



towers 58

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brief encounter

"Going to Los Angeles?"

I put down my copy of **True** and looked at the young man who had taken the seat beside me. His suit was Brooks Brothers — with Brooks Brothers suits you don't need to look at the label — his shirt crisply white and in the latest style, his tie a tastefully striped ivy-league.



"No," I answered, "just as far as Chicago. I change planes there."

We exchanged smiles and I noticed his thin, rather Lincolnesque face beneath his curly but well-trained hair. He struck me as being almost pretty, in a masculine sort of way.

"I see you're reading **True**. Did you happen to read that article on Burma? The author is a very good friend of mine."

"Really? No, I haven't had a chance to read it yet. The first time through I just look at the pictures."

The engines wheezed into action one by one and the plane vibrated gently. The "Fasten Seat Belts" and "No Smoking" signs went on.

"I hope they hurry and turn on the air conditioning. I detest stuffy planes."

"They'll have it on as soon as we take off. Live in Los Angeles?" I ventured.

"Oh, no; I'm just flying out to visit my father. He's president of Benton's and Walton, you know, and I haven't had a chance to see him since we came back from Europe last fall. Tell me, what do you think of Europe?"

"Not much, I'm afraid. I've only been there once, so I really couldn't judge. Of course, I did like Paris."

"Paris!" His hands were like immaculately groomed birds, one or the other of which fluttered up a few inches from his lap each time he spoke. "I loved it! Where did you stay?"

"Oh, a little place called the Hotel Suisse, in Montmartre."

"Next time you go you must stay at the Claridge; it's the best in Paris you know."

I nodded. "Did you go with your parents?"

"Just my father. Mother died when I was twelve."

"No brothers or sisters?"

"Good heavens, no. What on earth would I ever do with them? Cigarette?" He produced a regally monogrammed box with a flip-top and purple tinfoil. "Turkish import. They're really quite good."

He lit them with a discreetly expensive lighter.

"Ronnie — the one who wrote the article — always smokes them. His father was vice-consul in Turkey and brought some home with him. He and my father went to Harvard together"

He went on talking; his voice pleasant and with a sort of urgency to it, which drew me to him in spite of myself; his hands, those graceful birds, giving quiet emphasis to everything he said.

"--- and so then my father insisted I go to Harvard too, though frankly I preferred Yale. Quite a man, my father. Eventually I suppose he wants me to start in at Benton's and Walton, but I haven't spoken to him except on the phone since we got back."

"I imagine he'll be very glad to see you after all this time."

He laughed; a warm, rich, and soft laugh. When he spoke his voice was surprisingly sincere.

"My God, no. My father hates me."

ode to kleenex (soft pink)

Hail, Oh perfect pack of pink profusion,

Whose very absence heightens life's confusion;

Whose blushing petals rise in single file;

Whose porous tissues blot up trace of smile,

And tear, and other oozing agonies of man

Which have plagued him since first his time began:

To Thee I pose one question, oft unheeded:

.. Why, oh why, Most Wonderful, art thou never near when needed?

april

So spring is here —

Go ahead, impress me.

So the birdies dear

Sing for me expressly;

So the croci leer,

And the breeze caress me . . .

I think I'm catching a cold !

needles not for sewing

Unnoticed by the four well-dressed men talking to the bartender, a blue light flashed warningly in the jukebox. Repeatedly like a neon sign the flashing light signified danger only to the few who knew its meaning — raid! Two young men had slipped away unobserved toward the wash-room and made their escape through the back door. Three women sat with calm facade waiting their chance. The bartender himself looked as relaxed as possible as he conversed with the four detectives; he dared not look in the direction of the three girls left who he knew would make their break soon.

Pamela waited breathlessly for her two friends to leave. She hated going last; it was bad luck. Finally, they made it. Picking up her purse she proceeded to make her well rehearsed exit. Her gait could not be too brisk, yet the anxiety pounding in her throat forced her legs faster—faster. She was almost there; it was a matter of a few steps. There! A slight feeling of relief began to fill her. God, that was close! Then suddenly a strong hand grabbed her shoulder. Pam felt the blood drain from her face, and with shaking knees she was ushered to the front door. It was only a matter of minutes before the squad car pulled up in front of the county jail.

Behind steel bars Pam looked all but her usual gaudy self. Coldly she stared at the floor, and answered not once the questions thrown at her by the matron. Tired of the futile interrogation, the matron slammed the steel door behind her. Pamela shuddered from the sound of clashing steel. Suddenly she clutched her stomach, and collapsed upon her cot. It had been sixteen hours since she had had her last fix. She thrust some pills the doctor had left her into her parched mouth. No water was left for her to quench her thirst. She knew only too well what was happening to her. She had heard others tell her about it; she had read it and at the same time had vowed she'd never get caught, she'd be too smart for that. Bleakly she glanced at the bars surrounding her. Puffy from lack of rest, her eyelids closed. Sleep, the unbigoted comforter.

In the sixty-fifth hour Pamela's screams of anguish echoed pitifully

throughout the hospital section of the jail. Her body, contorted in convulsions, lay writhing upon her cell floor. Her uniform was drenched with sweat and vomit. Her fingers were dug deeply into her stomach as she tried to relieve her pain. Her body shook as her wrenching guts allowed only dry heaves. Her mouth was a froth of blood and bile. Her eyes were blazing fireballs which squeezed shut as spasmodic cramps twisted her insides.

Across from this tortured soul, whose pain could at any moment terminate with death, a doctor sat calmly. No physician could help now; no drugs could be administered to relieve this pain — only time, the healer.

Pamela had survived the seventy-two hours of withdrawal, and in the eightieth hour she could hold a soup spoon and smoke a cigarette. Not since her entrance had she spoken a word; she uttered no thanks from her swollen lips for the food or smoke. Her eyes, the pupils still dilated, glanced weakly at the matron who carried away the tray.

Three days later Pamela's boyfriend, Benny, escorted her away from the hospital of the county jail. She had no more punishment to endure; the law had said as the police released her. Pamela's only response had been a hateful laugh. Benny's affection for Pam, in the form of a hard grip around her waist, was accompanied by, "It's too bad ya got nabbed, baby. You'll feel better in a few weeks; then you'll be back in the swing of things."

Pam smiled bitterly and said, "Yeah, Ben, I'll get O.K. soon. The boss'd kill me if I ever stopped pushin' the stuff." Her voice softened a little, "I was awful sick, Ben, awful sick, I'd liked to died the way it hurt so."

Benny helped her into the car saying, "Yeah, sugar, I heard it's hell; ya just gotta stay clear of those hot spots next time."

Again the sneer of hate crossed Pamela's face, "I won't get caught again, Ben. Don't worry. I'm too smart."

the kishwaukee

Seeing the Kishwaukee rush through DeKalb refreshed by the recently melting snow brought to my mind the long forgotten days when the Kishwaukee was one of the major rivers of the North American continent. Because of the present sad state of the river, most of the present generation will not believe the part it has played in history.

At one time the Kishwaukee may have marked the most southerly exploration of the early Vikings. This cannot be proved as yet since nobody has found a marker stone closer than Minnesota. It is known that at a much later date it formed an important link in the most direct steamboat route between Rockford and Chicago. Between these two dates it seems to have been a favorite recreation area for the Indians of the midwest. It was a favorite place for the young braves to practice their canoeing because the current was very leisurely. This was caused largely by the fact that it flowed into another river smaller than itself. Traffic was heavy on the river in those days, especially in the eastern portion. The name DeKalb is derived from an Indian expression meaning "at last, we are out of that horrible Chicago traffic."

At a point near the present location of the Northern Illinois University campus, the Indians had their equivalent of the modern West Point. One of the graduation ceremonies was the throwing of the graduating class into the river. Naturally, when the braves waded out of the river their feet were muddy. This mud was regarded as the same as a diploma from the school. The braves traveled to their homes without washing their feet, and the one getting home with the most Kishwaukee mud still on his feet automatically became the next chief. This worked well for all but one of the many tribes. The braves of this tribe became so adept at walking without disturbing the mud that they were able to keep it on their feet for years. As this created a tie between numerous braves, and none was willing to give up his chances of becoming chief, the entire tribe became known as the Blackfeet.

Since the Kishwaukee was so tranquil, Robert Fulton chose it for the first trials of his steamboat. Since the farmers along the river called it Fulton's Folly and told him to quit wasting his time and come help hoe the hybrid corn, he took his invention to the Hudson River where the people had time to stand around and admire his work.

The Kishwaukee was a very important factor in the industrial North during the Civil War. It was so important an asset to the Union that the Confederacy organized one of the most daring expeditions of the war, to sabotage it. Volunteers from the 17th Alabama Infantry slipped through the battle lines and all the way to the banks of the Kishwaukee. They dynamited the narrow isthmus between that river and the Chicago, and overnight the once mighty Kishwaukee became a mere trace of a river.



tom brady

• • • •

Because the blast occurred on the very night that news of Lincoln's re-election reached Illinois nobody became alarmed at the noise, but passed it off as a prank of some of the juvenile delinquents of that time. By the time the truth was learned the rebels had escaped. Because of the humiliation of the North and the stricken consciences of the Confederates for having destroyed such a beautiful river, no mention of this is made in history books.

Songs have been written about the Kishwaukee, but none ever became popular. Probably the nearest to being a hit was "Beautiful Kishwaukee." However, because of the poor design of false teeth in those days the title had to be changed to "Beautiful Ohio" to protect the front row customers. Steven Foster started to write a song about the Kishwaukee, but had to change to a river farther south because it did not sound right to sing about "Way Up Upon the Kishwaukee."

After the Civil War, money was appropriated to restore the Kishwaukee, but due to a contractor's mistake it was spent making the Chicago River flow backward. (But that is another story.) Since that time the Kishwaukee has been relegated to oblivion.

the dawn

The dawn, pregnant with promises,
Flaunted its colors

Listen! O dwellers

Dawn brings happiness

Dawn gives peace

But the dawn went unheeded,
Flaunting its colors

To the sky,
To the sea,
To the city:

Of the sky,
Of the sea,
Of the city,

To the sky,
To the sea,
To the city.

To the sky,
To the sea,
To the city.

To the sky,
To the sea,
To the city.



gene patrizi

london bridge

Sylvia Cloyd was the little girl's name, though you could hardly make it out from the way she said it. Miss Crawford had to ask three times before she could understand what the girl was saying.

Ardith Wintercrest clapped her hand quickly over her mouth to keep from giggling aloud. What a silly name! What a funny way for a girl to talk! She squirmed around in her seat to see if Bonnie and the other kids thought it was funny too. They weren't even smiling. Well, she would tell them about it at recess.

"Boys and girls," Miss Crawford said brightly, "this is Sylvia. She is

new in the first grade today. Our principal just brought her to us. Let's see . . . I think we'll have her sit in the seat in front of Ardith." She pointed to the empty desk.

The little girl made no move to go to her seat. She stood like a little statue beside the teacher's desk. All the eyes in the room were on her. She was a strange looking child. Tiny and thin, with a pinched face and untidy hair.

"You mustn't be frightened, child," Miss Crawford said impatiently. She got up and led Sylvia by the hand to her new seat.

At recess time, Sylvia stood by the playground fence with her finger in her mouth. She was watching the girls jump rope. Ardith, Bonnie, and Nancy, Bonnie's sister, had a game of their own. They were jumping to see who could reach the highest count without missing. Bonnie was way ahead of Ardith and Nancy.

"I'm tired of this old game, you kids," Ardith said, and she stopped jumping. "Let's not play this anymore. I bet I know a secret. Wanna know a secret?" Bonnie and Nancy forgot about the game. They dropped the rope and pressed close to Ardith. She began to whisper. "It's about that new girl. She's awful poor. That's why she's so dirty and raggy. She probably doesn't eat anything but old rotten bread and water. And she lives in a shack with rats and big black bugs."

Nancy, who was only in kindergarten, shuddered to think of anyone living with rats and big black bugs. But Bonnie looked dubious.

"How do you know, Ardith?" she asked. "Do you know her? Were you ever at her house?"

"Well . . ." Ardith wavered. Then she said definitely, "Sure. I know her better than anybody, and I was at her house too. And I made up a good name for her. SALIVA, that's what I call her."

Both Bonnie and Nancy thought Saliva was a very funny name. They laughed.

Ardith was pleased. "Let's go talk to her. There she is over there. Let's go." She skipped over to Sylvia, with Bonnie and Nancy following close behind her.

Ardith's blond curls bounced when she skipped. Her mother always put curlers in her hair after it had been washed so the curls would be pretty and springy.

"Hello, Saliva," Ardith said.

"That ain't my name," Sylvia said in a very small voice, without taking her finger from her mouth. She was looking at the ground.

"Well, then, what is your name?" Ardith demanded.

"Sillveuh," she said softly.

"See? You said Saliva." Ardith laughed. Bonnie and Nancy couldn't help giggling.

"Do you have any brothers and sisters?" Ardith asked.

"I hab a thithter."

"What's her name?" Nancy wanted to know.

"Franchithco."

"What?" Ardith squealed. All three girls laughed outright. "Say it again," Ardith commanded.

"Franchithco," she said even more softly and hung her head still lower.

Ardith laughed so hard she had to gasp for breath. "It couldn't be," she said. "Franchithco isn't a name. Whoever heard of a girl named Franchithco?"

Bonnie edged in closer. "You wanna come 'n play with us?" she asked. Before Sylvia could answer, Ardith said, "She can't even talk straight. She can't even say her own sister's name. C'mon, you kids, let's play hopscotch. Me first!" The three girls ran off, leaving Sylvia standing by the fence.

The next day was Saturday. It was a warm and sunny morning and Ardith couldn't wait to be outside. She hurried through her breakfast and ran up the block to Bonnie and Nancy's house. Their father was the only one home and he told Ardith that the two girls had gone downtown with their mother to shop. Ardith walked slowly back to her house. Why did Bonnie and Nancy have to go away today? She slammed the door as she went into the house. "Mama," she called.

"I'm upstairs, dear." Her mother's voice floated down to her. Ardith climbed the stairs and found her mother making the beds.

"Mama, why don't we get in the car and go over to Cousin Joey's? You and Aunt Barbara could drink coffee and Joey and me could play."

"Joey and I, dear. Heavens, no. This is Saturday and mama has to clean the house." Mrs. Wintercrest went on with her work.

"Then can I go to the playground?" Ardith begged.

"No. It's too far for you to go alone and I haven't the time to take you. Now run along and play and don't bother me."

"But mama," she wailed, "I haven't got anybody to play with."

"You have so many lovely dollies, dear. Now you take them out under the trees and play house. Won't that be fun?"

Ardith pouted. She went down the stairs and out into the yard. She began to walk along the sidewalk, kicking a little stone along with the toe of her shoe. She walked all the way to the corner, until she was in front of the little white house that used to be the Kellys. They had moved away a week ago and now the yard was littered with old boxes, cans, and scraps of paper. Ardith stopped to look. Then she saw Sylvia sitting on the ground in the debris, arranging little sticks into patterns in the dirt.

Ardith watched her quietly for a while. Then she began to edge herself cautiously into the yard. She stopped when Sylvia looked up.

"What're you playing?"

Sylvia didn't answer. She became very absorbed in her game.

"I can do that too," Ardith ventured as she came a little closer.

Still Sylvia did not speak.

"Do you live here?"

At this Sylvia nodded. Encouraged, Ardith squatted beside her in the dirt and began to chatter. "I know lotsa games that're lotsa fun. Should you and me play together? This is kind of a unky place. It's fun to play in my garage. Wanna come and play in my garage?"

Ardith jumped up eagerly, but Sylvia remained on the ground, busily moving the little sticks around.

"Oh, c'mon. Pretty please. We can play whatever game you want. Any old game. Pretty please." She reached for Sylvia's hand and began pulling her to her feet.

Then a timid smile stole across Sylvia's small face. "OK," she said and hung on to Ardith's hand. They hopped and skipped and ran to Ardith's garage.

"Let's pretend," Ardith said when they got there. "Let's pretend we're mice. Do you know how to pretend mice?"

Sylvia looked ashamed and shook her head.

"Well, then I'll hafta show you. Just do like me and you'll be a mouse." Ardith got down on her hands and knees and began to crawl around. Sylvia obediently imitated. They pretended to live in a hole in the wall. They crawled around, squealing loudly, and pretending to bite people's toes.

Ardith said, "Here comes a big toe and it belongs to Miss Crawford!" They bit and chewed ferociously.

"Here comth a toe an' it belongth to the printhipal!" Sylvia shrieked.

"And it stinks just awful!" Ardith laughed. Soon they were both so tired from laughing that they had to sit down on the floor and rest.

"You don't hafta go home yet, do you?" Ardith asked.

"No," Sylvia assured her.

Ardith jumped up. "Goodie. Then we can play sailing on the ocean." She ran over to the corner of the garage and came back with two old bushel baskets. She gave Sylvia the one with the hole in the side. "This is your boat," she said. "This one is mine. Get in and we'll go sailing. You hafta follow me 'cause I'm the captain."

They sat in their baskets and pretended to be seafarers. "I see Africa over there," Ardith announced, pointing. "Let's stop off in Africa."

But Sylvia had a different idea. "We can't," she whispered loudly. Her eyes grew very large. "I thee cannerbalth hiding behind the treeth!"

Ardith shivered. "Let's get outa here! Ooh, they're getting in their boats and coming after us!" They turned their boats around and sailed away with screams of terror.

After they had escaped the cannibals, they visited Alaska and China. When they had left China, Ardith pretended her boat was sinking and toppled over, basket and all. Sylvia discovered a leak in her boat too, and they both began to gurgle and sputter. Very soon they heard Ardith's mother calling her to lunch.

Sylvia's face fell. But then she brightened. "I c'n wait for you," she said.

"No," said Ardith, "It's time for lunch. You better go home."

"C'n we play mithe an' go thailing again?" Sylvia wanted to know.

"I s'pose. I play with lotsa other kids too. I hafta go in now."

Sylvia followed her as far as the garage door, then stood for a while looking after her.

* * *

As Ardith was getting up from the lunch table, she heard Bonnie and Nancy calling her from the back yard. She yelled "bye" to her mother and raced out the door.

Bonnie and Nancy were waiting in the yard. "I wanna play London Bridge," Ardith announced. "You kids wanna play London Bridge?"

"Oh, yes!" they chorused, and followed Ardith around to the front lawn and began to play.

"London bridge is falling down,
falling down, falling down.

London Bridge is falling down,
my fair lady."

At first they didn't see Sylvia standing on the sidewalk watching them. Then Bonnie spied her. "Hey, there's Saliva," she yelled. They stopped their game.

"Hey, Saliva, c'n you play London Bridge?" Bonnie called.

Sylvia drew nearer.

"Don't pay any attention to her, you kids," Ardith said in a voice loud enough for Sylvia to hear. "We don't want her to play with us."

"How come?" Bonnie asked.

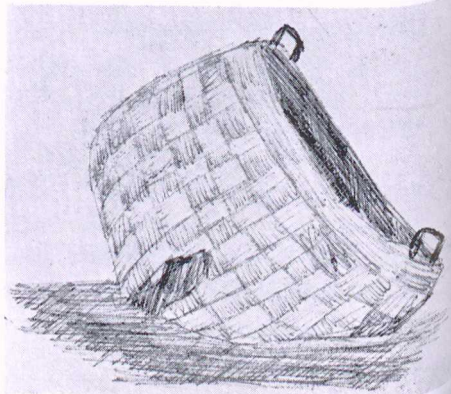
"Just 'cause. She's dirty and she can't talk straight. Anyway, 'cause I don't like her. Just don't pay any attention to her. C'mon, you kids, let's play."

Ardith resumed her skipping beneath the bridge. Bonnie and Nancy followed.

"London bridge is falling down,
falling down, falling down . . ."

Sylvia backed slowly away. Soon she turned and ran off down the street.

"London bridge is falling down,
my fair lady."



With the Aid of Shakespeare

Shall I compare thee

To a summer's day?

If not, to what, fairly,

Shall I compare thee?

To the winter's chill? Barely!

I'll ask again, no matter what you say,

Shall I compare thee

To a summer's day.

two triolets

With the Aid of Robert Burns

Should auld acquaintance be forgot

And never brought to mind?

If you owe money, and pay it not,

Should auld acquaintance be forgot?

But if you are owed, to their homes slyly trot,

And smilingly state, "When your bills are behind,

Should auld acquaintance be forgot

And never brought to mind?"

our little acres

Should I live to be one hundred (and at this writing I am not a symbol of shining optimism) I will never fully understand why my parents settled upon our present acreage. Our acreage amounts to a full ten of them — ten acres of sandburrs and grit.

Oddly enough, the farms all about us are enough to water the collective mouths of all of the agricultural experts in Northern Illinois. Throughout the course of our twenty-year sojourn upon the "Sand-flea fairyland," very little of this neighboring fertility has rubbed off upon us.

Why did my parents choose to settle this barren plot of ground instead of a more promising piece? My parents were courageous. They were also adventurous. They were also broke. But they were as resourceful as they were destitute. My parents knew that one crop has a peculiar affinity for sandy soil — melons. Therefore, with stout hearts they planted their first crop of melons. The "first" came very close to being the last. The melon farmer knows that most people are very fond of melons; this fondness causes the market to be comparatively good at all times. The farmer must also know that yellow bugs with spangled underbellies consider the young plants as a special type of insect ambrosia. The farmer should never forget this. That first year my parents forgot — the bugs did not. They chewed up any prospective profits.

At the end of the first fiscal year spent upon "Melonball Manor" my folks netted the inspiring sum of two hundred dollars. This was not big money. This was just barely any kind of money at all. It did very little to ease the crimp in the family peso-pot. Even our relatives began to worry terribly about us. Whenever they would visit, their solicitous looks plainly read, "Will we have to keep them when they get bombed out of this sand-box?"

"We have come fairly close to being "bombed out" several times since then. I well remember the year we trustingly planted our melons. They were remarkably healthy little plants. At the end of the month they were green and glossy. They were chipper and beautiful. They were cucumbers — every last one of them. Our faith in seed companies has not been all it might have been since then.

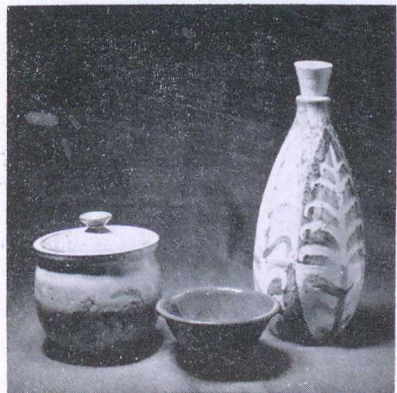
In the raising of melons for a profit, one fact will stand unchallenged. They must be sold — and they must be sold to people. There are many processes which are more entertaining than that of selling them to people. We have several types of customers. The "cynic" is certainly one of the most stimulating. His is the air of a man who will be hanged if he'll let the world get ahead of him as much as one step. He enters our melon shed and casts an authoritative glance at the melons, which plainly reads "Don't try to kid me into thinking that these things are ripe — every dang one is green as moss." The next move is to pinch, poke, prod, scratch and shake the melons. Unless the seeds will rattle about like buckshot in a beer can — "It ain't ripe."

The "trusting soul" is the opposite pole of our cynical friend. He saunters into the shed and announces "I don't know much about 'mush-melons' — you pick 'em for me." He then walks back to his car to pick his teeth in solitude, leaving us to worry about the desired number and size of the "mushmelons." It is a matter of debate as to whether or not the melon is the only skeleton in his "don't know much about" closet.

The most fascinating single customer of all was a gentleman who entered our melon shed in such overwhelmingly wonderful spirits that it was a safe bet that other "spirits" had contributed to his cheer. He happily and trustingly ordered "a shix hunnert poun' wadermelon." When we collected ourselves sufficiently to express our regrets at not having one on hand at that time, we were horrified to see him burst into the wildest tears imaginable. He refused to chirp up at all until we solemnly promised to try to raise one for him. We are still trying.


One of the most interesting sections in the book of melon farming is the chapter which deals with nocturnal visitors — better known as "melon moochers." Through the years I have become well acquainted with the processes involved during an invasion. A volley of rocksalt shots ring out, followed by a volley of language which pulls few punches. If this language is issuing from the homespun tongue of a moocher, then all is well with the melons and all is not well with the seat of someone's pants. If not, then a meal of melons will be digested "on the house."

Many of the years of raising melons have proved to be disheartening. We have been assailed with drought, depression, distressing customers, "moochers," bad seeds and most any other discouraging factor to be imagined. During all these times of trial my father had regularly roared "We're getting the (censored) off this (censored) place!" We have never left and probably never will. In a matter of years, I suspect that we shall all be buried in a quiet spot beneath a watermelon rind. I can not imagine a more fitting monument.



the road to mecca

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Streams of people pushing by,
Snatching, grasping, clinging
Possessions they were loathe to leave,
Their eager faces gleaming.

Now determined on they surged,
Laughing, shouting, singing.
"On to Mecca," was the cry
That split the air to ringing.

One weary figure tried to turn
With outstretched arms he cried,
But people that were passing on
Spit and let him die.

Onward with a mighty roar
The stronger pushed ahead.
With one last look at those behind,
Snarling, on they tread.

Now they strained and struggled;
Set against the swirling sun.
Their white-foamed bodies reeking.
Hollow faces. Tortured ones!

Forward. Forward. Step on step.
Heads bent to the ground.
Cursing, swearing violently,
One by one went down.

Trees no longer offered shade;
The birds pecked mercilessly.
Each hated the fellow by his side
Still marching endlessly.

One lone figure in the night
Waiting, stopped their song.
Boldly took the City's light;
Extinguished it at dawn.

He quickly passed the fallen
Still clutching fast their gold.
He reached the last and striving few
Now covered black with mold.

Far behind he heard new feet —
Others snatching, clinging
Possessions they were loath to leave —
Their eager faces gleaming.

canyons

The intercom buzzed sharply and Doctor Jackson turned from his perusal of the canyons of the city and pressed the button to answer. "Yes," he said curtly.

"Your next patient is here, Doctor." The bright voice of his nurse came from the speaker.

"Oh, yes. Send him in please." The doctor took a sharp pencil from the holder and rearranged the blank pad on the desk before him. The door opened and a young man entered. As he slowly advanced across the deep pile floor covering, the doctor saw a youth of about nineteen, blond, tall and huskily built. There was one incongruity about him that was startling. Lines of worry were deeply ingrained around the eyes and across his forehead.

He perched gingerly in the chair the doctor waved him to and nervously shifted his gaze between the doctor and the floor. Jackson put on his most genial and confidence-inspiring smile.

"May I have your name, please?" he asked gently.

The voice that answered him with the words, "John Anson" was startling. Never, in the course of his career, had the doctor heard two words that carried the thought of hopelessness any more than these two. He decided quickly to cut the usual formal opening short and try to get at the base of the illness of the obviously sick boy before him.

"Why don't you just lean back in the chair and relax?" he asked gently as he pressed the button that dimmed the room lights. He waited until the boy became as comfortable as he could before he began.

"Do you have any idea of what is troubling you, John?"

"Yes sir. I have an obsession" John answered quickly.

"And what is that obsession, John?" His voice was pitched low and, from practice, he knew it was soothing to the ears.

John bit his lower lip for a moment then, biting off each word as he spoke, he whispered "I ... am ... an ... 'A' ... student." As soon as he had said the words he turned his head from the doctor as if expecting censure.

Jackson was silent for a moment as he gazed blankly at the boy. "How did this all begin?" He tried hard to keep the worry from his voice.

"Well, in high school I was all right." The words came tumbling out as if a dam had burst. "I was able to keep myself at about the median of the class. I never failed a subject, I couldn't bring myself to do that, but I never received over a 'C plus' in anything either. I knew that if I did it would mean social ostracism and the taunting of the other members of my class calling me 'Egghead!' I couldn't have taken that so I kept myself down. Even so, I wasn't fully accepted because I had never flunked a course."

He took another deep breath and again the words came spouting out as the doctor sat back in his chair and let the tape recorder do the work of his memory. "After I was graduated from high school I took a job in

a factory, but it was no go. Doing the same thing over and over again was driving me nuts, so I applied for college and was accepted. I made a promise to myself that I would not excel in anything, and I honestly tried not to. The first semester I received an average of 'C' in every subject. And then came the second semester."

John stared straight at the ceiling, centering his eyes on the pattern there, rather than look at the doctor. "I blame it all on the sociology instructor. He made the course interesting and a challenge to me. Like a fool I accepted the challenge and, at the end of the semester, I received an 'A' for that course." He swallowed hard and sighed deeply as a glum expression settled on his face.

"That 'A' lost me all my friends. Up until that time I was pretty popular, but that 'A' stopped that. No one would speak to me, and when they did it was with scorn. But you know, I didn't care. Seeing that 'A' did something to me, I don't know what, but the next semester, with no one to go out with or to talk to, I settled down and got all 'A's. They came easy and I didn't have to work too hard for any of them, but at the same time I became worried. I knew that eggheads aren't socially acceptable, and yet I couldn't seem to stop myself from turning into one. Each subject I took became an interesting challenge that I **had to meet**. I'm a junior now and it is still the same, I'm getting 'A's in everything."

"Anything else?" Jackson asked curtly.

"Yes. I've developed an interest in reading now. It really **is** a lot of fun, you know. And I like to listen to the classical type of music rather than that modern stuff." He sat up suddenly and faced the doctor. "Can you help me back to normal sir?" he almost shrieked.

"No!" The doctor's voice was curt and slightly scornful. "I'm afraid I cannot do a thing for you. You are just another egghead. You've made your bed, now lie in it. You had better leave now."

The boy's face broke as racking sobs shook his shoulders. "I can't take it like this though. Living alone with no one to talk to, and when I do try to talk to someone they scorn me. I just can't take it any longer." He made a rush past the doctor's desk and, with a shivering of glass, threw himself out the window and fell, laughing, the twenty stories to the pavement.

The doctor leaned out the window and watched as the twisting body plummeted down. As he sat down at his desk again he pensively shook his head. "Too bad, really," he said softly to himself. "He could have been a likeable enough fellow if he had stuck to the norm." He shrugged his shoulders. "Oh well. It **is** all for the best." He returned to the interrupted perusal of the canyons of the city

mideajn said

My friend, you were discussing suicide. Where did you uncover these thoughts of yours?

Do you know a man called Mideajn? I asked. He is the one who presented these ideas to me.

Just what did you discuss?

We discussed . . . wait, let me relate to you the whole incident as it happened. One warm and sunny afternoon, Mideajn and I were strolling along the lake. He was in a rather strange mood and answered all my questions with short, abrupt comments. He seemed to be pondering on an idea which gave him no rest. He looked up as he asked me this question, "Is suicide justifiable?" I was shocked and astounded but I immediately replied: "No." Suicide is not justifiable because no man has the right to take away his own life. God gave man his life and only God can take it away. Feeling quite assured of myself, I quoted Socrates in saying: "Only God can summon you."

Then, Mideajn asked: You say that only God can summon me to die? Yes, I replied.

You mean that if I were an innocent bystander as a bank robbery and in a barrage of bullets I was shot to death, this would be God's summons to me. Or that while crossing a street, I was run over by a speed-crazed maniac and was killed, this would also be a summons from God?

You're distorting what I have just said, I replied.

Granted, Mideajn answered. Again working with your theory, if in a dream which came to me constantly night after night, I saw God's outstretched arms summoning me to heaven, could I not kill myself in an effort to comply with His summons?

No, this is not true, I answered. You are rationalizing your desire to believe that God summoned you.

Who is to say that he did not? he asked. I fell dumb. He smiled and said: Can you honestly tell me that being accidentally shot to death is any more an act of God than my dream is?

I reiterated: Mideajn, you don't understand, only God can take a life. You are God's possession, as a cow is a possession of yours and you have no more right to take your own life than your cow has.

Oh, my friend, he responded, you compare a man with a soul and brain to a dumb animal? You must give me a better argument.

I answered, quite displeased: It is a known fact that to commit suicide is to sin.

"Why?" he questioned.

It is a sin because there is always right and wrong and good and evil in this world.

He then asked: You mean that a man who kills himself does an evil thing and therefore commits a sin?

Yes, I replied.

Even if he has never been taught to believe that to take his own life

is wrong? he asked.

I don't understand, I replied.

Let me cite an example: What if a tiny baby was washed onto an island after a shipwreck and was left to grow up in loneliness. No society had put its mark on him; therefore, he could see no connection between killing himself and committing a sin.

Yes, I replied, but all men know good from evil deep in their souls.

He agreed. But first he said: You will admit that a human being is born with only a few basic drives and processes — hunger, thirst, and sex being the primary ones.

Yes, I replied.

He went on: I agree with you that man knows innately right from wrong through his conscience, but who develops man's conscience if it is not a basic process endowed to all men at birth. Society would be a logical answer, would it not?

Yes, I suppose, I replied.

And if this man is all alone and has no contact with other human beings, his conscience would not be fully developed. Is that not right?

Yes, you are right.

So wouldn't suicide be justifiable for a man who did not know it was a sin? Mideajn inquired.

I have one more thing to bring forth, he continued. I nodded. If all his life, a man were a good father and husband; if he were an idealistic yet realistic, just, kind, and fair man to fellow beings; if he were willing to fight and die for his beliefs; and if theoretically, he did not mind pain, even extreme pain to the point of constant agony; and if by chance, he were struck with cancer, would he be justified in committing suicide for a logical and noble reason?

He sounds like a coward to me, I rebutted.

Wait, let me finish, Mideajn said. Constantly remind yourself that this man was in all his actions and thoughts, the man I have described above. He, in the last days of his life, was positive of his oncoming death, as profoundly sure as Socrates was of his. He did not want his family and friends to see him as a man he never was. He wanted them to know and remember him as the real man, the man he had been for fifty-five years. He was deeply afflicted by their pity because he, himself, didn't fear pain or death; nor did he wish to cause the sorrow and anguish that the long days of his slow death would inevitably bring. He detested his wife's helplessness and misery at seeing a man slowly deteriorating. He truly believed that his soul was the important thing and that his body was nothing. Since you rely on Socrates quite often as a reference, you will admit that he also believed the soul to be of prime importance and the body to be a distraction.

I admit the truth of that statement, I replied.

So Mideajn asked: If you agree with these truths, will you then admit there is justification for suicide?

I pondered this question as deeply as my abilities would allow and I answered: NO.

impregnation

Within a room a light shimmers;
wraiths of gray mist undulate
upon the still, stagnant strata of air,
chimeras of shadowy glimmering
refracted by some windows.
Within a room dusky light creates a lake,
a shifting, drifting mirror
upon which float dreams of age and youth.

The wind howls, rattling panes, distracting.

Windows cloud, catalytic darkness.
A flower blooms: roots, stem, pistil, stamen,
soft and fragrant petals gently encompassing pollen.
The room is misty with delicate aromas permeating.
The misty lake exudes pink-blues, yellow-whites
luminously enmeshed, entwined.
A startling, vivid redness
streaks through the harmonious mist,
twisting, swirling prisms of glistening hues.
Floating blue creeps lazily up,
folding, curling, wrapping the comet color.
Star-bursts of velvety purple
caress the red-blue rioting.

Merging spectrums rocket off,
symphonies of sound seas roar — crashing thunder.
A distant silence glides above sound.

The wind howls, tears at the windows.

Sliding to and fro
a rhapsody of tense motion, surging joy.
A space of swirling pollen
creates a widening circle;
a thing of fullness
completes the swelling, stirring strain.
The comet surges up, full bursting,
scattering glowing embers, burning, floating,
lingering, settling delicately upon the
swirling pollen engulfed in golden light.
A wafting breath stirs the embers glowing anew.
Soft lines delineate this precious mound,
strong light etches shadows,
the mist rolls up and out, strikes, recedes.
Substance stands, cohesive, pasty,
within the dewy mist.
Cool draughts, sweet and pungent,
caress the ashy mound,
moulding, carving a hardening substance.
The shimmering mist rises, enveloping,
cascades down, around —
A clear clean rush of pristine sound sweeps a room;
A solid, bulky rock looms in the lake.

the bear

Whenever the boys go out for a beer, everyone makes a very deliberate effort not to sit next to the Bear. Not that the Bear is a bad guy or anything. After all, he has been an accepted member of the group for about ten years and he is invited to all its social functions. He's a good-hearted fellow, always willing to buy you a drink, or loan you his car, or do almost anything that a buddy of his asks him to do. Nevertheless, no one wants to sit next to the Bear when the boys go out for an evening.

Last time I went out with the fellows, I inadvertently chose the stool next to the Bear when we entered the bar. We ordered a round of draughts and started watching the fights on T.V.

"How's school, Tom?" asked the Bear.

I turned to answer, and only then did I realize the mistake I had made. I was looking into the all-too-familiar, unshaven face of the Bear, or Sherlock, or Justice, or Clark Kent, or almost anything else you want to call him since, by actual count, he has over thirteen aliases.

"Not bad, buddy," I replied, trying to adopt a middle of the road attitude. That's the trick of trying to talk reasonably to the Bear. You try not to express an opinion or a feeling on any subject whatever, since he will invariably adopt the opposite view merely for the sake of argument.

I found that I had succeeded in avoiding a dispute on the merits of our educational system, since my companion, seeing no opportunity to disagree on this first attempt, changed the subject.

"You're lucky you're goin' to school," said the Bear. "This unemployment situation is gettin' serious. Five guys got laid off at our shop today."

"Gee, that's a shame," I said, trying not to offend him.

"What d'ya think o' this recession?" inquired the Bear, as he stared at me with that hungry look.

Not very subtle of him, I thought. He was usually resourceful enough to start an argument without making it so obvious.

"Well, it sure makes things tough on a lot of little guys," I answered testily, hoping that I had maintained my neutral position.

"Sure it does. But who the hell caused this mess?" he cried, his voice beginning to reach that familiar crescendo. "Who the hell voted for that yo-yo in the White House today? Who the hell went out and bought everything on credit? Those stupid 'little guys!'"

"Yeah, I guess you're right," I nodded, knowing that I was hopelessly lost.

"Guess? Whaddya mean, guess? Why I coulda tol' you two years

ago that this was gonna happen. And it ain't gonna get no better, either!" he shouted.

For the next two hours I was given a detailed account of the background of our present economic situation, several sure-fire ways to remedy it, a condemnation of the condition of today's labor unions, and some other undeniable truths which I had not been aware of previously. During most of this discourse I gazed vacantly at the flattened nose, protruding jaw, stubbly black beard, and blinking eyes which comprise the face of this economic philosopher. His speech was interrupted frequently by the rasping cough which has plagued him for the past five years. Despite the fact that it doubles him up and reddens his face, he is always able to pick up the thread of his story, even after five or six hacks.

There is no trying to escape him, either. I must have gone to the washroom at least five times that evening, hoping that my companion would find another victim in my absence. But coincidentally, the Bear was able to accompany me on each of my trips, bellowing loudly all the while. That was another thing I couldn't understand. Why was he bellowing? I was certainly not disagreeing with him. All I had done since this one-sided debate had begun was nod my head and mumble "Yeah" at what I thought were appropriate intervals.

I don't know what it is about the Bear, but no one can remember his ever having lost an argument. On rare occasions someone will state some fact which contradicts what he had said. By sheer weight and number of words, a few menacing gestures, and some choice profanities, he thoroughly smashes these attempts at argument. Invariably his opponents will leave, shaking their heads hopelessly and muttering, "Yeah, yeah, O.K. Bear, O.K.," as they walk away, thoroughly beaten.

smoke rings

Ellen laid her finger lightly on Bill's hand as he was about to turn the doorknob. "Let's not go in. Let's go somewhere else tonight, just to be different. The gang will never miss us if we don't show up."

She had intended to sound gay and spontaneous as if she had just thought of a fascinating adventure they might follow, but her tense, pleading tone betrayed her urgent desire to entice him away from the crowd waiting for them inside. Every Saturday night, in the Bohemian surroundings at Grunet's, they met his friends, University radicals, would-be intelligentsia, who sat until the small hours of the morning over schooners of needled beer discussing the philosophy of Schopenhauer, the impact of modern art, or the message of Brave New World. She couldn't face another session. If Bill should sense how rebellious she felt, he would insist upon spending the evening in the dismal little basement hang-out just to prove that, as usual, he could override her objections. She had never been able to defy him successfully. Now she tugged at his coat sleeve, trying to urge him to turn away.

"Not go in! Why not?"

He must have recognized the plea in her voice, for he was already forcing her to accept his plans for their Saturday date just as he always forced her to acknowledge his ideas. He jerked his hand from her restraining fingers, turned the doorknob assertively, and opened the door, waiting impatiently for her to step into the hallway.

She didn't answer. If Bill couldn't feel the importance of this evening, if he was willing to share it with the same noisy, superficial people, what use was there in pointing out that this would be their last date for many weeks? He didn't really care about being alone with her, that was the whole truth. She had hoped to get some things settled between them tonight, to understand, finally, how they stood with one another. It was apparent, in spite of his glib talk, that she meant nothing special to him. She had better get that quavering voice of hers under control before she spoke. Its unsteadiness would tell him that he represented something special to her and that she was even now anticipating the lonely days ahead.

She held up her head as she walked into the dim corridor. Bill brightened up. "Come on, baby. Don't be difficult. We're having a party tonight."

"A party! What for?"

"For us. For you and me, baby. I wanted to surprise you. You're not going back to that stuffy Middlewest college next Wednesday. We're getting married. I'm throwing a party to celebrate. Won't your old man be surprised?"

There was no time for a reply. They were at the door now, and Bill was rapping with the special rata-tat-tat rap which always brought Charley on the double. Charley opened the door cautiously, and then threw it wide as he hustled them into the dingy bar-room. George struck a welcoming chord on the piano and began to bang enthusiastically. Ellen could recognize vaguely a syncopated version of "Here Comes the Bride." Someone thrust a bouquet at her, a bouquet of carrots and beet tops and parsley. Everyone was screaming, "surprise." Stupified by the confusion, Ellen looked frantically around the room trying to identify the guests at her engagement party. Everyone looked unreal and unfamiliar. All the faces seemed to fuse into one grotesque, grinning blur.

"Relax. Don't be stuffy. How about a smile for your well-wishers?" It was Bill speaking. "Charley, bring a drink for the lady. The usual."

Out of the swirling haze, one of the faces began to take form. Ellen could see Inez, lolling in the corner booth, alternately blowing round smoke rings and eyeing Bill with cynical scrutiny. Inez was better than the rest of Bill's friends. Ellen felt comfortable with her. For one thing, Inez wasn't forever showing off her sophistication, speaking brightly in terse epigrams. Inez might now be quiet and forego the clever, knowing remarks until Ellen could collect her wits. "Let's sit with Inez and Al," Ellen said, making her way through the clamor to where they sat.

Bill settled himself in the booth. He was cocky and smiling. He winked at Ellen as if to say, "You lucky girl. You've snared me at last."

"Buy you a drink," he said to Al. "Congratulations are in order."

"When is the happy wedding day, Cassanova?" Inez spoke flatly, a suggestion of sarcasm in her voice.

"Oh, we haven't any immediate plans." Ellen chose to answer in Bill's place. She toyed with her napkin. "After I finish school, I guess."

Bill was the man of the hour again, deciding everything, planning the future without consulting her. "We're getting married Wednesday, see? You're not goin back to that dumpy corn-belt college. I might not be in the mood by the time you finish college. Anyway, I'm the only one in our family who will need an education. Your old man will be furious when you quit school, but let him rave."

Your old man. We're getting married. The phrases echoed louder and louder, mingling in a great, inharmonious jumble in her mind. No one had ever spoken of her father in that fashion. Bill had no right. She knew that he was scornful of her father, regarding him as an old-fashioned conservative who had reared his daughter to be stilted and repressed. Bill had often sympathized with her because she had given up the glamour of the University in deference to her father's wishes and had spent a dull year at a church school where dancing was taboo and box socials were the chief form of entertainment. Bill had promised her that he would free her some day from the shackles of her stodgy life.

Free? She had never been free to think or act of her own accord since she had met Bill. She was more of a puppet to his whims than she had ever been to her father's demands. Why did she dance like a marionette when Bill pulled the strings? She looked at him sharply for a moment, compelled once more by the blunt determination of his square jowls and severe mouth.

"Make up your mind," Bill said smugly, confident of her answer. "I'm going places, baby. You can help me, and I'll let you ride the gravy train later."

He leaned across the table and stroked her arm. She felt her skin creep, and she knew her face was flushed. She didn't dare glance up at him now, but she was positive that he was smiling, amused that she couldn't resist him, certain that nothing — college, her father, her career — was as important to Ellen as he was. Evidently, he expected her to quit school and work to help him finish his last years at the University.

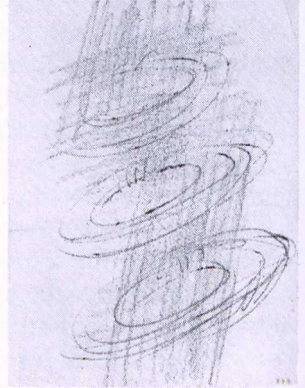
Ellen thought again of her father. They had discussed Bill once. Her father had dismissed him with a shrug of his shoulder. "He may be a smart chap, Ellen, but he's not for you. You feed his ego, but he doesn't love you. He'll never think of your happiness. He wants you for a stepping stone."

A stepping stone, that was what she'd be, or at best, a mirror. Was that what she wanted in wanting Bill? Could she exist as a mirror, reflecting his image? She drew her arm away from his caressing fingers.

Charley was bringing the drinks. "A toast to the bride-to-be," he said, holding out the tray.

Ellen reached past the special coke with a cherry that he had brought for her. She took a tall glass deliberately, looked deep into the clear amber liquid, and then looked at Charley. "A toast to the school girl," she corrected him. "I'm leaving Wednesday for college, you know."

"I'll drink to that," said Inez, and she blew another smoke ring, a giant, symmetrical, emphatic smoke ring.



conquest

Cold moonlight on a field of glittering snow
Aglow in beauty—
Acres of diamonds—I gaze at it—
 Jewel-wealthy.
I step into the field, and walk the pathless wonderland
 of white,
And when I'm part way 'cross
 Pause—
 And looking back
See the footprints I have made across the silent
 whiteness,
Each step filled with moon-shadow.
And then push on, until I reach the line of trees
 that marks the boundary of my field,
 Triumphant!
I alone of all the world have walked this field of snow,
I alone have put my stamp upon the crisp whiteness.
 Is not this Beauty mine by Conquest?

an evening with judy

"Now, don't you worry, Mrs. Adams, I'm sure Judy and I will get along just fine, won't we Judy? ... Yes, I've had quite a bit of experience baby sitting. How old did you say Judy is? ... Three? Oh, what a cute age." (Cute like a tiger! I don't know how I get myself into these things. It seems as though I can't think up an excuse fast enough when someone asks me to baby sit. If I had any sense at all I would simply say, "Sorry, I'm busy." Oh well, money is money. I wonder if Judy will cry when her parents leave. This is it.) "Bye now, have a nice time; ... You left the address and number? ... Fine ... Whoops, I'll get some Kleenex. I'm sure she will stop crying as soon as you leave. Bye!

"Now then, Judy, is that any way for a big girl to act? ... What? You're only a little girl, well, just the same ... Look at the little doggie, Judy — woof, woof." (Brother, if anyone saw me now I would die of humiliation right here on my knees. No matter how much baby-sitting experience I have had, I get so frustrated when they cry.)

"Judy, here is a nice big cookie for you. Mommy said you could have it if you didn't cry." (That did it. Good grief, hasn't she been fed yet today? Almost 7:15, a three-year-old should be in bed by now, but her mother said 8:30. Over an hour to go. What on earth do you do with a three-year old. I feel ridiculous sitting here. She looks at me as though I were from outer space.)

"Ouch!" (My land, she tried to drive that hammer clear through my foot. Why do people give kids such destructive toys? It makes monsters out of them.) "Now, Judy," (I must use psychology) "was that a nice thing to do?" (She looks as though she is sighting on my other foot. The thing to do is distract her. Books say that saying "No, No" doesn't do any good unless you give the child something else to do instead of the destructive act.)

"Judy, **dear**, would you like to hear a story? ... No, dear, you can't climb up on the coffee table! ... Because you will scratch it, that's why! ... Because your shoes are rough ... Because the shoemaker made them that way ... Because — enough of this — here, you sit on my lap and I'll read to you ... Certainly, I can read ... Oh, about first grade, you'll learn then, too ... Frankly, I don't care whether you want to, you'll simply have to go along with the crowd.'

"'Once upon a time, there was a little baby duck. His mamma was a big beautiful duck and his papa was very handsome.' ... Where? Well, the little duck came from an egg ... No, the Easter Bunny did not bring it ... What? You don't like to eat anything but Easter Bunny eggs." (My heavens, I wonder if she actually thinks rabbits lay eggs.) "Now, don't interrupt, Judy ... In-ter-rupt! Never mind, just don't ask so many questions."

"'Mamma and papa and baby duck all lived in a big beautiful house.' ... Yes, Judy, I think your house is pretty, too, and you are your mommy's and daddy's little baby, too ... Heavens no, Judy, you didn't come out of an



egg ... No, dear, I know she doesn't lay eggs ... You just wanted to see if I knew? Well, of course I do; after all, I'm 18 ... NO! I'm not a grandmother!"

"Every day mamma, papa, and baby duck went for a walk around the pond." (Oh, dear, back to this again.) "Where did you come from? Well, uh ... of course I know! Why don't you ask Mommy when she comes home? She'll probably be home around 11 o'clock ... No, you can't wait up until then ... I know I said ask her when she comes home, but I meant tomorrow morning." (I don't think she cares whether I read this story or not.)

"Why don't we get ready for bed now, Judy? ... No, I'm not going to bed. I just said 'we' because — come on, you show me where your pajamas are. My, aren't they pretty! Let's hurry and put them on ... No, Judy, not both of us, I have to go home later. There we are, now to brush our — your teeth. My, you're quite the big girl. All finished? Here we go — what? — Oh, well, here, I'll lift you." (Heavens, I hope she doesn't fall in, she's so tiny.) "Here we go now, into bed." (Oh, my aching back, I wish I were the one going to bed.) "Sleep tight!"

(I hope she doesn't put up any fuss. I might be tempted to use the hammer she was using on me. Maybe if I very quietly try to pick up these toys — oops — who ever heard of giving a three-year-old marbles. The darn things went under the couch.) ... "Yes, Judy ... a glass of water?" (Why is it kids never get thirsty until they get in bed?) "Little one, do you know it is way past 8:30? You are supposed to be asleep. What would mommy and daddy say if you were still awake when they came home? ... No, I told you you could ask her tomorrow morning." (The things kids will remember.) "Good night!"

(Nine o'clock, two more hours to go. Maybe I can get some work done.) ... "What — hiccups? My land, what next? Try holding your breath for a while. Judy — Judy — JUDY, for heaven's sake, breathe! You are turning blue! There, are they gone? ... Good! Good night now." (Peace at last, and after nine o'clock at that. I think I'll read a while.) ...

"What—what? Oh, hello Mr. Adams. I guess I must have dozed off ... Judy is awake? ... She has the hiccups? ... No, she didn't swallow any marbles, it was just the water she drank ... Next Thursday? Well, ah — a previous engagement? No, I don't think so." (I wish I had the nerve to say I had a previous engagement which I would make at the first opportunity.) ... "Seven o'clock, all right, I'll be here. Well, well, look who's up. Bye, bye, Judy. She is such a good little girl, and certainly a joy to sit on — er for. Good night!"

campfire

They say that when a fire burns
In its depths are seen
The myriads of colors gathered
Since the tree was green.

The azure of a summer sky
That smiles on summer days,
The pinpoints of the summer stars
Are echoed in the blaze.

The flame of autumn's reds and golds,
And winter's solemn white;
All are seen as the fire glows
And are echoed in its light.

I love a fire, for in its depths
I have seen many things.
All the colors flaming there
Have caused my heart to sing

As once before I, like tonight,
Have sprawled upon the sod
And lying there, enthralled and still,
Have sent my thoughts to God.

a race with time

The first time I noticed her was between classes in the second week of school. As she walked through the hall, her frail body tilted to one side. She carried her books on her hip as a laundry woman carries a full basket of wet clothes. For just a moment, I saw her thin lips curve into a smile, and then she was swallowed by the current of noisy, pushing girls and carried down the hall.

The next day I looked for her. She fascinated me as she did everyone. Again she came toward me in the hall, her delicate frame striving to keep pace with the rest of the group. As she passed me she saw me staring. Her large pale eyes pleaded, "Don't look at me so — please don't pity me." I turned, ashamed.

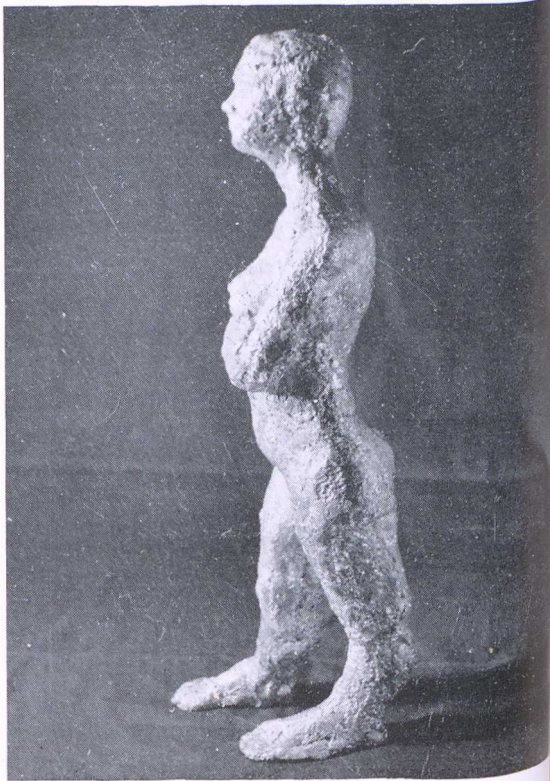
I gradually got to know her, though not as an intimate friend. Jeanne was her first name. The last name is not important. Even knowing her as I did, there was something intangible about her. I don't believe she wanted anyone to become too close to her. But that was one thing she couldn't control. All of us learned to love her. All too soon, she became the heart of the school, the topic of much of our conversation, and the subject of our prayers.

She would meet the bus every morning, while the rest of us on the corner would wonder if she'd be there tomorrow. She would walk the long block between the bus stop and school listening to our ramblings, smiling at our silly jokes, but always remaining silent. She couldn't keep pace along side of us and talk too. She would climb the stairs to class and hope we wouldn't notice her pause at the top before going on, and her blue, veined, hand trembling on the railing. During lunch, a halo of friends would form around her. She never spoke much, but when she did, everybody listened.

One would never guess her to be a high school student; her body was that of a five-year-old child. Her thin, bony frame denied her the right to show her gay, daring spirit. Even in the sunlight, her body retained a bluish cast; her soft baby-like skin seemed transparent. Even her child-like face was false to her. The high, hollow, cheeks and the cupid lips tinted purple made her seem like something cold and lifeless. Only her eyes revealed her true warmth and love of life. They shimmered with intelligence and sparkled with the energy the rest of her body longed to show but couldn't. Still, sometimes their pale, blue color haunted me and made me ask myself the question. "When?"

After a while, I got so I didn't think about this question; I stopped pitying her. I know I did, because she let me carry her books for her. She would never have let me had she thought it was out of pity. She detested it so.

Easter was drawing nearer. Jeanne, anxious to fill each day, had taken a part in the annual Easter pageant. She was to be the Christ Child in the Easter tableau. She made no pretense; she loved her part, every minute



of it.

Easter Sunday finally came, but it was not the happy day we thought it would be. The play was beautiful as was the tableau, but there was no enthusiasm. All eyes were focused on the statue of the Christ Child in the center of the stage; some of us had carried it over from the chapel to take Jeanne's place.

casus belli

American as blueberry pie . . . but Pearl Harbor (the lousy Japs) threatened to make rice our diet. The President, Mister Roosevelt, said: War, and a wave of khaki followed red, white and blue into the Pacific, into battle.

Mothers, brave moms (some with one gold star already hung in the grey window), sent blueberry pie, and dads, who got just a small wedge, or did without a piece at all, worked in factories, sent ammunition. The wave of khaki exploded on beaches, and more beaches, then tapered to a stream and seeped through seething island jungles.

Sometimes, even in the khaki, round little holes appeared, and blood and blueberries oozed out . . . onto yellow sand, but the sea of khaki surged on, engulfing the Orient, submerging it, washing it clean.

The USS **Missouri** floated in with a cargo of pens and parchment. Admirals and generals agreed: it was time to quit and go home . . . the game was over. The khaki tide ebbed and receded. Thousands of boys, red, white and blue Americans, came home, and tasted sweethearts' lips and blueberry pie.

change

I walk down the street —

And blink at the vermillion window frames

reflected in the warm sun.

The grime runs in the gutters

Where tattered black children make mud pies

and stick-rafts.

Long ago blonde, blue-eyed kids roller-skated

where now big yellow buses rumble.

"Jesus Saves" shouts from under the Star of David.

Garlic and dill become stale beer.

Old-world gypsies dance on the car tracks,

And trash swirls in the gentle wind.

I walk down the street —

And shake my head.

a fable

In the northermost section of Nigeria, near the edge of Lake Chad where the herons skreek all day, there is a village called Magansu. Two hundred people of the Tulu tribe live in Magansu. The Tulu men fish in Lake Chad, and the women weave nets and cultivate corn.

During the long, hot afternoons, while the herons skreek and cicadas hum, the children of the village gather in the shade at the edge of the lake. There they are joined by the women of the village. Throughout the afternoon the women tell tales. So it has been since the beginning and so it will be until the end.

The tales are usually beast fables or heroic stories of the wars of the Tulu tribe. They are told in no particular order. Perhaps the children request a favorite, or an old woman's whim lead her to ask for one she has not heard for a long time. There is only one story which is regularly told on a particular day of the year.

On the first day after the new moon in the month of grain harvest, the following tale is always told:

Once there lived a rich man in Magansu. He owned two boats and two wives. He caught more fish than any other Tulu, and he had six sons. But Maruk, for that was the name of this rich man, had no daughters. Maruk was sure that he would have a daughter and, being a proud man, he predicted that she would be the most beautiful girl ever born in the village. He boasted, "She will be the most beautiful of children, and I shall send her to the mission school in Nguru." Maruk, besides being a proud man, was a man of new-fangled ideas.

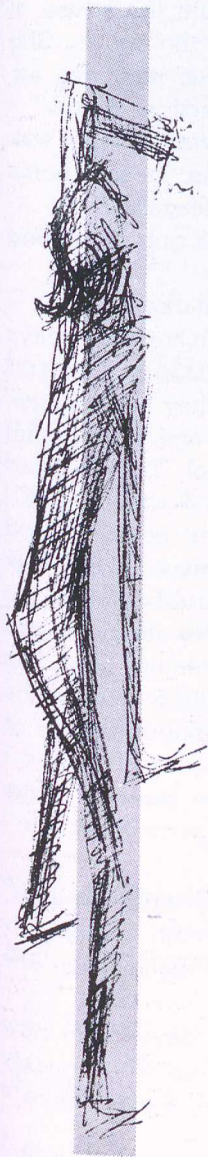
In due time Maruk's wife had a daughter. She was beautiful, she walked more gracefully than any other girl in the village, and she was named Kiri. When Kiri was twelve years old, Maruk sent her to the mission school in Nguru. There she stayed for two years

and learned all manner of strange customs.

When Kiri returned to Magansu she was more beautiful than ever. Her eyes were large and dark, and her voice was low and musical. She wore a long garment of blue cloth which she washed every morning in Lake Chad.

One morning Kiri spoke to her father, "I wish to use the knowledge I learned at the mission school. I wish to become a housewife."

Maruk reluctantly betrothed Kiri to Loka, the son of his best friend. Kiri persuaded her father to build her house of boards rather than of poles



and thatch. Against the advice of the villagers, Maruk built the house of boards. Before her marriage Kiri spent her time preparing the house. She said to her husband-to-be, in her soft, sweet voice, "Let us not have extravagant celebrations, but let us spend that money on practical things."

Loka agreed with her. He believed Kiri to be as wise as she was beautiful. Therefore Kiri and Loka bought cooking utensils, mats, brooms until theirs was the most elaborately furnished house in Magansu.

The elders were disturbed. They spoke of Kiri and Loka quietly, among themselves.

"It is not good to omit wedding celebrations," one remarked.

Another agreed, "This will antagonize the spirits. So many new ways will not go unnoticed."

Kiri and Loka were told of the elders' judgements. They were polite, but firm in rejecting them. Kiri said, "The talk of spirits and punishment is superstitious. I must live as I learned at the mission school. To be a good housewife cannot be evil."

As soon as Kiri and Loka were married, Kiri set about being a good housewife. She worked harder than any other village woman. She scrubbed her house in the morning from ceiling to floor. She scrubbed all of the clothes, and cooking utensils. Then she wove nets until late afternoon and cultivated grain in the evening. After preparing the evening meal she scrubbed the house and dishes again. She did not have time to sit in the shade and listen to stories. She did not have time to celebrate festivals or to mourn at funerals.

The villagers murmured together. They spoke of the legends of the vanishing women.

"For each amenity omitted . . ." whispered one.

"For every celebration and funeral neglected . . ." muttered another.

"For every unnecessary duty substituted, one hundredth of her substance vanishes," concluded the third. "But she does not believe us; she has learned new ways."

Kiri followed her ways diligently. And on the first day of the new moon, in the month of grain harvest, Kiri arose early. "I must work quickly today. The neighbors will be celebrating the harvest and I shall have a great deal of order to contend with."

Kiri began to scrub the ceiling of her house. With every stroke of the brush a portion of the building disappeared. Kiri did not notice. She continued to scrub until the house was completely invisible. Then Kiri took up her clothes and walked to the lake to wash them. As she scrubbed the clothes, and herself, everything she touched became invisible. Kiri no longer existed.

The villagers say that she still lives, scrubbing her invisible house with an invisible brush; washing her invisible clothes in the lake. They avoid the spot where the board house stood. They asked Loka to move to another village. No one from Magansu has sent his children to the mission school for many years

for a fleeting moment

For a fleeting moment yesterday

I saw beauty face to face,

And held my breath,

Lest this fair vision go along her way

Unnoticed by the others passing by.

I yelled, but no one heard,

I waved, but no one saw.

And with a fleeting smile she left.

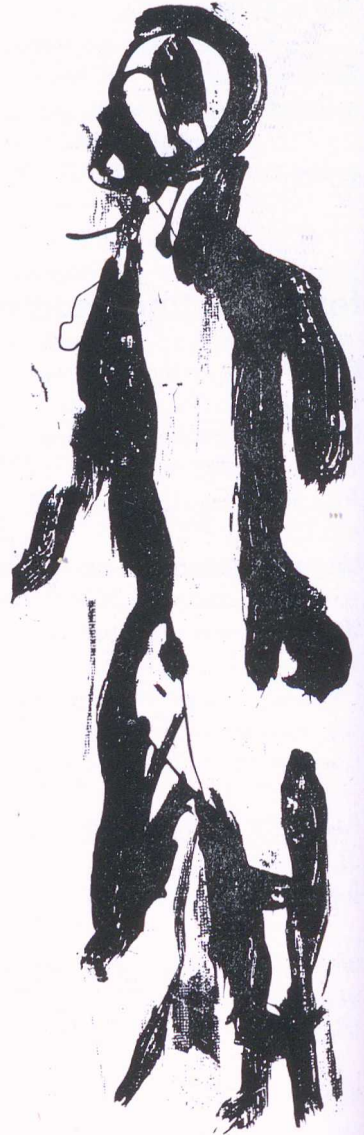
And who lost more?

I for having seen and lost,

Or they for never seeing.

I cannot say.

carnival scene



Rolling slowly on its axis, the ferris wheel like a ring of fireflies stood sparkling against the dinginess of the shabby Chicago neighborhood. Around and around the seemingly unattached chairs carried the screaming people who waved at earth-bound friends. Rising and falling, the swiftly revolving platform of the merry-go-round gaily circled the platform to the blare of the hurdy-gurdy while children clutched at the elaborate trappings and waved at Mommy and Daddy.

The deafening roar of ride motors, dazzling lights, flapping canvas tents, and damp sawdust packed down by the milling crowd. Backs of housewives hanging over the tiny round stools at the bingo tent. The rasping voice of the caller. Gamblers around the clacking big-six wheel. Squealing children clustered in front of the concession wagon with distraught parents.

Gloria's concession wagon rocked to and fro as popcorn, cotton candy, peanuts, and frozen custard were exchanged for sticky nickels and dimes. Oblivious to the surrounding bedlam, Mr. Demano sat hunched in the corner of the wagon quietly shelling and munching peanuts.

"Pretty good crowd, Gloria." Mr. Damano glanced over the counter and then returned to his peanuts.

"Yeah, Poppa, they're spending money too." Gloria pulled a strand of pink cotton candy out of her black hair and began spinning the candy on the paper holders.

Mr. Demano nodded in approval of this good business for the Demano Carnival Company and sleepily worked his way to the bottom of the peanut bag.

Suddenly, a shriek stood out from the screams which came from the rides. A general rush to the ferris wheel signaled that something was wrong. The ferris wheel lurched to a sudden stop. The tilt-a-whirl also stopped abruptly, leaving the tiny cars spinning crazily. The hurdy-gurdy stopped in the middle of "Good Old Summertime," and the horses were suspended in mid air. Gloria's wagon lurched to one side as Mr. Demano jumped down to the ground and pushed his way through the tense crowd.

"Jesus Christ!" he exclaimed. He bent over the prostrate body of the ride boy. "What happened to Joe?"

"He was just running the wheel, and some goon hit him in the head with a brick," Mike replied.

"You call an ambulance yet?" Mr. Demano looked at the hushed crowd.

"Yeah, Mr. Demano. It's coming." Mike bound Joe's bloody head with a handkerchief.

"I saw it happen. Everything," piped a young girl from the crowd.

"It was Marty Raymond. He threw it. He's been in trouble before. I can tell ..."

"You tell police everything you know," interrupted Mr. Demano.

The piercing wail of the ambulance came and carried away Joe who was just regaining consciousness. The little girl proudly told the police everything.

The ferris wheel rolled again, the tilt-a-whirl motor roared, and the blaring hurdy-gurdy engulfed the lot. The hushed, tense crowd had dispersed into squealing children, shouting teens, and fretting parents. Mr. Demano sat in the corner of the concession wagon beginning his second bag of peanuts.

to ezra pound and t. s. elliot

Civile, civile, si emgo!

Fortibus es in ero.

Nobile,

deis trux.

Vadis inem?

Causan

dux.

Causan dux, si emgo!

Fartimil esto Che kago.

Nobile,

atis ent so.

Quo Vadiant?

Cic

ero.

memories of world war II

I can remember it now. It is 1944. The place is ten miles north of London. I lie half asleep in the pitch darkness of my room. Then, like the cry of a lonely wolf, the siren begins its wail. Before I have time to cry out, "Mummy," the bedroom door bursts open and my mother quickly bundles me into my zip suit. I am carried out into the dazzling light of the landing, and then, after a jolting ride down the stairs, still half-asleep I am deposited on the sofa as my mother contents herself with other matters.

I am at last becoming accustomed to the bustle and light around me. Grandmother is closing the blackout drapes, as grandfather, complete with helmet and rifle, hurries out the back door to join the Home Guard at the local pub. In the next few minutes the German Luftwaffe will throw itself against this tiny island. This is the London Blitz.

My mother hands me a blanket, and I follow her out into the damp night air and down the garden path to the Anderson shelter. The never ending battle for London is on. The searchlight beams dart across the dark sky seeking, in vain, the intruder. First the whine and then the impact. The ground quivers under my little legs. I am too young to realize the danger as I stop to look up at the glow of a bomber hit by ack-ack fire. It seems to be losing altitude as its engines cough and splutter. "Well," I say to myself, "if he crashes, my grandpa will shoot him." My mother calls for me, so I toddle off to the shelter. In a few minutes I am lying in a bunk as she tucks me up in my blanket. The door opens, and a neighbor, tea kettle in hand, comes down the stairs muttering, "I'd luv' to get me 'ands on that ruddy 'itler. I'd show 'im a thing a two." She smiles at me and says cheerfully, "But we're alright ducks aren't we. We've got our tea. Don't know what we'd do without a good cuppa tea," she sighs. The bombs continue to fall. Now and again an explosion rocks the shelter, but oblivious of the destruction around me, I drift slowly back into dream-land.

When I look back at those forgotten days, I am shocked to think that I took the blitz so lightly, but I was really too young to know any better. When I lived in the north, which was not bombed so badly as London, I can remember seeing a whole housing estate, no more than 300 yards from the house in which we lived, that had been laid flat by the previous night's bombing. I could see sections of walls still standing, the curtains around the windows fluttering in the breeze. It was a tragic sight, but more tragic was that over 400 residents had been killed.

But there were moments of cynical comedy. One time a German fighter fired at a barrage balloon, causing it to descend and completely cover a neighbour's house. I remember my mother often running around with a helmet on, covering incendiary bombs with dust-bin lids. Water has no effect on them, so covering was the only thing. My grandfather often gave Grandmother many moments of anguish. When on Home Guard duty in Newcastle, which was heavily bombed, he would walk around the deserted streets and watch the big buildings burn as bombs fell all around him. His excuse was that he thought he might be needed, but I wonder



dawn monnett

what for. One incident I shall never forget occurred when I was at boarding school in the unmolested English countryside. As we were picking blackberries — I was five at the time — we came across a shiny cylinder. With all the strength our little selves possessed, four of us carried it back to the school and deposited it outside the headmistress' study. It turned out to be an unexploded incendiary bomb, and I think the headmistress had all branches of the armed services in to dispose of it.

I have often wished that I had been older at the time of the Blitz, but I suppose it is best to leave well enough alone. To me the war will always be a series of interrupted nights, of keeping the blackouts drawn, of dried eggs, and no bananas. The concern that I showed the day the war ended typified my innocent attitude. My father joyfully burst into the garden calling out — to the whole block it was loud enough — that the German army had at last surrendered. "Well good," I said, "Maybe we'll get some bananas now."



rodney

So you're my new helper. Well, I hope I can break you in as good as the last guy done for me. He had the job I got now. His name was Rodney. Too bad the foreman was so damn' ornery to him.

Rodney was a swell guy. From the first time I seen him I knew I was going to like him. I met him when I first came to Malone's to get a job. Not that I wanted one, you know, but Ma said if I didn't get one pretty soon I'd be just like her lazy lout of a brother.

Well, this guy I talked to says he needs a heavier packer for the shipping room. I says maybe the work would be too heavy for me 'cause I sure don't want to hurt my back, but he says I'd do fine. I says I'd start to work next Monday, but he says no, if I want the job I got to come in the next day. So I says OK and what time should I come? He says seven o'clock sharp.

So I come into the office the next morning and the same guy takes me up to the shipping room. He takes me in and shows me how to punch into a big clock they got there so they know if you come in late or not and then he leaves me with the foreman.

The foreman takes me around and shows me the other guys that work there and tells me their names. Last of all he takes me over to this kid about my own age who is called Rodney.

"You can work with Rodney," he says.

"You can work instead of Rodney," says Rodney.

I got kind of mad, but then I saw he was just kidding me so I went over and shook his hand.

Rodney says, "Stick with me kid and I'll teach you how to get out of any job in the place."

I looked around to see if the foreman's gone, but he's still standing there.

When I look around he says, "Maybe you better not stick too close to Rodney. You might stick to him when he leaves."

Rodney just laughs while the foreman goes away.

He says, "You don't have to worry about him. I told him the other day, 'Tom, you fire me and I'll tell them down at the personnel office how you run things up here.' I got Tom scared."

"Why, would he really fire you?"

"Aw, he's been kind of picking on me ever since I started here. He ain't going to fire me though. I always keep pushing him a little. That way he don't know what to expect."

I asked him what we were supposed to do.

He says, "You see those little boxes there? We got to put them in those big boxes and band them up and get them ready to go."

"There's sure a lot of them."

"Don't worry," he says. "If we don't get done they'll send some of the other guys to help us."

I started to throw the little boxes into the big ones. The big boxes were sitting on four-wheeled dollies. Those little devils sure got heavy. Pretty soon I look around and Rodney ain't there. Then I see him a long ways down the hall talking to some girl. When he gets back I says to him, "Where did that girl come from?"

He says, "She comes down from the office twice a day with mail for Tom. She's a sexy little bitch."

All of a sudden I see it's four o'clock and we got a lot of stuff left to pack. Then I saw the foreman coming. I thought we'd both get canned for sure, but Rodney says, "How's about getting us some help, Tom?"

The foreman goes over to the main room and says, "Joe, Andy, you'll have to come out on motors again."

Sure enough, they came right out and helped us, just like Rodney said.

I heard one of the guys talking to Rodney and he didn't sound as if he liked to help us, but Rodney laughed at him.

He says, "You're just jealous 'cause you can see I got Tom under my thumb."

"Don't worry, kid. Your day'll come," says the other guy. "Tom's run into guys like you before. Just you keep pushing him."

That worried me, 'cause Rodney was the only pal I had there, and I sure didn't want to see him get canned. But what the hell, I figured, Rodney can take care of himself.

Next day we was resting a minute and having a coke when the foreman went by on his way to the office. Rodney calls him over.

"Hey, Tom, when do I get another raise?"

Tom smiles at him. "Do you think you deserve one?"

"Aw come on, Tom. You know I got the hardest job in the place. Don't they have to come out and help me every night just before quitting time?"

"Oh, you've got to have help, all right."

"Well come on then, Tom. I don't have to stay here, you know."

"I'll see what I can do about that," says Tom. He wasn't smiling any more. He went up to his office.

"What'd I tell you?" says Rodney. "You got to put them in their place once in a while. He might be the boss, but he ain't any better than us."

Then Tom came out of the office again.

"OK, Rodney," he says, "you can head for the personnel office. I called them and they know you're coming."

"What the hell do you mean?" says Rodney.

"You're fired, kid. Sorry, but you didn't leave me any choice."

Rodney walked over to his locker and got his coat. Then he walked out — never even said good-bye to me. I guess he just couldn't believe he got fired. He sure was a swell guy.

an act

Clouds began to form

And the sky awoke

Blackness Laid upon Greyness

And the sky trembled

A thrust of Lightning pierced

The blackness

And the sky screamed

Rain fell quietly

And the sky relaxed

buddha

Buddha sits, contemplating.

Men fight and die —

Nothing.

fog

Grey fog, soft, ghostlike, mysterious —

Hides the landscape,

Drips from grey trees in gentle drops,

Dampens streets, and spirits.

And yet —

There is beauty in its mystery.

Each harsh shape softened —

partly hidden,

To appear and then recede into grey whiteness

Sounds, muffled, echo from the wall of grey.

Who knows what may lie ahead?

Great adventure — or —

nothingness.

. . . .sits

Buddha sits, a cracked statue.

Men try and die —

Progress.

behold the righteous

"That's it — the one on the corner — with the picket fence." Mrs. Gibbs' voice was thick with secret knowledge and ill-concealed her excitement.

"Oh," said Mrs. Fritsch, who was beginning to wish she had not come. "It looks just like any other house," she ventured after a moment.

"Yes, it **looks** all right, Amantha, but that's where **he** lives."

The two neo-elderly ladies cowered in the shady obscurity of a large lilac bush and peered at the house like two cats watching a bird cage from behind a sofa.

"Let me tell you, Amantha, it's a disgrace! A perfect disgrace! I can't see why they don't lock him up. It just isn't fitting for him to live in the same neighborhood with decent people."

"But really, Margaret, do you think we have the right — ."

"**Do we have the right?** Well, if we — decent, law abiding, God-fearing citizens — haven't the right to protect ourselves and our children from . . ."

"But he doesn't do it anymore, Margaret. He promised he'd stop."

"Of course he promised. He had to say **something**, didn't he? After all, they **caught** him at it!" Mrs. Gibbs gave a dramatic shrug of revulsion. "Oh, come, Amantha, let's go; I don't know why I let you drag me here in the first place."

"But it was **your** . . ."

The two ladies turned and scurried off down the street, away from the house with the white picket fence.

He was watching from the living room; he'd seen them stop, and try to hide behind the lilac bush. He didn't know who they were, but it didn't matter; there had been others.

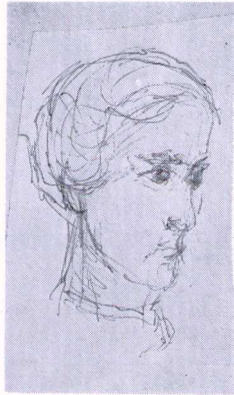
"Keith — Supper is ready."

He left the window and followed the aroma of steak and onions into the kitchen. Sandra was placing two glasses of milk on the table. She smiled at him, wiped her hands on her apron, and sat down.

"Two more," he said, nodding toward the front of the house. Sandra flushed, but said nothing.

He was silent throughout the meal. She sensed his tension; saw him glance ever and again out the window. Her few attempts at small talk were answered in monosyllables, and finally she gave up and joined his silence, watching him closely.

While helping her dry dishes, he dropped a cup. It shattered on the bright linoleum. He looked at the pieces, then placed the towel carefully on the rack.



"I think I'll go for a walk." It came out far less casually than he had intended.

"Oh." The way she said it reminded him of an empty room.

"For God's sake, Sandy," he snapped, "quit treating me as if I were something that belonged on a leash!" Then, ashamed, his glance dropped from her face to the floor. "I'm sorry, Sandy. You poor kid; you've got enough problems without my barking at you. If only you could understand."

"But I **do** understand, darling." She took his hands and looked into his eyes.

"Yes, I think you do, in a way. Oh, Sandy — I'd be so lost without you!"

Still holding hands, he led her out to the back yard. The sun had set and the stars, one by one, became visible against the deepening shades of the sky. His hand gripped hers so tightly that she almost cried out, but did not.

In the east, a bright streak flashed across the night.

"A falling star, Keith. Make a wish."

"I never wish on a falling star, Sandy. A falling star is dying."

He kissed her then, almost timidly, and walked away, out the back gate. She stood, her hands in front of her as he'd let them go, watching until he blended with the darkness.

He walked rapidly toward the edge of town, aware of every nerve and muscle in his body, little tingling waves of expectation washing over him with steadily increasing frequency.

The houses along the street were quiet, the bluish glow of TV sets outlining their living room windows. A police car cruised slowly down the street, and he lowered his head to avoid being recognized. It passed on. From far off came the deep cat's purr of a diesel train.

He could smell the green of the fields, now. The last street light was far behind him, and the sidewalk became a dirt path a few feet ahead. On his left was a wall of rose bushes, the buds silently nodding in the almost imperceptible breeze.

"Not yet — not yet — you can still be seen," he told himself.

But he could wait no longer. Taking



two half-running steps, he rose into the air; above the bushes, above the trees and telephone wires; up and up, until the town below was a handful of neatly arranged stars. His chest ached with an inexpressible happiness; above and below him were the wonder of the night and the world and the heavens. The air flowed around him, whispering the secrets of the universe.

In the house, Sandra heard the purr of the train; she listened for another sound, but it did not come. She finished drying the dishes, and kept from going to the window and looking at the star-filled night.

A car stopped in front of the house and two pair of footsteps came up the walk and onto the porch. The bell played its monotonous little tune and Sandra hurried to open the door. Her eyes widened momentarily with fright when she saw the police badges through the screen.

"Mrs. Cross?"

She stepped back, swinging the door open, her hand still on the knob.

"Yes?" Her voice was too flat.

"Is your husband in?"

In spite of herself she caught her breath and bit her lower lip.

"No — he — he just stepped out for a moment."

"May we come in?"

"Well, I — of course." She let go of the knob and stepped forward to push open the screen door. It made a twanging sound. The officers entered and stood self-consciously on the mat in front of the door. Sandra offered them a seat with a gesture of her hand but they shook their heads.

"We can't stay, Mrs. Cross. We just wanted a word with you.

She sat down on the arm of the sofa, her fingers plucking nervously at her apron.

"We saw your husband this evening . . ." her eyes flew to the window . . . walking," he added, and saw her break her glance and stare at her apron.

"Mrs. Cross, there is nothing we can do officially to stop him; there isn't any law against — what he does. But people don't like it. He can do something they can't do; they can't understand it and so they hate and fear him for it. Maybe way down deep it's a form of jealousy; but, nevertheless, your husband is in danger."

Sandra looked up, her face pale and afraid. She would have spoken, but the officer went on.

"We know he does it only at night, when he thinks no one can see him, but that doesn't make it any different — in fact, it would probably make it even worse if people found out. Even today there are some fanatics who would love the opportunity to scream 'witch'."

"What I'm going to suggest, Mrs. Cross, may sound hard and cruel, but believe me when I say it would be for his own protection . . . Would you consider having your husband committed to an institution?"

The clock on the mantle counted off the minutes of silence. At last, embarrassed, the policemen turned toward the door.

"We've got to leave, Mrs. Cross. We're sorry to have upset you, but please think it over. He would be safe there." The screen door twanged shut and the footsteps receded down the walk. After a moment, the car moved away. Sandra sat on the arm of the sofa, her hands lying still in her lap.

It was almost dawn when Keith came in. Sandra was in bed, but not asleep.

The next day she went through all the household chores in a daze; her mind was like a crazily spinning carousel. Keith slept all day; he always did, after.

Late in the afternoon, while dusting the living room, she heard voices. Three small boys on bicycles were stopped before the house, talking in tones she could not help but overhear.

"— and he's got big wings ten feet wide and he's all green and got long, sharp teeth."

"Y' ever seen him?"

"Well, no, but I heard about him."

"Yeah, my dad says they're going to get him one of these days. He says God should destroy all evil things like him, an' that if God won't . . ."

"Yah-Yah-Bat-Man!" one called, and threw a rock on the porch. Sandra ran to the door and out into the yard. The boys jumped on their bicycles and raced off down the road, snickering and yelling "Yah-Yah-Bat-Man!"

Sandra stumbled back into the house, her face wet with tears. She went quietly to the bedroom and looked in. Keith lay on his back, one lock of his curly brown hair falling across his forehead. Sobbing silently, she closed the door and went to the telephone. She stood with the receiver in her hand for several moments and then dialed, slowly.

"May I speak to Dr. Baldwin, please?" she whispered into the phone, trying to control herself. "Dr. Baldwin? This is Mrs. Cross — yes — I'd like to speak to you about having my husband — placed in the state institution."

She felt rather than heard the door open behind her. She turned, the phone still in her hand.

Keith was staring at her, in disbelief — a look of horror and indescribable sadness on his face.

She dropped the phone.

"Keith!"

He shook his head, the tears forming in his eyes.

"Keith!" she repeated, softly.

He bolted past her, slamming open the screen door, leapt from the porch and, with a cry, bounded into the air — over the white picket fence, above the lilac bush and prim white houses; up and up and up, far above Sandra, standing in the yard, her arms raised to him calling "Keith—Keith!"

Ten minutes later, on the other side of town, a small boy who had been watching the sunset made a wish on a falling star.

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