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An ageing idea packed tight with details
From the Flux: subverted and multiplied
4x + 3x = 4Y
Beauty is the Quest:
A gathering up; a celebration
of Creative Writing
402

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AND WHEN I HEARD THE FOOTSTEPS

Etched in his face were the scrawling, crawling lines of a question. This one he won't ever answer. (life goes on within you and without you) The question lingers momentarily and is served by a complementary answer as good steak is followed by good wine, which brings up another question . . .

And when I heard the footsteps

Joe Bano knew lots of answers. Some times he knew answers before he knew the questions. He learned answers, he prepared answers, when Joe heard a question he challenged with his monument of knowledge, his answer. He knew too, questions. Joe was an almanac. One day I asked, "Joe, when will it rain in Layton, Tennessee?" I really didn't expect an answer. Said Joe, "Tennessee, being the mother of Layton and possessing a height relative to sea level of 600 feet, rain will pass on the third down, or in laymen's terms, on the 3rd of March. Layton, being of the same, should experience percipitation, relative to its own reality, on or about the same day." Joe said that.

And when I heard the footsteps

As a child growing up on the lower south side, Joe knew life for what it was. His father didn't know. Joe knew his father didn't know. Joe's father worked for the Daily Oil Company, as a derek maintenance man. He didn't have much time for questions much less for answers. His direction was, according to him, predestined. Joe's father didn't spend much time with Joe's mother either. Jenny, she was Joe's inspiration. He spent much of his time thinking about an answer to the puzzling perplexities of her feminine anatomy. Joe's favorite times were spent when the terminal smoldering of revolution were dark in the air with wretched hatred, dashed with color. The sounds and smells of comrades talking of armed revolt could send Joe running home as fast as his ten year old feet could carry him. Safe in his room he lost himself in opened books of C. Wright Mills and Talcott Parsons to find the answer.

And when I heard the footsteps

I've known Joe now for five years, off and on. I met him one January night on the corner of 7th and Blan Street. I was on my way home from work. I was lost in

a book I bought in the five and dime about a little boy who ruled the world with sublime powers, like falling monarchs with a single glance, when I ran smack into Joey. He seemed to have had already read it. He began to speak of ruling the world and of the presence of supernatural talents. Since that night we've met on several different occasions. I used to like Joe. He could talk and talk and talk about so many topics; quatum mechanics, body building, the physiology of inert chemical reproduction, the musical analysis of prehistoric percussion instruments, on and on. Joe was an inspiration of angelic quality.

And when I heard the footsteps

Why do I ramble so about Joe?

Joe's dead now. I – I know. Joe couldn't live anymore. More means more. Joe was much more; his more was so much more, his more was so much more then mine. I just couldn't take it, his being more that is. But don't get me wrong, I loved Joe. I can see him now standing at my door, his old self right there at my door, ready for any question, his eyes bright on the answer.

And then I heard the footsteps

Listening, listening, listening. So many words forming in mouths to glow and illuminate a walk thru the halls of higher learning to a fountain flowing lucid thru the veins and conglomerate glob of minds, mouths, mouths and more mouths. I Hated Joe!

Joe never listened to me. He turned my words directionally. My words were never good enough for him, he had to always start combing my words for better alignment, he could never leave well enough alone. I knew he couldn't do that. He thinks he's so smart. If he could only have listened for a change he could have seen how smart I was. But Joe, no, he never listened. He's always talking. He's in the dark room now. Ha! A good place I might add for a blind mouth.

And again I hear his footsteps

Joe was, but now he's not.

But people who aren't always will be.

Joe was once, but now I am. So is the problem solved?

And when I heard the footsteps, his coming -----but how could ---- I know that can't be. I killed him.



"I was informed you speak for the people of this town." The man removed his hat and smiled slightly.

Clendenon nodded and sat perfectly still looking up at the man. The room held only Clendenon's chair and he did not offer it. Clendenon's friend, John, whom he'd been talking with before, sat on the bed. John did not offer the bed.

Finding the man he sought, the stranger began; "You're English aren't you?"

Clendenon nodded. He spoke with a slight accent which hinted of his origin.

"Well . . ." the man laughed as if they shared something in common, but soon stopped when Clendenon didn't join in. "Well, let's get down to the point of business." The man began to open a case.

"Business?" Clendenon asked raising his brows. "What business have I with you?" he continued in a polite aloof tone.

"Well," he laughed quickly, "None yet . . . I . . . or my associates and I have something for you."

Clendenon waited without movement. He knew what the man was here for. Iron Ore - it had been found in many areas of Newfoundland.

"Yes," he continued uneasily. "We have a deal for you and your people. We're willing to buy this land for a good price."

Clendenon sat there staring at the man, watching beads of sweat sprout and roll down his forehead.

The land speculator waited for some reply. He stole glimpses of the order in the room and found only the necessities of life. "He must be moving," he concluded to himself. Suddenly he realized that Clendenon had not yet replied. He looked down at him and Clendenon looked back.

"Mr. Clendenon," he began again with forced sincerety, "please don't think me a shrewd man. I'm not. I don't have the heart to drive a hard deal."

"On the contrary. I find you amusing."

"Mr. Clendenon." The man became uncomfortable and spoke strongly. "With the

money we'd pay the people for this property they could buy better lives. We'd give them jobs."

Clendenon didn't argue that point with the speculator. There was no denying the picture of the town. It was still poor and the man had no way of knowing what had gone before. "And how many winters would it be before they were hungry again?"

"Never! They'd mine the land. We'd pay them and take all risks."

"You'd grow rich on this land while they'd come to depend on your wages." Clendenon continued to look him in the eye.

The speculator lowered his voice. "You have a distorted opinion of land buyers . . . Only a few are what you say . . ."

Clendenon continued to stare at the man. The speculator slowly closed his bag, picked it up and walked to the door.

With his back to Clendenon he said calmly; "Mr. Clendenon, there are other ways to get what we want. We hoped you'd be a . . . wiser man." He lingered a moment longer. Silence answered and Clendenon watched the man's heavy neck heave. The door closed.

Clendenon had entered Essex two years earlier. He had walked into town with his few possessions in a carrying bag - needing only enough work to see him through the winter. Essex lay inland a few miles from the eastern coast of Newfoundland. No one of any importance had taken interest in the few people that lived there nor the land they tried to farm. The essence of Essex seemed distant to the customs of the bulk of the people on the peninsula. The fish of the Grand Bank was the foundation of their livelihood. Clendenon was a man of neither background. He claimed no place as home.

When he entered Essex, several watched him and finally one approached. "Hello," the voice boomed, "Name's John, Would you care for a drink? Good clear well."

The voice was sincere and Clendenon liked him. "Yes, thank you." As they walked to the well, people began to come out of hiding. Many went on to continue their daily business and others took the opportunity to stare. "Do you have any work?" he asked.

John looked up at the sky. Winter was coming in early and many feared they wouldn't get the crops in before frost set in. "Can't pay ya," John said.

"O.K."

He was given a small room in the center of town. It had a small bed. John wanted

to find a better basin but Clendenon said the bucket already there would serve well enough since he'd be there only until spring. A set of shelves, a chair and a table were the only other furnishings. He was invited to share meals with John's family.

"Sir . . ." John was in the room when the speculator arrived and since Clendenon made no motion that he should leave, he did not. "What can we do?"

"My name is Clendenon," He answered without looking up.

"I cannot address you by your common name," John said with apology.

Clendenon looked up into his friend's eyes. "I shan't be called anything else."

"You are more than your name," he said with reverence.

Clendenon turned and sighed. "You are wrong . . . I must leave."

"You can not leave," the friend stated.

"But you can leave," Clendenon mocked and waited for a reply that didn't come. "Essex stays." Clendenon bent down as if to drive the idea further into his friends mind.

"Essex leaves!" Each word came from John's mouth complete and whole and they joined with the other words and bounced from wall to wall.

"Only I leave," Clendenon said calmly, rose and turned away.

"Essex leaves, too." John's voice returned to its seemingly calm tone to hide his inner tension.

"I am not Essex," Clendenon answered evenly.

"I see Essex in your face." The tension vollied back and forth.

"I am not Essex."

John's eyes moved round to the bare walls. A thin thread chain hung silently there. It held a small round ring. "You break the whole."

"The streets remain, the people stay . . ." Clendenon pleaded.

"The heart beat leaves."

"If I am more, then if I leave, my spirit remains. It will suffice." Clendenon got up and walked over to the bucket and began to wash his hands for dinner.

"No, the people will forget," his friend pleaded. John waited, "Sir?"

"My name is Clendenon," he said flatly.

John went to the door. "Sir?"

"I will stay awhile longer," said Clendenon then he added, "Let's have a town meeting . . . don't let on what it's about . . . no use getting everyone upset. Maybe we can all figure this out together.

During Clendenon's first winter in Essex, he had been persuaded to stay on a year to supervise crop rotation - a new method of farming he'd learned about further south. The harvest that followed that winter was a success. There was plenty of food for the coming winter and if in the years to come the crops continued to flourish, the town might be able to sell some of their excess produce to nearby towns along the coast.

One late afternoon a man and his two grown up sons came to Clendenon's room shortly after the harvest. He carefully pulled a small ring suspended on a thin chain from his pocket and held it up to Clendenon. "Only thing I have of value to me and my sons and its value is beyond measure. We want you to have it." The man looked straight into Clendenon's eyes, "Thank you, Mr. Clendenon. It's a hard thing to watch your kids go to bed hungry. I'll have grand-children soon."

"Mr. Wilt, I can't take this. It was just an idea I heard along the way and I was glad to pass it along." Clendenon was touched but confused.

During the winter that followed, Clendenon's advice was often sought after. Speculators, buying up land that might be full of iron ore, were beginning to pressure the people of Essex to give up their land and way of life for another. They turned to Clendenon for guidance. To handle this problem he'd have to spend another year, another winter in Essex.

The door closed behind John and all the words of the day fell from the walls into silence. Clendenon stood by the bucket, silently, carefully washing his hands. He stopped and began to laugh. "It's curious, don't you think," he asked in a flippant tone, "how life walks up and shakes your hand?" Clendenon's hand shook the air. "May I have this dance?" He made a large bow, knocking a cup from the table at its completion. "Oh, sorry cup! Please forgive my clumsiness but you see I'm dancing with life. When we finish I may be an admiral . . . or a businessman . . . perhaps a politician or a pauper." Clendenon began to dance around and around the room with his imaginary partner. "What if you deal me a life I cannot handle, Life?" Around and around he danced quickly and lightly. He suddenly stopped. "I shall be a fool?" he asked thoughtfully. "Is that what I am Life? Yes," he decided but without conviction, "a fool. When shall I start? Now? Have I already begun?" He became flippant again but a thread of seriousness came through. "All these people worship me . . . they worship a fool. Yet, even fools can be wise . . . sometimes . . . and they get away with it. Maybe that's what has happened here.

I uttered wisdom and the people don't recognize my whole . . . or , was I wise before and I'm a fool now?" Clendenon walked slowly to his bed, laid down and fell asleep. The carrying bag lying upon the otherwise empty shelves waited for Clendenon. The bucket, the table and chair waited. The small ring suspended on the thin thread chain waited on the empty walls in the empty room.

The wind blew cold and pushed the illusion of life back and forth through the dark sleeping town. Only the pacing of the sentry was real. He watched to guard Essex that no one came or went while all opinions lay covered and at rest. Walls and doors woven in and out between dirt and grass stood erect and held the individual differences of the whole. The pattern turned up and down with irregular design and rose in slight protrusions to emboss the whole. It is a small, yet sturdy one room house that holds the thoughts and being of Clendenon. The walls stand close and tight and long planks circled round to hold the conversations of men borrowing life from Clendenon . . .

Clendenon walked out towards the common street. People already mulled around the wagon which would soon stand as his platform. He marvelled at how fast a secret could spread. Starts out like a small glow of fire hidden by tall grass and in a moment grows to a huge roaring force. As he climbed aboard the wagon and looked down, the people looked back at him as children do their mother when the cruel wind blows hard around their little lives. He saw and read all that was to be known in their faces.

Connie Hoover

THE SISTERS

Jingles and Putsy were the names friends had given them and so they were known. Jingles had her name from being so dainty and stepping so lightly that a friend had said, "Really, dear, you walk as if you'd jingle if you really moved quickly!" From then on she was "Jingles." Putsey was thus called because she was a bit pushy and the first one who'd said she was had been overheard and swiftly changed it to "Putsey" which sounded "cute" and "offbeat" so it clung. Silly names, but the Sisters seemed to like them and they were different. You'd not be likely to run into another with the same. In their circle the girls were very popular. Although they were twins, they were not identical; Jingles had a shy quality and was first to say "Please" and "Thank you" in her own quiet way, while Putsy demanded rather than asked in almost everything from her supper to affection. While Jingles with gray eyes, had a tawny look about her with golden highlights on her head, Putsey was pinkish with blue eyes, and always wore black and yellow and white colors, while Jingles stuck to browns and grays. In short, the girls were good foils for each other and went nearly everywhere together. They'd slept in the same bed for years and often went out with boys of the same family.

Both girls had their families young but Putsey was the first to contract an alliance and the first to have a family. For a while it looked as though Jingles, with her calmer ways, might be an old maid but a handsome masterful fellow came to the neighborhood and swept her off her feet and into domesticity and family like a young Valentino. Indeed such he seemed to be, for after the children came he began to stay out late with the boys and finally didn't come home at all. By this time Putsey was settled into matronly ways and commiserated with her sister, lamenting so long and complaining of males in general in such terms and such a shrill manner that one day her spouse, too, just walked out and disappeared.

So the Sisters came together again and raised their offspring in the same house, taking turns watching over the young ones and taking up with their old friends who rallied 'round and saw to it they were soon back in the social whirl. As the children grew up and left home, the sisters drew closer to each other. Jingles nearly always bowed lovingly to Putsey's demands, and Putsey protected the gentle Jingles from the harsher aspects

of life when she could. Other gentlemen callers came to chat with the sisters and often stayed to supper if Putsey asked them, Jingles deferring to Putsey in these things. The "girls" were not interested in matrimony, though, having had quite enough of that sort of thing. Precautions were taken to prevent any further family involvements, but the gentlement callers were encouraged to visit and talk and really the Sisters' home became a meeting place for good conversation and pleasant refreshment. What used to be called a "salon" was held by the Sisters regularly and added a certain tone to the area. True, at times the gentlemen grew a bit unruly, singing the good old songs at quite a pitch, and the neighbors would complain. The Sisters, however, saw to it that disturbing gentlemen were not invited back so all was accomplished with proper decorum.

The Sisters lived happily together. An occassional tiff was quickly smoothed over. Now and then Jingles would stand up to her sister and Putsey would then back down, like most bullies. Putsey realized in her gentle relative there was a point beyond which she could become quite firm. Putsey recognized her own forceful ways had to be curbed enough to keep the really very comfortable arrangement harmonious, and did her best. Then gently Jingles would forgive her, give her a kiss on the cheek, and all would be well again.

The Sisters are still living and are still popular in their feline circles. Jingles, the tawny tiger stripe with gray eyes, and Putsey, the black, yellow, and white calico with pink nose and blue eyes are the arbiters of cat society in our neighborhood.

Margaret Packer

THE VALUED

Peter walked across the dusty circus lot, the ticket carried in his hand inside his jeans pocket, his sore back muscles straight with pride and a new awareness of himself as grown up almost. He had worked hard all day helping the circus to settle in and carrying bucket after bucket of water to the elephants and the other animals. It was the annual visit of the circus to the lonely prairie town for its one night stand. All the boys in the town had crowded around to watch it unloaded from the train and had begged jobs to help so they could get a ticket to the show. Peter had been one of the lucky ones.

He was tired but too keyed up to be sleepy. He had his ticket now, in payment for his long day's work. It seemed a very fair exchange to him, chances to do anything for such a reward came mighty seldom here.

He walked quickly, purposefully down the alley to the back gate into his yard, past the fences topped by hollyhocks of many shades of pink. His mother had only hollyhocks inside their back fence, she considered sunflowers "common." Peter didn't care, he thought the flowers were all pretty nodding their heads in friendly fashion to the boy from the white painted high back fences. He turned into his yard and dusted at his trousers and stamped his feet to rid them of excess dust before entering the kitchen door.

His mother turned from the sink where she and the hired girl were mixing sausage.

"Wipe your feet on the mat, don't just stamp them," she said, "After all that playing in the field they're probably muddy, too."

"Wasn't playin', Mom" Peter thrust out his hand with the ticket on his palm, "was workin' for a free seat to the circus tonight."

"Well, I guess you'll have to ask your Dad about that, young man." his mother said, "You know he's going up to Deer Creek for a load of gravel in the mornin'. Has to get going at four so he can get back tomorrow night. You'll be in bed when that show starts, I'm thinkin' ".

"Gosh, Mom, I can sleep in the truck tomorrow on the way."

"You know your Dad sleeps while you drive. So now, no more arguments, boy. Talk to your father."

Peter knew better than to argue, but his heart did a stumbling lurch at the thought of missing what he'd worked so hard to get. Surely, just this once he could sleep while his Dad drove instead of the other way around. And why did they have to go tomorrow? The next day would do as well. While he washed his hands and face for supper and raked a comb through his sunburned blond hair, he convinced himself that, just this once, he might make a try and win against his father's firmness.

Through their supper of baked squash with sausage stuffing, green beans, corn and mincemeat pie, Peter was mostly silent trying to think of the right approach. His parents did not notice his preoccupation with his food, at his age he usually ate everything like a young, healthy puppy and had seconds as well to fill the long lankiness of a growing teenager. He mechanically filled himself while thinking. Tonight, after supper would be the right time, he thought, when Dad is in a good mood with the good food and his favorite cigar.

After supper, however, his father pushed back his chair, lit his cigar, and looked directly at his son.

"You get to bed by seven, boy," he said "long drive tomorrow and plenty of work loading the gravel."

"Dad, could I go to the show at the circus just this once? I got a ticket by working all day helping there."

"No way, boy. Can't have you falling asleep at the wheel. W'ld rather you didn't mess with those circus people, anyway."

"But, Dad, please! I worked so hard all day for a ticket! Just this once?"

"Boy, you heard me, didn't you? You have to drive the truck and we've got to go before four in the morning. So forget it."

"Dad, please!" he hadn't quite the courage to suggest his father drive the truck. "Why I'd be good as new with only four hours sleep, the show is over by midnight."

"That's all, youngster!" His father pushed himself out of his chair and went to the hall closet "I'm goin' over to Jesse's for some poker, Liz, don't wait up." He put on his overcoat and headed for the door.

"I'll leave the hall light on, John." His mother followed his father out the door, and when they were by the car spoke softly.

"You should've let him go this once, John, you know he worked hard to earn that

ticket. Means a lot to a boy his age. He's getting big now, you know."

"He'll get over it. Should have asked me first about workin' with that bunch. I'll order that new rifle he's been wantin', that'll fix things. Can't let him think he can talk me out of things. Once I make up my mind, thats how it is! Boy's gettin' big alright, feelin' real grown up, arguin' with me like that."

"Well, its important to him."

"Thats enough, Liz. See he goes upstairs by seven. G'night."

The father drove off to his card game and the mother returned to the house to get the hired girl at the dishes. She told herself her husband was probably right, but somewhere deep inside she felt the pain of tears when she saw the misery on the boy's face.

Promptly at seven the boy went upstairs to his room, footsteps heavily treading each step and shoulders slumped. In his room he could look out his window across the hollyhocks and sunflowers and across the town to the endless prairie. He could hear the circus band music and could see the circus lights casting their glow against the low clouds that moved above the town. Might mean rain farther south tomorrow, but the road north to Deer Creek would be dry. They'd need the gravel, too, for the road into the farm before the rain got at it making a slick, sticky track of gumbo mud, but did it have to be tomorrow? Seems like just once, for the circus, he could have got to go. He finally fell asleep still hearing on the quiet prairie air the drums and sounds of the circus music. Much later he heard his father return, moving a little unsteadily into his parents' room. Jesse poured a good drink when he had the men in for poker. He knew Dad would be asleep in the truck before they were out of town in the dark dawn.

About a month later his father presented him with the new rifle when it came in from the city back East. Peter was pleased with the gun and thanked his father nicely. When he put it in his room he hung it on two hooks beneath a small plague he had made which held the place of honor. The plague was bare except for a little piece of cardboard on which was printed in already fading red ink "Atlas Circus - Admit One."

Margaret Packer



THE EXECUTIVE

He was reinforcing himself with his third scotch and water - delaying the confrontation with his wife and daughter as long as he could - meticulously twisting the top back on the bottle - and carefully placing it back in the cupboard - pushing the other bottles aside so that not another one touched his - so that it stood well in front of all the others - ready to be called forth to duty quickly and smoothly, when next it was needed.

He had to walk between the two women to get to his chair - the one, whose very young beauty was obvious and perhaps enhanced by the flow of adrenalin being pumped into her by her great anger of neglect - the older one, whose beauty had once been obvious, but was now made brittle by the excessive demands on her body from the poison of too many years of the anger of neglect. As he passed through the no man's land, he was riddled by the glares of hate and resentment from both of them. He was somewhat revived as he sank into the executive feeling and smell of his over-sized, genuine leather chair. It reminded him that he had called this meeting - that he was in charge - so he took a generous sip of his drink, the added transfusion of a puff from a cigarette, and drew his balding self up to assume his proper position.

When the phone rang out, he was aware of his effort to not seem too relieved, nor too eager - but rather like a gentleman, performing his call to duty - as he went forth to answer it. It was ringing out for his eighth - no ninth - command performance for the evening, he gave his full attention to the phone - turning his back on the women.

"Yes Joe - yeah, sorry - the wires have been a little hot tonight - starting that new government housing project in Arizona you know - Everybody's trying to get in on the kill since the story broke in the paper – Hey! - that's the best news I've had tonight - When can I pick it up? - Did you get the gold colored executive model like I wanted? – turbo system and oxygen equipped? I'm going to have to do some high-flying on this one, you know -- Sounds like you've got the one - Couldn't be better timing - I'll hop a commercial back tomorrow evening and pick it up Wednesday morn."

He was feeling so right inside, as he sat there savoring this good luck - the way that everything was falling into place, just so - that he didn't even notice when his daughter got up and left the room. But the slam of her bedroom door was profound enough that even his feeling of rightness couldn't ignore it.

He turned on his wife, as his feeling of self-rightness was melted away by the slam of the door, into self-righteousness – "What the hell does she mean - flouncing out of here and slamming her door like that - when we still have this school thing to talk about? - Maybe she's forgotten that she was the one caught smoking the marajuana!"

The wife - in a weary voice - trying to control its own fire of anger - conditioned by hopelessness in its effort at explaining - explained again, nevertheless - "No, she hasn't forgotten, not for one damned minute - She was counting too heavily on it to get your attention - your undivided attention - for even a few minutes - But then she's got a lot to learn, hasn't she? - if she thinks she's going to get the attention of an important man like you - over a little think like getting caught with marajuana."

His moment of fear of defeat had passed - had been made triumphant by the phone call - and he drew himself up - "You'll see whether she got my attention or not -- After that lousy counselor interrupting my meeting this afternoon - with his important call that couldn't wait -- well, I got the girls in the office to work on the phone - knowing damn well that you would do nothing but argue about it – We've got an appointment with a private school in Santa Barbara - in the morning – With a little pressure they'll take her."

Her old pangs of frustration started eating at her insides again. "In the morning; Jim you can't do that to her - You can't just yank her off to some private school without even discussing this whole thing with her!"

"The hell I can't - She walked out on me when I was willing to talk about it - didn't she? - Now, she'll just get her fancy tail out of that bed in the morning and go with us - Like it or not -"

He felt strong as steel again - He tossed down the last of his drink like a man of decisions - "I'm tired - I'm going to bed - You can come or not –"

It was another one of those nights of the hell of rigidity for her - He slept like an innocent babe that had gone to bed with its bottle. The sound of the alarm awakened her to the sensation of dread - and pain - from her finger nails biting into the flesh of her palms. He was already coming out of the shower. She had hoped against hope that he would not push the matter this morning. instead, he called out as he dressed, with very definite movements – "Come on - get up or we're going to be late!"

Her apprehensiveness and fear in the deep knowledge of the feelings of a spurned

woman made her plead – "Please, Jim - don't try to push this through with her - until we've had a chance to talk about it this evening -"

With the mounting anger of one who is not used to being blocked - he turned on her with clipped words - "You heard my telephone conversation - you know that I'm supposed to fly back tonight to pick up my new plane - I've got other matters of business to take care of while I'm there too – It may be two or three days before I get back - I don't want this whole damn mess cluttering my mind - We've got the appointment at the school this morning - I can just get us there in time - We're going! --"

He burst into the daughter's room in a manner meant to shock and strategically attack – Yanking back the covers from the enemy - he barked out the orders -- "Hurry and get up and get dressed - you're going to Santa Barbara with your mother and me."

With wary eyes made wide awake from the sense of threat in this remark, she questioned - "And why are we going to Santa Barbara?"

"We've got an appointment there to see about enrolling you in a private school -- Maybe they can teach you how to grow up --"

Gripping the sides of her bed with fists clenched white - as if to hold onto a raft - just before going over a waterfall, she held his eyes with the quiet decisiveness of her words – "Oh, no you don't, you are not getting rid of me that way - I am not going to any school - anywhere - I'm not leaving this bed!"

She was caught off guard by the pain of the strength of his first blow on the side of her head - She yelped out in her pain and surprise - Tears of ultimate disbelief escaped--

Anger of many years' vintage was escaping his control gates - and he screamed out - "Get the hell out of that bed - now! - if you don't want the shit beat out of you --"

She only clenched the sides of her bed the harder - her eyes dried by the acceptance of reality – "Beat me all you want - I'll not leave this bed --"

Not another tear nor cry did she allow herself as he tore into her with all his frenzy. The wife had run - half-naked - full speed - for the daughter's room at the sound of one yelp of pain, knowing well the strength and fury of her husband's self-righteousness - and her daughter's need to defy it. She flung her small body - made large with the innate strength of all the ages of the mother creature fighting for her young - against this hulk of frenzy flailing at her child. His utter surprise and shock at finding himself

in the floor - let escape a fleeting feeling of disgust. Only an executive of his caliber could pick himself up from the floor with the decorum that he managed - and turn to speak with such composure to these two debased examples of woman-kind - as he did - Disdain chose his words carefully -- "Okay, okay - I wash my hands of it - I was ready to try to work out my solution - but you're both too damned high and mighty to have any part of it--" Then turning to his wife - anger almost escaped again -- "Now you deal with that wench yourself!"

The daughter still clenched the sides of her bed - the wife was crumpled in sobs beside it - Thus he left the woman and the wench.

He was grateful that his suitcase was already packed - He swooped it up with his brief case - and was out the door - with the door slammed, just appropriately to show his indignation. He had driven all the way to the corner where he always turned - when he realized with a jolt that he was on the way to the office - and he had not yet thought of the execution of this day.

By the time he had reached the next corner he had lit a cigarette - had a few calm puffs - and had the order of his calls and business all worked out in his head -

He had decided - It would not be until the last moment that he would tell the little stenographer to rush home and pack her overnight bag - her services would be needed on this trip - and after all she deserved a break from the office.

He smashed out his cigarette at the next corner and straightened his tie in the rear view mirror - and was ready to meet the day.

"The Match"

"You about ready to call it quits, Lee?" John shouted from across the net.

"It'd be worth conceding just to get out of the sun for awhile," Lee shouted back. "What do you think, Trev? Bill?"

"Fine with me," I said, yearning silently for an air-conditioner and a tall, cold beer.

"You called it, John," Bill shouted, coming up from the back-court. "I'm so hot my shades are steaming up."

"That's what you get for not keeping your mind on the game," John chided, digging his partner in the ribs and grinning.

"Aw, knock it off," Bill retorted. "If you must know, I was thinking about my wife–she wants me to clean out the garage."

"Whatever you say, Bill," John replied in a neutral tone, as he inspected the steel-blue sky.

"Hey, why don't you guys come over to our place for a couple of cold ones, huh?" Lee suggested.

"Sounds like a winner!"

"Yeah, right on!" We gathered up our gear and headed for the parking lot, still ribbing each other and generally enjoying the chance to get out of the house for awhile.

Bill swore at his new Vega when it refused to start right away. Maybe he thought he could scare it into obedience. "Damn thing. I just got it Monday, and they haven't got it adjusted right yet."

"Yeah, I know what you mean," I sympathized, thinking of some of my own problems. "It took the dealer six lousy months to straighten out all the bugs in the last car I bought."

"Some of those foreign cars take forever to get lined out. Lee's been having a helluva time with that Porsche he got a little while back."

"I noticed he was riding with John today."

"Uh-huh. Blasted car's in the shop again."

"Poor son of a gun. Those mechanics'll eat you alive."

"Don't you know it!" Bill assented fervently as he swung the Vega around to park in front of Lee's house.

"Come on in this way," Lee called over his shoulder as he opened the garage door. "We can grab the beer on the way in." We followed him into a suburbanite's dream–a clean garage containing a washer, dryer, and second car--and everybody took an icy Olympia from the aged refrigerator that guarded the door into the house.

"Lee? Is that you?" a woman's voice called from another part of the house.

"It sure is, dear," he responded.

"Well it's--" her tone changed abruptly when she came into the room and noticed the rest of us–"good to see you guys again." She paused for a moment. "I'll get you some coasters to set those cans on." She went into the kitchen and started scratching around, looking for them.

"Ann, I think we'll just go in the den," Lee said, sounding a little bit uncomfortable. "I think the coasters are in there, anyway."

"No wonder I couldn't find them." She followed us to the other room.

"Come on in," Lee invited at the doorway, starting to wave us into a warm, comfortable-looking room with a very beautiful and very expensive Persian carpet in the middle.

"Please don't step on the rug," Ann ordered. Startled at the edge to her voice, Bill removed his foot from the rug with considerable haste and mumbled an apology as he backed out of the room.

"Well, if you can't step on it, maybe you can go around it," John said, trying unsuccessfully to salvage the situation. "It's sure pretty, that's for sure." He started forward onto the gleaming hardwood floor.

"Please," Ann said, her voice a little sharper. "I just waxed that yesterday."

"Oh. Sorry," John said awkwardly.

"Maybe we'd all be more comfortable in the kitchen," Lee said jovially, shooting a meaningful look at his wife as we started back from the den.

When we got to the kitchen we were treated to a spectacle of glittering chrome and acres of immaculate Formica. There was a large mahogany table off to one side, and we approached it with something akin to wariness. Hesitantly we sat down.

"If you don't mind," Ann said, just as we were beginning to relax, "those are antique

chairs. Could you please sit somewhere else?"

"Let's just sit on the floor," Bill suggested. "By the time we find another spot, the beer will be too warm to drink " He got up from his chair and settled himself on the floor. As the others followed suit, Ann reappeared with a spray-can of furniture polish and a cloth.

"Here, let me get you something to sit on," she said, setting the polish down on the table. "I just scrubbed this morning." She took folded grocery bags from under the sink, handed one to each of us. "There." Briskly she polished the seat of each chair and the spot where each beer can had sat on the table.

At last we could turn to the once-cold beer, and as I lifted mine I happened to spot a droplet of sweat running down my wrist. Before I could put my beer down and wipe it off, the droplet slid down to land on the linoleum. Oh, Lord, I thought, here we go again. Why in heck did that drip have to miss the paper bag I was sitting on? I studiously avoided looking at it, hoping that if I just ignored it Ann wouldn't notice it. I guess I didn't hope hard enough, because she spotted it as she was leaving and bobbed down to wipe it up. "Sorry," I said. She didn't even look back.

"Well, it sure was a good game this morning, wasn't it?" I remarked. I could almost see my words falling into the silence like rocks that a little kid plunks into a creek.

"Sure was," Lee agreed. "We'll beat you guys next time, you better believe it."

"Not if Bill keeps his mind on the game," John said teasingly.

"Thinking about cleaning out the garage on a day like today is enough to make anybody's shades steam up," Bill added defensively.

"How's your Porsche doing these days, Lee?" I asked. "I hear you've been having some problems."

"That's one way to put it," he said. "The mechanic's had the damn thing more than I have. He's been messing with the carburetor for three weeks, and it's still all screwed up."

"Yeah," Bill agreed, "they take forever to fix those things."

"By the time the car's fixed, you just about have to sell it to pay off the mechanic," Lee laughed.

"Oh, that reminds me," John said, putting down his beer, "I'm gonna have to run. I promised my daughter I'd take her car down for a tune-up today, and I'd better get going. Thanks for the beer, Lee." He got up to go.

"Yeah, thanks, Lee, but I'm gonna have to go, too. My wife hates for me to be gone all day on the weekends." Bill took his leave, barely managing to hide his relief.

"Well, I'm sure glad you guys stopped by for a while. We'll have to get together again."

"Sure thing. Hey, Lee, you'll have to come by. Wish I could stay but I've got the whole front yard waitin' for me, so I'd better take off, too." He'd never know how really thankful I was that I'd promised Mary I'd get after that yard.

"Don't work too hard, Trev. See you later."

"Right. 'Bye." The three of us headed for the door, and as it closed behind us I caught a glimpse of Ann picking up the paper bags we'd just vacated.

Once in the car Bill asked me, "How in heck does Lee put up with that? If Nancy was forever cleaning and picking up and putting my guests on paper bags, there'd be something said, believe me."

"Same here. He's too nice a guy to have to put up with that. There's another side to it, I'm sure – there always is – but still . . ."

"Yeah. I know what you mean." He shook his head.

Cynthia Combs

Tennis Shoes and "Things"

When the large hand-carved door opened, he had a quick awareness of expensive furnishings and a decorator arrangement of "things." His eyes were still adjusting to the sharp contrast from the bright sunlight -- but his other senses came keenly into play. His nose caught the peculiar aroma of sterile purex. He felt an immediate call to battle between it and the aroma of virile sweat that surrounded him from his big black body – No, that wasn't fair – it came from all four of the men's bodies -- white as well as black. The tennis had been lusty. He had felt warm inside -- a part of something shared with his friend from Italy. They had held their own against the other two professors from this oil-stained town – Now – he had a quick sensation that the warm feeling was being drowned – in purex and sweat –

He was being pushed ahead, since he was in the fore of the group. He stepped uncertainly from the narrow entry-hall into the large room. As one tennis shoe -- with a big black foot in it – sank into deep, pink-beige pile of the rug – he was electrocuted –

"Oh! No!! – not on the Persian rug with your tennis shoes!"

The foot snapped back – the eyes caught sight of a female creature, or was she part of the furnishings? He bent over in confusion to remove the tennis shoes from his feet -- two big splashes of sweat fell from his forehead to the polished floor -- His friend rushed forward as if he were trying to save a net ball -- reappeared in an instant with a fist full of paper things – motioned quickly to him to wipe the rest of his sweat off -- at the same time that he daubed frantically at the sweat spots on the floor -- as if they were spilled blood.

Then suddenly, pink-beige composure was regained. His friend stood up and was smilingly introducing the piece of female furnishings -- "This is Elaine, my wife --" The sterile purex smell came back to overpower even her perfume.

"That Persian rug came all the way from Europe with us -- you know -- Elaine spoils it like a child. Forgive the fuss over the terazzo, but if you don't get any little thing that drops on it off immediately, it stains like crazy. Now on to more important things --" and into the kitchen they were deftly herded.

But he had to stoop down again to work his foot back into the tennis shoe that he had partially removed in his confusion. As he did he felt shrivelled up inside. Once in the kitchen -- he looked for a place where he might not be noticed. He found a friendly looking rocker in the corner, and started to settle his large body into it.

"Oh! Pl --- ease!! -- not that chair – it's over a hundred years old, a gift from my grandmother and much more fragile than it appears."

Her voice pushed him out of the rocker over to join the others at the bar.

The liquor hung in his throat – moments became heavy with dis-ease; attempts at conversation went nowhere.

"How is your English Lit class shaping up?"

"Oh the usual, you know – one or two sharp ones -- the others -- run of the mill."

"Say did you catch the T.V. show on Dickens last night?"

Thank God someone decided to smash the ball and end the set -- "I 've really got to go – wife's expecting me to pick her up at the beauty parlor."

He rushed in to take advantage of the opportunity, and stammered his way out -- into sunlight again.

The door to the house had closed -- another game was over. The friend and he had lost – but he could tell -- the hot sun would draw forth sweat again.

Marcella Deeter

The Black Cross

The sun was hot and green coming through the trees, pale, still, in the early morning. The road writhed up along a gully filled with scree, and the range above reared dry and stark and jagged. There was a smell of eucalyptus -- only no live oak, he thought. If there had been live oak it would have been just like Berkeley, climbing deep into secrets of green, and when he thought that she began to moan again. Not loud, something like a loving cat, and when he turned from the road for a second look at her the jeep hit a rut and she gave a cry. Goddamn goddamn -

"You're perfectly sure Gonzales is not in Tiraque," he said in Spanish to Eusebio. Always calm, he thought savagely. Discipline and all that. Always the anthropologist.

"Si', 'señor Clark. Demetrio Saavedra looked for him yesterday during the fair. They say he is still in Cochabamba."

"He's always in Tiraque. He's always in Tiraque ever since we've been here. Every time we go to the fair he's there, trying to get us to drink with him, to take a ride in the jeep, to play football."

"Si', señor Clark."

"Now he's not in Tiraque."

"No, señor Clark."

"The one, miserable day or the year - manakosachu, Eusebio."

"Si', señor."

He laughed at himself, at what was nearly the extent of his Quechua. The old Inca saying - strong, simple: Manakosachu, it is not right -- seemed enough. There was no need to rage. He felt vaguely ashamed and relaxed his grip on the wheel.

The road snaked higher into the hills, thin and dusty. The smell was thick of dry grass and eucalyptus, and the range reared like aged flesh in the sun. He saw a peasant high up toiling behind oxen, crude scratch plow hung across his shoulder. Toiling to the top. Inca had been here; Inca were still here working their plots of wheat and potatoes with wooden tools.

The road veered abruptly free of the timberline: nothing but the bed of a ravine that roared during the rains, ruts and rocks sharp as knives. Somehow he shifted into

traction in time to avoid stalling. It was close. Each heave and lurch of the jeep, poised sometimes at a perilous angle, racked her where she lay on the floor in back.

"Hold her, Eusebio."

"Si'. I am trying."

"Lie on her if you have to," as she gave little sharp cries. If only I had morphine, he thought, or cocaine buy in any store in Bolivia. Christ! Past the bole of an incongruous dead tree warped like rubber, Bang, up through piled scree, twist and turn. Who could have foreseen this? Appendicitis probably, or septicemia BANG, fighting the jeep in a damned rodeo until they broke free at last on top of the mountain and rode along the edge of the range. A breeze blew. The sky was close, deep and pure and close as only in the mountains, and for a time she didn't cry anymore. The road was barely wide enough for his jeep, and to the right the expanse of the Cochabamba Valley shimmered in haze. He saw the peaks and serrated ranges beyond reaching all the way to Potośi in one direction, the Chaco in another. The valley was dry as a bone and flesh-colored, with here and there strips and patches of green. All was washed a faint dark in the distance.

"We've never been on this road before, have we, Eusebio."

"No, señor."

"Never. What lies in those mountains far off?"

"Surumi, señ.or. The Virgin of Surumi. The people go there on burros to be healed, or on foot, for there are no roads."

Sickness, he thought. We live in it world not an inn but a hospital.

"When do they go, Eusebio?" Always the fieldworker, probing.

"In spring, señor Clark. The third of September."

"We must try to see it." A graveyard.

"Si', señor."

A valley of bones, a charnel house, this beautiful land, smelling so fresh. He saw the long line laboring through the mountains, with flaring eyes, in the dusk, under torches bearing the image of saints. It gave him gooseflesh. They entered a section of the road the peasants had lined with stone. It stung his eyes with tears of dread to see it, mixed with his usual furious drive to fathoms it all, to know. They climbed so high. The range fell away starkly on both sides, with the valley on one hand, the rich brown fields of his hacienda on the other with here and there a tiny peasant plowing.

"You're sure there's a doctor in Muela."

"Si', señor. The peasants say so. A new doctor. They don't know what he calls himself."

"I hope they're not mistaken." On the other hand, what choice did they have? Cochabamba itself, the city, was very far.

"Señor Clark."

"Yes, Eusebio."

"I must tell you. This road." They were threading a particularly narrow section -- sheer rock drop on either side. "It is where I have heard rumors in the towns, rumors only but frequently, that the peasants of Toralapa killed one of their mayordomos during the revolution. They shot him here and threw his body down. Emilio Lafuente. You remember, señor."

"I think so, now. We have it in the notes. There was fighting, too, here."

"Si', señor. The peasants fought with the police. Many died, not here but there." Eusebio pointed ahead where the road descended along a ridge covered with sandy thorn and cactus. "There was war between the country and the towns. They say," he added, with a dash of the mood in which the deed was done, "they say the peasants removed his balls and made him eat them before they shot him."

No wonder, he thought as they drove. No wonder. Lafuente, drifting back from interviews like sediment, an odor cropping up again and again, Lafuente, even now haunting the decayed hacienda house, the ruined garden, the sealike sound of wind in Eucalyptus, talk of an old peasant: "The mayordomo came to my father to take a sheep." Thin as a nail with beard like a movie Malay, voice barely audible: "My father didn't want to give it to him. He hit my father in the face with his whip. He hit my father in the eye and put it out." Another man, Jacinto Parra: "He caught my daughter in a field watching the sheep. A child. Twelve years old. He forced her --"

"There," Eusebio's voice broke in as they descended the ridge and swung into the valley where the heat rose up and hit them like a hand, "there," pointing out over a hard dry eroded field toward a fringe of eucalyptus tall against the sky, "the campesinos belonging to José Rivas met those of Sinforoso Vargas. Private armies, señor, no less. They were killing each other. After the patrones were driven off there was no law.

"There Sinforoso Vargas died," pointing to a gutted ravine above which sheep were grazing. "There Hinojosa," roofless ruin of a house, "very bad patroń. The peasants threw

him down a well and stoned him. There," pointing suddenly to the middle of another field covered with scrubby bottom grass, hard and pale and eroded at the edges. "There, from a tree, Demetrio Claros was hung. He had been Minister of Hacienda under Salamanca."

The road unfurled whitely, endless over the valley floor. The fields were nothing but bottomland covered with grass, divided by low mud walls and stands of eucalyptus. Here and there a peasant worked; but Len did not see him, he felt only the sun mixed with Eusebio's voice pounding like a hammer. He couldn't breathe, his head hurt and he had a vision of fields under red light, hanged man on a black tree . . .

There was a jolt, a scraping sound. Silence. "Señor," Eusebio's dark face with almost perfect Maya nose loomed toward him out of red mist. "Señor Clark, are you well?"

"Yes . . . Yes . . ."

"You nearly left the road, señor."

"I'm sorry, I . . . the . . . heat . . . Is there any water left?"

"Of course señor. Eusebio handed him the canteen from which he drank deeply of hot water thick with Halazone. The world was pale and very still in the stalled jeep.

Ana in back suddenly gave a cry which filled it all with silver.

"Hold her, Eusebio," as they rode on. The piercing little cries turned to moans.

"I am, señor."

Goddamn goddamn -- he glanced back at her; blunt Indian face bathed in sweat, scar on one cheek. Blunt and thick-lipped, quite young, she rocked with a frown on the floor of the jeep and flung suddenly back (Like when she comes, he thought, like when she sits on me) and Eusebio caught her and she jackknifed, moaning.

"She's coming," he muttered in English, "she can't stop coming," with deliberate cruelty half to kill the boredom of the drive, the fatigue, half like a kid in the country talking-pretending to himself. With deliberate cruelty he pressed the accelerator down as far as he dared and let himself think of the times they had been together. It tore him like a sword, the massive rawboned girl, who moved the ox with one blow of her hand, open and passionate in her basic nature -- it broke him beyond himself to ease her to this, away from a torment he sensed in her.

She freed him. She burned him down to diamond, beyond his usual, perpetual stiffness and will, and he freed her.

The road seemed changeless. The mountains never came any nearer, and they rode

through bare fields which resembled eroded rubber, and gaunt rubbery cactus lunged at them from the roadside. A small chapel stood in the distance, black across askew.

The town came on them suddenly. White as the earth from which it was made, silver in silence against the sky, it seemed at first an image out of Ariosto, drifting vaguely above the earth. They entered a street which rocked the jeep drunkenly. All the white houses had shut their rough doors. It was noon --

Dead, he thought, dead. The deadest town he had yet seen of all the dead towns of the valley, of the province. The houses were low and windowless, with thatched roofs; not a dog, not a cat or bird crossed their path. Ahead, the inevitable church cast a pure shadow.

A girl sat on the threshold of a black open door. She was dressed in black and had a long face. The blackness of the door seemed even deeper for the sun beating on the house, and she caught his eye and held it as they passed.

He stopped the jeep.

"Pardon me, señorita, where is the doctor?"

"The doctor?" She looked away, and then straight at him. Her eyes were caves with fires burning in them. He felt the heat almost tangibly, the pain and lust and desperation.

"Yes, señorita, please. The doctor."

She was not as young as she first looked, with smudges under her eyes from the jaundice in the region. Her face showed nothing as he smiled impersonally. She said with formal politeness:

"Dr. Salazar is on Vandiola Street. Two blocks beyond the plaza, on the right."

"Thank you very much." They drove on. The girl's pain mixed with Ana and heat. It's a dream, he thought as they entered the plaza and drove around, must be, treeless and humped like the back of a bald head with dogs brawling in mud before the police station. The mud was liver-colored the station open but silent, the great red dogs drifted off in a ragged train. Eusebio began a long story he thought his boss would like to hear how Muela was the birthplace of the infamous Melgarejo who, when he was president of the Republic, made his white horse governor of a province.

It's not a dream it's not a dream, riding down an alley which snaked off the plaza, VA DI A all that was visible between rusted pocks on the enamel sign. They came to another square with a few trees and house of the same style as the others but larger with the brass plate beside the door:

DR. JULIO SALAZAR, L.

MEDICO

CIRUJANO

Stop the jeep, jump out, Eusebio as always his squire, his Sancho Panza leading the way, pressing the bell.

Silence in the cobbled street, smell of dust, faint smell of dung. Len concentrated on the blazing white house with tile roof and sturdy door, the shiny brass sign his new shingle; he rang the bell again.

The door opened finally and an old woman peered out.

"Is the doctor in?" Len asked.

"Yes. He's here." She bellowed – tall, with a shock of iron hair swept back. She resembled some old soldiers' priest in her fierceness, her plain, black, striped dull dress.

"I have a person, very sick. Is it possible for the doctor to see her?"

"Yes. Of course. In the vehicle?" She struck her surprisingly long neck out the door.

"Yes."

"Bring him in, caballero. India?" She mumbled in apparent surprise as the men helped Ana out of the jeep, big and gaudy in her native blouse and skirt, and they lurched into the house. "This way, señor." She led them across a broad paved courtyard to a room where glass doors stood open, and then vanished. Ana groaned at every step, sodden and sweaty against his face as when she got drunk and kept banging into things. Like Santa Rosario barely two weeks ago when they danced . . . Bougainvillea flared in the courtyard against the sun. He found himself in tears, turning his face skyward, gaunt, desperate as any peasant on the way to Surumi, among the rocks, caverns, wind of the mountains, praying to the Virgin Pray for us now and in the hour. Pray for us. In the dim consulting-room now, smooth cement floor, white metal examination table only slightly chipped. Pray. She cried when they laid her out upon the table.

The white walls breathed a coldness; again he felt the dread, and anguish, seeing her hand hang down. Water dripped somewhere; the sun was bright outside the door. He remembered all that smooth brown hand could do, young and still a bit vague around the edge, as if still growing. He saw her body. "Where is that fucking doctor!" In English. Eusebio looked at him blankly. The water dripped, dripped down the core of his brain, all mixed up with jumbled precise images of the glass cabinet filled with drugs, aureomycin,

Eli Lilly. A scale, a sink with shiny U-shaped faucet, an autoclave. An operation could be performed in an emergency.

"Caballero."

Len turned. A man stood erect in the doorway, who strode at once toward him without so much as a glance at Eusebio who stood - all five feet of him - in the way, so that the latter had to scurry to one side almost like an insect in his rumpled shirt of a poor town workman, his plain work pants.

"A sus ordenes." The doctor took Len's hand and seemed about to click his heels, nodding his head erect and military. He was young, with wet black curls and a blue chin. Rubbed look around the eyes of a man driven by work; yet he was so stern, so absurdly stiff and military, it was hard to take him seriously. The curls had been tended so carefully, almost like a girl's, wet and gleaming. The furrows in his brow above the nose were very deep.

"This is she then, la India." The doctor moved to the table. Why don't you drop that word? Len nearly said, "How long has she been ill?"

"Since yesterday. She suffered pain -- mild pain from time to time before. I gave her Enterovioform and she always got better." If I'd known, he thought. If I'd only known. He saw with sudden blinding force; he might have known, he might have guessed; but he hated even for a day to leave his work, the fount of his pride, his small, indelible wand against death.

"Where are you from?" The doctor probed the belly of the woman who groaned.

"Toralapa." Goddamn goddamn. "A hacienda in the mountains. I'm studying the results of the revolution there. You know it?"

"I know it. Pardon me." The doctor left the room. The water dripped. The walls were white. Death, banished through one door, lurked outside nothing without cost nothing for nothing caballero.

"Eusebio." caballero India all that The sun turned subtly dark.

"Si', señor."

"Do you remember that time we took Juan Najera to the oculist in Cochabamba?"

"Si', señor."

"You believed if we had not been there he might not have been treated too well."

"True, señor."

"There are doctors who were of the Rosca –"

"Señor!" Eusebio called out. Len was already through the door. He turned back briefly.

"Stay with her."

"But señor –"

"Stay with her. I order you," and his field assistant went back inside. Alone in the courtyard he paced furiously. Silence. Raging bougainvillea against the sun. The courtyard was larger than he first thought, the house larger than it first seemed with tall second story and balcony at the far end with a rail of frail dark wood.

Silence. His head pounded. "Doctor!" He called. Again. Everything fluttered red and black. It was hard, he knew, to force the doctor to work in a country where doctors often refused to leave their homes to visit the scene of an accident, where distances were great and they ganged together like sheep.

Fool! I should have gone to Cochabamba. But why? What's the matter with me? What do I have to go on?

Yet a numbness crept over him. He moved stripped somehow, hard, the guilt and drive for knowledge mixed with dread worn to fire around the doctor's wet, black, gleaming head . . . The stair to the second story creaked tightly under his foot – soft springy wood with a wobbly bannister. He climbed up and found two rooms giving on the balcony; he pushed open the door to the first. Darkness engulfed him like a billow, like a tongue hauling him in and turning him dazedly before the walls, dim, snowy. Like a wild growth, the darkness, in what seemed to be a combination bedroom-study: wall lined with books; dark rolltop desk.

The darkness thinned. He made out a picture on the wall above the bed and moved closer. It was the portrait of big men in black suits done in the style of a certain kind of Bolivian portrait-painting, flat, extreme and unreal. Moustaches, stern expressions, flaring hats and riding boots. One was dressed in a bemedalled uniform of the Chaco War.

I knew it, he thought, I knew it with numb and sodden certainty even before he caught the names in brass on the frame, Claros and Ledesma and Salamanca, names of the great families. The smell of the old hacienda house drifted back, brown and dank, the sealike sound of wind in the trees. He thought of Lafuente and probed the portrait for some hint: it gave nothing. The voice of Jacinto flitted like a shadow through the

room, and the trees in the evening groaned and creaked in the wind, though not the wrenching groan of eucalyptus but lighter, softer . . . He edged outside. The doctor stood on the verge of the stair.

"Doctor!"

The latter never turned but stopped, stiffened, back to the sun. His almost geometric figure stood out with brutal clarity.

"Where are you going?" sonofabitch trying to sneak

"Pardon me, señor. I have to leave. I have an emergency."

"But you can't. You can't have more of an emergency."

"Are you saying that I lie, señor?" It was said quickly, with total apparent casualness, but the air was still afterwards. The doctor stood motionless, as if suspended against the sun. Len did not know what to do.

The doctor started forward. Len grabbed his shoulder. "Señor!"
He stiffened like a spring, never once turning his head. "Please." Len removed his hand. He felt detached and peculiarly unsurprised, as if acting a part in a play. On top of his mind the words raced They're real furrows they're real pain and just below Why her why her why all of it now on her.

"Doctor!"

The man stopped. Len heard his own voice like the voice of someone else, like a force almost filling the air, harsh, metallic:

"I insist you answer. I don't lack feeling for you, but I insist. I saw the picture. Who are they? Your relatives?"

"My stepfather. My brother, my uncles. All dead." It seemed the doctor spoke also tonelessly and disembodied.

"But my God! What difference does it make? You're a doctor. You have sworn. What difference? You're a doctor."

"I have to leave, señor."

"But this girl. It's not her fault. She wasn't there. She's so young."

"I have to leave. I cannot treat her in any case. The infection has advanced too far. I haven't the medicine and equipment."

"But you have the equipment." Again the doctor stiffened. Len lurched on: "You have – I can't believe . . . Doctor I beg you. We came here. We would have gone to

Cochabamba, but we came here. We can never make it now. She'll die. I beg you. As a man, I beg you. I love this girl. She is good. If you ever loved a woman --"

"You? Love? That?" The doctor gave a laugh like a chop and turned in the sun, and Len was removed. It all moved away from her onto him, the proud, stiff, incredulous face blazing in sunlight, and Len was removed. Drifting outside himself, he felt his fists break the doctor, smashing the delicate white nose and cheeks, and mindless mouth, saw him topple backward through the rail.

"I'm sorry señor." Stiff and military as always -- the doctor's face became a mask. He moved on down the stair. It was still not too late -- still not too late to grab that wet black girlish head and throw it to the stone.

He was gone. The sun-pure silence. Bougainvillea. Sky a darkening, deepening dome. Nothing had changed. Len brushed at a fly who had settled on his cheek and descended the stair.

Back in the consulting-room they got Ana to her feet. Out the door and into the jeep again, out again across the fields.

"He wouldn't treat her. He just would not treat her. He's of the Rosca."

"It happens, señor. A bad thing."

Nothing. His heart burned in the heat turning dark across the fields. Nothing for nothing. The doctor danced like a toy A sus ordenes. Mocking, nodding and clicking, an avatar, familiar, under the red sky, the reek of battle, the hanged man, the black cross -- Len spoke through tears: "We'll try for Cochabamba. It's all there is."

"Bad as the road is."

"I understand, señor."

"I love you, Eusebio. You are my friend."

"You are my friend also, señor."

Roger Simmons

The Revisit

I went back there tonight, back to a place that I hadn't been to since I was a boy.

It's only a tiny niche, that place I went back to, nestled in amongst other niches about its size that ramble in and out of the surrounding countryside, and like most of its kind, isn't described in any of the inveterant travel folders that so often litter my desk anymore, and my mind. In fact, hardly anyone knows about it at all, just those who might have stumbled upon it accidently, and people like me, who were fortunate enough to have lived there once.

It was beautiful then, and I am happy to say, it has remained so, untouched by gaudy florescent lights, and noisy machines, and mammoth obelisks of chrome and steel that mark the restless world of "civilization." A perfect example of New England rural life that so often reminds one of homemade applesauce, piping hot, and thick chunks of gingerbread, and popcorn chains draped festively around an evergreen tree at Christmas tide.

It was a long drive from the city, and an arduous one, with remnants of the last snow slushing the roads which became rougher and more narrow as I drove. I kept going though, driving myself doggedly into the night, and it was past midnight when I achieved the top of the last short hill and began my winding descent into town. The night was clear and quiet, and my heart fairly flew with joy; it seemed that there was only me and the darkened town left in a world surrounded by sky, and stars, and miles of woodland.

The streets were wet, and the buildings on the ten or so half-city blocks that comprised the immediate township hung together in a thick pelt of snow, their distinctive brick facades and colonades obscured in the dim glow of the tall, hooded gas street lamps that dotted each corner so that they lost all autonomy. Yet, still, they managed to preen their ageless grace before me.

A fragile snow began to fall by the time I crossed the old Arch River bridge on the other side of town. Its heavy, gnarled pilings were whitewashed with snow. I stopped momentarily, and rolled down the window to catch the guttural sounds of the river as it churned along in its bed, impeded by ice and winter debris. I remember it ran free in the summer, and so clear that you could see the sand and bits of rock lining the bottom. I used to fish there, when moss and lichen clung to the ancient bridge, perched

atop the rocks along the side where the sun shone through the trees. The heat from the stones penetrated my jeans and warmed my small, flat bottom.

The memories return in vibrant blobs of winter, and spring, and summer, and autumn. They flatter me.

I circled back by the houses of my boyhood friends. Passed on from generation to generation, their first names, and those of their sons', were not printed on the mailboxes instead of their fathers'. I saw the yellow schoolhouse where once I attended classes. It was still standing, and probably, still used, with its high, beamed ceilings and enormous gas heater that used to intermittently spew steam throughout the long winters' day.

Beside the school, adjoining the churchyard, was a small park enclosed by a white picket fence, where on a Sunday school picnics, my friend, Buster Knorr, lost his Boy Scout compass exploring, and when Howard Sancheon and I fell into a stream hunting for it, Reverend Cleary put our socks across one of the outdoor grills to dry and scorched them!

I drove by the house where I had lived and was satisfied with its appearance. The porch swing hung in its usual place at the side of the house; the elm trees stood proudly out on the wide expanse of lawn where I had had my tube swings fashioned out of old tractor tires, and used to sit drinking summer lemonade. I longed to enter the big green barn in the back, to smell the musty hay and perhaps stroke the soft muzzle of a horse, but I could not, and instead, passed quickly on. For I had forfeited my right to trespass there some thirty-odd years previous when I sold the house to strangers, when I fell heir to it.

That, however, is in the past, and now it is morning, and I cannot linger anymore. Of late, I have been criticized for being unusually smug in my successes, and crass in the security of having grown up in a house referred to for generations by the name of its inhabitants. I can only blame it on advanced age. For I am no longer a mere slip of a boy romping through the woods with Lanny, my golden retriever, at my side. My moustache is gray, and my figure misshapen, (as is likely to happen when a man crowds the age of seventy). It means little to me.

I hang back awhile, gazing at the simple magnificence of the matchless white before it, like me, melts indistinguishable -- it into water, and me into another life which I never will really know. Then, I retreat, my tires making pleasant crashing sounds on the watery pavement.

But I leave with no regrets. I have done what I had come here to do. I have brushed the snow from my mother's grave, and from Father's, their granite markers standing so straight and tall in the tiny church cemetary. And I have sat beside what was commonly referred to as that "dumb old thinking tree," its trunk partially hollowed, and its grotesque branches reaching like tentacles toward the sky, where I buried Lanny when I was seventeen.

Yes, I went back there tonight, back to the place where I fell in love with Macy Kell in the sixth grade, and hated her by the seventh, and where I once punched Stewart Holley in the nose and made it bleed for stealing my pet frog.

Yes, I went back there again tonight, back home.

Sandra C. Chroman

THE PUPA

The room, large enough, seemed suddenly too small to hold the tension that gripped the Wellington family. Like an iron vise, its jaws tightly clamped on a pipe for the threading, it held each questioning member in stunned silence and stifled the easy atmosphere with which their meals were wont to be taken. This was the time, when the lights were low, when coolness had descended upon the world, when the labors of the day had been discarded, that all the grievances, problems and perplexities were aired, discussed, sometimes rather heatedly, and settled for the night. James had taken advantage of the policy and left each of them a little shriveled inside.

"I mean it, Mother! I'm leaving! I can't stay here anymore!" James, seventeen and struggling for manhood, pushed aside his plate, the roast-beef feeling as leather in his mouth, the potatoes flat and tasteless.

Despite his efforts his voice quavered, failed, and he couldn't stop the hard dry sobs that rose out of control. He jerked up, rapping his knees sharply against the edge of the table and bolted like a wounded bobcat daring any to enter his lair. His chair turned over, shattering the silence.

John, as head of the family, sat at the head of the table. For a fleeting second an uneasy expression arranged his features, as though he condemned himself, but just as quickly his usual optimism returned. "These are hard years for the boy and growing up is not easy," he said. He shook his head. "Yet, I cannot shake the feeling that just possibly there is something I could have done, or left undone that might have helped.

Mary, the mother, was shocked into silence. Her glance took refuge on the pretty knife holder that James had made for her in woodshop last year. Her color receeded. Her lips pressed tightly together to stop their trembling. Suddenly her knife clattered sharply against her plate as though the last of her strength drained away.

Stan, eighteen and a year older than James, looked askance at the fleeing figure of his younger brother. "Well, I wish he hadn't said that, but I know how he feels."

"Has he been drinking, John?" Mary Wellington, still young for her years, gave a sobbing sigh, her face crinkling with a white, strained dismay as if she was going to cry, but the tears didn't fall.

"I don't know," John answered, not lifting his eyes from his plate. "Something's wrong with him."

"I smelled his breath and I don't think I've smelled anything like it before. Could it be dope? Mary passed her hand over her face as if the light was too bright, then the tears fell and dropped on her too-still hands resting quietly in her lap.

"I found him over at the Hills and you know they're all on it."

Slowly with an old droop to her shoulders, Mary rose and followed her son into his bedroom. He lay stretched across the bed, face down, unmoving, feigning sleep.

Mary sat on the bed beside him, blank, at a loss for a beginning, silently rubbing her hand along his back, alternating its course with affectionate pats.

"Son, don't you love us anymore? What's the matter with home?"

James wheeled over, defiance lighting the fire in his eyes and whipping a lash to his voice. "I didn't say I didn't love you! I didn't say anything was wrong with home! That's the way you always do, Mother, read something into nothing!"

"Then why do you want to leave?"

Wilted, he replied. "Mother, I've got to think. And I can't do it here! I've got to get straightened out somehow or I'm going to loose my mind!"

"But I don't understand. Wouldn't it be better to do your thinking here, where we can love you and can help you? Off over there at the Hills you won't have a chance. You think they're your friends but they'll just tear you down."

Like a tiger James sprang up and prowled the radius of the room, fuming like a caged thing. "That's just it! You don't like them! You never did like any of my friends! You don't even like Debra and you don't even know her! All you know is what you've heard, what Mrs. Martin told you and she doesn't know! She doesn't like her either!"

The storm spent, he dropped into a chair, head in his hands. Calmer, he continued. "Mother, what do they do? Just tell me that!"

Mary felt afloat, lost. How did one bridge the chasm created when thoughts collide? Psychology was adept at telling why they do but she had never run across the theory telling her how to close the gap. Yet, somehow she must speak confidently and not transmit her frustration to the boy.

"Why, James, look at the condition you're in now. All they think about is partying and having a good time. Life is more than that and everybody knows their place is a

regular dope hangout. It's not that I don't like them, James, it's what you do when you're with them that I don't like."

James spread his hands in a gesture of futility. "What's wrong with having a good time? You wouldn't even let us go to the park by ourselves. And - and you run all our friends off."

James, you know why. That park is a regular hangout for winos and addicts. You know we found that dead man down there. And if a grown man can't take care of himself, it has to be dangerous for children. And as for running your friends off, I certainly won't allow them to do things I don't allow you to do."

"Yeah, cuss! I'm still leaving!"

Mary, silent for a moment, stood and wondered where she had failed this part of her flesh. She tried so hard to teach him to be a man but somewhere along the line she hadn't given him the backbone to stand alone.

"Well if you have to leave, at least wait until morning. Maybe you'll feel differently then."

The morrow was definitely improved. Stan got the car Pop promised him for graduation. If he left now he might never get to get under the wheel. But he still intended to leave when the right time came.

He was glad for his brother, yet strangely unsettled inside like a detained storm cloud held back by the wind. He made turn and again around the car admiring the hub caps, the paint job, the sharp, clean interior in spite of its age, and told himself the oldest should have a car first. His time was coming. He didn't have a license yet. But Stan got all the breaks. He just wasn't as good as Stan. Somehow he didn't really rate as well as Stan.

"Hop in, Chum! Pop says to take her down to Mac's Automotive and have her lined up. Five eighty-eight! How's that for cheap?"

James started at Stan's exaltant invitation. He hesitated, wanting to, refused, unwilling to unbend and effectively closed a chance to emerge from the cocoon he wrapped around his self-absorption.

"I'm going with Pop. He's taking the truck up, too. He asked me to go with him."

James scarcely noticed the sunshine that darkened the shadows, nor heard the hypnotic swish of the tires turning into the wind. Why did Pop have to keep talking, and talking, and talking?

"Yes, Pop, those were the good old days."

James wondered what the gang was doing right now. Swimming probably.

"Wh-what, Pop? Irritated that John kept interrupting, James drew his preoccupation closer. Maybe Pop wouldn't see he didn't want to talk.

"What-oh, yes, Pop. We'll go hunting together sometimes. In a misty rain when the night is black and we can't see the moon on the flat of the leaves."

James clenched his teeth to keep from screaming. Why did old people live so much in the past? Surely Pop knew he couldn't be interested. Life was for living and the past was dead.

"Yes, Pop, I know life is different now."

At Mac's Automotive James idly stalked among the old tires like a wide eyed boy on tom-walkers. He grinned at the kid with the yellow Ford waiting his turn.

Doing his duty, the service man, trim and lithe, neat in spite of his grease-splotched coveralls, spoke to Pop in an affected manner of importance.

"Bud, what you need is a new idler arm."

James glanced at Pop, watching for the slow grin he assumed when he was being taken but knew it.

"Is that one worn out?"

"Nope, but it's not even as heavy as the ones on those cars over there. You need a heavy duty on a pick-up truck."

"That's the one that came on there. I don't see why I should change now."

"Well, they don't make things like they used to."

"What do they cost?"

"I'll put one on for eighteen dollars. Eight for the arm, ten for labor."

Pop whistled. "That one will do. I don't haul heavy loads anyway. Those cars are heavier than that truck, the front end especially."

"I suppose so. But you do need a heavy duty."

"Just give me a line-up. I'd come out better to buy the arm and put it on myself, and probably save two or three dollars buying it at a cut rate store."

"It'd still have to be lined up after you put it on."

"Yep. I'd bring it up here and get it done for five eighty-eight and still come out winner."

The service man didn't grin with Pop but turned to the yellow Ford. James watched

suspiciously while the man went over the car, inch by inch, like a detective.

"You need new plugs, an idler arm, brakes relined, oil filter and a tune-up." The service man busied himself with a bolt here and there, turning this, twisting that, and giving a squirt of grease occasionally. "Plus a few minor things like a leaky radiator."

"I don't think that old car's worth all that," the kid answered, a worried frown wrinkling his bewilderment. "I just had a hundred dollars worth done on it about two weeks ago."

"Well, it needs a hundred thirty-five done on it now!" Snapped the service man.

The blond headed kid looked dubious. "O.K., go ahead, I guess," he agreed.

James gasped, then boiled. He couldn't decide whom he was maddest at, the boy for being such a nitwit or the attendant for being such a slicker.

As afternoon approached, a baseball game solicited James' attention, then there was the lawn to mow and watering to match. He cleaned the back rose bed for Mother and tidied up the garage. He rested an hour at the television watching I Dream of Jeanie and Wagon Train. Momentarily, he forgot his threat, but as night fall approached, the old impulse to move, the restless pacing, the closed in feeling returned with renewed impact like a forceful charge of battle after a brief pause for reinforcements. He endured until ten and the family unaware in sleep.

With a stealthy, lithe motion, cautiously like a wary animal stalking its prey, he slid over the window sill into the bright moonlight, eased down the window without so much as a whisper, and sped with swift, muffled steps around the corner of the house. Pausing for a moment, he crouched in line with the peach tree path, black and sharply defined on the lawn, until his heart stopped its palpitating and then he slipped the catch on the back yard gate.

Clammy with dew, it felt cold to his touch, lifeless like the dead weight in his heart, and he hesitated a moment, undecided if he should turn back. Found out and exposed, he would likely end up in jail. His youthful lips turned into a curl giving his face an expression of disdainful derision as if his mere disparity carried enough contempt to stop the force of continuity. Could he do this to Mother? She'd never live it down. She set such store by appearances as if a patio, a swimming pool, and two cars in the garage could produce the ultimate in happiness. And she worked hard enough at it, babysitting, taking in ironing, even cleaning house, anything to supplement the income and keep her

boys equal with society.

But Pop, he wouldn't care, not on the outside anyway. His duty ended when he handed Mother the paycheck. "Boys will be boys," he told Mother. "Leave them alone. They'll grow up." He couldn't blame Pop though, double prices for every necessity, the little man starving while a certain few raked in all the money. Poor man money! James steamed and raged, shaking the thing like his terrier shook a rat, all the while knowing the futility of mere emotions but unable to stop.

Suddenly he laughed, a genuine, comfortable laugh. Mother did look so funny when the brakes went out and she knocked a hole in the garage. Three hundred and forty-nine dollars and fourteen cents worth! That contractor really got paid and for fourteen hours' work and a four foot space.

Pop really told him off! Got sixty-seven dollars back. Mr. Evers thought Pop didn't know a thing about carpentry. But Pop sure fooled him. Told him right where he was off.

No, Pop wouldn't care if he should wake up and find him gone. But Mother! He hated to tangle with Mother. Her boys didn't ramble around and roam the streets at midnight.

Delbert waited for him at the end of the alley. Wouldn't Mother be surprised if she really knew Del? She made a point of him and Stan keeping the best of company; shun evil companions like the Hills', she said. Del could hell and damn along with the best of them but Mother couldn't see past his smooth, suave manners and close-cropped, blond hair. Too bad Del couldn't get over his obsession with horses. In fact, James hadn't really expected Del to go to the rumble at all. James expected to find him mooning on the corral fence watching some brand new filly prance in the moonlight.

Keeping well to the shadows, the two boys made their way down Stein Street, crossed Marcus Way at the intersection and turned north on Chaplin. Ten minutes later they hurried across Waverly Park to the west side where the hum of voices already rose and fell, occasionally cracking with anger like the hard clap of thunder after a flash of lightning.

"What's the rumble about tonight?" Del asked as fragments of sentences and words with wierd intonations and strange, menacing meanings sliced the air.

"No idea. They don't need a reason, they just rumble for the fun of it."

Trying to see everything in the dark, yet trying not to be seen, James and Del approached as the fury unleased and clubs cleaved the air, knives slashed and fists flew.

Any and everything available was used for weapons and the swaying, swirling mass responded with sharp cries and groans. Trash cans resounded against the earth adding to the din and clatter. Cursing, swearing, yelling and crying roared in waves of frenzy.

"Stop them! Stop the cowards!" a voice rought with swagger yelled and a burly boy streaked across the light. "They're sneaking off in the cars!"

James whistled for Del. "Wasn't that Kimball?" he hissed. "Hey! Del! Are you there?"

Del didn't answer.

"Gone to the corral, I betcha!"

Around and around the park crashed the cars, roaring, screeching, brakes screaming like agonizing, hurting things, the impact of metal against metal ripping the air. Excitement coursed through James, aching for a chance to join the fight, which spoke to some need deep in his being as the world of music speaks to others.

The wild orgie stopped as suddenly as it began and red, flashing lights and screaming sirens moved in as though conjured up with some strange incantation. Battered and beaten jolopies scattered around any available corner and James, unaccountably resentful, slunk across the street, hidding behind a garage while the police searched the park.

"They weren't hurting anyone but themselves!" James thought. "They weren't destroying any property but their own!"

Blind unreasoning frustration surfaced and he watched a battle being waged for him about him, and with him but he stood as one looking on, a bystander, unable to enter, even to defend. The whole affair was out of his hands and he became as one hypnotized acting out a will other than his own.

"Kill! Kill! Kill!" The one contender shouted over, and over, and over again. James stood wide eyed while waves of dispair and fear chased each other through his body, pimpling his flesh. "Do what you feel like doing, let go, do your stuff, get it outside. This is just being you, individualism!"

Then the essence of orange blossoms interviened.

"But love is dead."

Torn in two directions like a mismatched team pulling against each other, James did not feel the ground under his feet as he walked beneath the weight of battle, the internal, inaudible voices contending, full of grief that he could not be himself and full of fear of the unknown forces of life, full of insecurity and inadequency. Through his veins coursed his mother's blood, enough to stay the violent action? Enough to counteract

the welling tide of resistance? Was there a safety valve? Where were the responsible impulses?

Gradually his breathing became quiet. The police cars left the park, and James stepped out of the shadows, tall for his age and fully developed like his father, in faded jeans, with long, waving, brown hair tangled now with the breeze, eyes steeled and greyed as clouds curdled across the moon.

"What's your name, boy?"

James stopped on a half turn as if a pistol shot swiped him to one side, heart hammering as a trim, imposing, uniformed figure materalized in the street.

"James Wellington, sir." Strange how polite he could be even in the face of perverseness.

"Well, now, anybody that's able to walk wouldn't been a-rumbling, would they?"

The boy said nothing "Enemy!" he thought. "Theirs and mine!"

"You know I could take you in? It's past curfew."

"Yes, sir," James mumbled, his head roaring like the wind behind a plane before being airbourne, whirling all reasonable thought, mesmerizing the function of his brain, preventing his being aware of the concern in the man's voice, until all he saw was the fear, dispair and grief that rode his soul. Then the thought struck him as an enlightning flash of truth. He might not be prolific enough to whip the world but before him stood an unsuspecting part of it. With a sudden spurt of adrenalin, effortless power flowed smoothly, with all the force of unleashed repression, knocking the emblem of his problem to the pavement in a crumpled, breathless heap, his knee catching the officer in the stomach as he fell.

James went. Swiftly, he knew, for in minutes he stood on main street, blood and breath roaring, past the theater, the library, the corner drug store, the bank, tall letters glittering and gold like the wealth cached inside.

With deliberate hesitation, like a deadly cobra biding his time, he eased to the rear of the building, resolute in the night, fooled around in the grass awhile and slowly sauntered to the street.

But a sudden emptiness engulfed him like the culminative expectation without the consumption, and a green sickness that startled him, like rocks in a rattling tin can. Over his shoulder a red trail spiraled, staining the sky. For a moment the sharp silhouette of a night bird loomed against the glow.

He entered his window the way he left it and went to bed. He smelled the orange

blossoms mingled with the wild, acrid scent of smoke, turned his face to the wall and cried.

Bertha Crow

In Search of the Lost Idea

There is a lot of stale saliva on the back of his tongue; throughout his mouth and upper throat, the sticky slime of sleep refuses to dissolve. He tries an imaginery bite of lemon, but the ruse is today insufficient and the juices refuse to flow. He gets out of the bed, washes his face and combs his hair. He dresses himself in levis and sweatshirt while the coffee is brewing. It is the coffee which finally singes the scum, carrying it down his scalded throat into an empty stomach. Officially, then, he is awake.

He searches across the kitchen floor, which he finds as vacant as his head. He sighs quietly against his right shoulder.

"I am a writer and I have no ideas again and I am sick and feel like homemade dog waste and that is why. That is justification enough for . . ." he stops this thought and leaves it floundering on the kitchen tiles.

The young writer's name is Lloyd Floyd (when signed at the bottom of a manuscript); his given name is John Borges. John, as he shall hereafter be designated, is waging a battle against normality. He varies his schedule and habits so as to maximize abnormality. His worst fear is that he may be thought predictable in the eyes of God, or some other invisible critic. So as he walks across the living room rug he may break into a polka, not because he feels like dancing, but because he revels in absurdity. Or he may begin a complicated discussion of metaphysics with his dog, Chowzit. The dog barks at appropriate breaks in his master's monologue and seems to understand. This type of nonsense has occured regularly at the Borges' place for a number of years. John schemes that it will make interesting reading someday for his autobiography, after he becomes rich and famous and powerful.

"My readers will want to know about my most intimate thoughts and habits," thinks John, and then he grins monetarily.

More immediate troubles return to his consciousness. A writer with no ideas is like a . . .

"I am a writer," he says aloud, trying to recover some primal essence. "I am a writer. Yes, I am a writer." Chowzit barks amiably and wants to play. John gives Chowzit a

harsh kick in the collar, and the martyred canine tucks tail under the coffee table, disappearing from view.

In disgust, John finally decides to take some action. He decides he has been lying around the house long enough and it's past time, long past time, to fill the vacant linoleums in his noggin. It takes the form of a decision, such a decision as seems worthy of a famous writer-to-be.

John thinks it over and agrees with himself that it is the best decision he's made in quite some time, so he decides to announce himself. Ahem.

"I Lloyd Floyd," he shouts, "shall venture out this day in search of the lost idea! And when I have found it, I will write the greatest words of my life, and all the holy critics shall know that I am at last arrived!"

He loses no time, goes straight to the front door and steps outside into the morning air. It is a pleasantly warm day, with huge flat-bellied clouds overhead. He fills his lungs with tasteless air and sighs.

"Confrontation with the Core is what I need," he muses, "and there at the core of my small environment will I find the lost idea." This thought gives him even greater confidence and be begins to look about the front yard.

The first thing he sees is the large cherry tree which grows to the left of the cement walk. According to plan, he makes efforts to "confront the core" of this tree. Sense-data pours into his head from the tree. He hears the rustle of wind through leaves, and smells the faint odor of the blossoms. He plucks a cherry from the drooping limbs and the still-green fruit tastes quite bitter in his mouth. He spits the oval seed onto the lawn. The seed wedges itself into the grass and disappears. He further notices the way the limbs branch and separate, diffusing into smaller and smaller fingers, until twigs leaves blossoms and fruit are joined. All of it. The whole tree displacing the atmosphere just so, and it couldn't possibly be any other way. John wraps his arms and legs around the trunk of the cherry tree. In this fierce embrace, he feels his own vibrations melding with the vibrations of the tree. Then he climbs the tree, feeling the strength of the tree beneath him, testing its strength by gently bouncing up and down on its strong limbs. Then he climbs quietly down from the tree, observing the mescaline dance of the tree's shadow across the lawn. And he looks up through the tree and observes the fast flashing sunlight, diffused and angular, like twinkles of broken glass through the leaves and branches.

"There is no idea here," thinks John. "I will go somewhere else."

He walks across the dicondra lawn to the southeast corner of his house where five or six paper plants grow up to the edge of the roof in an awkward regiment. As he reaches out his hand and touches the leaf of the nearest plant, dusty pollen is shook loose unexpectedly from the stalk. The pollen quickly disperses in the air and some of it is unhappily sucked up John nostrils and he sneezes, sneezes, he sne-sneezes, he sne-sne-sne-sneezes!

Behind the paper plants, a metal rod leans up against the side-shingles of John's house. The rod is used to turn on the lawn's sprinkler system. This particular sprinkler system is not particularly efficient. When it is turned on, as John now demonstrates to himself, the water dampens the pavement halfway across the street. Cars and boys on bicycles have to make a wide arc to avoid getting wet. The man who designed this system was no Robert Trent Jones. It is definitely abnormal. John lets it stay.

Now, John confronts the sprinkler system.

He sees that there are eighteen sprinkler heads, nine each on the two halves of the lawn. The water sprays into the air in irregular fans. High spouts of water shoot flamboyantly, trembling like peacock feathers in the wind. The water is misted by the gusting wind. It filters down like prismic jewels into the grass. John attempts to smell the water but only succeeds in smelling the cherry blossoms once again, which produces a strong sense of deja vu. John bends over the sprinkler head nearest him and places the flat palms of both his hands over the spouting water. The water breaks into a foam of many bubbles instantly bursting. The water is bent into spider shapes as it rushes off the slick umbrella of his hands. In the skin, the water burns like balm into the nerves up his arms through the back of his neck and squirts into his brain. He watches his hands, detached from this feeling of coolness, registering the data as it flows into him. He is not only aware of the coolness, he is aware of his awareness of the coolness. Introspection piles upon retrospection.

"I am thinking to myself," he thinks to himself. Ho hum. He stands up and walks back to the main valve. Then he turns the sprinkler system off and replaces the metal rod behind the paper plants.

"There is no idea here," thinks John. "I will go somewhere else."

He brings a ladder from the garage. He leans it against the roof. The ladder is so old that it's even odds on it falling apart whenever it's used. One rung is missing near the bottom and the side planks are warped badly. In fact, one of the planks has a split

running from top to bottom and has been wired together on four separate occasions. So, as John mounts the ladder, he tries not to bounce his weight as he moves. He tries to maintain a flowing agility of motion and avoid stressful jerks and bumps. He thinks of the movement of cats, no wasted effort. Cats, yes, that's the key. John really gets into believing himself a cat as he ascends the ladder. Purr, thinks John, really getting into it, purrr, purrrrrrrr . . .

Phssssst!!! goes the cat, startled from a lazy snooze on the edge of the roof as John's head bobs into view. The cat is quick to claw the end of John's nose and scamper over his shoulder and down the ladder. He spits on the end of his finger and dabs the blood again and again off the end of his smarting nose until finally it quits bleeding. What a bummer, thinks John, discovering a sudden animousity towards cats. He also discovers a capacity for violent thoughts and suppressed obscenities. But, the lighter side is saved from the fires just then by the unexpected conjuring up from his little used memory files of an old high school football cheer.

"That's OK! That's all right! Stand up, sit down fight fight fight!"

He is able to laugh a little at this and finds himself smiling for the first time that day. He forgets the smart in his nose and takes a seat straddling the top of his shingled roof. Many near and far away rooftops scatter in every direction.

John can feel the wind rushing underneath his arms and over his knees and playing with his hair like rippling wheat. All the roofs have escorts of trees. Trees with leaves dancing in the wind, trees waving and swaying, making the sound of sifting charcoal. Television antennae and chimneys and nothing to tell one man's house from the next, not really. And his smile folds up in his face at last.

He can see in the kitchen window of the house behind his own. A middle-aged lady whom John has never met is washing breakfast dishes in the porcelain sink. She is framed by yellow curtains tied back at the sides. As she finishes the dishes she wipes her arms off with a white towel and moves away from the window to another part of the house, her life again invisible.

Another turn of the head. He sees that the cat is now crouched low in the grass, stalking the fearsome butterfly, carefully, a little closer, stop, move . . . stop . . . POUNCE! - and the butterfly flitters away effortlessly as the cat cranes its collared neck, watching it with jealous eyes until it disappears over the fence into the next yard.

He sees to his great disappointment that the back lawn needs to be mowed. That's a perpetuality, he decides. Then he is caught in the tangles of a daydream, an airborn reverie with wings attached. If he could fly, how he would torture that miserable cat, peck its head and beat his wings in triumph, and fly away over the city; fly over the city, fly and become famous: John the flying human or rather, Lloyd Floyd, Floyd the Flawless Flyer, . . . no . . too much alliteration, let's see. He mulls this problem of title for awhile. He broods and contemplates what name to give himself if he could really fly, but he cannot satisfy himself.

So, he lets it drop.

He looks one last time across the rooftops as far as he can see, with the smile gone completely away now. Then he scrambles down the roof and down the ladder and hops from halfway up to the lawn. As he lands, he turns his ankle, and now his mood has completely turned for the worse.

"There are no ideas here," thinks John. "There are no ideas anywhere! Where is the lost idea? Where is it gone? And where can it be found?"

And as he is seated on the grass massaging his twisted ankle, and feeling most despondent and vacant of creativity, an idea suddenly occurs to him.

Steven T. Swarts

she wanted all of me

alone

she wanted none

alone

and I stayed there

s i n n
p n i g

alone

steel traps wait in the garden
perched on limb and stem
they spread their airy traitors
beckoning; come again

alight gently dragon
fly away again
we fear much
you may stay

Full moon, scared rider
galloping to the gate.
Do not look back.
Think not, it is late.
Lathered steed, pounding
hooves and heart.
The bridge is near,
you are awaited.

by William Winder

The curtain pulled slowly.
Stifled sighs echoed.
Slowly shuffled feet had gone.
The chairs were empty.
Dust fell on the stage.

(exuent)

William Winder

RUMBO NORTE

Una mar de algodón.
Sobre el ala,
al rincón de mi lado,
sol y sombra callando,
se le apaga la luz al tercer toro.
Bajo las olas blancas,
al fondo,
huye las tierra,
me imagino.
Y siento que España se me acaba.
Y me da pena.
Chocan en las lejanías
las memorias de antaño,
y las de hoy.
Y renace la emoción de la mañana.
De la inmensidad resurge,
nueva Venus,
la visión del día,
y con ella revuelven
sueltas y encadenadas,
junto al universo,
aquellas armonías
de siete abrazos negros.
Todo en Uno.
Hierve la sangre,
y adentro me golpea,
y me humedece el mundo
y me lo abruma.
"¿Pero, hombre, qué pasa?"
me pregunto.
Y desde más arriba,
má allá del azul
mojado de los cielos,
Alguien me oye.
Y el alma me acaricia el beso
de una voz suave que me anima:
" ¡Vamos, viejo,
que Suerte tienes!
Ya que tu estrella te destina
aun tan niño a quedarte
frente a la FUERZA DE LA HUMANIDAD."

F. E. Albi

Al Escultor Santiago De Santiago

SACRIFICE

Samiel
Moaning, restless wind
That reckons spring's advances
Passes, tearing lily faces
Bearing grains that pock, pit, wound;
Oozing sacred lily-life bleeds --
Beads the stock
Resigned to stronger forces –
Sourceless now
And sacrifice to summer's reign.

Mary Conklin

EVENSONG

The clouded gloom hangs moonlessly
Hallowed by the sobs of dormant willows
Weeping tuneless tomb-dumb tears
Entoned upon the glutted earth.

And not responds the litany
And I am impotent to the womb.

Mary Conklin

Was it only yesterday?
I have seen the whole of my life since then
I have examined every crevice
Probing gently
And yet the search has hours to go
And the journey all the markings of a nightmare.
Traversing the convolutions of memory
I meet and live again
The days on horseback
Now hours that into minutes crumble
And mingle with the sand . . .
Sand to flow thru hourglasses that mark
Not time, but the space between happenings
A void, a sucking vacuum
That feeds on rotting dreams
To fill the bellies
Of those crawling minutes
And sustain them thru another tortured night . .
Dreams to gag the voice that comes
To scare away the horse I ride
The scream that sends me into time again
Where minutes lengthen into sixty seconds.

Mary Conklin

Narcissus

Behind the veil
Eyes rolled inward, bulbous
Red-veined onion sets ripe for planting
Twitch across the painting
come and go
Read the mirrored symbol
Trace the lines and furrowed valleys
And the wells --
Oh the well
And the image --
Crouched in the reeds translucent petals
Fringe the gold-cup-hollow-eye
The love is warm in the snow
Devouring, feeding leprose --
Spots of the leopard
Blotch the view.

Mary Conklin

SPRING TIDE

Lay low - the wind blows high!
The sea is leonine and wears a mane of foam
In lusting, swift pursuit
To claim a craving shore.
Leaping, thrusting in an ardent race:
Chasing conquest intones a mesmerizing chant
And roaring takes reverberating land -
Triumphant entry charts a frothy trace.
So cool and lucid now an ebbing slick
Mirrors its mating with a pale and golden sand.
Grateful sibilance, palpable reflection,
Talisman of a fertile, pulsing land.

Margaret Richards

DEFENSE

I

Don't speak to me
With love in your eyes
Words entreating,
Sweet cojoling . . .
I can't.
I must protect the tenderness of
Old hurts
Long dead flames whose ashes
Haunt me still.
No . . .

II

But your words are warm,
Spring sun on winter ice.
The captive green beneath
Stirs, soon strives
To reach the sky;
The very danger draws me
Like a far-off star
Once seen holds the eye
With its ice-fire
Captive.

III

No longer can I not hear
Your words that ask
This sacrifice;
Each plea seeks
To stir against my will
What I thought long dead.

Cynthia Combs

THE QUESTION

Shall we in writing ape The Poe
All darkness, cruel and dreary
Or shall we Ogden Nash-ian go
And leave behind the eerie?

***

When tempted to mysterious scenes
Should we by words betray
Our sense of humorous miens
And sing a mournful lay?

***

Upon a night storm rising
Could we inspire with chills
Or would the stylizing
Reveal our impish wills?

***

To draw a picture gloomy
With mounting waves of fear
Or paint with words that to me
Bring a smile or chuckle near.

***

Tis nothing hard to imitate
A way with words of dread,
But tempting sweet it is to state
We'd rather laugh instead.

***

But would our Doctor Solomon
In writing's way so wise
The light touch see as hollow, man,
Deep feelings to disguise.

***

Its true a laugh can hide and mask
Emotions felt forbidden.
The serious poet's greatest task
Is to raise those feelings hidden.

***

And in so raising have them shown
To us as true and real
And common unto all are known
The poet's lines ourselves reveal.

***

And so round and round we go
In search of some suggestion.
To be dramatic and indigo
Or laugh, that is the question.

Margaret Packer

WHY YOU ARE

Cruelness, why do you strip my soul bare,
Touch with deceptive hands;
With mystic eyes stare.

Cruelty, pain feels you lingering during the day,
Sorrow watches you wander at night,
Grief remains; for you it obeys.

Reality watches through a stygien peign.
Tragedy listens to a chuckling smile as affection screams;
"HAVOC! Let us break this binding chain!"

Cruelty speak as we lament.
Cry out! Tell on yourself.
Yell! Cry out! Why!

Gerald Howze

Yellow ochres drift down with red
and mingle with the grasses,
the end of a season.

I remember a time when
my tears blended with the rain
as it fell on the pavement -
when my youth cried in muted sobs
without knowing why
when my heart ached for a man I'd never known.

Janeen Guest

1.

But do you dare?

Do you dare eat the peach, grab the greasy chicken
put the pan and catsup bottle on the table
and still

walk fog shifting streets which don't lead to the party?

2.

The black tree backgrounded in statue grey sky.

mist might change grey to amber,
then
wind, green to silver-backed malachite which
    shuffles, turns to aquamarine
and the rain comes, melts violets into blue colbalts
    then whirlpools all back to
stillness in the statue grey of the alone silence.

Photography is a mind art.

3.

Chiaroscuro: coal pine against cinerous sky.

Then the rose hues rolled, broke the horizon,
the topaz blued under oranged lime borders,
and indigo fired the mosaic
to morning.

4.

Symbols developing
The highway
Grows washed out
No inside
No outside
Ending
Beginning

None for finding or following

go to the quilt
smother between the motion and the a
offer into yourself addition of the
opposite sort

when
the
world
shouts
my
way

chart
the
pattern

5.

clouds dribble themselves across and out
shades of white
grays, purples and silvers
flow into whirlpools which throw-whip
into
fog cats
and camels
flood-surge
until whales
and worms are within
the reality of wind and sky.

In night perhaps a moon
microscopes, tracing the white streams and sips,
charting the variations into
light time and the sun gives them place and depth.
They are sky and water and earth
and all which imagination can form
until the next
clouds dribble themselves across and out

6.

jam patterns into

carnivals or quilts

escape
by color noise,
kaleidoscope of black madness

or

by suffocating patchwork,
conglomerate shades of sewn order

slam patterns out of yesterday's expediencies into tomorrow's
conjectures

go

half-haltingly

pass paradoxes in the byways, midways or sheetways

pay for token tickets
to ferris wheels
which wash gray screams
into backdrop existence
to yellow bug-light mirrors
which angle images
to factual architecture
to centrifical circles
which cast out
unwanted patterns

or

pull up softened-down coverings
as wild ducks sweep mid-air,
stiffly stagnate
as shrunken carnival colors
scream hypnotically
as order tightens
smothering warm indecisions

Diane Eash

Move the world
Move
And fire and smoke and
Tide pools
Rotate
Form from
Clouds or fog or
Warm arms
The highway envelops
Cold forever

The driver's sense
Rotates
Grows washed out
No inside
No outside
Ending
Beginning

Diane Eash

go to the carnival
walk the byway, midway
(rats feet over broken glass)
watch the bars with shadows inside
shout pull the trigger
walk while the shadows inside
screech bang bang
the balloons, the barkers
the caliopes pierce
the carnival patterns blare

escape from yesterday
from tomorrow
from the hollow men
into
deaths
other
kingdom
for
thine
is
the
power

or

Sounds:
Pounding tympanic beats,
Beating
Loud to loudest;
Grow in intensity,
Move
Around reverberating skull
Down tension taut ganglia
Twanging, twitching.
Copious dissonance
Drowns hope of quiet.

Drowing should be silent.

Conjugal Love

You turn aside to sleep
But I,
I lie awake, mind awhirl
Regretting today's lapses, perhapses
Planning tomorrow's maybes.
Unchanging pattern,
A tender moment,
Then I yearn and worry
But you,
You turn aside to sleep.

J. H. Bilas

Wedding Song

Water rocks
our bodies
as your
breathing
rocks
my mind
Motioning us to sleep
to dream beside
ourselves

Water:
Crashing
Swirling tossing
Frothing falling
Calming ebbing
inward
Drowning
Sands and rocks
Widening thinning
Toward us and the cliff
Us
the rocks
and sand
Held from drowning
us and the cliff
by someones strong love hand.

Water:
Separates the lands,
the norms and structures
the pictures, and the minds.
What ocean separates the people?
The norms and structures,
the pictures, and the minds.

Water is the sound
that slants that falls
that hits against
the inside walls
and windows.
that hits against
the ocean of windows

and walls
Water that
falls as rain
drops fall
by rain drop.

Water lies beneath
separated from us
by man made hand
plastic vinyl strong
as are many men made things
Still yields to
the power
and water rolls and
moves and motions
as we lie
amongst each other
in each other

Living water joins
our souls
Livened water molds
our bodies into one
And welcome is the water
that lines the soft love sense:
kisses
Water, warm
and welcome.

Water were the tears
that took emotions
from inside and
left them plain for
all to see in stains
of salt upon our faces
Water from inside
us falling out and
calling out water
saying you, world, can't
use us
to ocean your disgust
and hate. To separate.

What texture is water?
What color?
I see it mingle
in so many ways.

Water we are
and minerals
Souls that trancend
continents.

So, water rocks
our bodies
as your
breathing
rocks
my mind
motioning us to sleep
to dream beside
ourselves
And I forget
which one of us is me
and which one you.

Or is there really
two of us
sleeping
softly
dreaming
now
of oceans
with waves
held back
and
nightmarish
intervals
of hate
receeding
even
as an
forever
tide . . .

Len Watts

STILL LIFE, STILL LOVE

Sitting on the lawn, sun-flocked
Beneath the irregular oaken canopy,
Which undulates desulterily from time to time
As the warm milky air lolls against the leaves --
With a brown, and a green, and a black book
All but forgotten at my side --
I suddenly feel her presence near.
Comes the loving pat, now the brown-eyed glance
Sprung deep from within the peaceful, trusting soul,
Now the peculiar liquid fragrance --
And the silence, her silence.
We sit for some minutes,
Until the voice, her voice resonates softly and monotenously,
"You are so quiet," is carried away, and leaves off
As if forever, while a few more moments mutely pass.
"Yes, I am quiet, it is good to be quiet --
I love to be able to be quiet --
Ah, but dear, could you love a quiet man?"
The single nod, slow, unblinking, absolute --
The languid breeze soughing confirmation.

L. Stafford Betty

The Veil of Wake

quiet quiet quiet
then as nothing silent still
merging light
twisting stone

stars

silent as glass

mirror

dark as bones

movement

stirring air

blinking

eyelid across the veil of later
against the shadow gone

Wake is
star blink
ever
ever
quiet quiet
merging light and twisting stone
still as glass at the still dot
of air bones on the eyelids
inside the eyes of eyes of
man outside the scuttling shell in time
the sweeping limbs of space

then quiet cold
then quiet hot
then quiet not at all

till now
the soul drowns
till wake
the stillness rings

nothing silent still
empty till
the flame burns dead
the peach flowers fall
wordless wordless all is one
merging light in twisting stone

Cal Keet

CLOUDS

Whipping wind, over yourself you tumble
Making a rough ride for gay fluff cloud maids.
Bawdy, billowed skirts and curls a jumble,
Dancing across your vault in promenades.

These ladies clothe themselves in thunder gray,
Passion mounting, tumult building, to end
Wrestling in a violent display.
Then, bursting, glorious torrents they send.

This day full spent, one maid dresses for thee.
Upon her body, strands of silver light,
On her shoulders, your cobalt canopy,
At her white throat, the precious orb of night.

Many guises has this maid of the air,
Each her expression and equally fair.

Joanne Beckman

His Poem

Glinting lights on a wall,

shapeless

yet:
with power to pick holes
into the dark of my brain,
and rouse what was quiet there.

Yawns end silence thought death-caused;
now, found sleep-caused.

Yawns give way to laughs that all leap up
to join the glinting lights on a wall,

shapeless

yet –

Virginia Grass

June,

The month that hid the most when we seeded

summer eves with ancient games.

And we tried to rake back the limpid leaves

that blew away into Augusts' dim glint of

morning air.

And then November came riding on its darkened horse

discing up the wrinkled roots

that lay beneath the crust

of this forgotten earth

that bends below my feet

like

the air that yields beneath the wings of crystal

butterflies that saunter in the wind,

And I glimpse at mornings gone

And February

lowered its brow on the eye of the month

and whispered to the spiraled air, wheezing through

the windy sky

to watch the limpid leaves slumber on the

crust

of this forgotten earth

Ed Howe

ULTIMATE MATCH

Contestant in the mortal game
I stand ready attentive alert
that the first point shall be mine.
The crashing serve
spinning outrageously lethally at me
I soulstretch to return.
The jolt vibrates
from the taut webbing
down through my very bones
into my core, my coil.
It becomes me.

The moment's respite splitseconds past
and quick again
emergency hurls toward me
unexpectantly low and left
almost beyond my reach, my sidestep.

Done
but weakly done
returned within a chalk-puff of the bounds.
My point?
Look to the judges perch:
empty.
The silent sunbaked bleachers
mock my intensity
somewhere in the upper reaches
two tight white shapes
impatient for their turn on the clay
have interwined tanned arms
and firm young bodies
and kiss.

Affronted, offended
I look away
waves of indignation
wash across the court and lap about
corners of the stands.

Now to resume
but I am distraut distracted
by the rude intrusion
of insensitivity
careless.
I watch across the center barrier
and see the armed poise
the relentless pose.
Heart paused I wait.

What if I win?
my name
coupled with his successive pseudonym
moved a further bracket into the future.

And if I lose?
my absence gone unnoticed
will only be sensed by his next opponent
at the moment when the mortal nature
of the set
becomes apparent
when the next contender
balances here in terror
waiting for the serve.

Anne Passel

LAY LOW – THE WIND BLOWS HIGH!

The sea is leonine
and wears a mane of foam
In lusting, swift pursuit
To claim a craving shore.

Leaping, thrusting in an ardent race:
Pacing conquest intones a mesmerizing chant
and roaring takes reverberating land --
Triumphant entry charts a frothy trace.

So cool and lucid now an ebbing slick
Mirrors its mating with a pale and golden sand.
Grateful sibilance, palpable reflection,
Talisman of a fertile, pulsing land.

M.R.

TODAY NOT

No, I think not
Today not
In the morning
when the cold grayness
No, tonight
after the lights
and the laughter
and the T.V. buzz
Think then

Contain it now
"Yes I will stay
Yes I want to go"
But today not

Press down
Bear up
Grit and clench
Not give over
Tomorrow I will
No, tonight
But today not

Susan Baumstark

Fragments

Pebbles rolled
tossed, made round
smashed against stone.

Pebbles sifted
caught in curls
molded for daddy.

Castle of sand
captured moment
lighted with reflection.

Pebbles, black,
veil others
holding silent prints.

Pebbles pressed
into quiet form
shifted by patterns.

Pebbles hidden
stolen in bluish
shining sight.

Pebbles swallowed
reclining breasts
delicate prints dissolve

Pebbles cannot evade
washed clean
dressed anew

Pebbles rolled
in circles
caught for release.

Pebbles; crushed stone
stares with
satin indifference.

Gerald Howze

NOSTALGIA

Slight rush
of air;
the serenity
of summer
afternoon
wraps itself
about me,
As pears
lazily drift
along
on
the wet belt.
Ceaseless squeak,
a creak
and a moan
issues from
tired machinery ------
fresh
green
pears
orbit casually
to be plucked by
fleshy
fingers
of breathing robots
with
automated joints
and dreaming minds.

Ellen Austin

DIALOGUE

Lady - I'll fix 'em. (pause) 'Cuz none of 'em ain't no good

Paula - (busy with her macrame slightly ignoring her) What

Lady - Honey, I'm 'tellin you, don't ne'va maa no gambla or drinka

Paula - Pardon me, but are you talking to me

Lady - (looks her straight in the eyes with her threatening green eyes) Yea hh!

Paula - Oh! Yeah! Sure! Okay! I won't!

Lady - (puts her hand under the scarf over the bird cage she is carrying) I'm tellin her right ain't I Sig. She should ne'va maa no gambla or drinka.

Paula - (looks around for another seat) What have you got in there?

Lady - Oh, it's just Sigmound, he's my pretty bird

Paula - Oh you have a bird, can I see him? What kind is he? (didn't hear any bird noises)

Lady - (hysterically she puts her arms around the cage) No! You can't see 'em. (Her eyes become as big as saucers)

Paula - Oh, well, that's okay

Lady - All they'a do is take 'yo money. That's what mah husband did. He gambled all my money. That's why I have to go on . . . 'walferr now (she looks all around her where people are whispering to one another)

Lady - What all you lookin at me 'fo. Ah ain't 'craza. You thank I am! Don'cha, Don'cha!!!

(People all around her are becoming embarrassed. They all started looking back at her. A little kid in the next row peeps over the seat to see who is doing all the talking)

Paula - Well, where are you going?

Lady - As far as I 'cin git way from 'em even if he do come lookin 'fo me

Paula - No, I mean what city are you headed for?

Lady - I 'jest toll'ya. (to the cage or to the bird) Didn't 'ah jest tell her Sig?

(Bus driver announces that the bus is stopping in Hollywood. People start getting off. That lady gets out of her seat and starts yelling)

> Damn all of 'ya who gits off he'ar 'cuz this place is full of all kind's thugs and robbas. All kind'a gamblas and drinkas. Tha's what my husband'wuz. This place ain't no good. "Fact it's puur hell. You'aa be sorry if you stop he'ar. My husband always comez 'round heer.

(Bus driver asks her if she wants to get off here)

Lady - Ov'a maa dead body

Paula - (thinking to herself) Wow! I'll be glad when the bus stops in L.A. I'll be glad to get away from her

Lady - (as she was getting off the bus she ran up and grabbed her and said) (frantically) Now chi'll you 'member what I told 'ya.

Paula - Yeah! Sure! Okay! Lady! (Relieved when she lost sight of that Lady)

Irene Boyd

The Swan Song

(Chant du Cygne)

by Bertha Crow

Characters

Emil, a big and brawny man, about thirty two

Anna, his wife, quiet and timid, retiring

Maria, six years old, rather frail

Grandmamma, very old with a determined mind but at times childish

Eric, young, twenty-five

Agents 1 and 11

Young dancers

Ingrid, twenty

Act 1

Scene 1

A furnished living room, dimly lit with a blur of white, sheer Austrian drapes at the window. A large black candle, lighted, at the far west of the window. A young woman sits in a rocking chair with a child on her lap. Heavy, ominous silence broken occasionally by a slight creak of the rocking chair.

Emil: (entering) Has she gone yet?

Anna: Sh! She's awake. You don't want to hurt her feelings, do you?

Emil: I know. I know. But what can we do?

Anna: Emil, where can she go?

Emil: Where can we all go?

Anna: Emil!

Emil: It's coming to that.

Anna: Do you think we may have to move again?

Emil: I'm afraid it's going to be worse than move this time.

Anna: I think I'd just as soon stay here and take our chances.

Emil: You don't mean that.

Anna: No.

Maria: Mama, is that man coming again? In the night? How did he find us?

Emil: We don't know when he's coming, Maria. But come he will.
(Maria begins to whimper)

Anna: Hush. You're frightening the child.

Emil: It's better for her to be prepared.

Anna: (sighing) Yes.

Emil: Maria, go talk to Grandmamma. It's time for her medicine. You may give it to her if you like.
(exit Maria)

Anna: Has it really come to that, Emil?

Emil: I'm afraid so. There was commotion down the street last night. We're sure to be next.

Anna: Couldn't we send her back to Jensen's?

Emil: Why do you think he sent her to us? And in a hired cab, too. I wonder how much of his precious money he had to part with to pay the driver.

Anna: (sighing) You're right, of course. And he just didn't want anyone to know. He didn't want to get involved. (pause) It's just that we're so tired. Maria, especially. And Grandmamma is too old and too ill to travel.

Emil: (pacing the floor) We could shut off the alarm clock tonight.

Anna: Emil!

Emil: Anna, we have to consider Maria.

Anna: Emil, how can you talk to me about consideration. That's worse than Jensen not wanting her. Emil, she's your mother!

Emil: I know. Don't you think it's hard for me, too. But what would happen to Maria? What kind of beast would she become at that Training School?

Anna: At least she'd be alive!

Emil: No! She'd well . . . .

Anna: But she wouldn't know it, Emil! She'd grow up in their world. (beginning to weep) You're right. But I can't deliberately do it. Maybe, maybe she'll go in the night.

Emil: (sitting with his face in his hands) Maybe. I'm ashamed to have thought of it.

Anna: (rising and cradling his head against her) I know. I thought of it too, but I couldn't do it.

Emil: (rising) Me, either. I'll speak to Eric. Maybe he'll have an idea.

Anna: (sitting) I don't trust that Eric. He's a double-edged man. Coming here all the time, friendly, and working for the administration. too.

Emil: He's in a position to help us, Anna. He has access to all the orders. He could warn us in time.

Anna: How do you know he isn't spying?

Emil: (a little impatiently) Anna, Anna. Our problems would all be over and we would have been put away long since if he was a spy.

Anna: I don't know what I'm saying. Emil, I just don't think I can run anymore.

Emil: You know you're going to have to.

Anna: Yes.

(a knock sounds at the door and a babel of voices is heard)

Anna: (answering the door, excited and happy) That will be the dancers. They thought it might cheer up Grandmamma.

Emil: Who told them Grandmamma was here?

Anna: Ingrid. Eric's friend. Did you know they will marry?

Emil: But does the whole village know Grandmamma is here?

Anna: Sh! They'll hear!
(opening the door)
Welcome. Oh, do come in and make light this house.

(The young people enter and Emil goes to the door and looks into the night.)

Emil: How the wind is carrying on. It is dancing the young leaves. The old leaves are falling before the forst. It whispers to the unborn buds, now gay, now somber, now melancholy. The cloud is on the moon. I think it will rain tonight.

Anna: Come, Emil. The violins are ready. Let's go in to Grandmamma.

Emil: The wind is calling. "Come away. Come away to the age of beginning. Leave behind the silence. Dance with me. Chant with me. Whisper with me." (pause, shaking his head somberly) The cloud is on the moon. I think it will rain tonight.

Anna: Grandmamma is calling.

Scene 11

An old lady propped in bed. Maria stands beside the bed, a glass in one hand, medicine in the other. Enter Anna, Emil, the dancers:

Maria: She will not take her medicine, Papa.

Emil: (going to the bed) What? Won't take her medicine! (speaking to Grandmamma) Why, you're a little old, little old lady. Look who's come to dance for you and you won't take your medicine. (raises Grandmamma up so she can see)

Grandmamma: Ah-h! Such pretty lasses! But I can out dance the best of them. Let me out of this bed. (She makes a move and falls back among the pillows.)

Emil: Remember your heart, Grandmamma. You used to out dance the best of them, but now you're a little old, little old lady who won't take her medicine. (to Maria)
Let me have that pill, Maria. (Maria gives him the pill) I won't humor little old stubborn ladies. Take this, Grandmamma, or you won't be here to see the morning.

Grandmamma: Why should I bother? I have seen the morning.

Emil: Nonsense, Grandmamma. The dancers won't dance until you take it.

Grandmamma: (Grumbling, takes the pill) You're mighty anxious to cheat the Pale Priest, Emil.

Emil: Never mind, Grandmamma. What's your favorite toe-tapping tune?

(Fiddlers begin to tune up)

Grandmamma: (clapping hands and singing in a quavering, old voice) Skip To My Loo, My Darling.

(Dancers dance. Emil and Anna join in. Maria and Grandmamma clapping hands)

(Dance ends, dancers rest, fiddlers relax)

Grandmamma: (sighing back into her pillows) That makes one young again.

Emil: What's your favorite, Anna?

Anna: Oh -- a Strauss waltz, Tales from the Vienna Woods.

(Fiddlers play, dancers dance)

Emil: Remember, Anna, where we first heard it?

Anna: (solemnly) Yes. The ladies were so gay. (sighing) Such lovely laces and flounces. (suddenly sad) Emil, will we ever be gay again?

Emil: Of course, Anna. Right this minute. Dancers! Fiddlers! Tune up! Maria, Bambino, what shall they play?

Maria: (chanting) Humpty Dumpty Sat on the Wall.

(dancers take up the chant, clapping hands)
(The door bursts open. The fiddles scream in crescendo then quickly die away into the pall of silence.)

Eric: (entering, very excited) Emil! Anna! Take the child and go! All of you! Out! Go quickly!

(Shocked, the dancers, fiddlers, Emil, Anna and Maria stand aghast.)

Eric: Emil! Don't you understand! They're coming!

(Dancers and fiddlers rush out.)

Emil: I won't leave Grandmamma!

Eric: For God's sake, Emil! You can't help her! Go!

Emil: (shouting) I won't leave Grandmamma!

(Footsteps and voices are heard outside the door.)

Eric: (pushing them out the door) I'll take care of Grandmamma! Now go!
(Eric turns as two uniformed agents enter)

Eric: Let me take care of her, Agent.

Agent 1: Where are the others?

Eric: Grandmamma was all that was here when I arrived.

Agent 11: Search the house!

(search is made)

There's no one here.

Agent 1: I heard music. (still looking around and opening doors)

Agent 11: (pointing his finger in Eric's face) You! Where are they?

Eric: (emphatically) We don't want them! We want Grandmamma, and I said I'd take care of her!

Agent 1: We want them all. They knew they weren't to keep her here since the law was passed! What's the matter with you, anyway? Gettin' soft?

Agent 11: Over here! Let's look in the cellar.

(Agent 1 and Agent 11 exit)

(Eric lifts Grandmamma out of the bed and hurries toward the door with her)

(Agent 1 and Agent 11 enter)

Agent 11: So-o! He-e-ro!

(They all rush out the door and a scream is heard)

Scene 111

A desert, near dark, several large boulders

(enter Maria, Emil, Anna)

Maria: I'm so tired, Mama. When will we get there?

Anna: Emil, where are we going?

Emil: There's no place to go, Anna. The law is everywhere.

Maria: Mama, when are we going home?

Anna: We'll have to find a new home, Maria.

Maria: But where? We've come for miles and miles and there are no towns. There's nothing. Nothing! Not even any trees. What is that sound?

Emil: That's the wind sighing in the rocks.

Anna: It sounds so lonely. Suddenly I'm very old, Emil.

Emil: Yes, Anna. I am very old, too. Even Maria is very old. The wind is calling. "Come away. Come away to the age of beginning. Leave behind the silence." (Pause. Shaking his head somberly) The cloud is on the moon. I think it will rain tonight.



ASYLUM

by Frank Kalanilehua Day

Stage: Proscenium stage with a runway from center stage through the middle of the audience.

Setting: A flagpole on a college campus, placed in a brick square. At the foot of the pole is a memorial plaque. A single backless cement bench stands about ten feet in front of the pole. It is noon.

Characters:

Professor Blake:	A middle aged man, gray hair, dressed in slacks, shirt with no tie, average looking.
Mrs. Johnson:	Young, in her late twenties, pretty, dressed in a department store pant suit.
Jim Fare:	Early twenties, somewhat handsome, hair just touching his shoulders, clean shaven, dressed in levis, tennis shoes, sweater.

Two uniformed security guards, a girl.

As the scene opens, Blake and Mrs. Johnson are sitting on the bench conversing, backs to the flagpole. Fare enters from stage right. He seems about to pass by the bench but stops.

Fare: (interrupting) Hey! Aren't you Professor Blake?

Blake: (stammering in surprise) Why yes. Yes, I'm Professor -

Fare: And don't you teach chemistry?

Blake: (obviously perturbed) Yes.

Fare: And this is your wife. (nodding to Mrs. Johnson)

Blake: Yes, ah no. This is my secretary, Mrs. Johnson, but -

Fare: Hello Mrs. Johnson! How are you?

Mrs. Johnson: (before she can catch herself, looks up and answers) Fine.

Fare: (to Blake) And do you know who I am?

Blake: (slightly embarrassed) No, no I don't.

Fare: (matter-of-factly) Oh, I didn't mean to embarrass you. It's O.K. No one else around here knows it either.

Blake: Well someone must. I mean, well, just because I don't know doesn't mean anything. I mean -

Fare: You're right.

Blake: What do you mean I'm right?

Fare: You're right, just because you don't know doesn't mean anything.

Blake: This is ridiculous! What do you want?

Fare: Are you married?

Blake: (as if to a noisy interviewer) Yes.

Fare: And you have two kids and a big white house.

Blake: Yes, ah no! I've got three boys and a big white house. Well, a relatively large house and it's not white. (pause) I believe it's brown. (louder) What's this all about? Is this for a survey or something?

Fare: No, no. (He suddenly steps from Blake to Mrs. Johnson) What about you? (She looks up at him as though he had hit her.)

Mrs. Johnson: I'm Professor Blake's secretary.

Fare: He told me that. (self assuredly) I bet your husband's a businessman.

Mrs. Johnson: (looking questioningly at Blake, who does not notice) No, he's a policeman. Professor Blake -

Fare: (to Blake) Did you read the inscription?

Blake: What inscription?

Fare: The one at the flagpole.

Blake: I am sure that I have.

Fare: What does it say?

Blake: I believe it says something about our brave men who died in the war.

Fare: Did you fight in the war?

Blake: No, I worked in a government lab.

Mrs. Johnson starts to get up, but sits back down when Fare looks at her. She glances at Blake again with a pleading expression, that is also unnoticed.

Fare: Doing what?

Blake: Doing what they told me to do! (Slowly, pronouncing every word) What do you want?

Blake and Mrs. Johnson look questioningly at each other.

Fare: I want to ask you about the lecture you gave last Thursday.

Blake: (Relieved at finally hearing a purpose for the conversation) Yes, about the need for changing the chemical balance of our oceans. But I thought I had explained everything properly.

Fare: (laughing) Well, not everything. I still don't see why you think it's so important.

Blake: To make it more productive of course.

Fare: What about the sea life you'd destroy?

Blake: (seriously) Our needs dictate certain actions. Anyway, I spent an hour explaining that. Didn't you listen?

Fare: No.

Blake: (pauses in surprise, then says) Look, are you in some kind of trouble?

Mrs. Johnson on hearing this, gets up and walks quickly off stage left.

Fare: (Watching her go) Where's she going?

Blake: Look, why don't you go talk to your counselor? He can help you.

Fare: (loudly) He'll help me about as much as you'll help the oceans. You tell me you'll save us by destroying the oceans and now you tell me to get the same kind of help from my counselor.

Blake: Look, quiet down. You are a student here aren't you?

Fare: Yes!

Blake: Then let them help you. Go on and -

Fare: I don't want their help!

Blake: What about your parents?

Fare: My parents are gone.

Blake: (sympathetically) Are they dead?

Fare: (angrily) No they're gone!

Blake: Don't you have some friends that can -

Fare: No! Not here, not at home, not anywhere!

Blake sits bewildered for a moment, not knowing what to say.

Fare: (suddenly calm) You know what I've been doing today? I've been squirting people with my water pistol. (he pulls a pistol from underneath his sweater and shows it to Blake) And do you know why? (his voice sounding more agitated at each word) Because they're dry, all dried-up. They sit at their desks and dehydrate because the man in front is all dried up too. He goes on and on talking about dry things. They're all turning to dust so I thought I'd water them, (with contempt) the little vegetables! They're dehydrating and I'm drowning. Drowning in your lifeless ocean! What about those men. (he points down at the plaque) Those men in the plaque. They're dead, dead, and what for, for peace? (profoundly) The world was lit by lightning then like it is now! (pause) You've got a wife. I had someone I thought was going to be my wife. But she, she left. And do you know what she said before she left me? She said 'Did we do anything last night'? Can you imagine that. Did we do anything last night.' I said 'sure, sure we did.' And she didn't say one thing not one thing! She just got that intolerable sick look on her ugly face! (pause) You look like you could use some watering yourself!

Blake: (astonished and fearful. He looks at the pistol and utters) Look, get someone to help you. Tell them what's bothering you.

Fare: (choked) My name, nobody knows my name, nobody knows me! (He holds the pistol high in the air.)

Fare starts circling around the bench.

Blake: (trying to sound something like sympathetic) Sometimes we have to be alone.

Fare: (from behind Blake) You aren't, you've got your two kids and your wife and your (mimmicking him) relatively large house!

Blake: (pauses) Look we've all got to be alone sometimes.

Fare: (Again facing him) Your wife does she leave you alone sometimes?

Blake: (starts to answer) Ye (but then catches himself and snaps his mouth shut. He pauses, frustrated) Something's wrong, but I don't understand -

Fare: (tears in his eyes, puts the pistol under his sweater) Yes you do I told you! You've got to know what -

Blake: No. I don't know! (almost screaming) I don't KNOW!

Blake looks to stage left and seems to recognize something.

Blake: (More calmly but still with a raised voice) Look, here comes Mrs. Johnson with a guard. If you don't want any trouble you'd better leave.

Fare: (softly, with tears running down his cheeks) Yes, I'll go. (pauses motionless, staring at stage left) I never want any trouble. (His voice falling off) Never want anymore trouble . . .

Fare looks down and starts walking down the runway, center stage. Mrs. Johnson and the two security guards enter from stage left and continue to the bench. Blake starts to stand as Mrs. Johnson points and shouts

"There he is!"

Fare, ignoring this, draws his water pistol, reaches out, and squirts a girl in the audience. She screams and one guard draws his gun, aiming it at Fare.

Guard: Hold it! Drop the gun!

Fare: (emotionless) Stop or I'll shoot, huh.

Guard: Drop it kid.

Blake stands ignoring this as he looks up at the sky.

Fare: (starting to cry hysterically) Please, don't take me. I want to stay here.

Guard: Just put that down.

Fare: Please! Please! Don't pull me away. (nodding to Blake) He says they can help me here. I won't cause anymore trouble.

The guards start to close in on Fare. As they reach the runway he screams

"DON'T! I want to stay here. Take them, take anyone, but leave me HERE!"

Fare runs into the security guards and breaks through them. He goes past Blake and Mrs. Johnson until he reaches the flagpole. He starts to climb it as the security guards approach him.

Fare: Please don't! Leave me here with these men. Kill me but don't take me away. Let me break in the sun till the sun breaks down but please! I wouldn't, I wouldn't do this. If six was nine I'd be there and you'd be here and I'd let you stay!

One guard reaches up and roughly pulls Fare off the pole. Fare hits the ground, head first, at their feet.

Fare: (passing into unconsciousness) What do you do when the lights go out, the lights go out, go out and go out, go out . . .

The guards pick him up, one at each shoulder, as he continues babbling on. They start dragging him off stage left, his feet sliding listlessly on the ground. While -

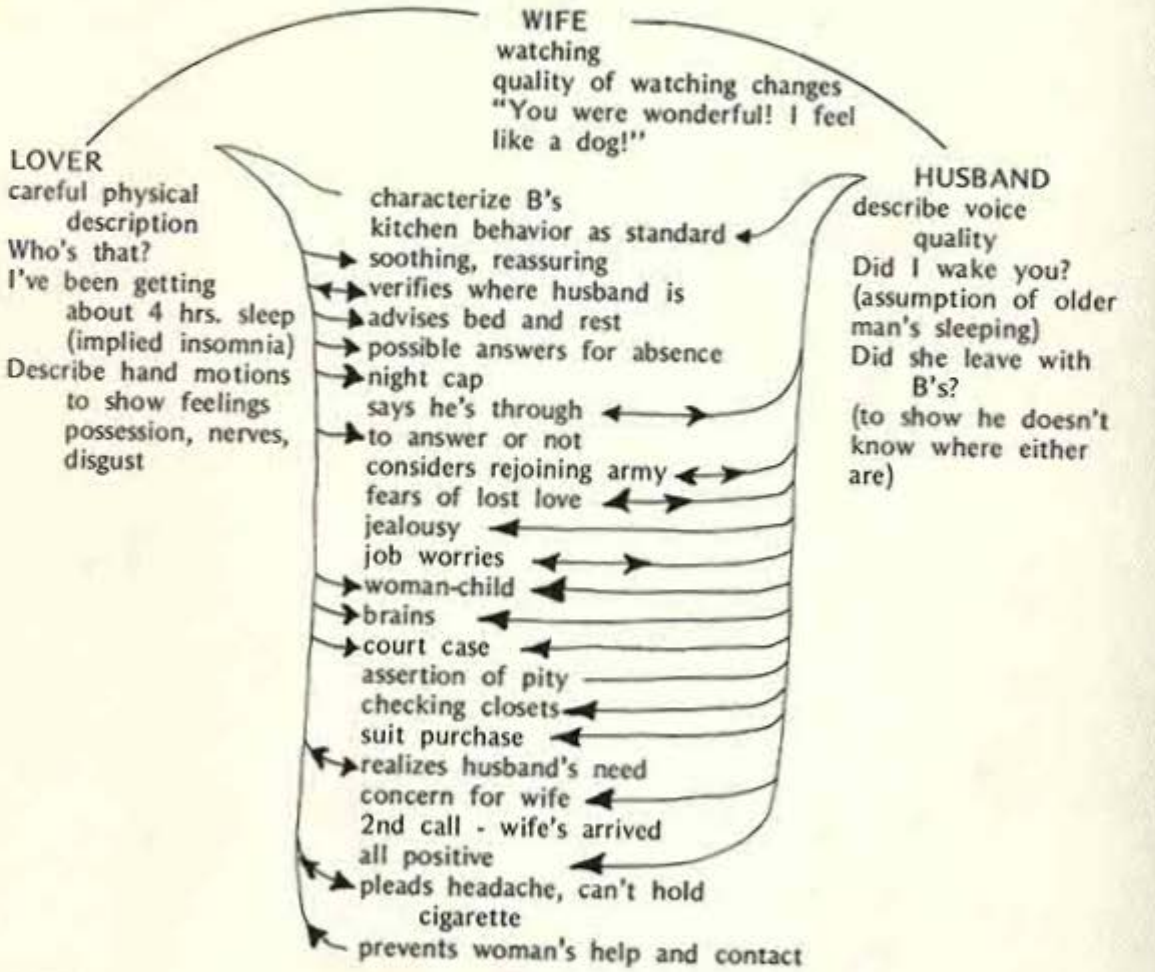
The lights dim out.



INCUBATION: A NOVEL IN PROGRESS

Situation: There was a party.
All 3 characters were present.
The wife disappeared. Husband goes home alone and calls friend who is bus. associate, an older man.
The missing wife is with this man in bed as he answers the husband's phone call. Call over, man and woman speak. Husband calls again and says his wife is home now.

Because husband doesn't know there is a couple on the other end of the line, he says things that produce peculiar effects.
Woman's identity to be revealed only by scene, not naming.
Husband's second call exposes the intensity of his need.



double arrows indicate reflexive, or dual effect of unit thought
single arrow indicates speaker affecting receiver
Omniscient point of view for directions only. Otherwise - all scene.

Margaret Richards



