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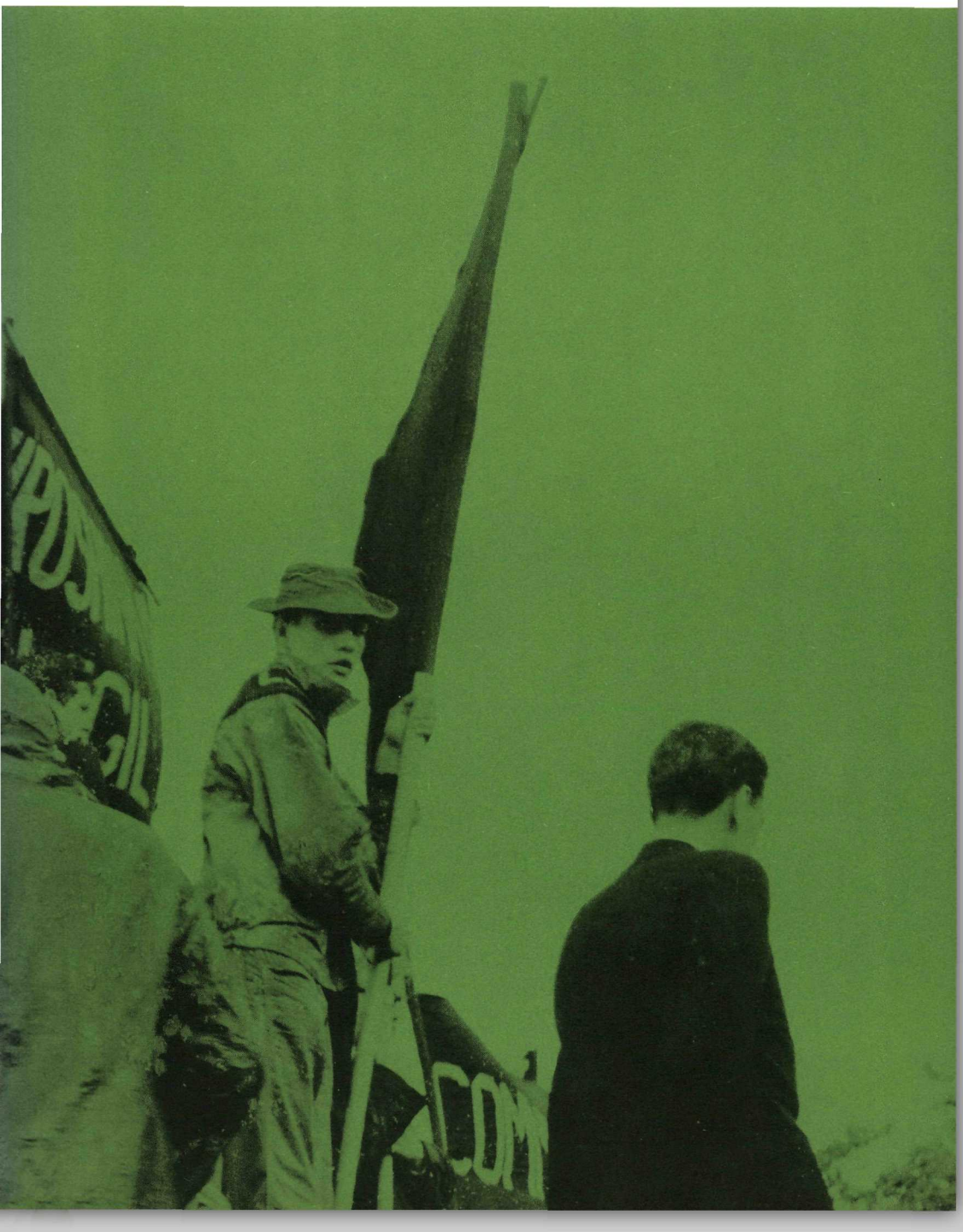

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DESCENT

BY LAURIE SWAILS

I

The floor is cold. The green cement wall rises to three small windows which look out below ground level to cement pits holding the slimy skeletons of brown leaves.

In the fireplace, flames bound up against sooty bricks in back, dart to the sides, spring, skip, spin, slender arms flashing.

Upstairs the Hedwigs have been arguing. They argue every weekend, about money.

Mrs. Hedwig's hair is tinted red; the night I moved in she had cellophane tape on her forehead to smooth out wrinkles. She stood in my doorway for an hour, telling how she tricked an admission of theft from one of her ragged fourth-grade pupils who had taken three marbles from a classmate's desk.

She wants to build an apartment house; it is her money, she bellows, and Mr. Hedwig shouts about her last venture on which she lost thousands of dollars and declares he will hear not another word about it. He was crippled in an accident at the sawmill and drags one leg stiffly when he walks: Thump! — swish, thump! — swish. Bang! goes the door.

The flywheel in the sawdust furnace outside the door began squeaking, slightly at first, then louder — skuh-*wheek*, skuh-*wheék*! I told Mr. Hedwig, but he said he could not hear it. The next day it was sharper — skuh-*wheeeeek*! skuh-*wheeeeek*!

"I cannot even read. Maybe a little oil . . . ?"

He doused oil over the noise and asked between gold teeth and empty spaces: "Why are you reading? So you can turn around and forget it all?"

Out on the vacant lot the apartment building was begun yesterday.

II

This morning early a full white moon drifted low over quiet streets, bounced like a glowing ball across black buildings.

Mr. Wilbur slouches into the room. "Well, let's see what kind of garbage we have in Lesson 12. English nouns and German cognates; lot of hogwash."

His hair is light brown and greasy. Two furrows deepen between his brows as he looks upon us with haggard eyes. Someone has asked permission to miss a class before Thanksgiving. He frowns and says:

"You have no right to call yourselves students."

A cigarette flops up and down when he speaks and ashes drop onto the lectern.

"Ha! Ha! He-he-he!" He laughs maniacally at our pronunciation.

Swiftly he demands, "Monica! Decline 'to become' in the past tense. Well? Answer! Don't just sit there and smolder."

"I don't know how," I say.

" 'To become' implies progression; 'became' is finished. I do not want to know how."

III

"Che-e-e-e-e-e-ee-ry Ba-a-a-a-aaa-a-a-by." The jukebox screams.

I see my startled eyes staring up from black coffee.

The booths are dark-stained wood, filled with babble and smoke. Old-fashioned lanterns hang on chains perpendicularly from a white oblong ceiling ribbed with brown beams. Posters of strange lands are pasted to the walls: tall stucco houses, windmills, and waterways appear like reflections in a mirror's unreachable depths. Let me go through the glass . . . my head is pounding thunderously.

"Do you mind if me an' Joe sit here?" a meaty man asks. Skinny Joe stands close beside.

I say, "No."

"It's awful crowded," the skinny one says.

I say, "Yes."

"How's the tavern business doin', Joe? Milkin' 'em dry?"

"Hell, yes. They're still drinkin' their money."

"The suckers. You can always milk a sucker. When I'm on the road I always stop in Chico. Suckers galore. I can always depend on sellin' a few prestocked freezers to the local yokels. Most of 'em can't afford a pot to piss in, but I can always get 'em to sign a contract; then they've had it. Besides, I've got a married sister there and they really put on a spread."

"Yeah?"

"They don't go light on the food; no sir. They believe in puttin' out the best."

"Yeah?"

"Well — let's face it — they're quite well off; she got a lot of alimony saved up; was married to a rancher before he ran off with some other heifer."

"Yeah?"

"Well, Goddamn! Look who's here! What the hell are you doin' here, Jack? Goddamn! Sit down, you ol' son-of-a-bitch. Say, Miss, you don't mind if this guy joins us do you? Well, Goddamn!"

The sidewalks are wet; white spotty birches have strewn their leaves brown and slimy in the gutter.

IV

In a quiet residential section a huge, white house stood above the modest dwellings around it. The grass was brisk green and newly mowed; shrubbery, placed with precise deliberation like emeralds in symmetrical form, bedecked the grounds, spruce and alert. Set in the smooth lawn was a turquoise pool, oblong, brimming full with glistening water.

All was still. I looked to see who might live there. Not a sound nor a movement gave me a clue. A cement walk led to a closed door. I asked Mother why we did not have a house like that.

"Your father doesn't have it in him. If you want something, get it yourself; takes more than a man to outdo any woman."

Father did not speak.

The air pushed in, hot and heavy. The door remained closed. The house stood brazenly, brilliantly reflecting the scorching sun. The pool glimmered with cool promise.

V

The turkey is glazed brown, and cranberry sauce shows garnet red through a crystal dish. Grandmother is dizzy because I gave her too much Burgundy.

Father's eyes are red; his nose is red; broken capillaries form red networks upon his cheeks.

An aria from *Pagliacci* is coming from the speaker in the kitchen.

"What's that?" asks Father.

"*Vesti la guibba*," asserts Mother.

"Oh, prelude to the opera *Carmen*," says Father. He looks at me proudly.

"No," Mother says, "for heaven's sake you don't have a prelude to an opera; and it's from *Pagliacci*."

"What's it?"

"*Vesti la guibba*!" Mother proclaims.

"Would you like some more turkey, Father?"

"Prelude to the opera *Carmen*."

"Turkey, Mother?"

"No! *Pagliacci*! *I Pagliacci*!" cries Mother. She leaps up and brings in her opera book, reads aloud Act I, *I Pagliacci*, verbatim, whereupon Father raises his glass of Burgundy and says:

"Yes, prelude to the opera *Carmen*."

It is early and I am leaving. Mother steps from the car and stands by the roadside near a dark factory where she earned her house, newly built. Her eyes, blue-circled beneath, water in the cold air; she smiles vaguely and makes a slight motion with her black-gloved hand. Her figure blends with the gray about her.

I smile, lift my hand. "This is the Ma that killed the Pa that lives in the house that Mom built." I turn my face. "*Vesti la guibba*."

Whistles shrill. Misty serpents rise from the gray Willamette; the river twists through the murky city; plump yellowish coils of smoke wriggle slowly from tall black stacks into the sky. To the east, the mountain rises, dark against a sky of fire and gold.

VI

A holly-decked card from Grandmother wishing me God's blessing sits upon my mantle. Grandmother's hair is a white silken skein; her eyes are clouded with cataracts. She sits alone in her small house. Her deeply wrinkled face is composed, as faint dreams cross her mind, as her lips form unspoken words. She murmurs prayers as her careful fingers move blindly over deep red beads and finally press the golden cross to her sagging breast. She smiles, smoothes over soft round knees the blue crepe dress which covers tan-stockinged legs, almost to her tiny feet. Slippered, they tread slightly to rock her.

VII

Whipped across the sky are clouds like frothy wine. Against the magenta tint a barren tree is silhouetted, all twigs reaching upward as if they have been straining against roots to the sun all day. The

magnolia's swelling buds wait to open to thick green leaves and ivory-cupped blooms heavy with musk.

Mrs. Phondew's car is sleek and bronze. Swiftly we glide down the street as if rushing through depths of fuschia.

"I'll never forget the trip I took to Brazil. Flew United, first class. Had splendid meals; they were always comin' by with the snack cart; we could have coffee or milk and cookies or anything we wanted."

Mrs. Phondew's face is powdered heavily over coarse and sagging rouged skin; big flecks of powder stand out like flour on a beefsteak.

There is no space large enough in the parking lot for her automobile; Mrs. Phondew parks by the curb. With a scarlet-tipped finger she pushes the knob to turn the lights out and slams the heavy door.

The table is in the center of an elliptical room; waiters with high-held trays of food and white cloths over their arms pad hurriedly over a thick carpet.

"You haven't been to Los Angeles, have you? Oh, you *should* go. They have the most *wonderful* department stores there. You can buy anything — *anything* you want. They have *everything* under the sun in them."

"They must be very impressive," I say.

"Oh yes, I'm glad you could come with me tonight. I get so tired of eating alone since Morton died. And I wish you'd drop over sometime; I'd *love* to tell you all about Europe. Went over first class on the *Lurline*."

"The *Lurline* sails to Hawaii."

"Oh, yes. Well it was some other boat; forget the name. But we sat at the Captain's table. Had an elegant dinner. We went to — to — what's the name of it? — not Rome but some other big city . . ."

"Florence?"

"No."

"Milan?"

"No; I think it had an 'o' on the end. Well anyway, we went to the place where what's-his-name — you know, that dictator killed by the Italian people . . ."

"Mussolini?"

"Yes. Where he was killed. And we saw those underground things where they buried people —"

"Catacombs?"

"Yes. Our beds on the ship were so soft; the stewards so nice."

A streetlight turns shadowy magnolia branches into a black web upon the ground . . . a bird's nest is a giant spider that rushes toward my struggling body; and yet, the web is soft . . .

VIII

Dolores sits upon my maroon couch drinking Chablis. She is thin and hollow-cheeked with large dark eyes. She has long straight black and shaggy hair. She is smoking, staring; her eyes shine above high cheek bones. Tomorrow she will gambol off to teach psychology in Washington.

"How did you get to be so damned astute?" she asks.

"What do you mean?"

"People like you usually fall into one of three categories: like me, they've associated with a hodgepodge of people, been around everything under the sun; like me, they're older people who've been trained t'be observant for professional reasons, for clinical psychology; or they fall into the third group which I can't find a category for; that's you. I've been around everything from soup to nuts; but it's left me coarse as hell."

"Maybe you only think you're coarse, compared with your ideal self-image." I pour her glass full from a tall bottle with a queer bronze monkey clasping it around the middle. Bug-eyed, the monkey peers back over its shoulder at me.

Dolores puckers her lips, blows smoke in a thin stream from a tiny hole in the center.

"Y'know, you'd be a good clinical study. Your precision of body movement and restraint of tongue belie a nimble wit — very misleading —"

"You're drunk, Dolores."

"You don't miss a thing do you? What're you hiding in there behind those eyes?"

"A chamber full of cobwebs."

She is talking still and it is very late. She speaks of homosexual preambles from a girl on the research project where she works and about Ronald, who is unshaven and snuffling with erotic inclinations for her. To record vivid observations, research material, he hypnotizes himself; there is an inked spot on the wall, nickel-sized, near the recorder on his work-table. Dolores discourages his advances; but she cannot be curt and he ignores her soft rebukes,

twists her words to suit his romantic delusions, and continues to leer at her through his fantasy, whispering sentimentally of erections.

"I talk too much!" Dolores says ruefully, "and you listen too well. Who've you been sleepin' with anyway?"

Wisps of long hair catch on Dolores' eyelashes and she brushes the back of a skinny hand across her eyes.

IX

Upon the hills to the east is a light cover of new snow and April bears the fragrance of lilacs in the cold wind. I walk, head down, in early morning, tread upon white petals blown to the walk, intermingled with large flakes of snow.

I hear steps, see immaculately polished black shoes. A melodious voice says, "Good morning," as if to lure me from reverie. I glance up into a somber face, which is familiar, yet for a moment thoughts hold me from recognition. His dark eyes possess my gaze as he towers above me. In secret the feeling occurs, a pull as strong as ebb tide.

"I will see you tonight, again," George says and touches my shoulder with his hand, gloved in fine gray suede.

"He's a satyr and not to be trusted; he has an eye for pastures always greener," Sonja says. "I've known him for much longer than you; take my word for it."

She has wanted him and he turned her aside.

"You are wrong," I say.

There is soft music coming from the hidden speakers. George looks into his mirror for a moment, then approaches me.

"Why so sorrowful, Princess?" he says. I call him St. George.

"The people have condemned me to this lonely island, where I must wait to be devoured by the dragon that dwells in yon cave. But it is not to be grieved; it is best, for I cannot find my place among the people. What seems cruel and an ill fate is kind and has my favor. Be gone, before it is too late!" I say. I am Princess Saba.

"I shall wind my jeweled girdle round the beast and together we shall lead it into the city. Come, listen to what I have to tell you of love, a kingdom, fair creatures with white wings and golden trumpets, peace."

"You speak of wondrous things others have never mentioned; your words entice me from this sole island." He hands me a tall, slim bud vase of green absinthe and drinks from a like vessel.

"He's pulled the hair from his hide over your eyes; he's a satyr in saint's clothing," Sonja says. She is thirty; her gray-haired mother sits with clenched teeth in the corner and negates Sonja's suitors, one by one. Sonja will die single. "George wished to marry Laverne, you know? But she turned thumbs down. By the way, she's back to do the lead in *La Boheme* after a very successful debut in San Francisco."

He seems to sway before me, to the slow, easy rhythm of sensuous lute music. He pours absinthe in the vase, and the faint aroma of anise reaches me.

"In the morning I will wreathe your head in flowers; you will go into the woods, sit quietly beneath a fir; a gallant white unicorn will approach, beguiled, place its noble head gently upon your lap. Maybe it will bear a priceless golden spiral horn," George soothes, his words almost inaudible.

"A golden horn! Then may I keep the creature? You will not harm it? It shall be mine?" I say, listening to my words, not hearing; when he speaks, I feel my reason ebbing; it is replaced by a new and magical power.

"Yours to bridle and ride like fury."

"You mean more to me, George, than I can ever express," I say and go to him.

"Hush, Princess. Don't try. Tomorrow evening let's have dinner at the Palace Royal; wear your long dress of ice blue organdy that billows and flows behind you when you walk, like a weeping willow in the wind, your teardrop earrings which reflect light like crystal prisms in the sun when you move your head."

"The Palace? But you can't afford it."

"Of course I can, this once; especially now; this is a lucrative time for me."

The Palace Royal's plush red carpet feels like the thick mulch which lies beneath woodland trees. A single massive crystal chandelier, which hangs in the center of the room, causes slivers of light to dart and leap over the tables, to highlight heavy water goblets, sterling, rings, and sly glances.

"Two? This way, please."

I step forward with the toe of my right shoe, as if to waltz.

"Waiter — we want to sit on the other side, toward the back," George says.

"As you wish, sir."

We weave in and out among the tables, as if playing follow-the-leader. There is a song whirling through my mind, pressing, urging . . . *All around the shoemaker's bench the monkey chased the weasel . . .*

"George," says a serpent-soft voice, "how nice to see you. I notice you have not forgotten our favorite niche —"

George stops and turns to the table at his left where a foursome sits. He seems not surprised by this chance meeting.

"Congratulations on your recent success," he says. "Meet my fiancée —"

"How do you do."

"How do you do." The monkey is chasing the weasel and the waiter is waiting. *A penny for a stick of bread, a penny for a needle . . .*

"How nice for you, George; such a sweet thing. I hope you will come to see me while I am in town, George; it will be nice to talk over old times." All the darting slivers of light in the room seem to leap from her eyes: "So nice to have met you, my dear."

"What is your name?" I say.

"Laverne."

I stand obviously waiting for the surname.

"Laverne Pfennigton," she says.

"How nice," I say and proceed to our table where the waiter stands.

"You should be ashamed," says George.

"Of what?"

"Of what?! My God. Do you know who she is?"

"Yes. Does she know who I am?"

"You're nobody."

"What did you say?"

"Nothing."

"I do know who I'm not, and that is your fiancée."

"Oh, yes — well now I've given myself away. I was going to ask you this evening and it slipped out before I realized my dreams were as yet unspoken plans."

"Plans or plots are all the same in that neither need be spoken to be known."

"What kind of gobbledygook are you uttering?"

"That suitable to the occasion."

"I cannot understand you."

"Of course not."

"You aren't yourself."

"I'm always myself."
"Sir, the wine list."
"Bring a bottle of vintage Bordeaux Cruse."

As we leave, he extends his gloved hand behind me as we sweep by Laverne's table, as if to wrap me into an invisible cloak.

In the early morning where George and I often hiked, half-frozen pellets of ice drop from the firs above as the trail continues upward. Above, the rocky summit is white-strewn with snow. Cloud vapor moves through the tall trees which stand so still that it seems they are listening.

I hear gay voices from the summit above me; a high operatic laugh ripples through the cold air. A man speaks and laughs; his voice rings sharply; a woman echoes delight:

"Bud vases! Unicorns! Oh, St. George, you are too funny for words!"

X

Charred branches smell almond-sweet; a noise resounds from the damp walls of the narrow dark corridor; there is a tug upon the string. Theseus has returned; arms circle round me; my arms go round him.

"Theseus? The beast is dead?"

An animal growl answers; my arms encircle hide. I jerk free from him and lurch into a side passage. I twist, turn, feel the hot breath of the Minotaur bearing down upon me. I fall and grope upon the cold stone slabs. I feel a warm trickle of blood from the wounds where rocks have gouged my flesh.

The beast is near. I scramble through the passageways. There is a low growl behind me; I hear a husky breath close, and clattering hooves upon the floor. I thrust myself forward — smash into a wall, feel my broken body falling.

Strong hands grip me by the shoulders, lift me from the stone; I feel thick muscles in his arms, flexing, the heat of his bulging chest as he clutches me to him, forcing breath from me. I reach up, grasp the smooth curve of cool horns, pull his head down close to my face. His face is ugly.

I cease to resist as I feel his mouth upon my neck, as my clothes are torn away and he, sweating, slides me against him, down beneath his massive body.

STARHIGH

Outside
stars pull at frosted pines
erect
thrust up
out of iced-over snow

Window-lit icicles
gleam in the dark
shadows stretch out, then
Leap at the light
clash and clash
(silently)
The cabin walls
stand stiff, and
Cold?
colder'n a witch's tit.

Inside
a fire curls
infusing heat
smoke scent of pine quickens me
(ashes form as quietly on the logs)
a tongue touch
warm and moist
turns me on
welcomes me home

"well- *Come*" smiles she

i move: she moves
we move together, move
together, together
movetogether-and
Make it

How high? Starhigh.
as Love is:

ALAN MITCHELL

PATERNITÀ

Uomo solo dinanzi all'inutile mare,
attendendo la sera, attendendo il mattino.
I bambini vi giocano, ma quest'uomo vorrebbe
lui averlo un bambino e guardarlo giocare.
Grandi nuvole fanno un palazzo sull'acqua
che ogni giorno rovina e risorge, e colora
i bambini nel viso. Ci sarà sempre il mare.

Il mattino ferisce. Su quest'umida spiaggia
striscia il sole, aggrappato alle reti e alle pietre.
Esce l'uomo nel torbido sole e cammina
lungo il mare. Non guarda le madide schiume
che trascorrono a riva e non hanno piu pace.
A quest'ora i bambini sonnecchiano ancora
nel tepore del letto. A quest'ora sonnecchia
dentro il letto una donna, che farebbe l'amore
se non fosse lei sola. Lento, l'uomo si spoglia
nudo come la donna lontana, e discende nel mare.

Poi la notte, che il mare svanisce, si ascolta
il gran vuoto ch'è sotto le stelle. I bambini
nelle case arrossate van cadendo dal sonno
e qualcuno piangendo. L'uomo, stanco di attesa,
leva gli occhi alle stelle, che non odono nulla.
Ci son donne a quest'ora che spogliano un bimbo
e lo fanno dormire. C'è qualcuna in un letto
abbracciata ad un uomo. Dalla nera finestra
entra un ansito rauco, e nessuno l'ascolta
se non l'uomo che sa tutto il tedio del mare.

CESARE PAVESE

PATERNITY

Solitary man before the useless sea,
waiting for evening, waiting for morning.
The children play there, but this man would like
himself to have a child and watch it play.
Huge clouds form a palace on the water
that each day dissipates and reappears, and colors
the children's faces. There will always be the sea.

The morning wounds. On the damp beach
the sun skims, clinging to the nets and stones.
The man goes out in the torpid sun and walks
along the sea. He doesn't watch the soaked scum
that ebbs and flows by the shore and has no more peace.
At this hour the children still doze
in the warmth of the bed. At this hour a woman
dozes in a bed; she'd make love,
if she weren't alone. Slowly he undresses,
nude like the distant woman, and enters the sea.

Then, the night, when the sea vanishes, one listens
to the great emptiness that lies below the stars. The children
in the reddened houses begin to drop from sleep
and one to cry. The man, tired from the wait,
lifts his eyes to the stars, which hear nothing.
At this hour there are women who undress a child
and put it to sleep. There is some woman in bed
embracing a man. From the black window
enters a raucous panting, and no one hears it,
except the man who knows all the tedium of the sea.

Translated from the Italian of Cesare Pavese
by GIOSE RIMANELLI

ALBA

Solo in te, alba, riposa
la mia morte affannosa.
Solo in te trova pace
la mia insonnia, ch'e' simile
ad un rombante fiume
rapinoso, infernale,
dov'io vado ogni notte
dibattendomi invano.
Dinanzi a te, che giungi
sempre cosi' furtiva
da far quasi paura,
ed origli e spii,
spettro anche tu, il piu' vago,
alba dal freddo viso,
cessan gli orrori, fuggono i fantasmi.
La morte, mia nera
compagna di veglia,
se ne va, s'allontana
a passi di ladro.
Ond'io emergo e mi libero
dall'onda tenebrosa
e affranto mi riduco
al mio sonno di pietra.
O alba, o dolce alba,
mare d'incerta luce,
in cui tutto sfocia.

VINCENZO CARDARELLI

DAWN

Dawn, in you alone
my anxious death
finds rest. In you
alone my sleeplessness,
like an infernal river,
vicious and turbulent,
into which I plunge at night,
struggling in vain,
finds peace.
When you furtively appear,
O cold-faced dawn,
always eavesdropping and spying
like a wandering wraith,
almost causing alarm,
horrors and spectres flee.
Death, my black
companion of vigil,
disappears in the distance
stealthily, like a thief.
Then I emerge freeing myself
from the dark wave,
only to return, fatigued,
to my stony sleep.
O dawn, sweet dawn,
sea of uncertain light,
into which all things converge.

Translated from the Italian of Vincenzo Cardarelli by
DORA PETTINELLA

DEEPDOWN

you speak to me of the soul
of its high flights
of its everlasting
yet i can only speak to you
of lower things
things dwelling deepdown
that swell inflamed
feltImages that grope
in black-flushed-red darkness
feltImages that erupt
furnaced in pits of raw sensibility
evermore storming insided labyrinth
restlessly throbbing
pounding within to without
in timelesstime
struggling
to be forged
into words
into gestures
gestures of shrugs into shrugs of jaunty jest
expressed by dead blank faces faded to masks
by hands that move with lips to move the words
words that weave and interweave to lies
lies that twine and intertwine to tales
tales that loop and loom at first as dreams
dreams of thingsthatwere and thingstocome
yet none can sing
songs of deep infernal fires
neither their heat
nor depth
ever speaksout
though we cry
though we holler and shriek
though we

break
crumbtumbling
then
from vast spaces outside
enter
not gliding from soaring flights
but creepcrawling
glacial icegreens-iceblues
sinking down pulling
weighing heavy
in hour-long-moments
crawlcreeping
into the blaze
clashing in thundercrashes
to hail fragments
to vapour
that rises
oncemore
from
deepdown
where feltImages
grope

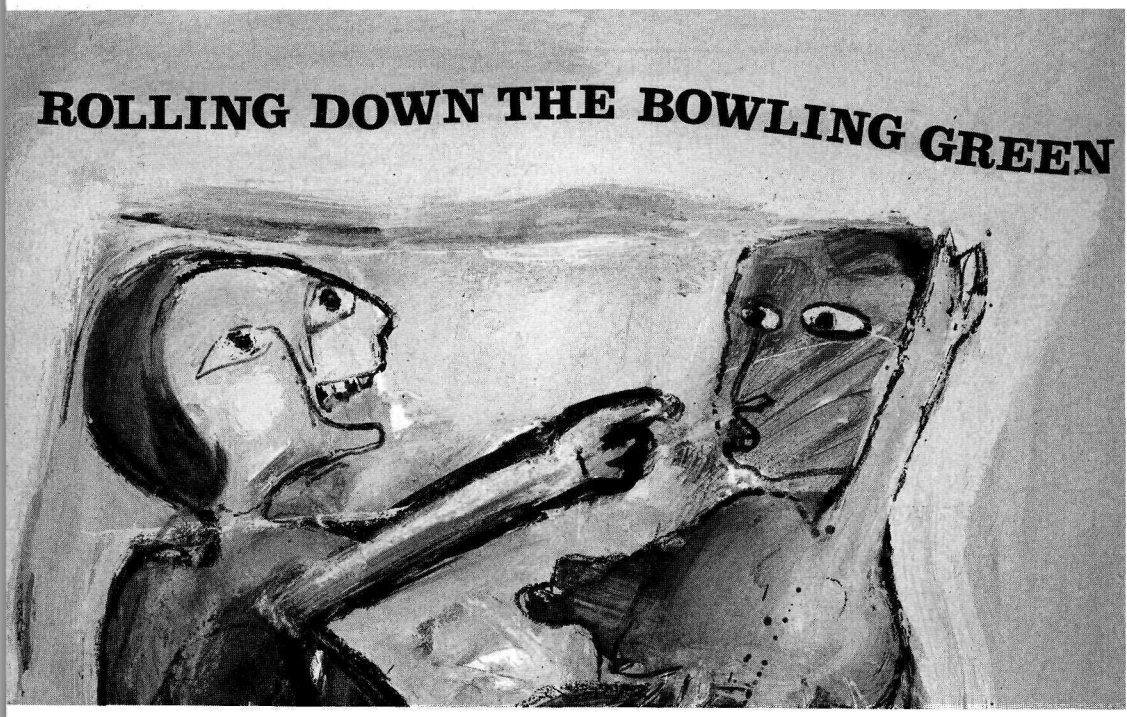
GABRIEL SAFDIE

SUPPER: GRADUATE CENTRE

At the table talking
of sex or food or new cameras
Everybody friends — relaxed — until
Somebody says something and
There's a half-hearted embarrassed
mumbling about politics
All of us suddenly uncomfortable
The food sticking in our throats
What is it? What
Is it? There's no Judas here
among us. Why are you
Leaving? Where are we?

LIONEL KEARNS

ROLLING DOWN THE BOWLING GREEN



"Bill Huish, I don't know why I ever married you," Gretchen said, going into that tired-out old song again. "It escapes logic. You haven't a thread of ambition. You're gullible, you have no drive. It — it completely escapes logic. I must have been crazy."

I seldom answer. Most of the time I ignore her by figuring out a crossword or reading about foreign affairs. The *both* of us must have been crazy. It gets tiring hearing her complain about our state of poverty and nagging me to study chartered accountancy.

She got that idea from that Finnish peasant, Eigha, next door, who comes over a lot to brag about her runt of a kid, Anttii, and what a remarkable boy he is at mathematics and woodwork. Sweet Jesus up in heaven! If I'd the faintest idea marriage would be like this, five years ago when we went down the altar, I can give odds I wouldn't have stuck around long in that church. That's for sure.

BY MICHAEL CHRISTIE

Maybe the alcohol clouded my judgment because she even gave a hint of her true character then. Everything had to be just so. All the ushers were supposed to wear black shoes and she wanted me to wear tails. That wasn't too bad, but believe it or not she had a screwball idea of acquiring a bishop to perform the ceremony. They're not a dime a dozen. When I told her of this she got all weepy and then she was sullen all the way through. All I did was act jocose because I felt her reactions were the normal wedding jitters. What an error that was!

"A chartered accountant's course would —"

"Are you on that kick again?" I said.

"Kick! Is that what you call it? Mr. Breadwinner! Kick! You're a miserable failure. You're no better than a lackey. You call it a kick? Kick!"

She always repeats herself because she thinks it's dramatic.

"Why can't you get some — some get-up-and-go?"

"What?" I said, pretending not to hear. When I do this she goes into a rage and can hardly speak sometimes.

"You — you — you disgust me!" she hissed. "All we are is paupers. Paupers, paupers, paupers! *Do you hear, lackey*? Am I going on that kick again! Bill Huish, you're mediocre. You've got nothing. We've got nothing. You're always letting me know how

smart you are, but you let yourself get taken by a crooked old woman. That Miss Arla — whatever her God-damned name is. You're useless. And you always will be. What kick! God! You burn me up. Jesus, do you ever!"

At times I seriously think of homicide. Strange as it may seem, the first time I met Gretchen, which was in a dance hall, we hit it off all right. We danced, drank a few beers, and had a good relationship. However, marriage destroyed all that.

Difficulties arose right at the honeymoon. Just then we came into a little bit of money (or I should say Gretchen did) from Gretchen's grandmother. She was the only heir and the small amount she received was not going to be shared with anybody. It was believed that Mrs. Hendrix had a substantial sum, but it developed that a major part of her wealth had decreased from the expense of being looked after for so many years, and there was a mortgage on the house. Mrs. Hendrix had hardening of the arteries and was senile. Quite often she would get up at two and three in the morning and yell out of the windows to the neighbors that a senior citizen was being cruelly treated. I don't begrudge her a thing because Gretchen was deserving. Many times she cleaned up the old lady's, well, excrement and sent her linen to a diaper service. But she was so possessive about her legacy I felt resentful.

With the amount we stayed three days in Hollywood, California. We took a bus which toured all the stars' houses, consequently making one feel poorer than ever. Gretchen was fanatical about seeing actors. However, we couldn't get into any of the studios and as a result we just walked around in the daytime and watched performers at night. No big show-business personalities though. On the last day we thought we spotted Minerva Urecal in the Brown Derby, but it turned out to be somebody else.

Having returned to Seattle, there was still some money left. Gretchen bought a dress, two cartons of Marlboros were presented to me, and the remainder went for a chesterfield. Today the armrests are shiny black.

"No ambition," went the song.

I just ignored her and filled in a three-letter word for *weight of India*, which is *ser*.

"That's you, Bill Huish. No ambition. We live in a dirty hole and we'll die in a dirty hole."

"You sound like one of your classics," I couldn't resist saying.

"When do you ever take me to a movie? When? I practically have to get down on my hands and knees. And when we do it's

usually to one of those artistic things with sub-titles. No talking, no music. You have no sensibilities. Not like *other* men."

"What?"

"I honestly think you like living in this hole. You don't care about *me*. Just *you*. Ah, Christ!"

"Do you have to? I get enough of that at work."

"At work!"

Nothing would shut her up now. I should know that the only way is to be quiet and let her fizzle out.

"Is that what you call it? Work! You don't know the meaning of the word. Sitting on your fanny all day! Is that what you call work?"

"What do you think I'd be doing if I was a —"

"Work! You disgust me!"

If I wanted I could have given her a bad time too. She is a rotten cook, a poor dresser, and she goes wild over second-rate musicals. Her taste is the same as that Finnish peasant's. Strictly in the mouth. But trying to make her aware of things is an absolute waste of time. She's the kind who lives on argumentation.

"I honestly can't think of one good reason why I married you," she grimaced. "I honestly don't."

Gretchen is about six feet and once was considering becoming a high-fashion model. However, since marriage she has developed into quite a slob. She never tries to make herself look attractive any more. When I come home from a fourteen-hour day she is usually slouching, all legs, in a chair, with just a slip on, drinking Ovaltine and reading the funnies. The funnies! And she gives *me* a bad time. At least I try to improve myself. For instance, I was quite stimulated by a book written by Albert Camus, who is a very respected person in the world of letters. Gretchen picked it up for a moment and then said she didn't understand high-brow things. She is so uninformed that she didn't even know his name is pronounced *Camew*. She simply doesn't appreciate the finer things. One can tell by just looking at her. She never does anything to beautify her hair, which is always flying out in every direction, and she doesn't care how she crosses her legs in front of me. She knows I dislike these faults but does not correct them. Some women love to twist the knife. I certainly wish that when I came home it would be away from the ugly things — marriage doesn't give her an excuse to act in such a fashion. Even a husband and wife should have some modesties.

"You're certainly no eye-catcher," she resumed bluntly. "You're losing your hair and you're three inches shorter than me. You get

shave-sores on your mouth."

But that is *her* opinion. I remember dancing with a woman once and she told me that I had as much sex appeal as Humphrey Bogart. And when I don't shave for a couple of days, because I have sensitive skin, I could be his double. My voice would give me away though. And speaking of voices, Miss Allardyce, my announcing teacher, says my tone is vastly improving.

"We haven't a thing in common, mentally or physically."

"What?"

"I thought cab-drivers were happy, talkative characters. You never say a damned thing."

Can one see a person having much to say to a slob who isn't above *Mary Worth* or *The Heart of Juliet Jones*? She does not know a thing about Laos or Vietnam. We are simply on a different level.

"Now *Jerome*!"

There is the chorus, and when this occurs I stop ignoring and begin burning. He's so effeminate. What a name! Jerome!

"I'm going to vote for him as the next governor of Washington," I said.

"At least he brings in a decent wage."

"Yes, and only his own mouth to feed."

"Oh, what does the future have to hold for us?" she dramatized to the walls. "Why can't you be like Jerome? He's a gentleman. He always tips his hat to me. And he talks like he's educated. And you're supposed to be too. At least you're always claiming you are."

Educated! That's a laugh. Last month I had to help him with his income tax because he wasn't familiar with percentage. I do that every day, figuring out sixty per cent of the gross which is my take-home pay.

"You can tell *he's* got brains. You wouldn't catch *him* getting taken."

"What do you mean *taken*?" I said irritably. This is heading into the *coda*.

"You don't call four bucks for a one-hour lesson every week getting taken?"

"Miss Allardyce —"

"Aggh, Miss Shmallardyce! She's a crooked old bitch. Why can't you realize that? What has it got you so far? A zero. A big fat zero. And — and you've been sucker enough to take those lessons for a year-and-a-half. God!"

"Miss Allardyce sees great promise in me."

"Yeah! Is that right, Mr. Breadwinner? Well, at four bucks an hour I'll see great promise in you too."

What's the use? I went back to ignoring her. Jason Clarke, who sells dog food on T.V., made a mint last year. Gretchen thinks that chartered accountancy is the world. She just has no faith. Miss Allardyce has told me repeatedly that it takes a long while to develop an appropriate announcing voice. There's a lot of style and technique that goes into putting over a commercial. She said that if she were to recommend me anywhere now it wouldn't do either my reputation or hers any good. And Miss Allardyce is very highly thought of, being particularly famous for her work on the east coast. Once she trained a large group of disc jockies, at the station's request, so that they would get class in their voices. After this the station became the most listened to and consequently her fame grew. Even Bing Crosby took some lessons from her. At first his notes came out of his neck, but she got him singing *Rolling Down the Bowling Green*, which is a voice exercise, and before long he was singing from his diaphragm. And look at him! He has no worries.

Miss Allardyce is elderly now, and for that reason she instructs only a few. I am certainly glad I answered her advertisement in the paper on time because she got many responses.

The first time I auditioned for her I was very nervous, but nevertheless she immediately saw my potential. And all students had to have that because she was no magician. She just had the skill of developing the quality in basically good voices. Miss Allardyce can see success for me because, when I want, my tone can have a rather vibrant charm. And if it has, it is all due to her intelligent, professional guiding. She says I wouldn't notice the change unless I taped my voice — but she will not allow that. Her viewpoint is that taping one's voice is a crutch and I should be able to tell what I'm doing wrong simply by listening to myself, otherwise I won't make much of an announcer.

Gretchen will certainly change her tune when I'm making as much money as Jason Clarke. For a while I'll probably be like him, selling *Doctor Macswain's Dog Food*, but eventually I hope to be a nation-wide news announcer. That is something I would really enjoy. Several times I practise reading news in my cab, from the paper, and I can pronounce all the foreign names. I do this now when there isn't likely to be anyone around.

I was practising by the Waldorf stand one day, waiting for a fare. I didn't have a paper and so I was rehearsing the opening lines. I

say, "Good evening, everybody, coast to coast, William A. Huish reporting." And the many times I did this I had an audience, because when I glanced out the window there were five or six persons staring at me in puzzlement. That was one time when I *really didn't* stick around.

She took it from the top again: "When *are* you going to get some get-up-and-go? Don't you have *any* ambition?"

Miss Allardyce says I will be pretty big some day, and it can't be soon enough. Don't think I wouldn't like to afford a nice place and get out of this hole too. It is falling apart — there are scratches, chips, dints, cracks, all over. Perhaps it would be an improvement if the room was painted a darker color than its light blue, but that would be as nonsensical as putting hardwood in a cow stall. Gretchen is always hounding me to do something about the walls and ceiling, and wants the wobble fixed on the table in the breakfast nook. That's a real laugh. The *breakfast nook* is only where the room narrows. If she's so concerned about it she can darned well take the time to do a little carpentry. She's no flower.

"You're a worthless lackey. Y'hear me?"

I honestly feel like taking my chances and killing her. I read a magazine story about a man who murdered his wife. He lived on a farm and commuted to the city. His wife was a first-class nag who was always saying he would never rise in the pillars of society. He was simply satisfied with his job and to have enough peace so that he could paint pastoral scenes on the weekends. She kept telling him that being an artist was a waste of time. He took this until he had finally stood enough. Consequently he planned her murder. First he stabbed her with a butcher knife. Next he cut her up into small pieces, ground up all the bones, and fed this powdered human meal to his chickens. Eventually all the chickens were eaten by the surrounding areas, including the sheriff who came and made a thorough investigation of his *missing* wife. When he talked to the sheriff his expression was glum, but he was laughing inside knowing that there was never a chance of recovering the *corpus delicti.*

It is useless to fix anything up. The only person who comes over is Eigha, and why make a ceremony for a peasant? I thought women were always supposed to be clean, but I don't think she even bathes. I have seen dirt in her ears on numerous occasions, and she will wear the same nondescript blouse as long as four days in a row. And as for Gretchen complaining about me never taking her out! Eigha and her husband, a garbage collector, go nowhere. At least we see the odd movie. The only place the peasants go is to Open

House at Anttii's school.

Eigha is really common — she has absolutely no fineries. I am not being snobbish when I say she is an inferior person. She has been in this country for seven years and still can't speak the language. When she comes over I feel violent — visiting as if she were on an equal level. Perhaps I would react differently toward her if she were shy and humble, but she is not and that is what practically makes me go berserk. Strange as it may seem, *she* is the one who acts like a snob when telling Gretchen about some piece of clothing she has just bought — a blouse or what-have-you. Big fat deal! Perhaps it would be if she were speaking to other peasants, but she is not and that makes me burn.

I'll bet she and her husband have their first nickel. They are so cheap that I don't think they give their little runt hardly a thing to eat. He is twelve, but looks about eight — short, and thin as a coat of paint. And he looks like a peasant too. That weak, characterless face.

There was a rap on the door.

One would know immediately who the rapper was. When the door was opened and I saw her standing in the doorway, I felt like running over and spitting at her. It is terrible to have to accept a caller with her hair in a silly bun, looking like she just got off the boat — a sponging peasant.

In that same magazine there was a story about a man who hated his next-door neighbor. She was like Eigha — a greedy pig. She was always free-loading off this man, borrowing sugar, milk, cigarettes, toilet paper, everything — once even his razor to shave her armpits. One day he invited this leech over for some food. He told her that he simply had to share his boysenberry pie with her because it was his birthday and he was all alone. What she did not know was that there was an additional ingredient in the recipe — ground-up glass. She died in horrible agony.

I'd like to do something similar — adding strychnine, arsenic, or one of those deadly poisons into her Ovaltine, but I don't think I'd have the nerve. In the ground-up glass story the man was found out at the end.

When she waddled in I just said "Hello" in an icy way and went back to the crossword.

As a mechanical procedure, the slob and the peasant sat in the breakfast nook, and before long they were slurping out of mugs and discussing the runt.

"Anttii — ee ees top een ees class —"

"Watch it, don't lean too heavy on the table."

"Sorry. Ee ees top in wood wark."

"You must be very proud of him. I should get him over here to fix this table leg. There's quite a wobble in it." I noticed from the corner of my eye that she looked over my way. Sweet, sweet Jesus up in heaven! Imagine a thirty-three-year-old man being compared to a twelve-year-old runt! To think that life could be made so miserable over wobbles and runts. So what if he's a top student? Why take it out on me? I was no moron when I was at school. My principal said that I was quite intelligent and if I quit being so lazy I would manage to get out of the lower categories. It is also a fact that persons who get a number of migraine headaches are unusually bright. I've had a few.

I broke the point of the pencil. Eigha was droning on about Anttii in her grating tongue. Anttii, the superb mathematician and genius of the Industrial Arts class. The little s.o.b. had made a "reel bewteefool" crib-board, and a match-striker, both lacquered and planed smooth as could be. And Gretchen was lapping it all up too. The two of them needed their ignorant heads bashed together.

A lot of women give me a pain. Miss Allardyce is one of the few who doesn't. She is intelligent, and since I've been going to her I've come a long way. At the beginning I used to say *anyways* instead of *anyway*, and *jist* instead of *just*. When one's hearing becomes acute it is very surprising to hear the *jists* in others' speech. It is the commonest habit and also the hardest to break. Every *jist* at Miss Allardyce's means I have to drop a dime into an ashtray. But that seldom happens today.

Until I *become* a success I'll most likely have to announce commercials like *Doctor Macswain's Dog Food*, and how its bark-provoking beef gives dogs that shiny, healthy coat, but that will be looked on simply as a stepping stone to better things — far away from ignorant peasants.

After a little more horse-manure about the genius, Eigha left.

Gretchen went over to the T.V. and switched it on. I felt complete irritation watching her walk. I loathe the way she carelessly moves her hips. She wears a girdle only on occasion.

"It's not working," I said. "Don't you remember, we need a tube for the vertical."

"Good Christ Almighty!" She was on the verge of a scream. "Doesn't anything work in this house?"

"Quiet. Do you want the whole block to hear you?"

"All you have to do is go to the drugstore and get the tubes tested."

I exploded. "Listen, you bitch. You've got plenty of time. Do I have to do everything?"

"Everything," she sneered. "Everything. What do *you* do?"

"Only put in a fourteen-hour day every day. That's all."

"*Lackey*!"

"All right, all right. Okay. If you want me to take that chartered accountant's course I will."

This seemed to stun her because she became very quiet. For a moment she just stared at me.

"Did you hear me?"

"Yeah, I heard," she said.

Her eyes narrowed and she sat down and lit a cigarette.

"Well, I've capitulated at last."

"Are you eligible?" she said quietly.

"What do you mean?"

"Have you got your full grade twelve?"

"What do you think?"

"I don't know. Have you?"

This constant third-degree was wearing me. I felt all worn out and my armpits were beginning to perspire.

"Please let's not argue any more, Gretchen," I sighed. "You've got what you want, haven't you? I've capitulated."

"Aggh, shmapitulate!"

"Now that *really* sounds intelligent."

"You know what you are, Bill Huish? You're a fake. That's exactly what you are. A fake."

"Why don't you go to bed, Gretchen. You're becoming a crashing bore."

She rose and stared at me expressionlessly. She was playing her hackneyed role for all it was worth. "That's just what I'm going to do," she said. "I'm tired. Sick and tired."

She closed the bedroom door softly. I suppose this was to have some big fat dramatic effect on me. But there was absolutely none. I know her for what she is. She was even too lazy to turn off the rolling picture on the T.V. set.

Six Poems by Rona Murray

THE BELL

The plunging bell makes no sound;
Crazed with gales and gusts, the round
Full-throated iron cup thrusts wide
An anguished mouth but no clashed tide
Of thunder shatters rocks; the chain
Only creaks in slithered rain.

The tongue in the cavern of the head
Pushed on palate, finds no press
Can burst the circle of the flesh;
No golden gong of love or rage
Can break the ancient barricade
Which centuries have chained in bone
About the heart, about the groin.

FERRIS WHEEL AT NIGHT

Back from far out, steady ground
Unsteady, whirling with what has been:
Scarlet circles, yellow arcs, blue, green . . .
Now is the time to plant feet upon round
Earth circling a round sun, star steadying
Its flight in a galaxy of light,
Which turns again among spiralling
Forms of fire caught in the net of night.

And we, dizzy, we too, find
Feet slip on land.

NAKED POEM

I am naked
Leaves which I strip
to clothe such nakedness
shrivel and die

I hide
behind walls which fall
and I reach for curtains that shred
to attenuate thread

I run
The world turns
I stand still in my running
Uphill and down no difference makes —
makes no sound

I dig
in the earth
and the earth is snow melting
wherever I touch
clod for comfort

I am naked
The eye of the sun burns the burning dance
the body the brain
the articulate hand
the tongue
the bone
the crotch of shame

THE WOOD

I came to a wood
Where the way was lost
Stick broken in hand
And no way blessed

Thin bones were nailed
On a blighted tree
And under the bones
A leaf ticked eternally

Can you explain,
Dante or Beatrice,
That leaf in a place
Where no wind breaks?

TEST

And you spoke
Of the crucible; cruel
Heat purifies, you said.

The dross will be cleared
We agreed,
And only fire may purge
The essential need;
The bone alone remain
When all is done.

It may destroy, you said,
And we may find
We cannot contend
With flame.
And all that time
We stood
Face to face,
Hand in hand,
Until nothing but ash remained.

CHARM

Lift your cup and find me stretched
Between the water and your lip;
The thirsting never shall be quenched
By water from a blue-edged cup.

Stand, outcast man, before the fire,
Find my shadow huge between
Warmth and your pale shrinking skin:
No fire may straight the crooked bone.

Run across the crumbled world,
Hide within the creviced rock,
Still your mind confronts my mind
In the mirror of the dark.

When the winter winds have stripped
Each aching ounce of tawdry flesh,
When the proud chameleon heart
Has died of its own curled deceit,
Then at last you may escape
Perilous love and perilous hate.

Five Poems by Peg Brennan

1

that old dog lying in the gully —
down flat in the wet dark
        dark hair wet-flat

long grass straggles
down the ravine

short straight grass
blows on the hilltop

the old dog sleeps
        or dies

It's only when he moves it hurts

2

I walked the edge of the continent
to meet the sea

we stood face to face
I, alone
the sea, allied with moon and wind

I stood where the ground was dry
a wet pebble in my hand
while slow shadows rolled the shore

the tide ebbed
the moon went down

and I was left
to walk the dark land
tasting the salt air

3

we stand apart.
between us
a dragonfly
in blue-shimmered
jerky flight
moves over the lake

he falls suddenly
struggling on the surface

then do our hands touch
coming together in the water
to lift him free

lop-sided
on broken wing
he staggers upward
and flies away

4

Naked I stand
combing my dark wet hair
feet solid on a high grey stump in the lake

dead trees
limbless and black
crowd together in the water
their jagged underselves
hardly leaving room
for the loon,
with his listening eyes,
to swim among them

shadow of the crane
                flaps my shoulder
shape of the osprey
                hunches a knotted snag
shriek of the kingfisher
                splashes over logs

and the other fish
not big enough to count
dart the roots of the stump
and feed on my reflection

5

Raindrops angle down my window
water creatures
flattened by the wind against the glass
    they hurry
        stop
    come together into one
        branch
            take two directions
    rush onward
        this way, that
        always downward
looking for escape

below the window
    they drop off the sill
    into one free moment
    before the ground
    soaks them in

I must look to the sea
search its curving shores and straight horizons
watch its changes
contemplate its depths

or

I must look to the pines
follow their swayed branching
upward and out
flat against the sky

but I cannot see the ocean
(or the pines)
I can't get past the window
and the crooked trails the raindrops leave
on the glass.

BOYS AND GIRLS

Foreignness in our speech, sloppy clothes,
Aggravate the manner, and mysterious dimension, of our goal.
Men privileged with businesses swear oaths,
Men garlanded with children pass us by.
Fools, like the first Christians, our redundant soul
Loiters in grey deserts, among smoky trash,
Kicking up cans from the smeared soil, where lie
Fragments from the future . . . smashed goods . . . bits,
Broken off stars . . . In the charred ash,
Follies without number inspire cheap
Trinkets of thought, like a dull rosary, wits
Blunted by repetition. We watch, and wait;
Wait, more than watch, for the tryst we keep.
And who are we to say what more we should anticipate?

JAMES RUSSELL GRANT

Three Poems by Helene Rosenthal

WINTER PLANT

Dripping tears
of ornament
small, tough
their bitter red
like drops of blood
congealed
upon the branch
these
are my late, hard
winter berries
rebellious in a scene
of constant nourished
green.

Where climate hasn't
charity of frost
to nip fruition
needless, wild
in the bud
but lets it grow
to wrinkle and to rot —
take my curse, rain,
and let me not
feel strength
again to suffer summer
birth, at pain of
winter length.

BUNSEN BURNER

You gave me concept:
cool blue fire
honed to the knife
shape of a still desire

but gusting, heedless
my own aim
consumed that inner
purposed flame.

My care is wild —
it has no heart
that is its own; it beats
on air that holds apart

and clings to hope
that what has lit
the burner will, in turn
light it

conceptually and not
as outer radiance begot.

You gave me concept and I burn
with knowing how I have to turn.

You gave me knowing;
I conceive
how coolly one must burn
to breathe.

LAURIE, SLEEPING

A wishbone is my youngest love;
a thin arched curve
a doorway breath
that opens, closes on my pulse.

The blue-sailed eyelids cup the wind;
through heaving threats
lightward on green
that fragile craft rides gaily.

Stars swim like sea anemones;
beneath the blur
of my real dream
her dreams are catching fish.

I pillow, pillow with my earth;
my navel root
blooms into day
My sap despairs the shoreline.

How reedy is my stem-thin reach;
but seed is blown
and season rounds
and time flows with my daughter.

SAKHARA

Here the eye is inevitably cast
Down, fixed on the desert
Floor, staring myopic at the grains
Of sand, until each one
Looks as large and hard as a boulder,
As smooth as a hundred clichés,
All true enough in the sun.

They are like the dogs of the nomads,
Distracting us from the lofty
Contemplation of history. Who cares
Or even hears when the guide
Stumbles through the life story
Of Queen Ti. We are not overwhelmed
By the palaces and tombs,
Nor burial mounds, nor a majesty
That is as distant as the eyes
Of the bedouin child.
It is a majesty that numbs.
Fascinated rather by the alabaster
Fragments in the rubble of sand
And all the other unimportant
Details that stick in the memory,
While the background of nonsense clings
To the sticky air like thunder
In our own summer country:
The coca-cola vendor in the shade,
The tourist camels, the pure
Geometry of Kings.

And one cliché not forgot —
Under the fragile nomad tent,
The half-starved children
In the desert slums.

R. A. D. FORD

William Wantling
A Sequence of Three

A SILENT AFTERNOON

weightlifters & handball in the west corner of the
Lower Exercise Yard / & then this sudden silence
as when a forgotten clock stops ticking / 9 oiled &
shaven heads surround one man left on weightlifter's
bench & the large well-built lifter suddenly surrounded
by a ring of skin shining, shining, surrounding in
the pleasant sun / his bare back & the sweat glisten-
ing there / the sweat & the deadlifted 200 lb. weight
straining his arms above his head surrounded there
suddenly, Surprise!

Surprise! as the first oiled & shaven dark skin strikes
/ strikes from just-to-the-left behind the weightbar
driven down, down at the head in the sullen afternoon
sun / head jerked aside in sudden instinctual terror &
the sudden *crack* as the bar drives deep into the hollow
of his left shoulder followed by a dull thud as his left
arm collapses & he manages to guide the weight with his
good right arm so that as he pushes with that one good
arm the weight falls in a sharp arc & the 200 lbs. land
on the kneecap of the Muslim in front of him & the crack
of his leg breaking followed by more dull thuds as other
oiled & glistening dark heads begin to strike in a rhyth-
mic pattern / raised weightbars lifted and brought down
/ raised & brought down in deadly rhythmical sequence &
what is frightening is the same deadly silence has not
yet been violated / the only sounds the grunts of ex-
ertion & the *crack* of new bones breaking & he was going
down now, folding under the blows as a great steer in
the stockmarket, a steer that receives the fatal pole-
ax but refuses to fall, remains standing on buckled
legs / as puzzled & angry blow after fatal blow is rain-
ed down on its massive uncooperative body / but finally
falling off the bench & kneeling, sinking slowly, he

manages to grasp the man whose kneecap the falling weight
had shattered & as he sank to the ground he dug his fore-
finger into the man's eye & it sunk into the socket like
a stick poked in soft butter & for the first time then
a cry broke the silence — a highpitched scream of terror
& disbelief rising steadily in pitch pain & terror / a
siren given its liberty

the pitch rising in pure terror & pain / the rhythm forgotten
now / they all struck at once, rose & struck, hitting each
other at times in the passion of their formal anger / the
weightlifter flat on the ground now // two shots ring out
from the guardrail above the yard / the oiled & glistening
skins scatter / the 2 men left alone now / the one without
an eye who had fainted & the weightlifter, his arms stretched
out straight from his sides but his spine at the wrong angle
& where his head had been was a mass of pulp & bone showing
& the silence broken now we all began to walk slowly away
from the guards converging on the scene

IN THE ENEMY CAMP

It looks as if I'm to
spend my life in enemy
camps. 2 months ago I
finally got free of San
Quentin and the Calif
Dept of Corrections —
after 5½ years. So I
came to Peoria to free-
load and Write. Now for
2 months I haven't heard
Art Pepper or Gerry
Mulligan or Jimmy Giuffre
— not even on the radio
Farmer Bill but no Charlie
Mingus or John Handy. To-
day I got funny looks when
I walked around town in

my go-aheads. The whore-
houses have been closed
since 1953 and when I
offered to eat a girl
up she looked shocked
and asked me if I've
seen a doctor about my
sex problem. The boys
don't play my game
either. I can't find
one lousy joint of weed
and nobody here ever
heard of Peyote. The cops
are polite and the negroes
humble. I'm thinking of
moving on. How far to
the next enemy camp?

LETTER FROM KICKAPOO (pop. 250)

I'm
hiding out
from the heat here

this time
they want me
for Living without Believing
for Working without Slavery
Playing without Patterns
and Loving without Misery

please don't give me away?

Three Poems by Dave Kelly

AUGUST

ninety degrees
in anybody's shade;
a slow earth
planting daughters,
breast tickling grass:
chairman of winds,
I eat dark cherries,
spit seeds,
smack the steamy flanks
of mares.

THE DIFFERENCE

today the dog brought up
a jointed bone

victim of some older violence.

no red riding hood in the
swamp
behind the hill

PASTORAL

oilcan harvest,
earth seeded with crushed steel,
auto graveyard stamped against sky,
goldenrod, sunflower, lead soldiers gone to war
and back to rust;
and you, a smile ripe with fields:

I take an axe to breathing trees;
concrete, oil, and dung
returning to the land;
geldings behind thin fences,
dogs chase chickens; hens peck stones:

no sun today and less tomorrow;
jury duty in a hot town.

Two Poems by William Harris

AUGUST MENAGERIE

August is a time
of slow-footed tigers.
Birds fall bomb-like
into the famished shadows
of lean trees.

Not much moves
in the great cities.
The cement brains of society
crack in the heat.
Little rain.

Under a white sky
we keep forgetting
winter and our thoughtful hats.
Under cover of heat
horrible history is made.

The zoo keeper
puts his whip away
and dozes in the park.
Children sing a song
of molestation — they are growing
to meet the crisis
of old age and the glands'
last season.

August moves like a tortoise
toward September.
The animals need water
but settle for blood.

August is a time
of slow-footed tigers.
There is little rain.

THE TASK

The finger
(here they drop)

these few little
words
are a way of working
over/toward and into

out of and through
my own, my very small
desire
to know the thing
that is myself

is the poem

STRIPPER

Your eloquence is moving, ma'am.
Let me caress
your wordlessness.
Your lips are tighter than a clam,
but every bump's an epigram.

Abstractions fog this wordy age.
The points you make
are not opaque.
Semantically, your pelvic rage
is clearly slanted to engage.

Your message antedates the word.
We have not missed
its cogent gist.
And I at least have quite concurred
with what you've said that wasn't heard.

ERIC NICOL

LETTER TO AN EDITOR

Sir:

Noting with compassion that your dog grows old, and the legs no longer swing in quickstep through the rabbit nation; seeing his country dwindle to a stout rope and a penny yard, and his ragged lunges bring the pipe hopping to the milkman's hand; I concur — put him mercifully to sleep.

Set no professional to this fruitful trade; you have given him heart, only you must take it away.

Let the children be part of this new adventure. Discovering early that survival is a bastard proposition, they shall be quick to charity when your time comes. Perhaps they can stretch the jaws with the blanket's screwing and gently turn their harmonicas against the garroting hemp; perhaps the sight of blood will impress upon them this old friend's passing, and they can muster pails for the sap's run.

Above all, it must be a festive occasion, for life is a whore that no one willingly beds. Pain (and its deliverance) is all that matters. Burn the marrow in the arthritic bone; pain (and its deliverance) is all that matters.

Spend lavishly to buy the finest casket, copper railing and velvet pad, and let your words ring loudly in the mound's blooming: he was a much loved dog who came to a much loved end.

GLEN SIEBRASSE

ON MOTHERS OF LITTLE CHILDREN

STEPHEN VIZINCZEY

"Come, come," said Tom's father, "at your time of life,
There is no longer excuse for thus playing the rake.
It is time you should think, boy, of taking a wife!"
"Why, so it is, Father. Whose wife shall I take?"
(THOMAS MOORE)

"The chains of matrimony are so heavy that it takes
two to carry them — sometimes three."
(ALEXANDRE DUMAS)

DURING THE REMAINDER of my student years I had many frustrating experiences, but few with women. I owe my good luck to the dear wives who shared with me their matrimonial joys and sorrows. Our romances were untroubled and unclouded, there was no needling, nagging or quarrelling — after all, what would be the point in extra-marital affairs if they were the same as marriage? Moreover, I didn't have to pay for their love the dues of social responsibility, at a time when I still had to study, help my mother and busy myself with all the indispensible activities of any young man. They saved me from the tragic mistake of marrying too soon — although I made marriage proposals to several of them. They also saved me from the excesses of passion: as a rule, wives are too busy to wear out their lovers. I could offer them only temporary distraction from their domestic ills, but it was joy without fear of retribution. They would embrace me without bringing upon themselves the obligation to wash my socks. Thus we spent our free time in happy adulteries.

Yet what stays in my memory most clearly is the misery of some of those wives, especially the ones with small children. As a rule, the mother of little children is going through the worst crisis of her life. She's had two or three pregnancies in quick succession: the periods of her husband's first extra-marital affairs. His cooling ardour only magnifies her anxieties about her figure and her age, as her dream-world of eternal love and girlhood falls to pieces. She's faced with the impossible task of winning back her husband at the very time when she's accosted with another series of new worries and duties in looking after her little people. While she's teaching them to walk, she's trying to find her own balance on a slippery terrain of new reality. Will her husband stay away again tonight? Is she no longer desirable? No one needs the reassurance of a new romance as much as she does, yet the bitter irony of her predicament is that just when her husband is ignoring her, possible lovers do the same: men tend to see her as a mother. There she is, more of a woman than ever, and she's supposed to care only about the children and the household.

Once, it's true, I knew a mother who had nothing to complain about: she had an adoring and loveable husband, five handsome and good-natured boys, and she enjoyed possessing and looking after all of them in their spotless and cheerful home. Yet she also had innumerable lovers — apparently having no graver problem than a miraculous excess of energy. I also knew mothers whose miseries were so overwhelming that the sedative of an affair was no use to them. Nusi was such a woman — though putting Nusi in any category is not quite fair.

I met — or rather found — her children first. I was out for a stroll on St. Margit Island (a pleasant and popular park on the Danube, between Pest and Buda) and saw them wandering aimlessly among the crowd: a boy of five or so, looking grave and dragging along by the hand a smaller girl, who was crying. I tried to find out what the trouble was. The boy wouldn't talk to a stranger, but the little girl finally told me that their mother had gone to the john and had told them to wait outside, and her brother had got bored and had dragged her away. They had been looking for their mother for more than an hour and so far none of the passers-by had paid any attention to them. As they stood a good chance of continuing to miss their mother if they kept moving around, I decided to anchor them at a refreshment stand by the park's main gate, which she would have to pass before leaving the island. It was a hot evening in mid-July, and when I offered the

children an iced raspberry soda they consented to join me. The cold drink loosened the boy's tongue and he asked for a sandwich.

They both acted as if they'd never seen food before. They were in fact pale and undernourished-looking, and their cheap summer clothes, though clean and tidy, showed signs of many mendings. However, they both had magnificent eyes: large, deep and sparkling.

"Are you a drunk?" asked the boy, between sandwiches.

"No, I'm not."

"You're just a boy too, eh?"

"I guess you could say I'm a grown-up."

"You're lying!" he countered scornfully. "Grown-ups are drunks."

"How do you know?"

"My dad's a drunk."

"Is your mother a drunk too?" I asked.

"No, but she's just a woman."

"Slum-kids," remarked the kind-looking white-haired lady behind the counter, who had overheard our conversation. "They're pretty things now but they'll turn out monsters, take my word for it."

As the children had had all the sandwiches and soft drinks they could take, I led them a few steps away from the stand. The girl, Nusi, hung onto my hand, but her brother Joska began to wander off and I had to run after him several times.

"He *always* walks away," commented his sister. "It's a *mania** with him."

"This time you stay put," I finally told him, "or I'll tear off your ears."

Joska shrugged his shoulders, resigned and unimpressed. "Everybody beats me up."

"Who beats you up?"

"Dad and everybody."

"Does your mother beat you?"

"No, she doesn't and Grandma doesn't — but they're just women."

I was beginning to feel sorry for both the boy and his mother. "Well, I'm a man and I still won't beat you up. As a matter of fact, I've never beaten anybody. I just wanted to scare you, so you'd stay here."

"You're lying," he announced as before.

"No I'm not. I've really never beaten anybody."

*Mania is one of the most common Hungarian words, for obvious reasons.

"Then you were lying when you said you'd tear my ears off."

"Yes, that's when I was lying."

"You mean you've never never beaten up anybody?"

"Never," I insisted.

The boy thought this over for a while, sizing me up with his suspicious eyes. "Are you a Jew?"

"No, why?"

"Dad says Jews are peculiar."

"Maybe he doesn't know."

Joska accepted this, too, with an air of resignation. "Maybe he doesn't. Grandma says Dad's just shooting off his mouth."

I also learned that their father was a mechanic, working in a factory, that they had not only a room but a kitchen too, and that Dad often spent the night next door where there was a girl who painted herself — even her hair. Dad said that she was prettier than Mother who, as the boy repeatedly assured me, was "just a woman."

When Mother finally turned up, she was a surprise. She came running toward the refreshment stand, wearing a faded blue cotton jumper without a blouse, and I thought at first that she must be just some thirsty girl. Though her children were fair, Nusi was a brunette, and her thick, dark hair fell loosely to her bare shoulders. Her eyes were as large and black as her children's and flickered for a brief second as she thanked me for keeping the kids company. A strong, sexy woman, I thought. Only her cheekbones showed that she wasn't eating enough either. The children's news about sandwiches and soft-drinks upset her.

"You shouldn't have bought them anything even if they asked for it," she said defensively. "You ought to know that children can't incur debts. But I guess you expect to be paid for it all, just the same."

Suspiciousness was obviously a family trait. I left the park with them and — as the boy was dragging his sister ahead of us — I told Nusi that I found her fascinating. She reacted with unexpected violence.

"Jesus Christ! You must be hard up if you notice a wreck like me!"

"I hate women who deprecate their looks. It's phony."

"There's certainly nothing fascinating about me," she said somewhat more calmly. Then she flared up again: "What are you, a pervert?"

"No, I just like girls with good breasts."

"So you loaf around parks to pick up women, eh?"

"I don't go anywhere to pick up women, I'm too busy. But I'll try my luck anywhere if I see someone I'd like to know."

She turned her eyes toward me for a second. There were people getting between us and the children: we had to hurry to catch up with them. We reached the bridge that led us to Pest and we were walking over the river when she returned to the subject.

"So you're one of those, eh?"

"Yes," I admitted, "I'm one of those."

Then again, with cold suspicion: "What do you do for a living?"

"I'm a student, I live on scholarships."

"That's a nice job." Still, she wouldn't trust me enough to give me a date. "Why should I? I'm sure you'd change your mind and not show up." She wanted to check her face in a mirror and looked for one in her purse, without success. "I'll tell you what," she finally said, "I won't give you a date but you can come home with us, I'll leave the kids with my mother and then you can take me to a movie or something."

That was more than I'd asked for. "Wouldn't your husband object?" So far we hadn't talked about him. I was worried that he might take me for a Jew and try to beat me up.

No such possibility worried Nusi. "He'll be out."

"How about your mother?"

"Oh, she always says why don't I ever go out and have a good time. But I don't like to go out by myself and I can't stand women friends."

"Do you people all have a thing about women? Your son calls you 'just a woman'."

"That's his father's expression."

Nusi had a strong and thrusting jaw, I noticed, as I walked beside her. We took the long streetcar ride beyond the city to a hell of factories, slums, smog and thick layers of smut: the buildings, the billboards, even the panes of the windows were black. They lived in a five-story building, a square, prison-like structure, and we climbed a dark, dilapidated staircase, passing by several open doors leading straight into dark kitchens. The door next to their third-floor apartment was closed: I hoped it was the painted girl's, and that Nusi's husband was either inside there or out of the building. As we stepped into the kitchen, I saw a sight I'll never forget. It had no window, and the walls were covered with open shelves holding dishes, pots, food, clothes and sheets. The shelves apparently served as cupboards for all the small items of the household. Besides

the stove and the kitchen table with five wooden stools, there was an old armchair (the living-room) and in one corner a bed where Nusi's mother slept, as I was to learn. In another corner there was a tub set against the wall (the bathroom). The communal toilet was at the end of the corridor on each floor. As I sat in the armchair I could see into the bedroom: four beds and the edge of a clothes cupboard. Everything was meticulously tidy and as clean as possible. Nusi's husband was out.

"Mother," Nusi introduced me primly, "this gentleman found the kids for me at St. Margit's, so I invited him for a cup of tea."

The grandmother looked much like Nusi, except older and stronger. She seemed upset. "I'd have made dinner for one more, but I didn't know you were coming."

"Actually, I wanted to ask Nusi out for dinner, if I may."

"Why, of course, if she wants to," nodded the old woman with relief.

"Well, if we're going out for dinner, I might as well put on a blouse," Nusi said, disappearing into the bedroom. She closed the door and I heard her turn the key in the lock, which struck me as excessive modesty.

"When will Dad be home?" asked little Nusi.

"Don't worry, he'll be home to eat."

I tried to say that I didn't want him to miss his wife (it was a Saturday evening) and maybe we should go out some other time, but the old woman interrupted. "Don't worry, Joska'll be glad to eat the extra portion."

I looked at the boy. He guessed my thought, for he shook his head. "She means Dad."

Nusi came back with a pretty white blouse under her blue jumper, and we left immediately. I was anxious to get out of that kitchen, though later I got used to it and even used to remember it with nostalgia, when I no longer went there.

We went into a quiet restaurant, back in the city, and asked for chicken paprikás and candles to light. While we waited for our order, Nusi mused over my good luck in being able to earn money by doing what I liked, studying. I asked her what she would do if she could make a living by doing what *she* liked.

"Look after a man who loved me and raise my kids." When the candles arrived and the waiter placed them so that they made a glowing frame for her pale face and huge dark eyes, she added fiercely: "But I hate daydreaming, nothing ever comes of it." When we were served, she abandoned herself to the food and the task of

interrogating me. Struggling with the slippery chicken paprikás, I had to answer the question (she went straight to the heart of every issue) of how long I went out with a woman.

I couldn't manage a reply without spilling some gravy on my shirt. "I stay with a girl as long as I can hold her and she can hold me."

"You mean you have one woman after another, eh?"

I was easy game for this line of questioning, and Nusi grilled me thoroughly. Yet — as I learned later — she had accepted me long before we began to talk. If she was trying to figure me out, it wasn't a pusillanimous weighing of pro's and con's: she just wanted to be ready.

"I like to know what I can expect from a guy," she said.

"And what do you think you can expect from me?"

"I don't know," she admitted pensively, "but whatever it is, it isn't much."

If she finds me so unpromising, I thought, I might as well shut up. My lapse into gloomy silence apparently pleased her. "You're hurt, eh?" she asked with sudden affection.

"Yes, I am."

"Well, that'd prove you care for me a little, wouldn't it? My husband doesn't," she said with a flash of bitterness. "He's so uninterested, I can call him the worst names, he doesn't even listen."

She asked me then about the university. "Tell me something worth knowing, like what do you study?" Nusi had been working in a department store, wrapping merchandise, but when we talked it was like talking with one of my classmates. She could think with precision and speed, and showed a genuine appetite for both facts and ideas. It took me no time to see ourselves as Eliza Doolittle and Professor Higgins. I saw us dining in the same restaurant several years later: Nusi wearing a smart new dress, a school teacher perhaps, who has a pleasant apartment we can go to. Her potentialities criminally wasted in the past by poverty and an insensitive husband, she had finally come into her own. A woman who didn't expect much from me, yet I transformed her life. I decided I would.

"Well, I guess I shouldn't worry about you being younger than me," Nusi said as we got up from the table. "Maybe you don't know much about life and people, but at least you know more than I do about things you learn from books. It kind of evens out, I suppose. I can't stand guys who're dumber than I am."

We left the restaurant and, as we had nowhere else to go and the hot day had turned into a warm night, we decided to go back

to St. Margit Island. We took the bus to the Danube and walked across the bridge, hand in hand. The river smelled fresh as a mountain brook. There was a pale moon and the soft dark mass of the island lay ahead of us like a huge bed, with the puffy black mounds of trees for pillows. Maybe Nusi had similar associations, for she suddenly stopped.

"I warn you, you won't get anywhere with me tonight. I wouldn't sleep with a guy unless I knew him for at least a month." She was ready to turn back and would not go on until I had succeeded in convincing her that I accepted her terms. "You need a woman like me to set you straight," she concluded.

The island was quiet and apparently deserted: there may have been other couples about but if so they had hidden themselves well. If Nusi wanted to know everything about me, she was also willing to tell everything about herself. She was bitter and desperate about what she was saying, yet her manner of saying it was almost cheerful. Her marriage began to go wrong when she first got pregnant. "He knew I was pregnant but he kept railing at me for looking fat. It was driving me crazy, all his cracks about my figure. It was his own child and all he had to say was that I was a fat woman." Things seemed to improve for a time after their son was born: Joska became considerate again. He even decided to work overtime, to stay in the factory until midnight, putting aside money for his son. Nusi felt confident until a "woman friend" brought the news that Joska was doing overtime with a girl, not at the plant. By the time their daughter was born, he didn't even try to make up stories when he stayed out. "When he didn't even try to lie any more, I knew I'd had it."

"Why don't you divorce him?"

"For whom?" she asked, looking me over.

I couldn't resist kissing her for her practical turn of mind, and she returned the kiss with her thick, soft mouth: it was more questioning than her question. As we went on walking, hand in hand, along the moonlit paths and through the cool deep grass, it was possible to imagine that we would start a new life together.

Her job didn't pay well, but Joska had lately been bringing home his pay-cheque — ever since he'd started sleeping with the bitch next door. "She's the one who wants us to have his money — she doesn't want to fight us in the hall, she's afraid of the neighbours talking." Joska was still eating his meals at home and kept his things there. "Sometimes he still sleeps with me when he's so drunk he doesn't know what he's doing."

When we got tired of walking we sat down under a huge oak surrounded by bushes. Nusi leaned back against the tree. We began kissing and I reached my hand under her jumper — only to withdraw it quickly as her mouth went limp, reminding me of the one-month moratorium. "Don't worry," Nusi said, "I prepared myself when I put on my blouse." She slid forward and lay back on the ground. "I just wanted to find out if you liked me well enough to stick around for a month without it." Her body contracted as if she had been broken in two when I entered her.

But as she was brushing the leaves from her jumper, she remarked with a grimace: "I was making love behind the bushes when I was seventeen — now I'm thirty-one and I still have to do it behind the bushes. I'm making great progress, aren't I?"

She had been faithful to her husband until the last couple of years, when she had got friendly with a few men. "But it never worked out. Men don't understand that if you have children, you can't just come running whenever they want you to. At least they said they couldn't understand — it was a good excuse to break off."

I saw Nusi home in a taxi and the next day, Sunday, we met again. She told me she had dropped out of school two years before matriculation, to get married, and I persuaded her to enroll in a night school for the fall term and get her diploma. We could now go to our apartment with books and notes: when my mother was out, we made love; when my mother was home, I helped Nusi with her studies. She changed a great deal, became younger, fuller and prettier, but she was still as sceptical as ever. "You're doing all this just so you won't have to feel guilty when you leave me."

I met her husband only once, at dinner time in their kitchen, and although I knew him as "the drunk," he was entirely sober. I was introduced as an instructor from the school; Joska looked at me knowingly, then at Nusi, then sat down to eat. He was a handsome, muscular man of about thirty-five, and he looked tired.

"School! Don't make me laugh, Nusi. You'll never make it."

"She's bright," I remarked.

"Like my ass," he stated with finality, and attacked his food.

I attempted a tone of casual comment. "Maybe you're too stupid to realize how smart she is."

His jaw slowed down but he went on eating. Nusi's face, though unmoved, acquired the air of a smile. The children stared at their plates and picked up their forks smartly.

"Are you a bachelor?" Joska asked later. I could tell from his voice that he'd figured out a comeback.

"Yes," I answered warily.

"It's an easy life, eh? A hen today, a chick tomorrow, eh?"

"Some people call them women." I detested him for picking on Nusi instead of me. But he knew he had us both; his jaw speeded up.

Nusi turned toward him with murder in her eyes. "I don't think András's private life is any of your business."

His wife's look held the full measure of his guilt, and he began to laugh nervously. "What have I done? Can't a man carry on a little conversation in his own home?"

"*His* home!" the old lady commented.

He turned toward me again. "That's how it is when you get married, pal — the hens gang up on you. Don't ever get married. What I wouldn't give to be a bachelor again! Free as a bird — there's nothing like it."

Nusi's mother couldn't suppress another comment. "I'd like to know who's a bachelor if not you! You certainly act like one. I haven't seen a jailbird yet as free as you are."

Joska shook his head in exasperation. "It's not the same, mother, it's not the same." He shrugged his shoulder, indicating that whatever I might have taken, it wasn't of any value to him.

"I'm not your mother — and as far as I'm concerned, you might as well move next door."

"How could I? How could I walk out on Nusi?" He spoke to his mother-in-law, but he was looking at his wife, pitying her with a vengeance. "I'd feel sorry for her — who'd look after her if I left?"

Nobody said another word and after dinner Joska got up. "I'll be back," he said darkly to Nusi and, motioning good-bye to me, went out.

"Going to his girl-friend," the old lady muttered, "and he says he isn't a bachelor."

Nusi let go of her temper. "Did you hear him? He's eating here because he feels sorry for me! He's feeling sorry for me!" She was furious. She beat her fists on the table and the plates gave a clinking sound as they shook. "I wish there was a God, He'd punish him for that, if nothing else!" She pushed back her chair and began pacing the kitchen, turning around herself like a prisoner in a cell remembering that she's got a life-term. "He's ruined my life and he makes it look as if he was doing me a favour!" She raised her arms to heaven, repeating over and over again: "I wish there was a God!" When I tried to quiet her, she turned on me. "I don't care whether you leave me or not, but don't you be around when you can't be nice to me any longer! That's the worst thing you can do to a

woman." Then, at last, she began to cry, and her back bent as if suddenly the whole weight of that crammed and windowless kitchen had descended on her. Little Nusi was watching from her grandmother's arms, fearful and hesitant. Finally she freed herself and walked slowly to her mother and, reaching no higher, embraced her around the knees.

The next day I rented a hotel room so that we could be alone at least for twenty-four hours. As I wanted and loved her I could cheer her up quite easily, and we had many good days before the snow fell.

Then I began seeing the wife of a homosexual.

She was the mother of two small boys, but her husband never touched her after he succeeded in fathering his alibis. He was very particular about protecting his secret: he didn't want to risk his job, which had a villa and a chauffeured car to go with it. He forbade his wife to have affairs, as this might have led people to suspect him. To make sure that she did nothing to endanger his vulnerable position, he had his sister living with them, whose job it was never to let her sister-in-law out of her sight. A considerate father, he asked his sons every evening to tell him about their day, what they were doing, what Mother was doing, did they meet interesting people? An imposing and manly figure, he attended official receptions and parties with his wife, and never left her side. He was jealous of her and wasn't ashamed to show it. He smiled modestly when people called him the Hungarian Othello. "I guess I'm an old-fashioned husband," he used to say, half-apologetically, "I'm madly in love with my wife." His wife was a beautiful and strange woman.

I met Nusi less often and had to make an effort to appear enthusiastic and interested. She accused me of being listless and impatient with her, and we were beginning to have scenes. Yet I couldn't take Nusi at her word and leave her as she had said I should "when I couldn't be nice to her any longer." She was still going to night school and doing well, and had a good chance of getting a secretarial job in a couple of years. This, as she had so shrewdly predicted, helped to assuage my guilt, but not so completely that I could bring myself to break with her. If there was ever a woman who had suffered enough disappointment and deprivation to last a lifetime, that woman was Nusi. Yet I couldn't have an erection out of a sense of guilt and obligation. There were times when I went to bed with her, after complicated arrangements, and ended by excusing myself. "There's no animal as mean as a man

who no longer loves a woman," I had once declared to Nusi apropos of her husband, and now the description was beginning to fit me. The welcome escapade from the misery of marriage was shaping up this time into an entanglement no less miserable than the marriage itself.

Once I confessed my problem to my new lover, lamenting that I didn't know which would be worse for Nusi — if we broke off or carried on. "My dear," she observed with a sigh, "it isn't a moral problem you've got there — it's a case of extreme conceit."

A few days later, I had a violent argument with Nusi. She accused me of being bored with her, and I protested that I loved her just as much as ever and our only problem was her suspicious nature. As she wouldn't believe me, I finally admitted that she was right and suggested that we should quit.

After a few moments, she straightened her shoulders and looked through me with her huge eyes. "Well, it ends just like I always thought it would. I wish someday somebody would surprise me."

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Even John Keats
dying young
in an extraordinary spring
lay like this
strange hands
brittle as snowdrops
clawing the familiarity of a cup
the mouth
sucking
lost elliptical phrases
spittle
yellow white
stinging
the heave of sheet
and saw
in the mirror of Severn's eyes
a beginning day
pigeons
washing in the sunshine
the scoured stone of buildings
traffic newly set out
and the inevitable
sight of
people
rushing like fresh clouds
in the February morning.

F. McNEIL

CONTRIBUTORS

VINCENZO CARDARELLI, the Italian poet and editor (he founded *La Ronda*), died in 1959. For more than twenty years he was the leading figure in the *prosa d'arte* movement.

R. A. D. FORD, presently Canadian Ambassador to the Soviet Union, has published one book of poetry, a number of essays in English, American and Canadian journals, and has translated many contemporary Russian as well as Brazilian poets.

JAMES RUSSELL GRANT's poems have been published by Putnam (*Hyphens*, London, 1959). His work has also appeared in *Trace*, *Botteghe Oscure*, *Saltire Rev.*, etc., and has been read on both BBC and CBC. He is a London doctor.

WILLIAM HARRIS, the editor of *Ante*, a bright new poetry magazine in Los Angeles, is at work on a first book of poems.

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CESARE PAVESE (1908-1950), Italian novelist, poet, translator, essayist, Melville scholar. An anti-fascist partisan fighter during the war, he emerged as a major literary figure in 1946. All his works are now available in English translation. Pavese committed suicide in 1950.

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GLEN SIEBRASSE has just published his first book of poetry, *The Regeneration of an Athlete*, (Montreal, Delta, 3476 Vendôme Ave.). He is co-editor of *Yes* (see Books and Periodicals Received).

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WILLIAM WANTLING, presently living in Illinois, published four books of poetry last year (two from the Hors Commerce Press) and will bring out three more this summer. His work continues to appear in numerous American magazines.

The following contributors are associated with the Creative Writing programme at the University of British Columbia:

PEG BRENNAN, F. MCNEIL, RONA MURRAY and GABRIEL SAFDIE have each completed a creative work for a "thesis" for the Master's degree in English, within the Creative Writing programme. Miss Brennan has been working

in prose fiction, the other three in poetry. Mr. Safdie came to U.B.C. by way of McGill University and Israel, and has not previously been published. The others have appeared in leading Canadian magazines.

MIKE CHRISTIE makes his first appearance in print with a story written in U.B.C's senior Fiction Writing Seminar. He has a one-act play in production in Vancouver, and is working on a novel.

LIONEL KEARNS is a former student of the programme, and now in the graduate school of the University of London. He has published one book of poetry, *Songs of Circumstance*, and is bringing out another this summer.

ERIC NICOL, presently an instructor in the Creative Writing programme, is also Canada's leading humorist and a columnist on the Vancouver *Daily Province*. His eleventh and current book is *Space Age, Go Home* (Toronto, Ryerson, 1964). He is a three-time winner of the Stephen Leacock medal.

HELENE ROSENTHAL has been attending the senior poetry workshop in the U.B.C. programme. She first appeared in the *Canadian Forum*.

CHARLES MAYRS' illustrations appear on pages 4, 22, 32, and 44.

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Ball State Teachers College Forum VI:1. (3 x yr.). Ed. M. & F. M. Rippy, Muncie, Indiana. 64 pp. $1.00.

Bim, n. 40. Semi-ann. Woodville, Chelsea Rd., St. Michael, Barbados, W.I. 70 pp. $1.00.

Chrysalis, II:1. Semi-annual. Dept. of English, Montana State University, Missoula. 58 pp. $1.00.

Delta, Dec. 1964. Q. Ed. Louis Dudek, 3476 Vendôme Ave., Montréal. 32 pp. $2.00.

ENGLISH, MAURICE. *Midnight in the Century*. Poems. Park Forest, Ill., Prairie School Press, 69 pp. $4.00.

Evergreen Review, n. 35. Mo.; 80 University Pl., New York, N.Y. 10003. 96 pp. $1.00.

Fiddlehead, n. 60. Q. Ed. Fred Cogswell, Dept. of English, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton. 76 pp. 60¢.

Joglars I:2. Irreg. Ed. C. Coolidge and M. Palmer, 292 Morris Ave., Providence, R.I. 98 pp. $1.00.

Liberté, VI:6. Bi-mens. Dir., Jean-Guy Pilon, case postale 97, Sta. H, Montréal. 94 pp. $1.00.

MAYNE, SEYMOUR. *Tiptoeing on the Mount*. Poems. Montreal, McGill Poetry Series n. 9, 25 pp. $1.50.

Montrealer, XXXIX:1. Mo. Ed. Gerald Taaffe, 146 Bates Rd., Montréal. 42 pp. 25¢.

Next, n. 1. Student lit. mag. University of Oregon, Eugene. 32 pp. 25¢.

PARR, MICHAEL. *The Green Fig Tree*. Poems. Toronto, Macmillan, 83 pp. $3.50.

PILLIN, WILLIAM. *Pavanne for a Fading Memory*. Poems. Denver, Alan Swallow, 82 pp. $3.00.

Poésie Vivante, n. 8. Mensuel. Ed. Societé Cooperative Poésie Vivante, 11 rue Hoffman, Genève. 20 pp. Fr. 1.50.

Poetry Australia, n. 1. Q. Ed. Grace Perry, 350 Lyons Rd., Five Dock, N.S.W., Australia. 32 pp. 5s.

Poetry Northwest V:3-4. Q. Parrington Hall, University of Washington, Seattle, Wash. 98105. 80 pp. $1.50.

Potlatch, n. 3. "A selection of work from Creative Writing classes, Fall Term, 1964, at the University of British Columbia . . ." Ed. Peg Brennan. 31 pp. 20¢.

Review of English Literature VI:1. Ed. A. Norman Jeffares, 41 Park Lane, Leeds 8, Yorks. 110 pp. 4s.

Small Pond, n. 2. Poetry Q. Ed. L. W. Pond, Box 101-A, RFD 3, Auburn, Maine. 26 pp. 50¢.

Voices I:2. Lit. Q. Ed. Clifford Sealy, The Book Shop, Marli St., Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. 24 pp. 75¢.

Wild Dog, n. 14. Poetry Q. Eds. Drew Wagnon & Gino Clays, 39 Downey St., San Francisco, Calif. 94117. 37 pp.

Yes, n. 13. Lit. Semi-ann. Eds. Mike Gnarowski and Glen Siebrasse, English Dept., Lakehead College, Port Arthur, Ont. 38 pp. 25¢.

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