

1981

UA68/6/1 Zephyrus

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Contributors:

Chris Allen – The Hoboken Hustle

Phoebe Baber – Apollo Revisited

Kimberly Ball – Reflections of An Azure Sky

Ralph Blight – The Shadows of All Hallows Eve
The Gate

Marie Bunce – Secrets

John Burkitt – I Walk the Night

Kevin Cundiff – The Wayfarer Returns

Lee Daugherty – The Keyhole

Joe Dragoo – A Gift From Alphonse

Conscience, Conquerors, Captains

A Two Story House and a White Picket Fence

Diane Eison – Child Wondering

Dorinne Geeslin – Brothers

Gary Hall – To Be A Jackal

Michael Harris – The Memoirs of a Grande Dame

Dangerous Curves

Gerald Morse – Second Time Around

Tommy Newton – The Oatmeal Incident

Sheila Riley – The Yellow Dress

Florence

Joe Roberts – The Cure

Beth Sample – The Tale of Petey O'Hare

Dorothy Spear – The Journey

Recollections

The Resolution

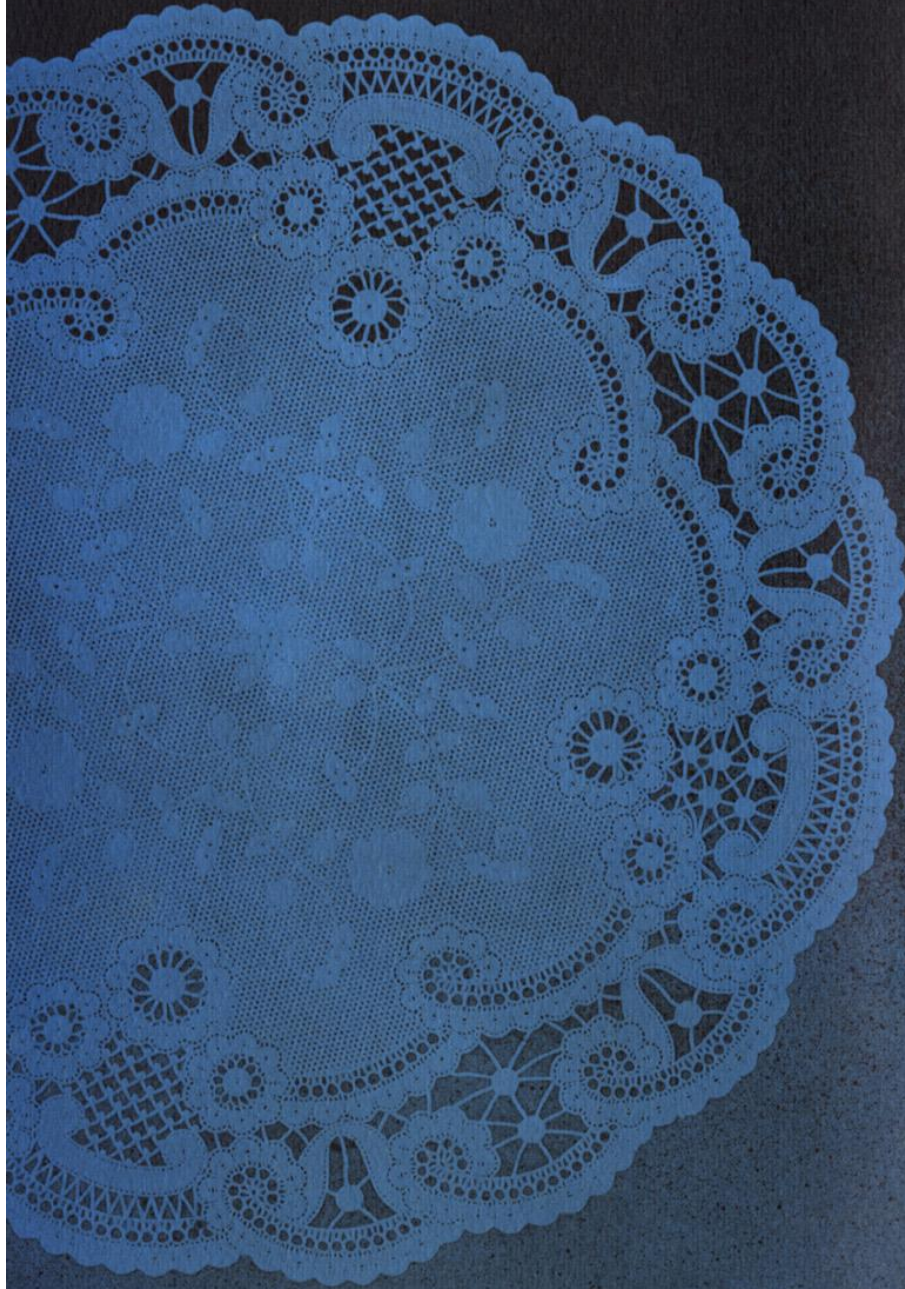
David Underwood – The Paradox of the Hero

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A Student Literary Publication of
Western Kentucky University



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ZEPHYRUS

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A publication of the English Department
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Michael Lynn Harris

THE MEMOIRS OF A GRANDE DAME

"I knew I was destined to be great, and so I was. I was simply too original for mediocrity. As a child, I often heard adults exclaim over my beauty. Other children, out of jealousy, detested me. The feeling was quite mutual."

Eugenia Lefort was as celebrated for her lack of accomplishments as for her beauty. She could not sew, bake, sing, draw, or do anything useful, although she loved to tat yards and yards of quite hideous lace. But of course, with her face *and* her fortune, such accomplishments were unnecessary. It would have been quite ostentious and vulgar to be talented or intelligent in addition to the gifts of beauty and fortune.

"From the time I was fourteen years old, men flung themselves at me, in the hopes that I would choose to be their bride. Many a gallant swain wept or rejoiced over my inattention or a sign of my favor. I filled many a seat and emptied many a flower stall when I ventured to the theatre or the opera. I was an object of worship and the cause of many duels."

As soon as her father discreetly spread the news that she would come into an immense fortune upon marrying, Eugenia was swamped with offers of matrimony and things of a less spiritual nature, also. She caused such a rush at the Folies Bergere that the show was delayed for almost ten minutes (although it was rumored that the leading lady's corset was the actual cause of the delay). The same thing occurred when she attended the legitimate theatre, also. When she expressed a dislike for the music while attending the opera, one of her beaux convinced the conductor to play Viennese waltzes, which quite put out the diva and most of the rest of the company.

And what a round of parties and balls! Hardly a week went by that her father didn't give one or the other. None of the young women about Paris would attend, so Eugenia never lacked for dancing partners, so she didn't care.

"Then came the day that I met that man who would eventually become the late M. Duval. I had just married for the third time. Louis was the half-brother of my new husband, by marriage. He was rumored to be the love child of both parents, who were married to one another at the time. Our affair was idyllic."

Louis Duval was the most ordinary man in Paris—so ordinary, that he was almost a paragon of monotony. His idea of an exciting adventure was discovering that he had worn two different—colored stockings, but Eugenia was blind to his faults. After three marriages, she was ready for love. She was nineteen years old and quite innocent concerning affairs of the heart. Her first two husbands died of heart attacks at the receptions following their weddings, but they had lived full lives, and at their ages, no one was especially surprised. Her third husband, brother of Louis, spent his wedding night with a maid, three wedding guests, and a girl he picked up on the way back from the church. He was then hospitalized for exhaustion, which, at his age, was to be expected.

Louis had neither looks, charm, nor influential connections. Eugenia found him to be a fascinating man and a stimulating match for her in intellectual pursuits.

"M. Duval and I spent our time patronizing art. Louis had exquisite taste and I learned to trust his judgement implicitly."

With the aid of M. Duval, Eugenia began to collect hand painted souvenir ashtrays and little pink statues of Cupid waving banners which read "Amour" or "Je Vous Aime!" She would tat lace frames for original prints by such illustrious artists as Issac Putz, whose greatest successes were the illustrations he did for a series of unsuccessful children's books about a vapid, blonde, blue-eyed girl named Eugenia (she also patronized writers). The books were never published.

"I feel that I have lived a gaily eventful life and I have few, if any, regrets. I have had love and marriage, tragedy and happiness, sickness (she once had a cold after waiting in the rain for a rendezvous with Louis. She waited twelve hours in the same spot because she thought he had meant ten a.m.) and health, good luck and bad, pain and pleasure, war and peace, pride and prejudice, power, and glory," *et cetera*.

Eugenia has earned her place in the obscurity of history. She outlived seven husbands (although it is rumored that one merely skipped the country with the paste copies of Eugenia's jewel collection, which she kept in the vault "so they wouldn't wear out.") And of course, one died in the middle of the marriage ceremony, so one may use one's discretion in whether to count him or not.) She had no children, although she had many step-children. Fortunately, her memoirs, the only record of her existence, were edited from the original 1327 pages to the form in which you find them here, before they were tragically (and accidentally, I'm sure) discarded with the editor's gin bottles.

Au Revoir!

Sheila Riley

THE YELLOW DRESS

Courting her wasn't easy.

At 14 she knew where men were coming from when they asked if they could come visit her on Sunday after church and sit on the porch (sit next to her) and drink some ice tea (and maybe some ginger beer) and hold her hand (her hand).

When he spied her at the play-party God knows it was some kind of special love.

She wore a yellow dress and he chose her for the winding-down song.

But she said no, she couldn't court, she was just 14.

It surely wouldn't set right with her daddy.

But she liked the way he looked in his tweed britches and flop-hat and she remembered his pipe and his blue eyes.

He was 20 and he knew the town girls and she was just a girl from a mountain in Tennessee and...

it surely wouldn't set right with her daddy.

He decided he would keep an eye on her yellow dress and wait for September and corn-shuckin and she decided to wait for next Sunday to say hidee to him in church and to hell with being 14.

It was hot in June in Kentucky. The kind of weather that called for the deacons to pass out the complimentary fans from Smither & Coates and Kemper & Arnold funeral homes. (The kind with Jesus knocking on the door, and ascending into heaven, respectively.)

It was hot in church thinking about the softball game out to the fairgrounds that afternoon, and thinking about visiting somebody's front porch (sitting next to her) drinking ice tea (ginger beer) and holding hands (just holding hands).

And when she saw her chance she remarked how good it was to see him there and

my but she didn't know he was Methodist.

He said he wasn't but being a Baptist was the next best thing and didn't we all go the same place anyway.

And she said she thought that depended a lot on how God saw drinking and dancing and playing softball on Sunday, and courting too early.

He asked her to be watching him pitch today and she said it surely wouldn't set right with her daddy but she would be there.

And she was and she let him buy her a lemonade and

her sister ran home and told her daddy. And her daddy smiled. She remembered how he looked with his sleeves rolled up and his brown hair stringy with sweat and dust.

She was wearing a green print dress, but he remembered a yellow one.

It was hot in June in Kentucky. And nothing felt nicer than cooling off, sitting on the porch (next to her) and drinking ice tea (just ice tea) and holding her hand (her hand). He knew the town girls wore sachet and liked bon-bons and riding with the top down, but he didn't know if mountain girls did the same.

She said that simple things set right with her and no perfume was better than her natural smell (so her Mam Ma said) and wading creeks was the thing to do on summer afternoons.

The water was warm and felt good and he stirred up the crayfish with a locust twig and she skipped rocks and chased frogs and God knows it was some kind of special love.

He called her Snooks and said she was still a baby.

She cried to sleep that night and her sister laughed and told her daddy the next day that Mona was "in love" and her daddy smiled.

She was afraid the city girls had something too good to beat about them cause she didn't see him for two Sundays straight and by then it was July and

July in Kentucky is too hot to stay indoors when you have a front porch with a new-painted swing, and plenty of ice tea to keep you cool.

She had heard he was courting another girl down the street a ways and hoped to see him pass her window any day on his way there.

She remembered his pipe and the way he'd unbuttoned his collar after church, and

he remembered her yellow dress.

It was two more weeks before she saw him pass her porch.

He stopped to say hidee and took a glass of tea and said he'd been working hard (chasing women) and tending the farm (dancing and drinking) and she said too much work and no play is bad for a man.

She thought he blushed, but he said the sun was awful hot in them pastures and he hoped he could keep from getting sunburned.

And she said she didn't know the sun was shining that time of night. He thanked her daddy for the glass of tea and said he needed to be off.

She wondered how city men ever got hitched and stopped crying to sleep and stopped watching for him to pass her porch.

He knew courting her wasn't going to be easy and wondered how mountain girls ever got hitched and stopped watching girls that passed the feed store, itching and twitching.

God knows it must've been some kind of special love.

When August came she turned 15 and the men in town knew that day the mountain girl had come of age for sure and they were out to *make* things set right with her daddy, if he didn't approve, it was time he did.

And of course it all was done with the utmost respect.

So she was 15 and a woman and he knew the yellow dress would look finer than ever and he went to her and asked for a glass of tea, for August is the pit of summer and he knew her porch would be oh so cool.

And she wore her yellow dress.

And before he got there she remembered his blue eyes and felt his voice making aural love, because she was 15 and could think of such things.

She still waded the creek and skipped rocks and chased frogs and he still threatened her with crayfish clamped on locust twigs and watched her move and smelled her natural smell and decided her Mam Ma was right.

Her sister saw them kiss that day. (God knows nothing in nature is sacred or secret.) And ran home and told her daddy and her daddy smiled and nodded his head.

And August was the hottest month that year.

And when he drew the red ear at corn-shuckin he chose to kiss her cheek and she did likewise when it came her turn and harvest was good for all the farmers.

And this set right with her daddy.

Courting her was chasing a round of seasons and he was ready to reap what he'd sown.

She knew it was some kind of special love.

The town girls didn't like it either, when he picked her for all the winding-up dances and walked her home after church. (Why, he was even a church-going man.)

No. They didn't like it when they saw it happening.

He missed the women, but he knew it was some kind of special love.

It was September after his upteenth glass of tea he asked her that wasn't the preacher right what he said that God didn't mean for a man to be alone on this earth.

And she said yes, it must be so.

And he asked her to wear the yellow dress when they married.

It was her who told her daddy they would run off and marry if it didn't set right with him, but they thought they'd ask to be proper

Her daddy said she had to be sure and she said she knew it was right.

And it was warm in September in Kentucky even in her yellow dress.

Sheila Riley

FLORENCE

He sent Florence away to a "home" in Louisville because he said she couldn't drive anymore (he took away her car) and she couldn't take care of herself (he canceled the lease on her apartment).

Florence was only 77. And damn but couldn't she cut the rug at community dances, and wasn't her figure the absolute envy of all the WMU ladies?

She was 77, but Florence couldn't be fooled. She knew where "it" was and she knew what she had to work with to get it.

Til her son sent her away.

Because he thought *she* was confused.

They gave her a room and gave her a nurse who gave her a smile and Florence was just all set up.

She was only 77 and her mind and body still ached for companionship and she moved her chair a little closer to the only eligible widower during recreation hour.

But he had given up looking for "it" 20 years ago and, despite her efforts, Florence couldn't convince him she knew where it was.

She filled her days with soaps and old movies and tried to be patient with the patronizing candy-stripers who taught her crafts and arts.

She wished she had a car and an apartment and a man.

She was still young and couldn't waste what time she had.

So Florence ached and pleaded and her son said she didn't "know best" like he knew best.

She had it easy, he said.

And she said he didn't "know easy" like she knew easy.

It was after her 78th birthday when they gave her a cake and presents and the nurses sang happy birthday that Florence decided it was one thing to be 77 and act 20, but quite another to be 78 and act 77.

The widower moved his chair a little closer to hers and said there comes a time when looking for it is the only thing that keeps you going.

A GIFT FROM ALPHONSE

As Madame Feneste closed her textbook, her head was turned by the sound of a branch, driven by the wind, as it struck against the pane. Outside, the low, gray clouds marched in slow, pompous procession, like fatigued troops returning from war. The world seemed bleak. The woman turned back her glance from the window. They were watching her, but more importantly, they were watching the silent warden, whose sleek, black hands kept watch over the precious hours of their imprisonment. They pretended to stare straight ahead, but the woman knew that from time to time an eye would stray to the left, towards the point above the door, where the silent warden was suspended by a nail. After securing the desperately desired information, held by the sleek, black hands, the eye would shift back. This game was played each afternoon, but today it did not matter: the hour had come.

The bell rang, or buzzed as was its wont, and the rapid, orderly, single-file torrent began, but just as quickly as it began, it would terminate. Yet, in that short span of time, no longer than the life cycle of some exotic, African insect, Madame Feneste had time to regard each face. The woman knew them well.

Jacques Fechaud would leave the room first; he also would be the last to enter in the morning. Marie Lebrun would be beaten tonight by her alcoholic father and not attend class tomorrow. Raoul Renard would be next, then Michel, Jeannot, petite Françoise, Dominique, Isabelle, Germaine, Gisele, Monique, Nicole, Simone, Gaston and Guillaume—the twins, and Jose Michelena, from the Spanish city of Saragossa on the River Ebro. At first, the woman feared that the boy would be unable to compete with the other children. She had planned to be somewhat lenient with him; until she learned from the rector that the child's mother was "Nicoise". At any rate, he did well enough in school and was able to curse in French and Spanish, which thoroughly impressed the other students. The last child to exit the classroom was Jean-Maurice Mellan. "Jean-Maurice," the woman called ritually to her most forgetful student, "ton livre." And of course, the book was still on the last-desk-fifth-row-over, where Jean-Maurice had left it. He gathered up his book and several papers he somehow managed to drop and with, "Merci Madame le professeur," he was gone. Jean-Maurice was a little *maladroit* perhaps, but a very intelligent pupil, nonetheless.

The woman sighed. Standing up, Angelique Feneste appeared to be every bit of fifty. Her hair, pulled back into a tight bun, was gray, salted with fine strands of virgin white. Her dress was conservative and she possessed that emotionless stern facial expression, so common to older women merely existing through life without their husbands.

The streets were gray and the air was misty as the woman left the Ecole

Troisième, perhaps some fell wind had traversed the "Manche", bringing with it the cold, foggy atmosphere of "Angleterre". She breathed deeply, drawing in the cool, twilight air. It was spiced with salt from the "Manche", and scented with the fishy odor of Bretagne's docks. Behind the salt and fish, the wind seemed to bring with it the smoky, industrial fumes of London and Birmingham. The woman could picture London, shrouded in fog; she could also see her sister-in-law there, claiming the body of her husband, who died on the quiet streets near the Thames. A chill ran up her spine. How Angelique longed for the warm Cannes of her youth, the weekends spent at her uncle's villa in Italy or at some friend's "caso de campo" in Spain. Always there was the Grand Prix in Monte Carlo, or the bars of Marseilles, but now Bretagne offered only cold streets, and memories of the past, yet Angelique was too old, too set in her ways, and too unwilling to leave her husband's homeland.

It was on those dreary, early evening walks from the Ecole Troisième to her flat on the Rue Haute, that Angelique thought most of Alphonse. Oh, the woman knew what most people said of Alphonse, and even if those things were true, it would not matter. Alphonse Feneste was found stabbed in the back with an oriental carving knife at Madame Claudette's in Paris. A Parisienne prostitute, an employee of Madame Claudette, was charged with the crime, convicted, and sent to the guillotine, but Angelique did not believe that the girl had done it. That was four years ago, yet still the matter would not die. Only a week before, the woman had overheard the rector speaking with a new teacher, "Son mari a couru la gueuse...." The words were ugly and untrue, but better said than the truth be known—better for everyone to believe Alphonse a whoremonger, than for them to know what he really was.

As the woman turned onto the Rue des Larmes, soft music flowed out from Chez Etienne and filled the street with a sad, wistful mood. It had been years, since last she had frequented the small restaurant, and the remembrance of Etienne's sweet wine made her long for a taste of it. It was before the dinner hour; the place was only half full. Near the hearth, there was a quaint table-for-one; she took it, and ordered a glass of wine. The "garçon" who brought the wine said that he had been her student years before, but the woman did not hear him.

Her eyes were drawn to the blazing fire in the hearth. She saw men, women, and children being gunned down in the road. She saw villages burning, and fleeing refugees carrying their meager lives on their backs. The ancient, noble temples were leveled by the ceaseless mortar fire; the priests died beneath the falling roofs. In the ditches, water flowed through blood and bodies, napalm and jeeps, soldiers and children. Death rode like a general in his jeep.

Moments passed. Angelique gazed about the room. The fire in the hearth seemed pleasant now. At another, table some acquaintances were smiling at her. She smiled back. Behind the bar, Etienne and his plump wife, Solange, were drying glasses. She was rattling along in her distinct Lorraine accent (She was from Nancy) about something or other. Etienne noticed Angelique; his eyes were drawn to hers. Teasingly, the woman

formed the words "mon amant" with her lips; Etienne blanched.

It was late summer, and Alphonse was still in Vietnam after the French withdrawal. Angelique had met Etienne in the market; he carried her packages home; the remainder of the summer was quite pleasant, but that was years ago now.

Solange caught her husband's glance and began a tirade which could be heard at every table near the bar. Angelique did not need the added gossip which would undoubtedly flow through the restaurant, so after placing a franc on the red and white checked tablecloth, she left. The woman was certain upon crossing the threshold that she would never enter Chez Etienne again.

Outside, the weather had become uncommonly bad. The streetlamps were glowing and a mist had settled on the cobblestones, making travel very hazardous. The woman had to be cautious as she walked up to the Rue Haute.

Crossing the Rue Sanglante, Angelique noticed that in an alley off the street—The Ruelle des Sansonnets—several men had congregated. The milliner, Madame Lejeune, came out from her shop. She was breathing quickly. A young gendarme, she explained, had been found stabbed to death in the alley. The old woman wanted to talk further, but Angelique walked away.

It was completely dark, as the woman reached her room. It was pitch inside, but even with the light on, the faded wallpaper gave the flat the appearance of a tomb. She stood with her back to the door. Crossing the chamber, she placed her purse on a small table. On the table was a letter from London. She remembered her sister-in-law's words. How Gauthier, Alphonse's brother and business partner, was found stabbed and dying on the Southwark streets. His last words, spoken in English, were: "Warn my sister...." His wife was worried about Florence, Alphonse and Gauthier's sister; Angelique had been too. But now the woman sensed the terrible truth. Gauthier in dying had tried to warn her; his last words must have been incomplete, sister-in-law, not sister. Angelique ran to the kitchen. "Alphonse!" she cried, but he was dead. On a counter near the pantry door, a velvet drape covered something shaped like a birdcage. Once the woman removed the cover, the object appeared in a golden flash to be an ancient Buddah. It glistened in the fluorescent kitchen light.

This was her only legacy from Alphonse. As the woman gazed into the jade eyes, she remembered the past. Alphonse and Gauthier were showing the Buddah to their friends. They all laughed over the story of how Alphonse murdered the Vietnamese priest to acquire the statue, and how the old man screamed out his curses of revenge. If only she had gotten rid of the thing, but she could not bear to part with it. Turning it over to the government would have been the intelligent thing to do, but Alphonse's name would have been soiled. It was better even for people to think him a rascal than for them to know he was a murderer, thief, mercenary, and liar. The woman stared deeper into the green eyes of the seated figure. Outside, the rain slopped against the window pane. She heard the men's haunting laughter, as they sat by that fire long ago bragging of their crimes.

She felt her husband's pain, as he died. Alphonse, Gauthier, the young gendarme, all murdered. The woman knew why. The Buddah's eyes seemed to hypnotize her. Angelique did not hear the wind blowing off the "Manche" or the door opening slowly, nor did she see the fluorescent glitter in the knife held in the thin, yellow hand.

Marie Bunce

SECRETS

There is much of our lives
We must hide from others—
Sharing a room, sharing a bed.
How many times have I
Held my breath beside you,
As you answered a late-night phone call.
Married friends talk of married life.
I pretend I don't know what it's like.
Every part of me shouts
"I am married too—
Just not like you!"
Instead I listen quietly.

John H. Burkitt

I WALK THE NIGHT

I walk the night; I am a child of the night. Since birth I have wandered among dark terrors, veiled by impenetrable shadows. With my hands I probe the mysterious, dark world, listening to the crackle of objects beneath my cautious feet. The sounds I hear are my only contact with the others who share existence with me. In my dark groping, I occasionally touch them, but rarely, since they can sense me coming before I am aware of their presence.

Lonely and despondent, sometimes I wish my senses were also as keen as theirs. From time to time they think me one of them. "Nice sunny weather today," they tell me. "Yes," I reply, "the warmth feels good." I walk the night.

David Underwood

THE PARADOX OF THE HERO

A cut finger
and tears flow
freely
down his cheeks.
Only moments before,
with nothing more
than a stick
for a horse
and that same finger
for a gun,
he single-handedly
fought the brave
Apache.
The tears dry quickly.
A few moments more
and no one knows
what wonders
he'll perform.
They may not be
"for real"
wonders,
but to him they are—
and he
most certainly
is.

REFLECTIONS OF AN AZURE SKY

We sat on the barren cliff overlooking the black, roiling waters and talked in signs. The incessant warm winds hurried the stream of salmon and scarlet clouds and turned Magda's hair to splintered onyx.

The sky, the strange cobalt sky, was always changing, yet it seemed invariable. Rivers of molten clouds surged over the horizon, illuminated by the sun that never rose over this part of the huge planet. The edges of the world were gaudy red with the promise of light, but the brightness faded until the center of the firmament was dark greenish-blue. It seemed a perpetual, nightmarish mockery of sunsets on Earth.

I had been an envoy on this peculiar planet for six long years. I was ready to go home. I missed speaking aloud to Earth's inhabitants. I communicated in intergalactic sign language with the mute race of this planet. I missed the green grass and trees, the cities, the people, the *noise* of Earth. Most of all I missed the azure sky.

Magda had made these six years bearable. She was intelligent, witty, and beautiful in the odd way of her people. The bleak landscape and lack of speaking ability had made this race remote, cold—the people communicated by oblique glance and nuance of sign, all incomprehensible to outsiders. Magda was different. She avoided the idiosyncrasies of her native sign language and communicated with me through the more direct intergalactic sign language. When conversing with her, I could almost forget that she spoke only in signs, and that her skin was pale blue instead of white or brown. Like her race, she possessed marvelously expressive gray-green eyes, but unlike her race, she allowed me to catch glimpses of her warmth and sense of humor. She was kind to me, a strange man on an even stranger planet. On the cliff, the restless warm winds stirred her filmy mauve garments, and sometimes, when the red light warmed her skin in a certain way, she seemed almost human.

I was more than a little infatuated with her.

Now it was time for me to leave. I would be transferred home for a furlough, training session, and possible promotion, then would be shipped off to another planet. I probably would never return to this planet. I was anxious to see Earth and to learn my new assignment, but I did not relish the thought of leaving Magda.

I knew that my family and friends at home would never accept her. I also knew that she would never be accepted on my next assigned planet. The thought of leaving Magda was painful, but the very idea of taking her along was out of the question. I didn't want to hurt her, and I was sure that I would. I suspected that she was even more fond of me than I was of her. We had been almost inseparable for six years. I had had to wage a constant battle with the iron-clad reserve of the other persons of this planet, but Magda had been a friend from the start. This was a stroke of luck on my

part. She was a pleasant companion—and, more importantly, a valuable source of information.

She sat with bowed head as I informed her of the news. Her long, slim hands, tinged pale pink by the garish glow of the sky, were clasped tightly around her knees. Her jet hair partially concealed her face, but I could tell that her eyes were watching me.

"I've been transferred to another planet," I announced. "My superiors are pleased with my work here. I may be promoted." I looked at her, suddenly vexed at her refusal to look me in the eye. I longed for the directness of Earth's inhabitants, even as I said, "I will miss you. You are very dear to me, and I don't want to leave you. I honestly can't imagine being without you."

She raised a hand and stopped me. "So you are leaving and you do not wish to abandon me?" she signed.

"Yes."

"I am sorry," she continued, her eyes flickering away in expected sadness, "but I cannot go with you. I see in your eyes the reflection of an azure sky."

"What do you mean by that?" I asked, irritated that she had reverted to the ambiguous turn of phrase so dear to her people.

She smiled wisely. "You miss Earth too much. Go home. You cannot stay here, and I cannot go with you."

"I know," I replied, attempting to mask my relief. "I *am* sorry. We've been together so long."

"Yes, we have been together quite a long time," she sighed. "However, these six years have not been misspent. I have performed my duty."

"Your duty?" I exclaimed.

"Yes. I have learned much of your culture, your written language, even your strange azure sky. That was my duty. Now I can deal intelligently with future envoys from Earth. And I can reacquaint myself with the ways of my world. I have spent almost every waking moment with you for the past six years." She smiled vaguely, "You are very dear to me also, but I miss my people."

"Your job," I said flatly. "Your duty." I realized that, in the incognizable manner of her people, she had never thought it necessary to tell me about her official duty.

In that one sickening moment I perceived the full extent of her alienness. How could she use our friendship to gain information? After my relief, I felt betrayal. I had become infatuated with a being who existed only as a pallid shadow of a human, a creature of my imagination. I didn't know Magda at all.

Then, in the face of my anger, she stunned me again.

She stood and touched my cheek so lightly that it could have been a dream. As she walked away, the eternal wind seemed to lull a bit, as if in reverence to her. She was truly a part of her world.

I sat and stared at the turbulence surrounding me with new eyes. For the first time in many, many years—I wondered. I wondered about people on Earth and people on this planet, and I wondered why one race could not

understand the other. I wondered why Magda and I could never get past the barriers of culture and duty and really empathize with each other. I wondered at the terrifying beauty of this landscape, and I wondered why I had been blinded by an azure sky.

Magda had performed her duty, as I had performed mine, but not without caring for me. For on this strange, dismal planet, this realm of excursive people, a touch was the most cherished gift of all.

Michael Lynn Harris

DANGEROUS CURVES

A GOTHIC PARODY

The first time I saw the moss-covered stones of Snively Castle, I felt a strange mixture of exhilaration and nausea in the pit of my stomach, although I could not have known what terrible and degrading things would occur to me within its dank walls and courtyards. I was to be governess to Lord Snively's two children, Geoffrey and Arachnidia. How strange are the twists of Fate! I was born into two of England's most illustrious families, through both of my parents. Unfortunately, they were disowned because they were in love with each other and affianced to each other's siblings. Luckily, my father was able to sell my mother's jewelry to support his gambling habit, so we lived comfortably until they were carried off by influenza, but let's not dwell on that now. I was left with only my wardrobe full of ball gowns and two pieces of jewelry—a diamond-and-ruby encrusted bracelet and one matching earring. I could never part with them, for they were all that were left of my parents' estate.

As the carriage had halted, I assumed that we had reached our destination. I gathered my parcels together, but before I could open the door, the handsomest man I had ever seen opened it and jumped in.

I screamed in terror. He had the grace to look taken aback before he spoke. "I'm dreadfully sorry. I had no idea that this carriage was occupied. Please leave at once."

When I had finally regained the use of my vocal facilities, I said haughtily, "I am the governess for little Geoffrey and dear little Arachnidia. Now, if you don't mind, would you kindly introduce yourself?"

He looked at me with his soulful grey eyes, which were deep-set above his aquiline nose and thin, cruel lips, and said to me, "I could never introduce myself kindly, for I am your pupil, little Geoffrey."

I am quite sure that my shock showed on my face.

"I was under the impression that my charges were small children. I simply do not know what to do! I suppose I should introduce myself properly. I am Philodendra Brendon Devon Clive. I expect you to be able to write in cursive and to be able to multiply up to five times seven. That is as far as I am able to go, so it will have to suffice."

"You may be prepared to teach me the rudiments of grammar and mathematics, but what do you know of love?" Then he flung himself at me quite passionately.

Suddenly, someone opened the door of the carriage and I screamed again. This time the intruder was an exceptionally beautiful girl of seventeen. Her hair was long and golden although at present it was hidden under a rather ugly, although obviously expensive, hat.

Geoffrey turned to me quite gallantly under the circumstances, and said,

"Allow me to introduce my illegitimate half-sister, Guinivere Alice Smirch. It isn't polite to speak to her in public, but just among ourselves, she can be rather pleasant company."

I must say I was dumb-founded and appalled! For him to actually present this female to me was a social outrage and an insult to all women of good breeding. I started to turn away from the wretched girl, so she would realize that she would get no encouragement from me, when I simply had to scream again.

The handsomest man I had ever seen opened the carriage door and crawled inside. He shook his tousled, curly, dark hair and gazed at me with piercing, melancholy blue eyes, and yet, when he spoke, he addressed Geoffrey.

"Good, I've found you at last. How many will there be for supper?"

Geoffrey snarled back at him, "Why don't you set an extra place at the family table for the pretty new governess."

"Really, Geoffrey, one shouldn't use the adjective 'pretty', when 'fairly' or 'rather' would modify 'new governess' much better!" Even though we had only just been introduced, I felt that I should not shirk my duties. "One must not be colloquial!"

He turned to me with a strange look on his face. "Permit me to introduce you to my illegitimate half-brother, Jeffrey Smirch. He works as our butler, but I despise him for he is my only rival for inheriting my father's fortune, and he puts too much starch in my shirts!"

"But surely that is the fault of the laundress."

"Jeffrey is the laundress."

What a strange household, and I had not even descended from the carriage yet! Once more I prepared to get out, and once more I felt compelled to scream, but I stifled the urge. This time it was another young woman, also exceptionally beautiful, in a rather swarthy way. She wore a wet black lace dressing gown, for it had begun to rain. She spoke.

"There you are Jeffrey. Why don't you come help me get dressed for dinner?" She had such a feverish look in her eyes that I feared that she might be consumptive. I also deduced that Jeffrey's duties must include those of a lady's maid.

"Why, you must be dear little Arachnidia!" I called gaily. "I am your new governess, Philodendra Brendon Devon Clive."

"Can you sew?"

"Why, no! But I am sure you could teach me!"

"Oh, damn! I need a gown to wear to the ball tonight. I simply can't wear the dress that Jeffrey made for me. It's too—white."

Such a high spirited girl! I was sure that she would be a problem, but I endeavored to be friendly.

"I'm sure that I could lend you something. I have *scads* of ball gowns!"

Geoffrey turned on me in a fury. "How dare you use a word like that in front of my sister! I think perhaps you should be discharged."

Oddly enough, Arachnidia herself came to my aid.

"Don't be so hasty, Geoffrey. Let me see her wardrobe first."

"Well, then," I announced in a brisk manner, "why don't we all go inside,

so I can unpack my trunk. I brought you both a present!"

A sudden, horrible thought occurred to me. I had brought nothing for Jeffrey or Guinivere! Of course, they weren't legitimate, but one must not antagonize the servants, especially when one of them may inherit the Earl's estate.

Soon, we were all established in my chamber—a dank, musty smelling room at the top of a winding staircase. I assumed that it was a tower room, for it was round. Only one thing bothered me about the room; there was only one window and it was barred. I strode impetuously across the room and peered out. What I saw there caused me to scream in terror, causing Geoffrey and Jeffrey to drop my trunk on Guinivere Alice's foot.

"What the devil—" began Jeffrey, when Geoffrey cut him off.

"It is quite obvious that Philodendra Devon has seen—a mouse." he said with a sneer.

"You forgot the Brendon, and it was no mouse! It was a beautiful girl—quite the most beautiful girl I have ever seen! She had gorgeous, rich brown hair, worn in a snood, and she was wearing an earring just like mine! She was wearing a blue traveling cloak with brass buttons and a stain on the collar!"

Guinivere and Arachnidia exchanged a startled glance. They obviously recognized the woman whom I described. I heard Arachnidia mutter something about a "crazy woman" and Guinivere, in a protesting manner, said "Don't jump to conclusions. She's probably just intoxicated." There was apparently a crazed alcoholic prowling around the castle! Buy why was Guinivere Alice protecting her?"

My reverie was interrupted by Geoffrey. He looked at me with a mixture of passion and cynicism and announced, "Father would like to see you before the ball tonight. We will leave you now. Be ready promptly at seven. Do you know how to dance?"

When I answered in the affirmative, he turned and left, along with Jeffrey and Guinivere. Arachnidia held back for a moment, as I removed my blue traveling cloak.

"What will you wear tonight, Philodendra?"

"I thought I might wear my black satin gown with the low neck-line, but I would be grateful for your opinion. Which gown do you think I should wear?"

"Let me see." She clawed her way through my trunk until she found a blue and white checked Bo Peep costume which I had once worn to a fancy-dress ball. With a cry of triumph, she pulled it out.

"Why, this is simply perfect! It's *you* all over!"

Obviously, the poor girl had no knowledge of fashion. She showed a pitiable lack of taste and breeding in her choice of clothing, but I endeavored to humour her.

"Don't be an utter idiot, Arachnidia! This is quite the ugliest gown in my collection. This yellow and pink plaid is much more becoming, and I wouldn't allow my worst enemy to be caught dead in it, even though my own sainted mother made it, herself."

"But I would like to see you in the blue and white dress. Please Philo-

dendral I might want one like it."

To humor her, I put on the entire costume, including the wig. I was looking for the shepherd's staff, when Arachnidia screamed.

"Quickly! We must flee! The ghost is coming!"

I fled madly from the room. As soon as I reached the door, it slammed and locked behind me. I heard maniacal laughter emanating from the room. Poor Arachnidia! I continued to flee through the castle, searching for help.

I searched through endless dark corridors. I feared that I would be too late to help Arachnidia, but I could no longer find my way back to my room, so I kept on. Finally, I saw a light gleaming under a door ahead of me. Thankfully, I rushed toward it.

In answer to my timid knock, a quavery old voice called, "Come in, dear!"

I opened the creaking door and stepped cautiously within. Not two feet inside, I was assaulted from behind. I whirled around. There stood the oldest, most lecherous man I had ever seen.

"Well, I'm glad to see you're prompt. How about a little fun before we go to the party?"

"Sir, I am not here for fun. Your daughter is even now being molested by a fearsome ghost in my chamber!"

That brought a response from him.

"Which daughter?"

"Arachnidia."

"In that case, God have pity on the ghost. If you didn't come here for fun, why are you dressed like that?"

"I was entertaining Arachnidia when the ghost attacked us. What did you want to see me about?"

"About a little fun. Since you won't play, go get dressed for the ball."

I gratefully left his presence and finally found my way back to my room.

The door was wide open and gowns were scattered everywhere. There was no sign of Arachnidia. I prayed that she had been spared, but I feared the worst. Nonetheless, I had a job to do, so I squared my shoulders and dressed for the ball.

What can I say of the events which followed? If I could have foreseen them, would the evening have been any different? Would I have changed anything, had it been within my power? Or were we locked within the mad machinations of Fate? Could it have been pre-ordained that the events of that evening *had* to occur? Who knows?

I wore a tasteful gown of ivory silk which looked quite stunning, even without any jewelry other than my earring and my bracelet. I carefully made my way to the ballroom, searching for signs of Arachnidia or the ghost, but I found nothing.

When I entered the ballroom, I paused at the top of the staircase which swept down to the dance floor. Jeffrey, in a very flattering butler's uniform, announced my name.

"Miss Philodendra Brendon Devon Clive!" The sound echoed in the deafening silence which followed as I gazed over the room. I then descended the stairs into the room, still in total silence. I was so mortified that

I stopped in the middle of the room and called to Jeffrey.

"When do you think the other guests will begin to arrive? I hope I am not too early."

"They should begin to arrive momentarily." He glanced out into the hall and then raced to my side. "Philodendra, from the moment that I saw you, I knew that we were destined to fall in love. Marry me, and we shall experience eternal bliss."

"Please, Jeffrey, don't be so impetuous! Even though you are second in line to your father's fortune, you are still of illegitimate birth and therefore a social inferior to me. A man in your station cannot hope to marry a young woman of any social standing whatsoever. You must remember your place in life. I know that you are heartbroken, now, but in the future, you will be grateful to me for putting you in your place. You may now go and live your life in humble devotion to me, possibly joining a religious order or the merchant marines, and remain, eternally faithful in your love for me."

"Then you will not marry me under any condition?"

"Only if you can change your social standing! Where is your legitimate brother, Geoffrey?"

With a snarl, he leaped away from me. Such mercurial moods! I am not sure that I could be happy with such a fickle person, even if he were a social equal to me! At that moment, the guests began to arrive.

I was not without partners the entire evening. When I was not dancing, I was surrounded by a dazzling array of men. In the middle of one waltz, I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned to see Lord Snively motioning for me to follow him off the floor. Reluctantly, I did so.

He led me to a settee beside a potted palm and we sat down.

"My dear, I have some wonderful news for you. Your grandmother is here tonight, and she has decided to acknowledge you as her heiress."

It was too wonderful to be believed!

"I am to inherit her entire fortune?"

"No, I was jesting! Heh, heh!" He continued to laugh until a coughing fit caused his face to turn quite blue. In alarm, I slapped him on the back and dislodged his teeth, but he ceased coughing.

"In truth," he said when he regained his faculties, "your grandmother *is* here, but I do not know what she wants with you. Will you meet me outside by the fountain?"

"It is raining out by the fountain."

"Well, it isn't raining in my room!"

"Don't be absurd. Which one is my grandmother?"

"She is the one wearing one earring and a matching bracelet."

"I am wearing one earring and a matching bracelet!"

"Well, her's match your's. Now go away so I can proposition that little blonde over there."

I searched the room for a lady wearing jewelry matching mine, but she was nowhere to be seen. I finally found her out by the fountain with Lord Snively.

"Confound it, girl! Won't you let me have *any* fun?"

"Grandmother!" I cried as I flung myself into her arms.

"Well, I should say you might have better timing! You waited all of your life to come to see me, and then you have to interrupt me in the middle of a tryst! Why don't you go wait for me in the carriage?"

"Yes, Grandmother." I couldn't say more, for the emotions I was experiencing choked the words in my throat. I went back to the ball, to say goodbye to the Snivelys and the Smirches.

There, I found Arachnidia wearing *my* black gown—the one she said I shouldn't wear! I was at a loss for words. Suddenly, Jeffrey was at my side.

"That's gratitude for you! I worked like a dog on the white dress for her, and she wears the first thing that comes along!"

He could even sew! I looked at him with new eyes. Here was a true gem of a servant. I would see if Grandmother would hire him, for I would need an accomplished dress-maker now that I was to enter society.

I saw Geoffrey across the room at that moment. I went over to say my farewells to him. When he understood that I would be leaving, and that I was an heiress, he seemed quite startled.

"That changes a lot of things! Darling, will you marry me?"

At *that* moment, Lord Snively called out that he had an announcement to make. Everyone gathered around to hear. He held my grandmother's hand, right there in public, but we dismissed that breach of etiquette because of their ages.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, Sally and I would like to announce our engagement to be married."

"Grandmother, what will Grandfather say?"

"Not much, I should hope. He's been dead for twenty-five years."

"I had no idea! What a relief! We shall all be so happy!"

Lord Snively cleared his throat. "I have one more announcement—I have decided to declare my legitimate son as my heir."

I turned to the crowd. "I, too, have an announcement to make. I am marrying him!"

Geoffrey leaped into my arms. "My own Philodendral!"

"My own—" but Lord Snively interrupted me.

"Unhand that girl! How dare you embrace another man's fiancée, in public?"

I looked at him in shock as Jeffrey leaped into my arms and said, "My own Philodendral!"

"Hold on a minute. Let me get this straight. You declared your legitimate son as heir; he is my fiancée. Yet you say that Geoffrey *isn't* your heir—Jeffrey is." Lord Snively nodded. "I am confused."

"It is rather simple. When my legitimate children were born, I switched them with Geoffrey and Arachnidia so they wouldn't be spoiled and useless. How many earls do you know that are skilled dress-makers?"

"Jeffrey, my own!"

Geoffrey rather sullenly interrupted. "Where does that leave us?"

My grandmother broke in. "My Dear Geoffrey, you are *my* grandchildren. Cousins to my dear Philodendra."

"My dear cousins!"

We all embraced. It was so emotional that I am not sure that I did not

almost cry. To be acknowledged, affianced, and propositioned in one evening is almost too much for anyone to bear.

It soon came to pass that we were all married to the proper individuals. We have continued to live in great happiness. The years have brought me two beautiful children—a son, Jeffrey Geoffrey Smirch-Snively and my daughter, Philodendra Brendon Devon Clive Guinivere Arachnidia Alice Smirch-Snively. Of course, there are many mysteries of those early days which will never be solved, such as the beautiful girl outside the tower window, and the fearsome ghost which has continued to plague Arachnidia when she and I are alone, but I feel that I can cope with these things, today, for I am convinced that, ultimately, Love conquers all.

Ralph Blight

THE SHADOWS OF ALL HALLOWS EVE

When darkness creeps upon the land,
And trees in gloomy vapor stand,
And windy whispers die in flight,
And silence fills the Autumn night,
Then sweeping through the valley-side
The horsemen of October ride,
To paint the garden and the sheaves
With shadows of All Hallows Eve.

The moon exudes a lurid glow
That kisses old stone walls below;
A burning orb of firey flare
That pulsates gently in the air,
And sets its gray and erie light
Upon the valley and the night,
And tints the withered Autumn leaves
With Shadows of all Hallows Eve.

And when the midnight tolls the knell,
And scarlet knights appear from Hell,
Then ghostly shadows gaily bring
The image of a demon king,
Whose red eyes burn like piercing stone,
While round his newly pillared throne
Bright waves of flame expand and heave
The shadows of All Hallows Eve.

In wreathes of smoke he wanes and scorns,
And spreads his wings and pricks his horns,
And casts his eyes in rampant glance
Upon his knaves in sprightly dance,
As from the moors, in wild array,
A fleet of ghouls engage in play,
With eyes that gleam and sharply cleave
To shadows of All Hallows Eve.

But soon the waves of night retires,
And as their dark and grim attire
Recedes from sleepy meadows thick,
Where newly-cindered embers flick,
The frightened world may lift its head
To see a light surmount the dead
And banish from the wizened leaves
The shadows of All Hallows Eve.

But in our valley all is still,
And darkness waits upon each hill,
As borne upon an icy sigh,
October's horsemen ramble by,
And in the hollows and the woods
Wherein a risen light once stood,
A scarlet band of demons cleave
Like blight to withered Autumn leaves,
And shadows of All Hallows Eve.

Dorothy Spear

THE JOURNEY

Swiftly your swirling currents
Twist and eddy their tortuous way
To the arms of the sea.
Battered by the jagged spines
Of jutting boulders—
Scraped on the gritty floor of sand—
Sliced and divided by intruding earth,
You struggle toward your destiny.

Relentlessly, you shape the jutting boulders,
Cleanse and round the shifting sands—
Unite beyond the stabbing spears of earth
To gently push before your urging waves
Rounded pebbles and polished shells
Upon the shimmering shores.
Tranquilly you reach your destiny.

Dorothy Spear

RECOLLECTIONS

He leaned against the fence post
Gazing with sadness at their big-boned bodies—
Muscles wasting from idleness,
Long mule ears twitching irritably
At darting, flying insects.

There was a time when they heaved and strained,
Sweating and panting, pulling their burden,
Rewarded at the end of day
By cool drinks from the stream
And a trough full of sweet smelling hay.

How long since they had a reason to sweat—
How long since they had strained together.
They are like me, he thought, relics of the past
Taking up space, gathering dust,
And passing time 'till there is no more.

Lee Ann Daugherty

THE KEYHOLE

I've lived so long
within myself
that I fear
I might have forgotten
the way out.

I kept the key
to my cage locked
away safely, but
I've forgotten
just where.

I found a hole
once and crawled
out, but it was
cold and I was
all alone.

I squeezed back in
and remembered that
I'd dropped the key
outside one day, so
I stay inside now
where it's warm.

Gerald Morse

SECOND TIME AROUND

We all felt its coming
the eternal fireman,
the ghost drumming.
Dreamers felt it first,
workers watched it burst,
rulers felt its curse.
When karma is revealed,
and the last pig has squealed,
and the breath of the last
whales and seals have ceased,
then we may all rest in peace.
But till that day, let us play,
let us jump down, turn around
hear that sound — but mix each
laugh with a tear — bury our
fear, reach for every year —
till the drummer must disappear.

Chris Allen

THE HOBOKEN HUSTLE

Colonel Hannibal Scott let out a long, slow sigh and sank deeply into his pilot's seat. His dark hair was matted, and sweat rolled down his tanned handsome face. He glanced down and saw that his light blue spacesuit was similarly streaked with perspiration. That wasn't supposed to happen; something must have gone wrong with the artificial atmosphere control during the battle. Scott took it good-naturedly, though; after what he'd just been through, a little extra warmth was the least of his concerns. Besides, Id could fix it.

Scott glanced out his starfighter's main viewport as he reached for Id's input activator. Minutes before, Scott had led a squadron of Earth's finest Pegasus SF-59 starfighters against a massive Sh'karr task force on the far side of the Sun. Through the viewport he could see the remainder of his squadron swinging into formation around him. A glance at his sensors told him that a great many of his ships would not return. It had been a furious battle, but one the Terrans could not afford to lose. They hadn't.

Activating Id, his starfighter's internal computer, Scott asked what was wrong with the artificial atmosphere system.

"Laser-fire damaged the oxygen recycler," Id's softly feminine voice explained, "and I diverted some power from the cooling unit to keep the recycler functioning. I knew what I was doing, Colonel. Of course, if you would prefer air conditioning to breathing, Colonel, I could always...."

"Watch it, Id. You're getting defensive," Scott chided. He liked the computer; when one considered that Id was his only companion on flights that often lasted days, it was no wonder that Scott treated the computer like a person—and Id did have a personality, of sorts.

"Id, is there any way of beaming a message back to Earth yet?" Scott asked. He already knew the answer.

"No sir. As long as we are this close to the Sun, it's radiation interferes with all of our long-range communications equipment."

Scott sighed in resignation. "Well, I guess Earth will just have to wait a few hours to hear that it's perfectly safe again." Scott stretched his arms as he watched the sleek Pegasus fighters rocket toward him from all directions. He felt a cramp in his leg and wished, as he had perhaps a thousand times before, that there was a little room to move in the fighter's cockpit. Unfortunately, the designers of the Pegasus had opted for deadly efficiency instead of personal comfort. Unfortunate for the pilot, but far less fortunate for the opposition, he thought sardonically.

Scott turned back to Id's vocal receiver. "How long until everyone's back in formation and we can start home?"

Id's viewscreens were located to the right of the main port, and they lit up with diagrams and tactical views of each ship as it approached. "Approximately 4.3526 minutes, Colonel," Id replied. As Scott

contemplated what a great straight-man Id would make, the computer flashed a schematic of the squadron across the screen.

Scott stared at the schematic in disbelief. Id confirmed what the readout indicated.

"Almost one-third of the squadron has been destroyed, sir."

Scott's deep brown eyes flashed angrily as he registered the loss. "Damned paranoid politicians," he growled. A few weeks ago, Terran intelligence had badly frightened Earth's High Command when they began issuing reports that the Sh'karr had developed some type of "superweapon" which they meant to employ against the Terran home planet. Earth and the Sh'karr Empire had been at war since the turn of the century, but it had been years since the reptilian Sh'karr had even considered attacking Earth itself; the Terran politicians had grown progressively more worried about getting their precious butts blown off with each report they received. Naturally, when a Sh'karr assault fleet had been detected approaching Earth from behind the Sun, the Terran officials had panicked. Despite his protests, Scott was ordered to take every ship he had and intercept the Sh'karr battlefleet. He would much rather have waited on the Earthward side of Sol and jumped the Sh'karr than have to orbit the star and let the invaders pick his squadron up on sensors in time to prepare for the attack—not to mention the fact that he would be out of communication with Earth for a dangerously long time. But the officials were scared; they wanted that mysterious superweapon obliterated. So Scott and his fighters had made the orbit—and it had cost him one-third of his pilots!

Scott strapped himself in angrily and reached for his ship's controls. At least, he fumed, that damned superweapon is gone. Not one Sh'karr warship got past his crew. Whatever that weapon was had been obliterated, along with every ship in the Sh'karr task force.

With that thought firmly in mind, Scott instructed Id to open communications channels to the other fighters, and the decimated squadron began to accelerate for the nine hour trip that would return them to Earth orbit.

Several hours later, Colonel Hannibal Scott was a very confused man.

"Id, are you sure we're within transmitting range?" Scott questioned.

"Certainly, Colonel. Earth should have acknowledged our signal several minutes ago," the computer replied.

Scott and his fellow human pilots had turned over control of their ships to the internal computers shortly after acceleration had been completed, and had settled into hyper-sleep for the homeward voyage. Scott had instructed Id to transmit news of the victory to Earth as soon as possible. Id had done precisely that; Earth, however, hadn't replied.

"This doesn't make any sense," Scott growled tensely. "Why the hell don't they answer?"

"I cannot guess, Colonel," said Id; even the computer seemed puzzled.

"I can assure you, however, that all transmitting and receiving equipment is functioning properly."

"But they still aren't responding. Id, are any of the other pilots awake?" Scott asked. His face was taut, nervous. Something was wrong.

"Yes sir. Lieutenants Stratton and Waterhall are both out of hyper-sleep," Id informed him.

"Good. Channel me into their receivers only," Scott ordered the computer. Id linked the three ships immediately.

Scott detailed the problem to the two younger pilots. Lieutenants J. W. Stratton and Pamela Waterhall were experienced space-wise veterans, and they agreed that something on the home planet was seriously wrong.

"Listen, Pamela," Scott said to Waterhall, "J. W. and I are going to warp into Earth orbit and find out what's going on. You bring everyone else out of hyper-sleep and then do the same. Remember, these Pegasus fighters can't take the strain of lightspeed for very long, so make sure everyone's calculations are precise. Jeremy, Id already has our calculations completed, so transfer them to your navi-computer and let's go."

Seconds later, the two sleek starfighters burst away from the rest of the squadron and leaped into hyperspace in a brilliant lightflash. Almost immediately they began to decelerate, easing off the supralight drive, and minutes later they blurred out of hyperspace and into sublight orbit around Earth.

Scott's jaw went slack. He tried to cry out, to scream, to do something, but his body refused to respond. Reeling in shock, his mind desperately tried to catch up with what was happening, and sent his hands flying over the starfighter's instruments.

"It will do no good to recheck the instruments," Id said slowly. "We are where we are supposed to be."

Scott stopped tearing through the instrumentation. Slowly, he turned to stare at Id, his eyes vacant, his face haunted. His hand spasmed uncontrollably as he pointed through the viewport. Tears began to flow freely down his cheeks as Scott screamed madly, "Then where is it? Where the hell is it?"

The colonel began to sob, his body shaking violently, spasms wrenching his body in waves. In the other starfighter, Lt. Jeremy W. Stratton was catatonic. Unable to accept what his senses knew to be true, the lieutenant's mind had simply burned itself out.

Beyond the two starships was empty space.

Many thousands of miles away, the angry red planet Mars glared balefully through the heavens; but where once had been the mighty planet Earth, cradle of mankind, now there was nothing—no planet, no moon, not a random trace of cosmic dust.

In the cockpit of Scott's fighter, Id searched for a clue to explain how an entire planet could suddenly no longer be. The computer's sensors detected a dimensional flux, as if something had literally torn a hole in the fabric of the universe, and then suddenly sealed it again, eradicating any trace of what had once existed in that sector of this dimension. The only clue the computer could find was a faint ion trail, the trademark of a Sh'karr fast attack starcruiser. Id followed the trail away from the null space where once Earth had been, past Mars, the gas giant Jupiter and out

of the opposite side of the solar system. In the cockpit of the tiny starfighter, Colonel Hannibal Scott stared blankly at the readouts, muttering over and over "...the Hoboken hustle...they hustled us...hustled us...."

Pheobe Baber

APOLLO REVISITED

Out beyond the stars
Lies a pasture of debris
Left behind
By great cosmic heroes
Of days gone by.

The gods used to graze here
And feed off
The horizon
When magic was real
And nights were juicy.

We've put the gods
Out to stud.
It seems a disgrace
To forget them so quickly;
Zeus and his friends
Hanging in limbo --
Put out to pasture
Grazing on forgotten dreams.

Kevin Neil Cundiff

THE WAYFARER RETURNS

It was a more beautiful time,
With maidens fair and bars of rhyme.
Before Technology: a land of history
Filled with truths now veiled in mystery.

The fields were greener then,
The sky bluer and higher;
The brilliant red hue of my evening fire
Would dance on the black velvet night.

Life could be lived then,
And it was lived right!

And I am a Wayfarer
Fulfilling my Quest with no other cares
Of finding gold or finding glory
In this land now thought of as story.

The Elves' enchantment and their proud wood,
The gleaming towers of the Wizards of Good,
The adamant fortresses built by Men,
Show that evil can't triumph and mercy must win.

There is so much to do toward the Edge of this Land,
With wind in my hair and sword in my hand,
My Quest shall never be totally through;
But if it were, what could I do?

I can never go travel it all
But all that I go shall be travelled,
Not just passed by:
There are oaths to keep and mysteries to unravel.

Dragons beware! My sword stings...

* * *

But all take notice as the class bell rings.
The Wayfarer is back in his chair,
But not for long, so

Dragons beware!

THE RESOLUTION

The silence in the darkened hospital room pressed against her ears as Addie sat unmoving in the hard chair beside her husband's bed. The soft hum of the air conditioner was the only sound to break the stillness while the minutes turned into hours and Van lay deathlike on the bed. She had been told to expect a deep sleep. The nurse had said the drugs would free him for a time of the incessant pain and permit him to sleep, but she wasn't prepared for this kind of sleep—this deathly, terrifying, unflinching sleep.

Addie reached for Van's hand, hoping for some small response, but it lay in her hand, limp and white. She stared at it, stroking his fingers, remembering when they were strong and rough and calloused. She thought of the other times she had stroked his hands, and he had laughingly told her to "handle with care." He had teased her about injuring herself on the rough ridges. It had been so long since they had laughed. There isn't much laughter, she thought, when you live with pain. There was a time when Jeff was small that they had laughed and played and picnicked. They were a close, loving family, and she and Van had always been a close, loving couple. The only remnant of that other life was their nightly sharing a glass of wine. How long had it been since the accident? Addie was pregnant with Jeff when they broke the news to her, afraid to tell her because of her condition. It was a terrible shock, but when she knew Van would live, she was calm. Nothing else mattered at that moment except that Van would live.

The sudden opening of the door brought Addie back to the present. The nurse walked over to the bed, checked the chart on her clipboard, and proceeded to take Van's temperature and blood pressure.

"Should he be so still?" Addie asked fearfully.

"It isn't unusual when a patient has had as much medication as your husband. It will wear off after a time and you will notice him moving about more."

"How soon do you think it will wear off?"

The nurse checked the chart. "He should sleep through the night. Do you plan to stay with him?"

Addie nodded.

"The doctor will be making his rounds between 7:00 and 9:00 tonight. He can tell you more about your husband's condition then."

She took Van's pulse, wrote something on her clipboard, smiled at Addie and rustled softly through the door.

Addie rose from her chair and walked over to the window. She opened the drapes and looked across the dusk of the city to the highway where the accident had happened. It all seemed like a dream now. She remembered Van's determination to walk again, even though he was told what he might suffer. He had to choose between being a cripple without pain or

being able to walk with constant pain. Van chose to walk, and for a time medication took care of everything, but as he grew older, his tolerance of pain lessened. His poor circulation created even more pain, until there were times when Addie felt she couldn't stand his suffering another minute. Van would finally fall into an exhausted sleep, only to wake to another day of struggle.

It had grown dark as Addie stood at the window. She glanced at Van, then at her watch. It was after 7:00 p.m. Addie realized that she hadn't eaten since Van was brought in early that morning, but she didn't dare leave his room now or she might miss the doctor. She wanted Van home, where she could nurse him herself. Jeff was grown and away from home, so the two of them were alone now. She wanted what time they had left to be spent at home and she knew Van wanted it, too.

"Mrs. Porter?"

Addie was startled by the soft voice. She suddenly realized that she had been sitting in the room in the dark. She switched on the light beside Van's bed and looked up at the doctor.

"I thought you had probably fallen asleep and I didn't want to wake you. You need rest almost as badly as Van."

Addie thanked him for his concern; then asked when it would be possible for Van to go home.

"He can go tomorrow. I'll see that he has enough of this medication to last him the rest of the week. It will give him some relief, but by the time the pills run out, Van's system will have built up enough tolerance that we will have to try and find something else. Just now, I can't tell you what it will be, but I promise you we'll find it if it exists. I must caution you about one thing, Mrs. Porter. I know Van enjoys an occasional glass of wine. This is a very powerful drug, and under no circumstances should he have alcohol in any quantity."

He looked at Addie's stricken face and added, "Call me if you need me. I'll sign his release before I leave the hospital in the morning."

It had been a trying week. Addie had watched despairingly as Van tried to hide the pain that had daily taken its toll on his mind and body. She shook the last pill from the bottle and placed it in on the tray beside Van's glass.

"Is it time for the pill?"

Addie nodded and helped Van to slowly and painfully raise his body to a sitting position. She sat on the side of his bed and pulled the tray to her. Then she filled two glasses from the bottle of wine and handed the pill to Van.

Joe Roberts

THE CURE

The scientist sat, poring over his notes by the light of a single candle.
Suddenly, he leaped from his desk.

"I found it," he cried, running out into the dark street, "I found the cure.
Man need not die anymore."

But his words echoed hollowly through the empty town, fell upon empty
ears, and returned unanswered.

He cursed the darkness and he cursed the silence.
And the candle went out.

Gary Hall

TO BE A JACKAL

Walking around the mangled wreck
I selectively choose parts to take.
Peering through what once was a window,
I see the glass-sprinkled seats and
The dried puddles of blood.

I move back and look away.
Remembering my purpose,
I begin my work.
Gauges, handles, switches, and
An unscathed rearview mirror...

The twisted steering wheel was the last thing
He touched.
He must have died instantly...
From what once was his,
I now choose what I want.

I take from my collection the rearview mirror and
Look at myself.
Did he have a wife and children?
Perhaps he was returning home,
Perhaps not.

My eyes burn in the reflection.
I drop the mirror into the box
Shattering it into worthless pieces,
Condemned, I hurl it to
The other bodies that have shared its fate.

My work is done.

I retreat with my salvaged possessions.
Now I will sit and wait...
Until the next time.

Tommy Newton

THE OATMEAL INCIDENT

For the residents of Half-mile Peninsula, the day began as usual with stores opening, people working, and school buses running. Little did these people know that within twenty-four hours this small town would become a hub of activity. Men were walking down the main street of this quiet community thinking only of going fishing or hunting later in the day.

Some people had stopped in at Harry's Half-mile Diner to eat breakfast. The restaurant flourished with the early morning crowd that came in to dine or have a cup of coffee. Eugene, the cook, had already scrambled several eggs, flipped a few flapjacks, and burned some toast. He had no inkling that by this time tomorrow he would be a celebrity.

In the next few minutes, the waitress took several orders and passed them to Eugene. One gentleman made the fateful decision to have oatmeal for breakfast. Eugene put the oatmeal in a pan, set the pan on the stove, and it started to cook. He left the oatmeal to fix an omelet, and then it happened. The kitchen, not to mention the town, was struck with the dreaded oatmeal boilers! Because of human error, the town was faced with a terrible problem.

Eugene, in his haste, grabbed the boiling pan of oatmeal and dropped it in the sink. The oatmeal ran down the drain pipes into the Half-mile Peninsula sewage system where it spread throughout the town. The residents were urged not to flush their toilets, wash their dishes, or bathe themselves until the oatmeal was removed from the sewer.

The news media got wind of Half-mile Peninsula's predicament and rushed in to give the town their news crews recording stories for the evening newscasts. Crowds had gathered at Harry's Half-mile Diner to hear the first-hand accounts of the tragedy. Telling the audience that he had reacted wrongly, Eugene got to the core of the situation. He said, "Brother, one minute it was a-cookin' real slow, then boom! The whole mess is a-spreadin' all over the stove. Th' only thang I could do was to pitch the stuff in the sink and let'er go."

Liberal and conservative groups with their opposing views of the calamity were also in attendance. The liberals wanted to place strict restrictions on the use of oatmeal and urged the Betty Crocker Homemakers to study the long-range effects of oatmeal. The conservatives believed that oats had helped horses, and oats would help men. Of course, laboratory studies had only been conducted on rats and monkeys, so horses were another subject. Even the former President was called in to offer help, but to the dismay of the people of Half-mile Peninsula he said, "Peanuts have been very good to me, but oats; I don't know about oats."

Finally, three days after the accident, a Roto-Rooter employee and the Tidi-bol Man were invited to help in the massive clean-up operation. The sewers were nearly cleaned, and the new President ordered a study into

the accident at Half-mile Peninsula. It would take several months to learn the causes and effects of the oatmeal boilover. The residents did not seem to care what the commission would learn because the crisis was over, and the town was flushed with joy.

Diane Eison

CHILD WONDERING

Framed in the window pane

Resting, chin cupped in small hands,

He stares beyond raindrops

Peppering puddles to waves—

A kenetic mirror of

Jumping tree trunks

And leaves trading places

With limbs and loose debris.

He speaks his wondering,

"Does water learn to rain?"

Ralph Blight

THE GATE

A solemn spector came to me
When all my joys had died,
And told me of the lavish wealth
That goodly works denied.

And with the young benightedness
That filled my former days,
I gave my empty heart to him,
And yielded to his ways.

And sooner came such things fulfilled
Of promised wealth to me,
Then there ensued an increment
Of promised joys to be.

Yet balmy whispers that arose
Within me would prevail,
And prick my soul to change my ways,
Lest death should me assail.

But heeding not the burdens felt,
I onward ventured still,
To journey in the sinful ways
That led my avid will.

And soon, before me shrouded in
A dark and clouded mass,
I saw the spector near a gate,
Inducing me to pass.

The treasures which he tendered forth
As my imperiled bate
Stood high in gold upon the ground,
An inch beyond the gate.

And as I gazed upon those things
That glistened in this land,
The grinning spector called my name,
And offered me his hand.

Then all at once I far beyond
This opulence could see
The dark and sorrow-spangled world
He really offered me.

And then I knew that I must turn,
And change my ways as well,
For when I looked again I knew
It was the gate to Hell.

Dorine Geeslin

BROTHERS

Dedicated to Ray and Steven Hawk

Money, they say, used to go a lot farther than it does today. That is probably true, but even as early as 1916 or thereabouts it was apparently not going far enough to satisfy my brother Arvil. He was a lad of five or six at the time living with his parents, two brothers and two sisters on a Hart County farm in not-easy walking distance from Mr. Caswell's store in Priceville, Kentucky. Had he been able to walk and go alone, his expectations from his hard-earned dime might never have been told. As it was, his brothers, both older than he and able to manage the road-wagon, witnessed the event and, in a way, bore witness against him.

Arvil took his dime and went to the candy counter. With much delicious anticipation he made his choices: a penny's worth of this and a penny's worth of that until a fairly large sack was full and the dime's worth had been fully reckoned. Then he took his sack of candy to the front porch of the store where there was no one to disturb him and no one to ask him for a piece of it. He ate it all. Shortly thereafter his face assumed a somewhat stricken look, and he began to scream. The screams brought his brothers from the store where they had been doing the family's trading. A look at that little face made them wonder how long it would take to get him to the doctor's house. Should they unhitch the horses and go full speed? Or should they save the unhitching time and carry him as fast as they could in the wagon? They managed to ask him what was the matter.

"It's gone," he shrieked. "It's gone!"

"What's gone?" They asked in unison, but a bit of knowledge of the hurt, just enough to bring a trace of a smile to their faces, was beginning to reach them.

"My money's gone!" Arvil shouted. As his brothers broke into uncontrolled fits of laughter, his scream stopped, and his little fists began to pummel the bigger boys. He sobbed heartbrokenly as they carried him, arms thrashing at them even yet, to the wagon and deposited him on the springboard. He had cried himself to sleep long before the boys got home with the staples, their little brother and their big story.

Time passed, and the times changed. A world war was fought; the family had another little girl; the family moved; the road was partially paved and a yellow line put in the middle of the paved sections; people became older. Arvil changed, and Arvil remained the same. He became a teenager, but he retained his high regard for money. He was big now and could earn money. He continued to amass money, but in larger quantities. Most importantly, he learned to turn it loose graciously, but only for those rare items which he valued more highly than money.

One other thing that had not changed was his age-relationship to his

brothers. They were still older than he and more able, it seemed, to manage worldly affairs and to make light of him when he was not able to drive a good bargain, to do well in school, or surpass them in joke-making.

For one thing, they had a car, a T-model Ford. Arvil, at fourteen, had no car, but he knew how to drive and had the money for gas and oil. The other fellows, with their many outlets for cash, were often hard-put for gasoline money. They solved this problem in part, however, when they learned that driving a car was one of those rare privileges which Arvil placed above his money. They drove a hard bargain. He could drive the car to Sunday School, two miles away, if he would put gasoline in the tank before he brought the car back home. He was paying about fifty cents for the privilege of driving four miles. It was an outrage, but he could have borne it well if his brothers had not laughed at him. They were nice enough early on Sunday morning, but before the day was over, they were getting the best of it, and they enjoyed that knowledge.

Each Sunday a high-spirited Arvil drove off, but he often became a bit depressed driving home since he knew very well what was coming. One Sunday an idea came his way, and it grew in the days that followed. Before the week was out, he had taken a younger sister into his confidence. The following Sunday she began to get confidential with her other brothers as soon as Arvil had left for Sunday School. It seemed that she had been hearing some gossip at school. "They say it's a sight to see what he does to that yellow line," she confided.

It wasn't easy to get to the place where one might view Arvil's handling of the yellow line. The road in front of the house was 31-W, but it hadn't been paved in Hart County. The county line was a mile from the house. As 31-W entered Hardin County, it became a paved road with a stripe in the middle. The boys walked the mile, hid and waited. In due time here came their brother driving their car down the middle of that road with one front and one rear wheel on either side of, and carefully equidistant to, that yellow stripe. Fortunately, no other traffic was on the road as was often the case in 1924. The driver was so intent on his task that apparently he never saw or heard his two brothers as they waved their arms and yelled for him to get on his side of the road. When he entered Hart County with its unmarked gravel road, it was with great effort that he kept the car between the ditches. He veered to the right. Overcompensating, he veered to the left. He zigged, and he zagged. One thing he never did was slow down. He outdistanced his followers, but they continued to run until they saw their machine turn into the drive at home. They arrived, panting, to find Arvil sitting on the porch reading the Sunday paper which he had purchased in town. They were too breathless to threaten him physically. Besides, he was protected by his Sunday suit which they would not have dared to soil. They tried to talk.

"Just exactly what did you think you were doing?"

"Now wait a minute." This came from Arvil. "I know what you're thinking, fellows. But, believe me, if there had been a bicycle anywhere on that road, I'd have got over and let him have his little path. But there wasn't any, and I can't see why I can't play it safe and stay on that road with a good

dependable guideline that they painted..." His sister sniggered, and the big boys saw just a trace of a wink in Arvil's eye as he turned to look at her. She laughed out loud then, joined by Arvil, whose volume soon increased and surpassed hers. The older boys turned red and redder and finally jumped into their car and took off to begin their Sunday driving fun.

Usually Arvil dreaded their return, not wanting to hear stories of their good time at his expense. Today, though, he did not care. Today would be different. They would never tell stories of today's drive. Today they might walk as far as they would drive. He had neglected to put the gasoline into their tank.

Joe Dragoo

CONSCIENCE, CONQUERORS, CAPTAINS

To us the disease sped through space,
Yet to the stars at a snail's pace.
And was that trip a sad mistake,
If worlds died within its wake?

We brought them books they could not read,
And planted thoughts that would not seed.
Music—they could not comprehend.
Power—they could not hope to wend.

Our works of art—the shades of a dead world.
To them the flag of death unfurled.
They objected of course, but blood still seethed.
Now weep you demons with knife unsheathed.

Hail the conquerors! Hold your breath.
And from the skies await your death.
For we meddle in things not our own.
Now even our home world is lifeless stone.

So now I pilot a packet liner.
A captain's life—there's no life finer.
But in nightmares, captured worlds I see,
Where alien children speak English with me.

Joe Dragoo

A TWO STORY HOUSE AND A WHITE PICKET FENCE

In the arm of a spiral galaxy,
A star did burn with brilliancy.
And with two moons to escort it,
A planet did run in elliptic orbit.

A world with nothing great to see,
Except for quiet prosperity.
I think that's what attracted me
To make there a home for thee.

But no, you missed the gambling ships,
Cruises, parties, out-world trips,
And all the money that I spent.
I think I was not negligent.

You wanted slaves with emerald hair.
You wanted to hunt Aldebaran bear.
And so of course I took you there.
You blasted that bear right in his lair.

You wanted to capture a Canopian king.
You ransomed him for a diamond ring.
And then on Mira you lost the thing,
And spent the day at dice, crying.

Undoubtedly, you're beautiful.
And I, of course, am dutiful.
But you're in jail and drunk with beer.
I think it best I leave you here.

In the arm of a spiral galaxy,
A sun does burn with brilliancy.
And on a planet, with dignity
I live in quiet prosperity.

Beth Sample

THE TALE OF PETEY O'HARE

A PARODY

The vast, ageless fir tree (it had been there for as long as any of the local rabbits could remember) spread its groping, winding roots into the black, fertile, sandy soil, leaving between its immense base and the yielding sandbank beneath it a gaping opening, a yawning beckoning hole which had long ago been chosen by Lem O'Hare as the home, haven for himself and his cow-eyed bride (she was the third daughter of Hal Hopson, heavy-thighed, cumbersome, over-fed) and which had been occupied by the Lem O'Hare family ever since Lem and Nettie had eloped to Camaraw County and had come home to their awaiting, welcoming abode to begin their life together, to have children, and to live in the tradition long ago established by their forefathers. Even now it provided steady, unfaltering shelter for Nettie and the four offspring she had borne him (the three incorrigibly lazy, idle daughters were soon to be married off to the Verner boys), and it witnessed, watched the every day occurrences in the pleasant, but not overly loving household of the O'Hare family.

Nettie O'Hare often took a basket from the shelf (the one her Grandfather Hopson had collected as a debt from Judge McCurron back during the war) and lumbered contentedly, peaceably through the woods which ran parallel to the old Barkwright place to Rutliff's Bakery where she would buy brown bread and currant buns but mostly catch up on the local gossip. Before starting off on her customary, usual outing to the bakery, Nettie had always made a habit of instructing her children in what they should, or perhaps should not, do in that interval of time during which she would be away.

"See that you mind yourselves and stay out of trouble while I'm gone, and 'specially stay away from Mr. McSpane's garden, you hear? Your father, rest his soul, had an accident there. He was put into a pie by Missus McSpane long about the time little Fannie Mae was borne."

Following the departure, leave-taking of their mother, the three girls, Floosey, Mooney, and Fannie Mae, moved almost as one body, progressing foot by foot, inch by inch, seeming almost to be standing still except for the incessant shuffling of their feet, down the dusty, parched, winding lane to pick blackberries, plump, ripe berries, the purple-red juice oozing between their paws as they plucked them from among the clutching briars and dropped them into the waiting pail or more often into their waiting, anticipating mouths.

As his three immense, mammoth-like sisters picked and gorged themselves on blackberries, young Petey O'Hare, small, wiry, like his dead, deceased father, yet not as much like his father as like his father's father, hopped slowly toward Mr. McSpane's garden, not forgetting his mother's

warning, not forgetting his father's death, but rather not remembering them by way of not thinking of them at all. He saw the garden fence, squeezed under the gate, surveyed the garden with utter amazement, profound disbelief.

"Well now, I've sholy never seen so much food in just one garden," he thought as he limped around nibbling on lettuce, French beans, radishes, parsley, sampling each vegetable and savoring each mouthful as if each plant were pure, blessed, sacred. His contentment was suddenly, unwarningly shattered as Mr. McSpane appeared from around the end of a cucumber frame waving and old, rusty rake which seemed not so much a symbol of danger to Petey, but rather a symbol of the long-standing war, unceasing battle between the McSpane's and the rabbit families in the surrounding countryside. Petey scampered, ran frantically, searching, seeking an escape, leapt through an open, waiting window of an old toolshed, sprawled weakly, helplessly on the floor, certain of his doom, yet indomitable, scrabbling up again, dove shivering, whimpering into a half-filled, yet half-empty, or perhaps one-third filled watering can. He lay there panting, immobilized, motionless, surrounded by garden tools, stacks of flower pots, and the musty smell of mildewed fertilizers, submerged, but not totally, in the stale, stagnated water which had been meant to quench the thirst of some forgotten, unremembered plant.

Temporarily forgotten, ignored, his existence disregarded by Mr. McSpane, he scrambled, clambered stiffly, awkwardly from the moist, rusty can and cautiously, discreetly, carefully crept from the shed, looking to and fro, searching for a way out of the garden. Just at that moment, or perhaps a little later, a fat, sleek, self-indulgent mouse trotted by, but her only answer to his urgent, insistent appeals for directions was an impatient, intolerant toss of her head, her mouth being clogged completely, utterly with a ripe, resplendent green pea (one of the finest from Mr. McSpane's garden).

Eventually, at last he spotted, spied the gate, his portal to freedom, but between him and his salvation was Mr. McSpane, stooping, digging, tending his beloved plants, the fruits of his endless, backbreaking labor. Starting out with the intention of skirting around Mr. McSpane, Petey was seized with an uncontrollable, irrespressible urge to sneeze, due to his brief, unforgettable stay in the watering can, and he could not hold back, restrain the resounding, exploding, echoing sternutation which startled Mr. McSpane, bringing him shouting, cursing, to his feet.

First paralyzed, immobilized by fear, then spurred on by raw, instinctive terror, Petey sped past Mr. McSpane, headed toward the garden gate, caught his jacket (blue tweed, bought only a month ago by his mother) on a net by the buttons on the back, and sat there, already almost convinced of his approaching death, but as Mr. McSpane approached, grabbing, clutching at him, he slipped out of the coat, leaving it dangling on the net as he scrambled, scurried beneath the garden gate and darted, raced home to the reassuring, comforting haven of the familiar fir tree (the only home he'd ever had.).

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