Voices

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The wind made the little boat rock. Then with no wind the boat rested quietly in the water as if nothing had happened.

"I brought along some ham sandwiches. Want one?" Malcolm said.

Johnny lifted his head. "All right."

Malcolm took the sandwiches from the bag on the bottom of the boat and after giving one to Johnny watched him take an unenthusiastic bite.

"Feeling any better?" Malcolm said.

Johnny swallowed and thought a moment. "Yes, I feel better. It's not so much what I did that matters. It sorta shattered my beliefs in things—and it's just that I'm trying to get them straightened out again."

Malcolm shook his head as if he understood. "Well, that's all right. I'm all for that. But you gotta remember one incident doesn't change things as much as you might suspect."

"I sure hope not," Johnny said.

"Sure it doesn't. You'll get over it before too long. Nothing is as bad as it seems."

"Yeah. A lot of people say that."

Circling over the woods on the other side of the lake a flock of crows cawed sassy as they flew, seeing the land below from their positions higher than all but the hawks, who flew in silence.

"Couldn't have picked a prettier a day," Malcolm said, looking around at the sky.

Johnny shook his head mechanically.

Malcolm slung back his rod, and thrusting it forward watched the bright silvery lure at the end of his line go spinning out through the air until it splashed almost without a sound into the water. After a few cranks on the reel he said, still cranking, "You know it was none of your fault. It could've happened to anyone and nobody really feels badly toward you. Sure—they're sorry and all, but they know you didn't mean it. So if you really want to start feeling any better you'll try catching some fish and try not to think about it."

"Why?"

"Why what?"

"Why try to catch fish so I won't think about it? What's so damn important about fishing? It's nothing more than a distraction."

"A what?"

"That's what I'm trying to get at, Malcolm. What is fishing but something to distract your mind? Not just fishing but everything else."
"I thought you liked fishing," Malcolm said. "You're not going to let what happened take away everything you have, are you?"

Before what happened I had a great deal and thought it all mattered and meant something. But now I can see I have nothing."

"Don't tell me you've even given up fishing?"

"Fishing?—crap!" he said. And then after a moment, "Any idiot can fish. But what gets me is why they do anything else."

Down deep into the water where Johnny was staring small fish hurried away at the approach of a larger fish, swimming quickly behind. The water was clear at first but then the farther down it went the cloudier it got until blackness obscured any object that might have been resting on the bottom. Deep in the water the sun-rays were refracted, giving a different effect than on the surface.

"Come on, Johnny and try and catch some fish. They'll be hitting good now in just a few minutes."

Listlessly, Johnny raised his rod, reeled in and put a worm on the bare hook. Watching the line sink back again into the water he sat like he had before, unchanged."

"You'll get a bite," Malcolm said. Then reassuringly, "I just know you will."

"Just another damn distraction," Johnny said.

"What?"

"I said it's just another—a distraction from man's worthlessness."

"Whatcha say that for?" Malcolm said. "You keep harping on this distraction jazz. Just what the hell you talking about?"

Johnny said nothing. He was looking again down deep into the water. At first the water was clear but then the deeper it got the less definable things seemed. At one moment something deep in the water looked like something he knew, but then the next something strange. In his mind he could see Billy in the coffin, dressed in his baseball uniform as if about to rise up from the sleep and run to the ballpark. Even there in his coffin where it was so dark it was impossible to see even if he had the ability he was surrounded by the idiotic vanity of the living, the illusions so deceiving, even found in the grave.

Malcolm asked again. "All a distraction? What's all that? Whatcha sayin'?"

"That's right. It all seems so clear now—as if someone had wiped the grime from the window. It's like nature made a mistake in allowing man to walk on earth. I mean we're just animals like any old dog except for some reason we were forced to think about other things than ourselves—and since then it's become an instinct—kind of an instinct to divert ourselves from ourselves—to keep from thinking about what we really are."

"Whata—at?" Malcolm said."

"It's like our ancestors a long time ago realized they were worthless but refused to think about it and to keep from thinking about it made up games and sciences and arts to keep their minds off their own worthlessness."

"You mean like going to a circus or something when you ain't got nothing else to do?"

"Just about," Johnny said.

The rain fell. The Spanish moss, saturated, dripped the rain from the trees and the trees, slightly moving like chained ghosts in the wind, stood too silent, too all-knowing to be articles of reality. Appearing too permanent, too timeless, they stood up from the swamp as if in a trance and in this trance seemed to offer the taste of their saps to all who wished immortality. But then the rain and the wind ceased, and with it went the trance, the illusion, leaving behind it only the sound of the water dripping from the moss—pli-plop, pli-plop.

With the rain gone, Malcolm got a strike and successfully placed the hook in the fish's mouth. At first the fish took the line down deep, pulling all the line he could from the reel. Loosing its first burst of energy it took the line in wide zig-zags looking for a sunken log or any rubbish sturdy enough to wrap the line around. But he could find nothing to save him. As he lost fight Malcolm reeled in, though not too fast, for all the pleasure was just before the fish lay captured in the bottom of the boat. Finally the fish came helplessly toward Malcolm, was pulled up and slapped proudly into the bottom of the boat.

"Hey!" Malcolm said. "That's a good two pounder." The fish flopped wildly in sudden impulses, lay still, its gills moving like wings, then again flopping.

"Not bad at all." Johnny said. Watching closely as Malcolm struggled at removing the hook buried deep in the fish's throat Johnny remembered the sharp, piercing ache he had felt turning and jumping in the cavity just below his rib cage as he sat crunched up on the little chair, bending over the way too terribly little coffin, ridiculously shrouded and decorated, knowing that inside lay the corpse, all dressed up in the same uniform and catcher's mitt it had worn in its last minutes, and in one hand the ball Johnny was the last to throw.

Johnny averted his eyes from the dying fish and after Malcolm had put the fish in the cooler he said, "Finally got a date with that girl Sandra Patterson. Been asking her for one now for months."

"Whatcha think made her finally decide on dating you?" Johnny asked.

"Oh, I don't know. God knows it wasn't because of my face. Maybe she thinks I got money. And then too she may be seeing something in me she hadn't seen before."

"Oh, yeah. Like what?"

"Oh, I don't know. But it must be something. After all she's going with me."
Maybe she's trying to be kind," Johnny said.

"What's that suppose to mean?"

"Forget it. I don't even know the girl."

"You mean she don't like me? You trying to say she's dating me out of sheer charity or something? What kinda bum are you anyway?"

"I said forget it," Johnny said. "It was nothing. I was just thinking about the other day when I was down by the courthouse listening to this politician running for state governor. He kept saying how he would be the best governor the state ever had if only he was elected. But there was a real old man standing there next to me where I was standing. You should've seen him, Malcolm. I never saw such a man. He had this real long beard full of dirt and all kinds of crappy-looking stuff. I bet he hadn't washed the damn thing in years. He'd been drinking too. You could smell it a mile off. Anyway, after a while he came up real close to me and asked if I thought the politician had any noble aspirations and really wanted to do something good for the betterment of mankind. I hadn't really thought about it but I said I thought he probably did. After that he got up even closer to me—right up to my face. And said the politician was nothing but a phony—like everybody else. That nobody does a damn thing if it don't do something good to him. Directly or indirectly. That the human organism is nothing but a twisted up bundle of tissues with the only desire of being fulfilled. That all fulfillments are thrills and sensations with sex high on the list if not at the top."

"Yeah," Malcolm said. "There's sure a lot of cranky old men in town."

Not noticing two dragonflies that had landed on the edge of the boat, Malcolm looked out at the lake and cast his lure near a battered stump that rose from the water. The dragonflies, one on top of the other, flickered their wings as they trembled, their bodily motions moving with grace and with the supreme power their bodies contained. Without disturbing the insects' attachment Johnny reached down and nudged them away and watched as they flew away again into the swamp.

Feeling a coldness from a sudden drizzle of rain Malcolm took the thermos bottle of coffee from the bottom of the boat, poured himself a cup and offered Johnny some of the beverage.

"No thanks," he said.

"Still plenty warm."

"- All right."

Malcolm poured another cup and gave it to Johnny.

"What kinda coffee is this, Malcolm?"

"Same old kind I always make."

"The damn stuff's tasteless."

"Tastes all right to me," Malcolm said.

Johnny took another tasteless swallow from the cup, then poured the rest over the side of the boat.

Malcolm put away his rod and seemed to be concentrating as he sipped on his cup of coffee. "You know what I'm going to do when I get through with school?" he said.

"Nope."

"I think I'm gonna get a sporting goods shop. -- Yep. That's what I'm going to do. You know, fix it all up real outdoors-looking and have it in a real convenient spot where everybody can see it. -- I bet a person can make a mint with that kind of thing. And not only that you're your own boss and don't have a lot of pressures and all that stuff. -- Yep. That's what I'm going to do. -- Why don't you and me get one and be partners."

Johnny thought a minute. "No thanks."

"Why not?"

"I'm going to be a soldier."

"A soldier! God! You mean as a career?"

"Yep."

"That's a hell of a thing to do. A man can get his head blown off in that kind of a thing."

"What's the difference?" Johnny said. "I had an uncle in World War II that got killed. They never found him. -- His only survivor was his daddy and he died two years ago. The people who knew his daddy only had a faint idea of what my uncle was like. And before you know it all them're going to die and then there'll just be people like me who only know his name and nothing else. When I'm dead who in hell's going to know if my uncle ever even existed? -- Uh-uh, Malcolm, there's no difference. -- Everybody's forgotten."

Johnny still stared into the water. His cork began bobbing and, watching it, he thought of the ball bouncing away from the home plate after he had stood high on the pitcher's mound, a moment before the ball left his hand, and sensing something wrong as if it were urgent to stop and look around but somehow fatal if he did not go ahead and let loose the pitch. And then seeing the ball way too low, kicking dust as it hit the dirt home plate, and the little catcher turning away for the dust, and than a sharp snap as the ball came from the dust striking the catcher's head, and then Billy lying dead in the ballpark. And him standing stunned as he stared down at the crumpled body.

And then at the cemetery under the tent sitting close to the way too terribly small coffin as the priest said his words and as the birds high in the trees sang songs and made noise in the leaves and him knowing that inside the coffin lay the remains of an individual's life cut short at age nine by none other than himself and that under the coffin lay the empty space of earth to be filled so needlessly by none other than himself and the two
hands under his rib cage squeezing each other and digging their nails deep into his flesh. And the mother of this life he had stifled sitting by his side muffling her sobs.

The fish swallowed the hook and then taking out the line fast made the reel spin widely. Still staring deep, even now deeper into the water Johnny did nothing all the time the line moved like a taut wire into the water until it finally snapped, leaving the reel bare. In the silence except for now pouring rain he sat as motionless as marble, with the lineless rod clasped hard in his hands, and with his eyes staring out emptily at the deserted vastness of the lake, his hands still clutching the lineless rod, the tip of the rod pointing into the rain without a quiver.

CLOWN

The defoliation of emotion so hard learnt
Goes slowly—like your Mother crocheting a pansy doily
All pink and blue.
Never white or green—two colors which burn
And are hot of life or the lack of it.
Pink, unnatural and safe
And blue in depths to the quick.
He said “Enuch”— one way out of it.
Being a clown is better, nobody knows what you’re doing then.
A clown—like a switch from a pauapau slicing
Through the rough green pod of the mild weed stock,
Breaking open the white blood and
Tearing the trapped silver fish scale
From feather and
Throwing them to the wind.

Philip Angeles

VIOLIN

There from the flood—light stage
Vague...
The cigarette smoke haze,
A whispering room...
Suddenly with the darkness—
Hushed...
Silent
Up
Lept the bow,
Caressed the strings,
The sienna wood vibrated
With liquid sound...
With beauty...
With eyes closed
The listener feels the melody...
Here in this green forest,
Fragrant and umber
Leaps the doe,
By her side the ruffled fawn
Tiptoes...
By the brook
That sings and races
I stand alone
Listening to the violin
That sighs
In the distance
With silver sound,
Throaty
Like a flute...
My heart leaps up
Allegro...
The note dies slowly
And the forest fades...

Judy Beth Gibson
BROKEN STATUES

I cannot look at a broken statue.
Aware and defensive it stands
With no leg, no hand, no thumb.
Seeing, eyes stare after nothing.
If there, unnoticed it goes.
Wanting them not to know
I know, I dare not look.
No broken statue is my friend.

Kay Jernigan

WISDOM

Go and find yourself a candle
Place a match to its wick
Let the tallow flow onto
the floor
When the last drop has hardened
Come and tell me what
You have learned.

Jerry Hensley

BEGINNING

(Or, Come Again, I'm not too sure?)

In the beginning there was Man,
So he allowed himself to be
Overseer of the world.
And Man saw that this was good.

He looked around and proclaimed:
"Let there be a division of surfaces;"
And this, too, came to pass:
There were
Cliffs, bays, islands, piers, ports,
Continents, peninsulas, oceans, seas,
Rivers, lakes, ponds, pools,
- Something in which to drown.
And Man
Reasoned this was more good than bad;
Therefore He permitted it to be so.

Man was perplexed; for
He sensed this was incomplet...
He could not, for some reason,
See his dreams.

"Oh yes, of all things! We have been
Living in darkness! Let there be light."
There were headlamps, single lights,
Street lights, gas lights, flashlights,
Bright lights, colored lights, no lights...
"Colored lights," Man recalled.

Man saw niggers, wops, kikes
Chinks, Indians, and white.
And this was good.
For in this new light, Man was able
To suppress, reject, enslave, persecute,
Impoverish, dominate, and obliterate.
All this in flaming technicolour:
And this was even better.

The world grew and Man grew
Confused; for this was still incomple...
How was He to alleviate the problem of
Expanding population? Fear won in a fit
Of confusion and reason. Man then said,
"Let there be border wars, tribal wars,
Slum wars, range wars, gang wars, cold
Wars, price wars, gas wars, and, yes, World Wars;
Pestilence, starvation, plagues along with
Infanticide, homicide, and suicide,
And this was good——
Man was proud.

Then somewhere someone, some color whispered,
"Please......let there be God."

Crusades and wars were fought to show
That there was: books written to prove:
People stoned to be convinced, people burned
Who weren't, people crucified who were;
To remove temptation, people subjected
To castration.

This only strengthened the desire to
Subject the entire world to His word.
Missionaries dressed the natives in the name of God;
But hated them for being black or red.
"Love God or I'll beat your god damned heathen ass!"
How could the natives resist? They couldn't.
And Man was elated.

Someone on the back row
Stood and mumbled, "God is dead."
Then another rose violently screaming,
"The Hell he is! I saw an ad on T. V.
Saying he's still alive."
"Yeah, and I heard it on the radio!"
Another echoed.
Thus it was settled.
And...Man was completeee.

James W. Minton
THE DEATH OF THE UNICORN
A Short Story by Judy Gibson

The unicorn died the summer I was ten. A mystic ruler of the walnut lobby from the high ivory mantelpiece, from a throne higher than the grandfather clock, from a place more honored than any ancestral portrait, the unicorn was the only ancestor I knew, the only heritage I claimed in the ranging house which all the brothers called home.

It was not my home. It was only a refuge to me, for I was a rebel child. I lived in the meadows with Quence, the stallion, and with a thin-nosed sable collie called Lancaster. I had a secret retreat in the pine grove, in a place where tree limbs wove a mesh of security around me. I ate wild strawberries and fruits of the passion flower in their seasons; it was my communion, my ritual to Nature.

The house stifled me. The stiff chairs forced me to sit straight up and on the edge so my feet would touch the floor. I would be buttoned into starched dresses in the afternoons and be polite to Aunt Katy or cousin Malinda... the fuzzy black hats with cloth flowers... the prattle and chatter of relatives and neighbors... "Come see Miss Lucy's doll." "I made it for Lori Anna." "No, don't touch it! You'll get it dirty... Lucy, you say she had the you-know-what-you-know-where since August, and you were about to say...?" "And her so young, with one completely removed!" Mother talked like that, lots of you-know-whats, so I wouldn't know what, but I always did. I knew a lot for a C-H-I-L-I-D.

The living-room talk... I always fidgeted, wiggled, squirmed. I sat back in my chair and swung my legs fiercely, until I knew Uncle Ben could probably see up my dress. But I didn't care, because my panties were pink lacy ones that had the day of the week on them but never the right day. Dad always talked to men over in the corner where the smoking stand sat in front of the bay window, and I heard little bits of conversation about crops and such; that bored me sick. Dad sat around in his work clothes, and Mom was in her apron stained with paint from the last time the porch was painted, and I had to sit there and look demure in a starched dress. The boys always said, "There's work to do in the barn," and left. I never considered them lucky, though, because they knew better than to not do work at the barn after they left.

The boys didn't like me much. They didn't like horses, and they said Lancaster was worthless. Besides that, I didn't have to do field work. In fact, I didn't do anything, anything but create a world of my own bigger and more fantastic than anything the people of the house would ever know.

On Friday, Wilbert and Bernadine Somebody came to talk, a lot of dull things tossed back and forth in clouds of cigar smoke in the musty parlor. I was in my room for quite a while when Mother came in and slid open my bureau drawer. I knew what that meant. I let her button the little pearl buttons of the dress down my back, and I surprised myself by not complaining. I combed my hair—great lengths of pale stuff that I loved to feel on my face and neck in a breeze but hated when the clammy sweat plastered it to my skin. Mother tied a ribbon in it, and we marched in to join the company.
They were in the front hall, and Dad was showing them the unicorn. He was telling them the history of the statue, but his history of it never came out the same twice. I wanted to shout from the doorway. "That isn't what you told the collector last April? You said a thousand then." But instead I said, "Do you like our conversation piece? That's what Mother calls it. Dad calls it Prestige." The two strangers turned toward me and laughed, pleasantly, but without feeling.

"Hello. Hope," Bernadine said to me. "A lovely girl," she said to no one in particular. Wilbert didn't say anything, but just surveyed me as if I were part of the furnishings and moved his eyes away.

They started on the unicorn again, so I slapped away. I went to the kitchen to get something to feed Rondall's turtle. Rondall was only seven, and he shouldn't have had a turtle, not a fine box turtle like Seventeen. Seventeen was seventeen years old. Bobby counted his rings and told me. Bobby and I always fed him, because Rondall didn't know how. Anyhow, I couldn't find anything to feed him but a little bit of tomato, so I took that. His cage was out in the back yard. I kind of fell going down the steps, but I didn't fall all the way down. I caught myself, but a can of Dick's fishing worms on the rail turned over on me, full of rain water from the night before. I was a mess! I felt like crying, but I didn't.

I fed Seventeen and went back inside. I was in the kitchen trying to get the mud off my dress when Mother called.


My heart started playing ping-pong inside my ears. I saw Bobby's hunting jacket hanging on the door, so I put it on and buttoned it up and went in.

Mother heard me coming into the parlor but she didn't look at me. The other three were looking at me with such shock. I wished those two people away, dead, or of a spanking.

"No, you aren't. I've told Bobby he can't go with the ground so muddy. . . I'll talk to him later, but take that filthy jacket off before you get your dress messed up." She started unbuttoning it, and all I could say was, "But. . . I al ready. . . ."

"You already nothing," she grumbled. "You can just tell Bobby I said he couldn't go. The very idea of you going hunting in your good. . ."

She saw it, and it was too late for me to run. I wasn't afraid of Mother now, or of a spanking. I was mostly wishing those four alien eyes were not looking at me with such shock. I wished those two people away, dead, or never born a thousand times in each moment, but still they looked, stared, gaped at me as I stood there in my soggy, muddy princess dress. Bernadine grasped her white gloves in subconscious protection against my filth.

Then Mother said them, said the words I knew would come. "When are you going to start acting like a young lady and not like some heathen little boy?"

"I'm not a young lady!" I screamed, with the sound loud in my ears. I felt my cheeks burning with indignation. "I'm not a lady, and I wish I weren't a girl at all. I wish I were a horse or a dog! They don't know THEIR parents, and they don't have to wear dresses!" I was crying then, choking on the words, but I didn't care. I had said too much, and I ran, knowing that in their embarrassment they would let me go, as always.

I ran down the hall and started through the walnut lobby when the golden unicorn swam into sight through my tears. I went to the mantelpiece and stood for a moment transfixed beneath the porcelain statue.

Some impulse suddenly clenched me in its muscular fist, and I could not struggle free from its power. I pulled the stool up beneath the mantle in obedience to the little voice within my head. Standing on the stool I could just reach the base of the statue. I lifted it down carefully and reverently.

Never had I touched the unicorn before! From my fingertips, that thrilled at the feel of the gold, a power suddenly crept into my blood and I was absorbed into the spirit of the unicorn.

I ran from the house and through the fields. The damp ground sucked at my rushing feet, and bushes clawed at my skirt. And the unicorn, tight in my arms and clutched near my throbbing heart, sang as the wind sings to ears that never stop to listen.

"At last, at last! I thought you'd never hear!" the unicorn whispered to me. "There is a secret clearing," he said, "deep in the woods, the court of unicorns of primeval days, where there is grass softer than the petals of orchids. You must take me there. There are secrets that only you can know."

Into the woods I ran, up the mossy hills and down into the coves of lacy ferns where the air smelled of pennyroyal.

"A little farther!" said the unicorn. "Soon now. Very soon."

And suddenly before me were the white bluffs—walls of limestone with gnarled trees growing above and below. And at the foot of the wall was a wide circle of tender grass like a carpet of yellow-green velvet. In a stoney basin was a pool of clear rain water. There was silence except for the distant sound of birds.

"There, see where the nympha have made a throne for me! the unicorn said. "There should be a carpet of flowers . . . always . . . the fragrance is nectar to me. 'Paladins fierce and virgins sweet, but he's never had anything to eat,' the poet wrote in 'How To Catch a Unicorn.' It's true, I've never had anything to eat. That's how it is with unicorns. We are a hungry lot, but we can exist on beauty alone. Our place is a world of beauty. I can survey it all from my throne."

I placed the unicorn on the shelf of the rock and raced to the edge of the trees where violets and dogwood and redbud were growing. These I carried back in small bunches, and arranged before the unicorn who stood
silently and watched me.

I stood back to survey the thrown, then sat in the velvet grass where the unicorn was reflected in the pool. There in the water I saw him toss his head and then lift it high with flaring nostrils as he breathed in the fragrant air.

"At last!" he snorted. "Here I am at last, free from the cold walls of the house. I've been calling you for years, Hope! I was afraid you'd never hear me. My life is in the water now... I'm free... see, up on the rocks I'm not alive at all." I looked up, and there he stood, cold and motionless.

My eyes flashed back to the pool. There was the prancing unicorn, moving in a court of flowers that seemed to be only a blurred cloud of color that rippled beneath his feet.

"One day," he said, "if you are faithful in visiting me and in keeping flowers at my feet, you may come with closed eyes into our world and when you open your eyes, I won't be on the throne of rock, but look for me in the pool and I will come out a living unicorn that exists only for you. I will race in circles around you and touch your cheek with a nose softer than cloud. And like Bellerophon with his Pegasus of white, you shall ride a golden unicorn into the sky. You shall call me 'Star of Hope' and I shall be the golden star you wish on first at night."

Suddenly, bursting like a bubble, the dream was gone, for so was the sun, slipped behind the trees. The light was a rosy glow in the west and the night air was damp and cool.

Lonely, tired and hungry, I took one last look at the unicorn among his flowers, stood before him in silent obeisance for a moment, then turned and ran through the darkened woods.

I was afraid, both that I was lost and that I would get a whipping when I did get home, because I had taken the unicorn. At last I saw light through the trees and ran toward it, bursting into the field as someone in fear of drowning thrusts his head frantically above the water and gasps in astonishment that life is wonderful.

Across the fields I ran, panting and shivering. I heard Mother's frantic calling and I answered, wondering how long she had been looking for me.

I ran into her arms, weary and frightened. I think she knew I had found my own punishment in the darkness for she said only, "Where were you?" to which I answered, "Lost in the woods."

She didn't mention the unicorn, for she had not noticed it was gone. Safe for the moment, I thought. But then what will I do?

The next morning I woke with a flinch. Mother and Dad were talking downstairs. Their voices were thin with excitement. The phone rang and Dad talked awhile, then hung up. I heard him ring the operator and say, "Give me the police!" My heart seemed to hesitate in its beating, and my stomach was like cotton. I jumped out of bed with my heart suddenly pounding. My legs trembled as I ran down the stairs.
MEDITATION IN THE WASTE LAND

The sharp forked wings of bats fan burning air
And rise through the yellow dusk and glowing sky.
Smoothed out with the pointed cactus underneath,
Wrapping itself around a mountain peak.
Lost in a voiceless, tearless, dread repose—
In a purple sleep.
The wind arrives, the hot wind mixed with sand,
Shall we have rain?
The meteorologist
Says so,
But he was wrong.
So wrong before,
He could be wrong again.
In this great land where shadow shapes are real,
And clouds but shadows made to mock the sun,
And tears the dew that wets the morning sand,
We kneel,
Where two or more are gathered in my name
And gathered here together, pray for rain.

Yesterday, today one day the more,
We cannot know, here all is dust and sand
And a cry in the wilderness, the ears that heard
No longer hear, the eyes no longer see.
Firm-set, sun-blackened, dead and visionless.
We who are little more than the rough-edged sand,
Walk as in sleep where night has never come,
In a rock,
In a weary land
Where no shadows are.
Could I but find the rod to strike the stone
And send the waters forth to shrunken roots,
But he who casts you down upon this rock,
He understands it all,
He knows
He knows.

Listen to the whirlwind, listen to what the wind says.

"And were you there, and were you there with me,
When this great thing you call the earth was made,
Were you there then?
Were you there then with me?
Did you see how the cornerstone was laid,
Were you there when the thunder first drew breath,
Growing out from the tree...
From the living tree...
And were you with me when the dark was lit,
When sun first shone on sun and star on star,
And on the earth
When it first knew the night.
And can you tell me how the sudden dawn,
Unfolds the virgin flower, or how the dark
Know where to point his wings and fly in winter,
And could you turn the earth with your bare hands.
Or hold it still between your fingertips?
And you would question me,
How can you know,
How can you see,
When you see not yourself.
But know this.
I do care.
This is my land,
I have watered it with my tears and it would not grow,
What have I done to you, O my people?
Testify against me and see if I will not—
Open the clouds
And pour down the rain."

"What is it you require, what price is set?
I shall eat dust, love mercy and walk humbly,
You have thrown me on the rocks, I shall walk humbly
Seek justice, and love mercy and walk humbly.
And listen to what the wind says."

Summer has passed and gone and no one knew,
There are no trees to drop their fruits in summer,
There are no leaves to crush on the moving sand.
See from where I stand upon the rocks,
The sky is whitewashed, filled with saucelike clouds
And hot sand—breath, singing the upturned eyes.
From where I stand not even the fading green
Can thrust one feeble root to crack the stone.
Winter brings not the snow nor spring rain,
But the cold, bright rocks endure,
The rocks remain.

Listen to the whirlwind,
Listen to what the wind says.
"What have I done to you, O my people?"
Listen to the whirlwind,
Listen to what the wind says,
Listen to the wind in the sand,
Listen!

Judy Williams

DROUGHT'S END

Hollow thunder...
Mellow blowing thunder...
Sharp, been, thunder splitting the stillness.
And in the moment's only
The cadence of pelting drops
Of aluminum sound on the roof...
The anger of the rain
Batters the patient roof,
And then all outside is seeping with water,
Drinking itself drunk with its reward...

Drenched...

Refreshed...
The earth suddenly,
Suddenly seeped full of showers,
Runs randomly with rain.

The earth begins to awaken,
Small green fairies of fern frond
Awakened by a fragrant kiss,
And the earth grows green
And overflows
With glistening droplets,
Nectar's spilled from cupped leaves
To the long tongue of grass,
A cup passed from lip to lip
As the earth drinks,
Drinks of the water greedily.

Until the dust has swallowed up
The night storm
And the mud has swallowed every puddle.

Judy Gibson
LAMENT FOR A LOSS

Weightless words and blind glances. 
These are all you and I exchange; 
These instead of understanding, 
These in place of love.

Why not come naked to each other; 
As naked as our beginning. 
When, as blank bodies and minds, 
We dropped from a warm nothing 
to cold and probing hands; 
Hands that covered our bodies 
With worthless symbols 
And cluttered our minds 
With empty knowledge. 

We became baubles 
With which the world would play. 
Now we sit and stare 
Choking 
On the desperation 
Of our mute prayers.

Joyce Reels

MY WORN SHOES

Today I polished my worn, brown shoes 
That I bought two years ago. 
In the tanned leather, I could see the indentations of my toes 
And the scraped and scarred places created by my 
Changeableness and my right to choose 
Where I should want to go.

As I gently eased them off my tired feet, 
I couldn’t help noticing they had acquired the shape 
Of my two feet, much like an ape 
Mimicking what he sees people and 
Other animals doing as he leaps. 
From branch to branch and watches us mouth agape.

They were dull and listless these brown, worn shoes. 
Until after I had applied the polish and 
Stroked them and buffed them with deft motions of my hand, 
Smoothing the polish in the hollows and on the hills. 
It takes a while of testing and changing and wearing 
Of the philosophy we choose to live by, 
To make it fit shoe to foot or glove to hand.

Ronald B. Hill

FLASH—FLOOD

A Short Story by Beverly McCooklin

It was late evening but it was still hot enough to sizzle your brains out. 
The road bed was so dry it was just cracked open with little pieces standing 
up like some big, yellow jigsaw puzzle. The leaves on the trees and 
bushes by the side of the road just looked like they were covered with 
an old brown quilt from all that dust.

And there they was setting out on the porch at old Jacob’s store looking 
over at that little thread of water like it was going to come busting out right away. All of them setting there like they was all old men and 
prophets and they was still, listening, like a voice was going to cry out 
to one of them and each one thinking he was the one.

Just then Merle Beasley came out of the store and the screen slammed 
like a thousand pop guns went off and everybody jumped clean out of 
their skins.

"Hold on, Merle. We can’t hear no flood coming over all that!"

"You durn fools still looking for that flash-flood, I reckon you’ll be 
still setting and looking come doomsday,” Merle lashed out. He was always 
like that, real quick and feisty like. That Merle he was always like a 
pop gun himself, ready to explode.

Old Jacob had followed Merle out. "I reckon when it hits it will be 
doomsday for somebody. Why I remember a flash-flood once and them 
people caught in it and us looking for them for days."

"Them folks,” he started and sucked in air like he was planning on 
it lasting all year, "Them folks built their cabin right smack in a dry 
river bed. Hadn’t been no water there for years as I recollect it. Then 
one night, real late after they’d bedded down, it hit.” He stopped to 
spit out a piece of his chaw, but really just to give us a chance to take it 
all in. He just wanted to see how we was going for it.

"Well, they was plumb washed away. The boy, he must have held on to 
something, cause we found him way down the river. His face all screw­
up and wrinkled looking and his hands all tight on this piece of wood 
like he was trying to hold on. He was way up on dry land, too, like 
that water just laid him there all peaceful like.

But the ma and pa, they was lost for days, till Seb Perkins, he found 
them hung up in this barb wire fence and brush all around them.” Old 
Jacob went on real soft, like he was talking to himself, "Seb, he never 
was the same, he was never the same.”

We was all quiet then, some of us just looking at that water and some of 
us looking at the teams wondering if we could still make it home.

"Now, Jacob,” Merle put in, "you wouldn’t be making up these tales.
The rest of us, we ain’t seen no flood.”

Miss Bessie had come out and was just standing there taking it all in. 
She was a little woman, but quiet. Some little women think they have to
make up for being little by being loud all the time and yanking their heads off and cackling like guinea hens. Not Miss Bessie, she just moved along and hardly nobody would know she was there. Except once, I recall when she smiled I saw her eyes. They were real funny like a little coon I caught once, real bright and kind of skittish like, wild looking and kind of trapped.

She got no chance to look now, cause Merle yelled at her, "Go on home, Bessie. I'll be bringing the wagon when I come."

She just started walking down that road not saying nothing and not looking back. Her back was bent over like it was bowed from the big satchel of goods she was carrying. Her hair was brown like the dust on the road, and she had on the same blue print dress she'd been wearing for the last couple of months. She went right on toward that river like she didn't have no call to hurry, though she had to cross afore she got home.

"You reckon she'll cross afore the flood hits?" I asked Merle.

"Ain't no use to worry, ain't gonna be no flood," he started, "and besides I got more than a flood to worry me."

"What's bothering you, Merle?" Jess asked.

"Oh, Bessie's been acting downright funny. You all know how much I set store by a hot meal. Well, day before yesterday when I got home from the fields, there weren't no vittles in sight and no Bessie either. She never had missed a meal and it shore riled me good. I waited for a hour or more and she didn't come."

"Where you reckon she was, Merle, did you reckon she run off?" Jess was laughing.

"You just hold on, it ain't no laughing matter. She ain't never gonna run off cause she ain't got no place to go. I already seen to that."

"She come back like I figured she would and I don't have to tell you fellers, there was sparks flying then. Now when I come home from the fields, I expect something warm to stick to my ribs... why cold food don't do nothing for a body!"

"Bessie, she shore is good in the kitchen, Merle," Jess put in and everybody agreed.

"Well, she knows she'd better be. I don't have too many pleasures on account of working so hard, but I expect three hot meals a day—no matter what."

"Yeh, it's shore hot food to keep a man going all day. You're right there," Oscar added. That Oscar, he shore looked like he had enough to last him many a day. Why, if he never took no more vittles, he could outlast us all till judgment day.

"And her not fixing me a hot meal and her gone, why its making me more riled just thinking about it."

"Merle, where you reckon she was?" old Jacob asked. He was always one to get to the heart of things.

"I don't know and what difference do it make anyhow, she come back didn't she? But you hold on, Jacob, you ain't heard all my troubles yet. Why the other day when I come home for noon meal, she was out setting on the porch, just swinging away like she didn't have nothing to do, but set there all afternoon."

"That the afternoon you come to my place, Merle?"

"Yes, Jess, she knew I was coming to your place and I needed her to get all my chores done around the barn and house. And there she was, just swinging away, setting there with that blue dress of hers kind of blowing and her with her eyes closed and her head back on that swing."

"I asked her where my dinner was. 'It's on the table,' she said. Why, she didn't even get up to go get it."

Everybody just set there looking at him, waiting for him to go on.

"Now, it's not that I missed talking to her, cause we never have had much to say, but I sure expect her to wait on me a little..."

"Well, I'd think I was lucky if Pearl didn't set by me," Oscar started in, "that woman sure can talk... with her mouth open so much and so busy, I don't see how she finds time to shovel all that feed in. I never get to say a word and..."

"Well, at least she gets your dinner out on the table. Now, Bessie, I thought she'd just about learned what a help-mate means, but here she done gone all wrong."

"No woman's a help-mate unless she's helping herself." Jess said.

Everybody laughed, but not Merle. We could see he was just warmed up and he was sure getting het up. Just looking at him I could see his face getting redder all the time.

"Being a help-mate's what I figger she is and she's going to act like it. She's been doing fair, but it ain't no time to fall down now, just when I need her most."

"Merle, maybe she'd tired," I put in.

"Tired, now that's what she said when I told her I needed her to top tobacco! 'I'm awful tired, Merle.' Well, I reckon she don't think I'm tired too, just cause some days I don't work don't mean I'm not worrying and that's work enough."

"It sure ain't no time for a woman to get tired right at topping time. You need every hand you can get," old Jacob had his say.

"Well, I know that. But this tops all... right after I told her she'd better not be too tired, well she looked at me kind of silly and said, 'Merle, set down and let's talk for just a little spell.' And I told her, 'Just what you reckon we been doing?"

"I reckon that told her, Merle." They all laughed at that and Merle just kind of looked around taking everybody in.
"Now wait, you still ain't heard the best part! I asked her what had got into her, and all she said was 'I guess you never have loved me, I guess you never have.' Why I remember it exactly, just to think all her silly acting on account of something like that."

"Well, it ain't nothing to trouble yourself about, women always are acting silly over some no count thing." It was Jess speaking out again.

"As if I don't care about her, why she ain't wanting for nothing."

"Its when a body got everything he needs that he gets upset." Old Jacob said. Old Jacob he sure had an answer for everything and he always knew what was right.

"Well, I reckon that's what it is then. She's got a good house and kitchen and a good garden. And I see to it the farm pays."

"Appears to me like you got a pack of troubles, Merle. You're the one that ought to be out setting."

"Yeh, Merle, that's right." Everybody agreed.

"Well, I get pretty riled up just thinking of her saying I don't care, cause I sure give her everything a woman could want. I always see she has good clothes and I always give her money for new feed sacks so she can have a new dress made right before the old one wears out. I don't even wait till she can't wear the one she has no more."

"If you ask me, women get more than they need anyhow. Take my Pearl, sometimes she wears things out too fast to suit me," Oscar tried again.

"Bessie gets all she needs. Besides she ought to consider herself lucky cause I'm not one to be bothersome, there's only my Saturday night drinks and they don't bother nobody."

"Say, maybe she don't get out visiting enough, Merle, I bet that's it," somebody told him.

"Well, I don't hardly think so. She don't get out much and I guess its cause I don't take her. But to my mind she goes all she needs to. A woman's place is at home anyhow."

"That's the best thing I've heard all day," old Jacob agreed, "women sure do too much gallivanting around."

"Well, now, Jacob, I know I'm right. Why I'm always too busy to carry her around looking at the sights. And, you know, I thought I had her to seeing the light, too, cause she finally said, 'You do all you can Merle.' And just like that she went in to bed and I ain't heard no more about it."

"Merle," I started, "you ....................."

Just then there was a low dull thundering sound kind of far away and a popping noise like hail or rain falling hard and fast. Old Jacob jumped up. "Its the flood, I tell you, its the flood." Right quick we was all jumping up and running over to see. That water was pouring down faster than any river I'd ever seen and it was just boiling over and over, filling the banks quick as lightening and beginning to run over into the field.

I looked behind for Merle, but he was standing there drinking from a bottle he carried in his pocket and then I remembered it was Saturday night.
TEARDROP WORLD

Created...
To erase the tormented, twisted
Mother and father faces of older
Years that disappear noislessly——
Leaving the void-world that only
Lonely children can feel.

A world...
Held so tiny in the teardrops of
Restless, tinking years that were
Broken with the unheal, minute
Murmurings of a child, lying
Large-eyed and hiding under the
Covers of imaginary memories.

Sam Edwards

BIOGRAPHY

I watched you yesterday
And I saw you press fragrant
Violets
Between pages of well-worn
Books.
And whisper pale water-color wishes
To the wind.

Today I saw you touch honey-scented
Hair
 Held gently like a golden locket
Between bronze, firm
Hands
Washing in oil and tempera now
Quick-splashed wishes on a pulsing canvas —
And answered gently
By the pink-tipped promise
Of apples
Hanging on the wind.

The last time...
I saw you heave a sick-sweet
And dust away
 Fragile cobweb wishes
Half-formed, hazy charcoal etchings.
I saw you grow old
Paper-thin
Crackly—brittle
And blow away——
Wish—torn fragments——
On a wistful, wanton wind.

Beth McDaniel

PSALM

Blue mists of syncopated jazz,
Sensuous strands, stroked from a blue
Turtle's hull, that rise and circle down
Around the lull of silence. down satin
Avenues to sound within the skull, as matin
Songs, soon followed by lounds to you.

In vibrasharp visions of blue—jazzed moments,
I watch you pass within this room.
Through vesper mists I stretch my hand to
Touch your hair; wretched hand that only
Snaps those hazed remembrances, lonely
Shadows which pass within this room.

Evanescent Sunday mornings and dew
Softly placed as pearls on tulip petals
And twined amid the framework of some
Spider's crystal-studded palace;

Liquid beams of light lanced through
The forest's coal, cut the winter's metal
Hue. lapped now upon the numbed,
Frosted lip of crystal ice;

Haunting echoes from the silken strand
Soft—spoken magic from a deaf musician's palm
That conjure up these spectral visions.
And lift division through the conscious mind,
That drift among these silent chambers, find
A worshipper, linger, and become his psalm.

Charles F. Whitaker

SHADOW PATTERNS

Night nurtures its own world infant and new
From sunset scarlet, softly like a babe,
Newborn each night in tender mist and dew.
How different from the sunlight abode
I know so well by time and touch and sight.
Each shadow frames a silver plot of lawn
In a new aspect here in robes of night.
Soft are its moving bords made from light
Slipping trough bleak cold fingers of strong oaks
That clap the pale wan light with trembling hold
And long caress the wind with puddled strokes.

Judy Gibson
APPRIAUTA
Grapple and clash
In the dark regions of my soul
Where ever sound or silence meets itself
The quick thin line is drawn...
For in your jungle
Or pathless, gory trail
The once-laughing laugh no more.
Give...
One word of consolation
That is not silenced by the sound of death...
Only then will I not hide myself
As the pearl-armed eurynome;
Only then will I not lament
The nameless bearded youth,
Childhood sweetheart of tomorrow's widow,
Bleeding in innocence at your feet.
Give...
A reason to approach the paws of hell
And laugh at the dark-skinned gunman
Wretling on the grass.

Judy Gibson

SYMBIOSIS

The soliloquy of a tree...
limb paralyzed forever
reaching for yellow life;
a speechless mouth
hungry I nursing the earth;
dark tendrils grasping
trying to hold a vast trunk
upright
against the black storm...
a green lacy dress for summer,
a dress of icy glitter in winter;
a song:
hushed whispers
of many leaves speaking
WE DARE NOT WAKE THE BIRDS
Morning...and the tree
is full of song,
bird notes among the
green leaves.
Night...and on a dark shoulder
a screech owl queries;
a coon sleeps;
Occasionally a tree dies.
Song again:
WE DARE NOT WAKE THE BEES.

Judy Gibson

A MOOD AT SUNSET

There is a song my lonely heart
Is singing
Hears only by the ears of grass
And you,
With the fingers of wind in my hair
I stand on the shoulder of
The earth
And touch the pink sky
With crying eyes
And my sob echoes from the
Texture of the trees—
Black harsh voices crying
For me...
Then somewhere in the greyness
Above the matted skyline,
Above the fading scarlet
Is born a star,
One fragile star alone,
So cold and alone;
Suddenly I cry for a star
More alone than I.

Judy Gibson

SEARCH

My soul is the gull—
That, perched upon the
Outermost piling on the Pier of Life—
Jutting shortly out into the
Sea of Eternity—
Pausing,
Contemplates the wisdom
Of its own existence—
Flies away
Into the oncoming night of uncertainty—
Braving wind of chance,
The Hall of ignorant diversion—
To the abstract dawn of Faith—
Searching a reason for its being—
Finding the factuality of its search
And of its flight
Is
Its own justification.

Anton Dacresovich
INCIDENT ON AN ICE COVERED LAKE

A Short Story by William Hanratty

A violent snap of the cedarwood fire diverted Latrise's eyes from the setting sun. With a protective maternal-like motion he quickly ran his hand along the top of the bale of furs. Assured of the safety of his winter's catch from pitch sparks he sank back into the snowbank to finish his last morsels of noacake.

Across the frozen Stillwell river the late afternoon sun hung barely above a stand of Jackpines. The receding rays of light played a soft dancing game of blues and golds; the snow carpet floor seemed alive with shifting light. Latrise fumbled from his parka a cheap imported pocket watch with an engraved cover of flying geese.

"Four-twenty today," he murmured as his glance recrossed the ice covered river. Each day he carefully noted the exact moment of the sunset. His heart brightened a little with the realization that each additional minute of light at day's end brought the faint promise of warming spring to the bleak midwinter wilderness of northern Canada. Latrise's favorite dream was of life in a land of eternal warmth filled with rolling days in hot foreign sands along tepid sea. His eyes fell back to the silver plated watch as he folded the cover and tucked it into the recesses of his coat.

The small cookfire was now boldly casting shadows of its own as the final reds mingled with a western haze. Latrise brought to his lips rich black coffee brewed in an improvised cup made from a discarded tobacco tin. The searing liquid flushed his cheeks and brought tears welling to his eyes. He excused the mistake to himself by lowering the cup and reading the remaining legible advertisement on its blackened side. "Players fine tobacco, made only from unblended pure Virginia leaf..." Between his palms he rolled the tin to its opposite side and read a redundant claim in French, a peculiarity of bicultural Quebec.

Latrise cast the remainder of his wood upon the fire as if to give offering to a long and successful journey and its last days end.

Three days before he had left the region of the Pokimino Lakes; his native land. "Three days to the world of the living," he mused.

Leaning towards the hunting sled, pilled high with furs, he pulled from the bale a large chocolate colored Fishers pelt. This rare magnificent fur-bearer of the northern forests is seldom taken south of the taiga. Its pelt usually brought a high price at the company post. Running his hand through the fur he marveled. The true tone and choice condition was made apparent by the long black fibers springing tensely erect in the wake of his fingers. Worthy pride manifested itself as the corners of his mouth turned upwards in a half smile.

It had been this pelt which had most influenced his decision to sell all possessions, holdings, and lines and quit the north country forever. He had traded for or caught over five thousand dollars worth of furs this season, an ample amount to settle again in another land.

In his ceremonious way Latrise had designated that the returns from the Fishers pelt would be devoted only for the purchase of an airways ticket to his new life. Clutching the fur to his chest, he eyes laid blankly upon the leaping flames as he dreamed of the nearing day when he would board a huge silver jet bound for a warm land. He imagined himself seated by a window and watching the world of clouds and mountains and hard life fly by beneath him. He would be dressed in fine clothes, his hands unstained by labor. A hostess, young and soft, would pour his coffee from a silver pot. Her hair, dark and shining like the autumn mink, would brush his cheek as she bent to serve. Her blouse would arch and fall away from her bending body and he would glance down into her warm and scented breasts. Her fawn eyes would glisten as she gently spoke to him with interest; she would like him.

Latrise laughingly threw back his head and shouted into the emptiness of the starry sky, "No more squaws with hands smelling of white fish! No more cold winds and stinking traps! Never another night in a lonely line shack... after tonight, no more, no more!"

Faintly from a ridge behind him carried theory of the gathering wolves.

"Never again will you grey dogs of the night rob me of my furs or steal my bait," he bellowed, "Only five miles more and my journey's finished, and goodbye to you!"

Exhilarated to a high pitch he scooped up an armful of snow and flung it upon the genial flames. With a crushing suddenness the circling night rushed in about him. He stared blankly at where the fire had been. Regathering himself from this shock he stood up and felt the blood rush towards his now numb feet.

With dynamic determination he quickly stuffed provisions into his pack and lashed it to the sled. After firmly securing his snowshoes he bent down, carefully picked up the Fishers pelt and tied it neatly to the top of the fur bale. Hanging like a brilliant guideon it retained a slight gleam, even in the high light of evening.

Again the mournful howl of the hunting wolves caused Latrise to look northward up the frozen river. As he pulled the parka hood tightly about his face his stare seemed to be attempting to transcend time and distance and actually see once more his native land, which now was no more than a dim point where white snow and dark sky failed to blend. Turning, he put his weight to the sled line, the unwaxed runners squeaked a mild protest and followed his southward tracks.

An hour latter his dreams were anywhere but about him as he turned out of a bend in the Stillwell and gazed out across a long slender glacial lake, Lac du Dommage, three miles long and only a fourth as wide, covered by ice and snow some three feet deep.

At the other end of this lake was the village of St. Dennis and the North West Company trading post. A warm bed to be had at the village tavern, a beginning to the new life.

The eerie cry of the wolves behind him returned his attention to his problems at hand. Latrise knew that the varmints offered little threat to his person; his primary concern was for his furs. The pelts had been

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treated with a salt based preservative. Salt, to the hungry wolves, was as enticing as raw meat. Each snowbank, iceblock, or branch which the furs might have brushed against on the trail would leave an alluring path to follow.

Cursing the wolves in the dark passage behind him Latriste resolved himself to his unfavorable circumstance and trudged off across the lake.

Out on the ice, where the unobstructed wind ran free, rolling wispy clouds of snow arose to fling themselves against the shore line wall of evergreen. As long as Latriste had remained in the sheltered river basin he was protected from the stabbing wind by thick stands of spruce and white birch. On the open lake the wind tore at his exposed face and hurled the cold night through his clothing, to the very marrow of his bones.

Latriste had gone but a few hundred yards down the ice when behind him the first wolf appeared on the surface of the lake. The scouling wolf, lean from wanting winter, watched the hobbing human figure with a nervous tenseness. The yellow eyes followed the unwieldy progress of the creaking sled piled high with salt scented furs as it wound between snowbanks and ice outcrops. Tucking his tail between matted haunches he raised his tawny muzzle and pierced the night with a mournful "gathering cry."

Latriste recognized the wolf call and listened for the pack's response. From somewhere beyond the pines came the wavering retort. The short fluctuating notes told that the pack was running towards the guiding howl of the scout wolf.

Turning, a gust of wind whipped away Latriste's attempt to breathe. With his hand he shielded his mouth and brushed away ice and snow from his eyelashes. The river's mouth whispered with activity as the undergrowth yielded up grizzled forms. Latriste's efforts to estimate the pack's number by a visual count were thwarted by dimness of light and wind driven snow. Deciding that watching the blurred forms was useless, he settled down on the sled huddling against the furs for protection from the cutting gusts and listened to the frenzied elegiac chant of the gray hunters. Moments passed rapidly as Latriste sat nearly mesmerized by the mournful serenade. Knowing that when the wolves ceased their songs the hunt would begin in earnest, he chose to remain against the sled and preserve his energy rather than to ineffectively try to out-distance them.

A smug confidence manifested itself in the manner in which Latriste sat, seemingly contemptuously oblivious of his trackers. Suddenly, in mid-breath, he leaped to his feet and tore away the parka from his ears. An alert scowl crossed his face as his eyes raced down the ice behind him. His tense, motionless body seemed to call for total silence from the elements as he questioned bush and shadow, each sound that rode the wind.

There! Again! That low nasal howl, plainly not that of a wolf. Latriste, remembering this low yowl from other times, grew visibly nervous at the prospects of the unexpected change of odds. Once more rang the gutural wall, Latriste tensed to listen. There was no mistaking that sound for anything but what it was, a wild husky. Rummaging through the provisions pack Latriste drew out his only weapon, an ancient revolver. Vehemently he cursed the small bundle of fox pelts which he had received in barter for his rifle at the start of his journey. A wolf pack was little more than maddening nuisance, but a pack led by a wild sled dog, which was devoid of fear of man, could be expected to represent a personal threat at best. Recomposing himself after the initial shock of facing a starving husky, Latriste ferreted out an easily defended position on the lake shore. His choice was a windfall created by the toppled trunk of an ancient red maple. Wind blown snow had packed itself firmly against and around the eroded trunk forming a cavelike structure. The furs would be safe there, but he must hurry — for the howling had abruptly stopped. Stuffing the revolver into the pouch of his parka he took up the sled line and heaved away towards his well-chosen fortress.

In his haste the sled seemed antagonizingly awkward, snuggling on each protruding limb of driftwood and rolling dangerously over every snowbank.

Glancing over his shoulder he could see the sulking furry forms behind him as they loped along in his very tracks. Numbering the pack he failed to find the animal he divined as his most dangerous foe. Perhaps the husky had anticipated his move and had circled around in front to rob him of the advantage of the windfall. His pace increased to nearly a trot. The frozen night air seared his nostrils and gasping lungs. Almost within thirty yards of the windfall the sledline sprung taut, yanking Latriste from his feet.

Rolling on to his stomach he saw that the right runner had hung on an outcrop of ice. The fur bale balanced capriciously, seemingly suspended by an overhead force. Tauntingly it rocked; then violently crashed onto the ice. The gleaming Fisher's pet dragged the snow ingloriously.

Regaining his feet he bitterly cursed his whimsical fortunes. Beyond the overturned sled the night seemed alive with gaunt ribboned raiders as they darted among the swells of snow. Rising his pistol, he sighted out a scrawny wolf and fired. A blinding flash erupted into darkness. On impact the wolf jumped stifflegged into the air and then fell dead into the snow. Latriste fired again for effect although it was not needed. The first shot had scattered the wolves. Instantly the lake was lifelessly silent, no sound but the wind, no movement but an occasional film of snow driving over the ice.

Latriste, assured of a momentary victory, backed cautiously towards the windfall from where he could assume a defensive vigil over the furs. Reaching the enclosure he bent to remove the cumbersome snowshoes. His unglowed hand struggled to undo an ice-coated knot in the leather thongs; a moment unguarded. From the corner of his eye he sighted a huge black form of lunging movement. His gun fired wildly as the tremendous husky crashed into him sinking slavered fangs deep into his parka. The jolting impact had sent the pistol tumbling beyond reach.

Crying with sheer rage the great dog battered the helpless man against the fallen tree trunk. No grip upon the beast was effective. Sky and ice
became indistinguishable blurs to Latriste as the combatants rolled and plunged about. Managing to place his feet on the chest of the husky, he kicked free and vaulted into the cavity of the windfall.

Seeming to realize the unarmed helplessness of the man, the savage dog pressed home another attack. Grasping an arm firmly, he jerked Latriste from his haven. Screaming snarls filled the lake as the husky, possessed by a lust to rip from his living matter all essence, dragged and shook his powerless victim.

Flailing the ice with his free hand for some possible vantage, Latriste’s fingers landed stiffly upon the barrel of the pistol. A resurgence of hope filled the tattered body of the trapper as he grasped the gun and brought it down in a rain of stunning blows on the head of his attacker.

Sensing the shift of advantage to the rearmed man the wily dog released his grip and bounded for the cover of the forest.

Trembling uncontrollably from fear and passion, Latriste fired after the bounding form. The bullet went wild striking the lower branches of a snow covered fir. A minor avalanche cascaded down screening the escape of the husky.

While Latriste was fighting for his life the ravenous wolves had fallen upon the furs and provisions. Yelping and snarling the excited gluttons failed to realize the man’s triumph. Turning his wrath upon the wolves Latriste aimed and pressed the trigger. A bitch, attempting to tear free a pelt from the bale, was caught by the shot in the base of her skull. She thrashed violently for a moment and then fell silent, her teeth locked fast to the pelt.

Once more the entire pack vanished in an instant behind snow banks. Latriste dragged himself back into the wind break to survey the damage done by the husky.

His right arm hung limply at his side,-wrenched from its socket by the ripping jaws of the dog. The thick caribou skin parka was laid open all the way across his chest. The hanging shreds of leather resembled a wrecklessly peeled fruit skin.

Warm blood oozed from the deep slashes in his body. Sweet breath came hard and blisteringly painful to his aching lungs. Breathing too deeply of the minus thirty degree air had caused the mucus membranes of his lung to freeze. With each attempt to draw air his body violently shuddered with a gasping cough.

Bracing himself against the grooved trunk of the maple he peered out in ragged defiance. A white winged Ptarmigan fluttering from beneath a juniper bush along the lake betrayed the movements of a wolf. The frightened bird chittered a fervent protest at being disturbed from its warm nest.

From the eastern sky came a roar of engines, a gigantic airliner’s thundering might drowned the night with its power. The frosted air crystallized each element of sound, creating a barrage of separate entities which were reflected from every plane of the frozen earth.

Latriste’s eyes rose to follow the flight of the huge capsule from another time... another place. The windows lining its side glowed with a warm golden hue. Latriste mentally projected himself into the liner and among the people. Again he envisioned the young, fawn-eyed hostess — her face lit with a wispy smile and deep, beckoning eyes. A convulsion of coughing returned him starkly to reality. The great jet passed from his line of view leaving only a thin white ribbon of mist as testimonial to its existence.

A clatter from out on the ice diverted Latriste’s attention to his cargo. The husky, taking advantage of the deafening overflight of the plane, had slipped back to the furs and was furiously tearing at the Fisher’s pelt.

Recoiling to the attack upon the chariot of his dreams, Latriste staggered out from the womblike cavern. The heat of rage flushed his cheeks as he cocked the gun for final foray against this demonic dog. Grim silent hate propelled his each suffering step towards the husky who stood insolently before him with the frayed remains of the once idyllic pelt locked scornfully in his jaws.

Loathing sweat blurred the trapper’s vision as he raised the pistol to a point between the dogs eyes. Summing all of his might he jerked the trigger.

Missing the husky’s head the bullet tore into the lean flank, hurling him to the ice.

Needed air bit at Latriste’s lungs like whiskey as he slumped to his knees, fighting to stay erect.

As the gun sighted for the damning shot the husky tottered to his feet, his fangs still locked sardonically to the Fisher’s pelt. Facing the gun the husky snarled threateningly, almost daring Latriste to shoot.

Forcing a response from his numb frozen hand, Latriste squeezed the trigger. The plunging hammer fell with a resounding metallic crash on the brass of an empty chamber.

The husky’s ears shot forward in awareness, a sense of total mastery came over his stance. The massive jowls fell open in a rasping snarl as the ravenous Fisher’s pelt slid from his mouth. With a cat-like tenesness the brute sprang.

Higher than forested hills, higher still than the Peregrin’s home, beyond the wind itself the vapor trails were fading.
COLOR SCHEME

Note the two English girls
Laughingly talking—they’re wearing red and white
Striped sweaters—about being the
Last prisoners, the last survivors.
They’re walking over gardens planted by
Dead men in honor of the more dead,
Those already making up the mounds of ashes.
The one girl is posing for her friend near the ovens
Where national wreaths turned copper-green
By tears and years are propped. She is wondering
If the flowers were there while the kitchen was still hot...
The soldiers still march here, just a different
Denomination of religious zealots. They
Irreverently shout their caes across
The grounds, echo off the
Skeleton arms of two rows of
trees on the old “Parade park.” The trees
Were there 25 years ago. So,
But today the cheap concrete is crumbling
And the barbed wire is black
And rusty.
Dachau.

* * * *

The gardener now is wrapping
His plants in green plastic bags to keep the
Life—blood of the roots moist. It doesn’t
Do much good. This is the 22nd year of
Bad growing seasons for youth I’ve known.
And the world’s is still rough
And black.

Philip Angelina

ANOTHER DAY

Saw this beagle hound
Strolling along the other
Day, had a suntanned body
And wore wrap round shades
Asked him who he thought he was
Jomo Kenyatta or somebody
He ignored me so I shot him, walked on up
The greasy road saw a man do a
Handstand on a chair saw then
There were two men doing
Half a handstand each
Another platinum bald lady
Very airy and
Very hairy and gold eared
Hit me with her silver cane
Upon my weary shoulder and
Said, “Son it’s a bad day
For chasing gay whippersnails or
Giant ants,” I replied most
Courteously, “yes man” and
Ran on, then that old bird
That great pigeon flew after me
I raced across the street
He couldn’t cross, I
Got a ticket for crossing the double line
I was flying but the crazy
Cop gave me a civic minded ticket anyhow
Went to the convention held annually
For one-armed, single
Left breasted, size
42—C midgets, still
Waiting for someone
To show up, bad deal
Anyhow went to urchar
Watched beer cans
Float around in
The cool brown water
Talked to the dead fish
And sat and watched the
See monsters.

Earl Paulus Murphy
I HAVE SEEN DEATH

I have seen death in the narrow crowded halls
Mingle with the sheets and the ether,
Stiff and absolute, stanch'd in puritanical whiteness,
I have seen death, winning an undeclared war
With the masked faces, the prayers, and the pity.

I have not seen death come among the lilies.
I have not seen him come with soft hands,
As an angel with arched wings ascending,
I have not found him in the tears,
Though I searched through the scent of the roses,
The stone and the well smoothed hair,
And the marble faces.
These were not made of death, the hushed music
Soothing the air with its reverence,
Falling as soft light through church windows,
On the wordless pain, on the prayers, on the firm-set faces.
These were not made of death nor death of them.
I have seen death coming in the night, in the darkness
Break in as a thief with a fierce quickness,
With a straightening and a stone touch and a cry,
Pillage and leave behind the rich silence.
But I have not seen death come among the lilies.

Judy Williams

TO BELIEVE IN GOD AND WALT WHITMAN

I went to him softly
With tired eyes that
Had seen too much
Felt the burning ache
Of hands that would not
Obey.
I laid my dark head in
His loving arms,
He carried me gently
Over the earth.
I looked at a few
Ugly grey furrows
And said
"Let me stay to
Give the world peace."
"No," he said,
"You will come again
And then they will
Have peace."

Jerry Hensley

LOLLIPOPS AND LOVERS

My life
Has been a carousel,
Of explosive emotion.
I have been
A violent son,
A savage father
And a sensual lover.
I have been content
To exist
In the gray twilight
Of the tomorrows.
I fought, only
To find myself
Lost,
In the masquerades
Of living,
Now as I stand silent
And impatient
Like the passionate
March night.
I dream...
The dreams
Of a lifetime
Of little boys
With lollipops
And urgent lovers
Withering in the grass.
But, I have lived
Only...
The days of the year
Which are gone
Like the wind,
From this rocky cliff high
I shall cast
My fate to the
Sea,
Which will only sigh
And roll away
Never to return
And we will be gone,
My fate and me,
Like the wind
Blowing into the night,
Touching all
But yet,
Caressing nothing.

Tommy Winstead
NEW ROSES
New roses bud for this year's spring,
Times have passed; new blooms are in store.
New buds expectant of rose—happy times
Swell for new and colored experience.
The rose—bud fantasy thrills unmoting.
New thorns creeping through the skin
Of the central, ever-changing stem.
Now the sharp points are crushable.
Even like the roses, are soft and sweet.
Yet in the next and next seasons
Blooming stems are scared and pained
By existent remembrance of these same thorns,
Now bitter, now hardened, now immovable.

Kay Jernigan

REMEMBRANCES
We were lost and unaware,
Listened, swinging with leaves,
Touching tremulous tips of good
On seeds of our own dreams.
Tree-jeweled mountains on
Mercury paths, we strode
At our own ease and love
To peaks of Godly gold.
Ours were cymbals and brass,
Strings played by winds
Of nectar—melodied breath
From songs of you and me.

Kay Jernigan

DE SENECTUTE: EPILOGUS
Vacua domus nunc silenter est,
Sedilla atque lecti sedent
Ad aliumque alium spectant
Muros adque quietor. Non iam est
Qui hic quiete quiescat, serum
Aiiti. Non iam cathedra striptet
Cam sentiit gravit motu.
Amicule superest, sed atque
Aiiti, sororum ab familia.
Sed etiam domus plena est nunc
Adulescentes agitant eis.
Notitiae, notorums, viduae, sola.
Dum fortis frigidum est, non tamen
Sed nisigit, quia renescit exitur.

Thomas LaVerne Aud

THE CLIMBER HIGH
A Short Story By Tommy Winstead
As the old man climbed the last few steps, which really were not steps
at all but places worn in the side of the mountain, he thought of playing
"King on the mountain". That had indeed been a long time ago, he
thought. He had been such a frail child and hardly ever won the game,
but he had played anyway. He had his own mountain. It was a good
thing he did not have to fight for this one, he told himself. At his age it
was all he could do to climb half way to the top.

When he reached the plateau, which was about half way up the
mountain, he stood to look around. It had been many years since he had come
to live. It was such a serene place, so calm, so quiet. The plateau
he stood on was not really a plateau, for in reality it only covered an
acre or two. Yet, to the old man it seemed huge. In the beginning it had
seemed so small. He thought it odd the way things changed as he, not so
slowly, became a very old man. Even his wooden shack had changed,
it seemed, all by itself.

Many years ago he had been a rich man. Very rich. He had obtained
almost anything a man could possibly wish. Almost! But almost is not
quite enough. A person could just as well say "not", as "almost", the
old man thought. People would always say, "almost home" or "almost
happy", but they actually were not home and they were not really happy.
Being almost happy can be the most terrible thing that can happen to a
man. They had been almost happy. But that happiness was a long way
into the past, possibly even farther than she was. He still had a little
money, for all it was worth. This very money that had once bought a
happiness now only purchased a meager existence. The money was worth
the same then as now. But the happiness it had now bought was not even
worth the pain it left behind.

The old man sat against the shack and looked out across the rolling
desert. He could barely make out the highway that stretched across the
golden sands. The avenue of express seemed to reach from one end of
infinity to the other. During the night he could see it quite well, the swiftly
moving lights that just seemed to float along. If it were a still night
he could hear the sounds, those man-made sounds of the machinery
running across the desert. How different it had been when he was a child.
Then it had been a more natural sound, with the animals and men working
together to get to a place that seemed to be forever away.

"Yes," he thought, "It has been many years since I came here to get
away from it all. Twenty—six years on the mountain and I still have
not really gotten away. I suppose the world would look at the way I
live is primitive. Actually I am quite modern. No, I'll never quite get
away, even if the boy who comes once a month should never again bring
to me the small amount of food that he does. I shall never completely
get away."

The old man had tried many times to conceive the image a child would
have of this silent life on the mountain. He too, had thought of what it
would have been like, for them, to have had a child. He usually dis-
missed these thoughts as senile, but sometimes they lingered on in his mind, and he would become quite lonely, quite afraid. He would feel as though he were empty, with only a warm stinging sensation under his skin serving as a reminder of his actually living. It seemed as though he were just a shell, a void that could easily be crushed and leave no identification to his ever having really existed. These were the times he most often thought of dying.

He placed the water pall which he had carried up the side of the mountain in a shaded corner inside the shack and walked quickly to the wall. It was not really a wall, only a flat, bare place on the mountainside overlooking the plateau. Oh, how well he knew that wall, the endless hours he had spent before it, searching for faults in its appearance. The hours he spent preparing it, trying to hide every blemish on its sun baked surface, now were over.

Then came the carving. It seemed as if it had taken years to carve all but the last two lines which were etched in, of the simple poem on the wall. It had indeed taken many countless days to carve that much of it perfectly. The finished inscription was flawless, like the granite into which it was engraved. Each letter carefully embedded to stand the burning sun of the day and the deadly still of the night. Yes, it was hard to believe it was nearly finished. Now as he stood searching the almost completed work, it seemed sort of... well... sort of silly to have carved it all. Quite possibly Lord Byron or Shelley with his Ozymandias would not have thought it very poetic but then he did not happen to think everything they had written was terrific either.

Silently wishing for a fine tomorrow, as he would then begin engraving the last two lines, he read it over:

THE MOUNTAIN HIGH
The mountain is high
and neither sees nor hears
the countless years of eternity
that pass by.

The mountain is high
but feels the pain
of famine, war,
the battle cry.

The mountain is high
but its destiny is
to be moved aside
as men go by.

The mountain is high,
beside men
mountains crumble and life,
but beside mountains . . . . .

Now for the first time in his life he wished he had studied poetry more seriously at the university. For some reason the poem just did not seem right. He wished for the knowledge of poetic rhyme and meter. But no

matter, there it was, exactly the way he had gone over it in his mind, no less than a million times. It just seemed to lose its meaning now that it was finished. But there it was and would be, time out of mind, for the whole world to see. Even if it never meant anything to anyone else, there it was and it meant something to him. That was all that really mattered, its meaning something to him. Enough of this silly thinking, he told himself, it was time to eat. The sun was beginning to go down. Soon the air would begin to chill. He would have to retire to the warmth of the old shack for he was unable to withstand long hours of the night's bone-penetrating cold.

Walking across the small plateau, he thought of the young boy who delivered his meager rations. Really, he knew nothing at all about the young man. Each time they met, at the bottom of the mountain, both had so many questions neither seemed to learn anything. Yes, in a way he had watched the boy grow. How many years had he been the one who came to the bottom of the mountain once a month? Nine, no... at least ten. The boy was probably around twenty-six. He was, without doubt, a fine looking young man. He was so alert, so neat and correct. What fools they were to waste those few precious minutes throwing questions at each other, when each could be learning.

He would have to climb the mountain tomorrow. Tomorrow would be the day the boy came with the food. The old man knew since he had only a can of pears plus a little meat left to eat. Tomorrow would be a long day. He always felt so depressed after the boy had returned to the village. Soon he would have to explain to the boy about the money. He had not enough to last much longer. That was a minor detail for the old man doubted he would last much longer either.

As he sat eating, he kept trying to remember the boy's name. He could not bring it to mind. He felt ashamed. How well he had loved the name, but in the excitement of the days they met, it had been lost in his memory. The other boys, who came to the mountain before this one, their names did not matter. They just did not seem interested in the old man. If anything, they seemed to have laughed at him. They had neither asked questions nor bothered to answer. They were just in a hurry to take their time back to oblivion. Although he could recall that it was a beautiful name it hurt the old man not to remember.

The cool of the night was beginning to reach the old man. But he only sat beside the shack looking at the top of the mountain. He could remember his excitement the first time a trip had taken him to the summit. As he sat he knew he would climb it again and again. For some time now he had dreamed every night of climbing to the top. But the dream never contained the actual thrill and excitement. He knew it would be the same tonight. They would begin climbing slowly to the top. They were both so young, so happy; they were the climbers high on the mountain. She would begin to coax him to climb higher and faster. As he looked back she would no longer have happiness in her face, instead only greed and hunger, the stuff, he now supposed, men were made of. She always kept pushing. Upon reaching the mountains height he would look back seeking a sign of approval... she was gone.

40 41
Each night it was the same. She pushed him to the top, then left him alone. With anxiety he would look back, only to see nothing. She would just leave him there, the climber high, looking out into the infinity of nothing called loneliness. Each night he would weep, it was a long way down... he was alone. Each night he would cry aloud... and awaken to find only himself and his imagination in the cabin still.

The old man could remember well the day he had returned home with her victory. With her endless struggling he had made it to success. He had walked into their home with the pride of a king, only to find the castle empty except for the rejected servant standing silent in the sun-lit doorway with pangs of fear running from his heart to his toes. From that moment on he only thought for the next two days, "Green grow the lilacs in the dark of the night". The rest of the week passed so slowly it seemed as through each second of the hours were being split in half, and he was forced to live two lifetimes in a second.

Early the next day, before the sun's searing heat had begun to clear away the night's cool calm, it was a perfect morning for climbing the mountain. Carrying the large grass sack of various foods, mostly canned, was no easy task at anytime of day. Climbing along the worn route to the middle of the mountain, he noticed a mountain goat a few hundred yards away. How proud the animal stood on the ledge as it watched, almost laughingly, at the figure of the man climbing so cautiously. The animal was so sure footed, so proud of its freedom.

Nearing the plateau he could see heat rising from the tin roof of the shack. The last few yards were well worn and he traveled quite fast. Once on the plateau, he walked immediately to the shack, setting the sack in the shade. He stepped into the old building, inside it was still cool and dark. Moving to the bed in the corner, Shannon knelt beside the old man... he was dead. On the wall was a poem neatly chalked on the gray boards, with all but the last three lines struck out... men die and rot away.

RIPPLES OF WIND AND RAIN

Spirit it seems to be, coming, capturing, And then retreats. Like tissues sliding across the cheek, It feels cool, soft, and even human. Drizzling diamonds it seems to carry Which bounce on the pavement. And act contrary, then ripple into A pool.

Harold R. Custer, Jr.

THE DAYS HUNG HEAVY WITH LONGING

The days hung heavy with longing...
You were gentle and passion I was eyes and hands...
A moment measured by delicate Canopied whisps of seashell-hair Through rain-felt touches.
We candidly talked the soapstone-colored sand of being Drifting to deep, auburn heights of love...
And there, at depths, pulsed...
Throbbed... Our siren-toned song of the sea...

Sam Edwards
TRANQUILITY

The night is tranquil...
The platinum sphere
Dances in the grasp of swaying trees
And the distant suns
Are but pin-pricks bleeding light...
Orion, Ursus, the Seven Little Sisters
All have crossed the black sea
And to my wide eye
They only fade into a mass
Of sparkles
That haze the wide palm
Of God.

The river breathes fog
Into the valley and the clouds come
Tones on the hills.
The little creatures slither
And amble
Within the woodland,
Seeing their path
With glowing eyes;
The distant mourning cry
Of a night train sounds
And the plaintive voice of its warning
Carries for miles over the moonlight hills
To the far off pricked ear
Of the listening, looking night.

Judy Gibson

VITA ET MORS

Tomorrow comes...
Will it be better than today
Or will the buried moments
Of yesterday
Drag from their graves
Continuous memories
That plague my mind with doubt?
Or will flowers
Grow from the heaped earth
That covers the past...
The rose twines
And the vine twines
And the passion flower blooms
In lavender splendor
In the quiet corner of today.
Tomorrow
Is something budding,
A flower with its color yet unsure
In a neutral infant hue...
And slowly dawn comes.

Judy Gibson

BRAGI'S CATHEDRAL

Like the spitted, dusty windows
In old churches' thick gray walls
Hang dark and leadish in the free light
But beam colour on brown caws.
To one within the transept
The coloured smell of prayer
In poems gives a like transfigured sight.

Philip Angervine

VIEW FROM BELOW

Sparks of silver bleeding light
Briefly frozen in their exits toward oblivion.
Chips of visible heaven
Floating a billion years away.
From below, so small the vinyl hand
Of an infant's doll might seize
All those in sight.
From above, as minute as that
Pampered bit of man, his Ego.

Joyce Reels
A HOLE IN ONE
A Play For Radio by Dennis Petrie

(Rain on a city side-street; cars, buses, trucks swishing by; the sounds of horns.
(Approaching footsteps. Two people, a man and woman, hurry under an awning and let down their umbrella, shaking themselves.)

James: Why did you have to pick today to do it—today of all days in this rain? If I can't stop you in any way, couldn't you at least wait until it wasn't raining like this?

Doris: It makes no difference when it's done. You know that, James. ... I told you. The rain won't hurt it. Besides, I want it done today so that I'll always remember. Nineteen years ago today . . .

James: Nineteen years ago today we got married—I know that, Doris. You don't have to tell me. I know that. And here we stand in water up to our knees . . . in front of a . . . a . . . (he looks at store sign behind him) in front of a used furniture store. . . . Waiting for you to . . . to—

Doris: Don't start that again, James. I don't want to hear it. That's the very reason I planned to come and do it by myself. Because I don't want to hear it. . . . But, oh no, you had to take off and come with me. . . . I have my mind made up. . . . for sure this time.

James: "For sure," you say. That's what you said the last time you almost had it done. . . . Before Teddy was born.

Doris: Leave Teddy out of this!

James: I am leaving him out. . . . I don't want to hear like this out here.

Doris: Are you afraid someone from the Church will come by and hear you, James? Is that it? Is it, James?

James: You bet it is! . . . Leave my Church out of this, too! (long silence . . . only the sounds of the rain and the city) Doris, . . . maybe. . . . Maybe if we'd had another child just after Teddy died. . . . Maybe you wouldn't want to do sinful things like this—

Doris: I said leave Teddy out of this. That has nothing to do with it. . . . I'd be willing to bet that almost half the women in this city have had it done some time or another.

James: But I'm not married to half the women in this city! I'm married to you: And I don't want some quack to do anything that would hurt you. . . . (silence for a minute) . . . Doris, do you remember that place we ate nineteen years ago tonight? The Japanese rock garden place. With all the colored gravel and those enormous. . . . those enormous glacier-like things at one end?

Doris: (almost sentimental with him) In St. Louis. Yes. (she smiles) They said—the cashier said we looked so young . . .

James: When he saw all those signs and things on our car . . .

Doris: (quickly) The food was terrible. -- Are we going to stand out here all day? The rain's slacking up a little. . . . Mabel said the place was on this street, so it must not be far. Can you see the number on that building over there? See. . . . over there. Is it 2367?

James: (looking) I can't see. . . . It's a jewelry store. Did you say they did it at a jewelry store?

Doris: Yes. That's what Mabel said. She had hers done two years ago in this same place. She says I'm silly for not having it done before. . . . Let's go. Open the umbrella.

(They move into the rain, go across the street, and stop under another awning. Thunder at a distance, now, up, over, beyond tall buildings; the rain becomes harder.)

Doris: (almost shouting over the rain) This is it. This is the place, James. Hurry. The umbrella's stuck. (James fumbles with umbrella) Hurry!

James: Wait a minute! . . . This whole thing is absurd. Let's wake back to the car and go home. Forget all about it.

Doris: (laughing nervously) Darling! I wish you'd quit worrying. . . . Please? . . . Here, (clasping her hand in his) . . . Cheer me up and help me in there.

(She drags him into the store. Japanese wind chimes sound as the door hits them and is slammed shut. . . . Sound of rain and street is abruptly stopped and a very loud Jane Morgan singing "What The World Needs Now is Love, Sweet Love" is substituted from a phonograph in the rear of the store . . . For a minute or two only the song. . . . Then . . . .)

Clerk: (Turning down the music so that it can barely be heard and walking to the front. With a lisp, as if his lips have been sliced in a brutal fight and sewn up crookedly.)

Mrs. Trevelman? . . . I've been waiting for you; I was afraid you'd tried to call me again and the line is out this morning. Bad storm, you know.

Doris: (stepping to meet him, away from James) Yes . . . Mr. Arvin, this is my husband, Reverend Trevelman. He decided to come down with me at the last minute.

Arvin: (laughing) Ah—Most husbands do end up coming along. . . . Don't worry, Rev. Trevelman; your wife is in good hands. I'm very careful and antisepctic, you know, and I treat my customers with the greatest of care.

James: Yes, I'm—ah—sure of that, sir . . . But I'm. . . . I'm not sure my wife wants this done . . .

Doris: Now, darling . . .

James: I'm just not certain you really want it done. Of course, I think it's cruelly barbaric—Besides my feelings as a clergyman, I—

Doris: (louder) You said to leave the church out of this, didn't you?
JAMES: Certainly, but—

ARVIN: Your wife is absolutely right, sir. In this modern day and age even ministers' wives are having it done. I'm sure she'll never regret it, either, for it can solve so many disturbing problems.

DORIS: Yes! That's just what I keep telling him, Mr. Arvin. What do I do first? — This is our nineteenth wedding anniversary and I'm really so excited. That's the reason I sort of want it done today. Do you think it's appropriate for today?

ARVIN: (hesitating) Well, —Yes, I suppose so. But it won't be a pleasant experience, Mrs. Trevelman. I'm sure you've been warned of that.

DORIS: No. Well— I mean, they—Mabel said it wasn't bad. After you. . . . I mean, after I get numb—

ARVIN: No, I'm sorry. I make it a practice never to use an anesthetic. I've found that it just makes it worse. Just step back behind that petition. Mrs. Trevelman, into my office back there, and we'll have you fixed up in no time. (He guides her away from James.)

DORIS: (whining a little) But I don't know. I just took it for granted you'd numb—uh—

ARVIN: Yes, actually, it's really not hurtful at all. You just mustn't think about it . . . . You see, I have my own special technique. . . .

JAMES: (stopping them with a sudden thought) Wait! Just a minute—Don't people usually have some sort of a doctor to do things like this? —What I mean is: Aren't there some doctors who will do it?

ARVIN: (with a 'professional smile') Certainly. But I know all there is to know about doing it—and as I've said before—I'm very sanitary in my work. Of course, if you want to put out that kind of money for a doctor. . . . I mean rather than my humble fee . . . .

JAMES: (angrily) Oh, come off it, man! Surely you can see that I'm radically against my wife's doing this. . . . You just keep helping her in her excuses! I happen to think that the husband should have a word or two in things like this. It looks like you could make enough money selling cheap jewelry and things without resorting to low stuff such as this! This is dangerous, I tell you. I DON'T WANT YOU TO TOUCH MY WIFE!!! — do you hear me? . . . . Doris, I forbid you to do this. In God's name, are you out of your mind?! —I've gone along with this about far enough now. Are you going to leave this place with me? Now?

DORIS: (laughing nervously) James! — Don't act like a child. — After coming all the way down here in the rain? Of course not. Let's hurry and get it over with, Mr. Arvin. . . . (to James as she walks away) Look at the rings and things in the showcases while you wait, darling. Remember: Just nineteen ye—

JAMES: Stop it! You have said that fifty times! I'm sick of it, Doris! — Don't do it! It will hurt you awfully, it will hurt you awfully! You will scream and beg and moan for me to come back there and hold your hand and I won't: No. I'm going home, Doris, if he as much as touches you with those dirty tools of his. I mean it!

(Doris and Arvin continue to walk to the rear of the store. James repeats his warning in a mumble and starts toward the front door. But the chimes sound. Sound of rain, cars, muffled thunder again just for a moment: then the door closes and a woman walks inside.)

WOMAN: (greatly surprised) Brother Trevelman! — What a day to catch you down here! (quickly and nervously) . . . . My husband was sent to Chicago on business last Saturday night and I was unable to call you Sunday morning. I do hope you found someone to take my class without too much trouble . . . .

JAMES: (just as greatly surprised to see her "down here") Why—ah—yes. Mrs.—Mrs. Belton. I'm—uh—sure I did . . . . Yes. . . . It is a bad day to be out . . . .

MRS. B: Is anyone with you? Is Doris with you?

JAMES: Uh . . . . yes. Yes. Doris is with me. She's back in the . . . .

(He is interrupted by a piercing cry. A horrible scream from the rear of the store. It's from his wife. . . . Almost immediately the phonograph near her is turned up again and Jane Morgan is still singing: "What The World Needs Now" . . . .)

JAMES: Oh God!

MRS. B: (shocked) What? — What was that scream? — (She shouts to the rear of the store) Doris? . . . . Is that you, Doris? . . . . What is going on back there, Brother Trevelman? Is Doris hurt? (She starts to walk to Doris.)

JAMES: (grabbing her arm nervously) Wait? — No. I'm—sure she's not hurt . . . she . . . she must have been scared . . . .

(Doris screams her husband's name . . . Arvin is mumbling loudly to her. Sound of chairs being pushed, instruments being dropped on the floor. Doris continues to moan throughout.)

MRS. G: It is Doris! — What is she doing? She wants you. . . . I'm going to see—

JAMES: (in a rage, yet embarrassed) NO! — I mean, no. Mrs. Belton . . . . I'm sure it's just fine . . . . everything's just fine. I'll see you Sunday. With your class again . . . .

MRS. B: But — What is wrong with her, Brother Trevelman? — I don't understand. We must go see what is . . . . I mean, she sounds like . . . .

ARVIN: (from rear) Now you've got to sit still!

MRS. B: What is that man doing with Doris? — He is doing something to her! (yelling to office) DORIS!!

DORIS: (from rear) JAMES! — NO! Quit! — Don't do that! I don't want
it done. -- LEAVE ME ALONE!!!

(A chair is knocked over. Doris runs to the front.)

DORIS: (running, screaming, whining) James! Darling! oh! — Don't leave me! Why didn't you come? — I don't want to have it done . . .

JAMES: No, Doris. I said NO! — Remember: I warned you. I said it is SINFUL. The wrath of God will forever be upon us — you and ME! Don't run to me. I won't help you! I'm going! (he steps to the door.)

ARVIN: (running behind her) Mrs. Trevelman! Stop! — There's too much danger of infection at this stage! . . . I'm not finished with you!

MRS. B: This is AWFUL! — Are you all right, Doris? Oh! — Why are you holding yourself that way....?

DORIS: (ignoring her) Oh, yes you are! — Don't leave me, James! Please....

(The chimes sound . . . Wind, rain, thunder, cars, Jane Morgan, and the shrieks of Doris are thrown together in one outrageous cacophony.)

JAMES: (breathing hard as he backs out of the door) I forbade it! — I said I was going home. — I AM GOING HOME, DORIS!

(The door swings open as wide as it will go and bounces on its hinges. Before it closes: the sound of running feet from the door and on the wet pavement . . . . the loud screeching, slushing, swerving sound of a car attempting to stop abruptly . . . the quick thud of a body being hurled into chrome and glass.

(The door slams shut with a jingle of the chimes.

Two women scream over Jane Morgan.

(The rain has stopped. Only silence for a split second . . . then . . .

(Two tinkles of the Japanese winds chimes, a herd of approaching steps, a burst of thunder far, far up, over, and beyond the city).

DORIS: (walking through wet broken glass) James! — Are you all right? (James emits a dull, sustained moan.) Is that you, James?

(Arvin and Mrs. Belton stop behind her.)

DORIS: (calmly at first, but still whining) Take my hand. I'll help you up. Can't you move? — Ugh! Blood! . . . Oh, James, why, why did you do that? Why? Run out of the store like that? I was calling for you. I was going home with you.

JAMES: (struggling) I was going . . . It's sinful, Doris. BRAZEN and sinful . . . Please! my leg! help me . . . Awww! . . . Help me . . .

DORIS: (not, helping him, whining, walking around him) But you would not come, James. I needed you to help me. — Don't you see? Don't you understand? — It had to be done all at once . . . I could never try it again! Never. Don't you see how it is now? Why couldn't you —

MRS. B: Someone get a doctor! — Doris, he's hurt! Don't just stand

there!

DORIS: AHHHHHhhhhhhhh!! — I hurt terribly! — IT IS KILLING ME!! (kneeling to James) — James, it hurts, darling. Can't you see. MY ONE PIERCED EAR HURTS!!!!

(Fade out slowly from the marriage of two singular sounds: the hoarse screeching of a woman and the low, dull moaning of a man . . . .)