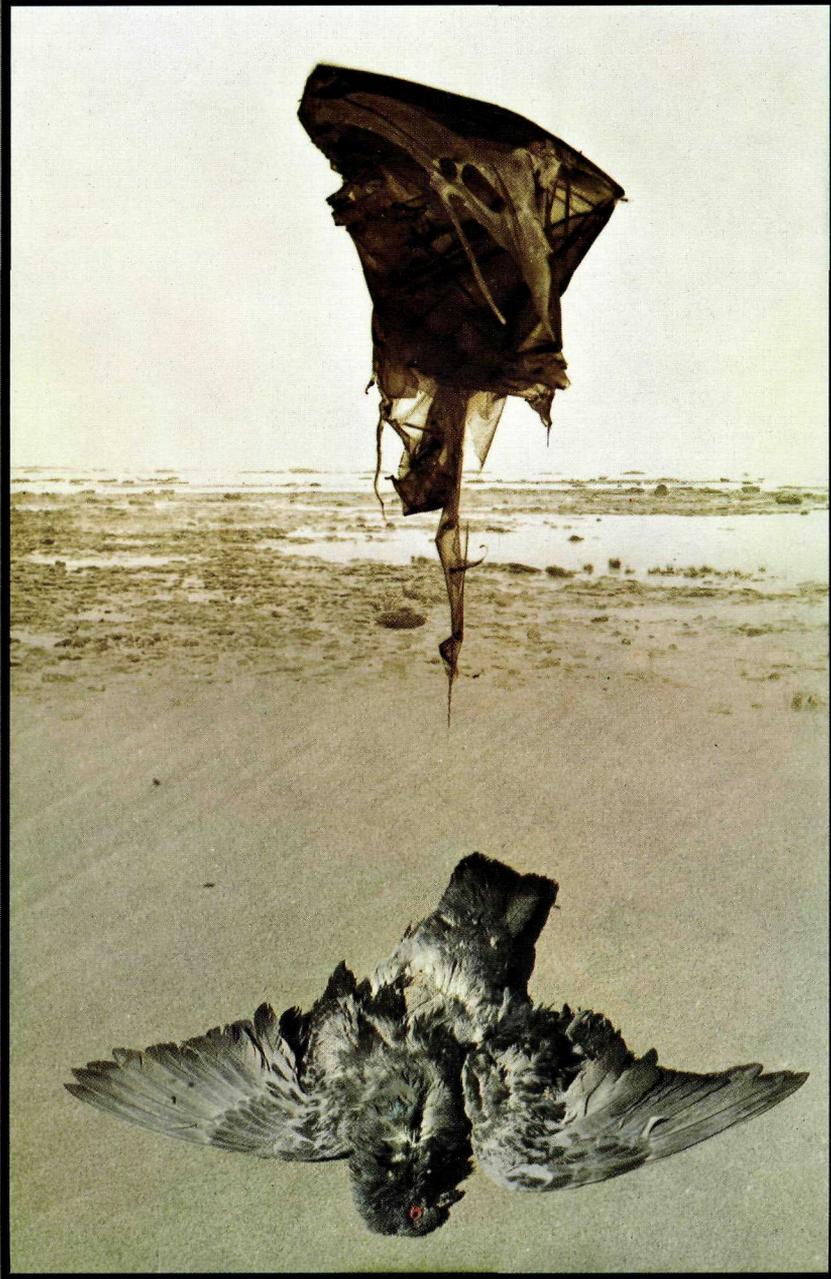


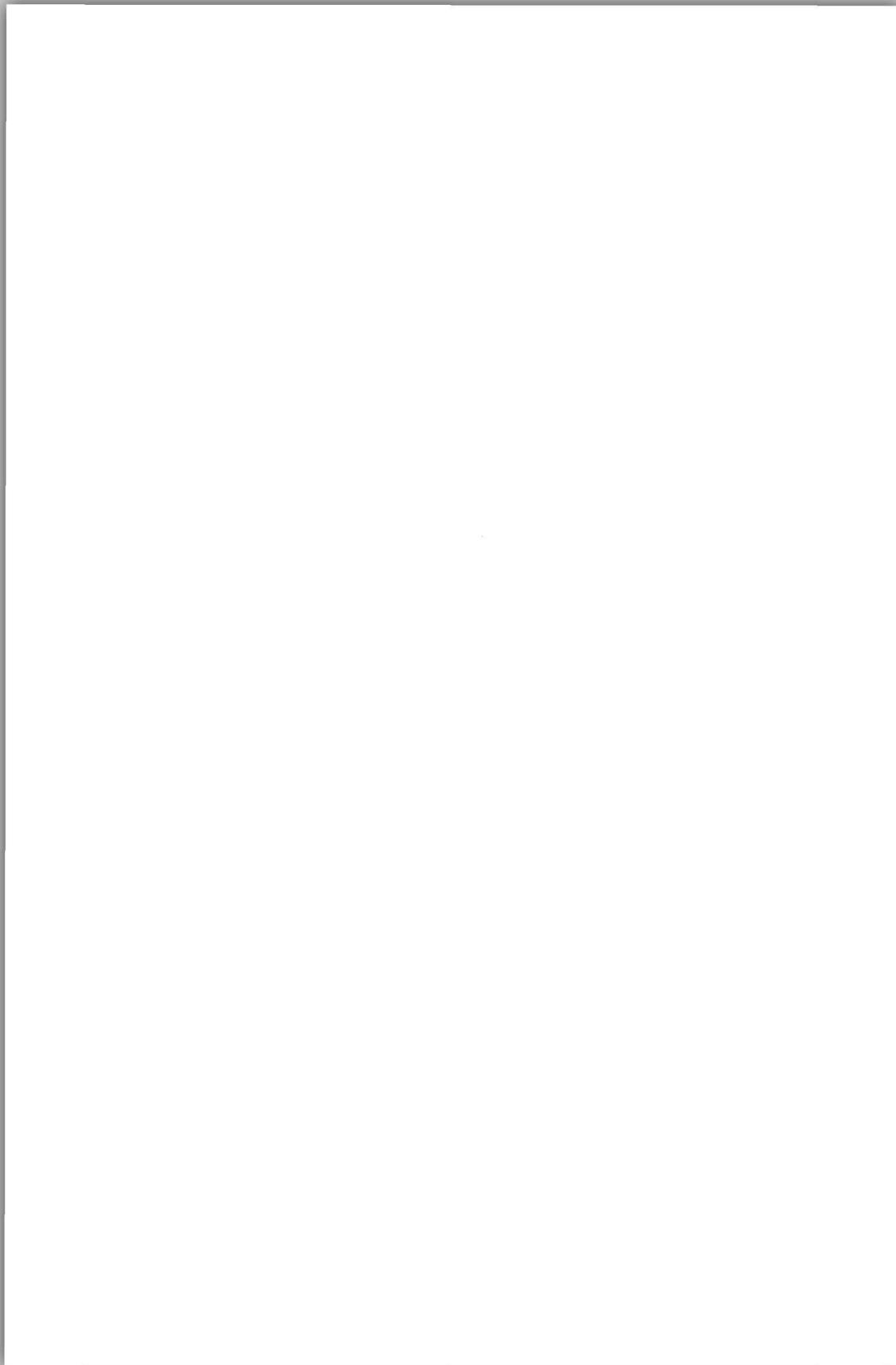
# PRISM

*international*

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# PRISM *international*

VOLUME TEN NUMBER TWO

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The cover photo, reproduced from an original colour print, is by William G. Larson. For more of his work, see page 65.

CHARLIE LEEDS is an ex-jazz-bassist whose drug habit has led him through a series of jails, mental institutions and treatment centres for the past twenty years. At present he is serving a 9-13 year sentence in the New Jersey State Prison at Trenton. Leeds' writing first appeared in *Prism international* 8:3. Since then he has had poems in *West Coast Review* and *Alphabet*; and recently, *Prism international press* and *November House* have brought out *Tillie's Punctured Romance*, a book of his writings from which "King of the Beasts" is taken.

# King of the Beasts

CHARLIE LEEDS

June 21, 1960  
Miami, Fla.

Dear Leo,

I guess you'll be surprised to hear from me after so long. I've been meaning to write but what with one thing and another — honest to God — we've been moving around so much lately we can't even get on relief. We've been down here almost a month and I'm still out of work. I mean I was working for a while but not now.

I had a good job too at a place called Andy's Alligator Farm where I was supposed to wrestle alligators. It paid good too — \$75 bucks a week and eats. But I loused it up, or Marie did rather, I'll tell you about it.

In the first place the whole thing is fixed. Not *really* fixed maybe, but well — you know — it ain't exactly the way it's supposed to be. When you first go there Andy assigns you to one alligator and you have to stay with it constantly for at least two weeks and maybe longer. I mean *all* the time almost. You've got to wait on it and play with it and eat in the same cage with it, and Andy likes you to stay over a couple of nights every week and sleep with it even, at first.

In case you haven't guessed, this is so you get real familiar with each other so when the time comes for you to wrestle, you don't

really wrestle at all, just sort of groove around with each other. But the crowd *thinks* that it's real.

Well, the one he gave me was named Stella Dallas and at first I was pretty bugged with the whole set-up but Andy said this was just because I was "Green," and to give it a try anyway.

So I did, and Leo, you'd be surprised! I mean, I can't explain it but it wasn't the way I thought it would be at all. Alligators aren't *anything* the way people think. Believe me. You might think I'm crazy but I really mean this.

But the whole trouble was after the first few nights Marie started raising holy hell. The first morning I came home to change my clothes she said — "So it's the call of the wild again, huh? You son-of-a-bitch." (You know her when she gets started.) And then she *really* blew her top because some kids drove by the house two or three times and hollered "*Snake lover.*" She said that the neighbors were beginning to talk and that the landlady had asked us to move and she threatened to take the kids and leave and all.

And then to really do it up right, Andy calls me up and said that I'd better come back over there right away because Stella had flipped and was wrecking her cage and trying to eat up *everybody* and that they had a three-alarm "Hey Rube" in then and it might get worse. But — I just *couldn't* go. Do you understand? I *couldn't*. And I felt terrible about it for days. The last I heard, Stella had bugged *completely* out and had to be sent back to Rocky Mount, N.C., and I felt awful about that too because she hated it there so.

I didn't have nothin' to say to Marie for quite awhile — after all I was just trying to do what I'm supposed to. She's so goddam selfish sometimes. All she ever thinks about is herself. A couple days ago I got a rush call from the Miami Monkey Jungle — they wanted a utility man, sort of a "trouble shooter," and I had been wanting to get in there for years. So — when I tells Marie about *that* she just looks at me — don't say *nothin!* and finally she said — "Alright, you smart bastard, just keep it up. You ain't fooling *me* — you *may think* you are but you're not. I've known you too long."

So — I just said, the *hell* with it. Let her and the goddam neighbors take care of the kids, right? And to make things worse, ever since she's been calling me "King of the Beasts." She's even got the kids and her friends calling me that now.

Well, I guess there isn't anything else much to talk about. I hope you're O.K. and can make parole again soon. The kids are all fine

and ask about you all the time. They don't know where you are of course; they think you're in the Army (Ha-Ha). Except for Charlie.

I think he knows where you're at. He never says nothing about it, but I think he knows. He never says much about anything anymore anyway.

Frankly, we're kind of worried about him, we think he's back on the "stuff" again. Junior told us he's been falling off his stool in arithmetic class and he went to sleep in the shower again last week. I don't know what to do with him, the poor kid. He just can't help it, I guess.

He's beginning to look more like you every day, pretty "weird" and "way out" looking, as you would say. Last week Father Dolan came to see us and The Father asked Charlie if he ever talked to God. He didn't say anything at all for a real long time and then finally he said — "God who?"

What the hell are you supposed to think about a thing like that? I'm afraid it's his mind, God forbid. We all got our troubles.

Well anyway, Life goes on. Take care of yourself and write.

Your Brother,  
Stanley

P.S. The whole time I've been writing this letter he's been in the room here singing some damn song *over* and *over* again. Something about — An Apple For The Teacher. That's *all* he does now, in fact, sing that goddam song. He won't even say *nothing*. I mean — Who does he take after? *Christ!*

*TWO POEMS BY DOUGLAS BARBOUR*

a long day's driving:

and closing your eyes do  
you ever notice how  
a stream flows into you;  
a night highway you  
must drive, the movement, there,  
always steady and glowing.

on your back it comes a continuous flowing  
from above, some point beyond  
the sight of closed eyes, or  
turn into the pillow and  
it leads forever  
                  down.

but always, at night, a  
wedge drives through darkness,  
moves, moves  
ever toward your eyes, drives  
the mind forward into  
an uncertain light

the visit:

the green slope strikes — an arrowhead  
where water touches shore smooth  
as a crystal's surface, cuts  
sight like an adze knife.

and this stillness in the city's  
centre, stir-stopped at dawn,  
contains the moment, surrounds it:  
morning sun silent as mist  
drifting into thin fragments  
above the upside-down world.

Memory laps against reality at  
an edge which fades,  
fades as you step to it. You  
begin to walk there as  
it disappears, and take  
your friends with you, begin  
to transpose time;

and out of the past last night  
he ventured, as a voice first  
on the phone, hello. Later he sat  
near you, and you saw  
him as yesterday, as if  
there had been no years.

All grew separately  
in the same direction, a tandem  
movement to this moment when

you laughed: the pleasure  
flowing was real  
as the sight of him  
moving towards us down  
a slope of hours  
on the other side of the water.

This meant nothing  
more than what you said,  
what you felt  
talking, saw the next morning  
early, with his eyes.

DOUGLAS BARBOUR's poems have appeared often in Canadian journals, including *Prism international*. He lives in Edmonton.

## WHAT I AM

BENJAMIN K. BENNETT

No thing is finished. Not the energy  
which by dividing Nothing into this  
world's clutteredness empties the void that all  
be again swallowed, is there. Uneasily  
stone stands on stone, we know it and nonetheless  
it takes us by the ankles, not the collapse  
of things, but that always remains: a wall  
between nowhere, stones in a ring, the sun  
beating on barren walls, but in the dark apse  
cool visions like memory, that Chartres like  
some carnivore's lower jaw remains, and our own  
minds are like statues' minds in the facade,  
thinking one arch thought stone by stone.

The earth  
always has everything: see, death's own shriek  
dies, into reflection, or back and forth  
across the same slow slime, emptiness that lives  
by telephone, endlessly ricocheted  
and raging, threaded on pain's wire, not there,  
the Brooklyn Bridge is. Each thing is afraid  
of itself, namely, and cannot die; fear  
destroys, fear builds again and tires, and leaves  
this emptiness we fear. Only the sieve  
of being spills no drop of us; we pace  
the floor and memory enters us like truth,  
changes to time, and crawls from between our legs,

and nothing knows its true season. But this  
absurdity is strong enough that it  
stand in the sunlight of its opposite  
which it becomes and was once.

Namely my cat,  
which is the colors of dead leaves, is moving  
through deep dead leaves under a dead streetlight,  
and what is this? I know only that loving  
will not wear down one thing, nor tides nor seas  
bear us our children: and whether we shall be  
pure spirit of unresting energy  
casting all things from us, or of the Whole  
but one seen symbol, constantly becomes  
less possible to decide. But spring comes  
and I stand in it; eyelids in my knees  
open again liquidly; time rejoices  
that time has come round again, and my voices  
disturb me like sounds in the trees, the trees.

BENJAMIN K. BENNETT teaches German literature at the University of Virginia.  
His work has appeared in *Poetry* and will soon appear in *Poet Lore* and *Poet  
and Critic*.

## TWO POEMS BY HAROLD ENRICO

### MADAM

*Fabelhaft* is the word she drawled  
over *Kaffeemilch* and two croissants.  
Morning lounges in her lap with two chihuahuas.  
In an hour the sun will be at its zenith  
In her hair.  
Girls and geraniums giggle in the valley of her chin.  
Sexilingual, she speaks all those languages  
and the language of love.  
(Sex is a word she never uses.)  
Her son is president of a firm-  
*Allgemeine Gesellschaft* something or other  
exporting what to what.  
*Er ist ein* nice gentleman.

Each year the geography of her hands  
grows more turbulent under their exterior calm.  
Scandinavia runs naked on her forehead.  
Naples sings in her belly.  
Her ears listen to Rumanian wind.  
Her lips taste the Pyrenees.  
Her feet dance in Africa.  
Her breasts are big with Asia.

"This is not what I wanted, to be sure.  
*Je viens d'une bonne famille, très catholique, et tout ça, vous savez.*"  
She is an alp towering over polite valleys.  
Her ore is pure.  
Although she is ancient, she looks forty.  
Her girls are *sehr elegant*.  
"Even the Archduke . . .  
The one at Sarajevo . . .  
War is terrible, I know.  
The next one . . . ? *Die Atombombe* . . . ?  
But Vienna, my girls, everybody . . .  
*Ich meine doch, mein Herr* . . ."

## HE NEVER WISHED FOR WAR

In winter my father spoke American.  
In summer Italian was for the leaves.  
For him, grape vines looped over every backyard fence.  
Leaf mold was always ready to take him  
Where he cared. Love was where the roots were.  
He never wished for war.

When goldenrods powdered the roadsides  
And balsam root multiplied the sun,  
His thumb favored the apple,  
Tested the ripening plum.

He sold the Chev and planted pear trees  
On the driveway. In time fruit  
Bent the boughs. On winter evenings,  
Slicing Anjous with his penknife, he feasted,  
Licked ambrosia from his dripping thumbs.

HAROLD ENRICO's poems and translations have appeared frequently in *Prism international* and other journals. He lives in Cosmopolis, Washington.

## FUGUE

FREDERICK CANDELARIA

in circe's house  
you become your desires  
EVERY WISH GRANTED  
— for a while:

even odysseus  
couldn't resist the visit  
the taste of visions  
the enchantress gave

a glance light  
over a bare shoulder  
illusions  
burning in the brain

a new mistress  
for each imagination  
a muse turning  
and returning in the mind —

then you pay:  
stand naked  
before hard x-rays  
that glare at you

out of every mirror  
in each dream's window  
whenever flesh touches  
the days & nights of your life

FREDERICK CANDELARIA has published a poetry volume, *Dimensions*, and other poems in many North American journals. He is in the English Department at Simon Fraser University, where he edits *West Coast Review*.

DANIEL KENNEDY completed his English studies at the University of Toronto and now lives in Rockport, Massachusetts, where he writes fiction and non-fiction.

# Tell Me What You See

DANIEL KENNEDY

TWO OR THREE YEARS FROM NOW, after I've taken my vows and gone to another monastery, I bet this bare patch under this tree will look the same. Dirt and dust with no grass, the same now as when I first sat here. Probably all the novices, year after year, sit in this spot when they have to watch the cattle. Twenty miles of valleys and mountains stretched out in front of me. Our twenty-eight Herefords grazing on the lower slope. Peaceful. Laudamus.

At this distance the cattle even look like ants in the palm of my hand. Twenty to one. Pretty soon I better get them moving down to the barn. The vet's going to cut the male calves, except for one. Where is the lucky one? There he is, rubbing himself against the fence, with his rear end facing me. This castration business rubs against the grain.

How would one of those ants near my ankle see everything? Imagine being an ant, looking around with human eyes and seeing this huge green stalk in front of you, and millions more beyond that. You're standing on a fallen blade of grass, and it serves as a brown bridge. There in the distance, visible above the green forest of grass, is this brown hulking shape balanced on four warped poles. There's a spare pole swinging loose from one end, and from the other end a strange shape grows out and its foremost tip, below the horns, swings back and forth as it gulps down entire groves of the green forest of grass. The brown monster is moving your way. Tremors of its steps shake the grassroots and your brown bridge. You turn and run for your life from the brown monster that must be stupid be-

cause it doesn't realize you are there, the way people figured that dinosaurs were dumb because they hardly noticed man. So you're running simply from the possibility that the brown forest-eater may set his jaws where you happen to be.

I think I'll skip being an ant. This is fascinating. Why if I was miles high in the sky on a clear day, if I looked down, I'd see no ants. I wouldn't even see the cattle. Probably the only thing I could make out would be the valley. From that high up it must look like a divot taken by a divine nine iron. I should leave God out of this. Anyway, I'd better get them moving.

The nearest cow seems to be on a slide under a microscope that I'm adjusting as I walk towards it. Let's go, lady, time for a little walk to the barn. The others are coming. That's the strange thing about cattle, you can't cut one or two out of the herd in a pasture because they all stick together. So you have to take them all, like now, even though John and the vet only want four of the calves.

From here the monastery on the side of the mountain looks like a kid's tin toy. C'mon, get moving there, we're late as it is. There's the red roof of John's house in the village. This is a riot, everything looks so damn tiny and I never noticed it before, not like this.

"C'mon. Hah!"

There's always one that wants to chew some grass before she'll go into the barnyard.

"Close the gate!"

John sounds like he has a mouthful of gravel. Strange John. I wonder how he was blinded in his right eye, the one that is forever staring into the sky on his right without seeing a thing. John'll never tell me, but maybe his daughter will. I'll ask Theresa next time I see her. That other guy in the baseball hat must be the vet. At least he calls himself a vet, but he's only a farmer who knows how to handle a knife and pliers. John probably knows how to do it too, except he's getting old and his vision's bad.

"Bring 'em all right in, son. We'll cut the calves out inside."

Look at the way the herd collects in the back of the barn. They're watching us with that dumb stare, like a pack of guys watching older, beautiful girls walk by on the street. C'mon, you get out. Go on, you too. You in there, let's go. No audience allowed, let's go, move your ass.

That's that. The four calves look like they're waiting for me to say something. I've got nothing to say. I'm just glad I'm not a calf.

"Get the big fella' first."

Scared, aren't you. C'mon, don't fight the rope. Just do what you're told and it'll be over fast.

"Tie the end of the rope to the post, son, so he can't break free."

"Get his head."

"I got 'im here, I got 'im tight."

"Watch it there, don't get behind him."

"Get 'im tight against the wall."

"Watch it."

"It's okay, I pinched 'em."

The calf can hardly walk. Easy, fella. Stop pulling and I'll get the rope off. God, he pinched them alright.

He's gonna use a knife on the rest of them. They're not as old as the first one. This one's fighting worse than the big one.

"Hang on, there!"

"Got 'em."

God, they're obscene, lying in all this crap.

"Throw 'em to the pigs, son."

I have to put my gloves on. There. Pigs. Rooting in the crap and the concrete, fighting for this little treat. No wonder Christ drove them over a cliff. And some of the locals eat them sometimes, deep-fried. "Mountain oysters" they call them. It may be true but I have to see it done.

Is that Father Matt coming in? The light's bad in here. Yes, it is. Well he likes to work on the farm for exercise, so let him try this for a change. He's pulling his gloves on. A priest can't have crappy fingers, after all. None of this is happening, it has to be a dream.

"John, the prior just told me that Emma's low on meat. She wants a quarter by tomorrow. Can't let the boys starve, you know."

"Okay there, Father. I'll bring one down the house soon as we finish up here. Only two more. You might lend a hand."

"Sure."

The smallest one of the four now.

"No, we better let this little one go, he's a bit too young. Let 'im outta there, son."

Gladly. Let me out with him. Let's get this over with.

Just you left. C'mon, don't fight the rope. It's hopeless. I have to get out of here. Hold still, goddam it.

"Don't hold him like that, son, you hurt him."

"I got 'im here."

"Pin his head against the wall."

"Stay clear, Father."

Too late. That was dumb, standing behind the calf like that. His kneecap may be busted. He can hardly stand up. There's fingerprints of crap from his glove on his old black pants where he was just holding his knee and moaning.

"Hold on now. Sit down there, that's it."

"Don't feel busted, John. Hurt bad, Father?"

He's looking at me. What can I say? Christ, I want to get out of here, and the two of them are playing with his kneecap. Let's go! The calf still has the noose around his neck and he's tied to the post. Pull the post out, bring the barn down, a little miracle. Never. Hold still and I'll slip the noose off your head. Hold STILL!

"What 'cha doing there, son?"

"Letting him go."

"He ain't cut yet."

"Oh, I thought he was. Sorry."

Liar. So we pin him at last, and the calf is bug-eyed, and there they go, without a sound, not even a plop. I'm leaving.

"Michael, will you give me a hand?"

"Yes, Father."

"Let's see if I can walk to the vet's truck. He said he'd give me a lift back to the monastery. Oh, that's not so bad, I can walk, so it can't be broken."

Wait till you try to genuflect. Father Matt and the vet drive off, and behind them appear clouds of dust that settle slowly. I think I'll go back up the valley with the cattle.

"Hold it there, son. You and I got work to do. Rope the cow with the star on her forehead, and we'll take her down to my place."

The cow comes easily. She looked at me like I was a harmless bug or something while I slipped the noose over her head.

John takes the rope from me. I'll follow behind. This cow must have had her quota of calves already, or else we would slaughter a steer instead. Look at how she walks. Hips go one up, one down, the other up, the other down, without a care, all the way to the slaughtering shed probably. If she had any brains she'd whip her tail around John's neck.

"What do you want me for?"

"Got a feeling about this one. Want you to hold her."

"Maybe I should go back and let the herd out to pasture."

"I already did."

Theresa is mowing hay. She doesn't look like John at all. You'd never guess that she goes to college, because she handles the tractor

like a regular farm girl who never left town. She must see me, she's waving and coming this way. She's got her favorite outfit on again: the two-piece red bathing suit, the straw hat, the boots. John sees her but keeps on walking with the cow.

"Hi!"

"I see you've got your outfit on again."

"Well, I might as well get a little tan while I'm doing this. Honestly, it's hot enough to tan me black. What are you doing down here?"

"I have to help your father."

"I'll give you a lift back to the monastery when you're done, if you like."

"I don't know, I think I'll walk."

"It's no trouble."

"But I have things to do. Anyway, I guess you'll be leaving for school in a few weeks. Maybe I'll see you before you go. If not, have a really good year. I'd better get going."

"Okay, but stop in before I leave, Michael. Promise?"

"If I can. See ya' now."

I have walked about fifteen or twenty steps away from her now, and behind me there is complete silence. Why doesn't she start the damn motor? There it goes. There she goes, racing the tractor back through the field in fourth gear like a fool. She's sharp. God, she's sharp.

John's leaning against the door like he's been waiting for three days. Let him be irritated, I don't care. Too bad.

He gave me the eye as I walked by, without saying a thing out loud. I swear his tongue must be in that good eye. His mouth never has anything to say, but his tongue-eye never shuts up.

It's dark in here, even with the light on. Solid concrete, the whole thing. This old lady knows what's happening, John was right about that. She keeps her head away from me, and she'll kick if I get behind her at all. God, you could smell the stench of blood in here without a nose. John has the rifle out.

"Get the rope, son. Be careful about it, we had our share of accidents for today. Now pull her head around, out of the corner, so that she's standing and facing me."

She knows what's going to happen. She won't budge and I can't pull any harder. Please, c'mon. Move. Goddam it, MOVE!

"Easy, son. Bend her tail."

That does it.

"Fine, that'll do, right there. Grab the rope close to her head so she'll stop looking around. That's it. Stay back."

The explosion. The cow goes down like a rug was pulled out from under her. The concussion and shock have frozen her open eyes. A knife slits her throat and a river of red blood streams out and into the concrete drain in the middle of the room.

"Open that door there, and get me the big knife. There's only one big one there."

I go and heads on a wooden rack, inside. Feet tied in fours. Bladders and guts in piles. Calves hung by the heels from hooks and I feel sick with the large knife now in my hand.

"Thanks, son."

He slips the blade into the belly-hide and begins to strip the hide and the guts are aching to tumble out. Chains and hooks hang from the pulley on runners overhead.

"Get the hooks over here."

I shut the door quietly, not all the way, so he wouldn't hear me leave. Air as I run, air that whistles in my ears. There's the herd back in the valley. Twenty-seven now. They look like ants on a strip of candy. Theresa is cutting hay, coming this way, but she doesn't answer my wave. Maybe she can't see me because I'm in the shade.

A minute ago the cow's eyes were two feet from mine. She was standing right next to me. She was alive and dumb. She just was.

Into the field and the sunlight. Yes, she's waving, she sees me. The shimmering heat from the motor distorts the tractor. She's headed right at me but the tractor doesn't seem to be moving, it hardly grows bigger at all. Then Theresa smiles and the motor roars so loudly that I can't hear her words but I see her mouth moving and then she turns down the throttle. It must be all over my face.

"C'mon Michael, I'll give you a lift."

My feet stand on the hitching bar and my hands grip the back of the seat she sits in. Two brown dots, beauty marks, are at the base of her neck. A crescent-shaped scar, pink from the sun, is just to the left of the small metal clip on her back. All her back is brown except for the white shadow of the top-piece that is just above it. Bushes go by slowly on the side of the road. Two children in front of a permanent trailer wave and she waves back. The monastery on the mountainside is hidden by trees, except for the spire of the church that sticks up into the sky, higher than the green trees.

Theresa has no folds of skin, no heavy creases, where her side becomes her hip. Then she is yelling over her shoulder, trying to fight down the roar of the motor.

"I'm going to turn down to the river. There's a deep hole near here, and I want to take a dip."

I see that she doesn't expect an answer.

"Duck down."

I do and the branches sweep by overhead. Theresa's face is buried in the steering wheel and her free hand holds her straw hat at her side. Branches catch on the wheel, then whip overhead. At last the sound of the motor decreases and ends and the sudden silence is overpowering.

She leaps off the large rear tire, holding her straw hat on her head with one hand. I put my foot backwards and it never seems to reach the ground but the ground moves up to it.

Theresa wades into the shallow riverbed. She scales her hat towards me but it lands short and I have to bend quickly and pull it out of the current. The water is clear in the pool before Theresa wades in. Then she can't touch bottom any longer and she splashes a stream of water at me that hits my leg and the cloth turns a deeper blue where it is wet.

"C'mon in, Michael! It's great!"

I hang my shirt on a branch and put my socks into the boots and then put the wallet and comb on top of one of the socks. With my pants on I wade into the shallow part and stand there, looking at her. The stony bottom is waving crazily because of the distortion caused by the rippling water. Theresa's red bathing suit is shaking and bending and enlarging under the water but her face is still and precise as she watches me. Then I dive in and surface near her.

She puts both hands on my head and dunks me so I rise up and dunk her in return and then she splashes me so I dunk her again and in her laughing struggle I feel her red bathing suit rubbing against me, then not, then rubbing again. She stops splashing and looks at me from a foot or two away, right in front of me, and the tongue in her eye is wide and then the tongue in her mouth is up against my clenched teeth. The red cloth touches me. Her arms are locked around my neck. Her eyes are closed.

I am under the water, free from her, kicking towards the bank where I emerge and water streams off me and out of me as I pick up all my things on the bank.

"Michael, wait a minute!"

Through the bushes and trees, running barefoot with the shirt and boots in one hand, with the other hand pushing branches aside. But some of the branches still whip the face and the wind moans and roars in the ears. Then I am walking and the woods never end but the road appears and I stop on the border between the two. She was in the water, inches from my face as I gathered my things on the bank. She was thirty feet from the bank and when she began to swim towards me while I gathered my things the bank moved closer to her.

I pull on my shirt, sit on a rock, and wait for my breath to return. The spire is sticking above the trees that hide the monastery from sight. My breath is back so I pull on my socks and boots.

With my eyes fixed at a certain forward angle in front of my feet as I walk, the ground seems to whiz by. If you watch the spire while you walk, it gets *no* closer, step by step. You have to look at it only once in a while, and then you notice the difference and know that you are closer. Theresa. And if you looked down from higher than the clouds on a clear day you'd never see me or the road. I still feel where the red cloth brushed me. And maybe not the monastery.

*FOUR POEMS BY PETER PAUL FERSCH*

**BLACK HONEY**

Black honey blooms  
only once a year.

Red lilac bleeds  
into the snow.

Out of the sun  
fall  
yellow oranges.

Blue fire  
licks  
the icicles.

In the blackberry eyes  
of the grizzly bear  
beats  
a cold heart.

Something Black drips  
from the bark  
of the blossoming cold.

## AUTUMN FEELING

The black hair  
of the wind, like smoke  
in the riderless sky.

The paper snake in the grass.  
Whispering behind doors.  
A hand full of sky in my pocket.

The black spaces  
of air will  
increase.

The heart of a salamander  
rustles in the leaves like  
fleeing children.

## HEAT

The open book  
in the shade of  
orderly rows of palms.

Noon  
falls like a black bird  
from a sky of leaves.

Heat  
with closed lips  
across the path.

Airy acrobatics  
of a tongue  
that tastes of orange.

The empty bottle  
tells the story  
of thirst.

## YOU'RE TIRED

You're tired  
but this is not the hour  
of your Fatherland.

Your black hair  
still smokes  
in the easterly wind.

Offer no resistance  
to the teeth of sharks  
when the black sail  
of your voice  
sinks into the sea.

You're tired  
but this last hour  
is without duration.

PETER PAUL FERSCH's outstanding translations of Georg Britting appeared frequently in *Prism international*; he was preparing a book-length manuscript of Britting's prose at the time of his sudden death last year in New Orleans.

*TWO UNTITLED POEMS BY WILLIAM L. FOX*

questions I might add  
together on a machine  
and roll on a stone  
    leaving clear  
imprints in the sand.  
it's another thing  
to get all the names  
right.

\*   \*   \*   \*

shall I write a hundred  
poems tonight  
if I grow a tree will  
the Chinese love me  
is my wall greater than  
theirs?  
    do they still paint  
it white  
    and how are the bridges?

do they still have use for  
wood, are their backs  
still tired,  
    is water any cleaner?  
    does the dragon smell  
so much,  
    have they fossil fuel  
    enough?

I leave letters out; it's  
warm tonight; let the  
Chinese read what they can —  
their eyes have slits  
    anyway I care if  
    yellow is a color  
fish come in, rainbows  
why not poems?

WILLIAM L. FOX is a young writer now attending the Claremont Colleges in California. Poems of his are due to appear in several North American journals and in two anthologies.

*TWO POEMS BY LEN GASPARINI*

WOMAN IN LABOR

For your sweet sake  
The world should be a streamlined womb  
With chrome-plated parts.  
In the hospital corridor I visualize births  
Regular as cars coming off an assembly line.  
Entering your room I see you magnified  
With life. In a sexless bed. Thirsty.  
Travailing.

It hurts like hell, you whimper.  
Unable to help you  
I feel conspicuously useless.  
My presence becomes a performance  
Of waiting.

## WEEDS

They seem to multiply overnight.  
Heaven knows I hoe them often enough,  
Eradicating the gross  
And more troublesome ones.  
Still they survive the hoe,  
The herbicide — holding their ground  
Like they own it — disheveling my lawn,  
Offending my flowers.  
It's not their appearance repels me,  
But their outrageous lack of restraint;  
The way they invade my garden  
With such vigorousness.

O weeds! why is it I envision  
Every seed a siege, every root a rebellion?  
Who am I to deny them wild growth?  
Somehow I want to spare their weedy lives.  
I want to call them by their proper names.

LEN GASPARINI's first book of poems, *Cutty Sark*, was published by The Quarry Press in 1970. He is presently editing *The Collected Poems of Bertram Warr* for Ryerson Press; his poems and book reviews have appeared widely in Canadian and American journals and anthologies.

## SWEET AND SOUR

ROBERT GIBBS

Your round bottomed wok  
    wears a fine mandarin lid  
    burnished like a gong  
You hold your head back  
    from your cutting board  
    and tighten in your hips  
as if the world's motion  
    away from you  
    would tip you up  
    spill you over your edibles  
    sliced almonds and bamboo shoots  
    and land you  
feet first in your own sub gub

The secret is you say  
    brandishing your butcher knife  
    over a chicken's slit skin  
to always cut away from the bone  
    and you never mince words  
    for any recipe

Outside  
against the trees  
white rain slashes straight as daytime lightning  
and yellow birch leaves  
point their own way down

The secret is you say  
    snaking off a peeling  
to chew the core  
split the seeds  
and taste the green trees inside  
    folded in as tight  
    as firework dragons

Chairman Mao's smile widens the TV screen  
the pinpoint pulses forming his gray lips  
succeed each other rapidly  
His dancers leap and brandish lightning  
Cymbals once clashed take their own sweet time  
in stopping

A fine show you say  
The secret about all apples is you say  
to spit out  
the shrivelled bitter black end  
    blossom  
    where spring bees might have waded  
    for all you know or don't  
    bellydeep in golddust

Your gourmet nostrils  
twitch at the thought  
and explode allergically

Gesundheit

The secret is you say  
to keep one thing from another  
    never mind how much  
    you mix them up

ROBERT GIBBS has published two books of poetry, and had poems in many Canadian journals. He teaches English at the University of New Brunswick, where he is also Poetry Editor of *Fiddlehead*.

## THE SIGHTING

PAUL GREEN

### 1. INVISIBLE ALIENS SLIP THROUGH OUR NORTHERN LIGHTS

I am glaring down from 10,000 feet  
through thin splintered strata of stone-green sky  
through split laminations of the ice-green light  
through slide after fractured slide of hard air  
into the snowdrift.

Whiteness is all  
all light is glazed  
light-waves and ghosts move more slowly here

I burn with a dry white light  
over the snowdrift;

I burn a green hole in the sky  
over the snowdrift;

I can sift and destroy any grain of snow  
(It will burn before it arrives at the snowdrift)

But I cannot make out the grey mass of my dreams,  
the yolk that wobbles inside my shadow,  
as my blur grows sharper  
against the snowdrift.

It is easy to lose height  
over the snowdrift.

Soon I shall fly in my sleep like a floating stone.

### 2. BREAKING THE LINE OF THE SILENCE

I am glaring down from 2000 feet  
over the snowdrift.

The snow has stopped crawling all over this secret wasteland  
but even behind smoked lenses my eyes burn.

The huge white ledge of the ice-age horizon quivers

These motors cannot hold perfect pitch . . .  
One overtone can be lethal  
    over the snowdrift.

I do not know which machine will design my ghost.

3. BENEATH THE PERMAFROST THEIR ENTRAILS BECOME ARTIFACTS

I am glaring down from 1000 feet  
    through the crazed plexiglass floor of this vehicle  
    into the snowdrift: the snow makes no move.

Under the crust (snow/stone)  
Any deep shelters or caves must be ice-packed;  
their stalagmite horns point: inwards and downwards.  
Perhaps someone claws through a seam of black blood  
under the surface of the snowdrift.  
Perhaps some kind of inhabitant uses this snow  
to preserve or compress his dead women  
under the weight of the green stones,

no-one has ever existed, perhaps —

A shape steps out of my shadow and moves  
    the snow makes no move but this point keeps moving . . .

My blurring dials waver like a single insect:  
    White is the colour of cataract:  
        In the blindness that flares up beneath me  
            something small and alive is moving.

4. THE OPAL LIGHTS OF ALL POSSIBLE DEATHS IN HER EYES

Between the vehicle's scorched rim and a page of snow  
there is less than one-tenth of an inch.

Pause:

    I sit in the infra-red glow of my hot black cell.  
    The starlight makes tiny holes in my hand . . .  
    . . . footprints are making a final spiral  
    around the blind side of the hull  
    towards this cramped blister of one-way glass.

A girl's shape steps over the edge of the shadow.



the black thing that is nothing speaks again  
as the knife edge of the galaxy turns

As she removes her dark glasses  
the snow flares up  
As I turn on the strobe in the cabin  
her body twists, I look through her eyelids —  
— how can I ask if she sees me watching,  
the opal lights of all possible deaths in her eyes?

5. AFTER THE BLACKOUT THESE LAST READINGS

I am flying stone-blind in slow orbit: 10,000 feet.  
The snow falls in shreds for the last time.  
I am drifting. Whiteness is all.

She is somewhere, on or beneath a surface.  
She is somewhere, beneath those stiff heavy sheets.  
When she sleepwalks into the maze of my cortex  
she does not undress  
for I, unidentified flying observer, must grope out of flight trance  
at random, but frequent moments,  
to find the same pattern still fading on the screen:  
The lines of force that flow through her solar plexus  
flex steadily towards the north.

It is time.  
It is time to retreat through the tunnel of sub-space.  
It is time to return to my home-built black planet.  
It is time to retire to my sinking black palace.  
It is time to record this last rite.  
I play myself back into darkness.

PAUL GREEN'S poems, reviews and articles have been in many North American and English journals. He has also recorded poems for CBC's radio *Anthology*, and had his own weekly radio program on CBC, *Little Brother Saul's Solid State Soul Show*.

*SIX POEMS BY JOY KOGAWA*

**SATURDAY NIGHT IN OSAKA**

Strolling along the stretching Saturday night streets of Osaka  
Between Osaka station and the dark corner of the YWCA  
Jostled by mini car and multi-legged man  
In narrow lane of lantern light and noise  
Screeching brakes of unoiled bicycles  
Pachinko parlours, glowing purple escalators  
With my Japanese face in my dragon lady disguise  
English like a dagger in my teeth  
Flashing out against lonely challenging men  
“Be my friend, Miss? Have some tea?”  
Shrug. (I don’t speak Japanese anyway, kid.)  
I saunter back to the safety of the Y  
And glumly brush my fangs with toothpaste  
Like a million other antiseptic inhibited biddies  
Who fear to look ridiculous or worse  
And for the rest of the evening  
Thumb through a Japanese-English dictionary  
And listen to the man in the next alley  
As he directs the traffic of a swaggering Saturday night  
Shouting “Orai Orai Orai (All right. All right.)  
Among the centipedes and dragonflies and exploding neon lights.

ON MEETING THE CLERGY OF THE  
HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH IN OSAKA

Heralded into a belly swelling bladder bloating banquet  
Where the excessive propriety is hard on the digestion  
Elegant ladies in kimonos and holy men with holier manners  
Bow and re-bow in strict pecking order  
Munch the meal and mouth polite belching and  
Rush at flood tide to the integrated toilet  
Where men still proper and black suited in a row  
Stand toes out and eyes down in syncopated gush  
While ladies in kimonos mince by without blush or bellow  
And I follow snuffling to hide a guffaw though  
Why should I laugh — which reminds me  
At the Osaka zoo my friend kept pointing out  
The peeing fox and the baboon's purple bum and such  
Asking how to say these things in English  
And I tried to explain about the odd Canadians  
Who hide their excretions beneath layers of strange sayings  
And have no bread and butter words  
To describe these ordinary things.

## PUBLIC BATH

Daily to the ofuro  
With basin, soap, towel and thirty-five yen  
With neighbors strangers and friends  
To boil away altogether  
All together in the bath  
And with wash cloth rolled tight  
As hard ball pumice stone  
Scrape and scrub each other's backs  
Already lobster red from steam  
Squat and flob flob with soap  
And splash and soak again  
Till steam and dumpling soft  
We merge as one warm vat  
Of boiled jelly fish  
All our offensive scabs and irritations  
Rolled off in communal banter.  
Would that this could be exported home  
And politicians and business men and sons  
Could meet together in the public bath  
To batter and scrub each other raw  
And dissolve the ills of the day  
And my frozen neighbors in suburbia  
Grannies and babies and mothers  
And children all wrapped in skin  
Could melt at the end of their day  
In a warm soft body blending.

## GLANCES

At first glance I am in a no-shout, no-spank  
Network of sensitivity training course graduates,  
The only reprimand being "Everyone is watching you."  
Fierce eyes, fearful eyes are more than enough  
And shame is the public watchdog.  
At second glance I notice tiny pock mark  
Scars on the back of a lady's hand and remember  
That peculiar old Japanese punishment  
Of setting a sen sen size piece to smoulder  
And burn a brand on the naughty child's skin —  
A strange code of barely discernible public glances  
And private barbarisms — a constant inconsistency  
And multi-standard code of behaviour.  
By the fifth and sixth glances I come to a tangle  
Of subtleties, stomach ulcers and suicides  
And I surface for air in an art gallery.  
On one wall hangs an outline of a pot in red  
With the English word POT printed in green.  
A thin line borders the picture  
With dimensions in neat Roman numerals  
Marked in the lower right corner.  
At first glance I am drained of subtlety  
But by the fifth and sixth glances  
I am fleeing the art gallery  
To watch a tea ceremony  
Where guests empty their minds  
As they empty the contents of ancient rustic tea bowls.  
At first glance the tea ceremony  
Seems a tedious discipline fit for old ladies.

## AT JINDAIJI TEMPLE FISHING POND

Rooting for the smooth grey fish  
Being hooked and snared by laughing child  
And powerless in the cool grey weather  
To leap out of one element into another  
Wishing only to avoid the death  
Of being hooked on my gills by some cosmic child  
And gleefully serenaded into a pebbly blackness  
Of some gourmet's solar intestines —  
Saying with vehemence I am a fish  
And will die the death of a cold grey fish  
Near my familiar mountain waterfall  
But even her fishermen dangle  
Worms on hook into the stream of my peace  
To pull me up into their rare foreign air.  
Above the surface of my sky  
Pure white seagulls circle  
And I know that if I bite  
It is for a devouring and an end  
To the swift flash of my dark  
Sporting body beneath the bumpy waves  
But what does it matter to rot here or there  
If I cannot will away this child  
And the expansive smiling of his father.

FOR THE ANNUAL SERVICE OF THANKS  
THAT KYOTO WAS SPARED THE BOMB

For the fact that this temple was not bombed  
And these dragons still stand guard —  
For this network of lanes on the city's edges  
Shaded by ancient trees —  
For this pre-Meiji pond and its family of rocks  
This still living and aging thatch roofed house —  
For Kinkakuji and Ginkakuji and countless wooden buildings —  
For these and other treasures still preserved  
We give thanks oh military strategists  
And with a happy unbirthday to you Kyoto,  
Pollyanna city of grace and gratitude.  
A few miles away in Hiroshima  
The wide boulevard in front of Peace Park  
Is jammed on International Peace day  
With a generation of students  
Who feel they know what to say.

JOY KOGAWA's poems have appeared often in Canadian magazines, including *Prism international*. The six printed here were written when she was in Japan last fall on a Canada Council grant. She lives in Ottawa.

JANIE KENNON has had stories and poems in various Canadian journals, including *Prism international*, and on the CBC radio program, *Anthology*. She is a graduate student in the Creative Writing Department at the University of British Columbia.

## LETTERS

### *from Another Country*

JANIE KENNON

*A letter, dated 1905*

When they first appeared to me, there were only two or three of them, crawling on the wall, or overhead—I couldn't bear it, especially when I slept, and brushed them to the floor and stepped on them and the servant swept them out. In the mornings, the outside wall of the main house would be covered with them; during the heat of the day they withdrew, under the eaves, under the floor boards, under the soles of your shoes if you stood still. During the night they crawled about everywhere; we crunched them under our boots like brittle twigs blown in the door.

In the compound the house boy and the field blacks and I dumped the crushed ones in a pile and poured on gasoline. The fires burned all night, as I went ahead through the barns and out buildings with a huge torch and scraped them off the ceiling with the flames or held it up for light so the boys could sweep them down stunned and charred, some of them still burning. After, we picked their dead, shell-like bodies out of one another's hair and shook out our clothes and crawled under gauze as heavy as bandage

to sleep. And I would wake up in the night feeling the quick scramble of their horrible crawly legs across my arm or on my face.

Curiously, these didn't sting or eat the stores piled by the wharf, but only multiplied — their generations a matter of hours. And then Handle brings me your letters; you say not to kill the things, they are useful, a harvest, in fact, that you have organized your farms for the business of breeding and selling. And he says to me that you've grown rich and run boats on the river and have cleared out miles and miles of jungle away from your houses, you've filled the swamps and changed the patterns of the animals to suit your seasons. As he came from your house, he saw many servants raking white poison around the trunks of trees.

But this is to say, I have gone into the marketing myself, as you advised. The first returns are satisfactory — I am rich! I expect boats on the river momentarily; the boys, who looked to me before for liquor and a kick are waiting for new clothes and tools — we start to clear as soon as they arrive.

A postscript. The stories continue of your beautiful horse that will jump as high as the head of a man and carries you over the mountain to the sea. I too have trained my thoroughbred, which I relied on before only to keep me off the ground when we tried to kill and burn the crawling ones. It wouldn't jump at first. Again and again I raced it at a fence, the boy beat it from behind, I spurred it and hit it with the stock whip when it refused. It jumped through the wire once and cut up its legs. Foam from its mouth ran down the reins into my hands, it rolled its eyes and pulled its head around and back to my chest, coming back to me, away from the bit. Finally there was no difference to the horse whether it jumped or not, and it took off far back from the fence, up out of the torn-up ground and cleared it in a huge leap.

*Another letter, not dated*

You must come at once — the boat that takes them away is delayed, they are dying, they suffocate in their own numbers. We have no room to store them, we are burning the dead ones all night but their generation is so short, they breed and produce and suffocate in a few hours. The poor things; only the ones that crawled up our legs, that hung on to our arms, could we save; we are trying to isolate some now — it must mean some shift in the moon, they seem to realize their own end and multiply in greater profusion and

increase the rate of suffocation. I've imagined for days what it will be like after they are gone.

\* \* \*

How can I be sure time is passing, if the boats no longer come? The birds re-cross the sky, restless as clouds; jaguars sleep in the dust of the road, the deer stay grazing in the clearing until noon. Still, the jungle doesn't quite close in. I have sent you a great deal of money and the photograph — where is my passport? Handle and I keep the paths clear, and repair the wharves and the sheds. There is nothing left undone here. We are going to a cooler country, a land like a deep watery drain, and singing and singing in the dark dark pipes, it is doubtful that officials or you can recall me to my empire of sand, indistinguishable from yours, which contains only stars.

IRENE SCHRAM's fiction and poetry have appeared widely in North American journals. Horizon Press, New York, recently published her "Poems, Hard-Edge and Soft" in its volume *The Smith Poets*. She lives in New York.

# That Old Soft-Shoe

IRENE SCHRAM

TWO CHILDREN, Jamie and Nikos, six years and five, have been missing in the park since one-thirty, and now it is four. The police have been called in, the Fourth Precinct, and they are searching everywhere for the children. We are all searching: through the park, from the swings and sandbox to the chess tables and the three hills. Here is the place where crazy people gather — the paths converge, in the center of the park and just on the west side (construction continues on the east) and form a fine, big, circular concrete area. It is backed by a stone bust of a man on a pedestal, and faced by one, two, three lines of benches made of natural stained wood. It is a new park, or rather an old one being redone. There are three paths converging, and along both sides of each the new benches run. Today is a sunny day in the beginning of spring, and the park is full for the first time since last winter began. As soon as the warm weather comes in each year every space and every bench is filled with its group of people, and that group's particular audience of three or four times as many as are seated stand in a crowd, facing them, laughing or talking, shouting in agreement or approval and all of them, everyone, fills the park with life — the performers and their audiences, all the children and their mothers and fathers, the old women and old men and the sun worshippers, one giant black man in short pants, sandals thonged to the knees of his enormous legs and a turban on his head, who

turns and turns, arms raised, worshipping the sun, for hours and hours every day.

The crowds make it harder to find the lost children. Today every bench has its audience and it's difficult even to get through. There are performers playing from every bench, while the wildest extroverts and craziest people choose the open center space. Just now in passing there's a young and fat brown Indian man in a tight black topcoat. His bare hands are fisted and stuck in his pockets. And he's dancing. With his hands in his pockets and his head tipped to the side, looking like an act on Ted Mack's *Amateur Hour* or the Ed Sullivan show, with his whole body, actually, tipped on the diagonal, he's dancing, he's tap dancing. The soles of his shoes are far too soft to make the clicking, but he tap dances, on the cement, hands in his pockets, and sings:

"Once in love with Ah-me,  
Always in love with Ah-me,  
Ever and ever . . ."

and as we pass he stops short, midway through a slice of the routine and in mid-lunge. Aiming forward, he stops himself at the front of his thrust and holds himself there, pointed at us, leering. He's frozen there, in his lunge, and it isn't clear how he sustains the angle without losing his balance. But he does.

Then we go and sit on a stone wall, thinking where can the children be? The park is half-fenced off, only half-rehabilitated, and on the other side of the fence there is heavy machinery. In fear that the lost children may have gone over the fence, women and men are seen climbing over it, at different points, and just a few running the long four blocks all the way around to get to the other side and the entrance to the construction area. There is a gate there, and they've forced it open. We can see them through the fence, moving and searching among the piles of rock, sand, gravel, dirt, and the steam shovels, bulldozers, cranes, tractors, and big slabs of paving rock, large broken-up pieces of cement, flat but as big as boulders; and the Arch, standing intact, not scheduled to be torn down, rising in its rock high over the shambles of the rest of it, straight and square and tall.

Nothing is working. It is a holiday weekend and the trucks and engines are shut off, everything's closed down, there's no fear the children might be injured by machines. But Nikos is a precocious

little boy who might climb on anything, get into everything, hide anywhere, and so there is reason to fear.

Looking up, the Indian dancer stands in front of us, staring. He's walked over to us, and he stands, while we sit, and he glares down at us, seeming dangerous. But when I meet his eye he can hold it only for a few seconds, and then he turns and leaves, returning to the statue area and going on dancing.

A woman joins him just to the side of the stage, in the park, in the center spot of attention: a girl in her early twenties, in a black leotard over black tights, and fat, fat all the way down the line, face, chest, arms, legs, middle — standing there on the grassy area just adjacent to the stage, one arm on a tree for support, while the other arm and one of her legs has a little dance-exercise it is doing, again and again, although only a few of them should exhaust anyone. In the motion she raises her arm and leg as straight up as possible, and then ripples them on out to the left, all the way, then ripples them back in, and then down. She does this motion over and over, she keeps on doing it and never stops. She is so fat that her whole body ripples when she does it and not just the arm and leg — her torso, her enormous breasts, the two balloons of them swaying and swinging with her up-ripple-throw-return motion; and she makes it over and over, over and over, tied to the tree by her one hand that's grasping it.

Right where she stands, around the tree she's leaning on, but last summer, a large group of children, ten or twelve of them and including Jamie and Nikos, sat, their eyes intense, as if were they even to blink they would lose sight of something. And there was something, a praying mantis on the ground in front of the trees. There he was, just as he should be: poised on the earth, looking as still and inanimate as the bark of the tree or the earth itself, with no tension apparent, waiting for his prey to come near. If you looked very closely there was the slightest left-to-right sway to his head — a dirt-brown bead — but his back, just like a twig, and his hair-thick, brittle and stiff legs, were stock-frozen still. The children sat in such rare silence around the tree, their legs crossed, bare knees sticking out and perfectly still, watching the mantis as they talked in whispers about it:

“He must be hungry.”

“Why does he sit so still?”

“No he doesn't, I saw him move.”

“His head is moving, only a little.”

“No, his leg moved. Look! Right now!”

He'd picked up a foreleg and bent it at the knee. It had a *knee*, unbelievable as a knee seemed on so hair-fine a leg. He spent nearly a minute doing it — lifting the leg up the fraction of an inch, and bending it at the knee, slowly so the action was barely discernible. Then he waited again, unmoving again, still on the ground before the tree, still slow-swaying his head, the one leg bent.

BACK IN MARCH: BALLET MUSIC fills the air. There's an old woman, in an old coat, with a yellow face and a sun reflector she's holding flat out from her neck to catch all the sunlight, trap it and melt it on her face. She's sitting on a bench facing the stage area. But her eyes are shut, the sun washes her face her skin is a landscape of wrinkles and it's made out of hide, or of scales like the back of an iguana, and the sun floods it. She has a portable radio playing the ballet music from Faust. The fat girl hears the music, looks annoyed, and then gradually adjusts her ripple-and-swing to match it. But the Indian man is oblivious to it, he clearly doesn't hear it, and he just goes on dancing, just goes on singing,

“Once in love with Ah-me,  
Always in love with Ah-me,  
Ever and ever . . .”

the old woman takes the sun; the fat girl holds the mantis-tree as she ripples to Faust; the Indian soft-shoes.

JAMIE EBERHARDT, the six year old child who is lost, is a thin intense boy, terribly fair, with his blond hair and white eyelashes, and his hair straight and fine and long on his ears, forehead, and neck. And Nikos is almost as outstanding with his darkness, his shiny smooth helmet of hair and his olive skin. They should be easy to find, but they are still missing.

The two mamas of the two lost children are running around wildly, their eyes flooded, from place to place in the park where the children might be; for they might still be here, even after we've looked for them so long. With so many people in the park there is still a possibility that they are here somewhere, and it's better to hold onto this chance as long as we can. We don't want to think they might have been taken from the park.

Jamie's mother is very short, and as fair-haired as her son. She

has a face with rough skin that is a dull red color. Her eyes are blue and slit-small, and wide apart, and her nose and mouth are attractive. Her body is nice, a little thick in the hips and thighs but a flat and tight belly. She never wears a brassiere. She wears old, machine washed and therefore wrinkled sweaters. Today's is purple, the wrinkles set into it, round-necked, short-sleeved, and probably cashmere (originally — now a *rag*). The bottom of her body is pushed into tight bluejeans, her feet in dirty suede clogs, and a combed muskrat-and-beaver coat goes over it all.

Nikos' mama is an American woman who married a Greek who ran off and left her. She lives on Welfare for she will never leave the kid to go to work. And she's insane, the way she clutches him to herself with both hands (she breast-fed him until he was three years old) and pushes him away, just as fanatically, at the same time: he has to be the best at everything. Though he's undersized, he rode a bike at four, roller-skates, ice-skates, and swims now at five, runs the fastest, and jumps off the highest heights. And he never has any bad dreams, does well at Kindergarten, is brilliant in science, can wire anything to anything and *make it work*. And he never plays with girls but doesn't tease them, is friends with the biggest and the toughest boys but is never cruel, he wouldn't hurt a fly, cries at the sight of squashed bugs; but can fight anyone, he'll take on boys twice his size, he's all boy, he'll never back down, but terribly sensitive too: just the best. He's everything.

#### BUT WHERE ARE THEY?

Aren't they over the fence in the construction area? It is beginning to be feared that they are not, and they certainly aren't on this side of the park, we've looked everywhere they could be. We are beginning to fear that they may be out of the park. Mothers and fathers are searching for them, and policemen, we ask everybody: the old lady with her sun reflector, the dancing Indian, the fat girl. . . . There have been bad incidents in the park before. Every Hallo-we'en adults are arrested with bags full of poisoned candy, drugged candy, they planned to give the children: we've all heard of this. And recently in the neighborhood a baby was taken from right in front of the market, on the Avenue. Its mother was inside shopping and it had been left in front in the care of an older brother (of five years) who skipped off a short way down the block and back but when he turned and skipped back *the baby was gone*. The carriage remained where it had been but it was empty. And it would be

stupid to blame the five year old: he could have been stolen too. They must have been waiting their chance. It was the neighborhood, and the times.

The park is full of dangers: take one Sunday, cold and windy in the winter. The park was deserted except that across the fountain a young girl was walking, hurrying in the wind, going northwest; and also across the fountain, but going southwest, was a man in ragged clothes, drunk and lurching and dirty. His path was going to cross the girl's. She saw him coming, realized they would meet, and looped out to avoid it, but failed as he saw her plan and forestalled it by lurching to the side, and as they passed he reached out and grabbed her: this is true. He held her and wouldn't let her go, and said something to her that really upset her, and she tried to pull away, crying "Let me go, leave me alone," as she struggled with him, trying to break his hold.

I started right toward them to help her, but got only two running steps, and then held back, afraid; then jerked forward again, two more steps; and stopped again, remembering my child's hand in mine, and not knowing what to do. As I started forward once more, the girl broke loose and escaped and it was over. The man was continuing on his way, shuffling and muttering, and the girl was crying and running away from him.

Then, unbelievably, a police car, loaded with police in the front and back seats, swerved into the park and started driving fast through it. The words, "That man attacked that girl!" were about to leap from my mouth, my arms about to leap up and point in the two different directions; but somehow they never did it, because all the players in the drama were moving off in their separate directions, *because it was over*. The girl, running, crying, northwest (the police seeing and ignoring her); the man stumbling southwest, muttering as he went; and the police car in the middle, careening through the middle of the set, the park, coming in the south side, rushing straight through to the fountain (which is gone now; they're building another), swerving around it and then swerving back and out the north, driving right under the Arch and then out.

It was raining, wintery, windy, cold, we were going to a birthday party, and continued on our way. The park has always been dangerous.

A FRIEND CAME ALONG, helping to search for the lost children too. We fell in together, continuing to look, and she told me

about Jamie Eberhardt's sister. Jamie's mother hadn't wanted a daughter. She'd wanted another son, she likes boys only. All the time she was pregnant she would talk of the baby growing inside her, and how it must be a boy. "Oh, it's got to be a boy," she would say, whenever we talked. "Girls are so awful."

"How are they awful?" I would ask. "Every baby is different—this one might be awful whether it's a girl or a boy, how can that make the difference?"

"Oh, you don't really think that, do you?" she would say. "How can anyone think that? Every little girl I know," and she named some, "is obnoxious. Aren't they? Whine, cry, it's true. Jamie never cried. They're really different from boys. There's something so special about a boy."

"But you already have a boy, then you'd have one of each," I would answer. "And you could make a girl great. It depends on the parents, and how the girl is treated. They don't have to whine." I agreed that the little girls she'd named were awful—she seemed to know only awful little girls. But certainly there were good ones too, and I named two or three.

Finally she had the baby. First I met her husband on the street, on my way to the park. "Girl," he said, as he crossed the street to meet me.

"What?" I asked, not understanding at once; he'd said "Girl" the way you would say "Hi."

"Girl," he said again, with a heavy face and a small, sour smile.

"You mean she had the baby? It's a girl, you mean Rhoda's in the hospital?"

"A girl," he said again, nodding his head heavily. It seemed he too had wanted a boy.

"And is she all right? And the baby?"

"Oh, sure, they're both fine."

"Well, congratulations," I said, not knowing what I should say. "Don't worry," I continued, touching his arm. "Girls are great. You'll love her." But his expression didn't change at all. "Look how nice," I said, pointing at a child walking past with her mother, and he nodded his head at them. "Do you have a name for her yet?"

"I guess Leslie," he shrugged, and that was all.

That was early in the morning. In the afternoon I called the hospital and Rhoda answered the phone herself. It had been easy, she never had any trouble having babies. The doctors said she should have one every year, she was made for it. It was over in a

second, and there was no pain to speak of. The baby? "Oh, is she ugly," she said. "She's so ugly."

"But all newborns are ugly," I said, "you know that, don't be silly."

"No, she is really *ugly*," she laughed. "You should see her. Ugh!"

"What do you mean? How could she be ugly?"

"Well-l-l, she has little eyes, and a big nose, a really big nose — oh, I don't know, she's just ugly. Such red skin . . . she does have a nice body though, very well made. She looks like Jamie did."

She did look like Jamie had — or any other baby. And not just her body, all of her. She wasn't beautiful, but she was just a baby, like most, and not ugly.

Since then here is what happened, as my friend tells me: Leslie, the baby, had what amounted to a breakdown in the fall — at two years old. It started at Hallowe'en when she became hysterical at the children's masks, and the terror stayed all night, and all day and all night of all the days following, for months. She couldn't sleep — eat — or talk more than minimally. The doctors told them she was extremely intelligent but so totally insecure that if they wanted her ever to be well they were to stay with her every minute, not to leave her at all, to give her nothing except love and support. No criticism, no chastisement, no expectations, no changes, nothing but security. If they can do it.

THERE'S AN OPERA SINGER IN THE center space now too, a baritone, he is the only new one. Everything else is going on as before: the Indian still dancing, girl still rippling, the leather woman still sitting on the bench, though there's very little sun left. And the boys are still missing.

Other children are crying and complaining now, wanting to go home, for they have been out all day and are tired and cold. Jamie's mother is in tears but much calmer than Nikos', who is completely distraught. The veins stand out like ropes on her thin neck. Her face is so narrow it is like a rat's, and her skin is sallow. A cigarette is smoking in her hand, between her fingers, and the hand holding it is horrible to look at, red from the cold and all the nails bitten off. It is painful to look at it. Her thin shoulders stand out from her body in fear: but all for nothing.

For they appear. It's late enough and cold enough and getting dark, and the little boys can't hold out any longer, and they appear, their faces and hands and clothes brown with dirt, shrugging their

shoulders and not meeting our eyes, but looking past us and past their mothers, coming out of a trench they'd scraped out far underneath three thorn bushes in a corner of the park, and then crawled into and stayed in all afternoon, watching us search. Lying still in there, for hours.

They are unhurt, the idea wasn't to hurt themselves. Now with set faces *their mothers* gather them up. We all start to go home: the dark is almost complete. In a few minutes, the park is empty. Last one out: the Indian, dancing as he goes.

*TWO POEMS BY PAUL LAVIGUEUR*

ANTIQUE SPINNING WHEEL

O that a spin of the hand  
And tongues of dust might command  
The minutes to weave once again  
The woman who sat at this spidery wheel  
Spinning yarn round and round  
For the man with the scythe in the field.

She would go on with her woman's work;  
He, in the grass, where he stands;  
And the minutes would slip from their hands.

A READER'S GUIDE TO THE POET'S MIND

I

He has a penchant for experiment,  
Yes — and the grand geste . . .

The custom-tailored man hailing a cab,  
Tails sleek as flippers in the wind,  
Holds out his cane like a majestic wand.

Later, punctilious and proud, he bows,  
Doffing his Homburg, bowler, silk,  
And disappears, in measured step, into the crowd.

This King-pin Rabbit multiplies  
By pulling rabbits from a hat:  
His mind is faster than a thousand eyes.

Catch up at last, and he may melt  
Into the contours of a cloak,  
Become a shadow matador,  
Who dances to side-step himself.

2

He is the one who walks  
The streets of your city, suburb, town;  
Duffer and dapper, half and half,  
A man of opposites,  
Of equal measures  
Of you and other men  
And of himself in them.

See him walking, always walking,  
The restless figure in the mirror,  
In the corner of the eye,  
And in the mind;  
Always there, always changing,  
Shedding the skin of centuries  
Of men,  
Moving towards himself  
Out of the selves in him.

3

Inside the poet lurks an archivist,  
A bald and brittle man, bespectacled  
And *old*, a timid little man.  
The movements of the master  
Are his brute caricature.  
He annotates the twinges of heroic fate,  
The seasoned melodrama of the soul,  
And seals the muted spirits up in glass.

4

If this museum seems a vacuum  
Of dusty boards and ordered specimens  
Of ghosts marooned in drawers,  
Perhaps the guide will introduce  
An album-full of greener haunts,  
Dark proof of an intense Don Juan  
Clutching his hot, moonlit guitar.

The scrolls of lightning that this lover read  
In youth's portentous skies  
Turned out to be his own mistaken fire  
Reflected in a young girl's empty eyes.

Put the document away!  
Call it Exhibit A —  
A scar across the heart's mahogany.

5

The brass inscriptions of the years  
Are brackets, merely marginal,  
A thin perspective at the edge of things.  
Still, life's a stairway that affords a view  
Of many portraits of the man:  
The scribe who scribbled as the butcher slew,  
The quartered jester and striped diplomat,  
Alike distinguished by a hat,  
The archivist too small to see,  
The actor and the acrobat,  
The dreamer who cannot forget,  
And, last, that shapeless mutterer  
Who swallows up the alphabet,  
The man who frames himself in words:  
That metaphor without an end.

PAUL LAVIGUEUR's poems have appeared in Canadian journals, including *Prism international*. New Brunswick Chapbooks, Fredericton, recently published his first poetry volume, *In Other Words, Poems*.

## THE SECOND PLANE

CHARLES KOLTZ

always before I have measured  
from  
zero.  
but not from never —

a flame green horse.  
the lights on water  
lay flat, elongated,  
touching each shore.  
on these  
he crosses  
to  
me.

when soothing thorns  
have  
trapped us,  
he says nothing.  
it  
is  
my place  
to answer,  
his place  
to bleed.

CHARLES KOLTZ is part Blackfoot Indian, has spent the past few years in the poverty program in the United States and is now employed as a dishwasher at Shawnigan Lake, B.C.

## MAGICIANS

EUGENE McNAMARA

magicians are kind  
they look with tender  
pity on our world  
they hover over us  
smiling from balloon  
gondolas, their moustaches  
carving us as if we were  
locked into sword  
pierced boxes  
bored assistants hold  
their tall black hats  
staring vacantly into  
space as the balloon  
dips and rises, perhaps  
yawning as they scratch  
a net stockinged leg

can the magicians help us  
to know what it was like  
in the foreign legion:  
the cool stone walls!  
down in the fort's interior!  
drinking cheap red wine  
which burned the stomach  
already sour with fear  
and hot coffee burning  
the lips as we sat in  
our white kepis at  
rough wood tables  
tearing at our coarse  
bread watching the man  
across the table go mad  
from the sun and the arabs  
his eyes bulging as his  
mouth opens in a scream

the magicians smile like  
king farouk about to bite  
into a nightclub sandwich  
there are no sad magicians

after the final disposal  
of arbour day, mothers  
day and psychoanalysis  
the magicians will still  
be with us, knowing  
our tawdy world of casual  
deceit, misplaced things,  
stuffed credentials  
standing on stiff shelves —  
knowing all of it,  
yet bending gracious  
from their firm world  
of glittering mirrors  
tender hold us  
in their terrible smiles

EUGENE McNAMARA's work has been in *Prism international* and many other journals. Delta Canada will publish his *Outerings* this fall, and *Soundings 70* (Anansi) will include some of his poems. He edits *The Windsor Review* at the University of Windsor.

## OOTISCHENIA

RONA MURRAY

I

After the anaesthetic is over  
the tumour removed  
and the patient not dead  
there are other things to consider :

the river flows by the end of the garden  
from one vast country into another  
and the rock across from the river  
protects or threatens the houses  
clinging into its shadow . . .

The patient takes a trowel, is not dead :  
hard handle against convalescent skin.  
Reality in touching things.

The garden has apple trees and quince,  
pears, plums, and cherries. Grass knee-high.  
Weeds triumph in every direction :  
tall as spears, feathery with sperm,  
unyielding.

After the tumour has been removed  
weeds become honest, uncompromising, passionate,  
beautiful, cunning, clamorous sentinels —

The patient pulls them out.

They grow more sturdy for his handling.

Surgeon, in your comfortable house  
— food on the table, white luxurious bed,  
instruments neatly catalogued, sweetly efficient,  
beautitudes almost —  
did you consider? Have you done a good job?

The river  
flows  
at the end  
of a huge garden.  
The apples fall  
                    and rot  
in the thigh-high grass.  
Winter is coming.

2

When they first came here  
they called this place  
Ootischenia meaning  
consolation  
or some say the beautiful  
the promised land  
They said  
We love God  
we work with the earth  
we live together  
Their trees spread  
over the valley along the river  
Their great square houses  
always built in pairs  
were pink in the evening sun  
Now when the first snows fall  
thistle-down flakes settle  
on each unkempt unpicked apple  
so they are half white and half red  
all over the valley

The houses have boarded windows  
or are charred rubble

3

There is no doubt  
in this country  
even one's bones are cold

ice chunks the river  
and a Sahara of snow  
blue in the half light  
builds salt-dunes  
monuments  
chrysanthemum twisted

Yesterday  
half-eaten a frozen deer  
on a logging road

All around coyote tracks  
and snow-shoe rabbit pads  
but no sound

We move slowly and with care  
in Ootischenia  
the promised land

4

I cannot draw the curtain  
although it is dark  
Birch trees are silver and black  
against the white snow

Now I  
may look into the flakes  
and know . . .

The thing one needs to say  
grows weighted  
Let it break  
let it go  
soft-dropping from the bending branch  
let the simple words be there  
to bless there is nothing else

Outside the window  
there is a river and a mountain  
and soft and god and snow

The whiteness the birches  
grasp me closer  
than can  
any lover or friend

5

There was once a woman  
and she came to Ootischenia  
her body thin in the wind

Snow blocked the passes  
frontiers closed in  
icicles barred  
the furred  
windows

'I am the snow queen'

Once she saw  
a tropical bird  
tail outspread  
feet held high  
walking daintily over  
the snow  
without tracks to show  
it had been

And once a cathedral  
spanning the black river  
huge in the clear light  
empty of people

But no bells disturbed  
the no birds

'Icicles are sharp  
as blades of grass  
clean as knives  
waiting to thrust

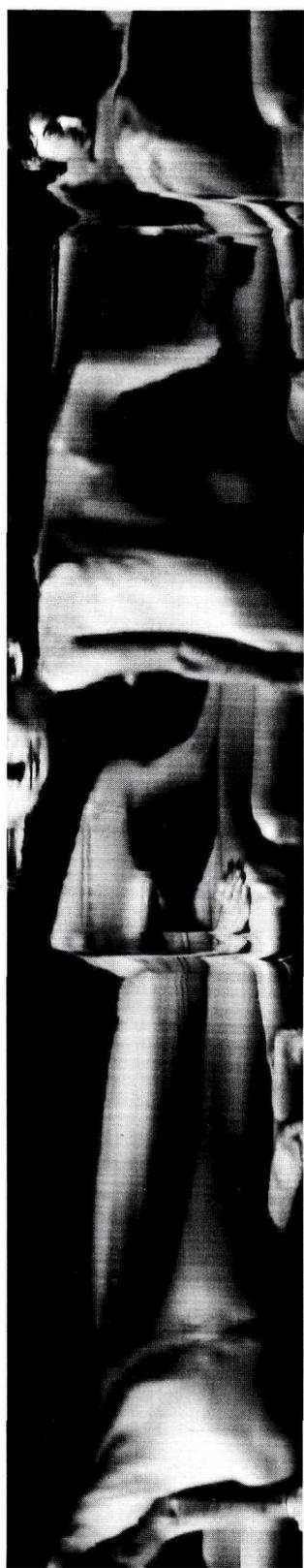
If the roof should fall  
under ice and snow  
weeds will still grow  
push through the hulk  
of this house'

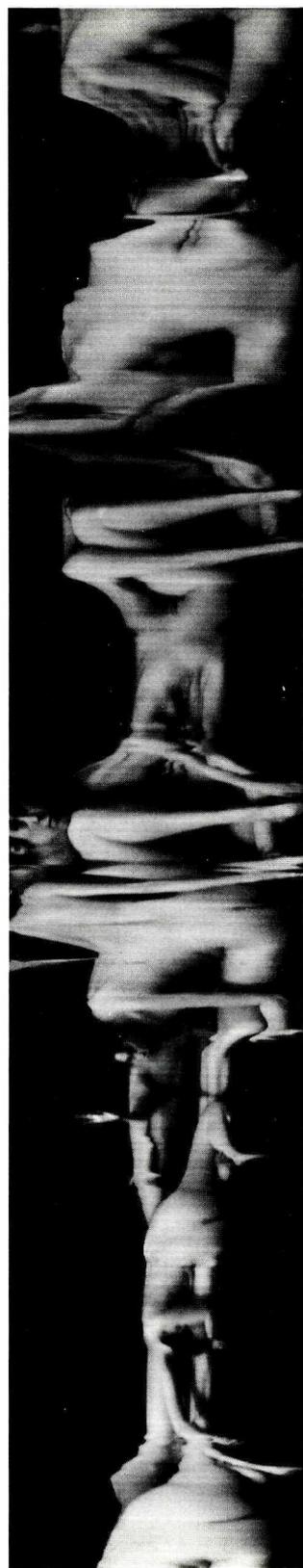
RONA MURRAY has had two poetry books published by Klanak Press as well as individual poems in many journals including *Prism international*. She now teaches English at Selkirk College in Castlegar, British Columbia.

# **P H O T O S**

**WILLIAM G. LARSON**

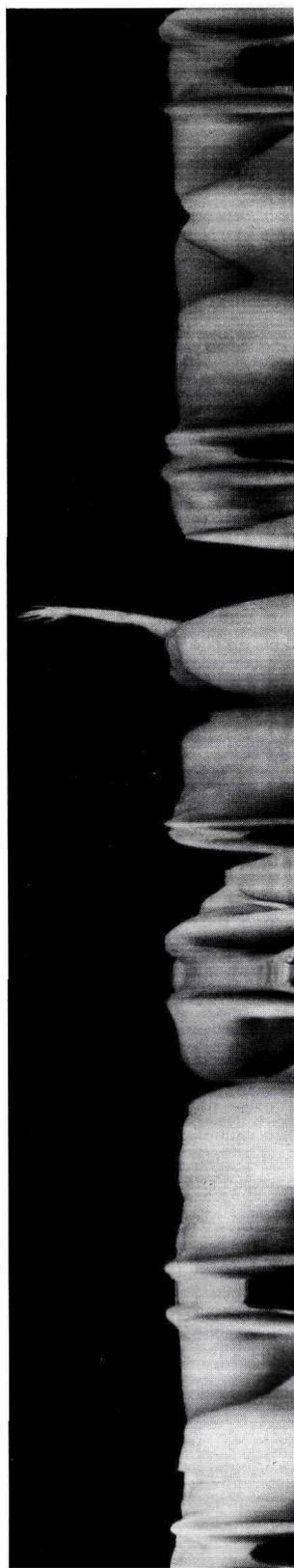
WILLIAM G. LARSON, whose work has appeared in leading photographic journals and in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art, teaches photography at Temple University.

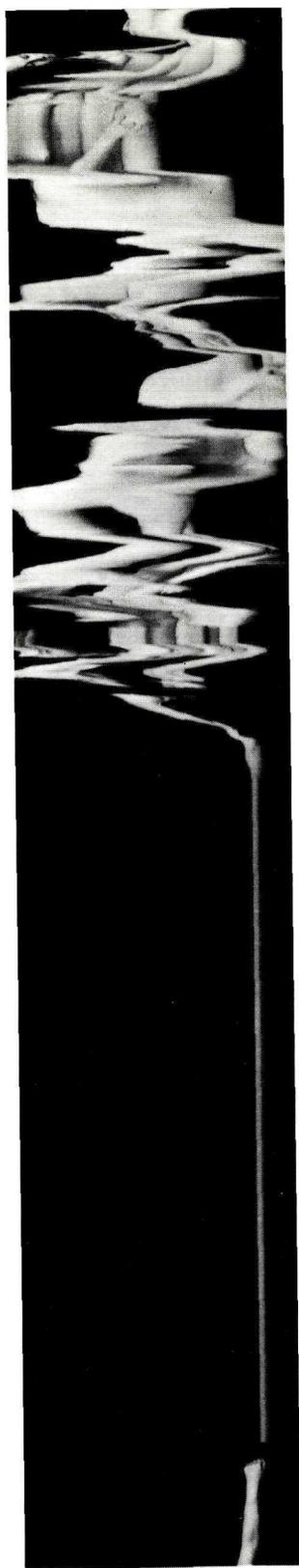


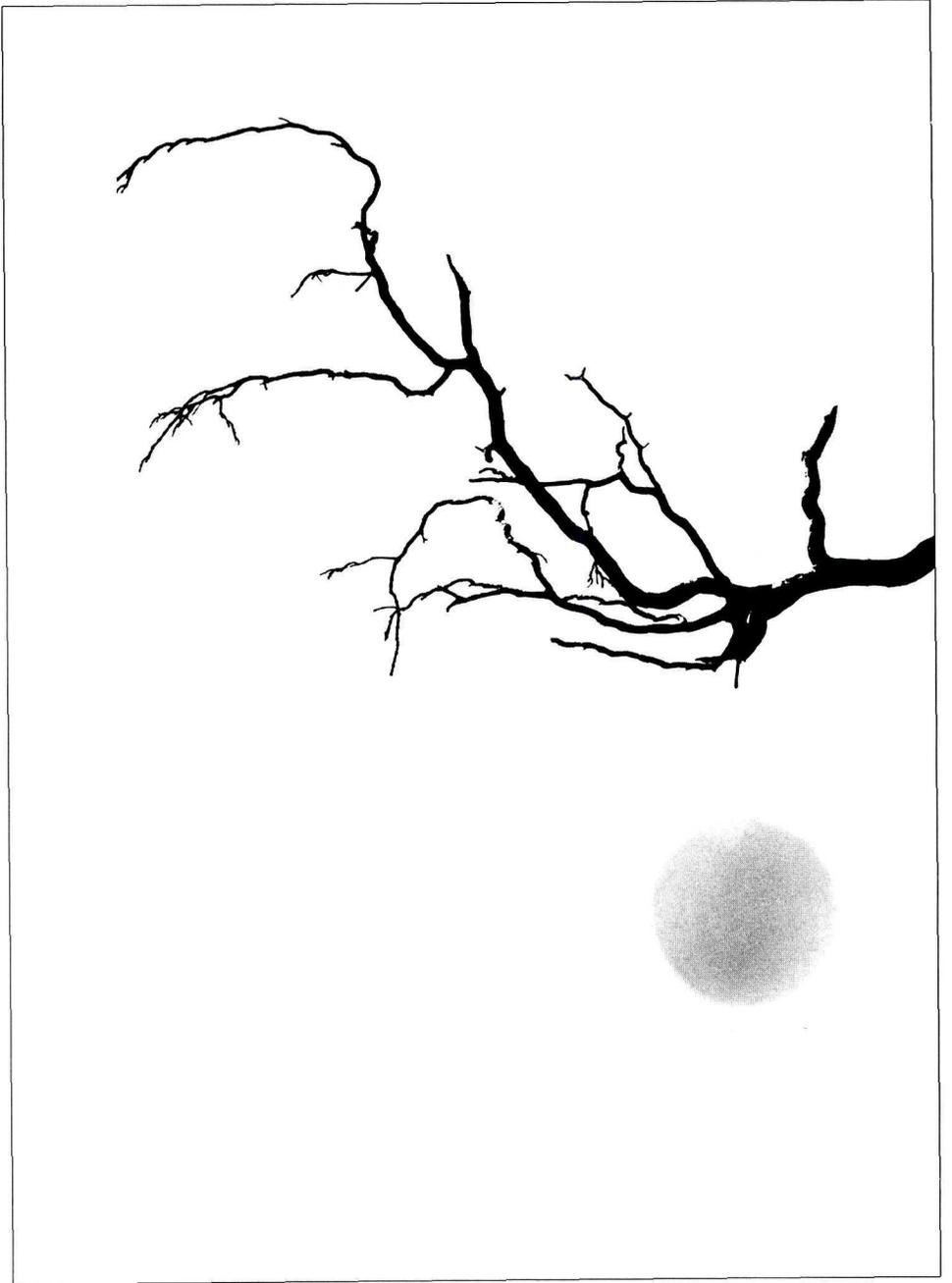












WAYNE STEDINGH's poems have appeared in several journals, including *Prism international*. This is his first published story. He is a graduate student in the Creative Writing Department at the University of British Columbia, and managing editor of *Prism international*.

# SOLITAIRE

WAYNE STEDINGH

THE SUN WAS BRIGHT, the sky blue, and the flowers red. It was terrible. Birds were singing, about what I never knew, rhythmically though, with lots of practice, and very certain. But I was low, and no way to go but up that day. I was going to say night, but I was young then, feeling awful, and low. And I was violent. Friendly, but mind you, there were no friends, a lot of hangers-on, mainly myself, and nothing to do but follow. So there I was, in a crowd of pants and dresses, running, everyone shouting, not saying anything, just running into a skyscraper, beating each other with brooms. But the elevator was jammed. Jammed, I shouted, and ran to the stairs. Some were left behind, but only momentarily. Then the elbows came, in the ribs, and one step after the other, a drop of blood, a pool of blood, and a red stream coming down. But I was going up, up with the crowd, following the leader into a cloud of breath and sweaty feet, not paying attention, everyone pushing. Then I tripped, over what I don't know. I think a foot, a pebble, perhaps an old shoe. At any rate, the floor was different. The crowd going up walked over me, dug their heels into my back, and several passed wearing golf shoes. Then they began to kick, and when I protested they pulled my hair. I soon learned to shut up.

But even then, they kept on kicking, and laughing, which made me mad, and when I tried to stand up again, I saw the uniforms and the billyclubs, and they pushed me down, even harder than the first time. Oh I fought, caught several in the nose, gouged out a

few eyes, and later found a tooth wedged in my thumb. But it was of no consequence.

Then another crowd came roaring up the stairs. There must have been a thousand of them, blind as the first, though more desperate. All I remember is I kept my eyes closed and hoped for the best. But someone pulled me by the ears, and an accomplice kicked me in the testicles. After that, I rolled in darkness, my eyes aching under pins of frost, and I screamed, there was no use being polite any longer. Then someone opened a door, grabbed me by the scruff of the neck, kicked me in the ass, wiggled his toes a few times, and beat me with a stick. It was then I heard the boots. One crashed down on my toes, the other gave me a push, and I landed on a concrete floor in the taste of blood. Then the door closed behind me, and finally, I just lay there, eyes closed, trying to count my wounds. I passed the tip of my tongue over lips that were only slightly there, and wished I never had teeth. Generally, there were so many places that hurt I could feel nothing.

But outside the door there were voices, then another wave of feet. They made a lot of noise this time, the fools. Women screamed, children cried, and a dog barked. Bodies were thrown against the wall, and several heads knocked on the door. I got up and gave the lock a double turn, quietly, so they'd think no one was home. But it was no use. Their enthusiasm continued as time passed. There were shots. I ducked. Felt nothing. A large body hit the wall, groaned, and crashed to the floor. Then a woman was hurled through the air. I heard her shriek, strike the wall nearby, and there were a few muffled thumps that drove into her body before she toppled. Then the lights went out in the corridor, and a silence was left behind by the few heavy feet that ran up the stairs.

When I thought it was safe, I reached blindly through the darkness. My fingernails splintered as they scraped the cold wall, and I withdrew. But I started again, more cautiously, with the palms of my hands, and although I couldn't feel a thing, my hands stopped. I slid them over the surface, and made a quick circuit of the room, but there were no pictures, no one, not even a light switch. And as I continued, my feet struck something hard, with legs, and I tripped again, landed on something soft, and fell asleep.

That's all I remember.

I don't know why they put me in here. There is really very little light. Instead of windows there are slits in the walls, one to the left,

the other to the right. And there is a bed. I noticed it this morning when I opened my eyes, just a little. The real discovery, however, came when I reached. You see, the sheets were warm on that side, and I must confess, I've been sleeping with no one. And it's not a case of having rolled over in my sleep. Oh no. I would have known. In here, I would have known. But to continue, when I stretched, my hand fell into the gully of the sagging mattress, and I was sure. I'd missed something. Then I put my head under the covers, not for the first time, as a child I did it often, whenever the black man came in the night. There I could pick my nose in peace and hide it under the box-spring where no one could find it but the spiders. I think they grew fat on it, and sure enough, when I looked under the bed, there was a nest of them crawling in and out of the springs. But for some reason, it was different this morning. They weren't smiling. There was a huge hole in the net. And when I looked closer, I saw that their round little bodies were bloated and their legs broken. And something else. When I reached over, and under, there was a swelling in my bladder, a growing stiffness in the lower limbs, and constant headache. Whenever I moved, it grew worse.

But under the covers it was warm, and dark. I breathed for a while, grew tired, and nearly fainted. But my hand went on reaching. There was a warm spot, warmer than the rest of the sheet, a shadow that stretched and grew warmer until I came to the edge of the bed. Then it went cold. I backtracked, and fumbled about. There were some wiry hairs down there, and a little higher. And down still further, just a bit, were some fuzz balls that rolled into hard little marbles between my fingers. I slid over very carefully, and adjusted the covers in an attempt to trap whatever it was, but there was nothing under me. Then my feet touched something cold. I reached down and found a dead carp, a big tough one, I could tell by the scales, though I didn't look. I tossed it over the side of the bed, it flapped a few times, but it didn't bother me as long as I was under the covers. What did annoy me though was the cold air I'd let in with all this movement. I crouched down on my knees, felt for the shadow again, and rubbed my nose in the warmest place. The sheet was softer there, and moist, and after a while I got very heady. Whatever it was that slept here had a wonderful smell. I swilled around in it, several turns, and grew restless. With the tip of my nose, I tried tracing it again, drew carefully to the left and found it disappeared. I backtracked once again and recovered it, after losing it. That's how it usually happens. There was a line, a

ridge of starch, and as I pressed to it I realized it was an outline, perhaps a man, perhaps a woman. And I grew excited, more determined than ever. Funny, it always happens after discovering something insignificant, how shall I put it, I followed it wherever it took me. But the farther I got from where I was kneeling, the more difficult it became. The warmth wavered, the cold wavered, the line wavered, I don't know which, and the shadow began to lose its smell. And there were times when I got lost as well, when the line went hysterically through an arc, like an arrow without any feathers. But I always managed to recover it. Then there was my nose, and I do mean my nose, the left nostril breathing the sterile sheet, the right the warm musk of the shadow, and it wasn't long before my face became divided by this line. The two halves pulled apart, flew off, and the two eyes came back reporting nothing. The halves never seemed to meet after that. I could only trace the line, ignore its consequences, and hope that a scar would form quickly. But it never did, and the line went up toward the head of the bed where it disappeared before the light near the blanket edge. But it came back again, a little farther to the right, curved, and went down toward the middle of the bed. It was at this point that everything became clear. There was no doubt. I was in the center of an enormous footprint.

Yet there was nothing to do but go on. I adjusted my position, being careful not to let in the light or cold air, and managed to keep my nose to the line. It went farther, toward the foot of the bed, and I found myself tipping over on the edge of collapse. I spread my legs wider, poked my head up like a fool, and let in a blast of cold air. It came in quickly, between the legs, from the rear. The balls climbed higher in their sacs, and I refused to go any farther. The shadow, the warmth, the smell had disappeared, and I had to piss, there were no two ways about it, and no use going on. So I just sat there, poking my head into the blanket letting the cold air zoom again and again. But it was no use. The swelling rocked my kidneys, my knees ached, and I pissed all over myself. It was warm though, and I lay in it, rolled around a few times until it got cold, and I was still.

I tried wondering how it might have appeared if I were outside my tent of blankets, in the room, but it was very difficult. A pair of boots, that's all I heard, ran down the stairs, jumped over the bodies in the hall, and opened the door. Don't ask me, I can't figure it out. They just walked in, stomped around the bed, and halted. I didn't

move, the room was silent, and far off some hardy voices laughed. Then I felt something prodding the blankets around me. A stick, a broom handle perhaps, came down with a whack across my ear. I yelped and felt a length of shit pull itself out of me and roll down my buttocks. Oh it was wet, but it gave me some comfort when the second blow came. I yelped, the stick came down once more, blood welled in my ear and ran over my cheek. I was going to wipe it away but figured, oh what the hell, it's gone. Then there was a pause during which I decided not to cry out again. The boots must have sensed this because they walked away with the broom, closed the door, and stomped up the stairs.

I was injured, injured badly, but it didn't hurt. And there was no helping it anyway. Strength. A good execution and a raw onion would restore my sensitivity. Perhaps.

But there is no food. The bastards who put me in here obviously enjoy it. Once in a while I can hear them laughing above me, undoubtedly the testament of their god, a love thy neighbor as thyself. But personally, I refuse to shit anymore. Excuse me, I meant to say, it's impossible for me to shit, but then, I have no say in the matter. It just goes on.

Every morning it is the same. I'll describe it, in case you haven't heard. Warm. My hands fall in it. Cold. Sometimes I think it comes just to plague me when I'm sleeping, when I'm most receptive. Perhaps it finds me a comfort, though I doubt it. Why then would it leave? Or perhaps it asks me questions, wants to know my secrets, although I can't think of any right now, and when I say nothing it leaves, that's clear. But I can't remember. Maybe it doesn't come at all. I'm not sure. That's certain. But I'm beginning to like this bed. Some time ago, I awoke in the night and found its legs were broken. But everything else is intact. The four brass posts reach for the ceiling, and the springs moan the more active I become. I can't think of leaving it, oh no. Now that I've shat and pissed everything, it feels just like home. But periodically, there are surprises. Yesterday, for example, there were no carp, just a muskrat chewing on a root. I threw him out of course, but he kept coming back again. It wasn't until I wrestled the root from him, just playing mind you, and tossed it out the slit in the right wall that he smashed his head into the corner and died. Obviously, if it weren't for the bed, there'd be no reason to go on.

Yet there is always the room, thank God, and the slits in the side walls where the light shines in, so dim I can't see what I'm doing.

But there's no use. I tell myself over and over. This morning there was a horrendous lowing at ground level, and then a crunching on the stairs below. Something big and heavy was plodding up the stairway on all fours, slipping, carrying itself nonetheless. As it reached this level, I heard leather scraping along the walls, a breaking of bones. Then it pushed right through the door. A cow, a fat Guernsey, ambled into the room bringing part of the door frame with her. Then I heard boots running down from upstairs. I put my head under the covers and peered out at the foot of the bed. A big man rushed in with a gun. But when he saw the cow, he smiled, and his eyes lit up. He put his gun in his holster, ran behind the cow, held her tail up in the air, and tried to suck her off. It was incredible. As he tongued around in the muck, she eased him back against the wall, and pulled him in head-first. And that was the end of him. I didn't move until she left and fell down the stairs, I think. Then I got up, went to the right wall, and pressed my eye to the crack. But the cow did not appear. There was a street below, one I'd never seen before, or perhaps the old street with new tar. At any rate, a military tank roared down the avenue and shook the building as it passed. A car sped close behind. It was full of men wearing brass leaves on their chests, and it seemed, no matter what direction the car might take, they would always be looking straight ahead. Soon after they passed, a road crew came with a steam roller and filled in the ruts the tank left. Then, a moment later, a little girl approached in a white dress. She must have seen me for she waved and raised her creamy white arms to me. Hello, you lovely little thing, I shouted. Then I saw her strike a match, and there was a tremendous explosion. A woman rushed to the curb, clutched a burnt piece of meat to her heaving breast, and nearly collapsed with her weeping. A man walked over in an English suit, and stood over her. The woman looked up at him, bowed her head, and cried: Why? Why did it happen?

He stuck an ice pick through her neck.

I would like to go on, to the other slit, to go on at least, but there doesn't seem to be a reason, other than being able to say, later, I tried. But the longer I lie here trying to ignore it, the more attractive it becomes. And when my feet carry me to it in the hour of

need, I find it isn't a slit at all. There's a crack, but it doesn't go through. I stick my hand in, up to the elbow, in, up to the shoulder, and fumble around. My hand brushes against something cold. I grab it, pull it out. A pair of scissors.

There's nothing else.

But instead, I run to the other wall, throw them out, and dash back to the bed. It's easier.

This is the place, the only place. I'm sure of it now. But the door is open, always open, and nothing to do but close it and hope no one comes to ask if I'm well or need a laxative. But no one comes. I struggle with the door, reseal it on the old hinges, and it keeps falling down. Usually, it happens at night, and I awake with covers off, legs stiffer, and the room colder. And lately, I've noticed my toenails curling upward and a white scum enveloping me from the head down. Sometimes I scratch myself till I bleed, just a little, never enough, and clean my fingernails with the corner of the sheet. It passes the time. Otherwise, it's gotten very quiet around here.

From time to time I hear boots strike the ceiling. There are groans, a sporadic laugh, then nothing but the laughing, and my breathing, the cold room getting colder, memory coming and going, and low again. Again. Low. And lower.

It's cold, that's all I know. My arms are numb, skin clear as crystal, and legs frozen to the sheet.

And the laughing, always the laughing, and all that I see, I see leaving.

It's all clear to me now. Nobody wants to be the last one.

But then, I don't remember. When were there any others?

*THREE POEMS BY JOHN NEWLOVE*

EXPLANATIONS

I write slowly  
because I cut my thumb,  
and I circle the poems  
  
because when they are finished  
they're by themselves.

MY DREAMS

There's a strange dog  
puking in my sink  
where I wash the dishes.  
I wish I were blind.  
  
My dreams speak to me  
with faint English accents;  
the zippers of my dreams  
are frozen solid.  
  
I only looked outside  
and my ears went ping;  
my dreams walked a thousand miles  
in search of mountains.  
  
What they found  
was Calgary; they tried to climb  
a hotel  
with old-fashioned equipment.

Now there are needles  
in the ears of my dreams.  
There is frost on their eyes.  
They try to be brave about shovels.  
My dreams fell off everything they tried.  
They lie on their backs,  
pointing newcomers in the wrong direction.

## SLOW SPRING

Lime-green pants and a red polka-dot handkerchief,  
hanging-on-a-line.  
The trees are fallow, trying  
to pretend to be alive. Touch them  
And your fingers  
Will stick together  
like people on a slow train.  
Their eyes follow you everywhere, yellow and grey.  
The air is colder than your dreams could be.  
The carved boulder in your shoe  
is only a pebble,  
and small.  
In the wind spider webs sway.  
This is Spring, soft ashes falling to the ground.

JOHN NEWLOVE's poems have been in *Prism international* and many other journals. His most recent poetry volumes are *Black Night Window* (1968) and *The Cave* (1970), both published by McClelland & Stewart. He presently lives in Toronto.

*TWO POEMS BY JOYCE CAROL OATES*

CONTRARY MOTIONS

you are the rising  
the pump handle flung up  
like a male shriek

I am the sinking  
the draining of dark water  
back to the private well

your eye in its solid liquid  
moves in the socket  
sure as grease

icy winds  
cascade along the fish-strewn shore  
of Lake Erie: ice like teeth

pellets of ice loosed and biting  
teeth melting back to droplets  
of harmless saliva

the edge of the ice retreats  
to shore on the break-water  
the water-line drops

the empty forms of winter  
smudged as thumbprints  
fill in again heavily with life

## AFTER LOVE A FORMAL FEELING COMES

pursued, I lie down flat  
embraced, it is like a shot  
of five o'clock traffic

oh I am pierced to my heart  
every time  
but then I fill in again  
as if with glue

I evaporate and condense again  
firm as tiny beads  
of frost

reduced to a cage  
of ribs and a smile  
locked between my jaws  
I lie down flat again  
being immortal

JOYCE CAROL OATES' poems, stories and reviews have appeared widely. The two poems here will be included in *Love and Its Derangements*, to be published soon by Louisiana State University Press. A collection of stories, including "Boy & Girl" (*Prism international* 8:3), is forthcoming from Vanguard Press. Her most recent novel, *Them*, received the 1970 National Book Award. She is now at the University of Windsor in Ontario, where she teaches English and helps edit *The Windsor Review*.

*FOUR POEMS BY RICHARD O'KEEFE*

**HUNTING**

He wanted me to shoot, but I said, "No,  
I'm not the man for guns."  
He aimed a borrowed, half-wrecked twenty-two  
At sandpipers and seals.

Each missing shot hit me, hurt me again.  
But how could I explain  
To seventeen years that needed it so much?  
Perhaps in time he'd learn.

Then from the heron-roost of tottering pines  
That edge our crumbling shore  
It flew, then perched. I'd never seen before  
Or dreamed of eagles here.

Bald, ruffled, ragged, huge, incredible,  
He stopped short on a reef  
And stared at us. Before I touched his shoulder,  
The boy put down his gun,

Almost in tears. He didn't understand  
What made him kill his need,  
That three had something as the eagle flew  
We'd never have again.

## AUBADE

The moment before dawn,  
Dark dawn, another day of rain,  
Their voices came again over the house.  
Why had I been sleepless half the night

As if I had been waiting? The birds came  
Low over the house,  
The herons from the point,  
Invisible, loud, close,

The birds who wait in mirrors of themselves  
Through an unrippling day,  
Then strike and eat  
In one sharp sudden piece of broken time.

The silent herons from the shore  
Had tried on voices for the fog,  
Far calls of hunters, cries  
Of welcome, shells and bones of welcome cries.

I lay in bed and watched a tide of gray  
Define the room, fake light,  
The herons' hoarse announcements come and gone.  
Looking for me again.

## AMONG SCHOOL GHOSTS

When I was small there was geography  
To live in, sheltered from the room, the nun,  
The kid in front with icicles of snot  
That crept between recess and lunch to make  
Twin glaciers of depression nourishment,  
The girl who peed no pants and sat and made  
Another puddle with her tears. But I  
Inhabited the dog-eared book and watched

The mores of the sun, where no one cried  
And nothing melted but my heart. The seas  
Were dry and blue, and continents like hearts  
Had pink and green and gold topographies.  
The dirt was different there, where abstract flesh  
Replaced anxiety with photographs.

## REASONS FOR DRINKING GOOD WINE

The extraordinary dream is relevant.  
The chateau in the wine glass opens its gates,  
Admits us to the ruby hall. Inside that drop  
The bloody world succumbs to peace. We step  
Through wine-colored glasses where a woman smiles,  
Withdraws her drapery, and shows us what  
We dream: the body of the glowing world,  
The grain, the grapes, the landscape of its sex.

Was it the vineyard dreaming when we smiled  
In sleep? In sleep we saw each other's eyes  
Reflected, mine the garden loam and yours  
The sea when early sunlight strikes its blue,  
Wheat goldening the shore. Now wake, love, see  
The drunken sun stagger across the sky.

RICHARD O'KEEFE's poems have appeared in various North American reviews including *Malahat*, *Antioch*, *Sewanee* and *Chicago*. He teaches English and Creative Writing at Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh.

*THREE POEMS BY E. CURMIE PRICE*

PART X OF "JOHNNIE KALE'S LAST RIDE"

A legend of dice  
in Texas dust, and women,  
he rode into Oklahoma . . .  
Johnnie Kale (on a silver horse,  
flashing his quiet surprise,  
nigger eyes, one gold tooth,  
and a sky-blue shirt)  
came riding in  
on a Southwest freight  
wearing an inscrutable hurt  
for his forty-ninth birthday;  
leaned into the windows  
of colored town, and laughed,  
whistling like seven  
even stones on the plains  
in a wind storm.

STATE OF THE UNION

Lately I've been sending words  
Out to do my dirty work  
Go up to the gate and wait for them  
Twenty years husband and wife  
Their divorce reminds us  
The state of the union  
Seems wrecked in a network  
Of parallel lies

## THE MONK

With celebrant passion,  
he went at the sky with two hands;  
his hands, eagle claws.

The skin he calls head  
grows tight around his brain.  
Inside his head, eyes  
set in vacant spaces.

Dark sounds  
move through eyes  
behind his head.

He thinks of rocket ships.

Three solitary doves,  
with bloody fingernails,  
from nowhere make dove  
explanations. What? What say?

Meanwhile clocks go  
you're dead, you're dead.

Poems by E. CURMIE PRICE have been in many North American journals, including *Prism international*. He teaches in the College of Ethnic Studies, Western Washington State, Bellingham.

DENNIS TRUDELL's writing has appeared in *Prism international* and many other journals. Some of his poems were published recently in *Quickly Aging Here*, the Doubleday/Anchor anthology. He lives in Buffalo.

## *Ceremony in Tract Housing*

DENNIS TRUDELL

WHAT IF A RUSSELL THAYER, sitting on his front porch one evening after supper, were to see a small truck deliberately swerve toward the curb and run over a cat? Russell, whose wife called him that and not Russ, who had not played high school football, who sometimes unbuttoned the top two buttons of his shirt after loosing his tie and sitting on his front porch of a twilight, was fond of cats and might jump to his crepe soles and stand staring after, say, a rusty pickup truck with a gumball on top. Might watch it go to the end of the street and turn up Crescent and then might rush over to the animal to find it was most assuredly dead. And then discover himself jogging along the sidewalk toward Crescent Drive, a dead-end street: the bastard's truck would give his particular six rooms and a half-cellar away — and Russell trotted tight-lipped and fisted.

Sure enough, minutes later there it was, Esso painted on its killer sides and the driver's door open as though the chuckling owner couldn't wait to get inside and tell his wife about the cat. Or someone else's wife: for the truck looked out of place among the neat lawns and pastel shades of the recently-created street. It was a warm evening; Russell heard himself panting as he moved up the three cement steps and stood looking for a bell or knocker. And finding none, was about to open the screendoor and begin pounding on the inner when someone passed in front of the window beside the doorstep and it was a man in a denim workshirt, and the guy was big. He was very big; Russell had a glimpse of crew cut and shoulders that could not only lean over a murderous steering wheel

but probably exert whatever leverage was necessary to crack a human spine as well. The man was moving the other way and hadn't seen Russell, who did not open the screendoor and begin pounding. Rather he moved to one side, out of view of the window, and stood for a moment with his nose a few inches from the name "Kratzer" in bought, glow-at-night letters on a black mailbox. Then he heard something and saw the doorknob inside the screen door begin turning and, holding his breath, ducked and ran under the window to the open garage and inside.

Heard the front door bang open and the words "... the goddam thing" come down the three steps and wondered how to get back outside and go running across lawns to where he lived. But there was no way, no rear exit, only a door to the house; and as Russell was deciding there was no use hiding behind the handle of a rake, he noticed a power mower covered by a tarpaulin and didn't think but simply scurried under it. Lay there listening to his heart, which suddenly began beating so loud it was clear that not only would Kratzer hear it but also the wife or floozie inside, if not Russell's own wife a quarter-mile away. So this is what a coronary is like, he thought, awaiting the pain. Instead, something else entered the garage, and it was something rumblier than death, something big; it was — and the pounding noise — not his heart but the Esso truck, started up by Kratzer and low-gearred the rest of the driveway into the garage, stopping a few feet from the tarpaulin.

Then the truck door slammed and a new sound, the garage door being lowered and another, fainter — click! — being locked for the night. If not, Russell realized, crawling out weak with relief but also with fear that he'd only managed to delay his eventual discovery — if not for the weekend: for it was Friday and maybe the guy wouldn't take his truck and go in to wrestle with tire irons the following morning. Would perhaps stay home and . . . cut the lawn! Or clean the garage. But surely, Russell was telling himself as he stepped softly around the truck failing to find one, a way out will occur before then. Meanwhile feeling somewhat ashamed at hiding under a tarpaulin to avoid confronting a man he had run three blocks to punish.

The first installment of which — coward or no coward, locked in or no — he was about to administer a few minutes later by poking a hot dog fork he discovered into one of the truck's tires when he heard the rhythm of voices from the other side of the wall he was crouched by. It was impossible to make out words; from where

Russell's ears strained, it sounded like a slow duet in Apache punctuated by the closing of a refrigerator door. There did not appear to be many polysyllabled words being uttered. He counted seven shuttings of the refrigerator and wondered what was being prepared for supper. He pictured Kratzer, hair blooming from the U of his filthy t-shirt, thick lips asneer, standing beside the appliance using its door to italicize the laugh lines as he described the old woman he had sold empty quarts of oil and phantom grease jobs that day. Or the cat he had nailed on the way home. . . .

Russell bent again with the fork and stabbed at the right front tire, but the prongs only bounced. He slid the points down into a groove, but there was still no sssssss. There was no sound at all but his own breathing, including from inside the kitchen and he figured the two must be in an inner room eating and it would be safe to test whether the garage door could somehow be quietly raised from the inside.

This did not prove to be the case and the fork was not able to puncture the rear left tire either, although Russell's mind wasn't really on the jabbing. He was thinking that if he were not to stay in the garage all night or weekend, he was probably going to have to knock on the Kratzer's side door and ask to be released.

But that was crazy; he could no more rap on the door and say "Pardon me, but a rather strange thing happened . . ." than he could butt a hole in the aluminum door. He did consider using the truck to ram his way out, but found that however primitive in other respects, Kratzer was civilized enough to have taken his keys instead of leaving them in the ignition. Which left — what? Only one possibility that he could think of (he dismissed the notion of using his lighter to burn an opening; he would either suffocate or blow the entire place up): he tiptoed over to the door of the house and so . . . very . . . softly turned the knob. Yes. It wasn't locked! He could escape by going *into* the house.

And out through the front door. But later, of course, after the Kratzers — for it began to seem that the big oaf was in his own home, was in fact Kratzer and married to the woman Russell was somehow certain was blonde and bosomy (a rather sweet girl, really, who said yes to the beered-up jerk one night in the back of a mufferless Ford less out of desire than boredom; and married him when she was late that month and subsequently discovered, for there were no bikes or kid things in the garage, that she hadn't had

to) — after the Kratzers went to bed. He hoped it wouldn't be long and hoped also there was no dog inside.

So the running board on the far side of the truck, lest Kratzer suddenly appear for an after-dinner spin or go at the lawnmower, and waited. There were more sounds from the kitchen — no voices this time, just refrigerator closings and sink-sounds; and as the line of light beneath the aluminum door grew fainter, murmurs from further inside the house, artificial ones, television, situation comedies probably. Then finally — Russell's watch said ten-fifteen, but it was seldom accurate — they ceased, the kitchen light went out, and all was quiet. He waited twenty minutes to give them time for tooth brushing, etc., waited another forty minutes in case they hadn't gone upstairs out of fatigue, hesitated another quarter-hour gathering his nerve, then twisted the doorknob and entered the house.

And what if Russell Thayer, having come this far — not really so far, but having wandered across this much emotional landscape of an autumn evening near the middle of his life — were to pause in mid-stride along the short hallway between the kitchen and living room at the sound of the shoe or boot he had *just kicked bouncing across the floor*? From the top of the stairway he had been about to pass came a voice stupid with sleep.

"Who's there?"

Russell made no answer, instead eased into the living room and knelt behind a fat chair.

"Who's that? Who's down there?"

It was Kratzer's large voice, less blurry with each question. Russell grimaced as he heard the floor above him take weight; he thought "The wind, you ass. The wind stirred a shutter. Use your imagination, you jerk, you ape."

"Whazza?" said another voice.

"Honey, I just heard somethin downstairs."

"It's the wind, you ass. Go to sleep."

Russell smiled. He hadn't expected Mrs. Kratzer to sound that hard — but if two short sentences had changed her from a caramel to a piece of rock candy, he was all for the firmer version. "That's right," he didn't dare whisper, "just the wind. He should go back to sleep."

"Sounded like somethin rollin across the floor," said Kratzer.

"The goddam wind. It blew a shutter or something. Now go back to sleep."

"Honey, there ain't no wind tonight. Somethin funny's goin on. I can feel it."

"Look, J. Edgar Hoover, you want to go sniffing around for secret agents or whatever, you go sniff. I'm going back to sleep. Maybe it's one of those nuts who wants to assassinate somebody famous, so he can get his name in the papers."

"All right, Gladys, don't start . . ."

"Read all about it. Hank Kratzer, the oil company tycoon, was found murdered in his bed last night —"

"Come on, Gladys, cut it out."

"He is survived by his twenty-nine-year-old wife, who looks about forty because the big slob didn't make enough money for her to get her hair done once a month. She also seems a little edgy lately because it seems that after a hard day's work, her old man couldn't even raise —"

"Honey, please. I said I'm sorry. You told me you weren't gonna be mad."

"That was when I thought I might get to sleep anyhow. Now are you going to shut up, or do I have to stick my head under a pillow?"

"Ssssh. You can make jokes if you want, but I'm goin down there and check."

"Be my guest."

Sound of bed springs. Sound of Kratzer moving out of the bedroom, sound of a soft click and Russell can see the walls around him in the dim light sent down from the upstairs hallway. Sound of Kratzer's feet on the steps; his voice:

"Anybody down there?"

"Try growlin, honey," came from the bedroom. "Maybe the neighborhood grizzly walked in."

"Very funny," said Kratzer, descending the stairs. Since it seemed too much to hope that one of them might disintegrate and deposit the fellow in the basement, Russell figured he had approximately five seconds before the overhead light would blink on and reveal his ass or ears — neither of which would shrink any further toward the other — sticking out from behind the chair.

Three of the seconds passed; Kratzer's bare foot reached the linoleum at the bottom of the stairs, and to Russell's shock a new voice entered the house:

"All right, buddy — freeze!"

It was his own. And apparently not merely imagined, for Krat-

zer's progress had come to an abrupt halt. Russell thought he heard a short oofing sound as a pillow might make upon being hit with a mallet, but wasn't sure whether it came from the stairway or himself.

Nobody said anything for several seconds.

"Well?" ricocheted down from the bedroom. "Did you find any bogeymen? Don't forget, if they're riding white antelopes, they're —"

"Tell her to shut her mouth," said Russell, in a thin knife of a voice.

"Honey . . . ah, be quiet."

"Wha?"

"Shut up, Gladys, please. Look, whoever you are, I haven't got much money in the house . . ."

"Can it, Kratzer. Now listen carefully, because I'm not going to say this twice. Move a few steps forward and put your hands over your head. On second thought, I want you to rest your arms on top of your head and grab the opposite ears."

"Okay, mister, anything you say. But please . . ."

"Just do it."

"Hank, who you talkin to? Wha's going on down there?"

"That's my wife, mister," said Kratzer, perhaps twenty feet from where Russell peeked around the edge of the chair. Standing in the faint light with arms wrapped around his head, his neighbor looked less like a man than a large ping pong paddle.

"Hank, what is it?" came Mrs. Kratzer's voice, somewhat more shrill.

"Pull harder on those ears, Hankie boy. All right now, tell your wife to get down here."

"Please, I —"

"Tell her!"

"Honey, he says to come down here."

Sound of feet on the floor and into the upstairs hall. "What the hell's goin on? If this is one of your cornball jokes . . ."

"Tell her to come downstairs, very slowly, and stand behind you with her hands across her head grabbing the opposite ears."

"Gladys, do like he says. Come down and grab your ears like I'm doing. And hurry. He's pointing a gun or something at me."

"Damn right I am, Kratzer," Russell said, who was in fact pointing his nose at the figure in the hall and had noticed it begin to quiver. "You a little nervous, fella? I didn't say anything about all that shaking. Stand still."

"Sorry," said Kratzer, whose entire body seemed to be pulsating. "Honey . . . stand be be behind me and grab and and grab your ears."

She did so.

"A little harder there, Mrs. K. We want to exercise those cartilages — those carteli — don't we? That's it. All right now, Kratzer, you're probably wondering what this is all about, right?"

By this time Russell's eyes had become accustomed enough to the light for him to see the man more clearly. Raising his arms had caused the tops of Kratzer's pajamas to pull away from their bottoms, revealing a spill of stomach. His navel seemed to be jumping back and forth in the middle of it.

"Don't answer, Kratzer. Just take off your pajama top. What did you have for supper tonight? Keep pulling on those ears, Gladys. You ran over a cat on your way home today. Deliberately."

It must have been Kratzer who made the pillow sound earlier; he made it again.

"Shut up, I said. Mrs. Kratzer, what did you have for supper tonight? Mr. Kratzer, Hank, why did you kill that cat?"

"I . . . I didn't mean . . ."

"Shut up, you're lying. I told you to take off your pajama top. *What did you have for supper tonight, Gladys?*"

"Tell him, Gladys, for Christ sake."

"Chili."

"Ah, chili. Excellent," said Russell Thayer, who was leaning forward to follow each new turn in the conversation. Having no idea what he was going to say until he found the words moving out of his mouth. Suddenly he was aware of feeling like an animal, a puma, with no thought of his next move but knowing that when it occurred it would be graceful and right. It was difficult to believe that a few hours before he had been cowering behind a lawnmower.

"Was there any chili left after supper, Mrs. Kratzer?"

"Yeah, sure. Plenty. Look, mister, if all you are is hungry, why not just . . ."

"Go and get the chili, please. I would hurry if I were you. If I were you, I would run into the kitchen and be back with it in about twenty seconds."

"Can I put my arms down?"

"Hurry, Mrs. K. Time is ticking. Now Hank, I want to know why you ran over that cat. Possibly you had a bad day and wanted to take it out on something. Perhaps you had a slow day at the

station, didn't make much money. Or the opposite, people kept coming in with flat tires or wanting new points and whatever and you barely had time to go to the john. Was it something like that? I really want to know."

Kratzer's quivering had slowed, Russell figured a result of the adrenalin loosed at the first sound from behind the chair having spent itself. But suddenly the thick body bent forward and made a small whimpering sound. For a moment, for the second time since leaving his porch that dusk, Russell thought he was witnessing a heart attack. Then he realized the man was crying. Russell got to his feet.

"There's no need for that," he said. "I'm not going to hurt you."

Kratzer made another sound.

"Hey look, it's okay," Russell told him. "What's the matter? Why'd you double up all the sudden?"

"I just . . . peed . . . my pants," Kratzer said in something like a whisper.

Russell moved from behind the chair without saying anything. His neighbor was still facing the floor.

"Jeez — what's my wife gonna think?"

Kratzer asked it in a voice so filled with despair that Russell could only stare with the same impotent wonder he felt watching lines of refugees on the evening news. The man in front of him seemed about to pitch forward, and Russell sensed that once Kratzer's form touched the floor it would change into liquid, a small puddle of urine perhaps, and never return to flesh. It was a miracle Russell was suddenly very anxious to prevent.

"Look, take off your pajamas," he said. "Then your wife won't know. I'll say I told you to undress, and — hurry, don't just stand there."

Kratzer slowly raised his head. "You're . . . gonna . . . kill me."

"No I'm not. I'm trying to help you. I haven't even got a weapon. See: no gun, no knife, nothing, just empty hands. Now hurry. Throw your pants over there with the tops, and later you can sneak them out to a laundry —"

"You've got it hidden," insisted Kratzer. "Inside your shirt or somethin. As soon as I'm stripped, you're gonna . . ."

"I don't have a weapon. Look, I'm unbuttoning my shirt. See, nothing but chest. Now hurry."

"Your pants . . . a pocket or somethin."

Russell stared at the man, who still held his arms around his head

grabbing their opposite ears. Then, moving more decisively than he had since leaving the porch, he took off his shirt and threw it to the rug in front of him. Next, fingers flying, he loosened his belt, unzipped his trousers, let them slide to his feet.

"Now, are you convinced? No goddam weapon."

Kratzer took off his pajama bottoms and flung them toward the stairs as his wife appeared carrying a pot. When she saw Russell, or rather his vague shape in the darkened front room, she blinked and stopped moving. But Russell was gazing at her husband, who, it was now revealed, had the normal male parts — had in fact an organ of rather amazing proportions (the thing must weigh five pounds, a corner of Russell's mind calculated: a pendulum, a Louisville Slugger) — but did not appear to own a single surrounding curl. There wasn't a pubic hair in sight.

"What the hell's goin on?" his wife said. "Mister, why you got Hank standin here with his ass hangin —"

"Had a operation last week," Kratzer mumbled toward Russell.

Mrs. Kratzer took the two steps that enabled her to see that Russell was wearing no shirt or pants.

"Jumping Christ," she said.

"He made me do it, honey . . ." began her husband, but she paid no attention, was instead peering at Russell. More precisely at the area between his navel and thighs. Then seemingly against, or at least not wholly under the jurisdiction of her will, one side of her mouth started sliding into a grin.

"Mister, I din think anybody but kids wore them kind of underpants. You look like some —"

And paused, realizing that in moving forward she had placed the faint light from upstairs behind her and behind as well the sheer nightgown she was wearing: the effect of which was for all practical purposes the same as having removed it. Which might not have made any difference had Mrs. Kratzer worn a brassiere to bed that night — whatever sort of special brassiere she wore to mask the fact that one of her breasts was considerably more ample, and dropped several inches lower, than the other. But they were unfettered; Gladys glanced down at them a short reach from her husband's missing thatch. Then she turned back to Russell and burst into laughter.

"Those underpants . . . kill me, mister."

"You're — uneven."

"Lopsided, I call it," said Kratzer, grinning. "I call her Lopyy."

Russell smiled. "And what does she call you — Bald Peter?"

"No. Lonesome Henry."

So they laughed, all three of them, standing there in the dim light looking at one another. Laughed slowly, tightly at first, then moved into a sort of rhythm they couldn't have matched with similar blazers and a year's practice — and then lost that as they began laughing harder, as Kratzer began to guffaw, his wife to shake, her dissimilar breasts jogging under her gown. As Russell, bent to reach for his trousers and suddenly shot from heel to nape with a spasm of mirth, sat on the rug and threw back his head to ride it. Laughing at the fact of their laughing now, as they went into a new crescendo; then started anew as Gladys saw that she was spilling the chili and started pointing at that. Laughing from relief, the Kratzers at the fact that they maybe weren't going to be raped or murdered or whatever, Russell at Hank's having stopped crying and gotten the pajamas off in time and because he wasn't going to have the woman pour food over her husband's head after all.

Finally they approached the end. Russell took a deep breath, feeling it move pure to the sweet cells of his lungs, when Gladys suddenly stopped:

"Hey. I just phoned the police in there."

They looked at her.

"They'll be here any minute," she said. "We better get some clothes on before they take us all in for having some kind of sex orgy."

"Right," said Kratzer, picking up the pajamas and bounding up the stairs to hide them in the bottom of the hamper or somewhere until he had a chance to sneak them out of the house and off to a laundry. Gladys turned and went back to the kitchen with the chili, then hurried after her husband to put on a brassiere and robe. And a Russell Thayer might quickly dress and walk out of the front door to go and bury a cat.

### *THREE POEMS BY STEFAN ROLL*

Translated from the Romanian by Tom Marshall

#### STEPS OUTSIDE

The skin opens its clear pores.  
Death's candle stands in each nerve-window.  
In the pupil of the eye a welder's arc  
makes changes, small explosions  
in which the sun browns like rising bread.

The foot closes cries of wild boars  
beneath itself, and the sloped shoulders  
harbour the dull ache of stone under water.  
Still the light glides on brow, on fur,  
and the blood flows on among the athletes.

Metallic words sound in air.  
Angels lived among us, in sounds.  
What fabulous giraffes  
glared in the city's fires  
and sang their violent news to the twilight air?

Eagles, rivers running through your legs  
with fish, fiery jade in their mouths.  
Autumn forests and the change of foxes,  
leaves falling, rusting like old swords.

The Iron Knight of history passes.

His arms gleam with metal ages.  
His brow invents a new geological age.  
Let's light the last candles and dance  
where the last king's head's cut off.  
The dance is history, and it's all the rage.

## FELINE LINES

Like a cat the storm  
scratches at sky  
with its fire nails.

The moon is broken  
in the fierce night  
by swords

tortured from iron sound.

I close my eyes.

It's all the same to me

whether it's the iron  
or a dandelion  
that has gone mad.

Like a cat the storm  
scratches at sky  
with its fire nails.

## I WANT TO DRINK THE LIGHT

I want to drink the light.  
I sometimes go  
by myself, from the edge  
to the centre of astonished  
suns, holding myself  
as it were, by the hand.  
Down to the last  
candle, *shaped and perfect*  
then back again  
to perceive  
from a little distance  
the miracle of light.

There is a light spent  
in the gladness of each one of us.  
An oncoming light  
concealed only by our tears.  
Let us wipe them away  
with our long lashes  
so that we may see one another  
in perfect light

until I see your image  
in me  
until I see myself  
in you  
as in a mirror that  
one can see through.

In the mirror from which  
I drink in light (sometimes sick  
of darkness) I am one  
who sees for a blind man  
grown huge  
in the same eyeball  
from wounds, from stars, from dust.

It is here that I live  
and from here  
that I travel  
every day  
to drink in light  
for everyone

to return full  
of stained-glass windows  
bas-reliefs  
even sin  
grown giddy and refracted  
when lost  
in so much light.

STEFAN ROLL is the pen-name of Gheorge Dinu, born in Bucharest in 1904. With Tristan Tzara and Ion Vinea he is one of the founders of avant-garde poetry, and is also an eminent journalist. His *Collected Poems* appeared in 1968. TOM MARSHALL is the author of a book of poems, *The Silences of Fire* (Macmillan, 1969), and of two critical books. The founder and editor of *Quarry*, he presently teaches English at Queen's University.

## A SPINSTER'S SUNDAY AND HER JEWELS

STANLEY RADHUBER

She sleeps in the aftermath of gin  
And finally her forgotten body.  
The garden wallpapered to the window  
Fades, and the three times read sunday  
Paper creeps across the shadows of the floor.

The deeper seed of sleep warms  
As the systems of the house die down,  
The snakes curled around her hiss  
Their way past the doomed afternoon  
Into the spinning cave of dark,  
And the scratching slows,  
And all the humming that menaced  
Settles like a choir ending  
A hymn in church. The house is quiet.

She stirs and begins to count her lovers,  
All five, one by one, carefully  
Lest she lose them,  
Over and over again until she's had it twenty times.

O she'd take that doom  
At the base of any stud's tool  
And caress it until she hurt with excesses  
Before she had a thought about it first.

Then in the palsied night  
She lies in stark terror of the closet door,  
Her topaz jewels collapse like thoughts, wings  
Thrashing on the surface of the sea.

STANLEY RADHUBER's poems have appeared in several journals, including *Poetry Northwest*, *Poetry* and *The Northwest Review*. He teaches at Portland State University in Oregon.

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## *Toys of Death*

DON THOMPSON

### TOYS OF DEATH: 1

*And zero at the bone* — EMILY DICKINSON

Tonight, there is a crisis:

all of my senses  
are dug in behind their borders  
patrols bring back screams  
tucked under their shirts  
like captured battle plans. . . .

The lean gunmen of the wheat are laying for me  
and the mad bombers in the orchards

I am a marked man;  
all night I hear assassins whispering  
in the stale backrooms of the grass;

I can hear the brooding of gravel  
and the nagging of brittle wind

soon the crows will be here  
to confiscate my eyes.

Say it simply: I am going mad.

Tonight I offer the last bitter prayer

I have not heard Thee  
with the hearing of the ear  
and my eye has not seen Thee

I have spoken to Thee  
with a tongue of stone  
I have cried for Thee  
and my tears were made stone

I have waited  
far out in the empty dark  
my years fallen about me  
like the stubs of pencils God  
and my skin scribbled over  
with prayers

Amen.

From now on

I will believe only in what I have seen:  
the sky made green by the breath of jade beaches  
iron ore tears wobbling  
down the wrinkles of the earth  
chunks of volcanic glass  
that hold the last thoughts of the damned —

I have listened to them, carefully  
and I believe in what I have heard.

Tonight, I must say goodbye  
to you my darling

something spoiled us  
we could not love.

In hollows  
in the small vacuums of touch  
between skin and skin

there

O there  
the dark ground out our loneliness;

I have seen behind your eyes  
in a light gone mad among hammers  
another sly assassin grinning  
whose teeth are nails

and flowers  
that are skinny disciples of ice picks;

darling, the toys of death glitter  
behind your eyes  
and there are ribbons in your hair  
that tie hands and noose thoughts

I am pulled to you as to Death's Door:  
in dreams of you I stare hopelessly  
and hear, far off  
the howling of a sucking wind.

From nowhere  
from the instant of the crack-up:  
where  
from huge distorted hours  
of unloving  
that have frozen solid and shattered?

I hear God keeps time by counting suicides.

Say it simply: I am going mad.

And it is you, mister  
not her, who drives me —  
if the air is stiff with hatred  
it is you I blame.

Awake in your nightmare  
I heard growling  
and smelled a dingy bedraggled lion

then a bear limped by losing clumps of fur  
that flared like gunpowder behind him

little girls made of sugar & spice  
were eating little girls who weren't

and the angel of mercy signed a contract  
with Evangelist Vending Machine, Inc.

Mister  
there is a riptide in your blood  
and your mind has hardened into sharp coral

domination swims through you like barracuda

and when you speak  
fat and greasy citizens scramble

like gulls for the fresh garbage  
of your words;

one thing is certain:  
your children will murder you

and the longest season of that night  
will last until dawn startles grandchildren  
cutting their teeth on your bones

the children of their children  
will cherish an hour glass  
filled with your own gritty dust

and when they too are cults of warping skulls  
may the wind batter your ghost from its sleep  
to watch ages come and go

according to the still perfect laws  
of nothingness;

I prophesy your fate  
and leave you to it.

Tonight, the falling apart  
then the quiet.

While my cocoon tightens  
I pass time making excuses for Texas

it is a slow process  
starting at the feet:  
happily I give up walking first  
but an immigrant with a wheelbarrow  
hauls me off to lecture the drowned  
on American Rivers

I smile when my hands are pinned  
until a large boy appears who kicks me  
like a tin can  
along the Oregon Trail

there's a certain peace  
in being able to breathe just slightly —  
I must whisper  
my farewell speech before congress  
with only my head showing  
newsmen crowd around me demanding  
to know my sexual habits  
and the content of my last prayers  
I stall until it becomes  
dark and peaceful and pleasantly damp(  
say it simply: I will sleep now  
and dream a way into loving  
)my eyes are moist, softening  
I am wrapped in a gentle sound!  
and something is happening to my fingers!

\* \* \*

Sometimes being very still  
breathing a revolution into the air  
or furrowing wet earth with a stick  
while the mind plows on  
sullen and isolated  
or grinning at enemies with our blunt teeth  
and passing the bottle or lifting the chilled crystal  
sometimes doing parlor tricks  
that involve tying each other's nerves  
into favorite knots  
or lying together  
secretly thankful to be safe  
in the zoo of our own restraint

sometimes there comes over us a tiny doubt  
like the blessing of an embarrassed messiah  
that as far as I know, is love.

Believe me  
if everyone were to feel it at once  
overnight walls everywhere would bloom  
with a new motto: Undertaker, Embalm Thyself!

## TOYS OF DEATH: 2

*Where black is the color,  
Where none is the number* — BOB DYLAN

We are dancing,  
a terrible swarming of the isolated;  
we are nuzzling oblivion's pocket for a sugar cube,  
fencing off a bedlam in our beds  
where we sit tight  
and hug jars of shiny pills;  
we are turning the full circle of the lie,  
not listening for the pure, inward scream  
that will finally splinter our crystal hearts

We are sleeping through an uneasy night  
in iron-heavy hours  
dreamed dense as blocks of hardwood;  
breathing exhausted air,  
we sink toward morning, unwilling  
to squeeze one more day from the pillow,  
and a bit of love, somehow,  
from another's reluctant waking:

In the last hour before rising,  
regret softens, lays flat its quills  
and turns gentle, snuggling  
like an old pet against a warm belly  
as we rest, blameless;  
in the evening we are hateful creatures  
lugging the anaconda of ordinary days —

evenings, our strangled nerves burst;  
and who sleeps peacefully through the night?  
who is not jittery and breathless  
in the dark, waiting for regret to soften?

Come away from it then, come  
quietly from newsreel explosions,  
the slaughtering shrug  
and fire that laughs, hidden in a child's pocket;  
abandon the crumbling suburbs,  
come hear the private noises within motels  
rotting beside antique highways;  
come out of the city,  
off the streets whose new names are slogans,  
out of the catacomb schoolrooms,  
out of the barracks  
and the government job;  
away from both strangers and lovers  
who take the toss off without touching,  
away from gossiping truths  
and the clatter of tin hearts in church;  
come from the last supper:  
cop and assassin at a meal of weapons —  
come away from the dance:

Anointed by the oils of writhing light  
and altared on a sound like midnight fire,  
we almost pray: "Who was it  
drove us beside ruined waters,  
cornered us on these tiny lawns?  
the answer is in an end to answering:  
find a socket and plug in the shriek!  
dance!

let still waters be in his sweating palm,  
greenest grass in the meadow of her sex;  
let basses throb the floor  
while death meanders the air toward us,  
and in the hard flash of each instant  
left to us,  
we dance!"

The least touch is a timebomb;  
in the pendulum swing of a stripper's tits,  
or high heels ticking down a pale green corridor,  
time is passing;  
in Asia, the minute is crushed,  
but where a lost tribe shrinks  
into equatorial night,  
the whole world gathers around a twig fire,  
and a gap in that circle will never close;  
here, a young man,  
whose eyes are the mirror of hours  
wasted among mirrors,  
knows that time is still with him  
and with the girl beside him,  
folded in chemical blankets of herself,  
quietly giggling;  
in another kind of emptiness,  
her father sniffs a gin flower  
and turns toward some woman,  
not touching:

Years of lies surround him;  
gone mad in bad dreams of cold cash,  
he and his years chatting  
strangely over cocktails with plenty of ice,  
listening to love songs  
that remind him of old phone numbers;  
the man and his life under a truce of booze,  
a loaded shotgun in the corner,  
a woman on the bed;  
and hiding their eyes, they fall  
spinning through darkness and burst  
into a black hymn of caressing

Other eyes are narrowing in smoke  
and fingers rollicking for jukebox grabs,  
then thighs grind like brawling  
until beer foam sputters;  
boys and girls work off their underwear  
as though untying knots;  
old folks unfold their bones  
in a whale-slow tussle by half-light,

rolling on the inward sea, forgetful;  
and the young man and his girl  
go on flowing among each other —  
the oceans of their blood switch basins  
again and again,  
bringing them no nearer:  
O the least touch is a timebomb!

Something swallows the shadow of his bones;  
he glares skyward, grumbling  
curses at a moon that no longer changes:  
“It’s over us always, full-round and dim,  
the ruined emblem of a worn-out oracle;  
the dead moon is dead at last,  
tides have all gone flat and women bloodless;”  
a mumbler forgotten in a sanatorium,  
he shuffles off to bed, chanting:  
“Our galaxy sinks through infinity  
like a drowning scream”

Another man is touching  
the harsh skin of a bridge;  
his father, fussing among the stars,  
screws each one tighter in its socket;  
mother is sewing a rag daughter  
to stuff with fog smuggled home  
from a sea dream, years ago;  
a man alone in a cradle of slung steel  
as lullabies only taut wire can hum  
drift him, almost sleeping, into the air,  
still tasting father and mother —  
a trace of acid on lips so dry  
a murmur splits them

And you, old one,  
with lustrous amber fingernails  
like fragments of boomtown bottles,  
wake up!

you’re only drunk on undertaker’s wine!  
old woman, dark side of the moon,

we bury you in bright spectacles  
remembering your piety,  
yet your dark heart is still dreaming  
a nude on red velvet, a long white thigh;  
old man, wake up!  
open the museum of your nerves  
and tell us again how it was:  
praise the taste of whiskey  
tapped from an oak keg

No matter;  
let the dead go down  
bellowing among their own ashes,  
sealed in urns like gunpowder for doomsday;  
let the dead be putrid tar babies  
rotting in the Arab sand,  
or dolls vibrant with cosmetics;  
let bone castles fall, scattering  
with seasons through gravel and wildflowers,  
the knife blood-rusted in a tree;  
let a boy burn in the tangle of his Ford  
while one is flown home from Asia  
in a box that will take the mail back,  
and one more snags on a twig  
where the sly river calms;  
let suicides dance in blacked-out hospitals,  
wet all the sheets  
and throw medicine bottles at the moon;  
let the dead go down, it cannot matter;  
what have they ever taught the living  
waiting to follow them,  
who swallow the shadow of their bones?

We dance on, somewhere  
find a socket and plug in the shriek  
while the dazed years go wandering;  
  
A monk in the monastery of a junkyard,  
knowing the future as if by memory,  
illuminates an alphabet of holy trademarks;  
nightclub impressionists are the only scholars;

quiet men in pale green rooms  
keep up the paper work,  
never voyaging a corridor;  
in aging aluminum cribs,  
a few children live like hermits,  
crying without tears or sound,  
wanting only to touch, to explode

Out in the hard, dry rain,  
a hag is singing a girl's song to a mirror,  
and minutes, swirling out of us like dust,  
sift into the folds of her skirt:  
the dream of our years is deserting us  
as though we were dreaming it;  
then our bones begin to glow,  
casting no shadow:

In that black light, the music flares up,  
burning away all regret, all doubt,  
and we go among the flames  
still smirking the solid ease of empty,  
not listening  
for the pure, inward scream  
that will finally splinter our crystal hearts;  
we are turning the full circle of the lie,  
fencing off a bedlam in our beds  
where we sit tight  
and hug jars of shiny pills;  
we are nuzzling oblivion's pocket for a sugar cube;  
a terrible swarming of the isolated,  
we are dancing.

## TOYS OF DEATH: 3

*(San Joaquin Loving)*

1

I touch the bed, the dented shape,  
lay my hand where hours of us were.

Sifting back into you,  
I reach deeply  
and find us there,  
touching,  
waiting.

2

The distant flash of sunflowers  
in her laugh  
was enough to bring me home,  
let alone her smile  
that stirred spring winds in February  
and set them to polishing the hills;  
just her breathing as she lay sleeping  
naked in the afternoon,  
almost floated on globes of dusty light,  
proved beyond doubt  
that the land was alive to my touch,  
still waiting;

and to watch, in the same light,  
her fat thighs rolling  
so willingly;  
then to go to her,  
kiss and go into her,  
was to be home remembering

how I stood on granite to see the valley  
shimmer into vague distances  
that were part of me.

3

With eyes hard as granite chips  
she walks out into the deepest grass,  
at home and hidden,  
and lies there, drawing me down.

I go among you among the hills,  
beneath rotted wood, darkside  
of ruined and scattered fenceposts —  
uncovering the mystery you gaze from.

You teach me the land, love,  
clingingly spin seasons around us;  
then with cold and scorching, motionless,  
you vision me inside the granite.

4

This is no wind, but a breathing;  
and the river flows from here to there,  
but no farther.

Now stones hold us down or we would float,  
and hang in the air,  
dusty and small,  
amazed.

We lie still  
and you taste of earth;  
bent through a drab pine, sunlight stains you  
the color of this land;  
darling, we are safe in our love:

in the stone-splitting moment  
your moan will root us  
deeper than hundred year oaks!

5

On her cheek is a fading print of grass.  
She smiles and touches her hair,  
wanting the girl in the mirror to stay close,  
always;

but there is no help for it.  
Her eyes move over burned-out land,  
shattering the air,  
and she is gone —

across the slowing river,  
into the hills among split boulders,  
dancing stiffly  
in a winding sheet of sunlight.

6

Your eyes yearn sullenly for waste,  
floating those looks over me  
that settle for hours  
like years of dust;

what in your eyes never cares,  
waiting uselessly to take us  
where no one moves —  
or even wants to?

7

Her glances drop  
exhausted in the sunlight.

She is lying in a field stripped  
of wildflowers;  
there is no wind,  
there are no clouds.

I want to invent something for her:  
a new word or an old flower,  
a danger, a meaning, a deep breath;

but I am a fool,  
and powerless —  
and in this last moment of feeling,  
I know it.

The sky is telling a joke about forever.

## NEWS FROM THE MAN DOWNSTAIRS

LAWRENCE P. SPINGARN

Once I lived on the top floor among bats  
And the dark winds when a blowzy cherub  
Puffed unheard melodies through cold pipes,  
When the rain teased and waved my hair;  
But soon, of course, much tidier tenants  
Tiptoed along my outer bounds, since tea  
Was fetched and sugar and frosted cakes  
To nourish them, though I never dreamed  
Of the service, the maid, or the china.  
I slept higher who wouldn't descend,  
Who couldn't wink at the blond daylight,  
Having treads to chew and tacks to swallow,  
Once, in the top-floor room imprisoned.  
Yes, and now the heaters ring this bed.  
Toys are unwrapped and set around me  
To march and jeer and clamor for my blood,  
The stiff mechanicals of an iron age,  
As I cough up little skulls into basins.  
I am stretched helpless at the winter end,  
The ropes tearing at my flesh, the music  
From a goatskin drum bang to my ears,  
And my tall memory smashed with the clock.

LAWRENCE SPINGARN's work has appeared in *The Best American Short Stories*, *The New Yorker Book of Poems*, *23 California Poets* and numerous in magazines. He lives in Van Nuys, California.

## SASQUATCH\*

DAVID ZAISS

### *SPINE*

That rising sound on the wall  
Is time, its craters open up like crows  
Listening all night for a lighter step;  
Keyholes where a skull was nailed down  
Drop into shadow to eat fear.

We have demonstrated the last  
Hunt, on tiptoe not to wake the glands.  
We are tall enough now to see daylight,

Hairless napes of daylight over  
The room's rim, shaking the ground  
To muster bareback trees out of the water.  
Our safeties have gone off silently.

### *SIGHTING THRU TREES*

Pass the word —  
That yellow eye drilled in the snow  
Is fresh, a perfect cast,  
No bird has fallen here yet this year.  
(Meadowlarks of dawn strike  
The mountain's nipple like chimes.)

The climbing silence of memory,  
A grandfather's clock burning  
At the summit, its hands cut off:

There, it is twelve o'clock at once.

### *BALLS OF WORMS DISENCAPSULATED AT THE SUMMIT*

It was written  
A letter at a time and buried  
With some Shakespeare and some scrimshaw

\* Sasquatch (Bigfoot in Northern California) is an Indian name for the hairy giant of legend and fact who inhabits the mountains of the Pacific Coast.

And a signet ring said  
To have been swallowed whole by Herod the King.

The hammerlock of old alarm  
Threw us to the needle-deadened earth.

We turned our past over on its back,  
Checked the half-life, turned it again;  
A coughed-up hair ball the size  
Of a Banff porcupine  
Spread its winds over the hunting  
Grounds of all our fathers. The sphinx  
In our voices erupted,  
Blotches of earthskin over the headlights rose  
So slowly we were blurs,  
Brilliant pools of scarlet and salt dancing  
Thru the hemlocks in an hour  
Like an arrowhead sliding into the brain.

#### *INTER-VIEW*

On the way down  
The planet was floating over a green tower,  
Our winter clothes had become nests  
At the trail's elbows,  
They still fit, we weren't cold,  
We forgot to put them on.

It seems easier now to go  
Backward, let it all run down,  
Let the visibility sink to its knees,

f/8, the shot coming out now,  
A little fast maybe, the whiskey sky  
Is thin but the broad slope  
Of shoulder lays a wingspan over the moon,  
The belly is a time machine full  
Of trained mice.

DAVID ZAISS has had poems in a number of North American journals, including *Prism international*, *Poetry* (Chicago), *Poetry Northwest* and *Fiddlehead*. A graduate student in Creative Writing at the University of British Columbia, he is also expert in garden landscaping.

This excerpt from *Black Snows*, a novel-in-progress, is SETH FELDMAN's first publication. He lives in Long Beach, New York.

## THE FAMOUS BLACK SNOW OF NEW YORK

SETH FELDMAN

### I

NEW YORK'S FAMOUS BLACK SNOW had begun to fall. According to the Con Ed intra-city loudspeakers, it could be expected to continue falling well into the night with predicted slush accumulations of from twenty to thirty centimeters. Earlier in the day, the moving sidewalks on Fifth Avenue stopped when, according to the loudspeakers, a woman fell into the mechanism near 50th Street, setting off a safety device which, although it did not save the woman, effectively jammed the sidewalks probably until sometime after rush hour. In other news, the Mayor announced that he would again seek a reduction in the number of vehicles permitted into Manhattan and whether or not he got it would, by executive order, place a 30% surtax on all vehicles in use. The four week old turbine-metro strike was no nearer to a settlement. And in closing, Con Ed reported some progress in its efforts to restore electricity to all of Manhattan, some of Brooklyn and Queens, most of the Bronx and a bit of Staten Island by no later than the second week in January.

New York's famous black snow continued to fall on this cold day in November. For Harry Sykes, up for the day from Washington, the Con Ed broadcast was another note to the dirge of his reunion with the City. By 1730, he estimated, there must have been nearly fifteen centimeters of slush, more than he had seen in four years, more than enough to reach the hole in his London Fog coveralls. His feet were freezing on the dead plastic surface of Fifth Avenue.

His boot heating units had not worked for more than a year and Washington's climate had never provided the incentive for going to the incredible lengths it took to get them fixed. Four years ago the change in his pocket would have been exactly enough for the up-town bus; today he was three nickles short. Nor had he seen a bus in the last half an hour as he walked north from the Pan Am heliport.

Sykes had not called Carla Lipton from the heliport or from the airport and had not written her from Washington because he wanted to surprise her, to confront her, to have done with it, to turn his back on her and then leave, having settled this one ache in his life as he was once sure he had settled it four years before ("Are you pregnant? Yes. Are you going to get an abortion? Yes. Do you need money? No."). He wanted things like they were a week ago, in the era before Sam Pomeroy, a fellow Columbia writing seminars veteran, called long distance to Sykes' office ("I didn't know who would answer at your house.") and after some very hurried pleasantries added: "I want to tell you something, Harry, I don't know how it's going to hit you. It's not really good or bad, it's just very strange. Two nights ago, I went to a party up here and met Carla Lipschitz, you remember her? She still calls herself Carla Lipton. She's supposed to be very big in genetic art. Well listen Harry, I went home with her and we took some Librium . . ."

The address Sam had given him was in the 90's, the old Central Park West area. It wasn't far from where he himself had lived in his Columbia days. Then the area had just begun to recover from its sudden introduction into slumhood. In four years, he imagined, some of the grand old high-ceilinged apartment buildings would be rediscovered by the avant rich and renovated to the point where they could demand as much rent as they had in their aristocratic heyday. Carla would be living in one of these renovations if she had really made it "big" in genetic art. So despite the fact that he hadn't intended to, it would be necessary to phone her before coming over in order to avoid the myriad and sometimes lethal embarrassments occasioned by the armed doormen that one found in front of upper class apartments.

There were still some blocks to go until the South Central Park Phone Complex. He stuffed his hands deeper into his pockets, wishing that he had paid the extra money to buy a hooded coverall, even if he did have to settle for a lesser name. Then it occurred to him that he ought to know more about genetic art before confronting Carla. He never thought of that. This had all happened so quickly

that he had had no time to add to his general layman's knowledge.

Of course he knew from bits and pieces of media exposure that man had always been playing with genetics for esthetic reasons (dogs, racehorses, hybrid plants). He knew that Terry North had merely popularized esthetic genetics by using modern laboratory techniques that enabled the artist to produce exotic mutants without waiting for the reproduction of countless species generations. North was some kind of ivy league dropout, now in his late thirties perhaps, who was constantly mumbling remarks about applying all we know to please us.

Sykes had even taken his wife Kathy to see North's *Mountain Condor*, one of the original and certainly best-known works of genetic art. He remembered thinking when he saw the 2800 kilograms of bird, with its 32 meter wingspan, all chained to the wall in front of the National Gallery, what do you feed that kind of thing? Was there some kind of genetic art pet food? The answer might be in the exhibition brochure, somewhere at home — Kathy always kept that kind of thing. She hadn't seemed frightened, or, for that matter, amused.

Sykes found himself in front of the Telephone Complex, nervous, as always, about approaching the telephone guards. As he pushed through the thick revolving doors, it again seemed to him that Bell got its pick of the ugliest and most trigger-happy New York cops. From a distance, they seemed almost human, talking to each other in front of the reception machines, dressed almost casually in their bullet proofs and sparkling white helmets. But as he approached them, all the old fears of brutality and humiliation came sweeping back. Shamelessly, he told himself that he had long ago disowned all obvious vestiges of Bohemia, that if he were at all discreet about it he could pass himself off as the perfectly legitimate Copywriter, Federal Government, National Aeronautics and Space Administration written on the uni-D card he offered to the first guard, held out at arm's length.

The guard didn't bother to point his weapon and utter the appropriate challenge. He merely snatched Sykes' card, not too hurriedly, and dropped it into the police scanner. After the green light proved that the card's bearer was not wanted for a criminal offense anywhere in the United States, the cop took the card from the scanner, looked it over, glanced up for a reaction on Sykes' face and seeing none, dropped the card into the Bell central billing machine. The machine was unreasonably slow in printing out a blue plastic key

tab. The guard handed the tab to Sykes, looking not at the latter's face but rather at the name and uni-D number monogrammed on Sykes' coveralls.

"Booth number C-168, Mr. Sites."

"Thank you."

Sykes walked at what he thought was a reasonably guiltless pace across the reception hall and up the perpetually broken escalators to the third floor. He followed the arrow pointing to "1-500" and walked down the appropriate hall, watching the numbers on the booths grow. All of the booths were filled, some having as many as three people waiting on line outside. The tiling on the floor was slimy wet; the sounds of shuffling, coughs, occasional pleas and curses, the smells of wet plastics pervaded. The 150-200 row had very few people waiting outside the booths. Number 168 was empty.

He waited patiently at the door of the booth until a guard approached and took the key tab. The guard looked twice at Sykes, wondering who this one was who rated immediate access to an empty booth or maybe wondering how he did indeed obtain this key tab. But the tab worked, the door opened with a small buzz and Sykes slipped into the cracked plastic chair. He was lucky. This particular booth had apparently been vandalized recently, for there was a brand new unit on the wall. There would be no mechanical problems. Even the air conditioning worked. It went on as soon as the guard slammed the door.

Sykes took the crumpled piece of NASA memo paper from his coverall pocket and spread it out before him. He dialed Carla's nine digits and a recorded voice answered:

"Click. I am sorry, the number you have dialed cannot be connected until you hang up and redial, adding nine one one seven after the first three digits. Thank you. Click."

So Carla had indeed become a public figure. You had to dial the Central Security tap even to be able to speak to her. Well, Sykes had nothing to hide from Central Security. He dialed again.

"Carla Lipton Incorporated."

"Carla?"

"No sir. This is Miss Lipton's answering service."

"May I speak to Miss Lipton?"

"I'm sorry sir, Miss Lipton works in her laboratory from 1200 to 1800 hours and has left strict instructions not to be disturbed during that time. If you would like to leave a message Miss Lipton may contact you after 1800 hours."

Sykes' watch read 1750.

"Yeah, okay. Tell her Harry Sykes called. I'm in New York. We have business."

He gave the number of the unit in the booth and hung up. She would return the call damn quick.

He remembered he had some good Virginia spiked in his tobacco pouch, so he took that out and stuffed it in his electric smoking tube. In Washington it wasn't legal to smoke before 1900 and certainly not in public places; he had forgotten the New York law, though. The smoker worked blissfully well . . . and it was such a fine brew. That his tobacco had more than the legal dose of narcotic was one of Sykes' few souvenirs of artier days. Now he was especially grateful. His head would be just where he wanted it when the phone rang.

The first time he allowed himself to look at his watch it read 1803. Jesus, he had put that part of his life so far behind him. If anyone had ever told him four years ago that he would come to New York to stand against the door of a phone booth waiting for Carla Lipschitz to call him back . . . it was insane. He had ignored her all first semester. He had thought he could play the musical mistress game, just like college, making his way around the table with the other young studs and the "frightened eyes" as he called them, the older grad students and refugees from the outside world. It was an appropriately artistically callous way of doing business. And the women? They were merely working their way around from the other side of the table.

Carla would always somehow be sitting beyond the next seat on his agenda. Finally, he did get her on January 26 at the third chair from the rear on the window side of the table. They made love (or so he had recorded it in his notebook) on February 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 19 and on Washington's birthday. Then, on February 26, after a pointless discussion at her place, they agreed to separate, as friends, in order to find the inevitable "more meaningful relationships" that lay in their respective futures. She quit the seminars in April, having had the pregnancy exchange sometime in March. He quit in May, the day his year project was due. He went South. They had failed to keep in touch.

The next time he looked at his watch it was 1811. Some seconds later, there was a loud tap at the booth door. He didn't have to look up to know that it was the guard coming to order him to extinguish the smoke. And so he did. For while smoking in booths

was definitely legal, it didn't look respectable to most cops and, of course, you never wanted to argue it. Sykes tried to remember if Carla had been studying genetic art in those days. He couldn't remember anything she might have said about it. But if what Sam said was true . . . the phone rang.

"Hello."

"Harry? Is this Harry Sykes?"

"Yes. Carla?"

"Harry, it's so fucking good to hear from you."

There was the pronounced sound of a tape recorder cutting into the line. It wasn't a necessarily hostile sound. It was just a habit of the New York wealthy to record their phone conversations for future reference.

"Yeah. Did you just turn on a recorder?"

"Harry, don't be so fucking paranoid. You know it's only you, me and Central Security, just like the fucking song, you know, it's only . . ."

Even her voice at the other end sounded fainter now that the tap was in.

"Carla, I want to see you."

"Well Harry I'm pretty fucking busy. I've got to see Johnny Michaelson tonight."

"Who?"

"Who? Oh, flaunt truly. Johnny Michaelson. He's only the Director of the whole fucking Museum of Modern Art."

"Carla, I'm flying back to Washington tonight if I can."

"Washington. What the fuck are you doing in . . ."

"Sam Pomeroy called me. I know about it, everything."

Silence.

"He. Called. You. . . . that prick. That fucking, that fucking . . ."

"I want to see you tonight, Carla. I'll be over in twenty minutes. I expect to be let in."

"Yeah, yeah Harry, of course come, come over. For Christ's sake come but please, and nothing else on the phone, for God's sake nothing else on the phone."

"Good-bye, Carla."

Sykes hung up without waiting for her to say good-bye.

## II

It was totally dark in front of the Telephone Complex as he stuffed his uni-D card and the 95-cent Bell receipt into his coverall pockets. It took him a moment to orient himself, until his New York sense returned. He took out the scrap of paper with Carla's address on it and looked at it until the best route to her place began to recrystallize itself in his mind. He started off west, wanting to skirt the Central Park housing developments. He walked for some blocks, or so it seemed, but the identical facades of the high rise city refused to end and their refusal began to increase the new spinning in his head.

He wondered if the oxygen percentage had slipped significantly and, if so, did New York still bother to declare states of atmospheric emergency? Perhaps the sirens had gone off as he was making the call to Carla. There would be stores of respiration pills in the lobbies of all these apartment buildings, but it would be a thousand dollar fine to take any one of those pills if no emergency had been declared. He couldn't take the chance. He had to keep going until he found a pay respirator and hope he had the right change for it.

What seemed like blocks later, he found one of the familiar red poles, the four machines around it, its overhead light smashed and that one other artifact you came to expect at the respirators, the prostrate body, lying head down on the sidewalk, hand in pocket, groping for change. This one looked like a derelict who would be groping for a long time before he came up with the two quarters. Sykes stepped over the man, got to the four machines and feeling his head going inspected them quickly. His city sense told him that two had definitely been vandalized beyond hope, the third maybe so but the fourth looked all right, had to be all right. He found two quarters and jammed them in; the quick start of the blower sent a tingle of deliverance through his body. He took the mask and greedily drank in breath.

You got, Sykes knew, three minutes of good air for your fifty cents. With thirty seconds to go, finally able to stand straight on his feet, he remembered the derelict. He dragged the man to the mask and shoved it onto his face. The face took in the air unconsciously, then suddenly coming to, instinctually tried to push the mask away. But before Sykes had to actually struggle with the derelict, the latter's city sense prevailed and he forced the mask onto his face by himself, clutching it fervently, trying to suck out every

last wisp of air, breathing long after the last sounds of the blower. And when the derelict finally let go of the mask, Sykes watched the sickeningly sweet smile of asphyxiation brain damage spread across a part-human face.

"Dank oo. Dank oo. Dank oo."

Sykes had been crouching down, looking into what he now saw were the derelict's empty eyes. He got up slowly, only slightly trembling, hoping those hands would not try to grab out.

"Dank oo."

He felt visions spinning before him in the snow. He wanted to puke, but his body had once taught itself that the oxygen consumed in puking would negate the pay respirator. And he knew that he didn't have another two quarters. So he just walked, as quietly and quickly as was safe.

He walked to the southwestern tip of the Central Park apartment buildings and turning north, started up the alleyway of Central Park West. The derelict never followed him. Once Central Park West had been a four lane street, or so he had been told. Now the awnings of the buildings practically touched the bare walls of the Central Park development. The derelict face lingered in his mind. He walked a bit quicker, wondering how safe it was on this particular street. It was not safe in the snow that came at him from all directions, each face a wet frame that fixed within it the brainless smile.

He began to think black snow thoughts: Perhaps the earth was getting colder, as half the scientists believed, for now it seemed to snow more than he remembered it snowing when he was a child. Or perhaps the other half of the scientific community was right and it was getting warmer over the years, for it rarely came down as slush when he was a boy. But whether the earth was growing colder or warmer, he thought, was a question that no man and no science had the luxurious long life to answer. Sykes' feet froze again, his boots taking on more water each time he stepped off the curb into a slush puddle.

He tried not to look at the numbers on each street sign; his city sense told him that the passage of the blocks would be interminable if he did. Instead, he kept his face to the ground, looking up, when he had to, only at the doormen standing inside the lobbies of the ancient apartment buildings. Doormen, years before, had been remnants of the elegance of another age. But there was nothing but brutality in these creatures. They were, to a man, enormous. They dressed like cops, in blue bullet proofs and white helmets, their

helmets bearing the addresses of their respective buildings. Each man carried one of the regulation police security weapons. And they were black, again, to a man. America had learned some time ago that the only thing more dangerous than an armed black man was one with no armed black man to oppose him.

The numbers on the buildings climbed slowly. He knew that Carla's building could not be much farther. His feet were numb now. Soon, he thought, he would be facing *her* doorman, the evening's greatest test for his courage and composure. If, just if, she had become desperate enough in these minutes since his phone call, if she, knowing that he knew, had panicked, if she had taken a genetic artist's obviously cold and objective view of life, if indeed women urge to kill the men with whom they have slept, just if, then it would be no complicated operation to have him killed. What a fool he was for calling her. She could tell the doorman about a molester in the neighborhood fitting Sykes' description ("shoot him if you have to, I'll come to the inquiry"). She could bribe the doorman. If she were rich enough, she could just give the orders, there were a million ways to cover up the facts. How many embarrassing government officials had made their exit just that way?

He was a fool to try to see her. He was a fool not to say anything to Kathy. When she asked him what was wrong, he had been a fool to lie to her ("nothing"). And he had lied to her again about the necessity of the trip to New York that "could keep me overnight." He had taken a chance leaving the office at noon. He would never be able to explain to Kathy why he had to pay his own traveling expenses. He was, in short, going to a lot of trouble to put himself into a lot of danger.

Danger because Carla could destroy him out of an esthetic mania if nothing else. How few years had it been since the death artists? ("Here comes the traveler on the verge of reaching his goal, not expecting anything, right. Okay, ready now? Blackness. He's suddenly dead." Applause.) Of course, death art had become passé even before the beginnings of genetic art. — He remembered that he thought he saw in *Mountain Condor*, beneath the intimidating bulk, a mockery of greatness, a parody of pleasure. If that beak could smile, the smile would be of, dank oo, the hauntingly brainless derelict. — But what about a revival of death art? For old time's sake? How many friends could a West side artist get together in twenty minutes to join her and Johnny Something, big man at the Modern, for an impromptu death art exhibition?

He consoled himself with the fact that death artists had never been allowed to use humans, not even terminal disease cases, not condemned criminals, not even the super-dilettantes who were willing to sign releases for the purpose. He remembered the Hampton murder trial. Not all of the First Amendment pleas that he and the rest of the art world could muster could save Hampton. The court would not even let him design his own execution. As far as Sykes knew, Hampton was still rotting in prison, quite unesthetically.

And the Hampton case set a precedent for all cases involving art and human life. D.A.'s, judges, Congressmen and preachers to this day never tired of repeating the key sentence in the majority opinion upholding the Hampton conviction: "Art ends where humanity begins." He remembered that with no little amount of gratitude. Art ends where humanity begins. That was the basis for the laws concerning genetic art. No human embryos were to be tampered with for esthetic purposes, with or without the permission of the parents. And that was the New York law. South of D.C. and west of Ohio it was still illegal to "pervert the unborn or *any* of God's creatures for the purpose of artistic display." Sykes had read of the Californian who got a year for each of the heads on his three-headed turtles, the Texan who got twenty years for his circular snakes and the Marylander who was publically flogged for his litter of nine-tailed cats. Even in New York, it would be mandatory life for producing mutant humans. Even in New York.

Sykes counted off the numbers on what he knew would be the block of her building. She did live in a good section, he could tell that by the smallness of the curbside puddles, the generally intact street lighting, the frequency of passing patrol vehicles. It was some relief that none of the vehicles stopped to question his presence in the area — a reward, Sykes imagined, for his investment in a London Fog, for his generally tidy appearance, for the easily readable number sewn over his heart. It would be hard for the doorman, *that* doorman, the typically huge, armed black, it would be hard for *that* doorman to claim he had mistaken the deceased for a molester. Sykes went up to the thick, clear plastic door and waited for the common challenge.

"Hold your uni-D to the door. Who do you want to see?"

"Carla Lipton is expecting me."

The doorman ran his eyes down the top sheet of his clipboard. Then, looking up, he stared straight at Sykes' uni-D:

"Do you claim to be Mr. John Michaelson?"

"No. Harry Sykes is my name."

The doorman's eyes went back to the board. This would be it. They never let you call up, they never let you say another word. Sykes felt the beginnings of another asphyxiation attack. His vision was fixed on the surgically clean weapon.

"Yes, yes, here we are, right at the bottom of the list. Harold Sykes. Mr. Sykes, you can come in soon as we run a check."

A step closer. He looked for the slot through which to pass his uni-D. He found none. And now the guard had gone back several feet into the lobby and picked up a small oblong box wired to the wall. The guard approached the door again. What the hell would happen now? He wasn't going to run, not this close.

"I'm sorry, I can't find the slot."

"The slot?"

"For my uni-D."

"Man, there ain't no *slot*. You just hold that card against the door."

This was a new one for Sykes. In Washington they were still willing to take a chance with a quarter-inch slot in the door. But sure enough, here it was considered a better risk to process the uni-D with an electric eye attached to the scanner. It took barely three seconds for his entire criminal record to be typed on the printout. The guard went back to the wall, yanked out the sheet and laughed.

"It says here you had some trouble with Internal Revenue."

"That's been settled."

And it had been. And it bothered the hell out of Sykes that the income tax people who had been so quick to get on his back were sitting on their asses when it came to removing the blot from his record.

"Well I sure do hope so. Oh, come on in, Mr. Sykes. Hell, man with a little tax problem ain't gonna make no great bit o' difference in this building."

The doorman let Sykes in, becoming the second person that evening to neglect pointing a weapon at him.

"Harold, take Mr. Sykes to 14."

But Harold did not neglect his duty. He marched Sykes into the elevator, standing behind the passenger all the way up. Sykes knew that his will no longer mattered, almost a welcome relief. This name-sake guard had become an alter-ego that made all his fortitude obsolete. He didn't think he would be allowed to avoid seeing Carla if he wanted to.

"Out. To the right."

He marched to the penthouse door, his guard close behind. Whatever greeting he had created in his mind, all day, all the way from Washington, in his entire waking life in the last few days, all those words were being hopelessly muddled by the security weapon pointing at the small of his back. Harry Sykes was afraid of even the most mundane day-to-day threats. Harry Sykes was a coward and knew it, never knew it more fully than now, at the time that demanded the greatest courage.

The bell was pushed for him. She came to the door herself.

"Is this Harold Sykes?"

"Yes. It's all right."

She tipped the guard. He turned and left.

"Come in," she said holding open the door for him, backing away.

The door closed behind them. He immediately felt that they were alone. For some reason, he grabbed toward his cardfold pocket, letting his hand brush against it, against where Kathy's picture would be, then feeling self-conscious dropped his hand to his side. She turned from the door and he felt her eyes circling him. Sykes felt his evolving establishment a mutually uncomfortable intrusion.

### III

"You're fucking soaked. Let me take your things."

She knelt down and helped him undo the coverall boot clasps. She was clumsy with the clasps, he assumed, because she had had little experience with boots of this particular price range in the last few years. Sykes tried to keep his eyes off her as he reached down to the first coverall snap at his right calf and worked his way up and around his chest, down to the left boot clasps. He undid the collar snaps and Carla caught both pieces of the coveralls as they fell to either side of him. She took the pieces out to the lobby somewhere while Sykes unzipped his boots and stepped out of them. He was left in the white disposables that he and 500 million other men had worn to work that morning.

"Leave your boots in the hall. Come in here, straight through."

He did so, walking toward the sound of her voice, into the living room, stopping before the sofa, across the room from Carla Lipschitz, because it was certainly a Lipschitz furnished habitat. There seemed to be more furniture than the walls could possibly hold together even if they were not burdened by an overload of paintings,

photographs, mounted certificates and magazine articles. It could have been her waiting room, there were more than enough seats. And then again, it might have been a conference room, as evidenced by the oversized table between them cluttered with expensive art publications, fashionable novels and museum mementoes. Or it might have been a small gallery, judging by the samples of stuffed genetic art. He could not think straight enough to decide. Despite the ostentatious buzzing of what he took to be a quality air system, his head had not recovered from the Manhattan walk.

"Sit down, Harry, before you fucking faint. Here, take one of these." — Carla pushed a small tray of pills across the table with her foot.

He had heard, as had everyone, about the nationwide shortage of respiration pills. There were strict laws against private hoarding, especially in places like Manhattan. But she would never think of covering the tray, or even having the basic humility to hide it beneath some piece of furniture. She hadn't changed. There was the rest of the world and there was her; the sacrifices, to her mind, only went in one direction. ("Everybody feels that way, Harry. What's wrong with having the honesty to admit it?"). He at least felt guilty when he took the pill.

"Well now, do you want to smoke some of mine, needle, Librium or do you want to fuck me? Whatever will make the conversation."

He didn't want the drugs, didn't need the West 90's introduction. As for his hostess, she was modestly barechested, her firm little breasts rather thickly embroidered with a blue and pink glitter that made her look a thousand times more refined than had the brazen red of her Columbia days. Her legs were a little thicker now, or it could be the effect of the transparent thigh boots. Her hair was just beginning to recover from summer beach bald and she had on a very expensive-looking silk diaper tied with a large bow over her left hip. No, he didn't need her or her Librium, for there was only one subject he wanted to talk about, and that subject required no chemical, no Carla's physical crutch to get itself brought to the fore:

"I want to see my child."

And the pre-arranged reply:

"You will, Harry. But I want to talk to you first."

And they both stumbled into silence. He began thinking that he had been true to himself again just then. "I want to see my child" was the first thing he had said to her face just as he promised himself it would be. To a man who had lied for a living that, plus his other

recent acts of courage, was evidence of a threatening hidden stockpile of integrity.

The buzzing in his head suddenly began to climb toward a crescendo. It took a moment of their mutual silence for him to discover the cause: there were flies in the room. A string of perhaps a dozen bright red flies, then a green string, a yellow string and a blue string darted through the room. He watched horrified. He hated insects, flies especially — too many memories of their black swarms around decaying masses. But here, in this most beautiful building, it was as if the “miracle” of genetic art had made the flies dress up for very special company.

“Aren’t they fucking beautiful? The company that bought the idea is trying to get a kit out in time for Christmas and New Year’s Eve parties, you know. You get the eggs and the genetic solution and they’re guaranteed to fly like that. They usually die in a few hours and you throw them away with the rest of the party garbage. Or you just open a window. Give me your address and I’ll send you some.”

He was imagining entire cities plagued by hordes of party-colored flies when there came a doubling of disgust that began at his open mouth and worked its way to the deepest regions of his abdomen. Behind Carla, on the other side of the living room, three bats flapped their way out of a dry aquarium, over a stuffed biplane pigeon, and began to hover closer and closer to where they sat. The creatures began to lower themselves onto her, one on either shoulder, the third on her bristly head. Then all three creatures began to climb downwards, along her nose, along her breasts. He could see now that they weren’t bats, but rather, shiny black lizards about the size of chameleons. Only their wings were bats’ wings.

“Harry, what’s the matter? These don’t bother you, do they? These are my babies, the last of the Carla Lipton mini-dragons.” And to the mini-dragons: “I’m going to have to make more of you, yes I am, babies. Mommy wants you to be in the Modern show.”

“Mini-dragons? Jesus, do they really breath fire and all?” Sykes asked her half-seriously.

“Ha, I wish the fuck they did. Michaelson would cream in his pants.” — She said it lightly, very much trying to make friends. At the same time, she spoke with the patience of a master talking to one not familiar with the art world.

“Would you like to hold one?”

Carla reached for the monster about to make a dive from her

right nipple. He knew he would not survive touching the animal. He politely refused. She let go of the lizard, which slithered down to join its siblings in the warmth of her groin.

"Is Michaelson still coming?"

"Not until 2130."

The flies returned. This time all four strings came through the room in one long line. He found it impossible to think amid the buzzing. He wasn't going to chat with her until 2130 and then be politely shown the door. He was going to see his kid.

"Would you like to see my lab? It's in the building."

No, he wouldn't. By her reaction, he could see that this was a seldom-refused offer. But perhaps she would be able to understand.

"Would you like something to eat?"

No, he wouldn't. He was starved. He hadn't eaten at the office and couldn't afford the meal on the plane. The last time he ate was breakfast with Kathy.

"Well you still haven't told me if you want a piece of your hostess."

She said it as if elaborate arrangements would have to be made in advance. He knew that his eyes were supposed to fall to where the lizards were swarming all over each other.

"No. My wife wouldn't like it."

"Your wife! Harry, you didn't say you were married. Are you really married? With a fucking ceremony and legal papers and everything?"

"And everything."

"In a religion?"

"No. A civilized ceremony, as they say."

"Oh, you should have done it in a religion. There are some fucking faz ceremonies."

"It never occurred to us. Besides, we wouldn't have had the money for ceremonies."

"But why get married if you can't have a ceremony? Terry, you know Terry North the g-artist, he wanted to marry me under *Mountain Condor*, this big bird, you know . . ."

"I know."

"Well, could you see that? Do you know how fucking faz that would be? But then he fucked it. He said something about *Tongue Dog* and I told him to shove it up his fucking bird. But we're still friends, you know." — It came out smoothly, a well-rehearsed party entertainment.

And *Tongue Dog*? Oh, Christ. Some months before someone at the office was talking about a female genetic artist who had come up with a perfectly normal dog with the modification of a long, obscene, reptilian tongue. And now *Tongue Dog* copies were supposed to be very popular among the most fashionable young singles — and he had then sniggered along with the other men. So that's what happened to Carla Lipschitz. He laughed again, to himself this time, but he laughed with a growing impatience. The subject of his child, he realized, was slipping further and further from the conversation.

Minutes kept passing while she dropped her names, while the names bounced on the floor and rolled around underfoot. His body began to slowly deflate, as the respiration pill gently reduced his oxygen need. She asked him if he had ever published. The flies came in and out. He was working on a novel at present, he said, for the last three years. And what was he doing for a living? He was part of a team making up lies for NASA concerning the usefulness of the Mars base. How interesting. How fucking interesting. Did he believe in the perpetuation of the Mars base? No. As far as he could tell, the "pioneers" spent most of their time thinking of ways to justify the astronomical amounts spent on them and were failing even that. How did he know they were failing? Because NASA kept paying him to cover up the failures.

"I believe in the Mars base, you know. Everyone I know believes in it. Science has to expand so art can, g-art proves that."

"Yeah, well I'd believe in it too if it did any good. I mean if they sent back one lousy living fungus, I'd believe in it. And I'd sure as hell be out of a job."

You know, she always thought that the failure to discover life on Mars had something to do with the growth of g-art. It's kind of like we're alone maybe and so we have to do something about it. Of course, she didn't claim this as her original idea (even Sykes had probably seen it in some piece of genetic art propaganda).

"And I don't want to take the food out of your wife's mouth, Harry, but I still believe, and I can't tell you how much, that someday life will be discovered on Mars."

He couldn't agree with her more. For some time now, he told her, he had had a completely unfounded premonition that life would soon be discovered on Mars, either by himself or one of his co-workers at NASA P.R. And he wondered, when the time came, would he be capable of creating that life, of being the anonymous

mother to a convincing horde of little Martians. He could have the personal satisfaction of producing the most sought-after piece of fiction in the history of mankind, if only he could prove to himself and his superiors that his imagination had what the imagination of every artist longed for, the ability not to portray, not to describe, not even to mutate, but to generate life. Then he could be the super-liar, the überfraud. She shook her head. Same old cynical Harry. When will you ever begin to believe in what you're doing? He responded by asking which window one pissed out of around here.

Getting up in a flurry of mini-dragon, she showed him to the bathroom in the far corner of her bedroom. Quaint. There had to be another bathroom in a place this size but he was not going to let it bother him. He told himself that they had been talking as well as they ever had — as if it were good between them. In fact, he could never remember it being this easy to talk in their Columbia days. They had both been so much less mature then and had had so many of those little tricks left. Then he thought, as he was standing in her bathroom, that she was going to make a mistake that would negate the pleasantries and, contrary to diverting him further from the purpose of his visit, would make the pursuit of that business inevitable.

On the way to the bathroom, he had passed the Yes/No Bird, a familiar piece of genetic art. (Did she do the original? He had seen so many copies in executive offices.) The big white two-headed cockatoo sat silently on its perch at the foot of Carla's bed. But while he was looking down into the toilet bowl, he heard the bird being activated:

“Yes, come on, say yes.”

“Yes.”

“No.”

“Yes. No. Yes. No. Yes. No.”

All one head knew was “yes”, all the other knew was “no”. All they knew how to do was answer each other. He flushed the noisy, old-fashioned toilet and walked out into Carla's bedroom. There being no bathroom door, he knew he had been framed and spotlighted for the figure lying on the bed, playing with the knot on her diaper.

“Yes. No. Yes. No. Yes. No.”

“Yes or no, Harry?” she said inevitably. Yes, he knew she was serious. But all this careful contrivance, the geography of bird, bed,

bathroom and spotlight, destroyed any desire he could have had for the idea.

“No.”

“Fuckit, Harry, no one’s that married.”— The remark unleashed a rapid multiplication of Sykes’ combined feelings of revulsion, impatience and hatred for both his hostess and his own tolerance for her evasion.

“Leave my wife out of it, damn you. Go use your dog.”

“Fuck you, Harry. Get the fuck out of my place.”

“Bitch, I told you I’m not leaving until I see that kid.”

“I’ll have you thrown out of here. Do you hear me, I’ll have you thrown out on your fucking . . . Harry!”

Then he was on her, on the bed, just the way she wanted it, the one difference being his hands on her throat. But even as he squirmed around on top of her for better leverage, he knew that strangulation wasn’t necessary for the whole affair. His hands were just superfluous symbols of a new stage in the conversation. Now, instead of trying to placate each other in the present, each would act only out of fear for what the other could do to the future.

“Do you understand me. I want to see that kid.”

He shook her. She tried to stutter something out at him, but from lack of air had to be content with silently beginning to cry. His hands squeezed, as they both knew, not very hard, symbols, he remembered. Then she nodded her head, bug-eyed, as if her last breath were already seeping out. It was his turn:

“I want to go now, do you understand. No more shit.”

She shook her head. Agreement. They had now achieved the “more meaningful relationship” they had begun to seek in other people on February 26, four years before. Sykes wondered, if they had bothered to go through this at Columbia, would he be with her in a more intimate capacity than as co-founder of their bastard? Would he be her personal mini-dragon, *Tongue Dog*, perhaps writing public relations for Carla Lipton Incorporated? Mr. Carla ex-Lipschitz. He gave her her neck back.

He got up. The end of tonight’s installment of the continuing comedy of both of them together, as funny as their ever meeting, half as funny as their ever making anything like love. Ah, he thought, so the subtle difference between fucking and making love was not so subtle after all. But neither was it much of a difference.

He would wait for her in the living room, dressed and ready to go wherever she hid her human genetic art. He couldn’t be sure

she would take him; he had not known her long enough to gauge her under stress. Amid trite meditations of "points of no return" his brain told him that it was stuffed with stained linen and that it was up to him to get it to the cleaning machine, again.

#### IV

Her vehicle left them somewhere in Harlem. The snow had let up a bit, but the streets they walked were nearly knee-deep in a brittle, icy slush. She had said only four words to him since the bedroom, though now she hung onto his arm, if for no other reason than footing. Her wet horse-skin coverall periodically bumped against him. The fur cover on her helmet brushed into his face.

They had taken along only one bodyguard ("He can be trusted."). But even he seemed unneeded in the deserted streets. His only function was to hold the high beam light by which they made their way through the black on black of air and snow. The longer Sykes walked along with Carla, the stronger was his realization that she had no idea of what she was going to do.

"Here."

They turned off the sidewalk and began to walk down steps that led two stories below street level. Each step was covered with slush that had to be kicked out of the way if they were to have any chance of reaching the bottom. They made their way slowly to the last step, where Carla stopped him. She wanted him to face her. He, not seeing the point, complied. The bodyguard was still on the landing above them, pointing the beam down the steps. She looked up to the landing and nodded. The light went out.

"I wanted to talk you out of this Harry. I still do."

With the light out, it became ferociously dark. Even so, he knew that she could still read his face.

"I don't know if you can understand what is going on in here. I don't know if you can appreciate it. We're doing things in art that have never been done before."

He could spit at her esthetics. His kid was going on in there. He understood that.

"Look Harry, I don't care what you do to me . . ."

She was being pathetic.

". . . but a lot of good people have put a lot into this place. Are you listening to me? A lot has gone into this place and I don't want it destroyed, you understand? You can take me to the police if

you really want to, but so help me, if you tell them what you see here . . .”

“No one’s going to the police, Carla.”

He thought she was being deliberately stupid, but he gave her credit for being genuinely scared. She tried hard not to look relieved when he spoke. She lit up in the man’s smoking tube he had assumed she would use.

“One last time, Harry. Are you sure you want to go in?”

“I want to see my son.”

“All right, Harry, but it’s not a son. Genetic art is sexless and sterile. You know that don’t you?”

No, he thought, he didn’t know that. He wasn’t a genetic artist. His boot heaters were working no better than before. And although it was probably his imagination, it seemed that the respiration pill had already begun to wear off.

“I want to see him anyway.”

“Harry, it might be dangerous. They don’t like strangers.”

Forgetting for a moment that he hadn’t decided whether he could trust her, Sykes wondered if this were some sort of sincere warning. No, to hell with it. He wasn’t laughing at the danger, he had just come too far to let it laugh at him.

“All right then, you wait here. There’s an eye on the door that’s programmed only for me and a few others. When the door opens, I’ll press the hold button from the inside. Oh, Harry, it’s only going to fuck up your life.”

She moved towards him. He turned from her. It was going to fuck up his life. At Columbia that was the kind of phrase that could dare him into anything. A week ago, the polite equivalent of those words could block him from the most worthy goals. Now he just wanted to be alone.

In a moment he could hear her go down the last step and through the slush to the door. He saw a flash of red light reflected on the wall he faced and then he heard the sound of the small electric motor that he knew was opening the door. More light. The body-guard would have a good shot now. The corpse could be disposed of in the same place as the defective genetic art. Kathy would be told that her husband had never been sent anywhere by NASA. The last clue would be records of a plane ticket bought to a city of twenty-one million people. Carla must have called twice before he came.

Again a door closed behind them. A dim overhead light barely

outlined a dingy anteroom. There was nothing around them but cracking, infested plaster and generous accumulations of half-frozen dust. He hoped this was some kind of decoy. Anyone getting past the front door would immediately conclude that there was nothing here worth pursuing.

"There's always someone here. We're going to have to wait until they let us in. But before they come, I want to tell you about this whole thing, whatever Sam Pomeroy might have left out."

He looked around the room a second time sure, with her words, that they were being observed. When she asked, he answered that he was listening.

"I got the abortion like I told you I would. Shit, you wanted to kill it and now you're so fucking indignant . . ."

"Go on."

He didn't know why, but her reasoning was wrong. He could be indignant all he wanted to. He knew what she was going to say next.

"You never wrote, you never said you'd care . . ."

"Go on."

He felt inside him a moral avenger, an anti-social self-righteous, hurt-dealing travesty from the bitter depths of pre-humanistic mankind. Perverse animal shame. He knew he could treat her like this because his beast knew that her beast felt it too.

"All right. A girl at Barnard, she took me to a place she said was better than a public clinic. And it was a good place, the best one I've ever been to, only they made you sign a release saying they could do whatever they wanted with the embryo. That was okay with me. I thought they were going to sell it to a med school or a museum."

"And then."

"And then I forgot about the whole thing. During the summer, I got lucky and got a job in a genetics lab which led to a grant to do work at the Vineyard Genetic Arts Institute. The next year, I worked at MIGA, you know, the Manhattan Institute of . . ."

"Yeah, I know."

"Well, at MIGA, I worked under North and the others and I started exhibiting around town. Well, one afternoon, North told me he had something he wanted me to see. He took me here and told me I could work here any time I wanted. He even gave me an embryo to use, but he waited a couple of weeks before he told me it was mine."

"How did he know it was yours?"

As he spoke, Sykes became aware of the wall in front of them, opposite the outside door, slowly sinking into the floor. Two men, one pointing the familiar security weapon, made themselves known.

"Hands above your heads, please. Sorry, house rules. Hi, Carla."

Both raised their hands.

"Hi George, Paul. I want you to meet Harry Sykes."

"Hi, Harry, please keep your hands up."

Sykes made no reply as George frisked first him then Carla.

"You have no idea how long I've been waiting for you, honey."

"There's nothing in there, George."

"Carla, is he all right?"

"Yeah."

"Okay then, come on in. Why are you standing out there in the cold?"

They entered a long, wide room, extending, he estimated, beneath half a dozen of the tiny tenements on street level. This block was probably old enough to have a speakeasy and this would be the saloon of it. Now it was partitioned off into cubicles with half a dozen door openings leading off a center hallway. At the end of the hall, he could make out lab tables with the tubing, and microsurgery equipment, the centrifuges and the sealed storage compartments of a small but efficient genetics lab. Beyond the lab equipment, at the very end of the saloon, as if to be forgotten and yet, to Sykes' mind, dominating all, was the polished shiny door of an electric disposal furnace. The wall behind them clanged shut.

Paul and George walked back to their respective cubicles and slammed their doors. Sykes followed Carla to her cubicle. They paused at the door, he not wanting to go in just yet, if only because she had yet to answer his question.

"How did he know it was your embryo?"

"Sam Pomeroy didn't tell you?"

She took off the helmet, her dark boyish mop untangling itself beneath his face. She would start to lie to him now. Pomeroy had told him all right. His animal would not let her.

"I want to hear it from you."

Her eyes shot up to thank him for the extra little stab. She waited, then threw the sentences at him with what was left of her dignity:

"North saw me at the aborclinic, he took the embryo then. He got me the job at the genetics lab. He got me into Vineyard, into MIGA. He saved it for me, alive. He wanted to give an embryo

to his little piece of fucking life art.” And as an afterthought: “It was the only embryo that fag could ever give me.”

That was what she had told Sam Pomeroy the night he and Carla went home and made Librium cupcakes.

“Do you still want to see it?”

Having administered its own orgasm of pain, the shame beast rested, while the other bits of Sykes’ mosaic self found in themselves some pity for her. Maybe it was just because she was redeeming herself by putting her righteous tormenter in her most secret shame. He felt sorry for her, just plain sorry. Out of what, though? They were so much alike. But what had happened to all her self-infatuation? What had happened to his? He realized he could take her to NASA now and show her the depths of his most degrading deceptions.

“Well?”

“Yes. Open the door.”

They entered the plastic-walled cubicle. She turned on the lights, exposing bare walls housing a small array of heavy (life support?) machines on primitive miniature carts, child’s toys. There was a near-empty work table onto which she dropped the helmet. There were none of the million personality markers that he had been used to seeing in artist’s studios. He took time out to note tragedy in the fact that the artist’s identity had to be suppressed at the site of the masterwork.

The masterwork: all tubes and wires led from the machines to the large upright incubator at the head of the room. Only one incubator, that was it, the protagonist of his evening. The machines buzzed lively all around them. Outlined by the thick black cloth that covered it, the incubator looked like the c.1950 office “water cooler” device he had seen in pictures. Carla began moving about, quietly taking readings from the machines.

“Is that him?”

“Yes. But don’t take the cloth off.”

“Why aren’t there any others?”

“I don’t know, Harry. I only wanted one.”

“Well, why can’t I take the cover off. Is he asleep?”

“No, Harry, it doesn’t sleep. Its system operates at a constant rate. But I have to prepare it for the absorption of extra light.”

“Well does he talk? What does he eat? Can he do anything?”

“Harry, it exists in an artificial amniotic fluid and absorbs food and oxygen directly into its bloodstream. It has no speech mechan-

isms, but it has a large mental capacity, larger, in fact, than yours or mine."

"What does its brain do?"

"It could think if I wanted it to."

"Well then make it think."

"Make it think. Why? It's never going to exist outside that glass."

"You mean he won't be born?"

"It is born. It's been growing for 32 months, ever since I took it out of the perservation fluid."

"Yeah, if you call that being born."

"Yes, I do, I do call that being born. I don't know what the current medical criterion for birth is. Frankly, I don't care. Nobody's ever going to know what 'born' means. You better realize that."

It was a black snow question.

"And so he will never get out of that bottle?"

"No, Harry. It would never survive."

"I see. And how long will he enjoy this life?"

"As long as these machines work."

Something half came to Sykes. It was a sudden break in the game somewhere around the word "machines." He suddenly wasn't with his pseudo-wife anymore and he wasn't basking in talking about their child. Perhaps a little of the shame animal? For this woman became a stranger again and whatever it was in that bottle was stranger still. Now under this impulse, after waiting not nearly long enough to double check his thoughts:

"Carla, Carla you tell me what you'd do to me if I turned the machines off."

She went on looking absentmindedly at the life support devices. He wondered if he had really said that, wondered if he had come all this way just to kill this thing that Sam Pomeroy had told him was his child. But what would die with that overage embryo? Only the thing itself, a mutant, a hangover from a lesser time. He wondered what the others would do to him if he killed the thing against her wishes, if the others had heard a struggle, heard her scream. Then he thought he saw the derelict's face again and all the fear returned, all the fear that he had spent the evening in New York trying to conquer.

"Nothing," he heard her say, "I would do nothing to you. I don't know why, but I'd let you just prance into my life and destroy the

only thing that has ever brought me any kind of joy. It's really a fucking joke, isn't it?"

And most fantastic of all, she was waiting for him to do it.

"I put more into that than any woman ever put into her own kid."

She was saying that by way of good-bye. And at the same time, she was more nostalgic than bitter.

"There's a destroy control, there, on the feeding unit. It's a button under a sort of little red box so that you don't push it accidentally. It's very painless you know, nobody feels anything."

He saw what she was referring to. There was even a little "D" on top of the box. It didn't look like something you just grabbed.

"Carla, let me look at him first."

"Yes, yes look at it first."

She spoke to him from the pall of a foregone conclusion. She went to spend another minute on her machines, then stopped and turned off the lights. She began to pull the cover off, speaking as she acted, sounding in the beginning like a museum catalogue:

"I knew I could never get it out of the incubator, so I planned to use the incubator itself as its life frame. The fluid it is immersed in is artificially dyed this shade of blue. I wanted it sitting up, with its legs folded in a lotus position, but I had to settle for just having them folded across each other. I wanted a large brain and a high forehead, but I didn't want a freak skull. I kept the natural light skin and blonde hair (I believe those came from your family). But the thing I was most concerned with was the face. You must have seen how some medieval Christs, the ones painted during the worst periods of famine, disease, war by the really great masters, how they had a special calm about them, an almost stupid grace to their faces. That's what I wanted to capture, totally by chemo-genetic means. And I did, Harry. It's mine. That's what I'm most proud of."

— At the end, she sounded like any mother at any time. Sykes, who might or might not be able to give birth to the believable Martian, incredible as it was to him, reached for her, who had chemo-genetically created his firstborn, hand and they looked together:

*It* was a faded pink and blonde behind the pale slightly bubbling fluid. *He* was so unlike any fish in a tank. *It* was sitting erect, *he* was serious, *it* was closer to humanity than the most perfect statues and further away than what, what by any black snow definition? *He* was

no failure, no mimic. *It* rose above the tubes that stuck in and around *his* body. *His* head, *his* face, *his* life was far above *its* sources of life. *His* face, in words, was at peace.

Guilt and fear, Harry Sykes was not a very complicated person. So with his free hand, he flipped back the little box covering the destroy button.

“Are you going to?”

He had come a long way from Washington that day. It was funny the way the little bit of light that seeped into this room made the bubbles in the fluid sparkle white as they fell upward through the glass-enclosed world. No. He exchanged a last look with those sacred blank eyes. No more derelict's face? He didn't know. When he asked her, Carla gave him two quarters for a pay respirator. Then recovering his city sense, Sykes worked his way through the lights and darks of the underground lab and back through New York's famous black snow.

## BOOKS AND PERIODICALS RECEIVED

### BOOKS

- HUGH & RUTH ARSCOTT, *Homofisheraul*, Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1970, 32 pps.
- PIERRE BERTON, *The National Dream*, McClelland & Stewart, 1970, \$8.95, 439 pps.
- BILL BIDWELL, *Satan in Sackcloth*, Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1970, 40 pps.
- LUELLA BOOTH, *Love Poems*, Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1970, 52 pps.
- JAMES CAMP, *An Edict From the Emperor*, Burning Deck, 1969, Providence, R.I., Poetry, \$2.50.
- STANLEY COOPERMAN, *Cappelbaum's Dance*, University of Nebraska Press, 1970, Poetry, \$4.75, 96 pps.
- FRED COGSWELL (translator), *One Hundred Poems of Modern Quebec*, Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1970, 91 pps.
- JUDI CULBERTSON and PATTI BARD, *The Little White Book on Race*, J. B. Lippincott Co., 159 pps., cloth \$4.75, paper \$1.80.
- DOROTHY FARMILOE, *Poems For Apartment Dwellers*, Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1970, 52 pps.
- JOAN FINNIGAN, *It Was Warm And Sunny When We Set Out*, Ryerson Press, 1970, poetry. 96 pps., cloth \$5.95, paper \$3.95.
- GAIL FOX, *The Royal Collector of Dreams*, Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1970, 16 pps.
- ROBERT GIBBS, *Earth Charms Heard So Early*, Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1970, 64 pps.
- DON GUTTERIDGE, *The Village Within*, Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1970, 71 pps.
- ROBERT HAWKES, *First Time Death*, Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1970, 24 pps.
- JANE JOHNSON, *Never, the Sun*, Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1970, 28 pps.
- D. G. JONES, *Butterfly on Rock*, University of Toronto Press, 1970, essays, 197 pps. \$7.50.
- DOUGLAS LOCHHEAD and RAYMOND SOUSTER (editors), *Made in Canada, New Poems of the Seventies*, Oberon, 1970, 192 pps., hard cover \$6.95, paper cover \$3.50.
- JOHN METCALF, *The Lady Who Sold Furniture*, Clarke, Irwin & Co. Ltd., 1970, short stories, 150 pps., \$4.95.
- BERNELL MACDONALD, *I Can Really Draw Eagles*, Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1970.
- GOODRIDGE MACDONALD, *Selected Poems*, Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1970, 48 pps.
- BRIAN MOORE, *Fergus*, McClelland & Stewart, 1970, novel, 228 pps., \$5.95.
- B. P. NICOL (editor), *The Cosmic Chef, An Evening of Concrete*, Oberon Press, 1970, \$4.95.
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