

Connecticut College

Digital Commons @ Connecticut College

Connecticut College Literary Journal

Student Publications

Spring 1980

Connecticut College Literary Journal

Connecticut College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/studentpubs_literaryjournal

Recommended Citation

Connecticut College, "Connecticut College Literary Journal" (1980). *Connecticut College Literary Journal*.
2.

https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/studentpubs_literaryjournal/2

This Magazine is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Publications at Digital Commons @ Connecticut College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Connecticut College Literary Journal by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Connecticut College. For more information, please contact bpancier@conncoll.edu.

The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author.



Connecticut

College

Literary Journal

Connecticut
Colleges
Literary
Journal

volume one
issue two
spring 1980

Connecticut
College
Literary
Journal

Volume 2
Number 2
Spring 1920

Editor-in-chief ---- Lois Méndez

Associate Editors -----

Carolyn Abbott
Charlene DiCalogero
Lise Kritzer
Sterling North
Jon Ramin

Academic Adviser ----- Fredric V. Bogel

Printer ----- Curry Copy Center

Cover design ----- Tom Proulx

Calligraphy -----Lois Méndez

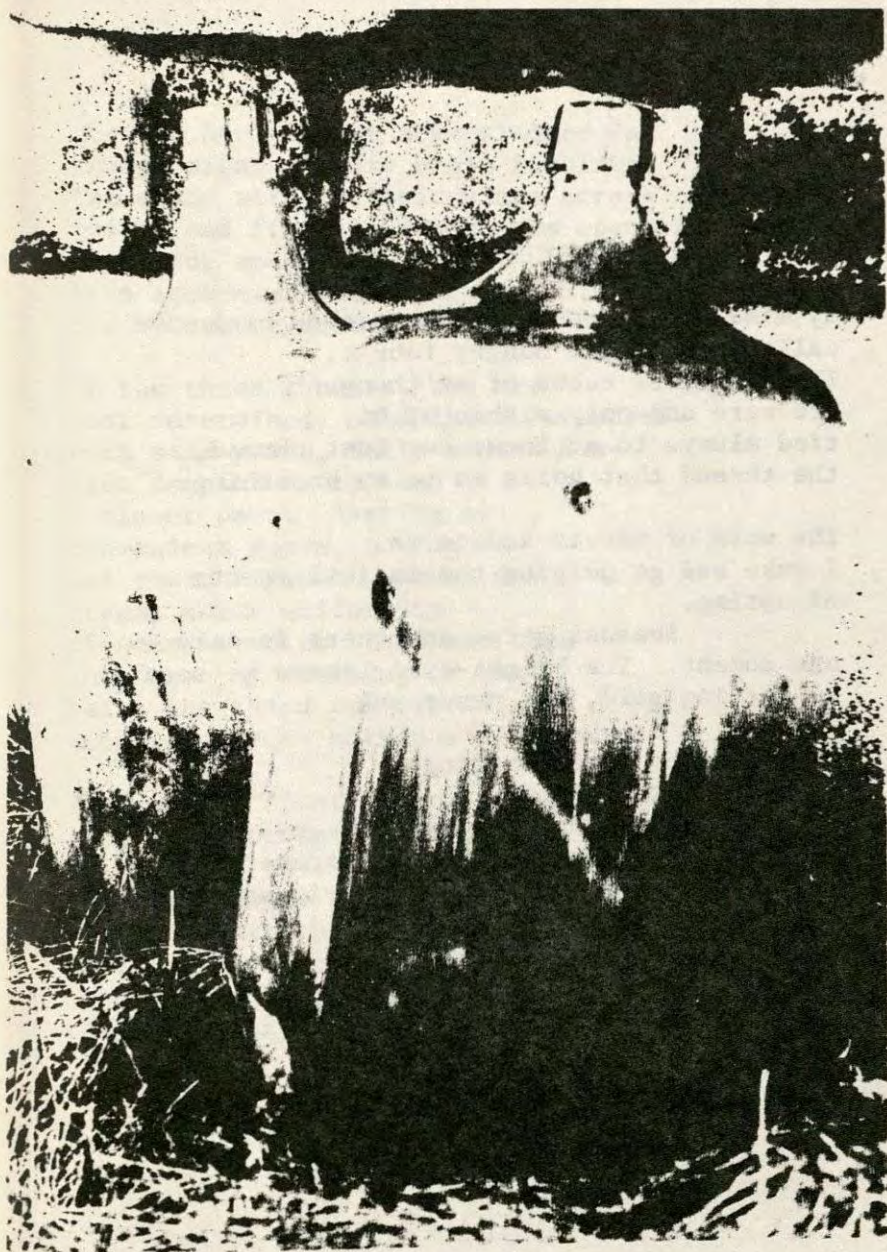
Photographs and Illustrations

(since the majority of the photos and illustrations are untitled only the name of the artist and the page number of the work will be listed)

Kim Fair	p. 1
Kim Fair	p. 10
Kim Fair	p. 13
Robert Miceli	p. 19
Karen Bachelder	p. 21
Kim Fair	p. 32
Lois Méndez	p. 33
Cathy Sponagle	p. 36
Kim Fair	p. 43
Katherine Gould	p. 48
Tom Proulx	p. 56
Lois Méndez	p. 51
Robert Miceli	p. 53

Table of Contents

Colorless Cubes of Thought-----	(Carolyn Abbott)---	p. 2
Morning Joggers-----	(Karen Frankish)-----	p. 3
Signora Sanminiatielli-----	(Natalie Ward)-----	p. 4
Having Traveled Poems-----	(Jim Sparrell)-----	p. 11
The Suicide of Charlie Kane Which Occured On A Preplanned Date-----	(Jason Baum)----	p. 14
Robbie-----	(George Bacharach)-----	p. 16
(Camelia Shadows)-----	(Anna Heffernan)-----	p. 19
The Ax-Man-----	(Aron Abrams)-----	p. 20
Bill-----	(Davis Schwartz)-----	p. 24
On the Highway-----	(Elizabeth Child)-----	p. 31
At the Edge Between Here and There---	(Herta Joslin)--	p. 34
Ode of an Indulger-----	(Krisztina Botond)-----	p. 35
Dawn in an Oklahoma Quality Inn-----	(Sara Townsend)----	p. 38
Vision-----	(Herta Joslin)-----	p. 40
Composed in a College Library on April 27,1979 During the Connecticut Rains-----	(Rhonda Russian)-p.	42
Fleabane-----	(Beth Burke)-----	p. 44
Unreal Spring-----	(Carolyn Abbott)-----	p. 46
(Stillborn)-----	(Anna Heffernan)-----	p. 47
Chiaroscuro-----	(Karen Frankian)-----	p. 49
Shadow Box-----	(Lise Kritzer)-----	p. 51
Dressing Poetry-----	(Carolyn Abbott)-----	p.53
Far From the Sea-----	(Aron Abrams)-----	p.55



"BOTTLES"

Kim Fair

COLORLESS CUBES OF THOUGHT

My mind is wrapped in this rainbow heat
called flesh, the hungry fabric.
The colorless cubes of my thought
are rare and only within night,
tied always to at least one last thread,
the thread that holds me to my breathing.

The wash of nerves seduce me,
I wake and go gulping the musical scents
of spring.

Seasons merge and there is only
one moment. The bright-eyed leaves go soon
to rotting gold, and never ask.

I lie in the black waiting
for the last pulse --
when the pure stones of reason
are weightless in a clear air forever
and there is no pain, and there is no love.

Carolyn Abbott

MORNING JOGGERS

The sun has not yet acknowledged day
though signs of life begin fumbling.
The swans stretch their wings across the pond
poised and fixed like mother's open arms
beckoning welcome.

From arboretum paths joggers watch
the return of summer months.

Of the three runners, two are
most determined. The third, wrenched
with side-pains, falls behind dis-
tant companions to keep
a slower pace. Resting at
convenient spots, he can
see their figures between the
trees; their uniformity
of step seems to transpose them
into one and desiring to take
part, the third runs ahead, all
securing places within a picture.

They absorb first signs of life;
a busy woodpecker calls out
the beating rhythm in cut-time.
And they answer back with innocent
mimics and laugh like sunlight,
praising morning the three race down
open paths, again and again
rediscovering landmarks.

Karen Frankian

UNTITLED

When Signora Sanminiatielle felt old and lonely she found solace in the thought that someday God would call upon her too. He took away her husband nearly seven years ago leaving her with a modest six room apartment and the dubious distinction that she had married an impoverished Florentine Count in 1925. There was a small picture of them honeymooning in Sicily which sat on the dining room table as if to remind us all that the Signora had once been like us - young, carefree, and beautiful.

If she seemed physically old, there was reason. Her life had been a series of struggles, uphill battles that had left deep lines in her face and scars of bitterness on her heart. But enough of that for now. This is not so much a story about the Signora as it is about her relationship with two American girls who were studying in Firenze that fall.

It was one year ago that Dory had casually mentioned to her parents between bites of steak and asparagus that she might like to spend her junior year in Italy. Mrs. Callahan was absolutely delighted and recommended the Smith program because it was surely the best organized and also had a fine reputation among all the leading Eastern colleges. Mr. Callahan suggested spending some time at one of the Universities in England or France. He was rather concerned that his only daughter should go to school in the tumultuous and backward country of Italy. Why, they didn't even speak her language, for heaven's sake. Mr. Callahan told Dory that he'd ask his barber about Florence because he had relatives living somewhere in the north of Italy. And so after coffee and strawberries, when her parents moved on to a discussion of politics and the golf course, Dory thought happily about Florence, the city of Medici, Michael-angelo, and romance.

"Remember, Petunia, that your house in Florence may not have hot water, so don't expect to take a bath every day. Remember that you are an American and that you have been used to the best of everything. Your family is going to do their best to make you feel at home, and you, in turn must do your best to be adaptable."

These words Dory remembered were among the last she

heard from her parents now 6000 miles away. Awakened from her reverie by the cab's abrupt stop, she paid the driver and lugged her two bags, stuffed to the zipper with everything an American girl might have chosen to take with her, to the building marked Via Masaccio 204. Dory met her roommate Gillian on the steps of the big white apartment house which cornered Via Masaccio and rose six stories into the cloudless air. So far everything seemed ideal to them; neither had lived in a city before, nor had travelled to Europe, but as they rode up in the elevator to meet their designated "Signora for a semester", their first pangs of nervousness began to show.

"I'll bet you 10'000 Lire that she's fat and cute like the lady on the Ragu ad. Do you think she speaks English? I sure as hell hope so because I don't speak any Italian. Well . . . what's your guess?" Dory decided that she'd probably be stately in appearance but with a classically beautiful face that she imagined all Italian women to have.

"Don't worry Gillian, I'll handle all the instructions. I took Italian for a couple of years at school so it shouldn't be too tough." The door to the sixth floor opened and there stood Signora Sanminiatielli, with newly coiffed hair, awaiting her American guests. As wide as she was tall, the Signora's forehead reached just under Dory's chin, and despite the efforts to make herself lovely, Gillian noticed the Signora's bald spots anyway. There was no smile on her wrinkled face, yet no frown either. Her expression was one of indifference, one of an inn-keeper accepting two more guests for the weekend. She was not beautiful, or even remotely attractive, but her strong double chin, sturdy nose, and stately carriage seemed to suggest that man hath no greater virtue than Florentine pride. Her eyes were deep brown and Dory immediately sensed that these eyes were like two-way mirrors, reflecting only what the Signora wanted the viewer to see, and capable of hiding dark secrets. A string of pearls, a wedding present from her late husband, fell across her sagging bosom, and a cheap taffeta skirt draped itself around her prominent waist-line. The two slippered feet lead Gill and Dory to their room.

"How do you call yourselves?"

"Buon giorno, Contessa. I am called Dory and this is Gillian."

"I will call you Natalia, and you, Gina. I

Speak no English, some French, and Italian, of course. Lunch will be in one hour. Here are your towels." La Contessa waddled out of the room and Dory and Gillian were left alone with a new identity in a new room in a new country. And so began the interesting relationship of Natalia, Gina, and Lydia Sanminiatielli.

The routine started early in the morning if you wanted a shower with some semblance of warmth. You had to get up at six and get into the bathroom before the mysterious hot-water strike started. Hair dryers were impossible because the Signora told us that that there was no electricity from dawn til dusk. Another strike? Natalia and Gina after two months time had adapted to the Signora's antics and idiosyncracies, and so managed to be clean and fed fairly regularly. It was at the one o'clock meal that they all sat down and listened to the Signora's rambling expose of her life and its hardships.

For a period of two months the girls had put up with the Signora's abrupt dismissals of questions. "Why does the water taste like the Arno?" "Signora, the rest of the street has lights . . . why don't we?" When Natalia got sick to her stomach one morning after drinking bottled water supposedly from the southern French springs, her suspicions that the Signora had been refilling the bottles with local tap water got the better of her and she decided to confront the Signora.

"Signora, questa l'acqua mi fa male. Why do you insist upon refilling the bottles? We pay you very well—certainly enough to provide healthy water."

"Natalia, non e la colpa mia. I have done no such thing."

Natalia's eyes met the Signora's deep brown two-way mirrors and stared for a solid fifteen seconds. She thought for a moment how her mother had told her to be adaptable, but Natalia's pangs of guilt were replaced by her strong instincts of common sense and self-preservation. She decided to risk confronting the Signora, because throwing up had not been an enjoyable experience. The Signora's eyes turned first and she busied herself with the "Nazione" trying to avoid the American who was trying to pry into her secret world. The next morning at breakfast Gina was surprised at the change in the flavor of the water, but Natalia said nothing. Instead she smiled to herself and for one enjoyed a nausea-free breakfast of crusty bread, marmalade, and real water.

As time passed on Natalia's suspicions that the Signora had been tampering with more than just the water, had caused a great deal of friction within the household. Gina, aware of her roommate's attempts of catching the Signora, in a lie, refused to become involved in the conspiracy. Her rapport with the Florentine septagenarian grew as Natalia's decreased daily.

"But Gina, can't you see that she's milking us of every penny we have? Don't you understand that this lady is truly dishonest? Who in her right mind would steal the tip we left for the maid? I mean, I can handle the two-ply toilet paper being split into two rolls of one-ply, and I can handle the cold showers once a week, but do you actually ENJOY being shut up in our room, out of sound and sight when her aristocratic friends come to visit? I realize that the Signora is a proud woman, who once claimed the title of Contessa, but ~~damit~~, we've got just as much breeding as she and all her friends put together. I absolutely REFUSE to be penned up like a cretin." Again Mrs. Callahan's words came back to haunt her daughter . . . "o.k., o.k., Mom. I'll submit to being a caged animal--but if you only knew just how adaptable I'm being."

The cold December days brought early darkness and rain to the city of Firenze. There were always reports of impending energy saving black outs, but as yet, no black out had been instigated within the city limits. Of course, on the sixth floor of Via Masaccio 204 there was always a black out or a water strike or an excuse for no hot water. Gina accepted this as some quirk of the building, but her roommate knew otherwise. Across from the kitchen there was a small closet which the Signora kept locked with two large brass keys. Only Piera the maid and the Signora had access to this closet, which was off-limits to the rest of the household . . . but Natalia was to change that. She had befriended Piera a long time ago, and often accompanied her on her shopping trips to the Pizzicheria and various markets to buy the staples for the household. One day, when the Signora was out of the house, Natalia interrupted Piera's bed-making to ask her if she could open the forbidden closet.

"Piera, I've just got to get in there. The Signora has been lying to us since the beginning of September and I've just GOT to catch her before I leave. It's

dark here now at 3:30 , but the Signora doesn't turn on the electricity until 7:00 or so. She knows that I don't believe her stories of water strikes and blackouts, but she won't give in and tell the truth. Oh Piera, you've just got to help me. I think the electricity box and water heater are in that closet--if they are, I'm going to set a trap that the Signora will fall right into."

Something about Natalia's story appealed to Piera, for the two of them walked down the hallway to the closet which Piera opened with her two big brass keys.

Once inside Natalia felt as though she had finally broken into the Signora's secret world, heretofore hidden by two-way mirrors and an unbreakable expression of pride and false innocence. There, behind the re-rolled toilet paper and half-filled water bottles, was exactly what Natalia had been searching for. The water heater had a large on-off switch right under the factory label, but she would not touch that--yet. Just above the 100 gallon tank was the electricity box, the second and integral part of her plan to catch the Signora. Mumbled cries of delight arose from the dark cavern of un-rolled toilet paper and acqua minerale as Natalia thought of her final stages of the Signora's conviction. "GRAZIE TANTISSIMO, PIERA. I'll never say a word." Piera left to do the marketing and Natalia rushed to put the final touches on her trap. She went from room to room turning on every switch and gadget that she could locate. On went the T.V., on went all the lights and clock-radio alarms; hair dryers were plugged in, and the trap awaited the Signora's trip to the electricity box. She decided to cross-examine the Signora at lunch.

Signora Sanminiatielli had absolutely no idea what awaited her when she sneaked into the closet later that night to turn on the electricity. This day for her had been like any other. Natalia had accused her of lying and she had denied the accusations again. In two weeks this wily American would be out of her hair, and she could continue life as usual-- a pleasant pace of ups and downs, mostly downs, but then again, her secret was safely locked behind two-way mirrors and a thick closet door. Fondling the brass key on her apron string she thought happily about the little villa in Taormina that she had been saving for for nearly twenty years. She calculated that in five more weeks she would have enough money to return to the place where she and her husband had honeymooned

in 1925. No more American girls would come to her as guests she had no need for their money now. "Ah excuse me God, but twenty years of hell are almost over." She moved into the closet, shutting the door behind her, and Natalia and Gina waited in the evening shadows for the surprise.

There was a tense moment as Natalia unexpectedly sneezed. Oh God, did the old cow hear me? Silence loomed in the hallway and both girls were afraid to breathe. Suddenly, the long awaited moment arrived as utter pandemonium broke loose in the apartment. The television, turned up to full volume for the occasion, was barely discernable over the racket coming from the hair dryers, clock radios, and the phonograph which was readied with the Signora's favorite, Carmen. The apartment resembled a carnival, with music and lights filling every crevice. Natalia broke into delighted laughter as she met the bewildered Signora rushing out of the closet. But alas, this splendid spectacle lasted only for thirty seconds. The onslaught of electrical appliances had been too much for the little black electricity box. Quiet darkness descended upon the apartment and the three of them stood in the hallway not knowing what to say to each other. "Well, Signora, now there really is is black out." Natalia and the Signora parted ways down the hallway, the Signora to find a new fuse for her precious box, and Natalia to light a candle for triumph in her tiny room. "This is one black-out I'll cherish forever," she happily thought.

Neither Gina nor Natalia understood what had happened when they returned from their week end in Lugano. Piera was in tears and the hysterical Signora was on the phone to the chief of the Carabinieri. Natalia calmed down Piera enough to draw an explanation from the terrified Milanese maid. Apparently, sometime during the night, two men had climbed up six balconies to the Signora's living room and had robbed her of all the ancient silver. They then went from room to room, grabbing up every valuable item they could find. The Signora, hearing this commotion, had hidden herself in the forbidden closet and steadied herself between the water bottles and the toilet paper. She reached behind the electricity box for the revolver that lay concealed in more rolls of toilet paper and she waited.

The door opened and a surprised thief was met with

a bullet in his thigh. He fell to the floor with the sack of silver spilling onto the cold surface. The Signora, used to a dark apartment after years of turning off the electricity to save her beloved Lire, knew her way around in the darkness than any burglar did. She tried to catch the other one as he slipped out onto the balcony and into the black shadows of the sleeping city, but he escaped despite the four more shots fired by the indignant Florentine.

The burglar had taken off with twenty years worth of savings. The Signora was devastated. Justice, however, works in strange ways. After twenty years of robbing American students, the Signora had gotten her due payment, I suppose. But the story does not end here . . . You see, for capturing one of the city's most wanted criminals in Firenze, the Signora was awarded a great deal of money. She became, in a sense, a noble heroine, a pillar of the honest society in Firenze. She has not yet moved to Sicily. She is instead basking in the backward glory afforded to the most noble (and dishonest) citizen of Florence, Italy.

by Natalie W. Ward



HAVING TRAVELED POEMS

BY Jim Sparrell

I. At the Cape

Sore and tired my body groans to me.
Should we have taken the handicapped spaces,
leaving our motorcycles?
The death wish is our handicap.
Boredom lends the dare,
Yet from somewhere a scream
that life counts . . .
I turn and hiss, "Show me."

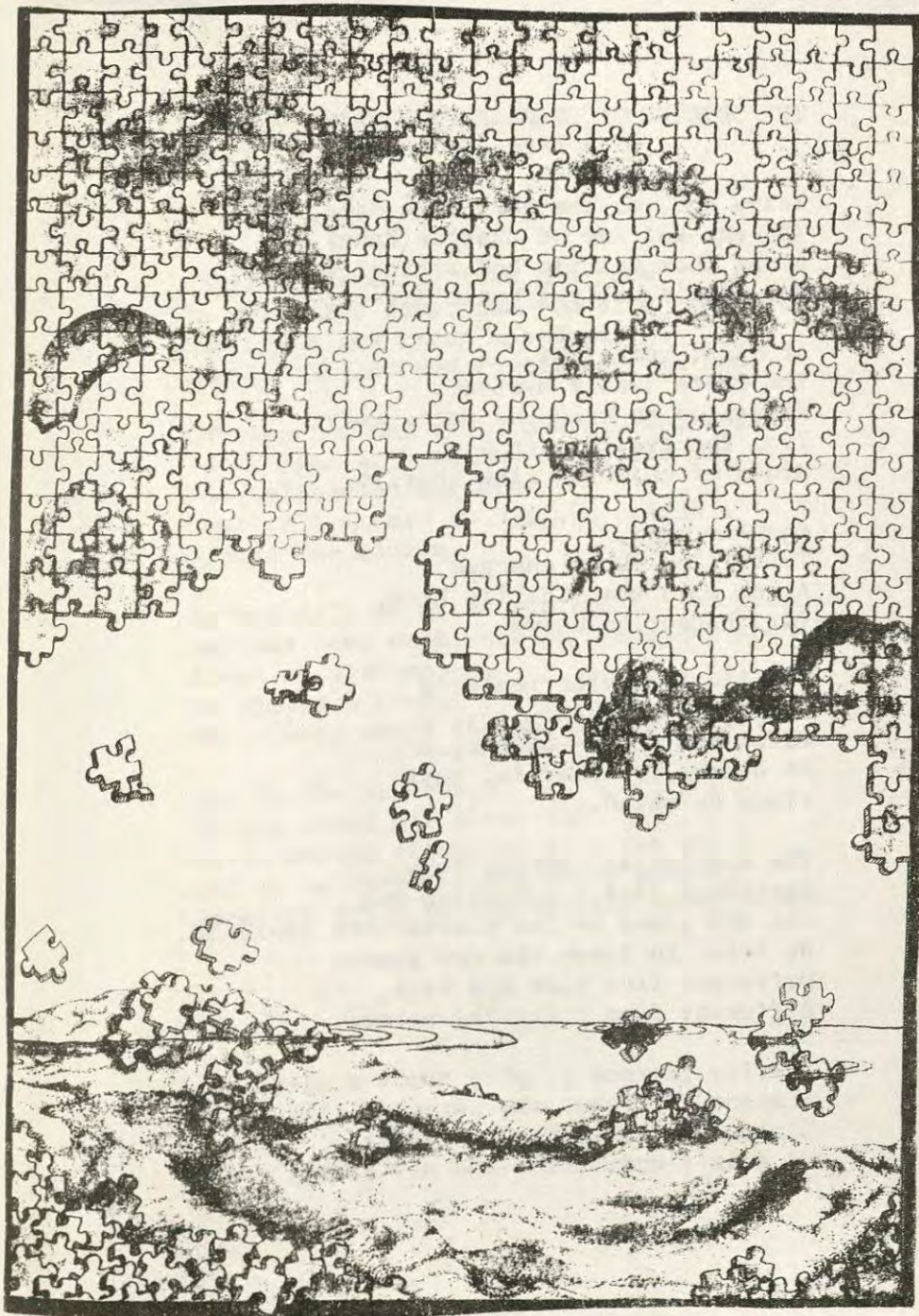
My life goes down with milk and sugar,
Hi-protein, they say.

II. Beaches: Cape Cod and St. Petersburg

The land
the sand
fine, and blue-green water.
The birds may be pelicans
or gulls.
The land struggles,
but they come,
with stands and amusements,
alligators and cranberry jelly.
Vendors.
They have come to sell america.

III. D.C. and Disney

Disney World and Lincoln
Monuments to man,
idols of contemporary,
cosmopolitan,
pagans.
Idols of ideals
replicas of nothingness.
Their gods cannot speak or hear,
(Except Mickey)
And they are like unto their workmanship.
(Excitement and lust
can a mouse save us?)



THE SUICIDE OF CHARLIE KANE WHICH OCCURED
ON A PREPLANNED DATE

Years ago, on the very same date,
(Of the suicide of Charlie Kane)
A man whom Charlie had sort of known,
But didn't believe could die--did.

At eight years old,
The death was a mystery.
All tried to keep the facts away
From the eyes & ears &
Minds of children like Charlie.

Charlie aged,
Television shows changed,
Along with what Charlie knew,
(Or thought he knew)

Complicated color replaced
Black and white;
Black and white--either, or.
No shades for Charlie, just
Black or white.

The simplicity Charlie knew
Tarnished like a forgotten mug.
The old games he had played were replaced.
He tried to learn the new games;
Different from hide and seek,
Different from imitating heroes.

Charlie learned to play someone else;
Someone to please the parents & teachers &
Girls. He hated the new games.
He didn't understand the new games.

Charlie retreated into his room
To watch the tube, the shows he remembered.
One day a new rerun appeared,
Charlie smiled and remembered the man.

Leaving for the city, Charlie searched
For a special hotel on a special day.
The television screamed,
Charlie listened to his old friend &
Opened the window.

He was only an actor who had gotten a break
And was seen each week on a sixteen-inch tube.
A man in costume,
He played a hero,
Who always saved the whole free world.

But in the process,
Forgot about his alter-ego
Which needed attention it never got.
And so in revenge, one early morning
Superman tried to fly out his hotel window.

by
Jason Baum

"Robbie"

Robbie wasn't on his side of the wall yet. I guess the folding yellow wall pretty much split our rooms in an even two, but I had the piano on my side . . . so his side always seemed bigger than mine did. We only left it open to play sometimes.

So I opened the wall to wait for Robbie to get in bed . . . 'cause I couldn't sleep at seven-thirty. Seven-thirty was too early to go to bed . . . what if Jonathan called and Mom answered and what if she told him I was asleep at seven-thirty. I got up and got a drink of water and went to the bathroom, and then I walked to the kitchen where Mom was packing and I told her I was too old to go to bed at seven-thirty . . . I hadn't gone to bed at seven-thirty in two years and if Jonathan calls don't tell him that I went to bed at seven-thirty like a baby does.

She said either I get in bed, or I could just forget about going tomorrow. We had to wake up before the fishes did, and if we were gonna wake up before the fishes did, I'd better get in bed right this minute.

I walked back down the hall to my room, and as I passed the bathroom I could hear that Robbie was in there brushing his teeth real loud like Dad sometimes did. I got back in bed and pulled the covers up real fast 'cause I knew he would be getting in bed soon too. I hated how he was allowed to stay up and watch Dragnet when I had to go to bed by myself. Mom probably knew that Dragnet was the only show I really liked and that was why she made me go to bed just when it was about to start. I'd usually wait up and if I was real quiet I could hear the t.v. in the other room anyway, so I knew what was happening to Sargent Friday and his friend Bill, (the one Dad said looked like his Grandpa Simon, who I never saw 'cause he died when I was too little).

I lay there under the covers and wondered if Robbie would shut the folding wall before he went to sleep so we couldn't talk at all. He was almost thirteen, and Dad had said that he should shut the wall whenever he felt like he wanted to because he needed to have more privacy now. So I told Dad that I needed more "privacy" not that I was older too, and he just laughed and threw me over his shoulder and made believe that he was gonna drop me like he always did. Anyway, before Rob came I pulled the

blankets up almost to my nose and shut my lashes just enough so that they touched . . . that way I could pretend I was asleep and still watch Robbie to see if he was gonna pull the wall shut. He tripped over my shoes when he came in, so he threw them over to my side and he whispered that I was a little slob--to himself. I couldn't stop laughing, then, but I bit the pillow hard enough that no sounds came out. I was having fun spying on Robbie.

I could see him in the dark pulling the blue spread off his bed, and for a long time after he layed down he didn't make a sound. I was scared he was gonna fall asleep before I could talk to him a little so I asked him if he knew how to put the hook in the bait the right way like Dad showed us last time we went. He said I was a little pest, and that I should go to bed 'cause it was like Mom and Dad said . . . we had to wake up before the fishes did, didn't we, and we had a long drive too. I told him that he was a baby if he was going to sleep at seven-thirty. I think I stayed up alot later than he did . . . I could tell 'cause I peeked through my lashes and made believe I was asleep . . . and he sure looked like he was asleep before I was.

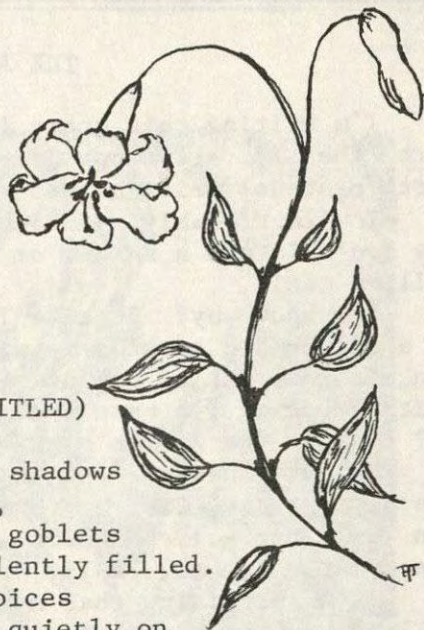
I had a dream during the night . . . we were all fishing, and I caught the first fish out of everybody. Mom came over and gave me a kiss and Dad came over too and he shook my hand and said that I was a real fisherman. But then, Rob caught a fish too . . . and his was a lot bigger than mine so Mom and Dad went over and looked at his big fish and left me alone . . . I threw my little fish back in the water. I wanted to catch a bigger fish than Robbie did.

In the morning Dad shook the dream out of me . . . but I saw the clock on the night stand and it said seven-thirty and we were gonna wake up at five when the fishes were still asleep . . . that was the plan, Dad turned around in the door and he said he wanted to see us in his room before he got dressed. He looked real sad and tired like he sometimes did in church. First he said we should sit down on the bed and then he said real softly that we couldn't go fishing 'cause Grandpa Abie died. I looked over at Mom and I saw her eyes were red 'cause she'd been crying . . . and I looked at Robbie and he started crying too. Mom said that I should

cry too if I wanted . . . Grandpa Abie had died of old age and when he was asleep so it was alright. Dad said we could go fishing next week.

I kept thinking all day that Granpa Abie might be listening to Robbie and me from in heaven, so I tried not to mind missing going fishing so much. Rob and I just stayed inside and watched cartoons all day 'cause Mom and Dad were out somewhere and we really didn't know what to do. Jonathan called and he wanted me to come over and play stepball, but I told him I was punished and I couldn't come over and play for the whole weekend. Robbie cried a little sometimes in the afternoon, and sometimes he just stared out the window during some of the good cartoons like "The Jetsons." I just layed on Mom and Dad's big double bed all day and watched the cartoons . . . but I knew I shouldn't laugh 'cause Robbie wouldn't like it . . . and besides Grandpa Abie might be listening.

Sometimes during the commercials I went into the bathroom and locked the door and thought about Grandpa Abie. I told him right out loud that I missed him already . . . but I whispered so that Robbie wouldn't hear me and think I was acting like a little baby. Every time before I went back to watch more cartoons, I flushed the toilet so Robbie would think that I was just going to the bathroom like normal. If he knew that I thought Grandpa Abie could hear me in heaven, he would say that I was being dumb.



(UNTITLED)

Camelia shadows
Flicker,
Stemmed goblets
Sit, silently filled.
Empty voices
Breathe quietly on
Candle fire, melting wax.
Perceptibly,
Time passes.

by
Anna Heffernan

I'm writing this story full of dirt. I'm full of dirt, that is. It's now 9:35 and I'm lying on my bed in dirty clothes, writing this story. Enough of the exposition.

You're probably wondering why, if I'm full of dirt, why don't I take a shower or change my clothes or something. Well, I can't.

You know why? Because I'm trapped in this room. There is a killer dog outside my window and a thief, maybe with a gun, in the rest of the house. And you know who's outside waiting for me, in case the dog and the thief fail to kill me? Yeah. The Ax-Man.

You ever hear of the Ax-Man? He's forty feet tall and his ax is twenty feet big. It's coated with red. The Ax-Man tells the police that he cuts red trees with it, hence the color. But me, Pauly, and Kennybird know better.

It's surprising that since the Ax-Man is so big and tall, no one ever saw him except me, Pauly, and Kennybird. But we did. We were on the playground, throwing things at each other until we ran out of sticks. Then we started running after each other til we ran out of breath. Then we started cursing at each other till we ran out of cursewords. Then we lied there, bored.

Suddenly, Pauly jumps up and points to the crowd of trees in back of us.

"Wouldn't that be something if you see a gigantic head pop up over the trees . . . and the guy's two miles away?" he said.

Me and Kennybird thought about it.

"Yeah. We'd be lying here, cursing at each other . . . Then we'd see this gigantic shadow over us. Shaped like a head."

"And he's carrying a big gun," I said.

"Nah. They don't make guns big enough. A giant knife."

"Nah," said Pauly. "A humongus stick."

No one approved the idea, so I said, "A big rubberband." I meant it seriously, but they all laughed.

"No. I mean it. Like if it was really wide, and if he shot it at you two feet away. Shoot, it would . . ."

But I was talking to myself. Pauly and Kennybird were talking about the real weapons a forty foot tall nogoodnik would carry. The ideas are getting skimpy.

"A giant glass bottle. He'd break it on you. Then



he'd pick up the glass and run away so no one would know he did it."

"He'd step on you and then he'd . . ." I stopped, thinking of something good. "Then he'd eat you." I disappointed myself. Everybody eats their victims.

We all sat there, wondering what the forty foot guy we saw coming at us would use to kill us with.

"An ax," Pauly said.

"Yeah," said Kennybird. "He'd swoop down and chop you into thirds because it's sharp on both sides."

"Who would he get first?" Pauly asked Kennybird. They looked at each other, then me. I knew I should have gotten into the conversation earlier. Odd man out.

"Samuel. He'd get Samuel because he's so uncoordinated he couldn't run away."

I was offended.

"Why wouldn't he kill you first?" I asked, trying to make them a little insecure.

"Because we wouldn't let him," they said.

I found their explanation un-good.

"Because what?"

"We'd hide. Then, when we'd see the ax come down, we'd attack the ax-man."

"What good would that do?" I asked. "Attack him before he gets me."

"Nah," they said. "That would be too risky." Then they made plans about attacking the Ax-Man. I was on the outs with them, so I left. While walking away, I figured I'd show off a little.

"Hey, Ax-Man," I yelled to the trees. "You're a jerk. A real, smelly jerk. You know that? And I mean it."

Pauly and Kennybird looked at me, stupefied.

"Whatsamatter?" I yelled at them. "You scared of the Ax-Man?" To tell you the truth, I was nervous of him too. That's why I wanted Pauly and Kennybird to help me.

"The Ax-Man is a Graxman. The Ax-Man is a Graxman," we yelled. Kennybird said that there was such a word as Graxman. I didn't think so. It didn't matter though, because we were always making up words.

We stayed there on the macadam, yelling at the Ax Man (who was lying face down, behind the trees) for about twenty minutes. Then we decided that we'd better go home before the Ax Man got sore or our mother started looking for us.

Usually, me, Pauly, and Kennybird walk home different

ways when we leave school. But there's this way we took this time that led us to Pauly's house first, then my house, and then Kennybird's.

After we said goodbye to Pauly, me and Kennybird spoke a little more about the Ax Man.

"Spouse he heard us?" I asked.

"He might have. But, then again, he might have been in Bulgaria or something (Kennybird knew those places). Or even if he had been lying there, he might not even know English. So we stand pretty safe."

There was a pause while we kept on walking. Someone had to say it.

"But, suppose he wasn't in Bulgaria," I said, my voice getting more scared every word. "And suppose he understands English. And . . . maybe he was there, hiding behind the **trees**."

Me and Kennybird looked at each other for a while. But we didn't say anything till we got to my house.

"Bye," I said.

"Bye," he said.

"See you tomorrow," we both said.

"Hopefully," I said, very quietly, as I opened the door . . .

And that's what happened. And that's why I'm here, writing this scary story. I still hear the burglar and the dog. I wonder how much the Ax Man is paying them to keep me in this terror. (Actually, it really isn't terror. I'm just saying that).

The next thing I knew, the door opened. I thought I heard a familiar voice saying "Hello Samuel?" but you can't be too sure. So you know what I did to protect myself? I took all the clothes out of my hamper (which is shaped like a bucket) and put it over my head. I'd carry it out there and, if it was the Ax Man, I'd hide in it.

Unfortunately, I never got to test the plan for just when I cleaned out the hamper, my parents came in and saw me with underwear all over the floor and dirt all over me.

I just finished telling Ma about the Ax Man and the killer dog and she's less than impressed. And she says that I've got to wrap this story up and take a shower. Which means hiking up those long, dark stairs.

I can hear the Ax Man laughing already.

BILL

by David Schwartz

Old Bill Ferguson did not know, of course, that this was to be his last day of life, but if he had it would neither have surprised nor upset him. He had lived a full life and was reasonably content, even if sometimes he joined with his friends in the sheer pleasure of lamentation. He knew that things could have been worse for him, and he thanked . . . someone for life's goodness. So when he awoke two hours earlier than he had planned, and he could not fall back asleep, he did not greatly mind.

"Have to change that water soon," he said as he plucked his dentures gingerly from the yellowed glass by his bed, the words coming out rather indistinctly. Had his wife been there, she would have reminded him of the virtue of not talking until the false teeth were secured, but she had died two years ago. Bill missed her a lot at first, but now he was glad she had died before he did, for she had been spared the pain of loss. Since Bill was nearly as content now as he had been before her death he had no reason to bemoan her loss any longer. There were certainly things he missed, and the first one that came to mind was always sex, but he had had his fill. Besides, he had not nearly the strength of his earlier days, and felt that the pleasure declined as the wind ran out. It did not matter terribly, therefore, that he had gained a vestigial organ.

Bill decided that a bath would be nice, and went into the appropriate room, stopping first at the full length mirror in the hall to admire himself. He determined, as he had almost daily for the past year, that he looked pretty good for a man of 79. He was still tall, if a bit hunched over, and was as slender as in his forties. He had a crop of white hair that was the envy of his group of friends, and this included at least a few women. The wrinkles—well, they were to be expected, and he felt they made him look wise, and not wizened. Bill went in and filled the tub. It was a little hard to convince his limbs that he wanted them to lower him in, but the idea of warm, soapy water appealed, and they obeyed. Bill lay back and began to reminisce about Alice scrubbing his back, and about how shy she was the first time he had asked her to do it. He smiled as he recalled how

mercilessly he had teased her, for they had been married a year by then. The incident had ended with him pulling her, fully clothed, into the tub with him; for the better part of an hour she had sworn she would never speak to him again.

Bill finished his ablutions, got out of the bath with a minimum of discomfort, put on his robe, and started down the stairs for breakfast. One of his wet feet slipped. Blindly he grabbed for the rail, and caught it. He stood for a moment to let his heart stop pounding, then continued. He remembered distinctly the time that Mrs. Hotchkiss had broken her hip from a fall. No one wanted to visit her because it was so hard to push her wheelchair around the house. For a while she was quite a burden, and Bill did not want to be a similar one.

Ever the realist, Bill Ferguson cooked up three eggs for his breakfast. His doctor told him that this was too much cholesterol, but Bill told him, "The day eggs are fatal is the day I want to die." This bit of wisdom escaped the doctor, who told him to at least cut down. Bill laughed at him. He enjoyed being a pain in the ass to doctors, especially the ones who wanted to probe everywhere, because they took everything so seriously. One story his friends always asked him to tell was about when he was asked for a "stool specimen." While his exaggerated tale involved the doctor sending an ambulance to his house, the truth of the matter was that Bill had collected some dog droppings instead of his own. There was a concerned telephone call, and the doctor wanted Bill to go to the hospital at once. After some teasing, Bill explained what he had done, and promised he would give a real specimen the next day, which he did not do. "Scatologists deserve what they get," he would say at the end of his story.

Bill consumed his hazardous eggs, got the paper from the front lawn, and sat in the living room to read. He did not dress until he was planning on socializing, a fact that had distressed his neighbors on at least one occasion. One of the children had come over to ask if Bill wanted his leaves raked and had run off screaming when the door opened. Bill's robe had fallen open, and later it was hard to explain that his morals had not deteriorated with his bones. He did not compromise though, and so now sat, partially disrobed, reading the news in the light of the morning sun.

The early day was uneventful. Any friends who

might visit would do so only after a call, knowing Bill's penchant for not dressing, and he did not plan to go out until later. So there was time to read, and time to write a letter to his brother. What to tell him was a problem, for Bill knew his life was boring (old people's lives were boring, senior citizens' lives were relaxed), and little he could think of was newsworthy. He scrawled one page of standard drivel and hoped it would suffice. Bill's brother was younger by eight years, and was just about to retire. Bill hoped Stan would come to live with him then, and he liked to muse over the fun they would have. "Two swinging bachelors," he said.

By noon plans were made for a bridge game at Mr. Ivers' house, followed by dinner for four, courtesy of his maid. Mr. Ivers was the only one of Bill's friends who had been rich; consequently he was the only one who could have dinner guests with any ease. Bill and Mr. Ivers were not the best of friends, and the week before, in fact, Ivers had almost sworn off Bill for good. Bill had had the group over for the evening, and when 10:00 had rolled around, Mr. Ivers wanted to leave. It was still early, in Bill's mind, and he said, "Are you tired already, you old fart?" This did not sit well with Mr. Ivers, who in his day fancied himself quite a gentleman, and he had gone off in a huff. Things were patched together the next day, but not well and probably not lastingly, for the two had never really gotten along. At their ages, though, one could not be too picky, for the selection was none too large.

At 3:30, while Bill was cleaning up the remnants of his late lunch, Mrs. Hotchkiss arrived in her white Rambler to give Bill a ride. She honked and waited, for it was hard for her to walk; Bill got to the door just as she was wondering if he was sleeping or going deaf. Mrs. Hotchkiss, or "The Merry Widow," as Bill liked to call her, was a spry octogenarian, or had been until her hip-breaking fall. Still, she was the most vivacious of the circle of friends, and spent many futile hours trying to get the others interested in various activities. She had been all over the world, and so conversations with her never lagged; when she was not present many discussions were held concerning her wealth, for her husband had been an insurance salesman of moderate income. One tentative answer was reached by Bill: that she was the oldest practicing hooker. Mr Ivers had been

distressed by that one.

Mrs. Hotchkiss and Bill got to the house on time and were greeted by Vanessa, the maid, and brought into the den where the card table was in place. Hopefully John Potter would arrive soon, for until all guests were present Mr. Ivers would not make his grand entrance from upstairs; Bill despised this performance greatly, and liked to have it out of the way as soon as possible. "If he ever comes down in a smoking jacket," Bill thought to himself, "I'll never come here again."

Mr. Potter came at 4:30, a half hour late, perhaps because his colostomy bag had leaked, a problem that occurred now and again. Potter and Bill were best friends and they felt they made an insurmountable bridge team, a notion that was not completely supported by their record. But it did not matter, for they enjoyed themselves regardless. They had a few common interests, and had both become postmen in their later working years. Potter was a semi-avid chess player, and he would whip Bill any time he succumbed to the urge to play. John was the funniest man Bill knew, and they both held a certain disdain for Mr. Ivers that created delightful conversations from time to time; the most recent one had given Bill a laughing fit he was sure would cause a stroke. The reason Potter was so funny was that at his age he felt he could say damn near anything he wanted to, for he had achieved, in his own eyes at least, the senator status. So he took insult from no one, and was willing to let fly with the most improbable obscenities. When he arrived, and Mr. Ivers had descended into the room, Potter said simply, "Sorry I'm late. My shit bag busted." Bill was delighted by the phrasing, Ivers' affluent disgust was apparent, and Mrs. Hotchkiss eyed the floor in deference to her delicate feminine sensibilities.

The bridge game began soon after. As it professed John and Bill showed that they were in good form this day. They traded glances of admiration from time to time, and would smile wickedly at each other when doom was forecast for the opposition. As the early summer sun was being extinguished so were the chances of victory for the camp of Ivers and Hotchkiss. It was agreed that the game be abandoned in favor of dinner, and the group was generally in a good mood, with the

exception of Mr. Ivers, who secretly was fuming that he should have to feed such low-life after they had the audacity to giggle about beating him. He would have to see about drafting a new partner, as he thought that Mrs. Hotchkiss was getting a little slow. For a little while she would just have to do.

The four sat down at the dining table and Vanessa brought out the food. Roast Chicken was the main course, and this met with the approval of all. When the corn-on-the-cob was brought out, though, some distress could be seen on the faces of all but Mr. Ivers. As the only one who had most of his natural teeth, Ivers found corn very tasty and got a perverse thrill from watching the others eat it. He knew it was hard to look dignified while one's plates were about to drop out onto the table, and savored witnessing the attempts to keep them in. He was sorry to put Mrs. Hotchkiss through this, but knew she wouldn't mind. Bill and John knew that their host was enjoying their torture, but they said nothing. Whether this was due to manners or fear of dropping their teeth was not apparent. Mrs. Hotchkiss said, "This corn is simply delicious," and wanted to say more, but she thought better of it. The others nodded. Bill decided that when he next had people over for bridge he would also serve dinner, and that it would be chili con carne, a fiery delight that would surely make Ivers' skin crawl with revulsion. Bill could picture himself being very liberal with the Tabasco for Ivers' bowl, and he fought back the urge to grin hugely.

Dinner ended pleasantly, although conversation was somewhat limited, and the four friends adjourned to the living room, with side trips to the bathroom by the guests to adjust their teeth. Mr. Ivers of course made no comment. When all had returned he tried to get a discussion going, but no one was too talkative.

"When is your brother coming to visit?" he asked Bill when he could think of little else.

"I don't really know," confessed Bill, "It all depends on if he takes his vacation this year or saves it to retire early next year. But I figure he'll fly out here for Christmas at least."

Ivers had liked Bill's brother when they met the year before, probably because Ivers had also been in investments. "And have you heard from your daughter,

Potter?" he asked next.

"I called her yesterday. She's thinking of switching to a different hospital where the benefits are better. She'll be a full R.N. by August."

"Perhaps it would be wise for her to change," said Ivers. There was silence for a few moments. Finally to break it, Mr. Potter turned to Mrs. Hotchkiss, who was on the sofa with him, and said to her, "You want to fool around, Maddie?"

"Oh, dear," she said, her face turning somewhat crimson.

Mr. Ivers said something remarkably like "For Christ's sake, Potter," and Bill chuckled heartily along with John. More silence returned, deeper this time. It was too early to leave, if etiquette was to be the guide, but the guests were tired of being in Ivers' home, even if it was the finest one any of them had. Mrs. Hotchkiss spoke.

"Shall we be leaving, Bill? I've got some errands I must run early tomorrow."

"So soon?," asked Ivers, who did actually want to get to sleep early.

"Yes, I really should be running along."

Potter decided that he too would go, and all the pleasantries were exchanged as they made their way to the door.

"Thanks so much, Ivers," Bill said. "Let's have a game at my house in a couple of days," he continued, and visions of chili peppers danced in his head. When they got outside he whispered to John, "I'm going to get that old coot for the corn-on-the-cob." Potter chuckled and knew that tomorrow they would discuss what by then would be Bill's master plan. They said goodnight, and Bill was on his way home in the rusty Rambler, the daring Mrs. Hotchkiss behind the wheel.

Bill fumbled with the key when he got to his door, and he wished he had remembered to turn on the porch light when he left. Sometimes he thought he should just leave the door unlocked, on the grounds that anyone who really wanted to break in would, but better sense always prevailed in time. As he stood there trying to get in, he wondered if it was failing vision or muscle control that barred his way. At this point it did not really matter, as both were likely to be culprits.

Finally, the right combination of key and pressure opened the door, and Bill passed inside.

It was a little past 10:00 when old Bill decided he try to go to sleep. He had tried to compose a letter to a frien in Chicago, but his earlier effort to his brother had exhausted any creativity he had had. Besides, he felt a little indigestion, no doubt from that damned corn, and he did not feel like staying up to nurse it away. So upstairs he went, and got undressed, a chore that seemed more time consuming each time it was performed. Not only were his limbs stiffer than before, but it seemed to Bill that the older he got the more clothes he had to wear. Someday he would have to stop and wear just what wh wore when he was young. For now he was grateful that disrobing was only as hard as it was. He folded his clothes neatly, an unwarranted compulsion since they were dirty. Next he went to the bathroom, and then got into bed. His final act of the evening was to remove his false teeth. He dropped them into the glass on the night-table, and a cloud of sediment was temporarily stirred up. "Have to change that water soon," Bill said as he turned off the light.

He fell asleep quickly. Sometime during the night he awoke with the indigestion clawing at his stomach, and he thought about the gift he would give Ivers. Bill slept again, but was shortly awakened by a crushing pain in his chest. He knew then what was wrong and realized that Ivers' deed would go unpunished.

John Potter called Bill the next afternoon and got no answer. A call that night yielded the same result. The next morning was no different, and Potter's fear was confirmed after he called the police. Bill was found in his bed, and appeared to have been sleeping peacefully when he died, or at least this is what the police told Mr. Potter, and what he in turn told the rest of Bill's friends. They were all glad for that.

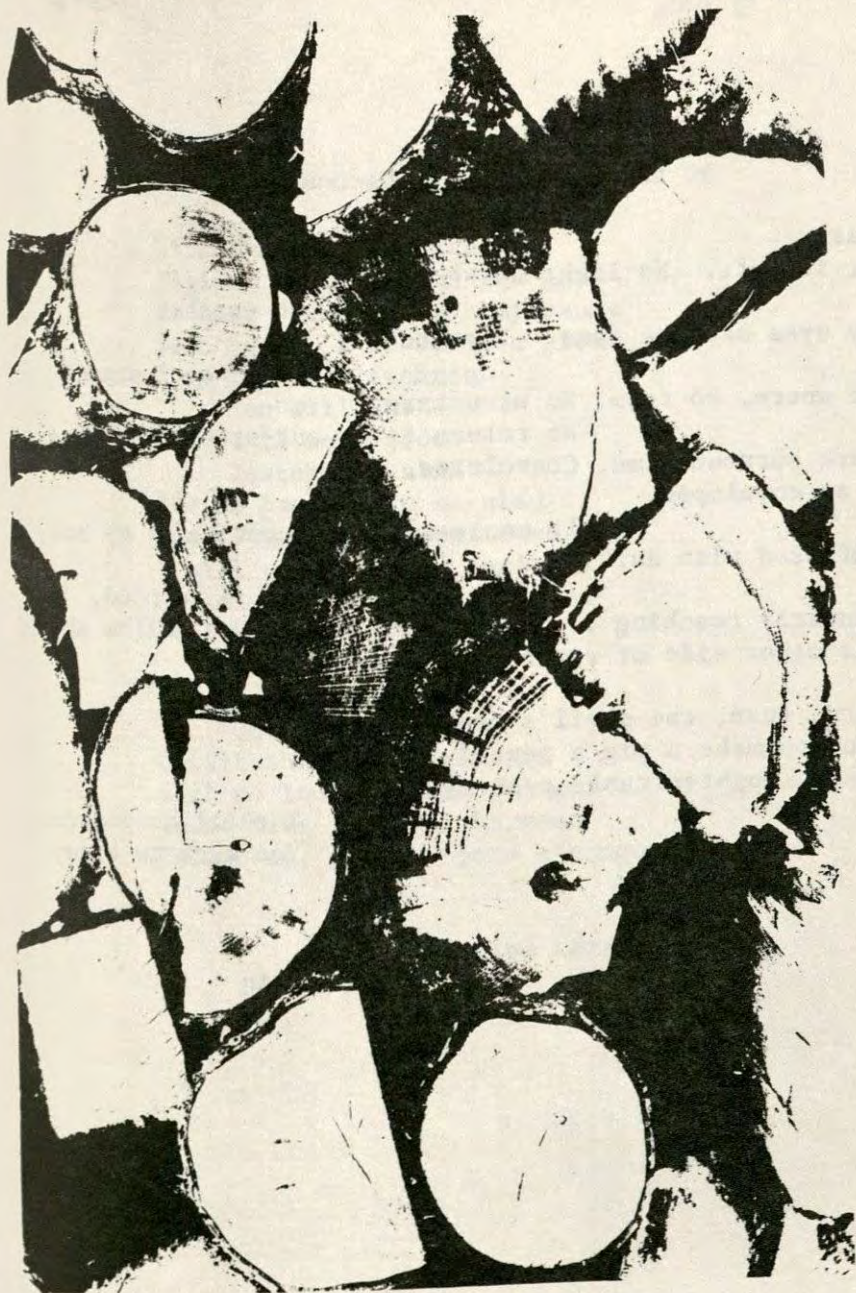
Something was now missing when the friends got together, an intangible quality that they knew once belonged to Bill. And for the time being, for the next few months, they would feel pain. But soon, before the immediacy wore off, things would be back to normal. Death would come again, but only to claim its due, and not to steal.

On the Highway

On the highway
cars,
like loosely packed moments
clutter by,
up to the crest
the horizon
laying its long arm across the land
where man is but a speck
and not a man knows dust.

Elizabeth Child





At the Edge Between Here and There

Dark.

It is soft. No light anywhere.

Open or shut

My eyes see the same. I stand . . .

Where so I stand?

No where. No form. No structure.

No return to my out-stretched fingers.

Dark surrounds me, Convolutés,

I am enveloped,

softly enclosed; each crevice of my body
suffused with dark.

Sensual, I respond,

tenderly reaching . . . to find, instead, a hollow shell.

The other side of reach

is retreat.

Turn, turn, the devil's dance.

Can you make a pig a pearl?

Green laughter curls past my hair.

I shall go tomorrow.

You must go today.

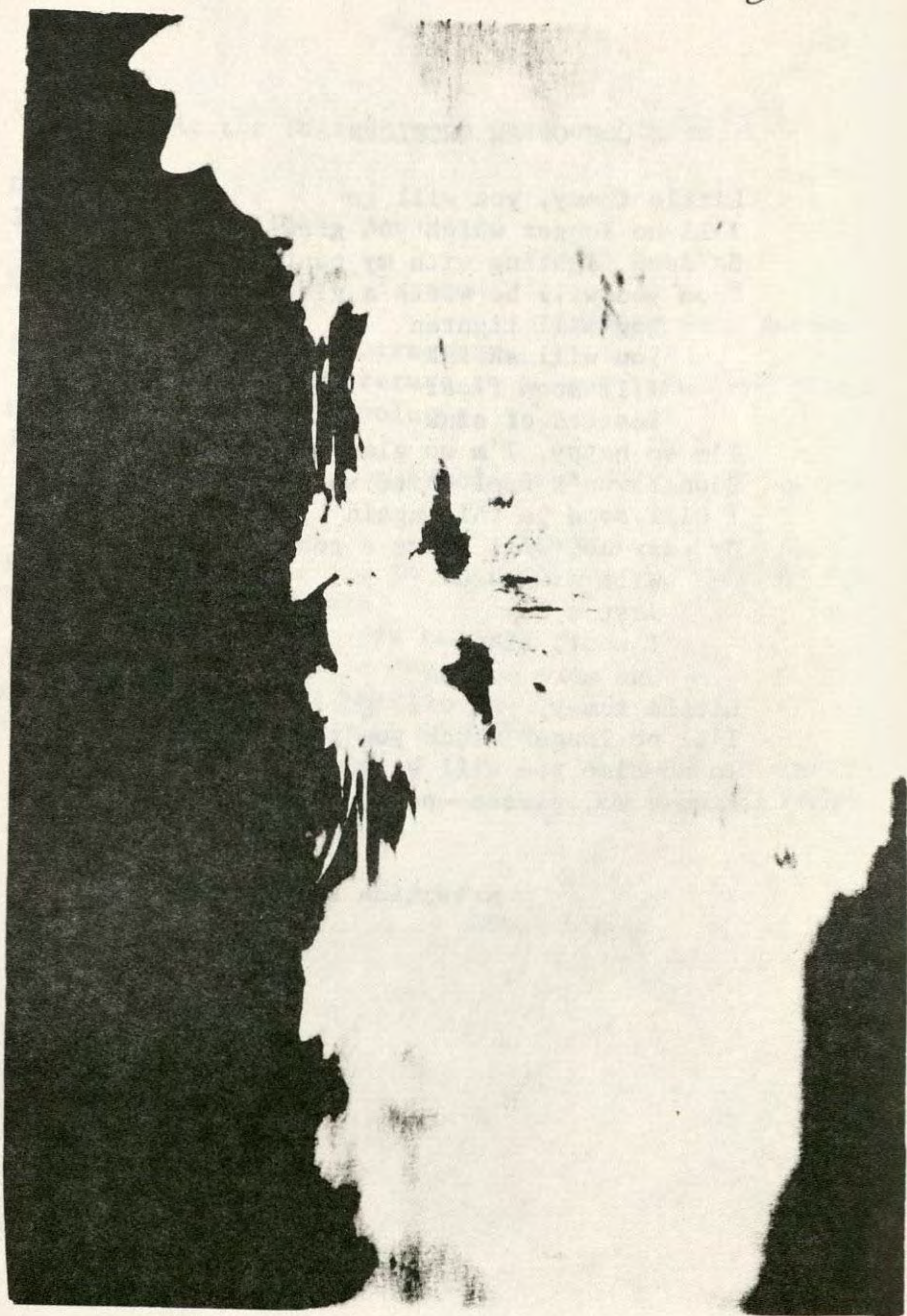
Herta Joslin

ODE OF AN INDULGER

Little tummy, you will go
I'll no longer watch you grow
No more fighting with my pants
Soon you will be worth a glance
 You will tighten
 You will shrink
 I'll soon float
 Instead of sink
I'm so happy, I'm so glad
Soon I won't feel quite so sad
I will soon be thin again
My sexy bod will score a ten
 Wait a minute
 Just a day
 I would like
 One more sundae
Little tummy, you will go
I'll no longer watch you grow
In no time you will be gone
Excuse me, please--pass a bonbon?

Krisztina Lee Botond

thirty-six



Dawn In an Oklahoma Quality Inn

I wake to the neon sun
that curtains never hide
You lie there oblivious
looking so vulnerable with your lips parted and your
body curled
you hold onto the sheet as if it were life.
Why won't you hold me that way?
I wish I could steal a chunk of your sleep, raw,
and dissect the dreams
to know what I can never know, and then I would slay
the steel roses
and put it all back so that you may know, too.
But instead, I take the Gideon, and with silent screams,
rip out every page and roll each into a separate ball,
and burn them and watch them burn, and then eat the ashes.
I stick my finger down my throat and heave bile juice
and ashes
as you wake up and with your lips tight now
say we'd better get on the road because Egg McMuffins
aren't served
after 11. I take a long hot shower and use both towels
as my feet drown in the yellow ink of the paper mat
while you read the road map on the toilet

Sara Townsend



Vision

by Herta Joslin

It is dry in the desert. The lizards squawk and scuttle under my feet, disappearing into the gully. Once there was water in this sandy, shallow gorge, tumbled with rock-water that foamed and splashed its way to a dusty death. The rocks hurt my feet. Barefooted, bareheaded, I trudge down a path that is nearly non-existent. At my feet I see undifferentiated pebbles and sand-only by raising my eyes ahead is it possible to see the way, winding through the cactus.

Why do I speak about the desert? You and I sit in comfortable chairs, writing and reading. Through the window comes the smell of fresh, new green - the spring is bursting. Tulips open their petals to the sun.

Yet the desert is real to me - it stretches, in my vision, as far as my eye can see. Distant in the haze are mountains, purple, rising at the edge of nothing. I see you, sitting there across from me, the book resting on your lap, your spectacles firmly on your nose; your breath is steady, you are lost in the story. On the cover I saw a lady standing on a cliff - her long skirts blow in the wind. You walk with her down the carpeted halls of her Gothic mansion. The servant comes with tea - you sit - a child rolls a hoop into the room. Am I here? Or there? You have forgotten me. Yet were I to speak you would raise your head - remove your spectacles - with no surprise for you know you sit in this room opposite me.

The trees gently rustle in the soft wind. Sunlight makes a barred pattern on the floor. The empty chairs sit silently, heavy with the presence of absent friends. Which is reality?

When I look at you, I see you with my eyes. My inner eye sees the desert. If seeing proves reality, both are real. "Seeing is believing." "I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it . . . " I can prove I see you because someone else, sitting where I sit, would also see you. Would that same someone else also see the desert? In all probability, not. Is it therefore less real? If

I tell you I saw a cardinal yesterday, you believe me, even without actually seeing it yourself.

The puzzle in my question is about the reality of the realities. You say the desert is "only in my imagination", thus implying it is not really real. But it is real for me. I can feel the dry wind on my skin, the smell of dusty air is in my nostrils - the blue of the sky hurts my eyes. At the same time I can see you smiling at me - your finger marking the place in your book where the heroine poised on the edge of the cliff, waits for you to return before she discovers the body lying below on the beach.

When the wind of time blows through our tumbled minds, tossing the memories of today into the confusion of yesterday, which image will be the clearer? Will the lady of the castle be forever vivid? Can you see the stuff of her dress, the color of her hair? And will you remember what I wore that day, or what color was the rug the sun beams fell upon?

When I can step into the desert from any portal of the known world, can you say that it is not real? There I find quiet, gentle respite from tension. And if, when I reach the mountains and must climb those cliffs of pain, the sharp rock scratching my feet and shredding my hands, is not this also reality? If I run, screaming, from the door, do not say I am mad. Come after me - call my name in the desert. Follow my tracks, the trail of my blood, up between the rocks, until you find me, standing at the summit, the far wind blowing through my hair. From there we look out, together.

Can you see the Sea?

Composed in a College Library on April 27, 1979
During the Connecticut rains.

In April, the worms come out to commit suicide. They lay their bodies on the side walks of men as if to imitate the days of Hiroshima.

I suppose you never notice such things, being concerned as you are with the anankē of existence.

Nor should you, I suppose.

I seem to have a hard time ignoring them, I guess it's because I know that, deep down, the worms and I are the same.

Now, my philosophy teacher (as we all know, a very learned man) would take ~~me~~ very gently by the hand, and would reassure both himself and his colleagues by telling me that I was truly a Homo Sapien who is suffering from an overdose of Cartesian Dualism--a quite typical case, no doubt--and that with an immediate injection of Plato and the Forms, along with a mild dose of Kant's Categorical Imperative (just to be on the safe side, you see) I should recover splendidly and should soon be my old normal, fragmented, dialectical, alienated self.

And indeed, it is comforting to know that such kindness and concern for humanity exists for the world.

But all in all, such digression seems to avoid the main topic of interest here--the worms.

And it doesn't really matter why the worms commit suicide; whether they have finally been overcome with despair in this most pleasant of months, or that they have decided that death is the only meaning of life, or that they have dared to utter the lie that the cause of all causes is that there is no cause--no, we needn't speak to this issue here, for essentially it is not the point.

The point, you see, is that the worms and I are the same. That is precisely the reason why I never step on them.

Rhonda L. Russian



Fleabane

Fleabane: another name for Pennyroyal, a plant. Treatment of catarrh, cough, pneumonia, and tuberculosis. Most female complaints, especially irreg. or suppressed menstruation. Should not be taken by pregnant women.

Take me where the fleabane grows,
Purple night flaming in the sky--
Wailing wakes me in begotten woes.

Nightshade nods to the rising crow
Who tells me of my mournful sigh,
Leads me where the fleabane grows.

The moorland hag must surely know
That brew, a shade of lilac dye,
To take from me begotten woes.

Ether-stinking liquid on the stove
Dissolves the fat of growing child,
Leads me where the fleabane grows.

Of kneeling ones in healing rows
The hearts are light with wine.
Now me, wailing in begotten woes.

The sup is at my lips, the weed disposed,
Death a vision in my blurry eye,
There I writhe where fleabane grows.
Morning wakes me from begotten woes.

Beth Burke

forty-five

UNREAL SPRING

This morning's fluid air has crept
into the sea, the tide has swept
unruly seaweed from the sand
and bright space falls on dampened land.

The wind has hurled gold leaves in clouds,
now soothes the place with melting rounds
of leaves, that quiver and are pressed
deep within the earth's damp rest.

The ground is spread with twigs of frost,
the muffled ends of fall are lost
to snow. Motions of nature know
how best to clean the landscape -- though

over waves of deepening green
celluloid and petrol careen,
breaking the velvet swell of snow,
cigarette paper and glass bestow
the colors of unreal spring.

Carolyn Abbott

Untitled

Stillborn,
The wind stops rushing.
Desire kills itself
With needless aggression.

Stillborn,
Tenderness remains hidden,
Unyielding to ripping passion.

Encounter brief,
Respite immense,
Scars still borne.

Anna Heffernan



Chiaroscuro

by Karen Frankian

There I preserve you
 little mother, there
 in that clumsy summer
 photo taken in unfamiliar
 light that twists our
 ghost-like faces.
 Retaining vague resemblances
 we pose innocently;
 it was not our trembling
 that made the camera
 shake before the fall.

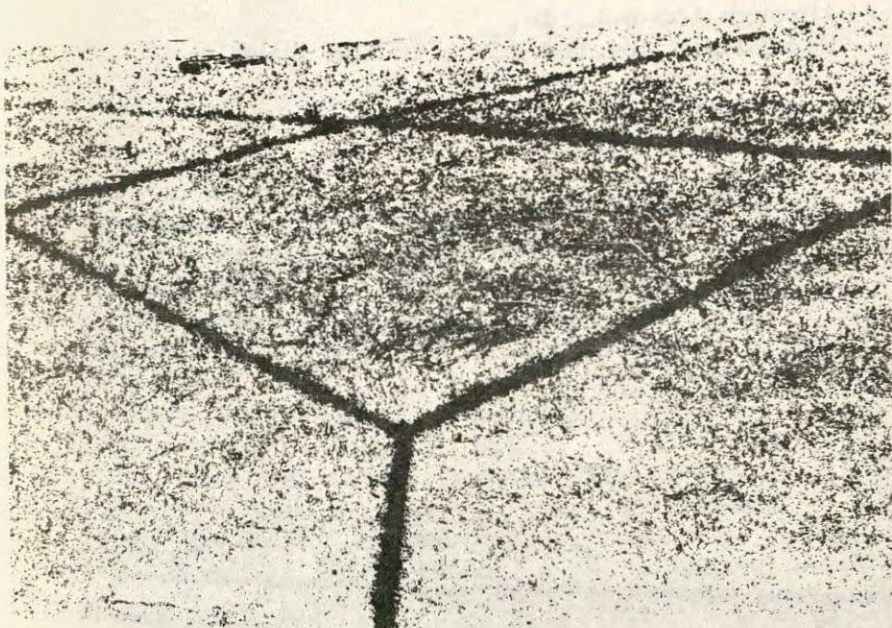
Our stares agnoize
 under blurs of leaf-shadows.
 We know this photograph--
 the pain behind celebration--
 and how we have died this way
 before, gathering and
 sorting our strengths before
 parting to distant places.

What misery if we had
 seen the pure exposure.
 This way at least
 the otherwise familiars are
 retained and masked,
 masked and blended
 behind our dappled faces.

"How sweet," they pinch dulled cheeks
 exclaiming how they look like yours,
 then go home satisfied
 they leave us to our telephones
 screaming of bad connections
 we can't take back, like this photograph.

The freedom from you
 I thought I had won . . .
 Mamma's girl, blind-
 folded, pinning the tail,
 spinning round and round, faltering
 I do not see how
 carelessly the shutter
 is tossed in front of me,
 dim and quivering,
 but trust it to
 secure and snap tight.





SHADOW BOX

Veiled in transparencies
shimmery shine
and dark negatives with sharp corners
they're flat, youknow, in color and form,
but bend the edges and oh
what a gloss!
Sunshine, night time,
the world is reflected.

Like this, I move
through the outside.
Cautiously opening doors in the quiet
lest too much light (or life)
over-expose my sanctuary.
Oh I can be colorful;
I can glisten-
sparkling and multi-dimensional,
yet aloof and tender,
I prefer to shadow myself in celluloid.

Lise Kritzer



DRESSING POETRY

Look at this woman,
she dresses herself like a milkweed
in fall -- in crisp robes that have long since
crackled into their own form. She has encased
everything within that longed to break and pucker
like kisses in the wind. She never breathes the space.

Here is another who has bound herself
in cloth so close it seems to eat
her flesh. She suffocates, for the sake of style,
everything within that longed to bulge in awkward
designs, to reach in mystical shapes, pressing
silhouettes and inticate shadows to the silence.
See how the light longs to breathe them, how tightly
they are coiled in the steely fabric.



There is a woman who wears
clothe so smooth it seems to join
with her flesh. The colors thrill and spangle
on her breast. There, in that exotic weave,
the light quivers and bursts. How comfortable
yet complicated she looks. She adorns,
for the sake of celebration, nothing. She is empty
as a painted shell.

But this woman.
she sews tears to the cloth
for sequins. She wraps her children's howls
around her neck, to keep the emptiness out.
She wears laughter on her breast, and has woven
the substance of her dreams into her flesh.
She has done all this without a plan, a decision,
and if you listen carefully you will hear the poetry
of her breathing.

Carolyn Abbott

Far From the Sea

by Aron Abrams

With the monotone beat of a clock which had been running for years and wouldn't stop during anyone's lifetime, Nabie slapped her hand against the wall. There wasn't any reason, but the hand kept moving. It was during the 11:00 news. She simply put her left hand against the wall and like a swimmer going full speed, she hit it.

Her husband, Jam, was disturbed but not moved to do anything. She didn't bother him anymore. Nabie was just plain stupid. Slapping her hand against the wall wouldn't make her any dumber and stopping wouldn't give her any additional claims to interlligence. Knowing that she'll stop slapping the wall when her hand starts hurting or bleeding, Jam continued watching the news.

"We must warn you that the next segment contains footage which might be considered too strong for youngsters," the T.V. anchorman said.

Jam straightened up against the bed board. A promise of gruesome footage was as good as an X-rating.

It was a film about the Boat People.

"This is a rerun," Jam thought. It did look like leftovers from the Vietnam shows. Nothing but stock shots: People getting shot and burned. Corpses lying on top of each other with mud carving its way into their skin. Orphans running down roads to nowhere better with grey soldiers slumping on the sidelines following them.

Jam ate some potato chips and waited for the new color footage. Then it came, the Boat People shots. People hanging off the sides of crowded boats like extras in a disaster movie. Soldiers lumping bodies on bodies as if they were so many pieces of infested mutton. And, as the kicker, shots of big eyed, big bellied babies who would probably die during that week.

With potato chips falling out of his mouth, Jam asked his wife what was so horrible about that boat people thing.

"If you ask me, Vietnam was worse. A whole lot worse," he said. "And World War Two was just as big a bitch as this."

The anchorman came back on the screen and, looking grim, he said that when the show returns after the com-

fifty-six
mercial, they'll have the sports and weather.

Jam sifted through the big bag of potato chips, looking for a whole one at the bottom of the bag. He thought he found one and, in the process of pulling it out, he tipped the bag over and the crumbs fell in his underwear. All the while, Nabie kept slapping her hand against the wall.

Jam got out of bed to brush the crumbs on the floor and get some new underwear. He found himself moving to Nabie's beat like a dancer moved to a drum.

"Will you cut it out, will you?" he yelled from the bureau. "I swear, you're getting stupider as we go along. Do you know that? What are you doing, anyway? Can you tell me?"

The anchorman came back on. Looking straight at the T.V., Nabie said that she was keeping a vigil for the Boat People. Jam didn't know what she meant, and didn't ask her because he'd only have to hear the answer.

"Before we get to the sports and weather, we have some interesting film here. It seems that a couple of typical New York lovers wanted to do something different for their wedding. So..."

The anchorman, not looking unhappy at all, gave a "go ahead" smile and they ran film of a couple who got married in their car. The bride and groom sat in the back, and the priest, the best man, the maid of honor, and the photographer sat in the front. It was a short segment which ended when the man kissed his wife. They smiled their very plain smiles at the camera, knowing that unless the fun-loving couple murdered each other, this would be the last time anyone would ever hear of them.

"And now the sports," said the anchorman. His mood had definitely picked up and he sped right over the Yankees and Red Sox and passed the beat to a reporter who smiled her way through a segment about buying brass antiques. This was followed by the weatherman who apologized to the audience for having to tell them it was going to rain tomorrow. The news made the anchorman glum again, but he perked up enough to tell the "Joke of the Day" and then told the audience that he'd see them all tomorrow. At the end, the news show ran the production credits over film of the couple getting out of the car.

"Well, another day dead and buried," Jam said as he turned the T.V. off. He had switched underwear and gotten the crumbs out of the bed, so he was in a pretty good mood. It was too bad that his wife was still hitting her hand against the wall, making noises which didn't disap-

fifty-seven

pear so much as bump into each other, making it hard to talk and sleep.

He turned on his side to look at her. Nabie wasn't, by any definition of the word, pretty. Jam knew that he wasn't handsome, but the wife's supposed to be the good-looking one of the pair. She wasn't intelligent either, but everyoncein a while she'd get into moods, like this one, which meant that she was thinking about something that Jam knew not to care about. When he got home from the lumberyard, she didn't ask him how his day went or any of those questions that wives are supposed to care about the answers to. She wasn't much fun at movies, never laughing at his side comments. And, as far as sex went, she was just another mattress to lie on. They were dull together, and Jam knew that if his wife was exciting it would perk him up and he'd start doing more things. But he didn't do much and Nabie moped around and looked like a wallflower.

They'd gone out through high school because Jam wanted someone to go with and Nabie didn't mind. When they graduated, neither one was planning on leaving town so they'd only keep going out anyway. And, if they kept going out, they'd wind up getting married. To Jam, it seemed best to meet the inevitable ending straight on, so they got married.

The highlight of the whole relationship was the Prom when he announced they were engaged. All the pretty girls in evening gowns rushed up to kiss him and the guys in the class shook his hand even though he didn't know them. While in the middle of these people, Jam saw that Nabie had wandered off into the corner, looking like she wanted to be home. One of the girls told Jam that she was sensitive, whispering the word as if it meant retarded. The she kissed Jam and people left and the Prom was over. As far as Jam was concerned, that was the high point of their relationship. The marriage was like a long slide down a muddy hill.

Jam pretended to snore, hoping to trick Nabie into giving up, in case her intention was to keep him awake. Tut the constant slapping against the wall brought him farther from sleep and it looked like he'd be able to watch the sun come up.

"Damn," he said. "You can't work when you're asleep. I'm going to start hitting you instead of the wall. How about that? Cut it out, will you?"

"I'm not going to stop," Nabie said. "I'm keeping a

vigil for th Boat People."

"The who?"

"The Boat People. You saw them drowning."

Jam thought about the news and the first thing that came to his mind was the couple getting married in the car. Then he remembered the "gruesome footage."

"Them? Yeah, that was bad all right. Real bad. But what the hell good is banging your hand against the wall going to do? C'mon. Go to sleep, will ypu? I've got work in the morning."

"I'm not going to stop," she said. Her red palm continued to hit the wall.

"H^{ll} with you," Jam said, turning over on his side. "I don't know if you know this, but, in all those years we went out, I knew we weren't the same type of person.. Not at all. I've got work in the morning and you're here bitching about T.V. Just plain inconsiderate. It's frigging dumb to worry about that stuff. You know that?"

Jam lay in bed for twenty minutes, no longer tired in the least. His thoughts were dancing to his wife's beat. He wouldn't go to the couch, because he's not supposed to. He's supposed to sleep on the bed, just as his wife is supposed to sleep and not bang her hand against the wall.

"One more time," he said quietly as if he was talking in front of a candle and trying not to blow out the flame. "I'm going to ask you to stop. Stop."

"I'm keeping a vigil," she said.

"Why are you banging your hand against the wall?"

Eyes ahead, Nabie told her husband that she'd seen too much of that stuff on T.V. It always bothered her when she was a kid, but she could stop it by going for long walks and that's why people thought she was strange. But, at this time, it got to her. So much death and blood that she stopped remembering it was real and, for a while, told herself it was another show because, in the real world,,the worse thing that happens is being fired, not starving to death. By slapping her hand against the wall, she wasn't helping anyone. She'd mail out a check in the morning for that. But she was just keeping herself aware that those were real people with honest deaths. And by drawing her own blood, she was making some kind of kinship, at least in her own mind so that, when one of them died, at least there would be a witness somewhere. She couldn't let them keep changing channels on her.

"Fine," Jam said. "But how the hell am I going to sleep tonight?"

Nabie didn't say anything. She continued slapping her hand against the wall, giving him the same answer.

"Fine with me," he said, getting from the bed. "Off to the couch. You're a psych, you know. Think this is doing any good. Hell with you."

Jam took the top blanket off the bed and went to the bureau. He reached into a drawer and tossed a bottle of sleeping tablets at his wife.

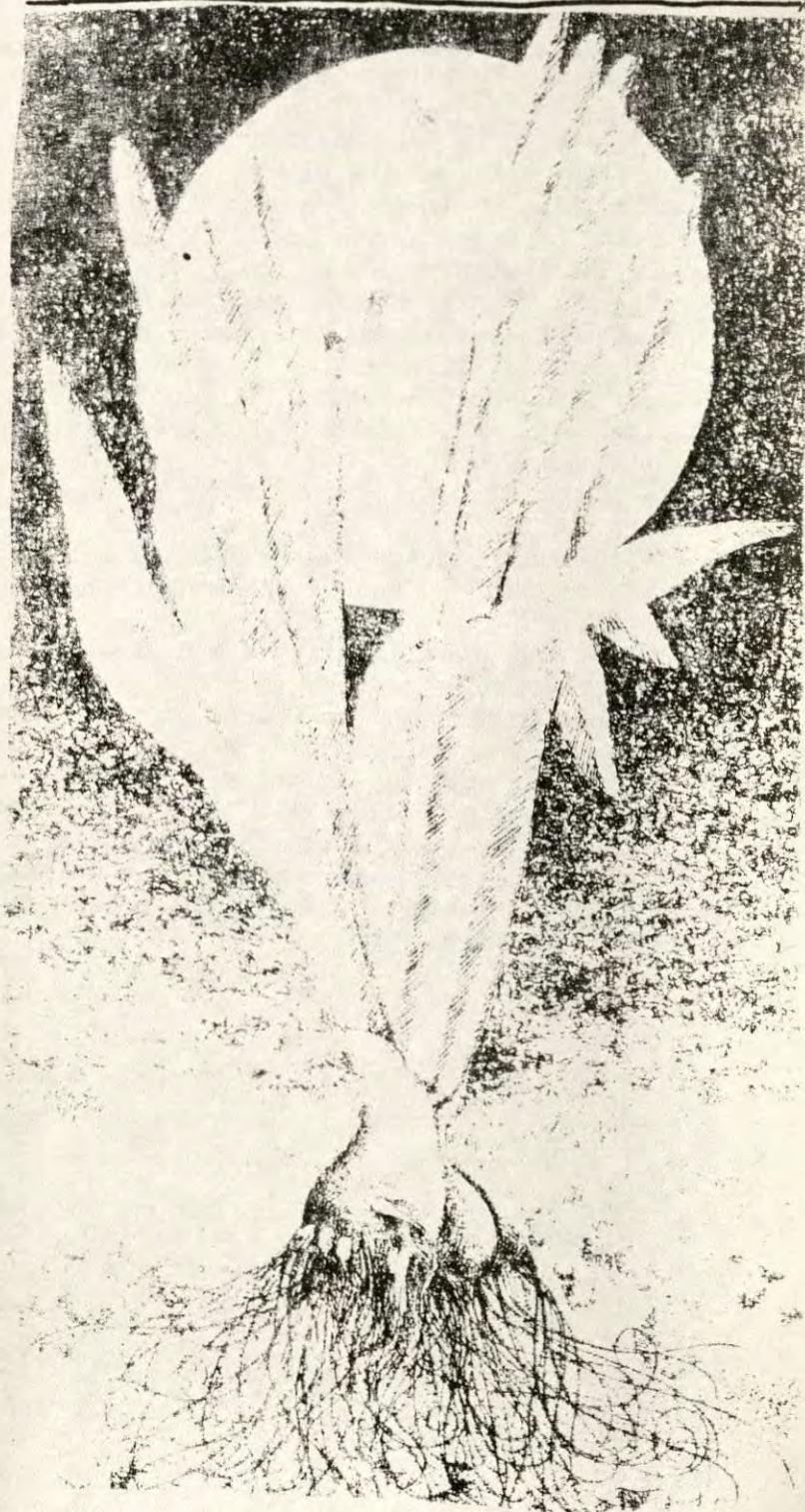
"Take these, will you?" he said. "I don't want to hear you tapping all night. I'm going to sleep on the couch. Hell with you."

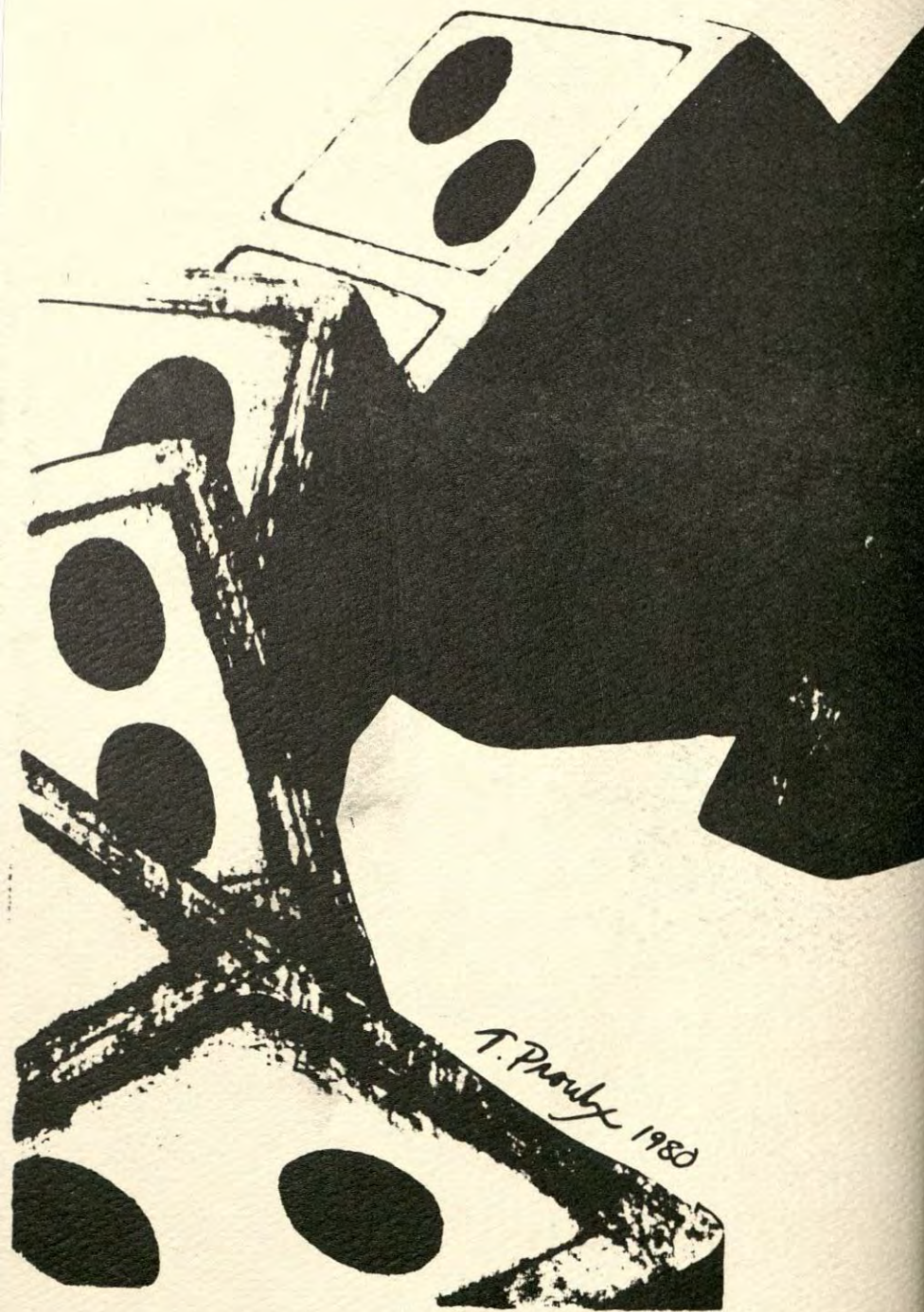
From the couch in the livingroom, Jam could hear Nabie's noise.

"Fine," he yelled. "You're really doing a lot. You're being ridiculous, you know. Think anything's gonna solve anything?"

After a while, the soapping stopped and Jam was able to get plenty of sleep.

In the morning, he went to the bedroom to get some socks and discovered that Nabie had agreed with his idea and probably felt that nothing was going to solve anything. The empty sleeping pill bottle was on the floor and her left hand was bent right over it. Just as there wasn't any blood on the wall, there wasn't any on her palm. Just a bruise which people would think came from holding the broom too tight.





T. Proulx 1980

Corrections for
Photograph & Illustrations

Kim Fair p. 39

Katherine Gould p. 43

Tom Proulx p. 48

Karen Bachelder p. 50

Tom Proulx p. 60