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### Insight, 1964 Fall

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INSIGHT

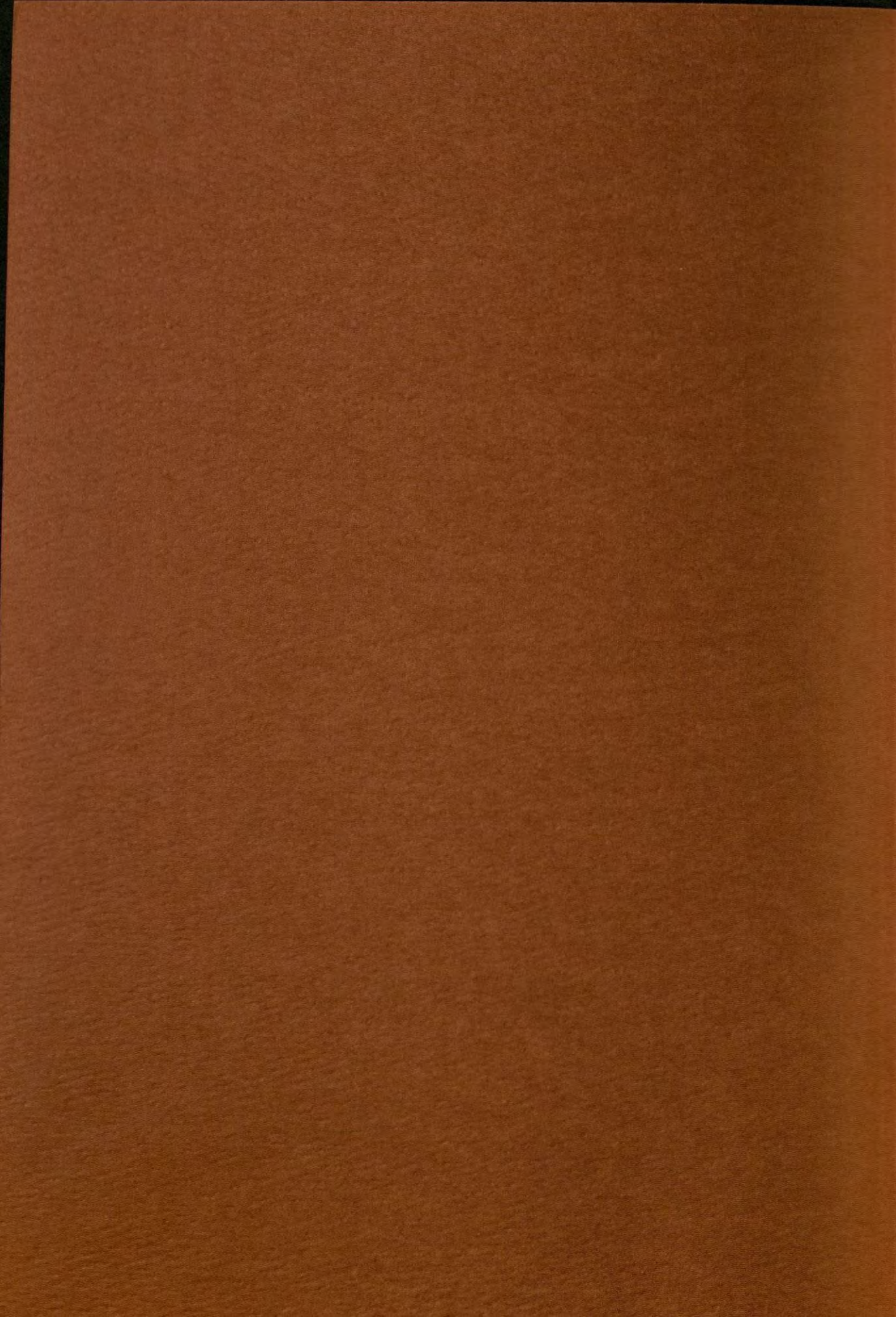


FALL



1964

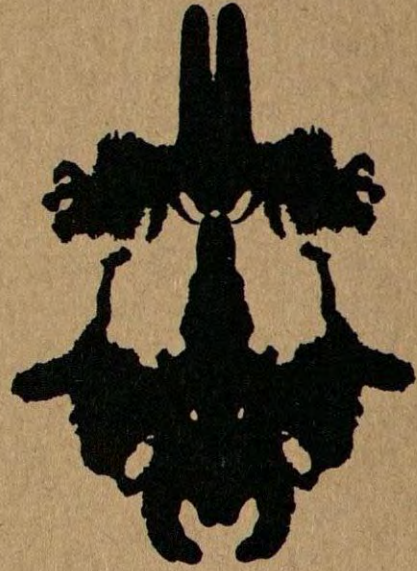




**insight**  
**fall 1964**



**connecticut college**  
**new london, conn.**



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Sally Tehan

## THE GLEANING YEARS

Frank Wilkins stood the base of the handle down in the tall grass and leaned the scythe back at an angle against the tree. The sun was right overhead now. He turned and walked back along the roadside slowly, through the layer of parched weeds and June grass which had fallen beneath the scythe, leaving the roadbank clear right up to the wire fence that ran along the corn lots. His feet were still damp from the dew that had soaked his shoes in the early morning, and the water oozed with a steady swish as his steps sunk in the heaped grass. It was hot. His shirt clung in a wet patch against his back, and beads of sweat on his forehead ran together in a stream that wound down across the side of his face. He pulled a wadded cotton square from his pocket and dried his face and neck.

The truck was standing in the shadows now. He opened the door and took his thermos bottle and the paper bag from underneath the seat. He had parked there by the beechnut so he could sit in the shade but it was still hot — deadly hot and quiet. He stooped down under the tree and poured some water into the tin cup. It was cold against his moist hands, and he drank in long, fast gulps with his head tipped back. Above him a locust strained on one note in an endless high pitch. Then he filled the cup again and pressed the cool metal to his face. Over the hill he could hear Sid Newmann's tractor. He was getting in that last piece of second cutting. Frank reached inside the bag and took out his sandwiches. His hay was in, and there would be another week before corn.

It was a week to mow the roadsides and to get a new coat of white-wash on the barns. If there was time he would mend those fences over by the orchard too, or sure as there was a week spot some loose cow would be in getting colic on the early apples. He stretched his legs out in front of him and watched an ant climb laboriously over the folds in his pantleg toward his knee. Then he flicked it back into the grass. If Sid did less drinking and more working, he'd be done too. The lettuce between his bread had wilted. He pulled it out and tossed it down toward the ditch. Drink never did any man good. He'd been fifty-one years on the place come the end of the month and never touched a drop.

## II

How old was he then? He must have been seven or eight that first time. They had lived in Carlton then up over the dry goods shop. Frank looked back down the road where the scythe stood marking the point at which he had stopped. He could finish it up before milking if he kept on. He rubbed the back of his hand across his wet lips and crumpled the waxed paper into a ball. Carlton wasn't much in those days, but it was the only city he had ever really known. It was a dirty damned place, too.

He and Jim were down on the street early that morning. His mother had sat up all the night before. It was November, and there was a thin coat of fresh snow on the ground. Mr. Lynch gave Jim a broom, and he



swept the snow from the walk in front of his shop. Frank watched for a while, but it was cold. He would have liked to sweep too, but there was only one broom. Jim was older by three years and a head taller. Sometimes Mr. Lynch would give him a nickel when he swept out the store for him on Saturdays, but not often. Mostly he would give them a peppermint stick from the jar on his counter, and they would break it in half. When they sucked it slow, it could last them all morning.

That morning he didn't give them anything. He was a nervous, skinny old man, kind of bent over all the time, and when winter came he seemed to bend over more, and his face turned a purplish-red color.

Frank didn't stay there very long. He knew his mother was alone upstairs, but he didn't know what to do. He couldn't go back up there without Jim. It had begun to snow gently again, and the sky was a dull, gray sheet. He dug his bare hands deep in his pockets and headed down the street. Behind him he could hear the broom scratch and drag against the walk. It was still early, and the street was empty except for the milk-horse standing alone at the corner. Its back and flanks were glazed with particles of snow which had hardened into minute crystals and gave him a queer, mottled appearance.

"Hey, horse."

It stood with its eyes half shut, and its neck drooped down. Frank put his hands up to the reins, and the animal's head jerked up in surprise. Its coat was warm and furry underneath the thick mane, and he burrowed his fingers in the soft mass. He could feel the horse's sides heave in a deep, slow rhythm against him, and for a few minutes they stood there together without moving. Then he heard old Joe coming down the stairs, and the horse stamped and sidled on the pavement.

"Hey, horse," Frank said again, stroking the muscled chest. It would be good to ride in the wagon.

"Frankie. Why you up so early?"

"Hi, Joe."

Then Joe was up in the wagon and had the reins in his hands.

"You got no school today. Go back to sleep."

He laughed and shook the reins across the mare's whitened back. Their movement marred the snowy blanket, and patches of it fell sliding across her rounded barrel to the ground. Frank watched the wagon move around the bend down Lee Street. The wheels creaked on two alternating tones that reminded him of the old piano stool in the back of Mr. Lynch's place. They would wind it way up high till it wobbled and then take turns pushing each other around and around, winding it down tight again. It squeaked just like the wheels. Then when they got off they would stagger all over the place, and everything would be whirring around, and they'd laugh like anything. Sometimes Mr. Lynch would get mad and tell them to go outside, but he wasn't really mad.

Frank turned around and walked back to Lynch's. Jim was inside the store now, sitting backwards on a chair in front of the stove with his hands stretched out toward the heat. Frank pushed open the door and felt the warm air meet his face. He went over to the stove and stood by Jim.

"Where's Mr. Lynch?"

"In the back room," Jim said.

"Want to go upstairs again?"

"Naw."

"Maybe Pa's home."

Jim sat still, staring ahead at his outstretched fingers.

"Go on. I'll be up in a while. I don't think he's back yet."

Frank's face was beginning to burn now from the steady heat against his cheeks. He remembered his mother sitting there in the unlit kitchen, and wondered if she had really stayed there all night.

"You come with me."

He looked at Jim, but Jim's gaze remained fixed straight ahead. Suddenly he seemed very old to Frank. He could hear Mr. Lynch dragging something across the floor in the other room. It would be nice if they were back there now on the piano stool. Jim got up and threw another log in the stove. The flames leaped high and made a loud gasping sound as the fresh piece fell. Then he sat back on the chair with his arms crossed and looked up at Frank.

"Go up and get something to eat," he said. "I'll be up later."

"I'm not hungry."

He was afraid to go up. He had heard his mother crying when he went to bed the night before. Later on he had woken up and heard Mr. Lynch's voice out in the kitchen, and she was crying again. Sometimes before that she would get real upset about Pa if he didn't get home on time, but this time he never did get there all night. Frank didn't want to see her cry.

"Go ahead. I'm gonna look for Pa."

"I'll go with ya," Frank said.

"No. Go up with your mother."

Frank felt his throat stiffen. His fists clenched hard in his pockets till his nails dug down into his palms.

"Okay."

He went outside. Mr. Emmons was opening the grocery store, and he waved through the window. Frank went around the corner to the back stairs. They were covered smooth with snow again since he and Jim had come down earlier. Lynch's cat was sitting halfway up, hunched down in a ball close to the side of the building. Frank went up slowly, running his hand through the mound of snow along the railing. At the top he scooped a big handful of it together and packed it into a solid lump. It was powdery stuff, though, and it crumbled before he could throw it. He wiped his wet hand on his pants and bent down to unbuckle his arctics.

In the kitchen the fire had gone out, and the breakfast dishes were still clean on the table. Frank shut the door behind him and took off his coat. In the next room he could hear his mother's voice. Then she stopped a moment, as if listening to his steps.

"Frankie?"

"Yes."

He waited for her to come. Her face was white, and she still had the wine-colored bathrobe pulled close around her thin body. She had stopped crying, but her eyes were red and puffy. He watched her come through the room and sit down at the table.

"Is Pa home?"

"Your father is here, but he doesn't feel well." She looked down at her folded hands, and Frank sat beside her. "I want you to go to Mrs. Waller."

"Where is he, Ma?"

"You get your brother and go to Mrs. Waller's house. I'll come and get you later when Pa's better."

Frank looked at his mother. Jim had told him to go to her.

"Is he sick real bad?" He paused, watching her twist the thin gold rings on her finger. "I won't bother him none, Ma."

His father was a big man and strong. He wore his shirt sleeves rolled up tight above the elbows so the thick skin bulged beneath them. He was never sick. Frank remembered him going out to work the day before. They had gone outside together, and he had walked with him as far as the school.

"Do as I say, Frank." Her voice was sharp now, and she looked at him hard with her lips pressed tight together.

He got up.

"Can I see him?"

"Please, Frankie. Do as I say."

He heard his father's voice from the living room then. He was shouting, calling his mother's name. It was a strange, half-familiar call. He had heard it sometimes in the middle of the night and would sit listening in the dark room for a long time. Sometimes when Pa came home after supper Frank had heard it, too.

His mother stood up quickly and left the room. Frank watched her move. He wanted to follow her, but she turned in the doorway and looked back at him without speaking. He could feel his heart throbbing loud against his chest, and his eyes fell to the floor. Above the hoarse, detached crys his ears seemed to ring, and his hands felt cold and damp, gripped against the wooden chair back. Then it was quiet again, and he could hear only his mother's hushed murmur — gentle, indistinct.

He turned to the frosted window and looked down to the street. Two men walked by beneath him with their collars turned up against their necks. He could see their wide sleeves billow in the wind. Then he was outside again, running down the stairs, down to the walk. For a minute he hesitated in front of the dry goods shop. The wind was cold against his chest, and he remembered his coat still upstairs in the kitchen.

Inside, the chair where he had left Jim was empty now, and he stood alone by the stove watching Mr. Lynch. There was a heavy-set man with a dinner pail in his hand standing at the counter. His black hair was slicked down close against his head, and Frank could see the marks through it from his comb.

"So old man Wilkins got back, huh?"

"Yeah. He's up there now."

Mr. Lynch counted out his change.

"I was over there when he started in last night," the heavy-set man said. "Drunk as hell even then."



## III

It was pretty soon after that when his mother began to take in the washing. Sometimes she'd have to get up before breakfast and start in. That was after Pa stopped working at the mill. They didn't see too much of him that winter, and then towards spring he was gone for a whole week. It was hard to remember how it was then. His mother didn't cry anymore, but sometimes she sent them to Mrs. Waller's. Sometimes he went by himself, and Jim stayed home to help downstairs in the store.

At first he had hated to go there. Mrs. Waller was old, and she wore thick glasses that made her eyes look too big. She had always tried to have him call her Aunt Louise, but he wouldn't. Later on, though, he didn't mind going so much because there were always cookies, and when it was cold out she made hot chocolate for him. But he could never quite stomach the fish smell in her kitchen.

It was strange how little the whole situation bothered him then. At first it was hard, but soon he had accepted the change and forgotten the bad parts. Maybe it was because he was so young, but more than that it was Miss Moran. She came to school that winter to teach the third grade, and from the first day he had liked her. He liked her long red hair and the way she printed in round, perfect letters on the blackboard. Then one day after class she had asked him to clean the erasers for her. After that he stayed late lots of times to help, and sometimes it would be dark before he got back home. He had even thought he would be a teacher himself someday — a third grade teacher. Once he had told her that.

Probably he couldn't have done it anyway, but the way things happened he never got the chance to find out. There was nothing for a kid to do in Carlton when the schools shut down for the summer. The only place to go was the park on the other side of town, but once they walked over and climbed around the monument a while, there was nothing to do there either. He and Jim hadn't been very close that year until then, but with school out there were the four of them — Jim and Loopy Guerrero and Clyde and himself. He never did know Clyde's last name, but he lived around on Lee Street near the mill. His father worked there. Clyde and Loopy were Jim's age, but they let him go along most of the time.

It must have been August or late July. Anyway it was hot. They were sitting on the front porch of the old tenement across from Lynch's where Loopy lived. Frank sat on the bottom step looking up at the others. Loopy was sprawled out in one of the three weathered rockers which were spaced at equal intervals across the veranda. His shirt was unbuttoned, and Frank could see the reddened V-shaped patch at his neck. Nobody said much. It was too hot. Jim sat on the railing looking down into the street. They had been over at the park in the morning, but there was nothing there. The brook that ran through the north end had dried to a narrow trickle winding over the mud. They had walked along in the slime for a while and played some game about being in Africa. They they came home.

"Boy, don't ya wish we was swimming?" Loopy said. He lifted one bare foot up against the arm of his chair while the other leg stretched up and out to the railing. "Where we used to live with my grandfather we could go swimming all the time. There was this big pond there down the road."

Loopy lived with his sister and her husband. His mother had been in the hospital for a year or so, and nobody did know where his father was.

"Hey, Loopy. Why didn't ya stay there?"

"Ahh, I don't know. Mostly I guess because they were getting kind of old and stuff."

Clyde rolled over on the floor and raised himself on his elbows.

"Hey guys, let's get a melon from old Emmons. See them over there." He pointed across the street.

From where they sat they could see the mammoth pile of green ovals in front of the market. There must have been a hundred of them out there.

"Where ya going to get the money?" Jim asked. "I ain't got any."

Naw. We just take it. Think old Emmons'll miss one little watermelon?" Clyde said. "He won't even know it's gone."

"It'll be easy as anything." Loopy sat straight in his chair now, looking across to the market. "Two of us can go talk to Emmons while the other two take it. We can even git two."

"What do ya say, Jim? You and Frank go talk, and we'll git the melons," Clyde said, standing up.

They ignored Frank now. He looked from face to face, awaiting the verdict.

"Come on."

His brother dropped from the railing, and then they were all on their feet, moving in a pack across the street.

It was so easy. He and Jim went inside, but Mr. Emmons was waiting on some skinny lady that looked like maybe she didn't feel too good. He never even noticed them, and they just stood there looking out the window at Clyde and Loopy. Then they went back out again, and the four of them ran like crazy down the street. Nobody knew where they were going except to get out of there. He and Jim were behind to cover the melons on Mr. Emmons' side. They were almost to the corner when Clyde fell flat down on the walk, and the melon went rolling lickety-split down the street.

It all happened fast. They helped Clyde to his feet and brushed him off. His knees were scraped and bleeding through his torn trousers, and his chin was cut, but he was okay. Then they started after the melon, but it was too late. A wagon stood midway down the street, and the old horse that drew it dozed restlessly in the heat. The melon was heading straight for it. They stopped running and stood watching, knowing they could not reach it. It was almost funny in a way, but then the melon flopped hard right into the sleeping horse's front legs and rolled on underneath him. He lunged forward, snorting, and tore up the street and back toward Emmon's store. The four of them raced after it.

Later on they found the wagon with its wheel smashed off against a tree. The horse stood at a distance, cropping grass on the roadside with the torn harness pieces trailing at its hooves. Frank's legs ached, and he could feel them trembling as he stood there with the others, watching the animal. They were all sweating hard and gasping for breath. Then Jim put his hand out and walked slowly toward the horse. He spoke in a soft whisper. The old thing eyed him nervously all the time, flicking his ears forward and back. He moved cautiously over toward the dragging reins

and picked them up.

They walked back in silence. Frank went behind the others, following the spaced prints of the horse's shoes. In a way he was glad it wasn't old Joe's horse. Joe was his friend. But he knew they were in trouble real bad. It was kind of crazy too, because they never meant it to happen that way.

That night was the worst part. It wouldn't have been so bad if his mother wasn't there, but they were all there up in the hot kitchen, sitting around the table — Mr. Emmons and the peddler and the officer and his mother. The peddler was pretty mad, and he kept on yelling about the wagon and punk kids that never did any work. Finally they settled it somehow — how they would pay for the wheel and everything. It would take an awful long time for the four of them to get the money up, but that wasn't what bothered him so much. It was his mother. Maybe if Pa had been around, it would have been easier. He would have yelled a lot and paddled them both, and then he and Jim would have gone into their room and talked about how it wasn't their fault really and how they never meant to have the horse run away.

Ma didn't do that, though. If she had, things might have worked out some other way. She didn't say much of anything for a while, but she did a lot of thinking. All's she could see was that her kids were turning bad, and it wasn't more than a week before she told them she was sending them out to board in Pikeville. She had some notion they'd be better off out there.

#### IV

They were still haying when he and Jim got to the farm. It wasn't a big place, but in the summertime there was a bunch of guys there. Some of them were old, and when winter came, they went back to the city again till the next spring. He and Jim had a room up in the attic with Charlie. He was a funny, little guy with an Irish brogue, and they would sit for hours after supper listening to him talk of the old country. They didn't believe most of it, but it was fun.

In lots of ways it wasn't a bad place. At first they didn't have much to do — just fun stuff like feeding the hens and bringing home the cows. There was plenty to eat too. Every other day Mrs. Bender made bread — lots of it, and on the other days she would bake cakes and things like that. There was always some good smell coming from the kitchen, and sometimes she'd let him lick the spoons.

That first summer was good. They went swimming a lot too, and then in the fall the school opened up. It was more like a chicken house than any school he'd ever seen before. All the kids came and sat in one room — there was only one room — he and Jim and everybody else all in together. He liked it at first, maybe because it was so different. He thought a lot about Miss Moran then, and wondered if she'd like it out there.

Mostly they had spelling and arithmetic, but the older boys were always causing trouble — the Thompson brothers and Carl Hawks. They must have been sixteen or so. Sometimes they'd start wrestling right there in the back of the room, and one day they sneaked Carl's pet skunk inside and let it loose. Everybody laughed, and some of the girls started screaming and running around. Things quieted down in the spring though when the

three of them left to help with planting and didn't come back at all till fall.

He and Jim stayed on at Bender's place for a long time. Once in a while other fellows their age came there too, but in the fall they always went back home again. Things changed a lot from that first year. Old Ed Bender was crippled up bad with arthritis, and the others—like Charlie—didn't give a damn what happened to the place. All they wanted was their pay, and plenty of time they were off the place more days than they were there. He and Jim had to do a lot then. It started out the second winter when there wasn't much other help around and Mr. Bender was down in bed for a month. It kept on though through the summer and all the time after that.

Frank wanted to work. He liked Mr. Bender, and he wanted to help out. It made him feel good to see the loft packed full with hay and to smell the sweet, dry odor or to carry the heavy pails of warm milk to the cans and pour it. The days in Carlton seemed like a half-forgotten dream then, and sometimes when things were good he thought he'd have a farm himself someday. Then winter'd come again, and things were tough. They didn't do fun things anymore.

Especially that winter before he left school. Mr. Bender was sick a lot, and he and Jim and two of the old guys that stayed on did everything. They'd be up when it was still dark out to do the chores, and afterwards walk the mile cross-lots for school. Once it had been snowing so hard he couldn't see, and he'd come out half a mile up the road from the schoolhouse by mistake.

But the worst thing was ice cutting. They'd hitch up the two big Clydesdales to the sled and be out on the pond right after breakfast to stay all day. It was the coldest darned spot he'd ever been, and often they'd come back with frostbite and feet so numb they could hardly walk. And then there was that day they had both stayed home from school to cut. At noon the two men left them there and never came back. God knows where they went in that weather, but they never came to Bender's place again.

He and Jim kept on cutting alone and got back just in time for chores. All that night up in the attic Frank shivered, and his face felt hot against the sheets. He didn't sleep much. If his mother had been there maybe he wouldn't have gone to school in the morning, but he did. Thirteen he was then and able to do a lot of thinking when he wanted to. He sat in the back of the schoolroom, then looking at himself and the rest there like overstuffed ragdolls in their felt boots and coats and mittens. It was cold as heck in there too, and about all that fool stove did was keep the lunches they had placed around it from freezing up. On top of it all they tried to have a spelling bee.

Frank never went back again. He was sick for quite a while after that too. He stayed on and worked for Bender. It grew on him, and once he got man-sized, he could hold his own. Nobody left him alone on the pond anymore or any place else. Jim kept on at school somehow and finished it out. After that he left and went back to Carlton. Things went good for him there, and Frank might have left about then himself if Emily hadn't come.

She was an out-of-state girl with no family, and Grace Bender took her in to help with the cooking and things. She was young—seventeen or

so. Frank was twenty. They were married before she'd been there a year. Then Bender had passed away, and he and Emily had rented the place. Nothing changed much at first. The boarders still came and the hired hands. Grace and Emily took care of the house together. They got along well, but it wasn't surprising. Emily could get along with anyone. She was too good to people, Frank told her. Too damned good, and some of those characters that came to sit on Bender's veranda every spring were plenty willing to let her do for them — to work her heart out.

The only big change was for Frank himself. It was he who ran the farm and gave the orders and shouldered the responsibilities. Then more changes came — new equipment — tractors, milking machines, a truck. They didn't cut ice anymore. They didn't do a lot of things they had done before. The two old Clydesdales were sold, and a new barn was added and more cows. It was a long haul in those early days. Finally Grace had faced reality and sold the place to him. There was more work then, and less money.

## V

Frank twisted the cap back on the thermos slowly and stood up. The locust still hummed its ringing monotone. He put the container back in the truck and pulled his watch out. Then he headed back, stiff from his seat beneath the beechnut, toward the scythe. Far ahead of him were the red barns and the old, rambling house, and he could see Chris, sturdy and brown at seventeen, mowing the front lawn down by the maples. He would go to the University in the fall.

Above the lawn mower's distant roar he heard the bulldozer. If he had turned his head, he could see the big, yellow machine in Newmann's corner lot. Sid used to grow a good crop of alfalfa there, but he'd aged quickly in the past few years, and money was short. It's going out, Frank, he had said, no matter what you do, it's going out. There's no fighting it.

For a couple of years now he'd been selling the land off, piece by piece, for building lots. Frank picked up the scythe and started with a rhythmic, sweeping motion. It was better to get rid of the whole place at once. Sid would probably be lost without it though. He looked across at his own land, now covered with corn too high for him to see beyond, and then back to the sharp blade moving through the grass. It was hot, and there was still a sharp twinge in his knee. It seemed to take him longer now than it ever had before.





Poems by

Karen Stothert

Grandfather died  
One October night  
On the orchard hill;  
His combed beard  
(on his chest to his waist)  
Touched with staring dew.  
And specks of a high, white moon.  
First snow.

The black of the forest is white.  
White is the gray and the brown.  
And the blue that was the river.  
In the white silence is the  
Screaming hush of falling,  
Falling . . . falling of the oak's brown stragglers.  
The silent white.  
Are the grasses and bushes asleep?  
(Are those white eyelids closed?)  
Or do they hold their breath in awe?  
Only the non-white bird, moving, is alive.

The sand where the children play  
Is a myriad of gem-craters eroded  
by the rain.  
No foot prints,  
No hillocks made by toys,  
No sound.  
Drops have tired of falling.  
No birds rush to sing.  
The hot-noise days have given way  
to morning cool.  
And silently  
The mist rises, two,  
Three feet,  
And my children hurry  
To fill the void with sound.

Susan Ford

NOT TO HOLD OCTOBER

The sense of gift has worn away  
 untie the bows on every finger  
 to let me play the question song  
 that skips along my sidewalk dream  
 and has no shoes and cries hollow  
 like winter leaves on stone.

    pressed and bare,  
     suffering long trees in rain,  
     much of having and having and having not at all.

The pain to create grows thin and black  
 in the straight flux of my season;  
     add to this the shift of clouds  
     and the leaves;  
     add, but then

Rest because rest  
 because rest because  
 it is time to walk to the edge  
 of the leaves.

Cross the moon naked  
 now the branches;  
 The garden is cold.

by

Marianna Kaufman

POEM

(Songs or voices are audible eternally;  
thoughts are audible internally)

They are all gone, the lovely ones,  
From vision, presence — friends of mine.  
Gone, gone to, other places.  
Songs no longer sing as song.

They are all gone, who paused for song;  
Continued, the lovely ones.  
To other places, other friends.  
Inert are thoughts and songs are gone.

They are all gone, the lovely ones.  
And thoughts of rhyme and tone are gone.  
They left behind a lonely one:  
Lonely songs to lonely sing.

One thought and shadows wait for song,  
For lonely ones to think as song:  
That only thoughts of song are mine,  
To think at night. A song for one.

## "IN THE RIVER . . . ."

In the river mud hugs the bodies of swimmers.  
 For color, the eyes reject red, impose yellow.  
 Contortions of mongoloids swim as a shadow.  
 A man jockeys his eyes to guide under water.

In the river a child might pat at the water,  
 Tipple ignorant of submarine shadows.  
 But something, like a memory, will draw in his stomach.  
 No one explains the paradox of water.

In the river a child's hands reach for a handle  
 (So old the reason children grab in the water).  
 Under water a child must pull in the river,  
 To bring the air in from the water.

## POEM

Bride-to-be, in whom the night lies long,  
 Nedding in the teepees of the soul,  
 Wake, and sing the small papoose's song.

Indian-lover, savage too and smooth,  
 Draw and shaft your arrows for the light.  
 Flint the fire: send out the clouds for signs of love.

Release with a rifle-shot-clear yell  
 The Greater Bear, and the Seven Maids.  
 Raise the sun — gold-red on a sky of pale.

Soon you will open up the night  
 To eyes which grew on ancient light.



Poems by  
Julie Baumgold

GREEN

I would unsay grey  
As the color of age  
For it is surely green  
Deep as the sockets  
Sunken in a nighttime sea  
Of eyes once green  
As the glass of a bottle  
Broken on the shore  
Smoothed by the sea  
Into a permanence  
Rarest to the child  
Till she finds she holds  
Not stone but glass  
And then her scorn  
As she throws it away

splinters

Spots that are not freckles  
Cover the skin and merge  
Where I look up the arm  
To a green sleeve  
Cautious lies the fabric  
On the old loose arm  
Aimless attachment of the grass  
To the unlit forest paths  
Yet stubborn as the grass  
It clings green to life  
(Outlasting grasstains  
On the clothing of lovers).  
The earth is old and green  
And jealous, grows greener  
Each year with hope

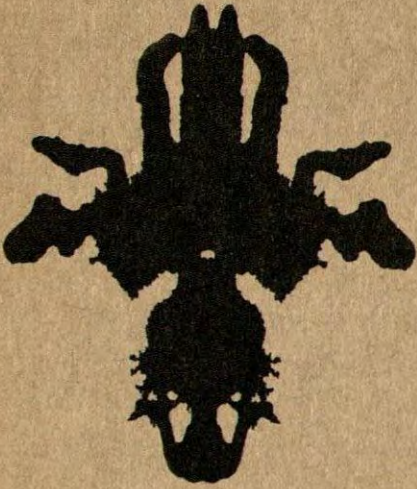
casting and recasting

Green shadows on the flesh  
The sea is a green beat  
Rising to the hope  
In her eyes  
Her hands drum taut fingerskin  
Shines over joints  
Small skin glints rise reticent  
Life pauses so  
Among green folds  
Clutching at the fabric  
Groping as a child  
Clinging, — till unsure —  
Ready to begin again  
This is age then  
And I call its color green.

We are born green  
From the womb  
And we die green  
In the fester grave

**MY FATHER**

I know you my father  
 From the evening world  
 As on the hard pavement  
 You walk yourself calm  
 Doing business with the day's end  
 You come to a purpose  
 Unfamiliar to the tread  
 Of strolls and endless  
 Goals all dead  
 Straightforward you walk  
 The better brother,  
 The father in translation  
 American proud and wiser shroud  
 Of haggard rectitude  
 (And I from the window  
 Watch remembering your pain  
 When I brought you  
 The phony boy I loved  
 But not again)  
 Once you held me  
 Over your shoulder  
 Childflesh on your warm back  
 Then life was my  
 Gurgled preface to your sons  
 I balanced your hard week  
 And together we were young.  
 Merchant and craftsman  
 (From whom came my art)  
 On Sundays you design  
 Under every word you say  
 I could draw a line  
 (For you speak only  
 In the present tense).  
 When from your shoulders hunch  
 You bend your eyes  
 On diamonds in the street  
 And see your craft mocked  
 You turn your head — unshocked  
 A brief bitter smile  
 But your strong days  
 Come without doubt  
 Oh my clear-eyed father  
 What are you thinking about?  
 Is life all aggravation  
 And tender responsibility?  
 Generous pious wisest artist  
 Walk with me.  
 Grant me your grip.



## THE TENDER BIRD AND THENSOME

He was born the wet bud  
 Of a modern idea  
 Fledgling — some thought him queer  
 Why did we have to hop?

With his head to one side  
 And some — they downright laughed  
 But his eyes knew no craft  
 He was just too simple

And what about those feathers?  
 Wet and chewed by his own beak  
 Some thought since he was meek  
 He should be also unprotected

Does this become pathetic?  
 Well too soon he had to go and die  
 Very strangely — without a cry  
 He hopped into some flame

He was never mocked or seen again  
 But decomposed fluttering in the heat  
 Some twig became entangled with his meat  
 For he lived and died a tender bird



## COME UP AND SEE HER SOMETIME

"Now I'll come directly to the pernt" she said  
And her heavy lids were raised  
And her eyes swooned up  
Can anyone enjoy it that much?  
(Being laced into the world)  
Moving slowly as a glacier  
(Deliberate in planning its swivels  
A century ahead of time)  
Each of her words she slapped in the face  
She covered her "heart of gold" in black lace  
And shadowed the aging puff of her cheeks  
With a picture frame hat  
Back on her posing curls  
When her eyes came down from their swoon  
She signified by a finger's crook  
That he should follow with a swooning look  
The patent leather boot  
Of his little Chickadee  
Already on the stair.

## PANACHE FANTASIE

The boy leans back on the back of the horse  
Drums roll their course through the fields unbridled  
The earth grows plumes that wave in the breeze  
The mane slides down his knees — the tail reaches ground  
And they bound through the straw afternoon  
The charge is on over sharp grass spears  
Appear cavalries of tightbound flanks  
Whose trained shanks tap hooved obedience  
To the drummer boy who cannot ride  
Who beats martial raps on the horse's side  
Over and under hills of bone the sound  
Rumbles drowned in the horse's flesh  
The grass spears flattened grow up red  
Under dead lying pressed boot to boot

The horse yawned then at being still so long  
His inside mouth formed a pink-gummed neigh  
Long teeth showed streaked with coward's yellow  
His tail flicked the boy's open eye  
Breaking the spine of the plumed afternoon  
Which dangled over the sky forming night  
The day swaggered off and left the fields unreigned  
And the old horse brought him home.

## DAVID AND JONATHAN

He brought his favorite to his son  
 In the rustling languor of the silken room  
 Where the young man sat  
 Not waiting to be king  
 But cringing from himself  
 In dread and pride  
 Stroking the silver beast  
 Of his unstirred soul

He kneeled to kiss his father's hem  
 Still had not seen the other  
 Quiet at the door  
 Till David's silent song  
 Coming slowly through the air  
 Made him look to the singer  
 Whose gaze in turn fell softly on the cushions  
 Where Jonathan lived his easy life

(That moment beaten into wire  
 Would spin itself so thin  
 That but to flick it  
 With a lady's fingernail  
 Would cause such sound  
 In the taut high places  
 To break the wire  
 With its intensity)

With fated eyes the bitter King  
 Then watched them shudder  
 Into one refulgent ring  
 Around the wire moment  
 When Jonathan first beheld  
 His father's favorite  
 And rent the Hebrew world  
 With his illicit gaze.

Julie Baumgold

THE HAND OF THE MAGDALENE

The last things He saw  
Were ten nails painted red  
Against folds of velvet  
Thick spotted with tears  
And where the cloth matted  
He saw blackened lashes  
Wet with grief  
Like a dog in the rain  
Whose coat shiver-pointed  
Forms trembling drops — hanging  
Cape with spots — thread

Ten nails painted red  
Matted black velvet  
And then Christ was dead.

Kathryn Lasky

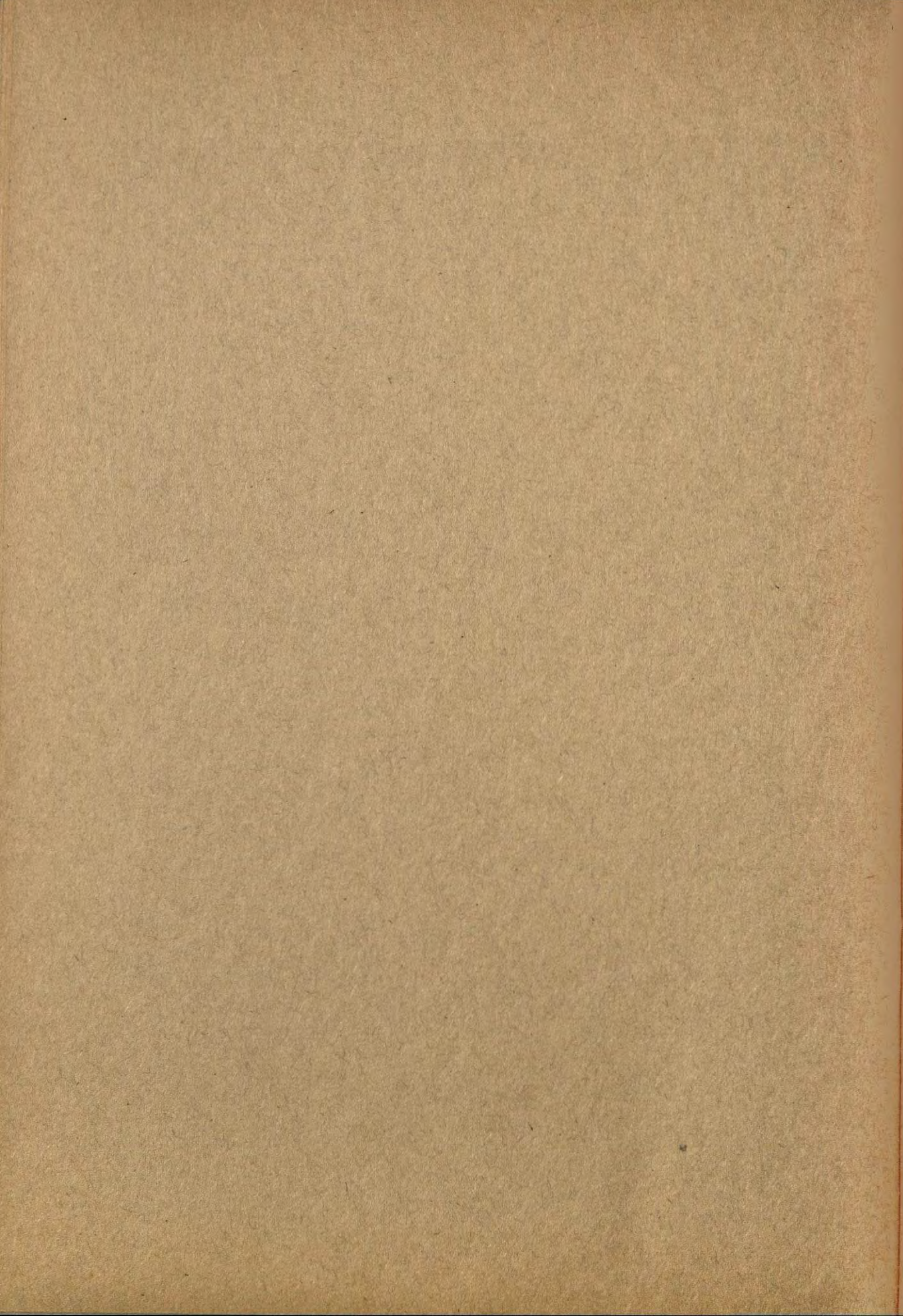
MAN WITH A CROOKED NOSE

Give me a man with a crooked nose,  
And I'll give you a woman wanting some toes.  
And through his cheek carve me a scar,  
Then on her chin some sort of mar.  
A niche goes here, a bump right there.  
Leaving her not round, nor him so square.  
Not one mistake will they erase,  
But in flaw's design will find a grace.













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