

# TOWERS

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

MAY 1963



# TOWERS

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**EDITOR'S NOTE**

*Towers is published twice yearly by Xi Delta Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, National English Honorary. Its purpose is to stimulate creative writing and to promote an appreciation of writing and literature in general within the college community.*

*The three-hundred submissions to this issue gave the staff a larger than average selection from which to choose. The prose and poetry in the following pages reflect the choice of the Staff members only, who carefully read, discussed, then voted according to what they felt to be the best of the submitted material. Anonymity was observed in selecting material.*

*Prize winners were chosen by four faculty members of the English Department from the twenty-three selections made by the staff. The awards appear on page 48. They reflect the choice of the judges only and were chosen anonymously. Our thanks to the judges for their careful consideration of the entries.*

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## FOREWORD

*The sky darkens to a frown as the grey-brown stormcloud spreads to the drum-rolls of thunder. The explosions rip into the ears and the light flashes fasten themselves to the eyes. Then the soft sound of water falling in bits, washing, wetting the air.*

*Thinking out the window at the rain, looking through each drop to one beyond, I watch one tear in its descent. And another. One strikes the windowpane and pauses there, unsure of the best road down. Slowly it winds until others join it, force it to coalesce into a large trembling pearl. It gains the bottom of the window, then the ledge. Quivering, it takes a deep breath — then jumps to the World Below. And mixes with the mud of the earth to nurture perhaps a weed, perhaps a flower, perhaps a tree.*

*An idea is born.*

— CAROL LINNE AHMED

## VEILED VISIONS

Moving Madonna-like  
Through an Orient of rattling Arabian pushcart streets  
The young woman peers silently  
Through her yashmak.  
She is only vaguely aware  
Of the hawkers' cries  
And the buyers' replies —  
She sees and hears only what pleases her veiled mind.  
Eyes follow her through the crowd.  
They see her separateness  
And her indifference.  
Now she passes out of the crowded street  
And sits at her window  
In a modern stone dwelling  
To watch the small boats  
That are napping in the bay.  
Veiled visions,  
Tan and white stone apartments,  
And sailboats viewed from a distance  
Make up the world  
For more men and women  
Than could crowd together  
In all the crowded streets of pushcart Arabia.

— R. GILLETTE

## ON WRITING

I sit and piece together words on paper, balance synonyms, toy with shades of meaning, ponder over the world of meaning within a word. — There's a squirrel in the grass. How do I move it on paper? What if he blinks while I do? — Hours go. I weigh connotations, and the pencil dulls, the eraser wears thin. I try to crack the hull of a word and separate kernels, distinguish among hues of power and strength. I juggle with periods, commas, semicolons. — That girl over there, smiling. Why does she half-close one eye? How do I open it and get inside? Does it look the same under the eyelid as the frosty sparkle of the one that's open? — I work with words. I work silent. Alone.

Am I a writer? What is writing?

The stare of glossy textbooks from shelves blinds me. *How To Write A Novel. The World of Fiction. Writers on Writing. One Hundred Ways to Use the Comma for Effect. How To Keep Your Typewriter Clean. How Not to Write Stories That Do Not Sell to Few Editors.* They proclaim sure-fire success in making you into a writer who can sell his stuff. They claim to teach you, through the very medium of writing, how to write. And I say that is like transplanting your own flesh to a prefabricated skeleton because they say it does not look good on your own. I don't think that's writing. It's formula.

Magazines full of axioms and formulas claim to know all about it. They engage writers who are qualified to preach because they have written successfully. And successfully means they've sold one or two stories which, after this month's issue heads for the garbage, won't be read again. They write about their successes. "Genesis of a Story." "Who Should Read Your Story First." "How I Go About It." "A Story Is A Love Affair." "A Writer's Sermon." How can they make formula of the spontaneity that sparks in them at the moment of converting emotion and experience to word and form? Do they write about writing? Can writing be written about? I don't see in them the essence of what a writer does. Sit and write? Put thoughts on paper? Carefully select words to portray and describe and relate the core of experience to other minds? Create?

I read writers, and I read what they've written. I see little point in studying about writing, about what extracts have been drawn from the blossoms which grew from the writer's germ. I read Hemingway. I can't see him as he writes, but I feel the spark that flew as he set down each word. Or James, Mann, Goethe. Fitzgerald, Michener, Maugham, Porter. I call their stuff writing, without knowing what writing is. I sit here myself and write. Mostly I don't like what results. Nor do I like what goes on before I begin. But I always like it at the moment when the pencil tip moves on the paper. I like the process of an instant: Thought, Thought transmitted to the Hand, Thought embodied by moving Pencil, Pencil into Word, Word on Paper, Reader's Taste of Word when he receives it through the same process in reverse.

I feel. I see a boy put sticky candy in a girl's hair and watch as she cries and tries to take it out. I sense warmth embedded in the wrinkles of an old woman's face. I feel when a white streak rips the sky jagged, lighting up cloud, fusing a mused rumble, letting fall a million drops which cool, and one drop hits the wing of an awkward butterfly hunting thick bushes. I have an idea. I form opinions. I see a blemish on a rose petal, and a diamond sparkle in an old man's eye as he spits in the gutter. My head swells, wants to break. I have physical sensations. A mosquito bite. One single icy raindrop sliding down my spine. I want others to know. How . . . ? I don't say them. I write them down. Words take a direct path into another's mind.

It's a silent jump from mind to mind.

At this moment when I lower my pencil and transmit *myself* through the silence of words to another *self* as lively and sensitive, yet slightly different, from me — is this writing? Is it when I use my pencil to trace the wing flutter of that butterfly as it falls to the mud and its wings wilt until, heavy, wet, they disappear drop by drop into the rain-pocked mud?

What is writing?

What is it to do?

— ULRICH WICKS

## HAIKU

The moon rises spinning,  
dropping silvery cobwebs  
over the earth.

— PHYLLIS FRAATZ

## THE SEARCH

I tread the narrow corridor of life  
Impelled by laughter, love and lust.  
Straight forward point my feet and face  
My footsteps fall on a sea of dust.

The past rolls up into a ball of night,  
The sides press in and force me on.  
Sibilant shadows kaleidoscope past,  
Impinge on my brain and are gone.

Pursued by life, I dare not wait for light  
But hurtle headlong in search of a door,  
When suddenly voices above me say,  
"This is not all. There is more."

My pulses race, my eyes assay the gloom.  
I hear my voice in the void asking, "Where?"  
Sweetly from out of ethereal space  
The answer falls around me, "Out there."

In search of what I've never understood  
My hands and heart scan the endless hall.  
The answers to questions I've never dared ask  
Are out there beyond the wall.

My hands of clay grope walls of adamant mass.  
One day they touch the patina of burnished gold  
Of a door, and a knob, and a key in the lock,  
And I catch my breath and take hold.

With fingers gross from use on rougher planes  
Trembling and heartened I turn the key.  
The tumblers fall, the door swings out,  
Too late. I cannot see.

— MARY PENSON

## THE PROGRESSING TRIPTYCH

### ACCIDENT

I was walking along a sidewalk, the kind with lines impressed into it. A row of neatly trimmed bushes followed it along the right side. Glancing over on the grass behind the bushes, I saw a man bending over a baby. The child appeared to have been hit and thrown by a car onto the grass; I could see that her head was broken.

"Are you a doctor?" I asked.

Without lifting his head, the man said, "No, I was just passing when I saw the accident." He was shaking in his speech.

"Let me help."

The top of the child's skull was detached. It had been cracked completely off and was lying on the grass next to her. For an instant I stared at it; the skull was translucent glass. The child's brain was exposed, but there was no blood. I reached for the top piece and fitted it to her head. During this time, the man stood there watching but did not say anything. The child's entire head was glass; her brain could vaguely be seen through it.

"Do you have some tape?" I asked.

"Yes," he said loudly. From his pocket he handed me a roll of Scotch tape, the clear kind that I could see through.

I quickly taped the top of the child's skull to the rest of her head. There was no skin on the top of her head; in fact, there was no skin on her face. The child's body was doll-like. As I applied the tape, the figure seemed to dehydrate and it was now a smaller size. I picked up the child and held her in my arms.

"I'll take the child to the hospital," I said. "It's only down the street."

The man turned and said, "Okay," then walked away.

I stepped over the bushes and started for the hospital. The evening had turned to night and the street lights went on. They reflected in the slickness of the Scotch tape. The child continued to shrink. The hospital was only two blocks away. On the other side of the railroad tracks, I

could see the red brick building with several of the windows lit. The child's body was stiff in my arms. I walked quickly but did not run because I did not want to drop her. She was getting smaller every second. A train had just passed and instead of waiting for the gate to go up, I walked around it. The emergency entrance to the hospital was the side door. I could see the fluorescent sign above the door.

"There was an accident," I said as I entered the room.

The nurse looked at the child and quickly called a doctor. The child was now the size of my hand. The two swinging doors opened and a doctor walked quickly toward me. He looked at the child and said something to the nurse in Latin. The doll had begun to shrink more rapidly; she was now the length of my finger. The doctor took the child from me.

"I must work quickly," he said. Looking down, he studied her glass skull and the Scotch tape. He produced a liquidy test tube and slid the doll into it; then he went back behind the stainless steel doors.

... I could not see through the doors.

The nurse asked me what had happened. I said there had been an accident and she asked me if I knew the child. I said I did not.

#### REVOLVING

Abruptly I was awakened by a low, continuously buzzing sound, but I opened my eyes to complete blackness. It was total blackness, something I had never seen before. The blinking of my eyes failed to make clear anything in the shadow of my situation. Yet, I had a feeling that I was outside on a starless, moonless night. A faint breeze tingled across my bare arms. I was not alone; the ever-present noise hummed like a little motor — always beside me.

There was a pain in my shoulders and when I tried to move my arm, I found that my wrist was fastened down. My other hand was also tied. They were outstretched and were supporting the weight of my entire body. Had I been crucified? I maneuvered my hand and squeezed the fingers together to make it smaller in order that it might fit through what seemed to be a shackle. Although there was quite enough room for me to turn my wrist, the width of my hand was too great to pass through the opening.

I was jarred with the feeling that, although I had been fastened in a hanging position, my weight had now shifted to the side. Whatever I had been chained to was turning. I could now feel the pressure of the shackles around my ankles. The surface to which I had been bolted was not smooth because I could feel braces against my back. I must have been attached to an enormous wheel. The hum I heard was made by the motor that was geared to turn this giant wheel — to turn it so very slowly.

The wheel had turned so that my body was now in a horizontal position; 160 pounds hung from my stretched left arm and leg. I strained my eyes but could see nothing. I wondered if I still had eyes; the blackness was so thick. I felt a heaviness in my head as the wheel brought my feet to the higher position and my head to the bottom. My head swelled and I heard the throbs of my pulse straining to return the blood to my heart. In this position I felt as if I were going to be sick at any moment. Slowly, the wheel returned me to the horizontal position. The wheel to which I had been attached turned ever so slowly, in fact, the turning was only perceivable because my weight shifted every now and then as it was gradually transferred from my wrists to my ankles. The wide steel bands, or at least they felt like steel, cold and slick, dug into my skin at every jerk and change in the direction of my weight.

I listened to that endless motor slowly grinding away under its heavy burden, and faintly I heard another sound in the distance. It seemed to hiss, but it was not continuous — a pulsating hissing with a second between every sound. I tried to listen to that sound, but every time the breeze blew, I could not hear it. What I thought was the night seemed cool as it passed over my scraped wrists.

As the wheel turned and was again bringing my head below the rest of my body, I began to count. It took 110 seconds for me to change from the horizontal position, to the inverted, and finally, up to the reverse horizontal position. This meant that it took about four minutes for the wheel to make a complete revolution. Just below my waist, pressing against my back, I could feel the pivot or axle on which the wheel turned. The grinding sound dug slowly into my head. I tried to close it out of my mind.

For hours I revolved. It seemed as if even the breeze had stopped. Faintly in the distance, I thought I saw a grayness; maybe someone was coming toward me. Was that a light? I strained my eyes only to see that the horizon was beginning to glow. I hoped for morning and now it was coming. The daylight was sure to bring people and someone to free me.

I was in the horizontal position again and I counted my way around. This time it took only 87 seconds. Had I miscounted the first time or was this wheel slowly gaining in speed? I didn't notice any change in the speed as I slowly revolved, but I anticipated the fate of being whirled until each one of my capillary blood vessels burst because of the extreme centrifugal force, or else until the pressure of the blood exerted on my brain forced me into death.

I could now see a straight, light blue line which was the horizon, but I could not imagine where I had been placed in order that I might see the horizon as an almost straight line. The wheel still turned slowly, but I counted my every inverted half. I counted every horizontal to horizontal position and it diminished one second with each complete revolution, but I thought that maybe I was excited and was altering the

pace of the count. When I was in the upright position, I strained my eyes across the landscape to the horizon which had become pale and pink. I watched and counted; the shackles bit into my wrists as the morning came. The sky gradually became lighter and I saw that I was positioned overlooking a great cliff. I must have been very high for I was now sure that the hissing sound I had heard was the crashing of the waves on the rocks below. There was no sign of people, but perhaps it was still too early in the morning. I could not see behind me, but I tried twisting my head from side to side. I was on fairly level ground except to the south which I now knew by the position of the sun rising directly in front of me. To the south the ground slanted downward for quite a distance until it met the sea. And again I came around to my inverted position, my back continually rubbing against the spokes.

I was sure now that the wheel, which I saw was wooden, was turning faster and faster. As its acceleration increased, the pain in my arms and shoulders was greater. The joints in my legs ached with pain at every shift of my weight. As the wheel turned faster, my weight shifted faster; I no longer counted; the wheel was spinning. My body was thrown back and forth. My eyes felt large and heavy, but I could still see my scraped, red wrists.

Just then there was a clank in the gears and the wheel broke off the axle. Before my eyes flashed the vision of the wheel crashing down on me and then falling into the sea, but it didn't. I was being whirled around and around as the wheel rolled down the hill faster and faster. My head ached. My wrists seemed to tear against the steel. I could see nothing but the blur of colors and feel nothing but the shocking pounds as the wheel picked up speed rolling down the hill. Suddenly, my eyes, mouth and ears were filled with water; terrified, I twisted my hand. It came loose; it slid through the shackle. The sea in which I expected my doom had served as a lubricant allowing me to twist my hands free. I pushed my head above water and took a deep breath. The wheel supported me as a float. I jerked and twisted my ankles, but they would not come free.

Holding a few of the spokes with one arm, I was able to keep my head above water. All I could see was that long, straight horizon. I paddled with my free arm to reverse my position by turning the wheel in the water. The small waves were obstacles. It took me a couple of minutes before I could see that in the other direction the only thing visible was another part of the straight horizon. Where was the land? Had the tide taken me in such a short time? There was no cliff; there was no beach — only the long, straight horizon.

#### EXPERIENCE

I was blinded. The light was so intense that it burned my open eyes; I could see nothing. I held my hand over my eyes to shield them

from the brightness. Even with my eyes closed I could see the intense redness through my eyelids. Only with my hand over my eyes could I shield them. I was lying on a floor of white glass. It was smooth and warm. I cupped my hands around my eyes and tried ever so slightly to squint. All I could see was a long, endless row of light. It was a corridor or a tunnel; I could not see the end. The walls seemed to be constructed of vertical fluorescent tubes placed tightly, one next to another. When I felt the tubes, they burnt my fingertips. The hallway was not wide enough to allow me to lie across it. In length it seemed endless. I looked down the corridor in one direction and could see no end to the row of light; I turned completely but saw the same in the other direction. I started walking with my hand over my eyes, slowly sliding one foot ahead of the other so as not to fall or walk into the burning walls. I walked for a distance and still could perceive no end to the corridor. I was now forced to keep my hand over my eyes at all times because they burned intensely if I took it away. They had begun to tear badly. I continued to walk.

Slowly pushing one foot out ahead of the other I kicked into something and when I opened my eyes I saw the image of myself. The corridor ended in a mirror. I touched the mirror and it too was extremely hot. With my foot I tried to shove the mirror down but I wasn't able to. I looked up and saw a reflection of the floor.

I tried looking in the other direction away from the mirror, but the lights converged in a point. I wondered if another mirror awaited me at the opposite end of the hallway. I could not move the mirror with my foot or move it away from the last fluorescent tube. The corner was just as tight as the tubes. The room itself was very hot; with my hand still over my eyes I removed my shirt and draped it over my head. With the sleeves I tied it over my eyes. The shirt allowed a little light to pass through; the color before my eyes was violet. I held my arms outstretched in front of me and began to walk for the other end of the corridor. I had been walking for what seemed an hour; then I removed the shirt from my eyes, cupped my hands, and slowly opened my eyelids. All I could see were bright red dots and blind spots. I squinted but saw no end to the corridor. I then closed my eyes, tied the shirt back across them, and continued walking. After every few steps I found myself touching the hot walls. My legs began to get very tired so I decided to sit for a second, but made sure that I sat facing the direction in which I was going so as not to retrace my steps. The floor was now much hotter than when I first touched it. After a few seconds I stood up and began to walk again. The place was deathly silent. I could not even hear my shoes scraping the floor as I walked.

I stopped walking for an instant and kicked the wall to see if I might shatter some of the tubes and thus reduce the light, but I couldn't. The glass was too thick, so I kept on walking. After a short time I took the shirt off my head and eyes and, with my handkerchief, wiped the

perspiration off my neck and forehead. All this time the light shone intensely red through my eyelids. I placed the shirt on my shoulder and cupped my hands over my eyes; opening them slightly, I seemed to see a tiny black dot. Again I closed my eyes and covered my head with the shirt and began walking for this dot which might have been just another visual reaction to the intense light. After several steps I removed my shirt and slightly opened my eyes. The dot appeared to be bigger — there was something in the distance. I held my hand over my eyes and began to walk more quickly. The shirt fell to the floor, but I did not stop to pick it up.

The next time I opened my eyes I could see something small and black on the floor a few feet in front of me. I walked a little closer and opened my eyes slightly. The light was still too intense for me to see what I had discovered. So I knelt down on the hot floor in front of the object and shielded my eyes with my hands. When I opened them, there in front of me was a small mechanical bear. It was black. It was standing up about a foot in height slowly pouring from a white bottle into a white cup and drinking from the cup. He repeated this action over and over.

I felt dizzy from the light and the ordeal and the juxtaposition. The comedy of it. I reached for the bear and pushed my hand through a thin sheet of glass. All of a sudden, a million guillotine blades were crashing all around me. I covered my head with my arms and remained on the floor. In a few seconds the noise of the crashing was over and all I could hear was the sound of the motor in the automatic bear. When I stood up, several pieces of glass fell to the floor, and when I opened my eyes, the bear still stood there pouring and drinking. I also noticed that the light began to dwindle. I had broken through a sheet of glass when I had reached for the bear and a large jagged opening was before me. The fluorescent tubes of the corridor began to go dim, and I wondered whether I was losing my sight or had just let the darkness in.

— EARL TETEAR

## HAIKU

A golden cloud of  
sparkling droplets  
cascading into place—  
Spraynet.

— PHYLLIS FRAATZ

He comes an awful lot,  
and goes,  
too,  
for most people.

It's the same sun but I  
don't think so because he,  
too,  
must have changed by just being  
or shining or setting.

You can see that time has walked on him,  
too,  
and dirty footprints show, but,  
he's unlucky  
because he can't hide  
like me  
only I'm not sure he wants to (or has to)  
because time might not affect him  
as it does me.

He goes down at night and I'm told this  
is relative  
because he is just "being"  
somewhere else but I'd  
like to think that he stopped for a while  
and maybe reflects me —  
or maybe just reflects.

But, he comes back and still looks  
the same only, maybe,  
smaller  
but, I hope I'm wrong.

— TOM JUNKROSKI

*Opposite Page:*  
*"Five o'clock"*  
SANDRA BLAIN



## A LAMENT

I happened to hear, several months ago, of a lecture given by a young television director, John Frankenheimer. He talked very brightly of the "new medium." Things look really great for television. Bigger and better things are on the horizon. Everyone in the audience seemed to agree with Frankenheimer's point of view. Everyone, that is, except a brave little old lady, bless her heart, who rose and asked the question: "Some of us like to listen to the radio, young man. Why don't you put on some good shows like they used to?" Mr. Frankenheimer scratched his head in bewilderment and said, "I don't know, madam, but I sure can sympathize with you. . . ."

I think I can sympathize too. Because for me, radio is part of the Lost Childhood. Those old time voices — Stella Dallas, Sam Spade, Ronald Coleman, Jack Armstrong — have become static in some inner ear. The ghosts of their voices might be found on some distant frequency, but they could never sound the same on today's transistors. Too much plastic. No, they belong to the security and comfort of the old mahogany stand-up console in the corner of the living room. And radio time was family time. Right after my brother and I wiped the silverware we would have our baths, put on our pajamas, bring our pillows into the living room and curl up on the couch. It was a ritual. The whole family listened together. We traveled to Hong Kong, the Dark Side of the Moon, and the gloomy tombs of Egypt. And it was all in our mind's eye.

A few of the old time programs have been put on TV. But they're not the same. How can a television camera "zoom in" on Fibber McGee's closet? The avalanche of roller skates, tennis rackets, paint buckets, Christmas decorations, and bottles of Johnson's Glo-Coat . . . the dramatic pause, and then the falling dinner bell; it was pure sound. And that door opened by Raymond on "Inner Sanctum." It wasn't a door. It was a horrifying rasp that climbed up your spine and gave you goose-bumps. Or how about the Shadow? I guess that the Shadow's alter ego, Lamont Cranston, wealthy man-about-town, would make a good guest for "Person to Person." But I simply cannot see the Shadow on TV. Men's minds have to be clouded with the Shadow sneaking around right in the room

... not by a mist on the big, big screen. No, the Shadow was pure radio. And the integrity-filled laugh the Shadow gave at the end of every program. I expected it, of course. But I never got used to the shivers that it gave me.

Those chillers haunt me still. Who can ever forget "The Shadow," "Inner Sanctum," and Arch Oboler's "Lights Out"? The program that really sticks in my mind as horror to end all horror is "The Mummies." Someone was always getting glued up in the wall. Somehow the cat managed to get glued up with them. I can still hear that cat crying to get out. For an entire half an hour the young hero would hear the cat too. But he could never seem to locate the source of sound. My brother and I would shriek, "The wall, the wall. He's dying inside the wall!" Finally, with about two minutes to go, the young hero would listen to our hint and he would frantically unglue the wall. It was too late, of course. The poor soul who had gotten himself glued up by this time was a raving looney. (With the killer instinct, of course.) My imagination made the victim terrifying beyond any make-up man's skill.

I was afraid to walk to school for two weeks after the program which informed us in great detail about the scientist (mad, of course) who was trying to reproduce human tissue. He used a chicken heart (not gamma rays or any other "gimmick," just an ordinary chicken heart that you can buy at any butcher shop). The whole project got out of control and the heart grew and grew. At the very end of the eternally long half an hour, the chicken heart burst out of the house (killing all) and started to creep over the earth. *That* is how the program ended! Now I ask you, how does one go about destroying a ninety-foot chicken heart? Everytime I turned a corner I was sure that I was going to run into that bleeding, blubbery mass of tissue. My brother still won't eat chicken.

Of course, you had to pass a minimum-age requirement before you could listen to these shows. (Mine was eleven — "They'll only give you bad dreams.") Ah, the wisdom of our elders. There was, however, a lot of listening that went on after hours. You know, on the sly. We had a grocery store when I was about ten. The night "Lights Out" was on my dad played cards so my mom watched the store. Every time the bell would ring she would leave the house and go into the store to wait on the customer. The second she'd walk out, I'd jump out of bed, make a record dash into the kitchen, stand on a chair, change the station (to music), jump off the chair, whizz back into the bedroom, dive into bed, and cover up my head. I don't know who I was fooling. Every time my mom came back into the house she'd turn the station back to "Lights Out." But, you know, she never mentioned it to me. I was convinced that the reason she didn't was because she was glad I was awake so she didn't have to listen to that program by herself.

A few voices, a few bars of music, a few sound effects and you were living with Eternal Evil. I saw every monster, every creature, every mad

scientist right in front of me. The longer you thought about those horror programs, the more terrifying they became. I can still *feel* the Dismal Swamp from one "Inner Sanctum" show. People drown in quicksand much better on radio than they do on television.

The first night-time program I can remember is "Return with us to the thrilling days of yesteryear when out of the past came the thundering hoofbeats of the great horse Silver." We never even knew who the hell the Lone Ranger was. That's not really true, I guess. We knew that he had been a Texas Ranger and that his whole regiment had been wiped out in a bloody gun fight at an abandoned silver mine. He was the only one who survived (which indicates great strength and inner fortitude). Tonto nursed him back to health and the Lone Ranger swore never to take off his mask. The mask never stopped my imagination, though. I was sure that the Lone Ranger was *very* handsome. The Lone Ranger was pretty much of a snob. He only talked to Tonto and Tonto only talked to the Prairie Gods. But the Lone Ranger was the Old West. That program never pretended to be adult. It only required that you be able to pretend. "Hi-Ho Silver, A———way!"

We never had to look in the newspapers for the time and station of our programs either. A "Radio Guide" would have been an abortion. Every morning before school we marched around the breakfast table with the Johnsons, the locomotive roared into Grand Central Station every Saturday afternoon, Mr. First-Nighter faithfully cried — "Curtain Time! Curtain going up!"

The only requirement in those days for belonging to "the gang" was that you know the words to "Cream of wheat is so good to eat . . ." For several years now I've been trying to condition myself, or I should say, re-condition myself to certain types of music. It hasn't worked, though. The "William Tell Overture" is still the Lone Ranger and "The Flight of the Bumble Bee" is the Green Hornet.

In those gentler days there were a lot of stable families too. The Aldriches went through hell raising their teen-aged son, Henry. But their problems were funny, not homicidal. I simply cannot picture Henry Aldrich in a black jacket, preparing for a rumble. The only delinquent I can remember was Baby Snooks. There's a logical reason for the singular lack of "bad kids" on radio. In those days, not too long ago either, teenagers were kids, not adolescents.

And the radio comedians were funny. The jokes were funny; you didn't have to be an intellectual to understand them. And the longer the gag ran, the funnier it became. How do we really know that the Polar Bear in Jack Benny's basement didn't eat the gas man? Sure the lines were standard. We knew it, but it didn't make any difference. How about the night a thief jumped out at Benny and demanded in fierce tones: "Your money or your life!" The two minute silence that followed was funnier than any camera man could ever "angle in" on. And every week, with-

out fail, Archie would answer the telephone in Duffy's Tavern and say: "Duffy ain't here . . . oh, it's you, Duffy." It didn't take much to make us laugh. "Goodnight, Mrs. Calabash, wherever you are," "Hey, A-a-ab-bot!" Cliches? I loved every one of them. Granted, some of the favorites are on television. But now they're involved with guest stars and elaborate skits. They still depend on the familiar lines for a guaranteed laugh, but most of the comedy is on a spectacular, intellectual level. Kids today don't understand all the comedians' jokes. In the days of radio the jokes were simple enough that even wee, little brains could comprehend and laugh.

Oh, yes! It's a forgotten era. I'm not saying that we should have fought against television . . . progress is our most important product. We were ready for TV. But it's nice to remember what it was like when we didn't have television. And this is personal opinion, of course. You know, I never got over the disappointment of finally reaching the age which allowed me to listen to the "grown-up" radio shows, and then antennae suddenly sprang up all over the country. And so I can't help wondering, "WHO KNOWS WHAT EVIL LURKS IN THE HEARTS OF MEN?"

— DIANE LELITO

## NEW LAND

When life shall be exclusively beneath  
The liquid realm where dry-land life was spawned;  
When, dying, too, for lack of victims, death,  
Exhausted by his task completed, has yawned  
And laid his formlessness to rest; when birds  
Have quit their strife and fallen down to top  
Seductive Gaea's languid limbs; when herds  
And droves of living things their journeys stop;  
The hope that hallowed human hearts shall slow  
Its measured march, and moan to see the air  
Replete with searing rain and burning snow,  
And hide its face and die in damned despair;  
And last to die shall be the last hurrah  
That echoes yet at Novay Zemlya.

— CHARLOTTE FARR

## SKETCH

this is a very pretty little church inside i sit all painted white and beams that go up to the ceiling they support the slanted roof are skinnier upon it straight and also painted white for purity long for grace theyre much like trees yes tall birch trees only whiter without green leaves and not feeling alive but these are winter trees lifeless leafless the sky is white the ground is snow just arrived touchcold but the shiny glistening tiny sparkles diamonds melting clean carpets without a flaw in walking pushing steps into it without anyone else ever seen but they cant tag along for my own is my discovery my landscape with long white and high white and pure white and lean white and cold white and never night on me or in me holes are my steps in the snow long ive walked with nothing new except my steps and their holes in shapes nothing comes across the sky maybe a line to show me where it ends oh if only i could bring along my friends and show them but thats impossible of course they would get it dirty where did my footsteps go theyve covered up taken away gone theres a bubble on the horizon just a hump but like a bubble when you get up close look at it from the side right up next to your eyes but back there are the birches so small now little birches down here close to the snow theres little holes between and it comes down on my tongue tiny dots of water not even cold enough to taste soundless always falling turning me white its cold in my shoe but brush it off and ill put my hands in my pockets with my gloves on the bubbles not a bubble anymore its a hill with three crosses on it scratched in it by the side of someones boot not even careful to make the lines straight the birches are straight behind me but theyre far away no holes from my steps behind me and the crosses are filling up its not cold ive always thought of that hill as higher steeper and dirty but its white like everything else ive walked along and have never been this far or come this close i can almost reach the crosses from the hill bottom will i ever be able to touch them or with will they be filled snow and gone as i come

— EARL TETEAKE

## SOLILOQUY

Forever posting down the road,  
Generously I kick up the dust,  
And think what I have.

What belongs to me?

To what do I belong?

Along the one way of time,  
Without hesitation I go.  
Companions, do you hear me?

"There was no road on the earth.

The first road was made by footsteps."

— PEN-TI LEE

永遠地站在路上，  
慷慨地踢開塵土，  
心想我所有的。  
什麼屬於我？  
我屬於什麼？

沿着永恒的時間之路，  
我無躊躇地前進，  
朋友，你可聽到？

“世上本沒有路，  
第一條路是腳印堆成的”

Wracked was her mantle blue  
With bloodless stripes, as the throngs which drew  
Blood from His flesh snarled and bit,  
Scored His skin, made by her incarnate.  
She withered, shriveled sick and weak.  
Crowned with thorns, she bore her part:  
Sorrow's sword pierced her heart.

Bloodless lips now strain  
Dry and thin-cracked against the pain.  
Pale flesh on his body stretched  
By cancer's flaming tongue that retched  
Its bloody story in his gasping sighs.  
She with her blue shawl and fear-glazed eyes,  
Bowels torn by grief  
Paid homage to time's thief.

Blue was her mantle on the Way.  
Blue-shawled her shoulders were that day.  
Drawn were her cheeks and pale.  
Her sobs were muffled in black veil.  
Sharp were her sighs with care.  
Stark were her eyes with terror's stare.  
Two women grieved an only son:  
Two hearts — blue-mantled and blue-shawled — broke as one.

— BOB FEELEY

## REVERIE

A sorrel sky on turbid grays,  
The calends, nones, the ides rescind  
The errant prayers of watchful night.

Wait north of dawn — west of the wind.

The quietus of vengeant eve  
Regards the sensient fair and power  
Resplendent as one.

Wait east of noon — respect the hour.

I'll come to thee above the wind, beyond  
a whisper.

— KEN OLSON

## A YEAR AND AN OCEAN

It was awkward, standing there. The whole situation was so damn clumsy. Ralph wished it were over.

Ralph's mother stood soft, head not quite so high as it should have been. His brother Bill was next to her, his usual quiet self. He felt an ocean between himself and Bill. He's a college whiz and I'm a dumb Marine — nothing in common, Ralph thought. It wasn't an ocean. It was a world. And often the communication broke down out there in space.

Ralph's friend Fred sat heavily as usual, looking as if he'd never get up again. He was OK — even if they did have fights, Ralph thought. At least they could talk it out.

Ralph trained his eyes on the cockpit of the jet-liner waiting outside.

"All aboard for Flight 191, non-stop to Los Angeles. All aboard, please. Gate 7K." The voice was dull, with static in the background. It sounded as if the voice, too, had hated to get up so early on a Sunday.

Ralph watched the two men in the cockpit prepare for flight. His eyes scanned the sleek length of the plane, following along the neat row of windows until he saw the "707" number on the tail section. Beyond that there was nothing more to look at, and he wondered frantically what next to do with his eyes.

He turned from the glass wall and crushed his cigarette in an ash tray. He didn't dare look at his mother — was it the sun sparkling through the windows and making her eyes gleam? Or was she really crying? — Or trying hard to hold it back?

The sun brightened the waiting lounge with an early-morning goldness. It was difficult to keep your eyes steady. A cigarette smell drifted back and forth, disagreeable to the early-morning stomach.

His mother's eyes were on him. He didn't see them but he knew it. Some nervous impulse made him flash his eyes toward hers, and for a moment a circuit was completed, the current ran strong and powerful — quickly he broke it.

"I've got to go to the john," Ralph said to Fred, motioning him to come. Fred jumped out of his drowsy state and traipsed along behind.

Ralph didn't have to go. He wanted to talk.

"What do you think I ought to say to her?" His voice echoed soft from the hard-white of the tiled walls. He took off his hat and straightened his tie. "It was so damn easy to say everything in letters. And now —"

"Jeez, Ralph. Why don't you just leave it? Say good-bye and then write a long letter." Fred lit a cigarette.

"It's always letters. I wish just once I had the guts to tell her face to face. Hell, I wish I could go a thousand miles away."

"You are."

"No, that's not what I mean. I mean far — way away, where — oh, I don't know."

"Come on, Ralph. They'll be announcing last call in a minute. Forget about it."

Ralph threw open the door with a violent bang, then walked slowly, fingering his hat.

Yeah. Blank white stationary again. Apologies. Dear Mom — I miss you — I sure am sorry for all the troubles I've ever caused — I'll make good — I'll take care of you when I get out of here — Boy, this boot training is hell — They treat you like animals — But I guess that's only fair, because that's what most of us are — Nobody in the platoon is too smart, but I'm the only one who didn't finish high school — Sure wish I had — Should've listened to Bill — But I guess I never do — I'm always apologizing, making good — I miss you! — Please write — I can't stand it here when all those lousy things I did come back — Tell me it's all right — Gosh, with Bill up at school, you're all alone — I love you — love and kisses — Ralph —

In one letter he'd said a thousand things. And it had felt good. When her answer came it melted him, so that he had to leave the barracks or be dubbed a crybaby. Funny, how one single moment of understanding on plain white paper thousands of miles away could undo eighteen years of misunderstood wandering.

A hundred letters had followed that first one. Even from Bill — Hell, he didn't ever expect him to write. But he had. "I'm just a dumb Marine," he'd said in his answer. "I'll try to come right up there behind you, big brother." And for once in his life they were all rooting for him. Bill said there sure as hell wouldn't be any second place — a Marine in the family deserved *first*.

That had felt good. He'd tried, tried hard. And when he got top honors at graduation and a transfer, now, to technological school, well, it had sure felt good talking to them long distance and hearing their congratulations. "I just want to spend my leave with you at home and guzzle beer and smoke and loaf and enjoy your cooking," he'd said. "This food out here — boy, I'll never complain about your cooking again."

Then his twenty days' leave came. Now they were gone. And look what he'd done with them.

Slept all day and stayed out nights. ("Jeez, I won't see the gang again for a whole year!") Borrowed fifty dollars from his mother. ("But, Mom. I can't take Lynn out and just offer her a stick of gum.") Told his mother to go to hell several times. ("Always nagging! — Nag, nag,

nag! I had enough of that. Now go to hell!") He hadn't eaten more than two meals at home. ("But Fred's coming to pick me up. I'll buy something.") He'd emptied the refrigerator of beer, taken a fifth of whisky, and the whole gang had had a ball. Ball. Yeah, a ball. And when he came home drunk his mother had to clean up the foul mess he made.

Ralph and Fred were approaching the golden brightness of the waiting lounge. She was sitting there, talking to Bill. She had on that black hat she looked so beautiful in, and the plain coat that made her look younger. She was smiling a little at Bill. In all his life Ralph had never seen another woman with such a warm smile that made you feel all cozy and pleasant in your belly, made a happy tingle run up your spine. And yet . . . she could be hateful, too. . . . Or was it only hate in his mind? And perhaps mere concern in her own, triggered by something he'd done to dry up that smile?

Ralph looked hard. She wasn't looking at him and he could look deeper that way, when he didn't have to look into her eyes, too. He squinted a little now. From the sun?

He felt sick as he approached the waiting room. His mother's eyes were on him suddenly, soft and tender, content with only a look, knowing that anything more between him and her was impossible. He was her Marine, and somewhere far away he sensed the pride she must have felt.

What do you do now, Marine? Again, he didn't know what to do with his eyes. I wished I felt like a Marine; I only look like one. If she only hadn't begun to nag this morning.

"Get up, Ralph. I woke you three times already." And at his tired moan her voice had become a crackle. "You haven't changed a bit. I thought the Corps would make a man of you. But it's all forgotten when you come home — all the letters — all the promises — isn't it? Now, get up — and get on that plane. I won't wake you a fourth time."

"Leave me alone, will you? Damn it, I can take care of myself." He had spit it at her a million times before. He, too, had thought, during the six months at boot camp, that he would never raise his voice to her again — never even give her cause to nag. But, then, she wasn't nagging. She had every right. Only he didn't want to be bridled so damn much!

And Bill — he always sat there, quiet, showing disapproval of them both, but not opening his mouth for fear of making it worse. Maybe Bill could see something in both of them that always lit a fuse — something that detonated, always fizzed, but never blew itself to bits because there had to be something left for another time.

If only this last hour hadn't been —

"Last call for Flight 191. All aboard, please."

The official at the gate looked at him questioningly.

Ralph grabbed his bag. His mother stood up suddenly, followed by his grandmother and Bill.

"Bye, Fred. Tell Ron I left. And tell Lynn to write." Hell, he was

purposely wasting the last few seconds to avoid his mother. Oh, it hurt. It hurt. I can't help it.

"Bye, Mom." He flashed his eyes toward her for a second. "Bill." Bill looked at him deeply. God, it hurt. "Gram, bye."

He turned past the gate and left them in the awkward air. His breath came fast, almost in spurts, though he wasn't running.

"Welcome aboard!" Her pretty clean smile blew a fresh atmosphere into the air about him. "May I take that for you, sir?"

"Thanks."

He found a seat. A window seat. He could see them all standing there, scanning the plane for his face in the window. He purposely held back his head so they couldn't find him.

His grandmother looked lovingly on, with her head cocked to one side as she always did. Bill stood with a funny stance, and though Ralph couldn't see his features, he felt as if there would be a little frown and perhaps even moist eyes on Bill's face. And was that his mother dabbing her eyes with a white handkerchief? Crying because he left? Or because he really never came home?

Ralph leaned forward, pressing his face to the small window. A hundred letters fluttered before his eyes. Yes, he had meant every word. Yes, he did want to show her how he'd changed. And damn it, he would do it yet.

He pressed his face harder. Mom, look! Here! Here!

They were looking at the plane, but not at any particular window. Here! Over here! He wanted to yell.

They all stood motionless. They couldn't see him.

Here, Mom! Please — here! Look at me, please!

A loud roar exploded in his ears and through the shimmering heat waves from below the wing he could see their shapes slowly losing solidity, until, when the plane started moving, he lost sight of them altogether.

Long after the plane had risen, in his mind's eye he still saw them standing there, and she dabbing her eyes. In the corners of his mind, he felt himself already making room for the words he would use to write home. Dear Mom — I'm sorry — I miss you —

And then he would try to dry up the ocean between himself and Bill. Maybe they could meet in its exposed bottom. Give and take. Not take alone.

He drifted between sleep and dream. The hum of the jets was constant, stringing his thoughts along evenly, monotonously. The steady hum grew foreboding in his ears. Was it his life, this hum, this aggravating drone? He could imagine his mother having to listen to it, to live with it, never reaching solid ground.

He turned his face toward the window. Far below were a million tiny objects on a plane of green and gray. So far away, everything was. Oceans and space.

Ralph wished he could tear open the window and jump through

space, swim the whole ocean, grab the whole wide world and apologize —

The engines hummed on. His thoughts were very blank. Mentally he tore up all the letters, replacing them with one. He would write it immediately. It would be long, very long. And it would begin: "Dear Mom: You don't know how I miss you and how I'm looking forward to my next leave. . . ."

He buried his face in his hands. Next leave.

A whole damn year!

— ULRICH WICKS

"The Loner"

MARJORIE SIEMANDEL



## THE CREMATION

We went to the graveyard  
To look at the flowers.  
It was a gusty day,  
And the wind had scattered them  
From their places.  
They lay unwithered  
Along the path and on the road.  
We picked them up  
And placed them against  
Gray stone  
In their plastic pretense.  
Then we picked a fragile  
Weed-flower of some kind  
That grew along the highway  
And took it home to look at it  
While it lived one fragrant day  
Among us.  
When it died  
We burned the withered stalk  
And remembered the fragrance  
For a moment.

— RACHAEL C. BURCHARD

Brats uncovered, flats unhurried  
Sibs unmothered, cribs unworried  
Cats, rats, bats, slats  
Ribs, bibs, nibs, dibs  
Glory be to the Father and to the Son  
Sing, sang, sung, slung  
Dink, dank, dunk, drunk  
Unwashed babes in dirty cradles  
Fatty soup in filthy ladles  
Sorry, hoary, Tory, glory  
Hi diddle  
To fiddle  
While we burn.

— PETER LEANDER HIRSCH

## DUCKS

Five ducks swaddled in velvet clothes of rich, deep hue —  
Some green, some blue —  
Stood in procession.

Five ducks waddled to the water's edge on wet, webbed feet —  
Outrageous orange —  
Like rubber boots on kings.

Five ducks paddled soundlessly, as one —  
Tail to bill —  
Propelled by an unseen motor.

— JAN KILGORE

## THE LOST LAMB

Tommy clutched his permission slip and his sack lunch, waiting in a line of second-graders to board the bus for a field trip. Miss Middleton was collecting slips as the boys and girls boarded the bus and saying something pleasant to each child. Tommy liked her. She was young and pretty and soft somehow, and Tommy vaguely identified her with stories his Dad told him of a mother who had to go away after his sister was born. Away was a hospital in Elgin, and Dad often went to see her; but to Tommy she was only an obscure memory.

Behind him Bill and Kevin started a scuffling game of touch-last, and little clouds of snow scudded up from under their shuffling feet. It was winter, two days before the beginning of Christmas vacation, and Miss Middleton had arranged this trip as a kind of symbolic pilgrimage to the City of David. They were on their way to Durham's Sheep Farm about ten miles west of town. This was lambing time, Miss Middleton had explained, and they were going to see the new baby lambs in the manger, just as they had been when Jesus was born.

"Hmph!" snorted Tommy's grandmother, who kept house for the family. "I suppose she thinks that there was lovely white snow around and all. Don't let her tell you that, Tommy. That's only on Christmas cards."

"No, Gram," Tommy said quietly. Somehow Grandma always seemed to spoil things a little. Lovely white snow only meant wet floors to her. He'd heard Grandma tell someone once that it was a thankless job raising your son's family when you'd already raised your own. Maybe that was why snow wasn't beautiful to her.

The bus pulled away from the school, turned onto the main highway, and the trip began. Someone in the back of the bus began to sing. The sound gathered strength, and soon everyone in the bus was chanting:

*I'm looking over  
My dead dog Rover  
That I ran over before.*

*One leg is missing,  
The other is gone,  
The third one is laying  
On our front lawn.*

*No need explaining,  
The one remaining  
Is down on the basement floor.*

*Oh, I'm looking over  
My dead dog Rover  
That I overlooked before.*

There was a thud at the back of the bus as Kevin slid onto the floor. He and Bill had their game going again. Miss Middleton stepped back to restore peace. The bus turned off the highway onto a snow-packed side road. Tommy looked out of the window at the snow banks. They looked like the icing Grandma put on her cherry cake. Plaster-of-Paris icing, Dad called it. Two cock pheasants walked majestically through rows of corn stubble that paralleled the road. The passing bus disturbed them and they took wing, flying low and heavily in line with the bus windows. Fur-frosted burdock, queen's lace, and foptails pierced the snow. Tommy squinted his eyes almost shut to heighten the glitter of the snow diamonds as it filtered through his lashes. This was a lovely trip, he decided. A large wooden sign above the rural mailbox read: "Durham's Dorsets." The bus turned into the driveway, circled the large white farmhouse, and came to a stop in front of a long low barn with a corrugated tin roof that gleamed in the thin December sunlight.

"All right, children. Please stay together, and please be quiet so we can hear what Mr. Durham has to tell us about sheep." The bus doors hissed open, and Mr. Durham stepped forward to meet them. He was a largish man with the wrinkled, tanned-leather skin of a farmer. He motioned the children into the barn and pushed the hood of his sweatshirt back onto his shoulder.

"Come in, kids, come in. It's cold out there, and we have to keep the door shut. We're having new lambs born every day now, and we have to keep them warm."

The big barn door slid with a screech along its metal trolley. Tommy's eyes blinked and then adjusted to the semi-twilight atmosphere within the large barn. The air was redolent with the smell of alfalfa hay, lanolin, and the faint sweetish essence of birth and mothers' milk. Along either side of the barn slat fences, wired together, formed individual stalls for the ewes. Above each stall, just high enough to clear the ewe's back, was a hooded heat lamp casting a yellow glow on the straw. In each pelucid bubble of light the great miracle was revealed. Heavy-wooled ewes, looking slightly topheavy on slim smooth legs, stood patiently while their lambs nursed, forelegs folded under, chins extended to reach the pendulous udders that hung nearly to the straw. In one pen twin lambs slept, muzzle to dock, forelegs tucked under, their noses baby pink, their wool a tightly crimped, pearly white. They lay directly in the center of the well of light. Watchfully, their mother lay at the rim of light. One lamb arose, pushing forward on his forefeet to get his rump in the air. He bleated faintly. His

mother immediately came to him, rubbed her nose in his pelt, and muttered short grunts of approval. Tottering along the mountainous side of the ewe, the lamb swayed and poked his exploratory nose into her long fleece, seeking the life-giving syrup that precedes the thick yellow milk into the udder. Mr. Durham pointed proudly into the pen.

"Those twins were born last night. She's a dandy mother. Generally twins for us."

He led the way past other family groups, each a little globe of serenity on a bed of golden straw. Tommy thought of the glow of the halo and wondered if it was golden like this.

In one pen a mother, alone, paced the area, emitting short gulps of sound.

"What's the matter with her?" Miss Middleton asked.

"She lost her lamb, and she doesn't realize yet that it's dead," explained Mr. Durham. "Ewes are wonderfully affectionate mothers, and they grieve when they lose their lambs." He reached over an adjacent pen gate and scooped up a lamb. He gave it to a little girl near him to hold, saying: "That one's about a week old."

The warm milky white head muzzled the girl's shoulder. "Oh, I'd love to have him forever," she sighed.

Mr. Durham smiled and gave the lamb back to its anxious mother. He held up his hand for silence.

"Now if you kids will be quiet, I'll let you see some lambs that were born just before you arrived. They're so new that their mother is still cleaning them. She's still a bit skittery, so please don't talk too loud."

Under the lamp the thin white bodies still steamed with the heat of the womb. One lamb held its head toward the light and made abortive efforts to rise. Another lay on its side, its soft pink hooves looking like whip-crèamed jello. Its eyes were shut tight, but already its body was making the first rocking movements preparatory to rising. A young man kneeled in the straw inspecting a third white form. He looked at Mr. Durham and shook his head.

"What's the matter with that one?" Tommy asked.

"It's not going to make it," said Mr. Durham. "Too puny to get up to nurse. Its mother can't take care of three anyhow. Two lambs is all a ewe can generally raise."

Tommy looked at the limp form on the straw. Its sides moved up and down rhythmically in the pattern of life.

"Can't you give this lamb to that mother back there who lost her baby?"

Mr. Durham looked into the troubled dark grey irises of Tommy's eyes. "Wish I could, boy, but sheep aren't like that. A ewe won't adopt an orphan lamb. She'll push it out of her way and go right on bleating for her own. No, it just doesn't work. Years ago when I first started in this business I used to bottle-feed the weak ones. But if you touch them

too much their mothers abandon them, and you have to raise them by hand. They become real pets and follow you around like Mary's little lamb, but sooner or later they get sick and die. Now I've got fifty, sixty bred ewes, and I just have to expect to lose some."

He turned to Miss Middleton. "If you'll follow me, I'll take the class outside and show them the rams. We don't keep a buck with the flock all the time, and we alternate the rams to keep the blood lines fresh, so we have a half dozen big boys with the curly horns out in back here."

The boys squealed approval, and the children followed him single file through a smaller door in the back of the barn. Tommy hung back, watching the still-breathing form of the third lamb. Then he turned and followed the last of the class out into the bright December morning. Behind the barn snow was piled in little hillocks like giant marshmallows. The mound nearest the door was pearly and uneven. Tommy followed the footpath in the snow to a smaller outbuilding. At the door he turned to look back. The kneeling man came through the small barn door, drooped something white on the ragged pile, and walked away.

— MARY PENSON

## McDONALD'S

Orange man chasing fifteen cents  
Somewhere through  
Green rain and  
Throbbing rainbows —  
Six hundred million sold  
To neon parking lots and  
Garbage cans  
With mouths that  
Masticate.

— JOAÑ CAVALLARO



Opposite Page:

"Flight"

JOSEPH RYBACEK

## SILVER CHORD

She opened her eyes and lay there in bed for a moment, savoring the bright sunlight which flooded the room. The first things she became conscious of were the rich, pungent odor of coffee perking and the pleasant clatter of dishes from the kitchen. She sighed deeply, stretched, then sank back into the blankets, relishing this Saturday-morning privilege.

„Saturdays! She had always loved Saturdays — the days for sleeping late, for leisurely shopping trips with Mama in the afternoon. I'm worse than my students when it comes to a day off, she thought. She glanced at the clock on the bedside table — 10:30 — you've slept later than usual, she scolded herself indulgently. In a surge of energy she threw back the covers and sat up on the edge of the bed. Her feet touched the cold floor and recoiled. Got to get those papers graded and look for a new dress to wear tonight.

Tonight . . . there wasn't going to be any tonight. The small black thought which had been gnawing at her mind suddenly forced itself into the foreground. The memory of last night, the memory she had been repressing came back with jarring suddenness.

The car slowed to a stop around the corner from her house, just out of sight of the lighted window. Bob shut off the motor and turned to her, drawing her closer to him. He kissed her, gently at first, then with growing emotion. She felt the sense of guilt rising up within her, felt her body growing tense. Bob felt it too, and pulled away with a sigh which revealed disappointment and a hint of disgust. When he spoke, his voice betrayed the hurt he felt.

"Janet, what's wrong? Tell me. You go out with me, seem to enjoy my company and conversation, then, when I kiss you, you act like you can't stand to have me touch you." The impatient rasp of a match accented his words as he lit a cigarette and hastily expelled the smoke. "What is it, Janet? Is it something to do with your mother? Tell me. You know I'll try to understand."

"What makes you think Mama has anything to do with it?" she replied, instantly on the defensive.

"Well, she's responsible for every other crazy idea you've got. We

date secretly so Mama won't know. I let you out of the car around the corner so Mama won't see me. Janet, are you ashamed of me?"

"No, Bob. I—"

"Well, then, take me in right now and let me meet your mother. Let's put an end to this."

"Bob, we've been over this before. You know how I feel and—"

Yes, I know how you feel, but I don't understand it. Janet, Janet I love you. I want to marry you."

"Stop it, Bob. I don't want to talk about marriage. I've told you I can't get married. Mama wouldn't—"

"Mama wouldn't! Mama would! My God, Janet, you've got to break away sometime. You're not a little girl any more. You owe it to yourself to get married and have children. You're an affectionate woman." The gentle touch of his hand on her shoulder failed to prepare her for his next words. "You deserve somebody to lavish that affection on. Somebody besides your mother."

"Bob! Mama hasn't done anything to me except love me and spend her life slaving for me, working ever since Daddy died, just for me. I love her very much and I owe it to her to do all I can to repay her for what she's done for me."

"All she's done for you is warp your mind and your life. Your father probably didn't die. He probably got wise and ran out on her and now she's living off you." He crushed the butt of his cigarette savagely into the ashtray.

"Don't say that, Bob! You don't know the wonderful person she is, or you'd love her as I do. Daddy did die. I know he did. Mama told me about it and she wouldn't lie to me."

"Janet, she's got you so completely under her control that you don't know, you can't see, what she's done to you. She's made you incapable of loving anyone but her. You're—"

"That's not true, Bob. It's men who don't know what love is."

"Janet! Has she actually told you this — made you believe this? She's worse than I thought she was. She ought to be locked up. She—"

"Bob, don't say that. She's right. She always told me. I thought you were different, but you're not. She's right. I don't ever want to see you anymore, Bob. I have to go in. Mama's waiting and—"

"That's right, don't let's don't keep Mama waiting. You don't need me. Go in to her."

The car pulled away, spewing gravel, and Janet found herself standing alone in the dark, trembling. She turned toward her house and with tremendous effort repeated, "You must not cry. Don't let yourself cry. Mama musn't see you cry. . . ."

She hadn't cried — then. The tears which had been held inside poured out freely now. She sobbed, then caught her breath suddenly.

Her mother's footsteps. Once again the tears were forced deep down inside. She rubbed her eyes as her mother's neat gray head peered around the door. "Well, Janet, I thought you were going to sleep all morning. I knew you were out too late last night. Growing girls need their sleep for pretty shiny hair and rosy cheeks."

Janet rose from the bed averting her face from her mother's adoring glance and gave her a light kiss on the cheek and a "Morning, Mama."

"Morning, Mama. Is that all the greeting I get from my little girl?"

The whining tone in her voice forced Janet to reply, "I'm sorry, Mama. I guess I'm just not awake until I have some of your wonderful coffee."

"It's all ready, dear. And I'll go right down and fix you some scrambled eggs and toast to go with it. Hurry down now."

"That's fine, Mama. I'll be right down." The thought of scrambled eggs and toast sickened her, but it was easier to agree than to say she wasn't hungry and face the inevitable inquisition that would follow.

"She splashed icy water on her face and once more her thoughts returned to Bob. How could he say those terrible things? Her mother loved her. She lived for her, not "off her" as Bob had said. And she had thought she loved him. How could she? He had said he loved her. Love! How could he say that and then say those awful things to her about Mama? Mama had been right. Men were incapable of love.

She remembered the scene of eight years ago as though it had just taken place. Jimmy Riley had walked her home from school and asked her, stumbingly, to go to the Homecoming football game and dance next Saturday. She had burst into the house quivering with excitement and eager to share it with Mama. Her first date! She had found Mama in the kitchen preparing the customary after-school snack they ate together every day. "Mama, Mama, guess what!" The event bubbled out of her, the words spilling over each other so fast that she failed to notice her mother's face. "And he asked me to the dance too!" She spun around and around in an elaborate pirouette until she felt the strong hands clutching her arms, forcing her to stop. Her jaw dropped at the sight of her mother's white face and burning eyes.

"Mama, what's wrong? You're hurting me."

Her grip relaxed. "I'm sorry, Janet, baby. I didn't mean to hurt you. You know I wouldn't hurt you for the world. It's just, well, it's just that this is nothing to get so excited about. You'll be able to go Saturday. Now calm down and listen to what Mama has to say."

Janet sat down, curious and bewildered by her mother's unexpected reaction.

"Listen, honey, I knew this would happen someday. I guess mamas just don't realize that their little girls are growing up until they go to their first dance. I have to tell you something now, something it's very

hard for me to say, but that I want you always to remember." Eyes glistening with unshed tears, she sat down next to Janet. "Other boys will walk you home and take you to dances and parties. You'll go to them and wear pretty dresses and get pretty flowers from the boys, but there are things you must never forget if you don't want to be hurt. Are you listening, Janet?"

"Yes, Mama," she whispered, overawed by this new aspect of her mother.

"Good. You don't remember your father very well, do you, Janet?"

"I remember he was big, and he laughed a lot and tickled me. And once, just before he died, he yelled at you and threw a vase into the fireplace. His face was so red. Then he left and you were crying." Janet flung her arms around her mother's neck. "Oh, Mama, I was so scared!"

"There, there, Janet. You don't have to be scared now. Mama's here," she crooned as she gently stroked Janet's hair.

"Then he came back the next day. I remember you made me stay in my bedroom and locked the door. After that he died and I never saw him again. That's all I remember about Daddy, Mama."

"No, you don't remember him as I do . . . the things he said to me—"

"Mama? Mama, what did you want to tell me now?"

"Janet, you love Mama, don't you?"

"Oh, yes! I love you awfully, Mama."

"Well, Janet, your father didn't love me. He hurt me very much." She took Janet's hands in hers and held them tightly. "He hurt me, but I kept him from hurting you. I don't ever want anyone to hurt my Janet, and boys — men — are the ones who hurt women. They don't know how to love, only hurt—"

"But, Mama, you said—"

"No; listen to me, Janet. Yes, I said boys will take you to dances and give you pretty things, but you must never let them kiss you or go out with one more than once, or you'll be hurt, you'll be hurt terribly."

"Let go, Mama, you're squeezing my hands so tight!"

"Janet, did you understand what I said?" Her fingers loosened slightly. "I won't let go until you promise me you won't ever kiss a boy or date him more than one time. Promise me!"

"I promise, Mama, I promise. Please don't get mad at me. I promise."

"That's my good girl. That's my baby. I'm not mad at you. I just want to keep you safe. Now, let's have some cookies and milk, and tomorrow we can go downtown and buy you the prettiest dress we can find."

The conviction and determination in her mother's voice that day still echoed in her mind. She had kept her promise throughout high school and college. She had never lacked dates. Some boys had been fun and others had not, but she never dated one more than once. A few had persisted, but these, too, gave up after repeated refusals. Her roommates regarded

her as somewhat unusual. In turn, it puzzled her how they could rave about boys and say they were in love. She had never really cared enough for a boy to want to break her promise to Mama.

She got her degree from teacher's college and found a job in the local high school so she could live with Mama. The school was too far to allow her to come home at noontime, but Mama always packed her a good, nourishing lunch so she never had to worry.

It was at school that she had met Bob. He taught math and ate the same lunch period she did. The cafeteria had been crowded that day. . . .

"Mind if I sit here? There doesn't seem to be any place else free." She looked up into his pleasant smiling face as he sat down without waiting for her answer. In the small talk which followed she learned much about him. His name was Bob Tanner. He had been teaching for two years here. As they talked shop, she found herself laughing at his experiences and comments and slowly warming to him. He seemed nicer than any man she had ever talked to or dated — warm, friendly, kind. She found herself accepting his offer of a ride home after school and actually looking forward to seeing him as the afternoon passed. But she did not invite him in to meet Mama.

He sat with her again the next day and invited her to go to a show with him that night. She accepted and enjoyed herself more than she ever had before. He was so funny and knew so many interesting stories.

The next day, again at lunch, he asked her to go to dinner and dancing the following Saturday. She refused automatically this second date, to Bob's obvious disappointment.

She sighed wearily after her last class of the day and realized that the mood of depression which had been haunting her all afternoon was due to the fact that she wanted to go out with Bob Saturday night. She wanted to go, yet she had refused. Her promise to Mama came back to her. But surely it wouldn't hurt just this once. Bob was so nice to be with and she had had so much fun. He hadn't even tried to kiss her after their last date as so many boys had.

When he asked her the next day if she wouldn't change her mind about Saturday night, she surprised him, and herself, by agreeing.

After that first time, it had been easier to go out with Bob again. And the following time it was easier still. But she had not yet summoned up the courage to tell Mama about her new adventure.

He had complied with her request to let her out of the car around the corner from her house and had, at first, accepted her explanation that her mother wasn't well. Then he began to question this, but always dropped the subject when he sensed her reluctance to speak of it. Always, until last night.

Now she realized that Mama had been right. How could she ever have doubted her? Men were cruel and incapable of love. She was lucky, she had not fallen into the trap. Thanks to Mama she had not fallen in

love with a man. She had faltered and had almost succumbed to the trap, but she had learned the hard way that Mama was right.

She finished dressing hurriedly and ran down the stairs to breakfast — the breakfast Mama had prepared with love. — PHYLLIS FRAATZ

## YOU'LL THINK OF ME

I've gorged myself with tinkly things  
and running things and other things  
of no regard but silly want  
and no respect but having them  
and little else but spending money  
and small consequence but why not  
because I wanted to gorge myself

a yellow front for notice me  
and purple back for watch me  
and Go To Hell for remember me  
and black inside for pity me  
and all hollow for myself  
because I knew! for gorging myself

the latent chrome and little use  
or need or want or magic spell  
or what the hell else have you —  
but see me yellow  
and watch me purple  
and Go To Hell.

— TOM JUNKROSKI

*Opposite Page:*  
"Alpha"  
ARLENE KOLIN



## WHAT MONEY CAN'T BUY

God was destroying the Chinese people.

In the spring of 1949, Peiping, the cultural center of China and its most colorful city, fell to the Communists. Groups of refugees were seen everywhere rushing out of the city gates. The airports were closed and the train was the only transportation we could use. It no longer darted like a flying dragon but moved as a snail due to the great overload. The passengers filled the train, in corridors, in lavatories, and wherever another body could be squeezed. The majority of the cramped passengers didn't even have tickets. Because of the overflow of children, the racks served as cribs for the infants.

We were moving on and I noticed the stars twinkling in the sky. The trees seemed to be falling behind us. Occasionally I saw a very bright star falling from the sky and disappearing in the darkness. Soon, though, the beautiful morning sun changed night into day, and I found I was in Hsüchow, the strategic center of transportation in East China.

The next day I boarded a riverboat sailing on the great canal for Hangchow from where I was to go to Canton. The riverboat was very crowded. The cabin was so full that I couldn't find room to put my feet. At the same time I smelled a pungent odor that made me feel like vomiting. It surely didn't smell like sweat, for I had experienced that odor before. It seemed as though a thousand people were breathing in one small room.

That night I huddled with my poor belongings, but I didn't sleep very well. At about ten o'clock the next morning we were driven up to the middle of the deck in order to have what they called lunch. It was rice porridge mixed with cabbage soup. Hungry as I was, I could hardly swallow it because there were husks and sand in it. There were tears in my eyes when I finished eating.

Suddenly a large number of people were gathering on the prow fifty yards away from me. It must have been something uncommon to have attracted such a group. I forgot the bitterness of my lunch and slowly walked forward to see what it was about. This was the first time I had been on board a riverboat, and it was an interesting experience, for it gave me a chance to get acquainted with the world-famous canal dug simply for sailing Sui Yang Ti, the most cruel Chinese Emperor's entertaining dragon boat. (It made me think of the yelling of the boss and the

murmuring of the slave workers when the canal was being dug 800 years before. The banks, along which the yellow water was swiftly flowing, were the graves of many nameless slave-heroes.)

No sooner had I elbowed the other fellows aside and passed through the throng than I saw a beautiful young woman throwing into the current handfuls of things which I didn't recognize. She refused to be comforted by two gentlemen standing stiffly and embarrassedly beside her. It caused me to wonder. What on earth was it that she was throwing so liberally and carelessly? I went closer to her and I saw clearly it was U. S. Bank-notes, diamond rings, gold, precious stones and jewels. She looked quite aware of her senses; yet, with her head hanging down she uttered softly: "Money can buy a woman but not her love. What money can't buy is really the most valuable thing in the world."

At the same time I heard the stouter of the two gentlemen say, "That's squandering!"

And the other one said in a faltering voice, "Why, don't be so silly, Hsüeh Mei. Speak your mind freely."

As if unaware of their presence, this mysterious beauty continued to do what she liked with her own property and, of course, no one had the right or any idea to stop her. One by one she threw the valuables slowly into the water while all the people around her were watching with amazement and envy. More astonishing than this was when she hurriedly stood up and plunged into the water to be immediately drawn into a whirlpool.

There was then a great commotion and the people rushed forward and pressed upon the two gentlemen for an explanation.

The man who seemed thinner and more handsome spoke first with a sigh: "I am well punished." He paused, sobbing, "It is a sad story to tell."

After a long period of silence he spoke again: "Her maiden name is Fang Hsüeh Mei. When I first saw her in a brothel in Peiping two years ago she was twenty-two. She was then more charming and alluring, which explained why many people wanted to win her heart. Among the solicitous suers there were retired tuchuns, generals, bankers, rich merchants and university students. They spent money on her like dirt. But as soon as they left, the insatiable madame robbed her of all the money paid her by the visitors. Gradually the visitors learned of this and so they secretly paid her much money in order to please her. She, however, stalled them off and chose me. Not for my money, because she knew that it was almost gone, but for my fine disposition and character."

He paused and then went on softly.

"Discovering that my money was gone, the madame closed the door against me and didn't permit me to see her again. From then on I overheard that she often pretended to be ill whenever her madame ordered her to entertain the eminent and prosperous guests.

"I then found myself stranded at an inn, in a state of frustration. I

didn't know what to do — go to Nanking? — no. My father would not receive his prodigal son after he had squandered all the money intended for his four years' tuition and living expenses at Peking University. Go to Hsüeh Mei? — impossible. The door was tightly closed by the old witch. I was lost, knowing not which way to go. Just as I was drinking tea so as to dissipate my sorrow in the long afternoon, I received a letter from Hsüeh Mei. It read:

*'Dear Yao Chü:*

*The fright and darkness of the storm has passed to leave a veritable calm. Our time has come at last. Our madame consents to let me free provided that you pay her \$500. Quickly, secure that money and get me out of here.*

*Hsüeh Mei'*

"Even though her letter brought me the greatest surprise, it was the source of great perplexity. Where could I possibly get that much money? I was distraught and in a frenzy, which caused my mind to work with the speed of lightning. Finally, with a certain amount of borrowing and imposition I located the money necessary to bring her back to me."

"How did you make your living?" interrupted one of us.

"It went hard with us. She sold what she had except that box over there. I have always been regretful of being unable to provide her with a good living. When the Communists came we made up our minds to go to the South to start life together over again."

"Why didn't you sell the contents of that box?" someone inquired, pointing to the box.

"The box was always double-locked and under no condition was I to touch it. It wasn't until today that I discovered what the contents were. If I had only known sooner, the misfortune would never have occurred. It was just this morning, on this deck that I bumped into a gentleman who frequented the brothel and was an admirer of Hsüeh Mei. He was a millionaire who loved her and was willing to pay me twice as much as I paid for her. I thought if she could live with him I would be unspeakably relieved. I was sure he would be kind and gallant to her — and one thousand American dollars is an enormous sum to me. I —"

The bell for dinner was ringing. The crowd, having no stomach to listen to him, dispersed.

— PEN-TI LEE

## IN DREAM TO RACHEL CAME

A bottle sucked a stopper in  
And a blackboy poked his head up out of a barrel;  
I saw a skinny red.

Yawning and bananas.

A light bulb entered its socket and turned  
While someone was drilling holes in the door,  
But I looked through the keyhole instead.

There were several worms on the mirror.

— EARL TETEAKE

## HOLY MOUNTAIN

The Mount of Christ the King stands high  
Above the town with stark white cross  
Etched sharp on blue El Paso sky,  
And granite slaughtered God looks down.

On Holy days old women sigh,  
And walk the three mile road to toss  
The fresh-picked flowers, cry,  
And count the beads to ease the pain.

In Juarez, where the women live,  
Young boys sell sisters in the streets,  
And black-robed priests say Mass and pray.

— WILLIAM DEAN

# AWARDS

## POETRY

- VEILED VISIONS, *R. Gillette* \* 1st Prize  
THE CREMATION, *Rachael C. Burchard* \* 2nd Prize  
HOLY MOUNTAIN, *William Dean* \* 3rd Prize

## PROSE

- A YEAR AND AN OCEAN, *Ulrich Wicks* \* 1st Prize  
THE LOST LAMB, *Mary Penson* \* 2nd Prize  
THE PROGRESSING TRIPTYCH, *Earl Teteak* \* 3rd Prize

## JUDGES

LOUIS CAMP  
E. T. HERBERT  
ENID HAGEN  
LOUIS PHILLIPS



