

James: It's just that you love your lifestyle and business more. (said in a matter-of-fact way)

Mr. B.: No, it isn't that; but tradition is important to me. Maybe some day you'll understand family pride and how important it is to have your son working for the same values and goals as yourself.

James: Maybe. But I guess I'll have to learn my own way. I couldn't enjoy my life always feeling that I'd sold out.

Mr. B.: We all sell out in some way, James.

James: I suppose that's true, (pause; then James looks directly at his father) but I'm not ready to call it quits yet.

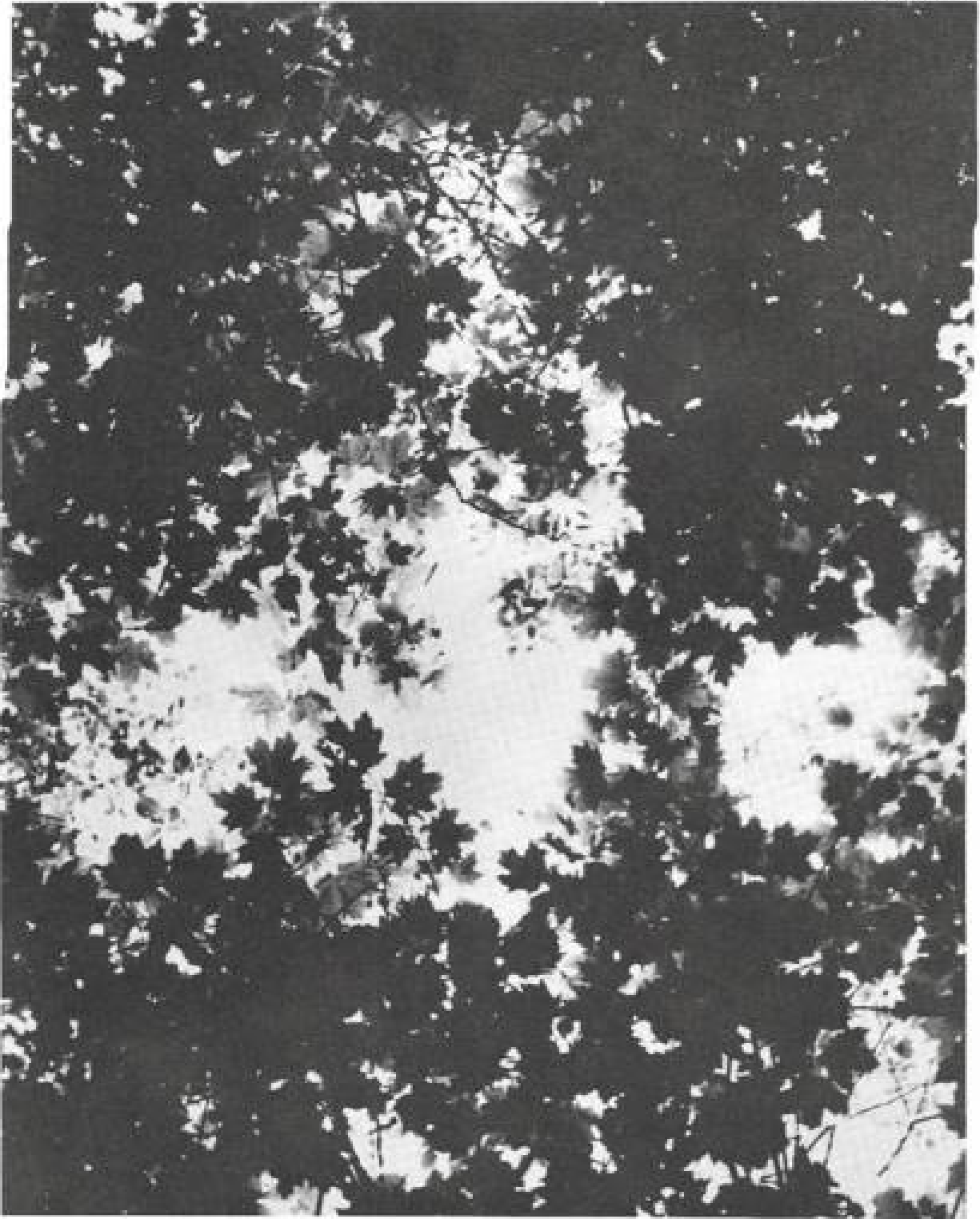
(James turns and walks out, closing door after him; Mr. B. is seated in his chair, staring at closed door; curtain closes)

THE END

Janus

Maple Sun Chickens

Photo by CARL COPEK



by
Dana Farlin

by Dana Farlin

Star

Star,
In you I see
The burning of
A hundred candles
For the love of
One.

Light,
Dazzling in beauty,
Soft in its way
Diffuses to the dreams of
Men.

Sound,
Not needed in
Your spectrum,
Is heard by my
Eyes.

Touch,
I cannot imagine
I can feel in
Dreams, but
Find only in
Death.

Nightmare

The coal black night
Touched with fear,
Sounds of shoes
Tapping in nightmarish
Rhythm,
Echoing like a ghoulish
Wedding March,
A never-healing scar
That mars the soul.

Haiku

The spectrum's bright hues
Held safe between sky and earth
Imprisoned, but free.

Astronomy

Spinning, swirling stars
Sparkling like the children's eyes
Who stare with wonder
Astronomy forgotten.
Nature's beauty, child's delight.

Mare Crisium

The Sun was setting
And as She descended
She enveloped Her lover,
The Earth, in Her ardent embrace.

The Moon was rising
And as She surveyed Her realm
She saw the passion
Of Her adversary, and was envious.

"He is mine!" She cried,
And for a moment
Two wills of steel
Were pitted against one another.

But the night sky
Was the territory of the Moon
And the stars
Were Her seconds.

The Moon had won the first battle
But dawn would bring
A new conflict to the Heavens
And dawn was the Sun's domain.

by
Tamila Farmer

Janus

by Tamila Farmer

There is no wind today

There is no wind today.

Yesterday it blew for hours, pushing
Leaves out of trees and onto the ground.

I waited in the park until dusk, but
You never came.
The wind swirled my hair in my face;
No one saw me cry, and the
Wind dried my face and cooled my hot cheeks.

But today there is no wind
And I am not waiting for you in the park.
Last night the snow fell and
I am so cold.

by
David Jones

by David Jones

The Ashes of Christmas

John stood at the living room window, and stared out at the icy Christmas tree in the front yard. The lights flashed on and off. The lights of the tree faded together as tears pooled in his eyes. How could Christmas ever be the same? The gaiety of the tree repulsed him.

"Chris is dead, and that son-of-a-bitch tree is blinking its damn lights like nothing happened," he felt as if he needed to unleash his anger somewhere, but could not think of a way of doing it. Four hours before, Chris had been alive, although sunk in a pall of depression, and now he was dead by his own hand.

"Shot himself in the head." John had been told by the voice on the other end of the phone as he wiped the sleep from his eyes. "His brother found him in his bedroom. He hadn't even taken off his coat. The body slumped in a wooden chair in the corner of the room. There was no note, only an ashtray with a half-smoked Marlboro twisted out in the ashes."

John could imagine his friend twisting out the ember of the cigarette with an air of finality, and preparing to end his journey in an unsatisfying world. "God," he thought, "Could he have known what he was doing?"

Death. Death. Death. The word seemed to mean very little. John had had very little contact with it before this. He could remember staring into the coffin of his grandfather as a small child, and seeing the others around him crying. He had tried to cry, but could not. He could only stare at the lifeless form that had make-up caked on its face, and flowers in its stiff blue hands. The logical realities of death ran through his head. Chris will no longer play frisbee, golf, drive recklessly, or outdrink the rest of the group. Never again would he show up unannounced and watch TV and discuss the world with John and his father. It couldn't be. A cold chill ran down his spine. It was true.

"Why?" He asked as he stared into the flashing colors of the Christmas tree, that blurred into a confusion of color through the tears. The previous evening rambled through his mind. Chris was only a smoky figure in the background of every scene. He had been very quiet, and had that belligerent air about him that he had developed in basic. John had played pool with Tim most of the evening, chugging beer, and exchanging fraternal war stories. They

both had sensed that something was wrong. Something seemed to have been eating Chris since he had gotten back from basic training at the end of the summer. Chris had drifted away from the crowd. The first semester of college had widened the gap. They had all gone through the motions, but they could all sense that the comradeship was gone. The night had gone as many others had, except they all knew that they were just passing time.

John could remember leaving Chris off at his house only moments before Chris must have taken his life. The car pulled up in front of the dark house which was covered with snow and icicles. Chris saluted his friends, and had said something, but all that John could remember was the icy breath that dissipated into the crisp night air. He walked up the walk to the dark house, and disappeared behind the large polished walnut door, delivering himself to his cool military execution.

"Would you like a brownie and some coffee?" Chris' mother asked. Her voice broke John from his trance.

"Yes, thank you," he said as he looked around the room. Three other young men sat around in the living room. John felt immediately uncomfortable, but would not allow himself to drift again. Chris' mother served them all, while her husband thanked another couple that had brought their condolences and a beef casserole. Something about this ritual seemed strange, and the somberness in which it was being performed made it even stranger. Chris' father thanked the couple in a very businesslike tone, and closed the polished door behind them.

With the door closed, John felt slightly claustrophobic. The living room, and apparently the rest of the house, had been scrubbed, as if to clean from it the stain of death. A small Christmas tree stood in the corner of the room under which were presents that would never be opened. There was a disconcerting odor of lysol and evergreen. Death hung in the air. Chris' siblings sat huddled on the couch, sobbing, and occasionally looking at Chris' friends with an accusing eye. Chris' brother, David, had found the body. His face was white and angry, and the reflection of his brother's corpse was frozen in his eyes. The younger brother and sister clung to him like traumatized monkeys. Tim, Paul, and Steve nibbled on their brownies, and stared down at the rug.

Chris' father sat by his wife on the loveseat, and blew his nose loudly into a handkerchief. "We hope that you will consider being pall-bearers. I know Chris would have wanted you all to..." He stopped and put his face in his hands. It was very quiet while he composed himself, as if none noticed his anguish. He looked back up and continued. All the young men agreed to be pall-bearers. The other two would be friends from the prep-school that Chris had attended in St. Louis. His father went over the tentative plans for the funeral with a strangely detached efficiency. Chris had only been dead a matter of hours.

"Chris is dead," Chris's father said. The words bit into John's mind like a razor. "But he did not die last night. He has been dead for some time now. Last night he just finished what he had begun a long time ago. We could no longer talk to him."

Steve mumbled something into the rug.

"What?" asked Chris' father.

"It's my fault. I should have known. He told me that he was bummin', and...I should have never let him go home."

"What did he say?"

"He kept making strange jokes about you disowning him, and about wrecking the car this summer, and something about not needing insurance anymore. When I asked him if he was bummin' out, he said, 'Yea, terminally'."

"It's not your fault, Steve," Chris' mother said. "You have been a good friend for years. It's only in the last year or so that Chris started really getting into trouble."

John could not tell whether she was directing her comment at the others or at Chris' friends from school, but it was obvious that she needed a place to discard the guilt of her son's wasted life.

"I know you boys drank, and I know Chris had even gotten high." She said it as if now the secret was out. Her comment fell on the floor. It was deadly quiet. John thought of all the beers that he had consumed with Chris, and wondered how this could have led him to such a violent act.

"Is it true that you told him that he was no longer your son, Mr. B?" Steve blurted out with a tactless hint of condemnation in his voice.

"Chris was not doing well in school." Chris' father in a confessional tone. "He went to become an engineer, and didn't crack a book all semester."

Then he started smoking that pot with those boys at school. I told him to shape up or ship out. No amount of yelling seemed to phase him. He had a thick skull."

John felt nauseous. He looked over at the mantle piece in order to focus his attention on something...anything. His eyes zeroed in on the sardonic smile of his friend in a neatly displayed frame. The picture sat in the middle of a wreath, and a candle burned on either side. John wondered what Chris would think if he were here. "He would probably enjoy it," he thought. "It is probably quite funny to watch us grope for some understanding, reaching out to each other for explanation, and then strike out at each other in fear. It was probably his intent to bring us all together with his naked hate, and make us feel the defeat of mortality."

The picture of Chris still burned in his mind as the line of cars snaked into the cemetery slowly to avoid sliding on the drizzly roads. Rows and rows of tombstones. "Death has been here before," John thought. The tombstones were like shells on an endless beach, where the names of men were covered daily by the sands washed in by the tides. The procession stopped, and everyone solemnly walked to the tent where Chris' body would be offered to the earth. The cold rain stung their faces as the priest read words that were to make them all feel better before going home as ignorant as they were when they came.

Ashes to ashes.

Janus

Whitewater Blackwood

Photo by CARL COPEK



by
Michael A. Locke II

Janus

by Michael A. Locke II

Ballet

They danced
tiptoed, tiptoed
caressing
the varnished
wood floors.

So moved,
the audience
yelled bravo, bravo.

And as the dancers
lived their lives on stage,
expressing who they were,
the violins
sang sorrowfully,
inciting more warmth
from the audience,

more compassion from
the onlookers,

a little more
expression
from those off stage.



Photo by CARL COPEK

Dream Geese



Photo by CARL COPEK

One Man's Ruins

by
Laura Main

by Laura Main

Rose in the Forest

A while ago I found myself
Lost and all alone
In the middle of a forest
And a million miles from home

With no one there to care for me
And evil all around
A thousand pairs of glowing eyes
That crept along the ground

When suddenly I came upon
A clearing in the trees
The melody of little birds
Was carried on the breeze

And there I saw a single rose
As much alone as I
A simple thing of beauty
And a pleasure to the eye

The comfort that it brought to me
Relieved me of my fears
A lovely light that shone on through
the prisms of my tears

I knelt and kissed the fragrant rose
And then began to cry
Because if I had picked the rose
I knew that it would die

And so I left my precious rose
And wandered off alone
Still searching for the proper path
To somehow lead me home

If only I could take my rose
And keep it close to me
But the forest is its home
and that's where it must always be

Beyond My Window

Beyond my window lies
a world
with tight seams
that need mending.
Things keep leaking out
and the threads unravel.

Beyond my window lies
a night
with warm wind
and milky whispering secrets
that tickle my ears.

I can be alone here
with my own sounds
and warmth
and darkness.
I don't need to let anybody in.

But voices call me
from the past
and the future—
call me to fly
beyond my window
and leave my heart behind.

clean before using

dead ivy on the walls of this
my home, my castle, my tomb
and faceless familiar figures
bouncing in the hall with laughter
that used to echo but doesn't anymore
because the girls have filled it
with soft tapestries and ferns
whose fragrance drifts me into
my room, my silent chamber
with books and shoes and a chair
that was found in a cellar someplace
and the men that brought it said
"clean before using" on a note
and taped it to the silly green vinyl
the same color as the bathroom tiles
that crack and crumble from the wear
of water now too-cold, now too-hot
as it burns my frozen fingers

by
David Moore

by David Moore

Dean's Night In

The old house was divided into two dwellings by a thin wall that passed on, with high fidelity, sounds on either side. On the north side were the Calmans. On the south side were the Jurgensons.

The Calmans — husband, wife, and eight-year-old son — had just moved in and, aware of the wall, they kept their voices down as they argued in a friendly way as to whether or not the boy, Dean, was old enough to be left alone for the evening.

"Shhhhh!" said Dean's father.

"Was I shouting?" said his mother. "I was talking in a perfectly normal tone."

"If I could hear Jurgenson pulling a cork, he can certainly hear you," said his father.

"I didn't say anything I'd be ashamed to have anybody hear," said Mrs. Calman.

"You called Dean 'baby,'" said Mr. Calman. "That certainly embarrasses him — and it embarrasses me."

"It's just a way of talking," she said.

"It's a way we've got to stop," he said. "And we can stop treating him like a baby too—tonight. We simply shake his hand, walk out, and go to the movie." He turned to Dean "You're not afraid, are you boy?"

"I'll be all right," said Dean. He was very tall for his age, and thin, and had a soft, sleepy, radiant sweetness nurtured by his mother. "I'm fine."

"Damn right!" said his father, clapping him on the back. "It'll be an adventure."

"I'd feel better about this adventure, if we could get a sitter," said his mother.

"If it's going to spoil the picture for you," said the father, "let's take him with us."

Mrs. Calman was shocked. "Oh — it isn't for children."

"I don't care," said Dean amiably. The who of their not wanting him to see certain movies, certain magazines, certain books, certain television shows, was a mystery he respected, even relished a little.

"It wouldn't kill him to see it," said his father.

"You know what it's about," she said.

"What is it about?" asked Dean innocently.

Mrs. Calman looked to her husband for help, and got none. "It's about a girl who chooses her friends unwisely," she said.

"Oh," said Dean. "That doesn't sound very interesting."

"Are we going, or aren't we?" said Mr. Calman

impatiently. "The show starts in ten minutes."

Mrs. Calman bit her lip. "All right!" she said bravely. "You lock the windows and the back door, and I'll write down the telephone numbers for the police and the fire department and the theater and Dr. Baldwin." She turned to Dean. "You can dial can't you, dear?"

"He's been dialing for years!" cried Mr. Calman.

"Sssssh!" said Mrs. Calman.

"Sorry," Mr. Calman bowed to the wall. "My apologies."

"Dean, dear," said Mrs. Calman, "what are you going to do while we're gone?"

"Oh, look through my microscope, I guess," said Dean.

"You're not going to be looking at germs, are you?" she said.

"Nope, just hair, sugar, dirt, stuff like that," said Dean.

His mother frowned judiciously. "I think that would be all right, don't you?" she said to Mr. Calman.

"Fine!" said Mr. Calman. "Just as long as the dirt doesn't make him dirty."

"I'll be careful," said Dean.

Mr. Calman winced. "Shhhh!" he said.

Soon after Dean's parents left, the radio in the Jurgenson's apartment went on. It was soft, at first — so soft that Dean, looking through his microscope on the living room coffee table, couldn't make out the announcer's words. The music was faint and dissonant — unidentifiable.

Gamely, Dean tried to listen to the music rather than to the man and woman who were fighting.

Dean squinted through the eyepiece of his microscope at a bit of hair far below, and he turned a knob to bring the hair into focus. It looked like a glistening brown cable flecked here and there with tiny spectra where the light struck the hair just so.

There — the voices of the man and woman were getting louder again, drowning out the radio. Dean twisted the microscope knob nervously, and the objective lens ground into the glass slide on which the hair rested.

The woman was shouting now.

Dean unscrewed the lens, and examined it for damage.

Now the man shouted back — shouted something awful, unbelievable.

Dean's Night In

David Moore

Dean got a sheet of lens tissue from his bedroom, and dusted at the frosted dot on the lens, where the lens had bitten into the slide. He screwed the lens back into place.

Dean looked down into the microscope, down into the milky mist of the damaged lens.

Now the fighting was beginning again — louder and louder, cruel and crazy.

Trembling, Dean sprinkled grains of salt on a fresh slide, and put it under the microscope.

The woman shouted again, a high, ragged, poisonous shout.

Dean turned the knob too hard, and the fresh slide cracked and fell in triangles to the floor. Dean stood, shaking, wanting to shout too, to shout in terror and bewilderment. It had to stop. Whatever it was, it had to stop!

"If you're going to yell, turn up the radio!" the man cried.

Dean heard the clicking of the woman's heels across the floor. The radio volume swelled until the boom of the bass made Dean feel like he was trapped in a drum.

"And now!" bellowed the radio, "for Katy from Fred! For Nancy from Bob, who thinks she's the greatest. For Arthur, from one who's worshipped him afar for six weeks! Here's the old Steve Miller Band and that all-time favorite, Jungle Love. Remember! If you have a dedication, call six-seven-eight, nine-three-thousand! Ask for All-Night Sam, the record man."

The music picked up the house and shook it.

A door slammed next door. Now someone hammered on a door.

Dean looked down into his microscope once more, looked at nothing — while a prickling sensation spread over his skin. He faced the truth: The man and woman would kill each other, if he didn't stop them.

He beat on the wall with his fist. "Mr. Jurgenson! Stop it!" he cried. "Mrs. Jurgenson! Stop it!"

"For Jerry from Glenda," All-Night Sam cried back at him. "For Ruth from Carl, who'll never forget last Tuesday! For Wilber from Mary, who's lonesome tonight! Here's the J. Giel Band with 'Love Stinks'."

Next door, dishes smashed, filling a split second of radio silence. And then a tidal wave of music drowned everything again.

Dean stood by the wall, trembling in his helplessness. "Mr. Jurgenson! Mrs. Jurgenson! Please."

"Remember the number!" said All-Night Sam.

"Nine-three-thousand!"

Dazed, Dean went to the phone and dialed the number.

"WORD," said the switchboard operator.

"Would you kindly connect me with All-Night Sam?" said Dean.

"Hello!" said All-Night Sam. He was eating, talking with a full mouth. In the background, Dean could hear clean, clear music, the original of what was rending the radio next door.

"I wonder if I might make a dedication," said Dean.

Part II

"Dunno why not," said Sam. "Ever belong to any organization listed as subversive by the Attorney General's office?"

Dean thought a moment. "Nossir—I don't think so, sir," he said.

"Shoot," said Sam.

"From Mr. Roger F. Jurgenson to Mrs. Jurgenson," said Dean.

"What's the message?" said Sam.

"I love you," said Dean. "Let's make up and start all over again."

The woman's voice was so shrill with passion that it cut through the din of the radio, and even Sam heard it.

"Kid — are you in trouble?" said Sam. "Your folks fighting?"

Dean was afraid that Sam would hang up on him if he found out that Dean wasn't a blood relative of the Jurgenson's.

"Yessir," he said.

"And you're trying to pull 'em back together again with this dedication?" said Sam.

"Yessir," said Dean.

Sam became very emotional. "O.K., kid," he said hoarsely, "I'll give it everything I've got. Maybe it'll work. I once saved a guy from shooting himself the same way."

"How did you do that?" said Dean, fascinated.

"He dialed up and said he was gonna blow his brains out," said Sam, "and I played 'Happy' by the Stones." He hung up.

Dean dropped the telephone into its cradle. The music stopped, and his hair stood on end. For the first time, the fantastic speed of modern communications was real to him, and he was appalled.

"Folks!" said Sam, "I guess everybody stops and wonders sometimes what the heck he thinks he's

doin' with the life the good Lord gave him! It may seem funny to you folks, because I always keep a cheerful front, no matter how I feel inside, that I wonder sometimes, too! And then, just like some Angel was trying to tell me, 'Keep going, Sam, keep going,' something like this comes along."

"Folks!" said Sam, "I've been asked to bring a man and his wife back together again through the medicine of radio! I guess there's no sense in kidding ourselves about marriage! It isn't any bowl of cherries! There's up and downs, and sometimes folks don't see how they can go on!"

Dean was impressed with the wisdom and authority of Sam. Having the radio turned up high made sense now, for Sam was speaking like the right-hand of God.

When Sam paused for effect, all was still next door. Already the miracle was working.

"Now," said Sam, "a guy in my business has to be half musician, half philosopher, half psychiatrist, and half electrical engineer! And! If I've learned one thing from working with all of you wonderful people out there, it's this: if folks would swallow their self-respect and pride, there wouldn't be any more divorces!"

There was affectionate cooing from next door. A lump grew in Dean's throat as he thought about the beautiful thing he and Sam were bringing to pass.

"Folks!" said Sam, "that's all I'm gonna say about love and marriage! That's all anybody needs to know! And now, for Mrs. Roger F. Jurgenson, from Mr. Jurgenson — I love you! Let's make up and start all over again!" Sam choked up. "Here's John Lennon and 'Starting Over'."

The radio next door went off.

The world lay still.

A purple emotion flooded Dean's being. Childhood dropped away, and he hung, dizzy, on the brink of life, rich, violent and rewarding.

There was movement next door — slow, foot-dragging movement.

"So," said the woman.

"Charlotte" said the man uneasily. "Honey—I swear."

"'I love you'," she said bitterly. "'Let's make up and start all over again'."

"Baby," said the man desparately, "it's another Roger F. Jurgenson. 'It's got to be!'"

"You want your wife back?" she said. "All right — I won't get in her way. She can have you, Roger — you mixed-up shit."

"She must have called the station," said the man.

"She can have you, you philandering, two-timing,

two-bit jack-ass," she said. "But you won't be in very good condition."

"Charlotte—put down that gun," said the man. "Don't do anything that you'll be sorry for."

"That's all being me, you worm," she said.

There were three shots.

Dean ran out into the hall and bumped into the woman as she burst from the Jurgenson apartment. She was a big, blonde woman, all soft and loose, like an unmade bed.

She and Dean screamed at the same time, and then she grabbed him as he started to run.

"You want candy?" she said wildly. "Bicycle?"

"No, thank you," said Dean tightly. "Not this time."

"You haven't seen or heard a thing!" she said. "You know what happens to squealers?"

"Yes!" cried Dean.

She dug into her purse, and brought out a perfumed mulch of face tissues, bobbypins and cash. "Here!" she panted. "It's yours! And there's more where that came from, if you keep your mouth shut." She stuffed it into his trousers pocket.

She looked at him fiercely, then fled into the street.

Dean ran back into his apartment, jumped into bed, and pulled the covers up over his head. In the hot, dark cave of the bed, he cried because he and All-Night Sam had helped to kill a man.

A policeman came clumping into the house very soon and he knocked on both apartment doors with his billy club.

Numb, Dean crept out of the hot, dark cave, and answered the door. Just as he did, the door across the hall opened and there stood Mr. Jurgenson haggard but whole.

"Yes, sir?" said Jurgenson. He was a small, balding man, with a hairline mustache. "Can I help you?"

"The neighbors heard some shots," said the policeman.

"Really?" said Jurgenson urbanely. He dampened his mustache with the tip of his little finger. "How bizarre. I heard nothing." He looked at Dean sharply. "Have you been playing with your father's gun again, young man?"

"Oh, nossir!" said Dean horrified.

"Where are your folks?" said the policeman to Dean.

"At the movies," said Dean.

"You're all alone?" said the policeman.

"Yessir," said Dean. "It's an adventure.

"I'm sorry I said that about the guns," said

Dean's Night In

David Moore

Jurgenson. "I certainly would have heard any shots in this house. The walls are thin as paper, and I heard nothing."

Dean looked at him gratefully.

"And you didn't hear any shots, either, kid?" said the policeman.

Before Dean could answer, there was a disturbance out on the street. A big, motherly woman was getting out of a taxicab and wailing at the top of her lungs. "Roger, baby."

She barged into the foyer, a suitcase bumping against her leg and tearing her stocking to shreds. She dropped the suitcase, and ran to Jurgenson, throwing her arms around him.

"I got your message, darling," she said, "and I did just what All-Night Sam told me to do. I swallowed my self-respect and here I am!"

"Rose, Rose, Rose—My Little Rose," said Jurgenson. "Don't ever leave me again." They grabbed each other affectionately, and staggered into their apartment.

"Just look at this apartment!" said Mrs. Jurgenson. "Men are just lost without woman!" As she closed the door, Dean could see that she was awfully pleased with the mess.

"You sure you didn't hear any shots?" said the policeman to Dean.

The ball of money in Dean's pocket seemed to swell to the size of a watermelon. "Yessir," he croaked.

The policeman left.

Dean shut his apartment door, shuffled into his bedroom, and collapsed on the bed.

The next voices Dean heard came from his own side of the wall. The voices were sunny, the voices of his mother and father. His mother was singing a nursery rhyme and his father was undressing him.

"Diddle-diddle-dumpling, my son Dean," piped his mother, "Went to be with his stockings on. One shoe off, and one shoe on-diddle-diddle-dumpling, my son Dean."

Dean opened his eyes.

"Hi, big boy," said his father, "you went to sleep with your clothes on."

"How's my little adventurer?" said his mother.

"It wasn't a show for children, honey," said his mother. "You would have liked the short subject, though. I was all about bears—cunning little cubs."

Dean's father handed her Dean's trousers, and she shook them out and hung them neatly on the back of the chair by the bed. She patted them smooth, and felt the ball of money in the pocket. "Little boys' pockets!" she said, delighted. "Full of childhood's

mysteries. An enchanted frog? A magic pocketknife from a fairy princess?"

Dean's mother held up her hands. "Don't rush it, can't rush it. When I saw him asleep there, I realized all over again how dreadfully short childhood is." She reached into the pocket and sighed wistfully. "Little boys are so hard on clothes—especially pockets."

She brought out the ball of money and held it under Dean's nose.

"Now, would you mind telling Mommy what we have here?" she said gaily.

The ball bloomed like a Walt Disney flower with ones, fives, tens, twenties, and lipstick-stained Kleenex for petals. And rising from it, befuddling Dean's young mind, was the pungent musk of perfume.

Dean's father sniffed the air. "What's that smell?" he said.

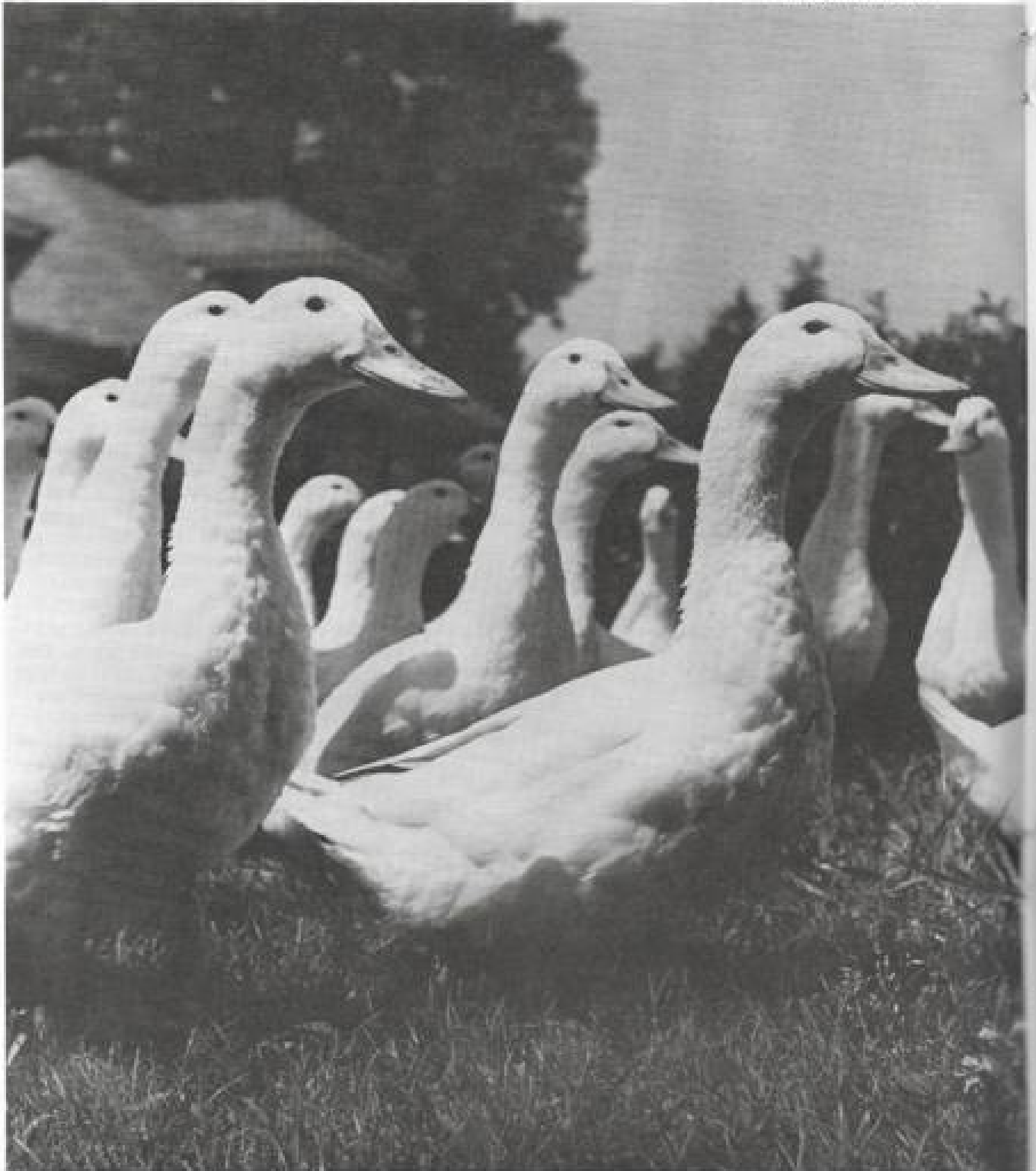
Dean's mother rolled her eyes. "Nontue" she said.

by
James F. Muench

Janus

Silly Geese

Photo by ALLEN RAY



by James F. Muench

A Fable

There once was an extraordinary young man in a not so distant place. His name was Andrew Cleese, and you may have heard of him, although I sincerely doubt it. Andrew was a very good young man. Very, very good. Extremely good. In short, too good. He was not well-liked in his home country, but Andrew could never understand why. He was, after all, always crusading for the cause of righteousness and morality.

Andrew was a fighter. He fought for what he thought was right. One day, for instance, he decided to rid his city of pornography. With only a small flick of his Bic lighter, he was able to torch several smut-carrying newsstands, and finally one dirty magazine from a certain filthy individual's hands. Andrew laughed gleefully as the degenerate's dreams went up in smoke.

Unfortunately for Andrew, this faulty individual was an important government official, and authorities put a quick end to Andrew's smut-burning crusade by slapping him in the slammer. However, Andrew was able to read an awesome amount of books, pamphlets, and magazines while in jail, learning about smut, religion and social injustice.

One day, while researching deviant sexual practices, he came upon an old news story about a man named Androcles pulling a thorn out of a lion's paw and befriendng the lion forever. Andrew was fascinated by the story and decided upon a new crusade. He would help the animals out of bondage at the soonest opportunity.

After serving his sentence, Andrew formulated a plan. The idea struck him during a Y.T.C. rally. His inspiration might cause much grief, but Andrew didn't care, because he knew he was right. It was the only thing to do. He must let the other animals out of their cages.

On a sultry May night he snuck past the elderly watchman at the pound, releasing every unwanted pet from bondage. He then made the rounds of the nearby houses and farms, freeing all animals from

their slavery. Wild shrieks could be heard in the streets as Andrew, the Moses of the Beasts, headed for the zoo. He pole-vaulted the fence, broke every cage open, and liberated the bestial prisoners. At last his greatest fantasy came to life. He came face-to-face with a limping lion. Here was his chance to outdo Androcles and live forever in history!

He grabbed the lion's paw and yelled, "I will save you!" Andrew didn't ask. He ordered. "You will be healed!"

The lion, who was a masochist, had stuck the nail between his toes because he enjoyed it. He shoved Andrew gruffly away saying, "No, I like nails. Have you got a hammer?"

Andrew yelled back, convincingly, "This is my mission, I must save your life by pulling the nail out of your paw. I'll be famous, billed as the reincarnation of Androcles! It is my divine right! Besides, you might get tetanus!"

The lion, with a benign smile on his lips, answered, "You're absolutely correct. Come pull this nail before I die."

However, as Andrew Cleese leaped forward, his mind on making history, earning royalties and charting with Donahue, the lion opened his jaws and gobbled poor Andrew Cleese. This was the end of Andrew Cleese, the divine missionary and social reformer. Unfortunately, nobody knew or cared. But his life was not wasted. He made a fine supper. The animals were eventually rounded up and returned to their homes. The outside is a nice place to visit, but most admitted they would hate to live there.

As for the lion, he later made a fortune working for M.G.M. and starred in the last episode of "Wild Kingdom." He ate Marlon Perkins while the elderly codger and his sidekick were studying the unique mating practices of sado-masochistic hippos. After this, he appeared in two major sit-coms and in one "R"-rated movie for H.B.O. entitled, "Lions in Heat." He lived happily ever after in Beverly Hills.

MORAL: Do-gooders often get done good in the end.

James F. Muench

Monsters and Ghoulies

Folks say that monsters don't exist,
But don't you dare believe 'em!
They've fooled people long enough,
And yesterday, I seen 'em.

I was lying' under an apple tree
When lo and behold, they came crawlin'!
I ran so fast, it's hard to believe
I managed to keep from fallin'!

Folks say that ghoulies aren't real,
But don't you listen to 'em!
They crawl out of their holes about ten o'clock,
And they grab naughty kids and eat 'em!

(Some say these poor children are eaten raw,
With only a pinch of salt.
Ma says it won't happen if you ain't out late;
If you are, it's your own lousy fault!)

I seen 'em in my room last night,
When all was dark and still.
They crept along my closet door,
And along my window sill.

I don't know when I fell asleep.
I must have been in their power.
If I'd been awake, I'd probably seen
Them crawl down the drain in the shower.

Maybe I'll stay up tomorrow night...

Questions

When the great explosion comes,
And the time of doom is near
Will we still sing "Happy Birthday"
With the same amount of cheer?

Will we still look up with pleasure
At the coming of the dawn?
Will we still play games of football
On a freshly-clipped green lawn?

Will we still enjoy the music
Of the radio all night?
Or will life completely stop
With a blinding flash of light?

Will the glorious human majesty
Remain after the blow?
And even if we do survive,
Will anybody know?

Will someone be around to tell
Of mankind's great mistake?
Or will we leave this second garden
A trillion tons of well-done steak?

Birds of a Feather

The cuckoo is only a pigeon
With a job.
The turkey is only a duck
Afraid of water.
The hummingbird is only a bumblebee
With a penchant for opera.
The cardinal is only a bluejay
With religious responsibilities.
The yellow-bellied sapsucker is only a sparrow
With a cowardly drool.
The woodpecker is only a crow
With a masochistic streak.
The seagull is only a stork
Who didn't make it and became a slob.
The buzzard is only an eagle
With more patience.
The ostrich is only a swan
Who didn't fly right.
This poet is only a turkey
With nothing substantial to do.

Soggy Story

You were crying in the pretzels
When I met you at the bar.
The salt was melting off, mixing with spilt beer,
And sticking to the top of the counter in a slimy mess.

Your beer was barely touched,
And you looked forlorn and frustrated,
As if the sands of time had drifted into an earlier meal,
And created a beach for the ocean of tears
dripping on the barstools.

I asked if anything was wrong?
Did your husband leave with a cheap blond?
Too many bills, but no bucks to feed babies?
No. You were only slicing onions.

Walking in the Dark

As I walk upon the streets at night
After a falling rain,
The stars are clearer; the moon is bright,
And my mind is freed of pain.

The breeze is brisk; the night quite quiet.
All nature is hushed and still.
I stand and listen to tree's whispered riot,
And begin to feel the chill.

I think as I walk through inky sky
And tramp the milky-way.
My prevailing question is asking, "Why
Does night have to bring back the day?"

James F. Muench

Feet: The Untold Story

On what did the Pilgrims stand when they reached the New World? On their feet, of course. Everyone stands on their feet. Everyone walks, runs, swims, and jumps with their feet. Feet are all-important to us, therefore, and ought to be recognized for the quality that God put into them. Feet deserve much acclaim for their accomplishments. They are probably the most useful body part next to the brain. Why, then, are feet so neglected? One never sees movies about feet. In fact, about the only time one hears about feet is when someone is soaking them. "Oh, my feet are so sore!", they moan, until one is forced to leave the room, completely nauseated. Thus, the time has come for feet to step out of the closet and demand recognition. Luckily for them, I have recognized their plight, and have devoted the next few pages to exposing it. Feet deserve an airing, for these unassuming pairs have been the greatest contributors to human history and life, and their story deserves to be told.

The English language is full of allusions, colorful sayings, and words involving feet. Think of it! Words and phrases such as "stand on your own two feet", football, footlocker, foot-of-the-bed, foot odor, and foot-in-mouth, would not exist if we did not have feet. Words relating to the use of the feet would also be nonexistent. Where would one be without kickball, runaround, "I get a kick out of you", "stand tall", "I can't stand him", "run around", "run circles around", and "stand aside". Words and phrases having to do with foot apparel would also disappear. One would sorely miss "boots and saddles", tennis shoes, blue suede shoes, sockhops, silk-stockings, and sock-of-the-month club. (Well, maybe that's digging a bit too far.) The point is that if God had made humans without feet, we would not have invented such catchy words and phrases. In fact, if God hadn't endowed us with our feet, the human race would still be rolling around on its buttocks, like one of those romper blow-up dolls.

Lo, what a disaster for our species! Imagine the pain and suffering our ancestors would have endured before the invention of Preparation H! But, above all, man would have taken much longer to begin exploring. The invention of the wheel would have been delayed, since one would have to walk to gather the materials for it. "Feet-less" humans would still be huddled around the cradles of civilization, if they were lucky enough to have rolled there in the first place! There would have been no Roman Empire and no European exploration of the

New Worlds in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Finally, from an American standpoint, there would have been no United States. Even if these footless people had managed to bob across the Atlantic, they would have remained on the Eastern Shores. There would have been no "American West." Without feet, this great historic undertaking would have been impossible. Besides the awesome number of animal feet that crossed the continent, there were vast numbers of human feet, pressing bravely on towards California and Oregon. (If the destination was California, it was probably a case of pressing greedily on.) Cowboy boots and Indian mocassins often had to square off against each other on the long trek. One such Indian tribe to be reckoned with was the Blackfeet (For the sake of making a bad pun). Many of the West's implements, now taken for granted, would not have existed without feet. Boots would be useless. Stirrups would serve no purpose. Spurs would have been thrown out (Unless someone wanted some new-wave earrings). The "Boot Hill Cemetery" is an institution that would have no meaning. The whole picture of the West is cut off at its ankles! Realizing the scope of mankind's entanglement with feet, one is shaken to the very core of his or her soul (or soles, as the case may be).

However, in all fairness, people might have been better off without feet. The human race might not have committed its most ruthless, barbaric, and stupid acts. If men had no feet, armies would never have pillaged the world. Julius Ceasar would not have forced Gaul under his sandalled heel. Napoleon would not have found pleasure in the sound of France marching across Europe. Hitler's German jackboots, likewise, would not have terrorized the world. American wouldn't have forced the Cherokee off their legal land. Strangely, when an American speaks of trails, he or she mentions the "Santa Fe" and "Oregon". But what about the "Trail of Tears?" "Trail of Tears?" What about the Indians Americans stomped on, the land Americans stole, and the animals Americans killed and sent away, never to return? Serious questions need to be asked about the use of American's feet. Feet should be utilized for constructive purposes, like playing football with friends, but not for destructive purposes that cause misery to other people.

Feet have made a significant contribution to the world. They have been a vehicle, through which

great explorations were begun, great discoveries were made, and great deeds were accomplished. However, they have also caused great suffering and misery. In America especially, one must be conscious of the many good things American feet can do, but also we must be wary of the many wrong things they can assist in. The power of feet should no longer be neglected, but recognized by all. Only then can responsible decisions be reached in their use. As I stated earlier, feet are all-important. People couldn't run, walk, stand, swim, or jump without them. Their power is very strong and can be used effectively for good. Noah even understood the power of feet. Do you know why no one could play cards on Noah's Ark? Noah was always standing on the deck.

Janus



Photo by CARL COPEK

Somewhere Near

by
Calvin Phipps

by Calvin Phipps

I'm Young Now

I remember the first time I read Dylan Thomas's "Fern Hill." I was sitting in my grandmother's big rocking chair on a slow Sunday afternoon; one of those Sunday afternoons that seems to drag on forever. It was cool in the room and I was full of my grandmother's lunch: cornish hen, corn on the cob, fresh sliced tomatoes, and of course home baked cinnamon rolls. Her rolls, of course, were the best in the world. I always managed to eat several of them along with the rest of my dinner. Sometimes however, I ate several of the rolls and that was my dinner. I was stuffed. The cows, I noticed as I looked out the window, were also enjoying their lunch of grass, barley and oats.

I got up to look through the bookcase (a sure sign of boredom when you look through your grandmother's bookcase) when I noticed a book by Dylan somebody. "Oh," I thought to myself, "anyone named Dylan can't be all bad," and I pulled the book from the shelf. I didn't think my grandmother was a Bob Dylan fan but then, Grandmothers can surprise you on occasion. I opened the book and read the first few lines my eyes came to rest upon.

And as I was green and carefree, famous
among the barns

About the happy yard and singing as the
farm was home,

In the sun that is young once only

I was enthralled. It didn't sound like any Bob Dylan song I'd ever heard of. I read on.

Time let me play and be
Golden in the mercy of his means,
And green and golden I was huntsman
and herdsman,

the

calves

Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills
barked clear and cold,

And the sabbath rang slowly

In the pebbles of the holy streams.

I stopped and looked out the window. Images of my own childhood seemed to bubble up unheedingly as if triggered by the poet's words. "The answer may be blowin' in the wind," I thought to myself, but this is great. I devoured the next stanza.

And nightly under the simple stars

As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing
the farm away,

All the moon long I heard, blessed

among stables, the nightjars
Flying with the ricks, and the horses
Flashing into the dark.

Someone else saw the simple stars too? I was shocked. My grandfather and I had spent hours wandering the wheat fields at night and gazing at the simple stars and talking of unimportant things. We were, I had thought, the only two people on the face of the earth who did such things. Apparently there were three of us. I remember walking down to say goodnight to the cattle, and maybe wishing sweet dreams to the horses. And when we came back I was always exhausted and would fall asleep to the sound of crickets and owls — owls which "were bearing the farm away."

And then to awake, and the farm, like
a wanderer white

With the dew, come back, the cock on
his shoulder:

it was all

Shining, it was Adam and maiden,

The sky gathered again

And the sun grew round that very day.

Suddenly, I was no longer in the living room of my grandmother's house, but instead in my grandmother's barn, years before. We were taking the horse for its daily walk.

"Granddaddy, when will I get to ride 'ole Dolly?" I impatiently asked. "I'm eight years old now and you said I could ride when I was eight."

"No, Grandson. I said when you were eighteen," he said with a twinkle in his eye. "You've got ten years to go."

"Granddaddy!" I didn't think it was funny. I'd wanted to ride a horse for as long as I could remember and I didn't want to play around. I wanted to ride Dolly.

"Okay, Grandson. How 'bout tomorrow?"

"Yeh, that's gr... well that'll be o.k.," I said. I didn't want to sound too excited. After all I was eight years old now.

The next day I was up at 7:00 sharp. I wasn't going to let a minute of this day go to waste.

"Do you want some more pancakes, Calvin?" my Grandmother asked.

"No, Grandmother, I gotta go riding today. Don't want to get too filled up, ya know." I was filled with importance.

"But that isn't until 3:00 this afternoon," she said.

"Grandmaaaa!-" She obviously didn't understand.

The day seemed to drag on forever. I watched the clock hands move minute by minute until it was almost 3:00. My grandfather would be home soon. It wouldn't be long until I would be galloping across green pastures like the Lone Ranger on his horse Silver. I would camp at night under the stars and . . .

"Grandson, where are you?" I heard my grandfather calling. "Dolly is waiting for you down at the barn."

"Coming, Granddaddy. I'm coming." I raced out to the back porch where he was waiting for me and looked up at him expectantly.

"Well, Grandson, you probably changed your mind about riding didn't you?" He said with a twinkle in his eye.

"No, I still want to ride," I said very seriously.

"Well then Grandson, what are we waiting on? Let's go!"

We walked down to the old red barn and there stood Dolly. I raced into the storage room and took down the saddle. I had often looked at it and imagined myself sitting on it high and proud. Today my dreams would come true. My grandfather helped me put the saddle on Dolly and showed me how to adjust it just so. Dolly seemed much bigger than I remembered her from yesterday. In fact she seemed huge.

"Uh, Granddaddy, well, uh, maybe we should wait until tomorrow." I was scared.

"Now grandson, you're not scared are you?"

"Scared? Ha ha. N-n not me. No, not at all. I just thought, well, it looks like it might rain." I knew I had made a mistake the minute I said it. There wasn't a cloud in the sky.

My Grandfather smiled and got that twinkle in his eye. "Well, that's good. I wouldn't let you ride if you're scared. Might not be safe. So let me help you up."

I don't know how it happened. There was an instant of sheer panic and I thought I might turn and run away in spite of myself. And the next thing I knew I was sitting on top of Dolly. It took a moment for me to realize I was actually sitting on a horse. Me! On a horse. By myself! And sitting on top of the biggest horse that had ever existed, no less. I was thrilled.

"Can I hold the reins too," I asked. My grandfather handed me the reins. My hands shook

as I took them, but I didn't let go. I looked around from my throne. The world looked somehow smaller from up on a horse, I thought to myself. I felt a sense of exhilaration I had never before experienced. I was riding a horse! I looked down at my Grandfather and saw him beaming up at me. That picture, I think, will be forever imprinted on my memory. Life was absolutely perfect. For a brief instant I had everything I had ever wanted. I truly was "green and carefree, famous among the barns..."

The memory of that experience was so real to me as I sat there on that Sunday afternoon that tears came to my eyes. Where had my childhood gone? The depth and richness of experience I had once known seemed to have vanished. Dylan Thomas's words were like a knife opening a part of me I had long since forgotten. And it was painful to remember. I, like Thomas, had followed the children, "green and golden" out of grace. Was there any way back? Was that richness forever lost to me?

As I sat there that Sunday afternoon I realized that Dylan Thomas was writing about me. His fall from grace was my own. My life had turned into something which was to be, endured but not enjoyed. I felt trapped.

I closed the book and walked outside the house. I walked slowly down to the barn below the house, the barn where I had first learned to ride. It looked old, run down. The paint was chipping off and several boards were beginning to fall off. Thomas's words came back to me, "Time held me green and dying. Though I sang in my chains like the sea." And suddenly, I realized that I hadn't lost anything at all! How else could I feel the richness? How else could the memory of my first ride make me feel so ... so young again? That depth was still there. That child was still a part of me. I had the depth of experience in me. I had it too! I felt as if a large weight had been lifted off my shoulders. I rose and walked briskly back to the house. I felt giddy and lightheaded. Nothing had really changed and somehow everything was different. On the outside I might be a man but somewhere inside there was still a child. A poet's words rang in my ears, but they weren't the words of Dylan Thomas. They were the words of Bob Dylan, and I sang them softly as I walked back to the house; "Oh but I was so much older then, I'm younger than that now...."



Photo by CARL COPEK

Cumulus Chimneys

by
Marla Poor

by Marla Poor

Up With
and
Across From

the growing and living
of judith holland

In 1830 Judith Raynor was born in Wayland, Massachusetts. At the age of 13 her family moved to Amherst, Mass. One year later she began to keep a journal. The importance of this journal lies in the fact that Judith was moved by a young girl who lived directly across from her in Amherst and through the 43 years she wrote in her journal frequently of her neighbor. Her neighbor's death in 1886 stopped her journal entries until her own death in 1921.

The young girl who grew into a woman with Judith Raynor Holland was Emily Dickinson — the Belle of Amherst. The way Emily touched Judith was not unusual to the very few who knew her yet they had no way of knowing that the shy, reclusive daughter of the Squire was indeed a creative genius who would touch more people than they could ever imagine and someday stand in the front rank of American poets with thoughts and feelings that strike and penetrate like bullets, with an originality of thought unsurpassed in American poetry.

What is written before you are some of her entries in her journal which give a small, delicate insight into Emily Dickinson's outwardly uneventful, inwardly dedicated life, dedicated to a secret and self-imposed assignment — the mission of writing a "letter to the world" that would express, in poems of absolute truth and of the utmost economy, her concepts of life and death, love and nature, and of what Henry James called 'the landscape of the soul.'

May 6, 1851

It's a glorious day. I walked outside to find every bird singing and praising. The sounds charged me so. A bird came down the walk, he did not spy me. He sipped a droplet of dusky dew and then sped away. Emily — Squire Dickinson's daughter — was out bright and early, also. I don't think she is beautiful, yet she has great beauties. Her eyes are lovely auburn, soft and warm, her hair lies in rings of the same color all over her head, and her skin and teeth are fine. She always is exquisitely neat and careful in her dress, and always has flowers about her. Perhaps I need to thank her for the birds' songs. I think maybe her small garden calls and yearns for its friends - the birds. I have never seen her garden without one that was singing.

July 18, 1860

Albert and I drove to town today. We so often enjoy a nice drive to our bustling metropolis. Jenny is growing more beautiful as the days grow shorter. I'm so proud of my little one. Pastor Honewern's service was short and sweet as usual. I at times find boredom running through my veins when he speaks.

I try hard not to let that happen. Emily looked gloomy today. She and Jenny seem to have grown fond of one another. I so wished and thought that she would have a precious one by now. I'm much younger than she is.

December 10, 1861

It's Emily's birthday today. The thought only touched me. I haven't seen much of her lately. She seems to be keeping to herself. I don't believe she is ill. I received a lovely gift of flowers from her. Her garden is alive year 'round. The flowers had some puzzling note or poem attached — about the sun rising a ribbon at a time. I did not understand nor did I think to ask. I don't know why I think often of Emily. She seems to haunt me, or is it that I feel sorry for her? Her family is such an honorable one. I feel pleased to be living so close.

September 3, 1874

It's a sad day here in Amherst. The Squire passed away one night ago. The family is devastated as is the town. He was a great man — lawyer, treasurer of our college here and our legislator in Congress. I speak of the man as great. One should always speak well of the departed but I don't know that he was a good man. I do know that he dominated the family.

Austin has tried desperately to pattern himself on his father but lacks the formidable self-righteousness of the old Puritan. Emily appeared as her usual self. She looked sad. She was sad I'm sure, but Emily always looks sad. She touches me like none other. I can't explain the aura she envelops me in. Albert thinks I am silly, I know. Jenny no longer knows who Emily is. I want to go visit her. Maybe I will in a week or two after this terrible nonsense is out of her mind and sunk deeply in her heart.

September 29, 1874

I received a gift of a letter today from Emily for my visit with her yesterday. She seems so reclusive. The letter is interesting. I cannot make but some of it. She writes in her funny assignment. Her writings are done in creative techniques of self-expression and she has handwriting so peculiar as if she might have taken her first lessons by studying the famous fossil bird-tracks in the museum of our college. Yet it is not in the slightest illiterate, but cultivated, quaint, and wholly unique. It says:

"After you went, a low wind warbled through the house like a spacious bird, making it high but lonely. When you had gone the love came. I suppose it would. The supper of the heart is when the guest has

gone.

Shame is so intrinsic in a strong affection we must all experience Adam's reticence. I suppose the street that the lover travels is thenceforth divine, incapable of turnpike aims.

That you be with me annals fear and I await Commencement with merry resignation. Smaller than David, you clothe me with extreme Goliath.

Friday I tasted life. It was a vast morsel. A circus passed the house — still I feel the red in my mind though the drums are out.

The book you mention, I have not met. Thank you for tenderness.

The lawn is full of south and the odors tangle, and I hear today for the first the river in the tree.

You mentioned spring's delaying — I blamed her for the opposite. I would eat evanescence slowly.

Vinnie is deeply afflicted in the death of her dappled cat, though I convince her it is immortal which assists her some. Mother resumes lettuce, involving my transgression — suggestive of yourself, however, which endears disgrace.

"House" is being "cleaned." I prefer pestilence. That is more classic and less fell.

Yours was my first arbutus. It was a rosy boast. I will send you the first witch hazel.

A woman died last week, young and in hope but a little while — at the end of our garden. I thought since of the power of Death, not upon affection, but its mortal signal. It is to us the Nile.

You refer to the unpermitted delight to be with those we love. I suppose that to be the license not granted of God.

*Count not that far that can be had,
Though sunset lie between —
Nor that adjacent, that beside,
Is further than the sun.*

Love for your embodiment of it.

It's a superb letter, highly constructed and most provocative. But I wonder who Emily is...what kind of woman just sits and thinks these letters and small poems up. She's 40 or so years old. Jenny brought home the best grade in spelling today. She was ecstatic. She has become quite beautiful — she is small like a wren, and her hair is bold like the chestnut bur; and eyes, like the sherry in the glass, that the guest leaves. She favors Albert more than myself. Albert thinks the opposite. It is a quiet evening for thoughts to bubble up and then slip like emotions with no where to go except the heart.

January 30, 1880

It is extremely cold today. The sun, I fear, has

Up With and Across From

Marla Poor

rested. Deserving of it, I am sure. I had a restless dream night before last and am just now beginning to remember. Emily and I were walking in the most wonderful garden and helping to pick roses and, though we gathered with all our might, the basket was never full. And so all day I walked with Emily to gather roses and again, and as night drew on, it pleased me, and I counted impatiently the hours 'tween me and the darkness and the roses, and the basket was never full.

March 8, 1880

Our trip to Mt. Vernon has been wonderful. We glided down the Potomac this spring day in a painted boat, and jumped upon the shore — hand in hand we stole along up a tangled pathway till we reached the tomb of General George Washington. We paused beside it, and no one spoke a word, then hand in hand, walked on again, not less wise nor sad for that marble story; we went within the door — raised the latch he lifted when he last went home — thank the Ones in Light that he's since passed in through a brighter wicket. Oh, I could spend a long day, if it did not weary you, telling and writing of Mt. Vernon — and I will sometime if we live and meet again, and God grant we shall!

May 16, 1886

I cried today such as no other I have seen in my life. I hurt today as no other and smiled today as no other. Emily Dickinson died yesterday. I felt her life coming to an end. I really did. Emily was so different from anyone I had ever met. There were times I craved to be near her, and her worldly and sophisticated yet naive aura. I do not know why, God, I am so obsessed with her. I remember the first time I saw her. We just moved to Amherst. It was spring with all the beautiful colors of birds and trees and flowers and the sky. The earth was purple. I was quite little the day I met Emily. She was enjoying herself while playing with her dog. I cried for Emily the day her dog died. Funny her father's death drew no tear. I looked at the sun and the world and Emily through an insect's wings. She was guarded with that shield and I have never looked at her in any other way. I feel lonely tonight thinking of Emily sleeping the church yard sleep. Emily told me once when we were very young that she did not care for the body; she loved the timid soul, the blushing, shrinking soul; it hides, for it is afraid.

I think we grow still smaller — this tiny insect life the portal to another; it seems strange — strange indeed. I'm afraid we are all unworthy, yet we shall "enter in."

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June 30, 1921

I will die today. I know I haven't written in you for a long time, not since Emily's death. But I guess my heart in a way died with her death. Her heart did not die though. I cannot believe what all has happened since her death. I suppose I always knew Emily was special — that is the reason she touched me like she did. She has become famous — literally famous. I find that so hard to believe. I lived by and was friends with a super genius. All those notes and letters I called silly. I speak of all this attention, yet as Emily said,

"I see no stars shining bright
No rainbows rolling down to scrape the earth
I see only the crest of the moon
Never full it appears to me
And yet my heart is filled so full with Love

And yet my heart is filled so full with Love
that to myself I hate
Those precious, beautiful moments in life
in my eyes never see.

It is only mine minds eye do they appear to me
Life being what it is, is being —"

I don't feel any pain today like I have in the past with this nonsense of old age. It is becoming harder to write though, but I must say what I feel before I go. I feel so minute compared to Emily. She said so much before she went. She wrote "A Letter to the World" and we all read it. We all felt it. I believe the world has a dream. Each person wants his life to mean something so important. Ben Franklin said that if you would not be forgotten as soon as you are dead, either write things worth reading or do things worth writing. I have done neither — only living a normal life — but I feel so special. I really do because of knowing Emily. I dream of only one thing now, it is a dream for I will never know the truth. But I pray that perhaps a tiny something I did or said may have prompted Emily to write one of her beautiful writings. It is possible, isn't it? I feel wrong feeling as if I am nothing. I raised a wonderful daughter and gave my whole to my husband and my family. I perhaps was special. Yes, I am special. I hope others will think I am. There are seven lines Emily wrote. I believe they are true. I dream so.

If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.

And neither will I, Emily. I will not live in vain!

by
Scott Rector

by Scott Rector

Hurricane Ridge

Brad crouched alone in his cabin. The blizzard was raging outside, often shaking the small shelter violently. His fire was beginning to flicker out and with no wood left to refuel it, he could only watch it die. Again the cabin quivered under the storm. Shadows danced away from the small fire, playing tricks on Brad's mind. The bear he had seen earlier could easily try again to find shelter in his cabin and with every howl of the wind, Brad shivered nervously. If only his dog, Sue J. hadn't run off before the blizzard hit. He was all alone and for the first time in his life he was truly scared.

"Don't worry Mom," Brad said to his anxious mother, "We're going to be fine."

"I can't help it, honey," she replies. "You've never been up there alone before."

"I've gotta go, Mom. I've been looking forward to this for a long time now. This last semester at school was very hard on me. I've got to get away for a while. "Besides," he said trying to comfort her, "you know Sue J. will take good care of me."

Brad and Sue J. had set out for the cabin in early November. He planned carefully for his trip. He wanted plenty of supplies to last for a month but he was careful not to overload his backpack. Snowshoes, a gun, a knife, an axe, warm clothes, a compass, matches, food, and of course, his faithful dog were among his more important supplies. His destination was the small trapping cabin he and his father used to use out on Hurricane Ridge in the Olympic mountains. It was a three-day hike, but he knew the area well.

Sue J. had entered Brad's life three summers ago. She was a large dog of many breeds. He had found her in very poor condition up in the mountains. She had a broken leg and was bleeding badly. Even in her condition, though, she let him know that if he came too close it would be the worse for him. Brad realized quickly that this was a very unusual and special dog. For not far away from where he had found her, Brad found the cause of her injuries, a large wolverine lying dead near a stream. How could a dog do this to a wolverine, he had wondered as he stared at the lifeless bulk in awe. Wolverines are the meanest and toughest creatures in North America. Hungry wolverines have even been known to attack and kill adult bears. Brad left the dog in search of food and returned with several rabbits that he had killed. Still the dog was suspicious, but finally

hunger overcame caution, and she limped forward to take his offerings. This was the beginning of a long and wonderful relationship.

The first day of their journey was largely uneventful. They covered the fifteen miles through the forest and along the river to the cave Brad had known about. Sue J. was a comfort for Brad. She was always running ahead chasing squirrels and following scents, but she would never get too far away. He always knew she would never leave. On the way, Brad had shot several rabbits for dinner that night. They ate quickly and Brad started to get ready for bed. He was extremely tired. It had been a long time since he had taken a walk like this and he had forgotten what kind of shape one needs to be in for such a journey. Sue J., however, was not ready for sleep. It was still light out and she wanted to play. She couldn't understand why Brad was spoiling their fun by going to bed. She started barking loudly and feigning advances, but to no avail. "Not tonight Dog!" Brad grumbled. "I have a headache and I need some sleep. If you want to stay up you'll have to do it alone." Sue J. shrank sulkingly to the mouth of the cave and finally lay down to sleep.

Brad and Sue J. awoke early the next morning to a thin layer of freshly fallen snow. It didn't worry Brad because he had expected to get some eventually but he did realize that he must push on to reach his destination. After a quick breakfast of brook trout for Brad and squirrel that Sue J. had caught, they were off again. This time they had eighteen miles to hike before they would find shelter in a small creek bed below the mountain.

Several hours into the journey, Sue J. came upon a moose. She started barking loudly and the moose took off through the woods with Sue J. hot on its trail. "NO! Sue J. Come back!" Brad yelled frantically, but to no avail. He listened to her barks get fainter and fainter and knew she was long gone. "Damn!" Brad said under his breath. "I can't wait for her here. Too far to go." Brad started off again, confident that Sue J. would eventually catch up. Three and a half hours later she finally did. "You worthless bitch," Brad said as Sue J. came trotting up, a cocky grin on her face. "Where the hell you been?" he asked. Sue J. just trotted up and licked his hand, fully knowing that he wasn't really mad at her. "Why don't you stick with me for awhile now,"

he said, "I was starting to really get worried." Sue J. licked his hand understandingly and then began once again. This time she stayed by his side for the rest of the day, even ignoring the two rabbits that bolted across their path.

After reaching the creek that evening, Brad looked up at their journey for tomorrow. Hurricane Ridge stared down at them from Mt. Olympia. "It's going to be a tough one tomorrow, Dog," Brad said. "Fifteen miles up and around this baby ain't no piece of cake." Brad found the cliff overhang he was looking for and crawled under ready for bed. Sue J. again barked in protest, wanting to explore before going to bed. "Damn it Dog!" Brad said looking back at her. "Why can't you ever go to bed early?" Sue J. barked in response before finally trotting off into the woods to explore on her own, disgusted that Brad wouldn't join her.

As Brad slept, Sue J. had ventured around the lower south side of the mountain. She was very hungry and the forest was just awakening. Sue J. climbed the lower ridge of the south face and stood looking out over the wilderness as if she were the ruler of it all. Not far away a bobcat shattered the silence with its high-pitched call. Sue J. ignored this animal. She was hungry but not enough to tackle a bobcat. Slowly she crept through the trees, careful not to make a sound. A great horned owl called from overhead, its eerie sound echoing through the woods. It too was on the hunt. Presently Sue J. came to a clearing and heard the sound of several animals whistling to one another. They were hoary marmots. It is unusual to find these ground-hog sized creatures above ground after dark but the impending winter made them work extra hard to build enough fat up for their long sleep through winter. This also made them prime targets for the late night hunters. In a flash Sue J. made for the nearest one. All around the marmots whistled and dove for their holes. One never had a chance. Sue J. took her kill back into the woods and ate before finally heading back to the overhang where she curled up next to Brad.

"Wake up you lazy mutt," Brad exclaimed the next morning. "I've been up for half an hour now and have already eaten. If you wouldn't stay up so late all the time you might be able to get up early." Sue J. stood up, stretched, and yawned mightily. After shaking and getting a drink from the stream, Sue J. sauntered off into the woods, ready to dig up the rest

of last night's catch for breakfast. "You have fifteen minutes," Brad yelled after her, realizing where she was going. "I'll leave without you if you're not back by then!"

Soon Brad and Sue J. were once again on their way. This, the third day out, was to be the toughest as far as hiking was concerned. Hurricane Ridge is a tough fifteen mile hike. There was still about an inch of snow in places which made the climb just that much more difficult. The scenery alone, however, is well worth the climb. Looking down the valleys that the glaciers had once carved out was an incredible thrill. Another was walking up through the clouds and looking back down at them. It was as if a huge, white cotton blanket covered the entire valley. Presently the two came to a small clear-blue glacial lake. It was beautiful. Both of them stopped to drink from this pure water. The wildlife they saw from up there was also spectacular. Herds of mountain goats clinging to seemingly sheer cliff walls could be seen in abundance across the valley. Fields of hoary marmots whistled at them from everywhere. Even an occasional eagle would soar gracefully out over the mountain, hoping to catch an unwary marmot.

Having reached the top of Hurricane Ridge, Brad and Sue J. started down the backside to the secluded valley where the trapping cabin was located. Though Hurricane Ridge was a long hike, seemingly straight up at times, it tackled little of Mt. Olympia itself. The trapping cabin was on the backside of the ridge but it was still quite low enough off the mountain to be in an excellent spot for trapping and hunting. A small but active river ran through the valley about a mile from the cabin. Much wildlife inhabited the Hurricane Ridge Valley including deer, elk, moose, and bear. The cabin, in the middle of the clearing, was the only trace of human presence in the entire valley. It was a beautiful haven for all those who occupied it.

Brad and Sue J. reached the cabin early that evening. There was still very little snow, but a dark over-cast sky and a cold north wind promised bad weather soon. Brad opened the cabin and went in. He immediately set to building a fire to warm the place up. There was not much wood so he would have to find some before too long. Sue J. had already curled up by the fire ready to sleep. "What's the matter Dog?" Brad laughed. "How come you don't want to stay up with me?" Brad looked out

Hurricane Ridge

Scott Rector

the window and noticed large snowflakes beginning to fall. "It looks like we made it just in time," Brad said. Suddenly Sue J. jumped up growling. She was facing the door and her hair was bristling. "What is it?" Brad whispered. Sue J. began barking then, and Brad could hear sniffing and snorting sounds as well as scratching outside the door. He reached for his gun, aware of what the creature on the outside was. Brad eased toward the door, edging in front of his dog. She was still barking wildly. As he opened the door slightly, Brad heard a huge growl from outside and suddenly the door flew open knocking Brad across the room onto his back. He was dazed and his gun was gone. He looked up to see a huge grizzly bear standing outside the doorway. Immediately Sue J. lunged forward with a vicious attack. The bear was not expecting such an attack as the 100 pound dog slammed full into the bear's chest, actually knocking him backwards. Sue J. is an intelligent dog and she immediately bounced away from the bear's flying claws. She kept barking as she circled the bear stealthily, always looking for an opening. The bear charged Sue J. several times but the dog was much too quick as she dodged and attacked like lightning. Suddenly the bear broke for the woods with Sue J. in hot pursuit. "NO Sue J.!" Brad screamed. "Don't follow it!" But the bear and the dog were already in the woods. Brad grabbed his gun and ran after his dog. The snow was falling heavily now. Brad had run about a mile when he stopped, out of breath. Already the tracks were being covered by snow. He couldn't even hear his dog's barks anymore. Wisely, Brad turned around back toward the cabin, realizing he couldn't get caught out in this storm. "Please come back Sue J.," Brad said softly, fully knowing that the bear had a huge advantage in the forest.

As Brad approached his cabin, the blizzard hit with full force. He was only twenty yards away but already he had trouble seeing the cabin. Brad crept in and sat by the fire. He was cold and wet and scared. It was going to be a very long night.

Brad finally fell asleep and the storm finally subsided. When he awoke the next morning, Brad immediately went to the door. He opened it to a whole new world. It was a bright sunny day and the whole world was white. Three feet of snow covered everything. It was a beautiful scene but Brad hardly even noticed the beauty, for Sue J. was nowhere to be seen. Brad broke out his snow shoes and gun and ventured out into this new wilderness. He headed in the general direction of where he had last seen Sue J. and the bear running into the woods. "Sue J.!" Brad yelled several times without response. There

was no telling where she might be on the mountain or, for that matter, if she was even still alive at all. Suddenly a great commotion caught Brad's attention from across the clearing. The snow from under a tree suddenly exploded and Sue J. came flying out from underneath it where she had weathered out the storm. It was quite a sight seeing her flounder through the snow, it not being able to hold her massive frame. Brad yelled with delight as he too floundered through the snow, snowshoes flying, toward his dog. Sue J. buried Brad when they finally met in an explosion of snow, arms, legs, and bodies. "Dog," Brad finally said, "It's real good to see you again. I was seriously wondering if I ever would again or not." Sue J. answered with a sloppy, wet kiss. "Come on," Brad said, "Let's go find some wood and build us a huge fire."

The next few days were spent hunting, fishing and exploring. Brad decided that because of the storm, small game would be scarce, so he went after a deer one day. To the displeasure of Sue J., he went alone, wishing to have a shot at a buck without Sue J. chasing it off. He found his buck down by the river and had no trouble in downing it. To his delight Brad found that the river was no longer frozen which meant he could do some fishing. "A surf and turf dinner would be just the thing," he said as he finished dressing the buck. After letting Sue J. out of the cabin, Brad grabbed some tackle and went fishing. He proceeded to catch three nice-sized trout, and a dinner of trout and venison was, as expected, excellent.

Six days after the storm, Brad and Sue J. had an unexpected visitor. Brad was busy chopping wood while Sue J. was pestering a squirrel. Suddenly she quit playing and started growling. Brad looked up and noticed Sue J. looking across the valley at something moving. It was a man and he was coming their way. Sue J. kept growling and then suddenly she gave a loud bark and took off across the clearing barking excitedly. Brad could do nothing but watch as his dog went flying across the valley toward the stranger. Brad couldn't believe his eyes at what happened next. Sue J. greeted this stranger like she did Brad himself, by jumping up and knocking him over and then licking his face. The stranger recovered from this onslaught and waved to Brad. "Hallooo!" he yelled. Suddenly Brad understood. "Dad!" he called and started running toward him. "Dad!"

Brad and his father began walking back to the cabin with Sue J. in between. "So what brings you to this neck of the woods?" Brad asked his father.

"Well son, it's like this," his father replied, "I knew exactly how I would find you out here. You and Sue J. enjoying the wilderness just like we used to do. But last week that blizzard hit and, well, your mother was a nervous wreck.

"I sort of figured it had something to do with Mom," Brad laughed. "I tried to tell her that you were fine but she wouldn't get off my case until I promised I would come out here myself to see how you were. Man, all this snow made it tough," his father added. "It took me almost five days this time."

"By now Mom is more worried about you than about me," Brad joked.

"Yeah," his father said laughing, "you're probably right." That night Brad treated his father to a royal surf and turf dinner and his father added to the meal by pulling a bottle of wine out of his backpack, much to the surprise and delight of Brad.

The next morning all three of them slept in. It was the first time since he had left that Brad was not up by 8:00. "Well, son," Brad's father began, "how long do you plan to stay up here?" "At least a couple more weeks," Brad replied.

"So I guess we shouldn't expect you for Thanksgiving then."

"Probably not Dad," Brad said. "I'm really at peace with myself out here. I just need some more time to get my life in order."

"I know just how you feel son. When I was your age I too felt an urge to be one with nature. I would spend days on end just camping alone. My folks could never understand it but that never stopped me. I'm glad that you have some of the same tendencies and loves that I do. And I'm glad that you have a place like this to be able to go when you have to."

"Thanks Dad," Brad replied, "just for understanding."

Brad's father left the next day and Brad felt strangely alone. Sue J., however, quickly cheered him up with a game of chase. Snuck up behind him and grabbed his hat out of his hand and took off. Twenty feet away she dropped the hat and started barking. That was all it took for Brad to charge her but he didn't have a chance. Sue J. was able to move through the snow now but there was still too much for Brad to be able to run after her very well. Brad, however, was not to be beaten that easily. He staged a new attack on the dog with snowballs. This tactic was enough to distract the dog into dropping the hat which Brad promptly dove on. Sue J., realizing that she had been suckered, counter-attacked mightily but to no avail; Brad kept his hat and won the battle.

Several days after his father left, Brad and Sue J. decided to hike the twenty miles up the river to the Ranger station located there. They left early in the morning and headed up-river. Along the way they had another encounter with a bear. They were walking along the river when Brad saw a black bear stripping bark on the other side. "Now don't you go chasing that bear Sue J.," Brad said. "It's not going to bother us so just leave it alone." Sue J. stayed by Brad's side but kept her eye on the bear. The bear did not seem too concerned with the two, having probably encountered people up there before. When they were even with the bruin, Sue J. finally let out a very loud bark. The bear looked back at the pair, turned around, and rambled back into the woods. Sue J. looked up at Brad with a grin on her face. "You just couldn't resist could you?" Brad said shaking his head. "One of these days you're going to get yourself into trouble not being able to leave things alone."

As they approached the station that evening, Brad noticed smoke rising from the chimney. "It'll be nice to sit by a fire real soon," Brad said to Sue J. Suddenly, from next to the station, a loud barking was heard announcing their presence. A large German shepherd came charging at them. Brad and Sue J. stiffened. The dog came straight up to Sue and and the two of them engaged in a dog's ritualistic form of identification, by sniffing each other around in circles. Brad looked up to see the Ranger standing in the doorway. Presently both dogs began wagging their tails and they immediately began chasing each other through the woods. Brad began walking toward the building. "Howdy," the Ranger said.

"How ya doing?" Brad replied.

"That's some dog you got there," the Ranger said. "Good thing it's a girl though," he added, "Max woulda chewed him up if it was a male." Brad just chuckled at the thought of any dog trying to chew Sue J. up. "Mike's the name," the Ranger said, holding his hand out.

"Nice to meet you, Mike," Brad said grabbing his hand, "My name's Brad." Me and Sue J. there have spent the last couple of weeks in our cabin over in the Hurricane Valley. Thought we might come up and visit you today."

"Well," Mike said, "that's awful neighborly of you. Quite a little trek though all the way over there." Mike and Brad spent the rest of the evening sitting by the fire talking. "So why are you and your dog spending so much time in the middle of nowhere?" Mike asked.

Hurricane Ridge

Scott Rector

"Well," Brad began, "I've spent almost three years at college now and I still don't know what I'm going to do or where I'm going to go when I get out. All college has done for me is to confuse the hell out of me."

"You seem to be quite an outdoorsman," Mike said. "Have you ever considered forestry?"

"I've thought about it a lot," Brad replied, "but I just don't think I could handle it as a career."

"I really love the outdoors though. That's partly the reason I'm up here. Once I graduate and start a career doing God knows what with my life, I may never have another opportunity like this again."

While Brad and Mike were talking, Sue J. and Max were exploring the valley. Because of the blizzard, most game came down into the valleys. Following the game came the wolves. North America has few wolves left but up in Canada and the northwestern states there are still a few packs left. Sue J. and Max came upon one of these. It was a small pack of only six, but a pack nevertheless. They met near the river and neither the dogs nor the wolves were aware of one another until they were upon each other. Immediately the leader of the pack and two other males dashed forward growling. Sue J. and Max just stood their ground bristling. The leader, upon sniffing both dogs, finally retreated with the other two. Both the wolves and the dogs then went their own directions, displaying a remarkable show of respect and understanding for each other.

Brad and Sue J. got up early to leave the next morning. Mike sent them off with a cup of coffee for Brad and a Milk Bone for Sue J. "Hey!" he yelled to Brad as he was leaving, "you'd better hurry if you can, the radio says it's going to get well below freezing tonight."

Brad waved in response and continued on his way. "So, did you and Max have fun last night?" Brad asked Sue J. as they were walking along. She wagged her tail in response and took off after a rabbit that suddenly bolted across their path. They made it back in good time that evening, so Brad did a little fishing before it got too dark. He wanted to catch some fish while he still could, before the river froze over again. That night Brad ate three fresh trout for dinner and Sue J. had some venison. "Let's do some hunting tomorrow, Dog. We haven't done any of

that for a couple days now," Brad said to Sue J. before falling asleep.

The next morning was bitter. Brad got up and looked outside. Everything was frozen. He opened the door to let Sue J. out and she promptly slipped and fell with a thud. "Way to go Grace," Brad said laughing. He stepped outside carefully to test the footing. The frozen snow would even hold him on top. "See Dog, nothing to it," he said after taking a few steps. He turned to go back in and promptly slipped and fell with a crash. Sue J., now used to the footing, trotted up and licked him on the face. "Alright alright," Brad said getting to his feet gingerly, "you made your point. OOH, that really smarts!" "Come on," he said, "let's see if we can't round up a few rabbits. They went to the woods and in an hour had six nice sized rabbits."

Later that day, Brad and Sue J. went down to the river. It was frozen. Brad started looking for some wood to build a fire while Sue J. went walking through the woods toward the river. Sue J. started barking wildly and Brad looked up to see her chasing a rabbit through the trees. He smiled and chuckled as she chased it all the way down to the river and along the bank. Then the rabbit dashed out and across the frozen water and Sue J. followed. Suddenly Brad heard a loud crack and he looked up to see Sue J. disappear through the ice with a large splash. Silence. "Sue J.!" Brad screamed as he ran toward the river. He reached the ice and tried to go out but a sudden crack sent him scrambling back. "Sue J.!" Silence. "NO!!!" Brad screamed, tears running down his face. "Sue J.!"

Brad remained staring at the hole in the ice for over an hour. Finally he stood and walked slowly back to his cabin, still very much in shock. He walked inside and instinctively built a fire. Sitting by the fire Brad began to remember. Tears came to his eyes again and Brad layed down crying heavily.

The next morning Brad packed up all his gear in his backpack. He closed up the cabin and began walking down to the river. The hole in the ice was now frozen over. Brad looked around at the woods, half expecting his dog to come bounding out of them once again. He turned again to the hole in the ice. "Goodbye my friend," he finally said. "Goodbye." Brad then turned and headed for home. He would make it back for Thanksgiving after all.

by
Lora Threm

by Lora Threm

Walking by the Tall, Stately Columns

Walking by the tall, stately columns
in the middle of an ink black night,
the only light coming from the streetlamps
and the moon.

The green of the trees blending into each other
and fading into the darkness.

The flagpole a silvery tower reaching into the heavens
of the stars, a spotlight searching for others
like itself.

The columns are society around us, shrouded in
dark; the trees are the faces of the people
we have seen and forgotten.

But the silver flagpole is a beacon shining out for
those who can see and appreciate its special beauty.

Water

Dew strung on the grass
Like diamonds on a long chain
Of a green necklace.

Rushing, tumbling
Tumultuous waterfall
In showers of sun-
Small children falling from high
Bars and turning upside-down.

Raindrops fall on the
Black pavement in the early
Morning's sunrise — a
Time of sorrow has come to
The land as the night ends.

by
Dave Wiethop

by Dave Wiethop

The Fun Lover (for Jolene)

Barrett was the funniest man in his fraternity and he knew it. He played funny pranks on his fraternity brothers, such as hanging condoms on the Christmas tree before a sorority was to come over to the House to drink hot cocoa, and pouring instant gelatin in the toilets late at night, so the early morning pee would bounce off the water. Barrett would laugh and laugh, and so would a few others, who understood how harmless Barrett's humor really was. Besides, this sort of thing was better than Other Things Barrett Could Do. So let him stuff a rubber snake in the mailbox, a special council of concerned fraternity brothers concluded. He could be doing worse.

"What could be worse than a bedful of ice?" said one brother, cloaked in a black satin graduation robe. "I cannot imagine what he could do that would be any worse."

"There are some very bad things he could do," said another after thinking about it.

"Such as?" the first asked again.

"He could pick up vices and then they could become *habit-forming*," the second responded.

"Yeah, like *drinking* or *smoking*," said a third, also dressed in a graduation robe, worn only for special council meetings like this one.

"Or *close dancing*," said a fourth, who seldom said much. The fourth brother has been sabotaged the day before by Barrett's rubber barf. It looked so real to the fourth brother that it lay in the middle of the room with a paper towel over it before he realized that it was not real. It came up in one piece. Barrett, standing outside the door, laughed and laughed.

And so the council decided to do nothing about Barrett's behavior, because his actions were innocent. If Barrett took up less innocent activities, then he might wind up in a criminal institution, which was the place the fourth brother was certain Barrett would wind up. He was positive Barrett was a nut, and the others agreed to limited extents.

One day, the Funniest Man in the World, who was also a World-Famous Writer, came to Barrett's campus to read some of his stories and make people laugh at a reception. His name was Manny, and people travel for miles and miles to hear his incredible jokes and funny stories. Like Barrett, he knew he was funny, but others all over the world knew he was funny, too. Manny wrote jokes for his

high school paper and for his college newspaper. When he graduated *summa cum laude* from Alfred University in Poughkeepsie, New York, he knew he was bound for stardom, again, much like Barrett. Manny went straight to New York City, where he wrote gags for Barry Chagrin, the World's Funniest Impressionist of the 1940s, and for a while, Manny specialized in writing FDR jokes. Soon, it was time for Manny to move on, and he settled in on a regular nine-to-4:43 p.m. job with a greeting card firm, where he also doodled on the side, and eventually began selling his doodles to *Esquire*, *The New Yorker*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*. Manny also began writing a few short stories on the side for his own amusement, and before he knew it, even those were published. Manny truly led a charmed life, and he came to the college to tell about it.

Yet, Barrett refused to listen to Manny's stories when he read them on campus that night. The auditorium was filled with people — so many that a rumor began that Manny would read *twice* that night for the same price. Manny was never confronted about an additional speaking engagement, but if he had been, Manny would have agreed. Instead, he read to a Standing Room Only crowd on a small campus in southern Minnesota. People sat in the aisles of the auditorium, along the staircases leading to the stage — people even sat in the lobby outside the auditorium, catching only parts of the stories. And, the people roared with laughter. Manny started with a joke about Barry Chagrin, whom only one or two of the people in the audience really remembered. Everyone else laughed because Manny thought it was funny. Manny had that kind of persuasive powers. He followed the joke with a gag he had written for Barry, and then read some stories he had written for *Esquire*, called "The Jelly Beans" and "The Fun-Lovers." One woman gasped for breath from laughing so much that she nearly collapsed in the middle of his reading. Once again, Manny was a hit.

As per Manny's contract, he was allowed to stay at the university the next day, so he could enjoy being with young people. "Young people," he said sagely the night before, "Young people keep me young." Manny woke up early the next morning, and started his sojourn from the Happy Trails Motel, near the campus, to the top of the administrative hill of the college. Along the way, he walked with young people, or very near them, and

sometimes pulled a notebook from his leather satchel to write down some of the funny things that kids say. "Oh these young people!" Manny would laugh softly to himself, "They have such wit."

Toward noon, Manny, tired of walking, sat against a large tree in the yard of the college. It was still very warm from a particularly hot Missouri summer, but Manny enjoyed the heat. He leaned his head against the tree and smiled. He loved the Midwest. He would never live here, but he would like to die here, perhaps. He wrote that down too. Manny was always coming up with funny things like that.

Soon, Manny fell asleep against the tree, with his chin against his chest, and a trickle of drool slipping out of his mouth. In time, he slid from leaning against the tree to leaning against the ground, soft from slumber and the warmth of the Indian Summer. He dreamed he heard sirens, but Manny was always dreaming things like that. Then he dreamed he saw an ambulance driving up the hill of the campus, with men in white coats pouring out of the back door of it. Again, he chalked his funny, funny dreams to his subconscious. It was always playing tricks on him. When Manny woke up, the men in the white coats were laddling him into a stretcher and preparing to push him into the screeching ambulance.

"What? What? What do you think I am? You think I am sick? You think I am a sick old man, am I right? What? Whaaaatt? Put me down!" Manny screamed, trying to sit up and look around from the stretcher. But, the men continued to strap Manny down, and shove the stretcher into the ambulance. As they drove away, a young person picked up Manny's leather satchel and carried it to the college lost-and-found.

Manny had to explain at the hospital emergency room that he simply fell asleep against a tree and woke up inside of an ambulance. Nothing more had happened. "You think I am sick? You take my blood pressure, you'll see. Strong as an ox. Fit as a whistle. I am incredible for my age," Manny said over and over. Instead, the nurse gave him a general anesthetic and put Bactine on the scrape on the back of his bald head. The anesthetic really was not necessary, but it pacified both Manny and the nurse. He was sent on his way.

The old man took a taxi back to the college and

looked for his leather satchel he left behind. "What? You even have criminals in the Midwest? What is this crazy world coming to — stealing an old man's papers?" he asked himself over and over. He tried to smile, because Manny did not want the young people to think he was a crabby old man — just a proud, witty man, to whom age made little difference. He climbed to the top of the hill, and asked a couple of students where he could find his leather satchel. They, in turn, directed him to the lost and found, where he picked it up, only after telling a few great stories to the young people working behind the counter. They roared with laughter, and he was proud; even in a crisis, he knew he could still be funny. Manny stepped away from the counter, and then remembered to ask who turned his satchel into the desk.

A young blonde said, "Barrett," and made "uuugggh" sounds.

"Why say that, pretty girl?" asked Manny.

"Barrett Harper is the grossest person on this campus," she said, "He lives at the Gamma Rho Theta House."

"Thank you, pretty girl," said Manny, "You are a beautiful human being." Manny walked to the pay telephone in the hallway of the building and looked up the Gamma Rho Theta House in the Yellow Pages. Then, Manny decided to call this kind young person. Maybe they might drink Cokes at the soda shop or something.

Instead, Manny suggested to Barrett that they meet in the academic building, and then they could take a walk together. Manny said he wanted to thank the young man in person for returning the satchel. Barrett agreed, and after Manny hung up the telephone, the old man counted the money in his wallet. He had over \$150 in cash, and he pulled out a dollar. Manny felt it was a generous reward for a kind act.

Barrett left the fraternity house in a hurry, and ran to the hill. This was going to be fun — he could tell his Brothers about it later, in a snide way. He recognized Manny immediately from the big half-moons of sweat underneath his arms. All old men sweat like horses, Barrett thought, especially this one.

"And you are Barrett," said Manny good-naturedly. "Your face even looks kind. I can tell a kind face from a far distance."

The Fun Lover

Dave Wiethop

"Hullo," Barrett said, taken a little aback. He had heard from his fraternity Brothers that Manny was the Funniest Man in the World, and this distinction made Barrett a little uneasy.

"Here's a reward for your kindness," Manny said, extending his hand with the bill crumpled in it. Barrett took the bill hoping that it was a ten or maybe even a twenty, but did not show his disappointment in the dollar.

"Thanks," Barrett said. "I hear you are *funny*."

"Funny? Me? Funny?" said Manny, over-reacting. "Never."

"My fraternity Brothers told me..."

"Yes," said Manny, smiling. "I am the Funniest Man in the World."

"That's what I was told," said Barrett. "I'm funny too. I'm the funniest man in my fraternity house." Barrett pushed the door open for the old man, who walked outside.

"And how funny is that?" Manny asked, eyes looking around, trying to connect with Barrett's eyes.

"*Funny*. I can make people laugh so hard that pop comes out of their noses," Barrett bragged. He really meant it.

"*Amazing*," said Manny.

"No, you don't understand," Barrett said, giggling. "They are drinking pop before I make them laugh at me, and then it gets caught...in their windpipes. Then it gets re-routed through their noses. That's funny, too." Barrett giggled at the thought of that.

"Sounds very funny," said Manny. Young people "turned him on," as they say. "You should write for radio shows someday, young man."

"Oh," said Barrett. He didn't know whether to tell the Funniest Man in the World that he was the Dumbest Man in the World, too. There were no more radio shows like that anymore. "I play pranks, too."

"So, tell me about them while we walk. You think I don't appreciate a good prank, too?"

Barrett got excited. "I have all these rubber gizmos in my room, see?" said Barrett. "Rubber puke, rubber poop, even rubber pop cans that look spilled over. They're all a gas, when people find them on the floor. A real gas."

"Ho ho!" cried out Manny. He slapped his leg.

"And rubber pencils that *bend* instead of write, too!" the young man said.

"Ho ho!"

"And sometimes I buy this prank soap which turns your face *black* when you wash!"

"I love it! I love it!" Manny cried out. "No more! Don't tell this old man any more. This is too much fun!"

"Serious?"

"You make the Funniest Man in the World laugh until he cries and you ask if he is serious?" Manny said. "You will be big like I am, someday, I know it. I know it."

"Can I ask you something else then?" Barrett said.

"I should ask you a question like that," Manny said.

"You won't be mad at me?"

"Say it, say it," Manny said, wiping the tears away from his eyes.

"Did you enjoy your ambulance ride today?" Barrett said, giggling softly.

"Did I enjoy speeding down cobblestone streets flat on my back in a strange town, and being gassed by Nazi nurses, you ask. You are *meshuggeneh*, crazy, to be sure," Manny said, calming down. "That, that was worse than a life with a cancer. Worse than *two* lives."

"Well, then," Barrett said, once his giggling decreased, "I was the one who called the ambulance on you. I am funny, so I played a joke on the Funniest Man in the World. Now, I am *almost* the Funniest Man in the World, and I am only one-third your age!" Barrett could not hold back his pride. Manny could not hold back his foot, either, and kicked Barrett Hooper between his legs very hard, causing the young man to double over and fall to the sidewalk. Manny cursed the Funniest Man in Gamma Rho Theta fraternity, and kicked the bottoms of his shoes.

"You are *evil*. You are worse than evil. You are a cancer on society. You do not deserve fine education or money. You are scum. Ptui, ptui." The Funniest Man in the World walked away. He called for a taxi when he got back to the Happy Trails Motel, and flew back to New York, away from Minnesota, away from the ambulances, and away from the Midwestern lecture circuit, forever. He never missed it.

by Dave Wiethop

American Legion

I can't tell if she kids me or not. Momma holds the *Southeast Missourian* in front of my face, allowing me to read a half-page advertisement with black block letters yelling out

American Legion Tool Auction Tonight

with pictures of tools we could buy, along the margin. That is, if we went to the auction, of course. We could buy drills of all sizes, a thousand different kinds of wrenches and hammers of different lengths. We are offered rubber mallets, socket sets, pulleys, screwdrivers, chisels with flat heads, chisels with curved heads, step ladders, wood planes, drill presses, vises, callipers, chainsaws, anvils. Plus much more, the advertisement promises.

"Momma," I say, pulling a bit of a Missouri drawl into my voice, "what more could I ever want besides all these tools?" She smiles weakly, not understanding my sarcasm. "Nope, I don' wanna go."

"It'll be lots of fun," she says. Suddenly I am aware of how much taller I am than she is. I suggest asking Dad when he comes home.

Later, he looks at her with the same curiosity I have. Again, she explains what an exciting time she thought we would have, and besides, she says, looking at me, "It's better than doing nothing — right, Dave?" My parents think I am dull, and rightfully so. During my twenty-first summer, I decided to waste three months of my life by floating somewhere between cable television and a stack of unfinished short stories that will never be finished. We laugh about my lack of ambition. I do not mind it.

Dad agrees to the tool auction, becoming more excited after reading the ad more carefully. He promises me a PapaBurger from the A&W on the way back from the auction. I consent, and climb into the front seat of the station wagon. Driving will be the one ambitious thing I will do today.

We drive to Jackson, the county seat, where the American Legion Hall is located. This is the same town I took my driver's test in, after Dad drove me to the court house. He sat on a misplaced office chair in the lobby, while I scribbled away on a twenty-question examination. I wanted to drive back home after passin' the final part of the test, but that would have involved either slippery country roads or the interstate, and we both knew it would be a long

time until I could handle the interstate.

Tonight, I find I am going out of my way to avoid the interstate. I decide to take Route W, then cut to Route Y until I reach the corner of Court and High Streets in the county seat. Jackson looks like any other Midwestern town of fewer than 5,000 — slow and residential, with old street signs at each corner, as if the streets were going to change names in the middle of the block. It is Andy Griffith Country. We turn right on High, passing the Coca-Cola bottling plant. The American Legion Hall is a block or so away, but tonight, we have to park in the lot of the bottling plant. The Hall is surrounded by other cars and pick-up trucks, dusty and grimy.

It is August, and it is humid. There is no breeze tonight, like any other night before it during the summer — just lots of warm, thick aromas.

"Fart today," I say to parents suddenly, "you'll still smell it tomorrow."

"Day-yuve," I am scolded.

"Well, it's true."

The sky is still bright from the sun over the western county hills, bouncing in soft shades of oranges. The street lamps are lit already. Moths and June bugs jump at the fluorescence in soft cosmos about the bulb. I think I can hear buzzing. I do not want to leave the air-conditioned car, trying to dig my heels into the floorboard of the driver's seat. Momma pulls her purse across the seat of the car and tells me "Come on." Dad has already started walking up the street toward the brick one-story Hall. Slowly, I walk with Momma in the shadows of the houses, saying little. Dad holds a wooden door open for us, and we enter a small ante-room, where men are buying bottles of Stag beer and drinking them in the hallway outside the meeting room. Alcohol is not permitted in the meeting room, nor is gambling, according to warped cardboard signs fastened to the wall with ceiling staples. Beyond the glass doors across the ante-room sit two men with metal boxes filled with dollars. Dad pays a dollar apiece for us to get into the auction, and signed for a number — 331. It is odd that we have to pay an admission to get inside the auction, but we do it because the auction will sell only new tools. It is a privilege to have the chance to buy new tools at an auction. Or so I think.

In the meeting hall, someone has set up nearly

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three hundred metal folding chairs. Men stand near the chairs, a few sit, talking to one another, and a handful of children in "Dukes of Hazzard" teeshirts step from chair to chair, chasing one another. Momma acts self-conscious, pulling her purse closer to her arm and sitting quickly in a chair in the back of the room. There are only five other women in the entire room, looking more like they belong on farms than Momma does, and all sit in metal chairs, waiting for the auction to begin and end. Even in 1983, the American Legion Hall is no place for women, especially in Jackson, Missouri. The unstated rule is enforced in the subtle movements of the men in the room. The men and women do not mix.

The men in the room are identifiable from their jobs. The brown-skinned men are soybean-farmers, dark from weeks in the fields, planting winter wheat or baling hay. The pale-skinned men with slight gray haze to their complexions are mechanics, emerging from beneath the cars long enough for the auction. They all walk slowly through the room, stopping at chairs, and not moving much further beyond the chair. The bottles of Stag have slowed their steps.

At the far end of the room stand about eighteen folding tables, piled with shining, new tools of all kinds, just like the ad in the *Missourian* promised. There is no order to the piles; ten wooden-handled hammers lie next to large plastic sheets with sets of wrenches beneath the clear plastic coating. Cardboard boxes of socket sets are stacked on the same table with a brass spittoon, and long rotary saw blades, plastic mallets, several large hunting knives without sheaths, but too large to fit inside pockets, a trailer hitch, a crowbar, and an open box of silver-colored sockets. Other tables have similar items, with many concealed beneath their white plastic packages. Some men wearing blue shirts with grease on the sleeves inspect the tables, turning the merchandise over in their hands.

As the room fills, more drift toward the chairs. It is eight o'clock and a few lines of orange light drift into the crowd between the faded curtains above our heads. A man in a straw cowboy's hat stands a microphone rest in the middle of the tables and plugs in a small public address mike. He bangs the microphone a few times, hissing into it, counting, and makes the crowd aware he is there. The public address system works. There are no shrill screeches across the room. It is surprising how well it works.

The man clears his throat and says his name is "J.B." He has a Texan accent, but he sounds like he is trying to hide it with a shred of a drawl he has

picked up from Missouri.

"Now, Ah'm from Buffalo Tool and Die," he says, making his last word sound more like "daa" than "die," and he continues. "An' Ah've got a truckload of tools out in the back just like these. Ah'm bein' paid to move these tools out theah. Ah'm goin' tuh do it if Ah can..."

I want to cover my ears. I dislike Missouri accents badly enough, but forced Texan twangs make me even more uncomfortable. J.B. explains that he wants to get rid of the tools mainly so he can get back to his "waff" if we know what he means. Of course we know what he means.

But, we want to believe everything J.B. says. He is the auctioneer. We want to know he is giving us a good deal on the new tools.

He explains the procedure for the bidding. Nothing — not the drill bits, not the chainsaws — nothing will start at less than four bits. The crowd laughs a little. He has to do that, to make that rule, so he can at least pay the wholesale costs, but that's dirt cheap anyway. Hold the numbers you were given high in the air, so Barbara, a skinny brown-haired woman sitting behind J.B., his microphone and a stack of tools, can see your number. She will write it down when you win the bid, and you will pay her after the auction is over. Barbara scoots her chair when she hears her name mentioned. Momma relaxes, knowing there is another woman whose presence has been acknowledged in the room. She puts her purse on the floor, next to her tennis shoe. The other woman is about her age. Now, at least she feels she can belong, no longer out of place.

J.B. stands pensively at the microphone for a moment. "Ready?" he says. The bidders shift their weight, and hack phlegm in their throats. A tiny girl sitting on her dad's lap in front of us sneezes. J.B. turns around and grabs a pair of needle-nosed pliers from one of the middle tables. His Texan twang disappears and his voice becomes auctioneer prattle: "Bidatfourbits, fourbits, fourbits, lemmehearsemty-fih, semty-fih! 1-45, 2-33, 5-6, 1-90, 1-21!" He points at each card held above the men's heads, shouting the first digit, and saying the last digits into the microphone. "Letsgohigher, semtyfih, semtyfih, one dollar! 3-10, 2-3, 4-5, 1-01!" J.B. stops and holds the pliers high in the air. "Y'all can see these, can't ya?" Y'can see these are quality pliers! Ah am bein' paid to meve this stuff, but if y'aren't gonna take advantage of these prices, Ah'm not gon' sell any of it. An' y'll gon' miss out on it, 'cause the price'll go higher as I sell the pieces. Y'got jump in quick with J. B. heah."

Momma leans over to ask me what I am thinking. I am curt with her; I am still sulking because I had to do something tonight. I do not admit I am enjoying the theatrics of the auction. I mutter "noth-en'."

"Better'n makin' you buy just one pair of these Buffalo needle-nosed plars, Ah'm gon' t'giveyo two pair, just t'get those cahds up in the air." J.B. begins his prattle again. He stops in mock-disappointment again. J.B. reaches for a third set of pliers, and then a larger pair. He settles on a fifth very small pair, for a total of "say, two bucks." "A good set of needle-nosed plars f'two bucks," he says, "Where can you get a deal lack that?" He has sold over three dozen sets of needle-nosed pliers by the end of the first bid. Dad has a new set of Buffalo pliers, so convinced after the fourth pair was added.

"Good, good, at this rate, Ah'll see my waff in no time!" J.B. winces. The audience is with him. I try to imagine J.B.'s waff after he mentions her once more. She uses orange-juice cans as hair rollers, and smokes menthol cigarettes. She takes too much aspirin, and can drink a horse under the table.

"What are you going to do with five pairs of pliers at once?" I ask Dad. He shrugs, but I am certain there is a reason. I am not a mechanic, though by my familial origins, I should be. It was a good deal, Dad says. He knows what he is doing.

J.B. picks up a chainsaw and begins the bidding at \$75 after describing the saw carefully, and starting the engine quickly, then shutting it off. I pull my brown baseball hat from the back pocket of my jeans, and slide it on my hand. While Dad listens to the auctioneer, and Momma watches everyone I count the baseball caps in the room, and then count how many have the same emblem as I have on mine; a yellow outline of a truck and trailer, a large yellow W, and my last name, WIETHOP. The hats all came from Dad's IH shop. It feels a little funny looking at your name all over a room filled with strangers. While you are a stranger to most of them, you are also the name on their hats. It's a deceptive anonymity.

This is not the first auction I have been to. After my parents had lived in cities in St. Louis and Cape Girardeau for most of their lives, raising my brother and sister as suburbanites, they decided to move to the country to settle on the farm where they planned to remain for the rest of their lives. I was raised there coming long after my sister and brother, on eighty-three acres of woods and pasture, eight miles from the nearest town. When my father needed a hay baler, we went to an auction to buy a used one. When we needed a manure spreader, Dad scouted

the papers until he found a list of sales going on.

I went along to play with the other kids dragged to the auctions by their parents. There were fields to run around in, and houses to play under, but best of all, there were other kids! It was one of the only times I would get to play with other kids living on farms — the other children I knew lived in the suburbs, and they were able to play with one another all the time. We never learned names, and when Momma would ask who I was playing with, I would tell her the truth: "three yella-haired kids, and one with no hair." Once, I even sat under a house eating pie with a yella-haired kid named Allen Friederich. His grandma died and his folks were selling off the farm she lived on. Allen and I raced eating pie and I won. We ate six pieces between us, and Allen threw up on the steps of the house. Momma made me sit in the car for the rest of the afternoon, administering a punishment for a crime never committed by either my brother or sister. They were city kids. I am not.

Now, Momma sits next to me, listening to the auctioneer. She tells me she is glad her men are enjoying themselves. "How can you tell?" I ask, poking a finger to tickle her ribs.

"It's easy to tell when you're having a good time. You're *doing* something." She pulls up her purse and fishes out a dollar for a Coke. "Get me one, too," she adds. Though she has not said as much, Momma is not keen on all the time I have wasted this summer. Still, she is patient, and tries to get me off the farm once in a while. She comes to my defense when others ask "What's Dave doing now?"

I ask Dad if he wants a soda, but J.B. is selling him a "come-along," and he can't be bothered now. I walk along the walls, slipping between people to the ante-room, where they were selling Stags. I buy a sixteen-ounce Coke for Mom, intending to share some of it with Momma. I slip back through the path I had created through the people, and hand her all of it, cold to touch. I make another quick trip along the wall, to take a walk outside, and breathe the thick, cooling air.

The Veach Oil Company has a gas station on the corner of High and Court; we passed it on our way to the Hall. I stuff my hands into my jeans pockets and walk there, in the shadows I create from the street lamps.

A tan Mustang bounces up High Street and pulls into the Veach station. Two young girls, both with summer-blond hair, climb out of the back seat, and laugh. They dive back in the car, forgetting their money. They are still laughing when they push upon the glass doors of the station. I watch them from the

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darkness beside the gas station, partly on the sidewalk, partly behind a large hydrangea bush with blue flowers. The girls have long, smooth brown legs, and brown-pink cheeks and chins, almost burnt from tanning. They laugh more inside the station, and that intrigues me enough to want to go into the station myself. Another girl, who has driven them, climbs out, pulls the legs of her shorts slightly to protect her rear from exposure, and turns the dial on the gas pump, opening the cap on the tank. I realize the girls are sixteen, seventeen. I still want to hear what makes them laugh.

I make up an excuse to go inside. I will buy a newspaper. The blondes have six-packs of Diet Coke in their hands, and heave has a bag of M&M's in their mouths. They look at each other, and make faces. Even though I stand behind them, the only other person in the room besides the cashier, they are unaware of me. I remember that I am still unmarried, almost a crime in southeast Missouri. That is, if you are male, and twenty-one years old. They leave the station before me, and I pay for a copy of the *Jackson Cashbook-Journal*, wondering if either would have been interested in a fairly sophisticated country lad, or an older, graying man like J.B.

I read the paper in front of the court house, sitting with my legs spread apart, elbows on my knees, and paper hanging from my arms. Soon, the paper is damp from humidity, and I lie back, wishing for stars.

I walk back to the American Legion. J.B. is in the middle of a Surprise Jackpot Bonanza, as he calls it, put together just for this group here in Jackson, Missouri.

Already, he is selling all the items on the first table — mostly hammers and skill saws, and six or seven come-alongs, which look a little like a pulley with a handle and a thick piece of wire attached to it. He also sells a sandblaster/grinder on a stand. All this, he says, for \$125. Did he forget the socket sets? Make that *three* socket sets, with 44 pieces in each one, the hammer set on the third table, four ball-peen hammers, a carton of electrician's tape, and a set of five universal wrenches. As J.B. adds items to the Jackpot Bonanza, he runs to each item with his hand-held microphone, he holds it up if he can, and then reminds the bidders that the entire set goes for \$125. No more, no less. \$125. The crowd fidgets with uncertain excitement. He adds the Buffalo drill press, and raises the price to \$200. J.B. does not stop. He has more stuff to get rid of. That's what he is paid to do. He wants to get rid of it all, so he can

go home.

"An' the mallet set, six mallets in ea' set, hell, make that *two* sets! And extension grips, for reachin' deep inside an inside to get that screw you jes' dropped in theah. An' knives! An' what a set — a pocket knife graduatin' up to a huntin' knife — hell, Ah'll throw in a mah-chitty, too, if it'll make y'll happy," he says, producing a knife with a very thick blade. He swings it around over his head a few times for effect.

"A machete!" I say. "Great! Now we can control that pesky bear population around our house."

Momma giggles. Dad ignores me.

"An the come-along! I'll give ya'll three of 'em so y'can use 'em to pull somepin', hell I don' care what you pull with them!" J.B.'s face is growing red. It is as exciting for him as it is for the bidders. He adds another entire table of tools to the Bonanza, for the same \$300, and puts the microphone back in its rest. "Now who wants to put up their cahd fust?" Four hands shot up quickly, and six others followed hesitantly. "Barbara, take these numbers! 1-26, 9-3, 2-7, 3-03," he shouts.

"Now what's the problem heah?" the auctioneer asks. "You wanna see the stuff up close? You think Ah'm tryin' t'rip ya'll off?" The bidders fidgeted and blew cigar smoke in the air. Of course they wanted to see the stuff. They always did. Each town, the crowd would get a chance to look at the surprise Jackpot Bonanza created just for them. This is part of J.B.'s game.

"C'mon up," he says, with a strong wave. He points to the merchandise on the first three tables and the table behind the third. "All this and the drill press heah, for \$300." The bidders scrape their cards on the wooden floor, and file by the tables, picking up the knives, feeling the weight of the wrenches, tugging at the chains on the pulleys.

J.B. takes a minute to drink a Coke with Barbara as he watches the men. Dad migrates to the tables, talking to people in the line. He comes back, thinking about it.

"Any good?" I ask. I am excited because J.B. is so excited. I want to have a machete over my head, too.

"Yeah, it's not bad," Dad says. He gives one of his half-surprised funny smiles of his, and does not say anything more until later.

J.B. bangs on the microphone as people head toward their seats. "Now ya'll sat's'fied?" he says. "Ah'm gon' move this stuff tonight. Ah promised that to m'self. Now, lemme see them cahds!" it works. The air is filled with cards bearing hand-

printed numbers. The air two feet beneath the cards is filled with faces, faces concerned with where the \$300 will come from. Some of them have wives who think they are at the American Legion Hall playing cards, or holding a meeting with other men

Dad's hand goes in the air.

A half-hour later, I carry tools by the armload from a tractor-trailer to the open tailgate of the station wagon. Each time I return to the trailer, two guys inside have piled more tools on the floor for me, another victim of the Jackpot Bonanza. Dad stands and checks a list he has made on the margin of a deposit slip as the auctioneer added things to the Jackpot. Momma sits in the back seat of the car, watching me fill the storage compartment with tools.

"Anything you can use here Dave?" she asks.

"In Washington? Maybe the machete." We laugh, and I lean against the back bumper of the car, watching fireflies in the dark just beyond the car.

I am winded in the Southeast Missouri humidity. I have never gotten used to it. It is rich and scented — almost chewable, I think. I lean back and take in a lung full of air, then rub the grease and carbon from the tools on my face.

It is time to go.

Dave Wiethop

Fourth

My parents sit in webbed lawnchairs
in the hazy backyard,
grass ankle-deep,
and watch distant fireworks,
listening to Mac bark
at loud snaps and bangs
beyond the woods.
It has become hunting season
for the dog
though he has never hunted with my father.

Mom clutches the Off
in one hand,
and holds Dad's paw with the other.
"Oooh! Aaah!" she purrs,
like an overgrown kitten
stuffed into a rocking chair.
Dad says he wants to plant blue bushes
along the wall of my bedroom window.
"What do you call those things?"
I appear from the kitchen,
white cake freshly shoved into my mouth.
"Blue spruces?" I venture
"Hydrangeas," Mom corrects us
the both of us.
"Those have blue flowers
like china cups."

It is noisy living in the country.
The frogs sing deep tunes,
Whippoorwills conduct waltzes—
even the crickets rub knees together,
telling what good fishing bait they make.
The dog whines to go inside,
so we leave Mom and Dad alone
to sit in the night air.
"It gets hot along that wall,"
Mom says to no one.
"I don't think hydrangeas can tolerate heat."
Dad, wiping his glasses
on his thin shirt,
ignores what she has said
and laughs out loud.
"I didn't spend one red cent
for fireworks this year."

Working

I am sixteen,
and Paula
is the older woman,
turning nineteen in three months.
We take inventory
alone together,
between aisles and aisles
of truck parts.

"Three six nine twelve,"
dark Paula counts aloud.
"Twelve tubes of OLLMO grease."
"The six-inch tubes,"
I ask innocently,
"Or the four-inch tubes?"

She moans in seductive tones,
then pulls her hand
across her damp forehead,
leaving a grimy smear.
"Oooh," groans Paula,
"Six inches, right here."
I lay my computer print-out
on the shelf next to the VALVOLINE
and notice for the first time:
I sweat,
and Paula perspires, no! Paula
glows,
for Chrissakes,
like Rita Hayworth,
in the hot stagnant warehouse.
I move closer to her,
with intentions of kissing
the side of her neck.

Quickly
I think of auburn-haired Connie,
also sixteen and so in love with me,
sitting in the backseat
of my yellow Gran Torino,
eyes swollen from crying over
what I will do to her.
Paula moves closer.

I bend over awkwardly,
and begin to suck
the side of slender Paula's neck,
committing adultery
for the first time.
She pushes away the boss' son
with a slow yawn
and a humbling "G'wan" sound.
I back from her,
acting unaware of what I have done.

After my coffee break,
I plan to go to Hell.

Dave Wiethop

Trailer, with Palm Tree

I. We have moved to Florida to die.
We sold our sofa,
our double bed,
and the pair of milk glass lamps
with filigree shades,
so we can travel from Chicago to Sarasota
in a Buick and
a Royal Coachman Traveller.

Our trunk is filled
with clothing,
our backseat with memories
of Joey (he was killed
in the War
and the parish gave him
a bad plot, near the fir trees)
and of Ming Choy,
our kitten Papa brought home
for our anniversary one year.
Now, Ming Choy lives
with Ellen, my sister.

We have one another now,
as before,
but the silence in the Buick
whistles in our ears.
We have forgotten
what we talk about when
we are alone,
so Papa watches the road
and I make sandwiches
from Underwood's devilled ham spread.

Papa wakes me
when we cross from Georgia
into Florida.

We are both surprised
we have made it this far.
Papa's heart is not well,
and I spend much time keeping him calm.
I smile, pat his arm,
and peel a tangerine
we eagerly bought in Peoria,
handing him waxy sections.

I am ready to settle
at the first palm tree
the first seagull
the first grove of lemons and oranges,
but Papa insists upon driving to the sea.
We will park there,
between a grove and the beach,
so we can swim
and eat real, fresh fruit,
like the song—
"all day, all night,
Marianne."

II. I want to buy a bag of oranges
to ship back to Chicago,
to Ellen and Ming Choy
but I sight instead
a pink and white plaster
seashell diorama of the seashore,
with plastic flamingoes,
scallop shells and
smaller white shells
in a fancy pattern along the base.
A cord connects the bulb
hidden behind the largest shell,
which lights and creates
a true vision of beauty,
a vision of Florida.
I pay for it, and have it wrapped,
knowing I will never see it again.

I slip a note in the box,
with the tissue paper
placed there at the souvenir shop.
I write:

"To Ellen and Ming Choy, our cat,
We wanted you to know
Florida is just great.
Love always,
Will and Corrine—"

I add quickly:

"P.S. We miss you, we
really, really do."
But, it is too late for such thoughts;
we are here, and
Papa says he is happy.

III. We find that beach,
but there are no groves,
just sand and other travel trailers,
all silver like ours,
all small, and full of terrycloth towels,
terrycloth beach shirts, fine for sand.
Papa ignores the other people
on the beach,
dragging a webbed-seated lawn chair
across the sand dune.
I sit inside the trailer
and watch him make the journey
he has waited to make by himself
all these years.

I decide to take a beer to him,
but the fridge is full of IBC Root Beer,
not Miller's, or Stag or Schlitz.
There is a small grocery down the block
from the trailer park, where
I can buy beer for him,
I am sure they sell it.
But, I will not buy him any,
because I cannot buy alcohol
in front of other people.
A woman alone
buying beer, is a woman
up to no good, others will think.
But Papa deserves more
than soft drinks upon his retirement.
A long, cold brown bottle
would taste good to him on the hot beach.

* * * * *

Will drank beer—
and gin fizzes—in Wilmington, near the base.
Ellen and I sit in the USO,
sipping Cokes, giggling to the music,
and watching the sailors.
Will slips into the folding chair
next to Ellen's and pushes
two cigarettes into his nose,
asking Ellen for a light. Ellen
turns away quickly,
but I find it funny, hilarious!
I almost spit soda back into the bottle,
I giggle so much. He says
his name is "Will,"
and I say I am "Will Not."
Will teaches us about sloe gin
that night, and Ellen spends time
in the bathroom on her knees.

He asks me to dance,
to a song, either "Blue Moon"
or "Stardust" — it was so beautiful,
it could have been both songs,
played at once. Will could dance, too.

IV. Papa sits in his lawn chair
staring straight ahead into the sea,
and lets a hand drop to his side.
I slide my feet in the sand,
so he may hear me approaching,
and slip a root beer into his hand.
I squeeze his shoulders
with both hands,
and say nothing in the swift spurts
of blowing air, salty to taste.
I let him know I am there,
and we watch the sea together,
waiting for the tide to come in.

This is as good as our life gets.
It will have to be.

by Dave Wiethop

Danner Comes Through the Door

Jim sits on the floor of Danner's smallish studio apartment, flipping through magazines with one hand. He holds a Dixie cup of Chablis with the other and tries to balance the cup on his knee. It is a party — a party for Danner's twenty-fifth birthday. Molly, Danner's girlfriend, has organized the party, to surprise him when he comes home from work. Everyone is here — all of Danner's friends, and all of Molly's friends, too.

It was Jim's idea to buy his friend a puppy for his birthday. For the six years he has known Danner, the birthday boy has bitched about not having a pet to greet him when he came home from the newspaper. Though Molly has often suggested it, Danner has resisted inviting her to live in the apartment with him. Danner's explanation has remained the same — he wants "another kind of responsibility." A dog. A horse. No cats. Cats tear window screens and shit in the upholstery when you're not looking.

So, Jim searched the newspaper ads for a good puppy for Danner. Since Danner hated cats as badly as Jim did, Jim struck out the possibility of any small dog — no Terriers, Poodles or toy *anythings*. Large dogs were out, too. His apartment was small and the parks around Danner's apartment building would not be able to handle the Golden Retriever-sized globs of poop. Schnauzers and Scotties were out, too. Jim had a Scottie when he was a kid, and all it did was run into the table legs with its head. Dogs did not get much dumber than Jim's pet Scottie.

Most of the free puppies Jim found advertised were from people with enormous litters of Doberman Pinscher pups. He actually went out one night to look at some Doberman pups, to see the allure a Doberman had to some people. He called before he went out, for directions to the "incredible D.P.'s" as advertised in Danner's newspaper. The directions led him far into the country, on a one-and-a-half-laned route several miles from the city. It was good to drive in the country air, and Jim roared around the curves, pretending to be on the Tour de France, and pretending to be on a bicycle as well. As instructed, he pulled into a gravel yard marked with a yellow newspaper tube and a large sign: Dottie's Ceramics. Beyond the sign and the tube lay a low-water bridge, with a babbling creek flowing lazily over it. "Oh, the glories of country living," Jim thought to himself, feeling lost in the beauty and

serenity of the countryside in the Autumn dusk.

Jim drove his red Buick through the water of the low-water bridge, and was met on the other side by a pack of black dogs — at least six, maybe a dozen. Jim was not one for counting dogs when they were trying to chew their way inside his car. These were grown Dobermans, and they all looked hungry. Jim just looked frightened. He almost yelled for help, but couldn't see anyone to yell it to. The dogs jumped at his windows, with big dirt-clogged paws with crooked claws protruding from each toe, and enormous red mouths dripping saliva. Some barked, but most just wanted a look at Jim. "Or a taste of Jim," he thought.

Dottie was uglier than any of the dogs. Though she was all of five feet tall, Dottie seemed shorter than she really was, more like a troll or a gnome than anything human Jim had ever seen. She carried a broom, and when she spotted Jim's car under seige, she started thrashing the dogs with it, chasing some away.

"Down, Ceasar! Down, dammit! Get back, Hercules! Down, down!" Dottie yelled in a strong, yet distinctly feminine voice. As soon as most of the black and brown hounds backed away from Jim's car, freshly seasoned with dog saliva, she made curly-cues in the air with her short fingers, telling him to roll down his window. He rolled it down with one hand, and stuck his face out, part-way. He was embarrassed, "Are you Dottie?" he said. "I think we spoke on the telephone."

"I'm Dottie if you're Jim. The pups are in the barn." She stood amidst some of the dogs and waited for him to get out of the Buick. "They're in the barn. You have to get out to see them." She pointed the broom toward a large high-raftered barn, which needed more than just encouragement to continue standing. Dottie prodded him again. "They're asleep."

"Could you bring one to me?" Jim asked, becoming more and more embarrassed. Suddenly, he was afraid of dogs. These did not look like the moronic Scottie he had known and abused as a kid. These Dobermans could rip into your flesh if they set their minds to it.

"Don't mind Ceasar," Dottie said, "He doesn't have *teeth*." Sure enough, one of the dogs was lying against the barn, flashing a toothless smile at him, trying to keep his tongue inside his mouth. Ceasar

had a difficult time doing so.

Jim rolled up his window after thanking Dottie for her time.

And so, Jim settled upon a brown and white Cocker Spaniel, which he named "Byline," after Danner's favorite part of his newspaper work. Once, Danner told Jim that the newspaper he worked for could keep one of his paychecks once in a while if he could only get his name on all the stories he wrote for it. Of course, this was after Jim and Danner had consumed nearly a bottle of Jack Daniels bourbon between them. Danner also told him that he could be a fireman and a cowboy at the same time if he ever left the newspaper. Jim likes it when Danner says things like that.

Byline is in the bathroom while his new master's friends drink and talk just outside the door. Byline whines and cries, and no one hears him but Jim. He just ignores the dog, and continues to page through Danner's *Flying* and *Esquire* magazines. The dog does not realize that everyone in the room helped to pay for his vaccinations, and his license, nor does he know that the same people also have Polaroid cameras with Insta-flashes, to capture that magical moment when dog meets master. All the people expect Byline to be magical, and cute. As cute as a Spaniel can get, at least.

This may well be the biggest day in Byline's furry life. Jim hates to part with the dog, having spent so much time searching and caring for him for nearly two weeks, but he thinks Danner will share Byline with him. Danner shares everything else with him — bourbon, lies, even his silver Peugeot racing bicycle. At least Danner will understand his fondness for the dog.

"Yark!" Byline says. The puppy presses his nose against the crack of the bathroom door and inhales deeply, smelling the party.

People filter through the party, and Molly's long brown hair falls from a loose bun tied on her head with a sharpened pencil. A lock falls into the cheese ball she pulls from the inside of the refrigerator, and Jim watches her slip the hair out of the cheese without attracting attention. Molly jams a Saltine in her mouth and carries the pecan-studded ball through the room to the top of Danner's stereo. She bites down on the cracker, and crumbs and salt spill from her mouth onto Jim's lap. That's how close things are in Danner's apartment. Molly and Jim

make faces at one another.

She asks Jim where Danner's Rolling Stones tapes are, but he doesn't know. "Why don't you put on a Barry Manilow tape instead? Here's one — *Even Now*. I think this is a good one."

"Not *Manilow*," Molly whines, with a quick, exasperated "uuhn" sound in her voice. She stuffs another Saltine in her mouth and drops her arms limply to her sides. "You don't understand," Molly says, and then pushes her way aimlessly through the crowd before alighting against the side of the refrigerator. She looks at her watch for the hundredth time that evening.

Jim stands up in the corner and tries to step from behind the stacks of magazines he has made. He swallows what little chablis he has left in his paper cup, and makes his way to the kitchen cabinet, to pour a cup of bourbon. Molly sees this, and grabs the upper part of his arm, knowing he has done this to annoy her. She hates to see Jim drinking all of Danner's bourbon, and thinks Jim should become more independent of him.

"Is that necessary?" she whines quietly, only for him to hear. She would like to see Jim talking with the guests for a little while and then leaving right after Danner comes in. She has told Danner many times that Jim might be the "wrong element" for him to be with all the time. Danner ignores these remarks, and acknowledges her jealousy. Friends are friends, Danner has told her in defense of Jim.

"I guess not," Jim says, "but I've already poured it." He tries to sound innocent with her, and it works.

"I see," she says. This is the game Molly and Jim play with one another when Danner is not around. He walks through the crowd with his Dixie cup high in the air, and sits next to one of Molly's blonde friends on Danner's soft sofa. He introduces himself.

"I'm the one who bought the puppy," he says. "I'm Jim." He takes a sip of his bourbon and extends his hand to her.

The blonde is named Heather. They're all named Heather, Jim thinks, but he decides he likes her anyway. She has a nice smile and a smooth voice. If she were wearing a cashmere sweater, Jim might be prone to put his head on her shoulder while she talked to him. Heather is a photographer for the same newspaper that Danner works for, but she met

Danner Comes Through the Door

Dave Wiethop

Danner through Molly at another party. Molly lives next-door to Heather, and she would like to see Danner marry Molly. She thinks coincidences are quite amazing. Jim agrees.

Jim explains to her that Byline is an A.K.C.-registered Cocker.

"Gehundheit," says Heather, giggling at her own joke.

He smiles a little and then gives an awkward, half-drunk account of Dottie and the Dobermans, calling them "Dobermen." Only, this time, there were nearly *two* dozen, and all of them had teeth, gleaming in the night air. Jim finishes quickly.

"Oh," says Heather.

"That's right," says Jim.

"Oh," says Heather again. She sits staring straight ahead, fidgeting with her hands between her knees. Jim feels awkward, too, and somehow feels too tall. Maybe he should kiss her now. He doesn't know. He leans closer and she turns to face him. "If we had some grass," she says, matter-of-factly, "we could sit here and smoke it."

"Oh," Jim says, backing away. He gets up and seeks out some hairy cheese ball.

Molly continues to lean against the Frigidaire door, chewing her lower lip. Jim gets her attention from across the room, and toasts her with a wad of pink cheese ball on a Ritz cracker. She rolls her eyes and sticks out her tongue again, almost laughing. Jim thinks she is a lot like Byline for some reason, as he bites down on his cracker. Mmmm, he thinks, cheese balls are always so full of good intentions, but they always end up tasting like Silly Putty.

People begin to feel the effects of the wine Molly has offered to them at the party. Everyone talks and waves their hands in the air while they speak. They light cigarettes for one another and pass them back and forth. No one talks to Molly. They know better than to talk to Molly when she is assuming the role of "Danner's girlfriend" instead of just being Molly Greenbriar.

Jim negotiates his way across the room for the five-hundredth time, to stand by Molly and wait for Danner. He wants Danner to come home so the party will go away. Then Molly might go home, too, and Jim and Danner can get drunk or something, and play with the puppy. Maybe not. Molly sighs.

"Nice friend you have," Jim finds himself saying

to Molly suddenly.

Molly looks up, from staring at the floor. "Heather? Yeah. She's well, she's really *neat*." Jim cringes hearing the word "neat." It is so "Fifties" of her, though Molly was born in the Sixties. Jim is actually nervous, waiting for Danner by the door. Molly's anxiety transfers to him, and he starts to wonder if Danner will really like the puppy or not. Perhaps Danner will change Byline's name to something more fitting for a dog, like "Mac" or "Prince." Maybe Danner would like magazine subscriptions better than a puppy for his birthday. Jim just doesn't know anymore. Again, he wishes Danner would come home, so the anxiety will go away. "Neat party," he says to Molly.

"Thanks," says Molly. She starts to say something else, but stops momentarily. "Uh, could..." Molly starts. "Could you bring out that puppy?"

"Byline?" asks Jim. "Oh, sure I can." He licks a crumb from the side of his mouth.

"So Danner can see the dog right away when he first comes in." Molly smiles nervously, and then tries to swallow it. "Danner'll be *surprised*."

Jim squeezes through the crowd to the bathroom, and finds floppy Byline lying against the base of the john, wagging his tail, proud of the fresh poop he has just produced on the tile floor. Jim puts a strip of toilet paper over the turd, and picks Byline up by the scruff of his neck.

He carries Byline, full of claws and tongue — though softer than the Doberman — through the people. Hands fall on Byline's head, and he licks Jim's face and hands while trying to look at the entire room all at once. Jim hands the puppy to Molly. "Be careful," he warns her amiably.

Byline squirms in her arms, almost too much for her to handle, but she hangs on to him for dear life. "He's so...so full of life!" she says. Byline yarks in her face, and Molly giggles.

"I think he likes you," Jim says. "That's what he just said."

"Oh, really?" Molly says, grabbing the pup's paws, to keep him still.

"I know," Jim explains. "I speak *Dog*."

"He's just like a baby," Molly giggles. "A real live baby for us!" Jim bites his lip and Danner comes through the door.