

# COE REVIEW





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# COE REVIEW • Number 9 • masthead

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# from the Diary of the Queen of Russia

*Alice Friman*

November 23

Bored.

Bored with barons and cognac

Ermine and the mazurka

The sweet of my shoulder by candle.

Bored with touring students from the university

Collecting wet dreams from corridors

That whisper of my skirts.

Bored with ministers who declare war

Just to share me, bending

Scented over maps.

I, the Queen of Russia,

One necessary night,

Stars flung like salt,

Low under the barn roof

Spread out,

Like butter on black bread

Like caviar on crackers,

And bedded the stable boy

Because he had good hands

And wasn't particularly busy.

# Arctic Summer

*Alice Friman*

I loved you like an Arctic summer  
An aching thaw that groaned from winter straight  
Bursting longlocked from a  
Sea (that never lost its taste for ice)  
Sprayed on sleepeyed rocks and calmed  
To halibut and cod in pocket shallows  
Nurturing sun.

I loved you like an Arctic summer  
Swift and wet and  
Rush of nesting cries  
Fledgling brown down of tangled feathers  
Shivering to warmth's wild  
To gull hoops celebrating sedge  
In a world of desperate green  
A world of new crowned caribou with velvet feet  
And moose that move like statues through the grass.

I loved you like an Arctic summer  
Of madly clutching roots  
Wet and quick and green and  
Done.

# **The Mechanic With Beautiful Hair**

*Alice Friman*

He appraised the car as if it were a woman,  
A saturday night woman,  
Calculating what she'd do from where she'd been.  
Reading her voice  
(dare she deny him the purr he's tuned to.)  
The mechanic has greasy hands and eyes that never smile.  
He never wrote a poem.  
Yet when he lifts her and strolls beneath her skirts  
Acting as though he could or even should  
Running his eye over her vulnerability.  
Fingering.  
She lets him.  
Nor would she even smudge that softness beneath her,  
That ringlet cloud around his head.

# Weekend in Battle Creek, Michigan

*Alice Friman*

Mr. Kellogg, who poured out this town  
snapped it into his crackle  
squeezed the juice from the corn and minimum wage  
then let it sit in houses of cracked  
boxes flaking paint

And you, with your striped and starry eyes  
of Kiwanis blue saying I love you with  
peaches and cream, come live with me and be,  
and you'll adore me, core me, bore me

Wore me out.

This was the courtship dance on the rim of the dustbowl  
the winning of crumbs left in cereal boxes  
the wedding whine of fat wolves.

What more do you want from Battle Creek?  
Railroad tracks cross her like abdominal scars:  
she is scraped dry and ruts barren,

Yet still you tug.  
Even at the bottom of an emptied glass  
the straw persists, pulling  
dry and desperate.

# Coming to Terms with a Piece

*Alice Friman*

The poem doesn't finish.  
Its imperative is caught.  
I cannot bring it safely to the surface  
The way a spaniel does a duck  
On wet mornings.  
It's swelling in the weeds  
Where the boot goes through.  
Yet I can't give it up:  
Like a dog bred for untaught purposes,  
I stiffen and point at smelling compost.

# Tundra

*Alice Friman*

I am weighted  
Centered down in frost and fallow field  
Kernal core of radiating cold.  
Not winter snow nor ice, no, not even  
Blocks from Hudson's Bay  
Nor great green ladies castled crystalline  
that reign in moats of Northern seas.  
I am earth.

Antarctica's forgotten soil  
That lay beneath a billion snows  
When pterodactyls flew.  
Cambrian juice, amniotic ooze  
Pressed, packed, sigma-stuck  
In the lock of icy stone.

Yet breathe on me for I was Earth.  
Fill my mouth and eyes with currant berries  
And berrystain my lips. Comb honey ribbons  
Through my matted hair and brim my icy breast  
With apricot and thyme.  
Then lay me flank to flank. Rain me  
Bursts of petals still beating from the stem.  
Wounds. Rose wounds.  
Bleeding.  
Cover me crimson  
For I am frozen Earth  
And I am dead.

# FLAIR-UP

*Marne Marcus*

Tired of all that quiet overhead,  
stars signalling diamond hints  
beyond dim ceilings  
same color as the walls,  
looking for a loud splash up there  
I painted my ceiling red.  
Looks good,  
up to where the paint ran out.  
When will I have enough to get more Pompeiin Red!  
Just another dead-end. I lay back,  
wise enough to want what I have...  
Dirty unpainted plaster  
sighs more poignantly.  
Sheen drifts across enamel depths.  
The patch of redness  
warms my home.

## ice runner

*Guy R. Beining*

we broke ice/ nothing more  
threw cans of soft drink  
in shaky night,  
ankles, heels going into feet  
of wheels  
carting kathrine thru park/  
dark ridge anotomy;  
fish pond grows into ice-  
skaters race silver, circular, orbital  
& in periphery ice cracks/  
white splashings of jersyed youth  
sinks into goldfish tights.  
white shouts form.  
underwater/ last years soft drinks  
wrappers, washed up leaves  
to see head blue-green, floating under skates  
slicing figure eight:8, on his rust-yellow hair,  
but mud/ mud was all they got  
breaking ice all night.

# Untitled

*Real Faucher*

lovers –

leave your dreams the side of the common

road

wade blindly into the waving

fields

and gently gather the pregnant

harvest

with your love stained hands

# STRANGE SHORE

*Emilie Glen*

Waters lone waters

    Trying out a strange shore

Familiar in their lappings

    As the lake of past summers

        Yet foreign

        Yet far

I extend my hand

    Reaching neither shore

# Tide

*Kathleen Malley*

Miles of dark corridors are painted unearthly colors  
by intruding moonlight.

Luminescent green phantoms dart silently before my half-closed eyes,  
opening the water with a shiny flicker of fins,  
and leaving sparkling bubble trails behind.

Your skin has turned to strands of seaweed, wet and moist  
it clings to my body in a timeless embrace.

The exotic taste of sea foam is still between my lips.

Waves thunder over us, drowning any memories of prior lives.

I clasp you to the heat at the center of my body  
and convulse from the electric sting of some unknown creature  
of the dark.

My soul rides the highest peak  
and, shuddering,  
plunges to a death at sea.

# OUR AGE OF FABLE

*Mike Lowery*

1.

I am alone in a noble room, a room  
hung with strips of shining silk.  
The curtains hang on red-gold rings,  
and have a rope pull. Silk tapestries  
cover the walls.

I am a knight errant with a fleur-de-  
lis on my shoulder. I wear a worsted  
suit, scented linen, a chain on my  
wrist, and a tie as fluid as a  
tongue of flame and shoes –  
black patent, narrow and pointed.

Surrounded by the dens of witches,  
I chant the hours in an underground  
thronged with bouncers, queers and  
whores. God enters my soul like a  
gigolo who cruises a tea room.  
Magic wafer words thicken the  
darkness within the great hall.

Outside the wild wind runs to  
wrestle with the sun till the  
Michaelmas moon promises snow.

I play dice and knuckle bones in  
the dark while cat footed guards  
wait for night to end.  
Thus, I begin my quest for rare  
sights and autistic visions.

2.

My lady's wild eyes are full of  
cocaine and flowers. Her heart  
beats quick with the music, she  
calls me her snake fisher of the  
wedding feast, prisoner of sheets  
lost in the matted wilderness of  
her hair. Her eye-hipped ancient  
meanings and slow rites take me  
down through the botany of the  
underworld where I join princes,  
astrologers and pornographers in  
the search for the Holy Grail.

3.

Dogs run free, and the forest swells  
with horns, hooves and chases.

Inside, thousands of white candles  
hanging in rings of gold and chrystal  
melt onto green marble floors. The  
waxed torches kindle a clear bright  
light on my face, a face gentle and  
violent. I was born to be a pimp.

When I was a kid in St Louis, the  
girls were called Babes. But when  
you found out a girl could be had,  
she became a bimbo.

4.

In my war against winter I wear over  
my doublet of tharsia silk a hood,  
tied at the neck and lined with thick  
fur. My white silk shirt is embroidered  
with parrots perched among painted

purple flowers, and turtle doves, and  
lovers knots so thick that ladies  
could have sewn them for seven winters.

I spend long evenings mulling my wine.  
I try my flesh with simple food while  
holy women drink my name before a  
long table laid on a trestle.

In a rain of ashes I wait for the  
powder keg of morning. A secret door  
opens on a dark but elegant stairway.  
I hear masses being said at the end  
of the hall where Saints drink sherry  
and smoke Havana cigars. Beneath  
this night shade of nicotine I give  
my heart to the King, my cock to the  
whores, my head to the hangman.  
And then dance and mime with subtle  
magic through this enchanted night,  
canonized in the warm belly of a  
frail sisterhood.

5.

As winter nears its end I prepare to  
leave the castle of the sinner King.  
Each year I set forth without shield  
when the flat earth opens into flowers  
and fields and plains grow thick and  
green. By the faith of my body I  
seek marvels no tongue can tell. I  
become a ghost torn by the sun, no  
longer a pale child prisoner. I  
ride where men go astray.

# To a Lover Upon Return – A Praise to Violence

*Maureen Hellenen*

In all good wars  
You're prepared to loose  
something. A sword, a rope,  
an arm, a belief. And come  
with all the yessing of  
a new saint, ignorant of the cross  
and the briar.

Now since you nation  
with your new ideas.  
Its the axe and the ground  
again. Hitting rock  
and wanting diamond.

# Hands

*Beth Gamse*

her hands wait on her lap  
her hands lie on her leg  
fingers tap  
quick jerks  
the fingers tap,  
pats, clicks  
irritating rain  
tapping storm windows

the fingers tap  
those cellular constructions  
could be so small, whole

cuts and scars adorn her  
struck by lightning  
she lies slashed, open  
cuts and bruises decorate her skin  
those wounds are a moment  
too soon she has healed, ready  
she withdraws her palms  
unclothed skin

her grip has lessened  
strength, the lightning  
has passed through her

that left a clear and jagged gash  
scars she wears as easy as birthmarks,  
she uses them like costume jewelry  
cheap souvenirs of hurricanes  
relics of trees cracked, weather  
beaten limbs.

# **Drirr**

*John Allen Bryan Jr.*

drirr thinks he's human  
he sees he has the hands of a man  
but surely you can see  
a man without hands  
is still a man

but  
the wind clings madly to his head  
crackling him  
spinning him  
whirling him around

rain water does not always remember him  
from day to day  
finds him hiding in some rusty drain pipe  
dissolves him  
and rushes away

and the sun  
constantly gives him  
unintelligible commands  
he tries to respond  
it waits impatiently  
burning at noon  
and finally giving up in exasperation

moon calls him a dreamer  
when he sparkles  
like the star neighbors  
just another flight of purposeless energy

# MEDITATION: LOST

*Robert Joe Stout*

I do not run now but bend  
my knuckles as the flashes skitter  
down the one black street  
away from me. Merge  
and return, a shimmer of orange,  
to penetrate an eye  
that neither is mine  
nor an eye as it angles inward,  
dissects lumps of flesh  
that are as mountains  
burying the fossil-forms  
– my bones or those of someone  
who died millenia ago –  
beneath a weight of darkness  
that I neither can resist nor control.  
I hover, listening as someone, somewhere,  
calls aloud  
and swivels in sensations  
I once thought  
exclusively were mine.

**"This Man is My Shepard . . .  
He leadeth me to lie down"**

*Maureen Hellenen*

Marriage is the black heaven, we angel to;  
the eternal ceremony that is our flesh.  
It is our rite, to make love the first  
night; to unclothe, covet and cleave.  
Your fingers depressed in my soft flesh  
leaving your brand. I am heifer to  
this new pasture, where the world has nothing  
to do with me and my own pale light is snow  
and morning. You shovel my paths till  
I'm dark; then you separate thinking of  
the child you might have left in the snow.  
and you begin to hate the day I'll  
find it in my thighs, my thick thighs,  
that will begin to hide from you.

# Carnival

*Joanne Seltzer*

My honeymoon, my first flight,  
air pockets out of Detroit.

I vomited green wedding cake  
all the way down to New Orleans  
without fear of anything  
except not to crash  
into the yellow Mississippi.

My stomach stayed in the stay.

\*

Such an old-fashioned taxi,  
young Yankee driver.

"You should have come last week.  
You should have taken  
the best hotel.  
You should have seen the parade.

No tip?

He spat white by the curb.

\*

Sirens blasted through the night.  
The desk clerk laughed  
when I called down to ask,  
"Is it  
burning yet, this fire trap?"  
Across the street, a fire brigade  
cleaning up after Mardi gras.

I was just a kid, a bride:  
I had a right to be scared.

# Tumula

*Yvonne Brooks*

From time before  
I dream your painted face;  
Cast out when you bled  
Chanting men cried devil.  
Time now for sons  
to call me dirty.

We die with each moon.

Feel the stir of your daughter;  
passed in the flow, dying.

And if the sons in our blood  
could be saved,  
would their eyes look away?

They will curse you still.

We die with each moon.  
Let us shed birth  
and mingle our wet fear.

I know your blood.

# Seeking Liberation

*Suzanne Wederich*

Black pool reflecting  
my white face  
round as the Moon  
and golden eye stars  
shining brightly on its surface.

I told him how I saw through  
the deception of language,  
yet he tells me  
It's not Truth.

Buttered from birth he was, by me,  
cherry butter, melted batter, silken fingertips  
touching bread, of flesh.  
Wheat drives the wind mad  
in the corner of my golden eye.

You see, then the relationship  
I sank  
In its hulk  
Down I went with my guilt of lies  
into a land of dreams and answers,  
Of moonfaced children like myself,  
Where the desert perfume warmed snakes  
And the childless mothers roamed free.

Now up again I am rise, not knowing why,  
and feeling quite lost amid the clutter  
of an age on top of me,  
suppressing me, and me bending it.

With half a voice I confront  
its walls of waxed glass,  
sweating bitterly in their vertical harassment.  
I advance toward the stigmatism of  
Its incorrigible perception

To break  
Our blind date with the future.

# For Ferris: Agility, the easy touch

*Beth Gamse*

Even for this, minute moment  
she steps that gingerly.  
Her intuitive balance  
wavers, swathed, tainted.

No easy sighting  
the statutes govern  
imperceptible rules her order  
disintegrates, she cowers.

Unlit hours straining  
clocks cannot ring  
seconds, the silence  
of breath and balance.

No wires', no curbs',  
width is different.  
She covers her lines, look!  
Dexterity can never be this nimble  
woman, agile child  
hunting again.

# For Sven Fire Flies Are Neon Signs

*Beth Kroni*

The electric glare hummed through eight oclock halls  
Like a crazed fly.  
Boots with mountain on their soles  
Echoed clown, sounding of houses  
In the city zoo  
Those boots, culprits of the mudslush trail.  
Tawny hair entangled like static straw  
Cheeks ruddy  
And sanguine lips  
He'd carry into class  
Only an afterglow of winter sunrise and marijuana  
That put goose bumps on my arms  
And made me wish  
I wore his flannel.

Last time, I noticed that your mountains live now  
In glass covered books . . .  
We talked of fire flies out back  
Fire flies are sometimes neon signs  
Neon signs signaling them to gather  
Like moths madly dancing  
Flapping under yellow porch bulbs  
On sticky summer nights.

Again I see you  
We inside drinking whisky  
Sucking warmly  
On the glossed over candies of youth.  
Outside snow trickles through lamplight  
Like sequins spilling  
From a plastic tube . . .  
In summer, in winter

You still remain  
The snow sparkle glitter  
On pot-holed or black slick pavement  
Before a cadillac  
Or the taped shoe of a wino  
Can crack it.

# ROCK CANYON

*Kent Williams*

Lying on a bridge  
over a dry creek  
staring upwards

Budded branches conjoin  
overhead in a network  
of veins feeding  
the blue of the sky  
connected, the sky pulling  
up trees pulling down  
a taut equilibrium  
if they let go  
the blue would fly  
away and slowly  
atrophy leaving  
red or green  
possibly black  
stars twinkling  
obstinately through  
a very long night  
indeed.

# "metal lightning on water"

*p. mandel*

at last the daffodils meet  
the silken winter air;  
reclining pathways  
wind by early morning lanterns.

coins mark darkened areas  
where long ago the air  
had dented the space.

boundaries chipped and lost  
die like roses  
hammered into  
a musty desert.

chunks of metal lightning  
plunk into the freezing  
waters  
of a lake fractured and strewn.

# Grace

*Andrea Moorhead*

eaten the soil  
cracked all nut  
bark  
leaf  
the clean raw apple  
and green twigs,  
eaten the soil  
stir out silt by river  
and mud to wound  
and mud to see  
fertile  
and using all light  
eaten by rain night  
eaten as the flow of floodtide  
lingers,  
swollen  
branch  
and the thick  
raw grain.

**AN OPTICAL ILLUSION**  
**(Paradise Valley, Montana)**

*Ernest Kroll*

The trees of the nearer ridge  
Passed quicker than the farther;  
In a hollow of the latter,  
The quicker ones rose clear –  
A momentary matter,  
But for the moment ran  
Between the slower ones  
(And in the mind still runs  
Across the gap of these)  
A sudden caravan  
Of quicker moving trees.

# THE PHYSICAL SIDE OF SEX

*Michael Finley*

Inside the clocks go cuckoo, lightswitches hiccup, pillows cough up feathers, vacuum tubes pop, and book jackets break into applause. Outside car horns honk, airplanes stop in the middle of the air, bees fall out of their drawers, treetrunks squeak and leaves jump back into the branches; while you man your post in spite of the rest of them, because you take certain things seriously.

# PATCHOULI

*Michael Finley*

Personally, I like the smell. So I bought some and wore it to work. But Carol said some people wear it to cover up sweat. So I gave it to Dirk as a present. Today I stood by a woman on a bus. It came from her hair, from her blouse, from her thongs. Om mani padme hum, I said, and disembarked two miles from home.

# YOUR LIFE IS NOT YOUR OWN

*Cynthia Veach-Espe*

In the crackle  
of dawn  
across the sea  
of everyman  
on a benign  
merry go round  
you jockey for  
position  
then are given up  
to the sweatfilled  
palms of parents  
who comb your  
curly brain mass.

Anchored in a  
stubborn sea  
initiative refuses  
your life  
numbly shuffles in  
through your  
narrowing veins to  
your soft diseasing  
organs.

Round and round  
sucking the  
paltry sweat  
combing and cuddling  
your own  
you wait  
behind your  
northern doors

for the expected ghost  
to curl away your legs  
and lay aside your hands  
to dizzily dance  
you off-a lump  
inside the earth.

# UNTITLED

*Kris Swanson*

I have become a parasite –  
living in you and on you,  
eating slowly away  
that part of you  
which feeds my wretched soul.  
I shall suck from you the love  
till you've no more to give me  
and lay disgusted and distraught.  
I will cling steadfast  
to your fumbling hand, your weary mind  
and your torn heart;  
drain you of yourself  
and still hold you captive  
unto the selfishness of my need.

I warn you now,  
before you take me  
wholly as yours,  
that your love shall bleed  
and die in mortal agony.

# Four Acres

*Len Roberts*

The old gray weathered planks of the barn  
drift in and out of my dreams  
with your breasts, like suns, blossoming.  
It's difficult to say just why I left  
those four acres and you  
standing in the driveway that Fall day –  
and it's hard to understand  
leaving the gentleness of your smile.  
What must you have thought of my nights drunk in bars,  
picking up women because I was afraid to come home to you?  
Did you know when we were first married  
and I woke in the night  
to put my face on your breasts  
that something in me was still lonely?  
That when we sat down to Sunday dinner  
I almost choked on the pork chops or spaghetti?  
We should have talked more, perhaps  
I could have told you  
that my days and nights had become meaningless,  
that I needed more joy in my life.  
Could I have whispered to you the secrets  
I kept even from myself as we lay in the attic bedroom so close  
yet not together?  
Could I have placed my hand on your face and sighed that  
I truly never meant any of it?  
Instead, I hooked my arm around your thin neck,  
my hand filling with blood and pulsing as we watched  
the light move away from the window.

# Puzzle

*James K. Bowen*

I come apart like a puzzle,  
leaving only light;

and only you know  
I have always wanted to kill  
someone in self defense,

to feel my hands press  
against the throat, flattening  
out the neck muscle and feeling  
the last rush of breath blow  
past her teeth, brushing  
the strong side of my left cheek.

# **Moon Dust**

*Kathleen Malley*

Sometimes on a certain kind of night,  
a night filled with warm, technicolor breezes;  
sometimes on a night that is silent except for old whispers,  
I can feel your ghost fingertips lightly brush my skin.  
Your fingers dance messages across my flesh – an ice skater's lake –  
    your breath teasing the back of my neck again.  
Sometimes on a night at the back of winter and on the edge of spring  
suddenly your touch invites me to remember.  
When I reach out to caress your empty image  
it shatters and soon disappears,  
scattering memories on the night.

# Uphill

*Yvonne Brooks*

They moved heavy  
against the sun  
His shadow long  
drew darkness from  
her following pace

The shadow  
grew wide  
as he turned

His sound  
spread silence  
and they  
were still

## the leaf buds

*p. mandel*

vials budding from the stems of a bush  
that has awkward juts and narrow stems;  
crowing vials open throats  
gravitating towards mouths.

tin coated mouths in an open position  
reflecting with surprise  
a bush that grows  
inside.

the leaf buds are fixed against teeth  
without air  
to provide  
sustenance.

# THE SUN GOES THERE

*Alan Britt*

The sun,  
an angel fused  
with a peach,  
shakes your bones  
over a field  
fish begin to sprout and leap  
through yellow weeds and poppies,  
the sun rises  
over the land and pours the blue-streaked fish  
into the mountains,  
the trembling mountains  
the earth's dark breasts.

# RIVERS I HAVE KNOWN

*Albert Drake*

## WILAMETTE

Something to build a city around  
Lights, rubbers white as eels  
blaze from the dead slate surface  
Something to bridge

## MACKENZIE

A virgin  
whose icy waters run too fast

## CLACKAMAS

Looks like it sounds  
transparent to mossy rocks  
fifty feet down  
Shad go crazy in its clarity

## SANDY

A bed articulated  
like a male pheasant's breast  
feathers of smelt

## DESCHUTES

A French river from another century  
preserved by Indians and a narrow highway;  
clear as memory

COLUMBIA

A gray-green monolith  
it rolls on like a worker's song

# pebble

*Susian Berger*

you see,  
you have a glimpse,  
and you,  
you have an idea  
is close – close enough?

a rock  
inside,  
a pebble next to it  
waiting,  
waiting to outgrow the rock.  
it doesn't.  
(something deep, down inside this fluid-filled-body-soul . . .)

a chisel  
form nowhere  
chip,  
chip,  
chip,  
pebble is now larger . . .

# RELATIVITY

*Cheri Lomax*

In a rain-water puddle a beetle was drowning  
While an onlooker gazed at his death-struggles, frowning.  
Said he: "My dear fellow, you're being subjective.  
The pond's very small from a human perspective."

# Good Samaritan Pump-jockey

*Eric Fredenburg*

Early morning shuffle  
pump to pump, tinny radio  
background.

tired, dirty truck  
eases in with limping trailer.  
Indifferent cop rolls thru;  
leaves them to their troubles.

my bitter facade of damning words,  
used upon all other late nite  
peace-wreckers,  
lies unassailing. quiet. curious.  
they . . . need . . . help.

the short, well-built, bushy-haired man  
swings down heavily from the cab.  
his 'arms-tucked' wife, kicking tires,  
tries several things, but the tires  
remain flat.

stranded they are.  
i talk to them, wanting to give my all.  
he offers money; I refuse.  
he smiles, appreciating, and tells  
me i'm rare.  
i just want to give my help to  
others;  
needing this like i need breath.

lonely neon buzz  
oblivious, sovereign unto itself  
(in the night)  
watches the three below.

i offer my labor, time and car.

sleep

temporarily breaks the line.

but we meet once more in a cafe,

over coffee and cigarette butts:

crushed, bent wrecks of human satisfaction.

we talk to know.

my taste of meeting "new galaxies" runs

rampant . . .

i crave,

i thirst,

for new meetings.

to crash headlong into people;

the magnificent orgy of mating minds

probing, ploring . . . discovering.

all, like snowflakes.

what a potential of

interreaction.

i explode with joy and

self-satisfaction.

it had been so long since

i liked myself that much.

# **This is No Easy Anomaly**

*Tilford Bartman*

This is no easy anomaly.

This is not just the encephalitic, bi-laterally dominant, palsic baby; that mother gave to grandmother, who gave it to Mrs Fedar the social worker lady, who gave it to the people at St. Elizabeths, who taught it to dribble and die. Nol

Nor is this just Dorthy Murphy, the Prince William County turkey. A lot of white meat spent thanksgiving on ward H. Nurse lady could something up here be making me hurt down here? Yes Dorthy, we are all going to die someday, but we are not about to have you die on us here. Dorthy smiles, how wonderful!

Dorthy hasn't smiled in months. Shes been out in the County, where shes been fed LSD by little children, beat up by old alcoholic men, She has shit in many a woods. Well, Dorthy is now a legend among the shrinks, whose orders read: MEDICATE TILL SOMULENT.

No, this is all of us; Mrs. Fedar the social worker lady, the people at St. E's, the nurse lady, the children with one thousand hits of LSD, the old alcoholic men, and of course Dorthy and the encephalitic, bi-laterally dominant, palsic baby. All of us whose missing link eat the fruit of knowledge. We now bear the burden of understanding.

This is no easy anomaly. . . .

# **Illustration for Visit From a Rajah**

*Vince Harrelson*

# VISIT FROM A RAJAH

*Marne Marcus*

Spread on the window  
soft as a smile  
a slug takes its ease.



# So Many Minutes Less than Yesterday

*Susian Berger*

So many minutes less than yesterday  
time mushroomed into a threatening black cloud  
high over his head;  
he shrank at the sight of it.  
And all the good he's done  
will soon get swept away  
as the crows black-winged flight south,  
and he can love nothing – and this dull truth  
has come the last – but sense supplies  
a love encircling him and mingling with  
his life.

And once again  
in vain he sought to trace how his days  
were formed in circumstance.  
His soul would never rule  
in this hell-life.  
He is mystified, and slightly amused her charm and her soulless face  
she (who) smoothed his heavy and restless head.

And I will float with him there  
but not like the air (as she does).  
He went out to see the sun and each pore  
could feel the elements,  
and I will float with him there, but not  
like the air, and so many minutes less than yesterday . . .

# 'Suus'

## *Bruce Springsteen*

The boy-god waiting for emergence  
    Into the home of his pre-flesh parentage,  
Lusts to leave this orphaned plane  
    Of soul-bare shadows and convex cries  
    And hushed cataclysm in hollow eyes,  
Phantoms embalmed in illusory pain.

The boy-god feels the third resurgence  
    Of an old, faint call from sibling tender.  
They beckon him quit this prodigal way  
    Of reckless dreams and bastard starts  
    (A score's turn gone by earthly charts)  
And see his promised natal day.

The boy-god ponders this divergence  
    Heeding the calls of umbilical tutelage  
While, entrenched in man's decay,  
The mad and imprisoned, lost in the night  
    -Never an exit, but always in flight-  
Desperately, blindly beseech him to stay.

The boy-god fighting this submergence  
    Into the mire of dreams turned carrion,  
Lost of list to linger on,  
    Rips the leach of life from his skin  
    Answers the call and prepares to come in.  
Only the flesh-rags are left when he's gone.

# COMMAND

*Suzanne Wederich*

leap high into the air  
and tear yourself apart.  
let fly your arms  
throw back your head  
let out a sound to signify your existence.  
unwrap the joy contained in physicality,  
the essence contained in molecular form.  
pull out your ribs with oxygen  
bend back your spine till your stomach is drawn tight  
over the supportive muscles of your belly.  
throw out your legs in a leap towards inevitable gravity.  
turn your feet into hooves and gallop  
till your heart swells with blood  
and you can see its dark warmth over take your mind.  
lie flat on a sheet of ground and imagine that  
all the world is a mirror of the sky's soft expression.  
cling to the grasses and hug the trees.  
with palms to the earth and soles to the sky  
cry out a grunt of pleasure,  
then fall into the presence of yourself.

# NIRVANA Robert

*L. Tyler*

I saw this plain:  
the whole world being sucked down  
some primordial anus or vagina  
or similar orifice of dubious respectability  
first the couch and chairs slipped down the hole  
which opened at first quite modestly  
in the living room floor  
then the rest of the furniture went  
the tables and beds and curtains  
and windows and walls and electrical appliances  
and the kitchen sink  
the widening hole then swallowed  
the street and the parked and passing cars  
the trees and lawns and public buildings  
then in a terrific whirlpool all around the vast rim  
went the oceans  
and afterwards the sky was sucked down  
like hurrying smoke  
everything disappeared into the hungry gap  
then the hole folded in on itself  
the rim crumbling down like arctic ice cliffs  
then the lips lipping lip  
and before I knew it everything was  
  
nothing.

# BAFFLEMENT

*Alan Britt*

(What is it? What is it?

What is it that becomes crushed beneath the sky?)

What are you talking about?

Do you even know what you are saying you perverted old fish?

(What is it that has no wings,

that shines and makes you talk like such a fool?)

# Untitled

*C. Kay Hinchliffe*

Poems, like grapes  
Come in clusters.

The vines bear bitter fruit  
But make fine wine.

Poems, no longer domestic,  
Are imported to open markets.

Shoot the meter, it has  
a deformed foot  
and limps to the end of the line.

## **he feared his face**

*Guy R. Beining*

his rubber eye  
fell flat on the street  
stretching into morning  
& the crazy leak from his head  
opened dawn.  
wet sea-horses are rising  
from the back of his head  
narrowing into a hiss  
& the mood of his teeth  
shine in cemetery plot.

# **pacific coast highway**

*Levant*

broken snakes of traffic  
hum shimmering past.  
in southern california  
christmass\* is no specific day,  
but each car becomes a bulb  
twisting and weaving its way  
around the tree of birth  
like broken snakes of traffic.

\*christmas

# "the skyline"

*p. mandel*

rising in the power of dreams,  
ivory amidst the reaches;  
like hulks  
within the boundaries of pain.

and inside the skyline panels  
is seen a machine –  
diamond tinted with the face  
and eyes of stars.

energy shatters like thunder on a  
late summer's warmth  
light can be touched as it hardens.

and the skyline panels  
bend with a graceful look  
towards the horizon –  
mapping waves on the sea.

# WAR TO PEACE

## *The Silver Unicorn*

Softly in the night,  
She whispers in her sleep,  
Moaning soft fantasies  
And a momentary weep;

She cries of unicorns  
Murdered by a knight  
Her virtue crumbles  
In the blazing light

Tolkien nightmares  
And seas of red  
Devour her mind  
And her spirit-dead.

"Spread my wings  
And set me free  
Liralen visions  
Cover me  
Color me," said she,  
"In shades of lace  
Drink my milk  
Caress my face"

Butterfly fields  
Carry her down  
Mushroom wizards  
Lift her gown

She screams in bloody fear  
At the sage's virgin rape  
Nude, she lies on ice

With the sky as a drape  
Her lips are soft and moist  
Whispering my name  
Softly she sleeps  
In innocent fame

I spread her wings  
To set me free  
Cherry-tree visions  
Cover me  
Color me, reddest sea  
In shades of lace  
I drink her milk  
Caress her face

Softly in the night  
She smiles in her sleep  
Waking soft fantasies  
From a land oblique

"Spread my wings  
And set me free  
Unicorn visions  
Cover me  
Color me" said she  
"In drapes of lace  
Drink my milk  
Caress my face."

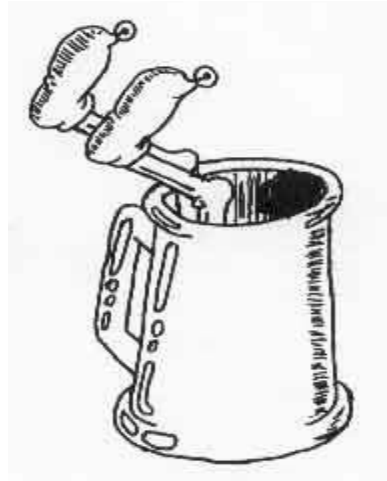
**Illustration for LEONARD THE DWARF**

*Vince Harrelson*

# LEONARD THE DWARF

*Mike Engberg*

Leonard, the Dwarf,  
Did grace me one day  
With a gold invitation  
To Gandlennin Lane  
(Leonard was not  
Too handsome a fellow;  
Nor, might I add,  
Was he totally sane).  
We lived in his burrough  
Our laughs we laughed long  
Whilst we chanted mad rhythms  
And sang insane song  
And Leonard, the Dwarf,  
Who insisted I stay,  
Said, "You'll kill thee, my friend,  
If I have my way."  
(Yes, this story rings crazy,  
This tale sounds quite mad;  
As indeed was the visit  
With Leonard I had.  
And so is dear Leonard,  
The Dwarf, who I know  
Will plant me one day  
If I chance not to go).  
The days stretched into weeks  
And the weeks into months  
And soon I forgot  
That he warned me that once  
As I listened to tales  
Of his sorcerous friends  
Of the magicks they taught him  
And their mysterious ends



Then one night I swooned  
From too many a draught  
And awoke to see Leonard  
What horror he brought!  
He rose from a looking-glass  
Hung on the door  
And he drew forth a rune-blade  
From a scabbard he wore.  
Then, the warning came back  
As I shook free that knife;  
And I thrust deep, and thought  
I'd took Leonard's foul life.  
But it seems there were magicks  
Worked by that small elf:  
He'd switched souls and bodies  
So I murdered myself. . . .

Now Leonard walks tall  
And my ghost wanders small  
And there isn't a hope for redemption  
At all  
For my grave's on a mountain  
Called Wanderer's Bane  
And my spirit's imprisoned  
At Gandlennin Lane  
As each night I beseech the Gods  
"Oh, even the score!"  
But Leonard, the Dwarf,  
is a dwarf  
Nevermore.

# PROCESSION OF THE SARDAR

*Alan Britt*

if you ask me that question  
I will have to tell you  
that I have no name.  
If you want me to follow you  
I will have to say  
that I can only fly.  
If you still insist on my presence  
I will have to turn you  
into a river.

# FIRST CONFERENCE WITH DEATH

*Cynthia Veach-Espe*

I

Age would have  
smothered slow  
and kind this  
first friend but  
facts were  
re-arranged  
to meet me  
a stranger at  
sixteen.

The conference was brief  
between death and I  
he laced me in  
survivor's clothes  
then bled me  
limp to sleep.

II

Dreaming  
I watched you  
at evening in  
a city park  
death came carefully  
wearing city clothes  
you spoke  
he was mute  
and led you  
with pistol eyes  
outside to a

park of snow  
you wrestled through  
the tundralled night  
broken a thousand  
thousand times by  
the violet of dawn.

### III

Was the closing correct?  
Who directed the cross  
of hands against your chest  
the rapor of your head  
to the pillow?

I didn't wish to see  
your final face  
but rather waded  
in fancy through  
the rites creeping  
near when they  
gave you to the  
fashioned crevice  
you snuggled into  
the split to wait  
for the scab grass  
to settle the break.

Are there certain words  
for new ghosts?  
The art betray me  
mutely I remembered  
for you your life  
emptied too soon  
into a slit in  
someone's cemetery.

# Below The Great Shield

*Jared Smith*

A large white dog courses through the fields  
    drives its long muzzle down through the trees  
        blotting out the stars where it passes.  
It sets its footprints upon the roadways between towns  
    circling  
        cautious aloof  
but curious as to the strange scents which fill its nose  
Faster than you are reading this  
    it comes loping through the great shield of the northcountry.

Down through the miles where the last hunters have died  
having felt a terrifying whiteness which filled their eyes  
and left them watching it into the fires they left behind;  
having filled their arms with the multiple of their kill;  
having spoken words quietly which broke the air in splinters  
from the cold.

It has left the land where savages build kayaks  
    from the nails of the dead  
        and men whisper into the ears of the walrus  
I have been bitten by something which is dark and swift,  
    something which melted into the snow and was solid;  
where the walrus swallows ice and shifts away on heavy feet.

But even so  
the people who surround you  
are not easy to fool. Oh, no.  
They have placed their hair between slices of bread  
    in cafeterias in restaurants in public places  
far from where they hide their bones,  
and they are waiting with an almost unliveable  
speed.

# MORNING IN THE SUMMERTIME

*T. L. Laskin*

Lying about

with the warm pleasures

of the morning

birds with cracked voices

Grackles

incessant plunging

from a well

being dug somewhere

close by

and i am the muddy earth

i am the heavy air covering

the land

Brought out like a roasted turkey

ankles ringed with paper crowns

the frills rouse excitement

while the roast oozes stuffing

the day begins resoundingly

# How Sleep Comes

*Rex Burwell*

The filled bottle sighs  
sinking to rest.  
The last dogs go in.

The house  
against the latex moon  
blinks out. Someone

wades through  
and under oaks, and through  
mazes in wood and stone.

While the pale candle  
shows the river  
closing into treeforks,

famous  
sleep comes lapping  
comes rippling over bark.







# CONFESSIONS

*Tris Junge*

of fathers and daughters:  
of degrees,  
signed, notarized,  
framed  
in five-and-dime.

of mothers and daughters,  
who would rather not be.

of your's  
in your two-tone Florsheim shoes,  
your pinstriped world.

I would rather dance in mary janes  
still stored in the attic;  
pierce your ear;  
pare apples in an endless ring.

# DEATH OF AN IRISHMAN

*Andrew Demon*

He held a woman – gentle in his mind –  
Though she was war-like  
He always loved her,  
When his people were insensitive  
To his offerings, his proof of their  
Inherent greatness  
                  he raged.

He was a man  
Too intense  
To only live his life.  
He buried himself –  
Wrote his own epitaph.

# Hour glass of Olive

*Beth Gamse*

Like her rocker,  
that smooth economy, movement  
seductive as sand dunes,  
chameleons of landscape  
and gardens, unkempt.

Her hedges have heightened  
privacy of shadow,  
priceless, this anonymity  
extracts from crowded mornings  
their busy appeal.

Furnished lakes and breezes  
delight in whispered whim.  
Her immense entrancement  
blankets, warm as down  
natural laughter spills  
fragile magnet.  
Again, she turns the timepiece.

# MY POEMS

*Alan Britt*

My poems tear themselves  
against rocks

A lizard carries a diamond  
across the moon

Silence drags its belly  
through the bushes

There are poems flying  
on the beaches,  
ring-billed and crying,

You found your poem,  
the white oleander  
in your skin,  
poppies spill your bones  
over the black dirt

I cover my eyes  
against the evening,

Under your forehead  
a lamp burns the darkness

# GARDEN

*Jerry Farnsworth*

A rock breathes.

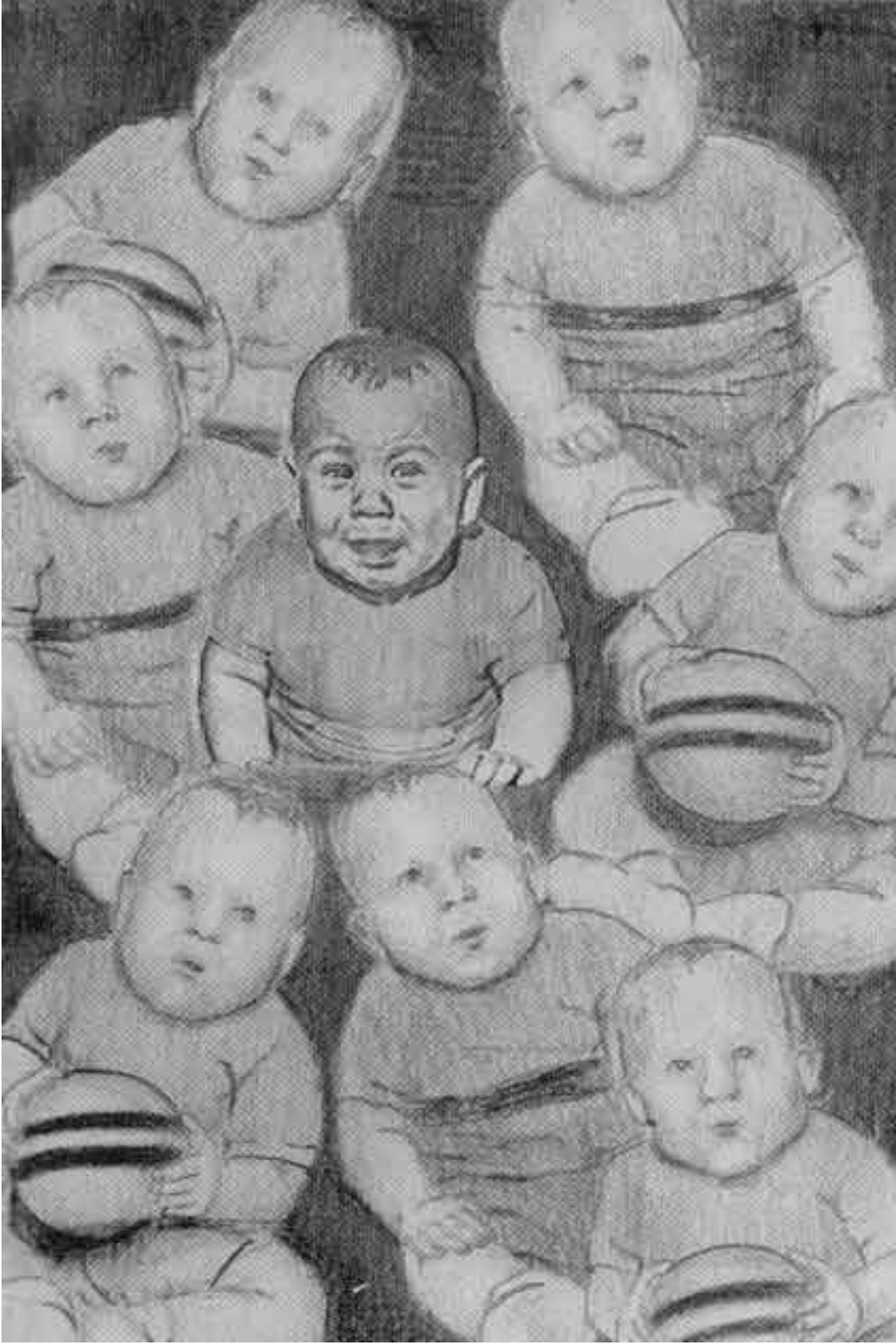
A pond

Remains glassy.

No wind

Can touch the rock.

No dream the pond.



# Disguises

*Jonathan Baumbach*

The baby that was is not the baby that is. It has come to that. The baby that is is an interloper, a baby-come-lately. The baby that was is no friend to the new arrangement though takes it as well as he might, as well as anyone might. The other learns how to disport himself by stealing his style. He (that was) is the real baby (if no longer quite that), while the other is a second-rate imitation. Distinctions have become hopelessly confused. The mere imitation deceives the world. Everyone seems to have forgotten the way it used to be and replaced that reality with the compelling illusion of what is. Life has gotten out of hand.

There are characters in his narrative for whom the baby that was feels not the slightest responsibility, the imposter baby being a prime example.

"Why do you pretend to be me?" he says to him when no one is listening. The usurper has no answer to that, seems dumbfounded by the question.

"I'm on to your game," says the former baby.

When the father picks up the interloper and says, "How's my baby?" the other laughs bitterly to himself, amazed by such misperception.

What he needs, he decides, is the restoration of his lost identity, a return to the good old days. The idea grows in him, blossoms. Working late at night in his laboratory (an insufficient space he shares with the usurper), he develops a mask that resembles himself as he was.

He will keep the disguise out of sight until the perfect moment for its employment arrives. In the meantime, he will pretend to accept the unthinkable terms of the present arrangement. He even plays on occasion with the usurper (anything to divert suspicion) with the kindness and deference he used to reserve for himself. Sometimes his impatience with imposture, the other's and his own, gets the better of his resolve. The usurper has the habit of identifying everything that he picks up as his own.

"My rabbit, my car, my robot, my GI Joe," says the usurper.

"It's not yours," says the story's hero.

"It's not yours," says the usurper, either in echo or assertion.

"I hate liars," says the former baby, storming off in unconstrained display of disgust.

The imposter suffers this slight as if it were a painful fall, calling out the other's name repeatedly in complaint.

"How many times do I have to tell you," someone says, shaming him, picking up the imposter for a whole raft of unearned embraces.

Why can't he keep his mouth shut? thinks the story's main character, and he would say it out loud if he weren't trying to keep a low profile. He wishes one or the other of them – the other his first choice – would disappear.

Indignity follows indignity. His own long forgotten imaginary grandma (reported dead in an early edition of *The N.Y. Times*) comes to play with the imposter. Perhaps passing away has undone her powers of sight, he thinks, wanting to put the best possible interpretation on unforgiveable betrayal. Is there no one left to tell the real from the false.

Some lip service is given by those of the household to his prerogatives, but in fact they have been stripped from him. Everything that matters in his life has been made immaterial. While the evening sleeps, he plans his comeback. While his parents are out at a local movie, he puts on the mask of his former self and slips out of the house.

He walks a long distance, six or eight blocks, crossing the streets he has mandate to cross and some others where the area of his authority is undefined, when a tapping on the window catches his attention. A woman both familiar and unfamiliar (someone he can't remember having seen before though remembers from some dream) invites him in. If it is soup she has to offer, he has promised himself to refuse.

The question of soup doesn't come up. In fact, for a while, there is nothing of sustenance offered him except a few heartfelt compliments and a kiss or two on the forehead. "What a big baby," the woman tends to say in admiration. She offers to put him to bed in the largest crib in the house so that he might be "full of beans" the next morning.

He wouldn't mind, he says, being full of beans this evening, depending of course on what kind of beans they were.

"I assume," the woman says, "that when you say beans you're talking metaphorically."

She marches him into the kitchen and sets him up in a cramped high chair. She has, she reports, a refrigerator full of leftovers. A metal bib (perhaps only a stiff plastic) is tied around his neck, vitiating an otherwise delicate appetite.

"Would you like me to help you?" she asks.

He nods by mistake, intending all along to shake his head in the negative. Before he can correct her misapprehension, a shovelful of leftovers arrives unwanted at lips' door.

The food refuses to be swallowed and the woman breaks into tears. "What have I done wrong?" she asks. "Why do you hate me?"

The former baby protests that he has been misunderstood, that his feelings about the woman and the food are separate and distinct, to be confused at the peril of the confuser.

"What can I do that will make you happy?" she asks. "Is there anything?"

The baby-in-disguise is escaping the high chair when the husband makes an imposing entrance. "What's all the noise, for God's sake?" he asks.

The woman gives him a somewhat biased version of the preceding events.

"You don't know how to handle him," says the husband. "What this baby needs is a little discipline in his life."

"If you were home more often," she says, "maybe he'd be getting what he needs."

"You know I have to visit my sick aunt every night," he says. "I don't do it for pleasure."

They shout a few things back and forth, most of them embarrassing to report. At some point the husband carries the baby-in-disguise upstairs and puts him to bed in the humiliating confines of a crib. "I'm putting you to bed without your dinner," he says, "because you were bad and didn't eat it. That's the kind of discipline you're going to get in this house."

The next morning, after the husband is gone, the woman tells the former baby a secret. "My husband hasn't the slightest interest in babies," she says. "He thinks they're a bloody pain in the neck, that the only purpose that they have in the world is to make life more difficult for him. Now that's not right, is it?"

Her guest can't help but agree.

"His idea of discipline is putting a baby to bed without food. Now my idea of discipline is having a baby eat everything that's good for him."

During the working day, the woman feeds him continuously until he is immobilized with food. In the evening, in accordance with his idea of discipline, the husband puts him to bed without any dinner.

Behind the bars of his crib at night, the baby overhears the husband and wife argue over the events of the day. Perhaps it is the television news, though some of the noise seems to concern him. Some of what he hears may even have been dreamed. They talk of babies and who wanted and who didn't want the one they had. The woman says that it is tradition to take the one you get, and if you don't love it right away, you learn to love it. The husband says that that's all right for her to say, but that he has never been able to love a stranger, particularly one that makes excessive demands on his time. Moreover (if moreover needs to be said), this baby arrived before he was ready for him.

The former baby decides that it is time to move on and tells the woman of his decision the next morning when they're alone together in the kitchen.

"If that's the way it has to be, that's the way it has to be," she says. "Promise me one favor, one itsy bitsy favor before you go."

"One," says the former baby, not a little grudgingly.

"I want you to promise to stay with me until you grow up."

The former baby removes the trappings of his disguise.

"I've grown up," he announces.

The woman shakes her large head in astonishment. "They grow up so fast," she says, blotting a tear with the back of her hand. "One moment they're babies and the next they look like teenagers."

The over-aged baby is given his unconditional release and is on his way before the woman can reorder the priorities of her affections. It is a little disappointing that she can part with him so readily. In the old days, she would have blocked the door or screamed or thrown herself on the floor in a wild flight of despair.

On his return he finds the interloper in his room, messing around with his toys. "Those are mine," he says.

"Those are mine, " says the other.

"How can they be yours if they're mine?"

The question seems to baffle the imposter, who mumbles something in reply and hugs the toys to his chest. As a further insistence, he lets out a scream.

In a moment – how fast they are when you least expect them – the mother sticks her head in the room and says, "Please don't make him cry. How many times do I have to tell you not to upset him?"

He answers her in his mind after she has gone, makes an eloquent case for his misunderstood position, then he separates his toys from the apparent baby and restores some semblance of order to what had once been his room.

The imposter is too stunned to scream, opening and closing his mouth in silent protest. Having gotten his way, the former baby relents and gives the other back one of the toys he has taken. He then slips out to avoid recapitulations.

Wherever he goes the image of his former self occupies space formerly reserved for him.

The next night, he disguises himself as a baby and leaves the house, pursuing the pleasure of old adventures.

"What a nice baby," someone says and he turns to accept the compliment with a befitting graciousness. In the middle of his turn, he stops himself (the remark might have been meant for someone else) to avoid disappointment. Then curiosity gets the better of him and he turns fully around, confronting the landscape behind. If there was anyone there before, there is no one now.

Later that night, he accepts the hospitality of an older couple, who are seeking to recapture some semblance of their youth.

"We'll give you a little time to settle down," the old man says, "and then we'd like to see you do some charming baby things."

The former baby has difficulty remembering what he used to do that old people found charming. He says (in improvised baby talk) that he'll take requests, but his hosts have that far away look that comes from willful misunderstanding of obliviousness.

"Just enjoy yourself," each says to him in private as if such advice had to be kept secret from the other. The former baby has no easy time simulating pleasure, sits on the floor and smiles, then stands up and smiles, then jumps up and down and smiles. It is not the most fun he ever had. His guardians ply him with baby toys he can hardly remember liking.

"That's so cute," one or the other says, but then they begin to yawn and the old man falls asleep. The old lady tats and watches television out of the corner of her eye.

He can see that they are trying to please him and he makes every effort, short of succeeding, to experience pleasure. He pretends to invent a world out of the toys they have given him, but the world refuses credibility. He has lost the old capacity for freewheeling abandon. The stares of these people constrain him, their unspoken demands. He speeds up his playing, strives for desperate gaiety.

"Are you having fun?" they ask him.

"Fun, " he repeats as he remembers the imposter doing.

After a while a certain amount of disappointment sets in on both sides. The old couple feel only the barest stirrings of lost youth, the breath of forgotten distaste, and the former baby experiences an incompetence unlike any other failure he has known before. The full and easy gesture of babyhood eludes him. He is like an athlete at the end of his career, used up, unable to will on demand (except occasionally) what came naturally to him in the good old days.

Tears rise and fall in him but never make a full appearance – lie under the skin, under the mask, under the skin of the mask, too real to share the stage with the willfully false. His spirit hurts him. Still, he continues to play to throw himself around the room as he imagines he had at an earlier, more reckless time.

The old man, peering out of one eye, is the first to give voice to the obvious. "This is not working out," he says. "It exhausts me just looking at this baby."

The old lady defends the former baby's behavior at length and without conviction. A parting of the ways is arranged under which the stigma of fault is avoided on all sides.

"You'll visit us, won't you?" they say for the sake of form as he leaves. "There'll always be a place for you here."

Disguise apparently is insufficient. He works at reestablishing his former highly developed sense of babiness, studies the imposter for clues. The imposter uses repetition to extraordinary effect, reciting the same name of word over and over again until it becomes other than itself, until it becomes a flower of sound.

One day the former baby goes to a fortune teller for advice.

"Tell them how it is with you," the fortune teller advises. "If you don't speak for yourself, who else will?" Then she gives him three fortune cookies with important messages inside.

"It is very fortunate that you came to me," says the fortune teller. "A good fortune is a joy to behold among other things."

He is instructed to read the fortunes in the proper order, but when he gets home he forgets what the proper order is. He trusts to fortune.

The first fortune is: "This person is true and honest and worthy of respect."

It comes as no surprise.

The second fortune is: "Romance is not to be found by pursuing the red tail of illusion."

The second makes little sense to him and he perceives that he is dealing with some kind of impenetrable code, or perhaps merely a translation from the Chinese.

The third fortune is: "Appearances are deceiving."

What he recognizes at dinner is that his mother and father, presumed his until this moment, are deceptive appearances, expert imitations of the real thing. He confronts them with his recognition ("You're not my real mother and father," he says), then watches them dance their awkward denial.

"I want my real parents," he says.

"Dear," says the false mother, "we are your real parents. What can we do to prove it to you?"

Several tests are set up for the imposter parents with mostly inconclusive results. They answer his questions correctly but with the wrong inflections. Their disguise, he concludes, is almost perfect.

He had a dream once (or perhaps it was a movie he had seen on television) in which aliens had slipped into the house during the night and replaced his mother and father by some trick of apparent deception.

A self-protecting secretiveness becomes part of his nature. He pretends for awhile that the false parents are no different from the real ones so as not to create dangerous suspicions.

"Do you think I'm not your mother?" she asks the next day.

"I'm not saying," he says.

"Well, I am," she says.

Later, he takes the interloper aside and says, "You're going to have to help me or we're in trouble."

"Help me," the interloper says.

"Understanding that you need help is a good first step," he says, which is something he's heard before or imagined he's heard.

"Good first step," says his echo.

"This baby is all right," he says to no one in particular. An alliance between them, an arrangement of mutual interest, enters the first stages of negotiation.

They play the rest of the day together as if they were both imposters.

Later. The apparent parents are in the bedroom when the baby that is lets himself in the door. The former baby stations himself outside.

"Mommy. Mommy. Mommy," the baby chants.

The woman raises her head. "Yes, my sweetpie?"

"Mommy. Mommy. Mommy. MOMMY."

"What is it, darling?"

"Mommy. Mommy. Mommy. Mommy. MOMMY."

"What do you think is the matter with him?" the woman says to her husband.

"Maybe he wants you to pick him up," the husband says.

When she gets out of bed to get him, the baby runs screaming from the room.

"What's bothering him, do you think?" she says.

At first the husband doesn't say anything, then he says, "Maybe he's on to you."

"What are you saying?"

"I'm saying, if you don't interrupt, that he knows that you're not what you pretend to be."

After that she gets up and closes the door.

It is hard for the former baby to believe that what he imagined to be true is actually so. At the same time, the evidence is inescapable.

There is nothing for him to do with his information except live with it in silence and hope for a reversal of fortunes.

The two of them share the secret now, although the interloper has a limited understanding of its implication and that frail understanding will erode with the passage of time.

Even the other, the older (the no longer baby) will one day forget his discovery and accept the family situation, which is to say the world, as it presents itself. Yet in some distant part of him the realization survives and it will return to him at certain moments as a warning against unequivocal trust in another. At any moment, those closest, those one loves, he knows, can turn out to be enemies in disguise. Once you know that, even if it is no longer on your mind, even if it is something you refuse to countenance, it remains with you like the residue of a dream.

One day he will wake up from a different dream no longer himself, transformed in his sleep (as his parents had been, as others) into a perfect imitation of the real thing. It is his fortune, he supposes. It is the way things are.





# REUNION AND FLIGHT

*Jonathan Baumbach*

When, after two days absence, Genevieve shows up in their hotel room in Paris her husband Joshua asks offhandedly – he is sitting in the bathtub smoking a cigar – where she has been.

At first she says *What?* as if the question eludes comprehension, looking at her reflection in the mirror with more generosity than she ordinarily allows that graven image.

A moment or two later she says in a voice barely meant to be heard, *I wasn't really anywhere.*

*I suppose it takes a long time to get back from nowhere,* he says. *Do you know that we have to be at the airport at 4:40.*

*If you're coming out of the bathroom, I'd like to see it.*

*Come here and give us a kiss, huh?* he says.

Dutifully, she presents her face, turning it away the instant his mouth approaches hers. He holds his cigar over his head while they barely miss connection.

*Does that make it all right?* she says, brushing away cigar smoke as if it were spider webs. – *Why do you have to smoke those foul cigars? You make the bathroom uninhabitable for anyone else. Actually, I don't mind the smell of cigars. Only . . .*

*Only you hate the smell.*

*Only . . . I hate the smell.* She laughs without pleasure, lies down on the bed, cries, laughs while crying, cries while trying not to laugh, covers her face with her hands. She is traveling incognito, she thinks.

She notices, though it is not untypical of him, that he is wearing a hat in the bathtub.

*I have no respect for you,* Genevieve says. *Isn't that terrible? I can't stand it when you tell those literary stories just for the sake of dropping names. I know it's a terrible thing to say and I'm sorry I have to say it but it's what I feel.*

The water in his bath is not as warm as it was, is not as warm as he remembers it, is not as warm as warmer water.

The situation reminds her of a novel she is writing about a marriage in which a wife not unlike herself wishes she were not married or were married to someone else. There's something I have to tell you, she says, but it can wait (she adds) until you get out of the tub.

Is that an inducement to leave or to stay? he asks. If I don't get out, will I never hear your story?

Nobody in fiction, he thinks, talks the way you do in real life, the life that includes baths, shit, anxiety, sex, regret, parody, misunderstanding and betrayal. If they did, it would be unimaginable. Earlier in the day, pacing the room in order to keep going, he happened to glance out the window and noticed Genevieve, or a woman who resembled her, getting out of a cab in a self-absorbed way. It was then he took off his clothes, went into the bathroom and turned on the water in the tub. An hour passed and he developed a taste for being alone.

Now that she was back, he was not concerned, had never been, that she would not return.

I'm seeing another man, she said.

Seeing? He had never, a man with an eye for metaphor, doubted the power of sight.

Is that what you wanted to tell me? he asked.

Doesn't it matter?

It matters, he said, then he added, It matters but not much.

Your coolness, I want to tell you, she said, is a symptom of dehumanization.

They flew back from Paris (to Boston) on the same plane, sitting next to each other as if it were the oddest of coincidences.

At the time he had no idea that that was how it would end up. When she confided her infidelity he imagined that they would return to the states on different planes or that Genevieve would drive off with her lover in a red Porsche and they would be listening to music, Mozart or Vivaldi, and going very fast and the driver, challenged by an oncoming truck, would lose control of the car on a winding mountain road and there would be a fatal accident. The music of chance fatality was clearing its throat on the sound track.

Another man came into the room, presumably a bellhop, and embraced his wife. It had happened moments after her confession and

moments before he had worked himself into a convincing display of outrage. The bellhop will say in his operatic English that he is in the room wrong.

Wrong room you mean.

How stupide of me.

Time gets ahead of us. Let's return to Joshua in the bathtub smoking an Italian cigar. His wife, who has been away a day and two nights, returns breathless and mysterious, wearing her secrets like perfume. What can she confess to him that he hasn't already imagined?

When I needed you, Genevieve says, you weren't there. You're never there when anyone needs you.

When wasn't I there?

When? WHEN? The first time the man I've been seeing kissed me you weren't there, were you?

He couldn't answer, ashamed of his absence when she needed him.

When that bus driver whose name I forget – I was only nine years old – stuck his hand under my dress, where were you?

Again he had no answer.

When that creep with the stocking over his face broke into the house and forced me to do it with my hands tied behind me, where were you?

No answer as usual, his hat over his face, a bald spot at the back of his head as big as her fist.

When that black addict on the MTA pushed my head onto his lap and said suck it white momma, you were not there. You were never there.

His excuses, such as they might be, were choked back.

I just mention the first things that come to mind. There were hundreds of other times in my life when you weren't there when I really needed you. If you weren't there then, it follows, isn't that so, that you won't be there the next time.

He thought to ask for another chance.

It's not that you always let me down, she says in a reflective moment. It's just that, how can I say it without making it sound worse than it is, I have disdain for you. Why don't you say something?

Come over and give us another kiss, baby, he says, blowing a smoke-screen from his cigar.

Like hell I will. She comes over slyly, tenderly, and offers him the side of her face. Several more occasions of his failure in regard to her come to

mind. – There was dream I had a couple of weeks ago in which I was locked in a burning room and your face was in the window and I was calling to you and you wouldn't come. There must have been times when I let you down too. Do you want to tell me about them?

I can't think of any, he says.

He gets out of the tub with an enormous erection. For a moment she thinks it's the cigar he's been smoking that's between his legs.

In Paris, such was the word – call it an injunction if you will – you do as the Parisians.

When she tells him of her assignation with the schizophrenia specialist, the air goes out of him.

In high school once (it comes to mind), a sassy redhead named Dorothy Day told Joshua that he had a Roman nose. A modified Roman nose, she would add on closer inspection. It hooked a bit like the vestiges of a claw.

He shaves, the steam from the bath clouding the mirror, his face ghostly on the other side of the fog.

I don't know what to do, she says in a voice louder than normal.

I thought you were through with him, he says out of the side of his mouth. Isn't that what you told me?

I don't know what to do, she repeats. He's one of the most decent men I ever met. He's really a very decent man. You'd like him if you got to know him.

They read their parts from a set of playbooks she inherited from a non-equity theatrical group in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

He wants to take care of me, she says.

What's that supposed to mean? Does he plan to adopt you?

It means that he's the kind of man who's there when you need him.

Her lines seem to embarrass her and she throws away the script they've been rehearsing, only to find herself speechless.

The phone rings. She looks at him smugly, her queer smile saying: See, he is there.

I have no intention of seeing you again, she says to the ticket agent at Pan Am who has called to verify their reservation.

An hour and twenty-seven minutes later they are boarding flight 522 to Boston, taking their seats like any other couple returning from holiday.

Their jet, a DC-10, is beginning to taxi toward the runway, turning once and then again, when they notice a hulking figure, running in their wake, waving his arms. It is, or seems to be, Genevieve's lover, the itinerant alienist.

The plane stops and Joshua fears for a moment that the doors are about to open and the alienist come aboard to take his place. Genevieve sits with her hands clasped in her lap, staring straight ahead, impervious to the interruption.

It is as if the schizophrenia specialist has some news for someone on the plane. There are words on his lips. Perhaps his invalid wife in Brazil has agreed to a divorce.

In a few minutes, three to four, they are in the air leaving Paris and Genevieve's persistent lover to the past.

Joshua has the uncanny feeling that he can read the word "Danger" on the lips of the figure below, receding before him like a moment of amnesia. Genevieve squeezes his arm.

A swarthy man, Arab perhaps, sitting in the left aisle three rows ahead of Joshua and Genevieve, is behaving in a suspicious manner. Genevieve calls Joshua's attention to the man. What do you make of him? she stage whispers.

The suspicious figure, forehead beaded with sweat, glances nervously about as if wanting to know where everyone is at every moment.

He looks too suspicious, says Joshua, only a man with the clearest of consciences could behave so badly.

A stewardess glides over to the apparent Arab to ask if anything might be done to ease his obvious discomfort.

Genevieve imagines the following dialogue:

Is there anything the matter, air? asks Cloris. Can I get you a pillow?

The man has a blank look, perhaps understands no English, offers his interrogator an agitated smile.

Air, he says after a moment or two of puzzlement.

You have to turn the little knob, she says sweetly, adjusting it for him, a pinpoint of air stinging the flesh above the bridge of his nose. – Is that better?

He points to an unmarked canvas bag balanced across his lap. – Please to tell pilot to take plane to (the destination is unimaginable). I do not intention to blow up plane but if pilot refuses me, it is something to be done. He hands the stewardess a folded piece of paper and asks her to deliver what is

apparently a message to the pilot. Akim is a decent enough man – this will come out later – although a hopeless fanatic.

An hour out of Paris the plane subtly shifts its course. Joshua is aware of the change of direction, though there has been no official announcement. Everyone goes about his or her business as if nothing is out of the ordinary. Joshua accepts this deception with a cynical pleasure as he accepts all the self-fulfilling deceptions in his life.

This is what Genevieve is thinking. Genevieve is thinking that had her lover been on the plane, he would have found a way to defuse the hijacker.

Genevieve leans her head on Joshua's shoulder. – I wish we had made out a will, she says. – Who will take care of the children if we're killed?

2

Someone on the plane was a hijacker with a bomb which can be activated by the turn of a screw or a radio signal of a certain frequency. It may not be the one they assumed.

The one neither the most suspicious nor the least suspicious was the most likely suspect.

Was it the pomaded gigolo with the rubber codpiece who was passing himself off as an Italian count?

Was it the Chinese lingerie salesman with the pointed Roma shoes and the glass eye?

A voice came over the loudspeaker announcing that they were going through some minor turbulence. The sign: FASTEN SEATBELTS flashed on.

A small suitcase tumbled from a rack and smashed open.

Was it the prosthetic devices salesman from Oshkosh with the thick-rimmed glasses and the forked tongue?

The kids will be all right with your mother, Joshua says. She may not be ideal but they are fond of her.

She's all right for short visits, but I don't want her bringing them up.

Who then?

That's just it. There isn't anyone I would trust with them.

Was it the Pepsi Cola executive with the American flag pin in his lapel and the faint, almost indiscernible Russian accent?

Was it the former professional football player, a dignified, massively built black down on his luck ?

Was it the fat Jewish matron from Shaker Heights who had spent the past two years, since the death of her husband, traveling first class through the principalities of Europe and Africa?

Was it the balding elegant Sicilian don who is coming to America ostensibly as an olive oil exporter?

Four hours and fifteen minutes after they take off, they land without further explanation in Lisbon Portugal.

Is that New York? asks the Russian scientist, inventor of the six-stage rocket. He wonders, staring out the window of the plane, if he's suffering from culture shock.

Genevieve slides her hand into Joshua's like an untenable secret.

A voice that does not sound like the pilot's reports to the passengers over the loudspeaker.

THERE WILL BE A SHORT REGRETTABLE DELAY. PASSENGERS ARE TO REMAIN SEATED UNTIL FURTHER MORTIFICATION. THE AIRLINE TAKES FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY INCONVENIENCE WHICH WE MUST SAY FRANKLY IS OUTSIDE OUR CONTROL. THANK YOU FOR FLYING PAN AM. THE TEMPERATURE ON THE GROUND AT LISBON IS 110 DEGREES.

The balding Sicilian don says to the English sportsman next to him that it may be necessary to take matters into their own hands.

I say, says the other. Jolly good.

It is still not certain at whose behest this unscheduled stop of indeterminate length has been made.

Several passengers exhibit signs of panic running up and down the aisles like gerbils on a tread mill. Machine gun fire blasts the unnatural silence with its inarguable logic.

A stewardess from Georgia named Roberta is whistling "Dixie" as an example to the others.

The fat Jewish matron from Shaker Heights, singing and sweating to keep up her courage, converts in a wholly unexpected and touching moment to Christianity. A celebrated religious leader, traveling incognito, hears her life's confession.

Genevieve is obsessed with the implications of their deaths. There is no one to whom I can entrust the children, she says as if for the first time. – I absolutely don't want them growing up the way we did.

All right, says Joshua, then let's not get killed.

Genevieve is impatient with wise-ass cracks, is sick and tired of a husband who confronts disaster by making light of it. Had her father been on the plane he would have penetrated the identity of the hijacker and through instinctive bravery – it was the only way he knew how to behave – saved them all.

Which one of you is responsible for this outrage? Genevieve asks, standing on her seat to command attention. Enough is enough. Some of us have to go home to our children.

Eight of the passengers – her eyes move like a camera from face to face – evidence guilt in a variety of ways: facial tics, averted eyes, fanatic stares, looks of distraction and madness. A man gets up to go to the can and is waylaid in the aisles. It is of course the suspicious looking Arab with the canvas bag.

A few minutes after his capture, as if a consequence of it, the plane takes off, dodging some misguided ground fire from the Portuguese police.

Genevieve is not a little surprised that the most suspicious-looking of the major suspects should turn out to be the guilty one, though it makes a certain sense. Nevertheless, she anticipates some further revelation.

There is great relief on the plane which manifests itself in unconstrained weeping. Strangers embrace one another. A camaraderie virtually unknown on private transportation buoys the mood of the plane.

Joshua whispers something in Genevieve's ear.

Are you crazy? she says, laughing at him.

He kisses the lobe of her nearest ear. Just for a minute, love, he says slyly. Just this one time and I'll never ask again.

Absolutely not, she says.

Genevieve, sweetheart, he says, why not?

If you mention it one more time, Joshua, I promise you I'll change my seat.

The only empty seat on the plane is the one formerly occupied by the hijacker, who reportedly continues to insist on his innocence.

I won't insist, says Joshua.

How can you insist?

I can say, for example, why don't we meet at the far toilet on the lift side.

I don't want to hear about it, says Genevieve.

Nothing more will be said, says Joshua, getting up. He goes by her, his hand-on preceding him like a Maitre D, is gone twenty minutes, finds his wife not in her seat on his belated return.

The pilot or co-pilot – how is one to know the difference? – comes out from behind the curtain in front, weaving slightly as he comes down the aisle, his cap at a jaunty angle, his upraised hand making benedictions over the flock. – How you ? How you, sweetheart?

Are you the pilot? Joshua asks.

The pilot, if that in fact is who it is, admits to being the pilot with a kind of mellow, slightly drunken insouciance, says he is Captain Chuck Heston, though his friends call him Dick. – Am I mistaken in supposing you're Joshua Quartz ?

Joshua admits to nothing, inquires into the source of the pilot's information.

Well, Joshua, says the pilot, I make it my business to know the names of all my passengers. Joshua, God blessed me with a wonderful memory for names.

He did, did He?

I can't complain, says the pilot stumbling at some subtle shift in the flight pattern. Some days nothing goes right.

If you're here, says Joshua, who's flying this plane?

The plane lurches in a spasm of doubt as if tilted by Joshua's question, spilling several passengers out of their seats. Belatedly, a FASTEN SEAT BELTS sign flashes on.

That's what happens, says the insouciant pilot, when there's a breakdown of trust in the social order. You got to trust your pilot. If he is not behind the controls of the plane, there must be a reason for it. You'll have to excuse me.

Chuck Heston pitches forward and collapses face down in the aisle. A doctor examines him and pronounces him unfit to fly.

He's been talking all day about his number being up, says one of the stewardesses, the one who had been whistling Dixie. – This is a clear case of extra-sensory perception.

Who's flying this plane? Joshua wants to know. The question comes to obsess him and he asks it at every opportunity.

There's always someone to take over, says the Wine Steward, and amiable old sent. – It's a tradition with this airline for someone unlikely to step in in an emergency. We've all had our moment or two behind the stick.

Yes, says Joshua, but who's behind the stick at this moment.

Have some faith, man, says the Steward, moving on. – When I have some hard information, I'll get back to you.

The man sitting directly in front of Joshua, the dignified prosthetic devices salesman from Oshkosh, turns around to say that he heard that one of the engines is out but that he didn't think there was anything really to worry about. – Principle of compensation. One engine, if it has to, can and will do the work of two.

Do you know that for a certainty ?

The salesman laughs good naturedly, says if I worried every time a flight I was on was in some kind of distress, they would have planted me long ago. Planes like people are programmed to continue their mission no matter the meddling stupidity of outsiders.

It takes a moment for the last part of the sentence – the odd shift in diction and tone – to sink in indelibly. Instinct precedes comprehension.

There is a small bomb in the salesman's hand which, Joshua, in a flash of anticipation, wrestles loose. The explosive device falls, flies loose. Joshua reaches for it. Two stewardesses come running down the aisle. The left lens of the salesman's thick-lensed glasses has a large crack.

Once again disaster is narrowly averted.

Everything ought to be all right from here on in, thinks Joshua.

An hour and twenty minutes out of Boston an announcement comes over the loudspeaker requesting passengers with religious backgrounds to pray for the safe landing of the plane.

While others pray in a polyglot of tongues, Joshua checks out the mysterious disappearance of his wife.

# CASING...

Rudi Piper



# CASING... RUDI PIPER

*Charlene Hinchliffe*

We met on the corner of Seaton and 45th while I was waiting for the crosstown bus. It was purely by chance of course, how we met. He asked me if I had seen a poodle in a trenchcoat pass by and I said no, that it was a puli wearing an Inverness. He liked my perception so we chatted while we followed the dog along the emptying Seaton. He seemed to be in his mid-twenties, had dark brown hair to his earlobes, green eyes behind wire-rimmed glasses, wore a lime turtleneck and tan cords, and had a hairline scar on the back of both hands and one more prominent on the right side of his face. His manner of speech was a practiced New England and he had a habit of begging with his left hand while speaking.

The puli entered the Lister Building and ran up the back stair. We followed it up the darkened narrow stairs to the sixth floor, and to the first open door which had voices and a dog on the other side. We listened quietly to the plans of a diamond heist which would take place at some time during the next three days. No names or places were mentioned and the meeting soon broke up. We followed.

After we reached the street and watched the puli disappear into an alley, he thanked me for my 'invaluable assistance' and said that his name was Melcour of Market Street. If I ever needed a private detective or a cup of bad coffee I was to be sure to call upon him at my earliest convenience. I told him that then would be convenient since I had just missed my bus.

We walked back to his office on Market Street just down from the Swedish delicatessen which was almost three blocks from my apartment. He was right, too; he did make bad coffee. It was so bad that if I'd wanted to kill small birds with darts I would have dipped the tips in it. The latke from the deli was good though, a little flat, but then again they often are. The office was stereotypical from a B grade movie, a roll top desk, a wheeled chair that squeaked, a lumpy straight chair next to a flat desk and old metal filing cabinets sitting around in a rather bare room with a dirty ceiling light.

We talked of the fine weather that we'd been having in such quantity and the length of time that we'd both been in the City. I had arrived just two months after he had, from Hartroe and he from near the River Rhee in Har-

din country. I had come to seek my fortune as a secretary and 'Gal Friday' but he did not tell me for what he came. It seemed that he was searching for something that he had not found elsewhere.

Just as I was preparing to leave all of this fun and excitement the telephone rang. It was a case, the first one in weeks, so Melcour told me. Rudi Piper had temporarily vanished and her family wanted her back. Melcour told the voice on the phone that we would be out to the Piper Estate as soon as we could catch a bus at eleven thirty at night. The voice said that a car would be sent for us in a few minutes. We cleared away the coffee cups and deli wrappings by the time that the Rolls Silver Cloud pulled up in front of the building.

The long drive to the Piper Estate was through darkened streets north of the City, toward the old mill area. Neither Melcour nor I spoke on the drive, though many thoughts ran through my mind. I noticed that the area, which I had always thought was palatial and lush, was mostly unpruned trees and broken stone fences.

When we turned from the road into the lane, I scarcely noticed the difference. The Rolls moved silently down the Macadamized drive and parked in front of what must have been a house of at least forty rooms with lights in almost every window.

The chauffeur led us up the front steps to the door, where a butler ushered us through hallways to the library. Mr. Piper was seated facing the library's door, reading a stock market report, which he put down when we entered. "Two days ago, my niece Rudi was taking her usual morning ride in the East meadow when her horse returned without her or the tack. He was standing at the front door waiting. He had come up the front steps and wouldn't go back down. I want my niece back as soon as possible." He pulled a brocade cord and a bell rang somewhere above us. The butler who had shown us to the library hurried in. "Take them to Rudi's room and make sure that I'm not disturbed." We left the library in proper deferential style and followed the butler upstairs.

"He's been like that ever since she disappeared," was all the man whispered as we ascended. Melcour tried to find out if any notes had arrived concerning Rudi's health; according to his knowledge, none had.

In Rudi's room in the East wing we met her maid, Glorianna, who knew even less of what had been going on. I asked her if there was anything missing that she could recall, had she moved anything while cleaning. I had

never been out on a case before but I was trying very hard to look professional. "Ahl ah did was my usual straightening. Didn't move anythin' much. The only things gawn was an ev'nin' gohn, sandals ta match, ah raku pot, ah boohk ah faerie talls, cahnt think o' nothin' ailse." I looked at the collection of books in an enormous walnut case while Melcour was searching the closet. The books were leather bound first editions covering a wide variety of subjects though most were children's books. While waiting for daybreak Melcour read a section of books of Hardin country tales. I read poetry that rends the soul from Talasia while Glorianna played darts.

At daybreak we went to the stable and talked to Rudi's horse. The hooves were short, and he was wearing a barred shoe on his hind right hoof. Galadrial didn't say much and the groomsmen couldn't say any more. Galad had not run hard or been in the creek or eaten since Rudi had left him. We tracked him into the field where Rudi rode. The grass was fairly short from the cattle so that we could track the barred shoe easily to the edge of the wood. They had not ridden into the wood but had merely followed the edge for about one half mile. A group of unshod horses had joined them at that point. The horses had come across the open field from the North and then headed through the wood. Rudi's horse had then headed toward the house at a canter where it waited on the front steps. We followed the herd's trail to a stone fence where they disbanded, a few jumping into neighbor's fields, a few heading in other directions. We walked back toward the house backtracking our own trail through the trees. Beneath a small tree, Melcour found the book of faerie tales and the sandals that were missing from the room. We made a more thorough search but couldn't find the raku pot or the dress that she had taken with her. The only tracks in the clearing were Galadrial's and a pair of high heeled riding boots like the pairs in Rudi's closet. She seemed to have read under the tree, eaten cookies, fed Galad a few out of the jar, remounted and left for where they were met by the herd a quarter mile afield.

The chauffeur drove us to the end of the bus line and we rode back into the City to Rudi's apartment there, in the Venus Arms on Lodoun Road on the south side of the City. We were met at the door of apartment six by Rudi's Aunt Emily, with whom she shared the apartment. Melcour introduced us and asked if anything was out of the ordinary this week. "Just the lavender from Fernado's Floristry. It didn't arrive this week." The flowers had been coming regularly ever since they had moved in. "Well, Rudi had two weeks off

from the library but her key card's revoked. Aunt Emily offered us a tea that smelled like a bale of hay and tasted like it still had the wire on it. Thus refreshed we caught the morning #4 bus toward the ferrier's.

The Pipers didn't keep a ferrier of their own but frequented one on Landcaster and Sutton. Above the ferrier's door was a pair of mismatched horseshoes; one was the size of a formal dinner plate, the other no larger than a silver dollar, with a sign that read, "we shoe the hard to fit foot" and one that gave the name of the proprietor, "Honest John Smith – the Ferrier with a Name You Can Trust". In the front windows were an assortment of reached, clipped, and barred shoes and half moons labeled "We carry a full selection of corrective shoes."

Mr. Smith was tending shop himself that morning. We asked him when he had seen Rudi last. He didn't recall any Rudi's. I mentioned the heel tab and bar on the far hind quarter crack, and then he remembered Galadrial. "I saw them about two weeks ago. The hoof needed to be trimmed and the bar shortened. She was asking whether or not it would be alright to ride over hard ground with the hoof in this condition. I told her no hard riding at all unless the hooves could be soaked and rested from time to time." I asked if she'd said where she was going. "Naw, but I didn't wonder about it though, there's no large area of ground that'd fit that description on the Piper place. Maybe the Simon place across the road. They've been coming in with chipped hooves from running on stone.

"Are the Simons doing anything for the condition?"

"Just the close trimming and what you'd call platform shoes. They're a padding clamped to the hoof by an ankle bracelet because nothing can be nailed to a hoof that's that short. Only four or five of their horses have really badly chipped hooves though. Most of them are just going barefoot. I don't think that anyone else has a bar for anything, just Galadrial. I'm going out to trim him again this week if you'd want to leave a message."

We said that we were going to see them ourselves soon so that there would be no need for that, thanking him anyway.

We caught a bus to the end of the line north past the old mill. From there we walked to the Pipers' main house. Mister Piper was temporarily granting audiences so we told him what little we had discovered. Most of which he'd known already. Aunt Emily was a gray sheep of the family and he couldn't remember much about her.

While we were going over our foregone conclusions, the post arrived. A note written on a Mark Book bag said that the Pipers had twelve hours to put fifty-thousand kyats in the bag and drop it. The note didn't specify where so Melcour and I left for Mark Books.

Riding in the Pipers' Roll Royce to the bus stop was still interesting. We were the only ones on the bus for a long while, and we took the time to express personal observations. I began, "Mr. Piper doesn't seem terribly concerned that Rudi is missing. But there is something going on that bothers him, something to do with an investment that he'd made. I don't know what it is though. Emily doesn't know any more than she's told us, in fact I think she's told us more than she knows. Rudi is a modern woman who doesn't believe in telling who or where she goes. She likes adventure – anyone who'd ride a mountain pony does – and works at the library in the children's section, is a reader, and is fond of the tales of Barubia. Her favorite flowers were delivered to her apartment until the time that she disappeared. The flowers came from a shop near the library. Lavender is not in season now but they were delivered fresh. Some person is going to a good deal of expense."

"All of those Barubian books, I wonder what it means. She doesn't look like anyone in her family could have even been to Barubia. Her uncle is much too dark to have been a native or even to have been there for any period of time recently. To Mark Books first, then to the florist, unless they send us elsewhere.

Mark Books was a mart for the rare and unusual book and imported item on the sidestreet of Inslet. When we entered, the shop smelled of fresh cinnamon, vanilla beans and book dust. The proprietor, a native of the far South, entreated us to remove from his care a bolt of silk and several nameless herbs. Not being into trading Melcour asked if anyone had come by in the last few days and traded for the bag in his hand.

"A girl bought a Talasian book of poetry in the middle of the week. She was also looking at a children's book."

I was interested, "May I see it please? I enjoy children's tales."

"You are indeed fortunate madam. It has yet to be sold. Right this way kind sir, milady." We followed him passed shining shilis and dried vanilla to a locked wooden cabinet in the back of the shop. "It is like no other in all the world." He brought out a small book bound in soft black leather and vellum pages hand illustrated and written in the fluid script of Barubian. My Barubian

was poor but I knew a valuable book when I saw it. The first tale had something to do with a mouse who wished to fly. The illustrations were as beautiful as the stories.

"The price of the volume?" Melcour asked.

"For you sir, a mere two thousand bahts."

"Seven hundred," Melcour bid.

"But sir, it is worth ten times what I'm asking. Is not the lady worthy of that?"

"The lady is without price. Nine hundred," Melcour softly said.

"Eighteen hundred. Feel the leather, none softer in known spaces."

"Do you copy them yourself? One thousand," Melcour flipped through the pages in the book. I knew that the binding alone was worth more than that and the merchant was sweating.

"Sir, you know a value of the book. A mere seventeen hundred. Milady, beseech him."

"Eleven-ten. I tire of this. Let's go over to Abdulah the Crook's." Melcour offered his arm to me. I didn't take it while the merchant was making his move.

"Sir, not even his mother goes to Abdulah's. Fourteen nine."

"Twelve-six and not a sabot more." Melcour was gathering himself to leave.

"Fourteen-three and that's my final offer."

"Fourteen-hundred," the merchant was aghast, "And throw in the necklace from behind the desk." I was aghast. Melcour smiled.

"Sold," the merchant handed me the book, looked shocked and removed a thin line of green gems from behind a glass, handing it to Melcour. Melcour paid him in cash, the sum which I'd only heard of. "May your ox calve, may your journey never end." The merchant smiled and deferred as we made our departure. I'd never heard anyone say good-luck and good-bye so eloquently. Melcour had wrapped the beads around his wrist by the time that we had reached the curb.

"We're going to the only florist in the City who would have fresh roses this time of year." We didn't take the transit this time but walked the gray blocks toward Fernando's Floristry on Azure Lane facing downtown.

The shop was a small place which reminded me of the jungles of Ash-tar. The cut flowers were kept in coolers in the back and the plants in the

front of the shop were large and exotic. Mitchell, the keeper, was feeding a plant hamburger when we entered. "Good Marrow Melcour, Lovely Lady. Is there a service which I may perform for thee? A body to dispose of? A flower to augment the lady's matchless beauty? Name it and it shall be yours." Mitchell continued to feed the plant while he spoke.

"I need to send some fresh lavender. Could you get it?" Melcour stroked a violet's leaves and it purred.

"I sent the last of it out this morning but I'll be getting more in later in the week. Would that be too late?" Mitchell then was feeding a purple leafed plant gelatin.

"Where'd you send them?" Melcour asked.

"Apartment Six of the Venus Arms Apartments. Use the back door," Mitchell said.

"I'll pay you later," Melcour said as we left for the Venus Arms and Rudi's apartment. We caught the Southside bus toward Rudi's.

On the bus I felt the freedom to speak again, "Melcour, we're running out of time. Have you ever had a client who disappeared and didn't come back?"

"Don't worry about it, Honeycakes. If we lose her, we lose her. There'll be another heiress next week or the week after." We got off of the bus and walked the block to the back of the Venus Arms. The stairs were what I expected, dark and rich with the scent of fermenting trash. We knocked on Rudi's door, number six, but there was no answer. Melcour opened the door and we went in. The apartment had been ransacked. Rudi and Emily's clothes were thrown all over, the pictures were off of the walls, jewelry was thrown all over, and the kitchen was a mess.

"They didn't find it either, but they weren't thorough. Check the kitchen. It's got to be in there." I swept flour and sugar up and put the dishes, silver, and pans back into the cupboards.

"Melcour, there's a raku pot in the ice cream. Is that what we're looking for?" I took the pot into the living room."

"No, but it's a start." Melcour dug the pot out of the butter brickle and opened it. "Just as I thought." He poured a small pile of clear stones onto the coffee table. "I'd say from one to three carats each. A good six hundred and twelve million sen, if not more." He poured the stones into his purse and put

it back on his belt. "Keep looking for a box four by six by two. It should be of a light wood, carved."

Melcour went back into Emily's room and was looking for the box. He called the office and kept digging. I'd just finished the refrigerator when I heard a scratching at the front door.

I watched the front door open and the puli in the Inverness entered. It crawled under the couch, pulled a dark wooden case from the springs and headed out of the door. "Melcour, he's got it!"

Melcour and I followed the running dog down the front stairs and into the street. Though there were people on the street, tracking the dog was no problem. We were going to the Lister Building. We took the elevator to the sixth floor, accompanied by two of the City's Security Force, whom Melcour had called. The only people in the room were the puli and Honest John Smith, the ferrier with the name you can trust. The Security Men caught John, but the puli slipped out the back stairs. We followed him down the six flights and into the street. In daylight a dog wearing a coat was still rather conspicuous. We wended through narrow alleys and streets to the park and lake that surround the City's Information Center.

When I came to the City the first major building that I'd seen was the library. It covered five acres of ground, had four levels above ground and six below with television and radio studios and transmitters, a newspaper and presses, offices, and a computer containing the entire collection of the top five levels.

I knew that if we lost track of the dog we would never find him again, so I ran faster to catch him. Melcour kept up at a lope. Up the front steps, between the State lions and through the main lobby we all ran. Down the emergency exit to the first level where the computer banks and the special collections were kept.

The dog ran into special collections and started barking. We rushed in and came face to face with Rudi, who was tied to a chair, the dog, and Aunt Emily.

"Hello, Aunt M. You ready to go?" Melcour asked.

"How did you find me? Was it the flowers?" Emily asked.

"It was a couple of things," I said. "The book bag from the kitchen, the dress you were wearing this morning from Rudi's closet, Mr. Piper forgetting that you existed, the horses from Simon's, the Talasian poems that you

left behind, the flowers that you took with you after you had wrecked the apartment, just a couple of things."

"We followed the dog," Melcour said. The puli wagged the coat. "Honest John's in custody but he didn't put up any fight. You going to join him?"

"I might as well. I'd never get out of the building." Emily sat back down and Melcour tied her to a folding metal chair with the bindings of corrugated boxes.

I untied Rudi's silk cords and ungagged her. She was wearing her riding habit yet and had her black hair braided down her back. "Who are you?" she asked.

"She's my associate," Melcour said. "Your uncle is worried about you. It's time to go home." The dog jumped into my arms and I took the coat off of him. He was clipped like a poodle.

Melcour and I carried the chair and Emily up the one flight of stairs to the elevator while Rudi carried the puli. It was a bit crowded in there, but the ride was short to the main floor. I called Security from the front desk where we waited.

In five minutes two more of the City's finest arrived and got to carry Emily out. Within five minutes after that the Rolls pulled up in front of the library. The four of us got in and we were on our way to the Piper's Estate again. Through the wonders of modern technology the chauffeur called ahead to have sandwiches prepared, as Rudi was hungry. The puli slept in my lap and Melcour read the Barubian folktales, which he'd purchased at Mark Books. Rudi read over his shoulder and mumbled in Talasian about our stupidity. If we had any intelligence we would have gotten her out two days ago. I didn't have the heart to tell her that we'd only been looking for her since midnight.

We pulled up in front of the house and Rudi sprang from the car, running up the front steps and into the East Wing. Glorianna met us at the front door to escort us to Mr. Piper. "No body loves her because it took us three days to find her. I'll send her food up to her. She's goin' ta be tarrible ta live with for tha next few days."

Mister Piper was waiting for us in a breakfast nook the size of Melcour's entire office. "Your expenses?" he asked. Melcour gave him a painfully boring itemization including the bus fares, the original price of the book, the necklace, paying for the information which Mitchell provided, the mess we

made at the library, the folding chair that we tied Emily to, everything. Melcour figured it to be fifteen thousand bahts. Mister Piper didn't even discuss the matter, but wrote Melcour a check and sent us to the kitchen.

I was amazed that we had done fifteen thousand bahts worth of anything since yesterday. Glorianna had toasted cheese, toast, fruit, and wine hidden away for us, and a joint to go for each of us as well. When we'd consumed a large quantity of cheese and toast the chauffeur drove us to the City National Bank where the Pipers' account was. Melcour cashed the check, ferretted some of it away, and then the chauffeur drove us to the corner of Seaton and 45th, leaving us off where we had met. Melcour gave me five thousand bahts from his back pocket and we were back where we had started.

He thanked me for my invaluable assistance and said that his name was Melcour of Market Street and that if I ever needed a private detective or a cup of bad coffee I was to call upon him at my earliest convenience. I told him that I might, sometime.

He turned and walked into the increasing dusk toward his office while I waited for the crosstown bus to go home.

It was an interesting relationship that we had. I never asked him why he limped, and he never asked me why I had six fingers.



# DEUCALION AND PYRRHA THROWING STONES BELATEDLY

*Frank Urbanski*

Every cell in my body must have been schizophrenic that Saturday morning. If someone had set a match under me I would have craved gasoline. It could have been the "real" Chinese food that my friend Rocko improvised for his sister's going-away party the previous evening. Or it might have been the punch that his friend Betty was ladling out as if Apollyon were on the doorstep. Whatever, when I woke up to those thousands of little dust specks filtering through my sooty windows, I knew it was going to be the type of day during which someone would undoubtedly ask me, "Is the plural of rhinoceros formed in the same manner as that of hippopotamus?" But then such things balance on one's vision of authority.

My apartment was not lushly decorous. It was not modern, nor was it "quaint." It had no rugs. They took the stereo away after I stopped making payments, and I was one of those snobs who didn't require a television. My apartment did have, however, four walls and a floor and a ceiling. Such things were a comfort in my times of need; and though I seldom found real pleasure in their existence, they did promote a certain sense of order.

Of the other apartments in the building. One was rented by a doctor who shaved irregularly. And another seemed to have been reserved for an assortment of pregnant women who each left after three or four days, so that the room was constantly occupied. The three remaining apartments were vacant. Extremely fashionable living quarters, my landlord explained disgustingly, were no longer deemed an obstacle to a correct sociological outlook. What I presumed he meant was that the bad little boys and girls had gone home to be deluged by their parents' monetary affection.

No matter.

It took me a while (three cups of Sanka, to be exact) to remember that I had promised to excavate a copy of an old Elvin Bishop album for Betty. I think the fact that she had requested that I bring it immediately to her place when I got it had something to do with the fidelity of my memory that morning, for I am usually not much good after a drunk. Lately, I had not been much good for anything. Unemployment, I guess, makes one feel that way,

being the new bull all young men must encounter. (Actually, it was a friend of mine who put it that way. I thought I might re-read some of Hemingway's bull stories to see what he had to say about it, but I never got around to it.) Anyway, after my third cup, it was downtown for me. I knew of a store at Third and Chesnut that always overstocked, then sold cheap. It was a mystery to me how a business could survive like that – but I guess it made as much sense as anything else did at that time (the Soviets had recently sold our wheat at a profit and my saintly grandmother had taken to biting small children). There was just enough clock to get downtown and purchase the record and make it to Betty's by lunchtime. She had said she would repay me upon receipt of goods (not specifically C.O.D., either) and I wondered if Rocko would be there.

Dr. Pjarik was leaning on his doorjamb when I entered the hallway. His face looked as if a porcupine had spent the night there rather uncomfortably. "Morning," I said, feeling like someone had just currycombed my genitals.

The doctor sneered. "Morning, night," he said, "what's the difference? A little more sun, a little less moon." He turned and shut his door with what I perceived as a definitive request for seclusion. Privacy is the only horror I can think of that is so highly valued.

I met Miss Ms. Mrs. (choose one) Saltzman, the mother-to-be of the week, as I was leaving the building. When I asked her, just to be sociable, how she was, she replied, "Hell, how do I look?" She really didn't look like anything, except pregnant, but then I hadn't really thought about it. Her tone was rather threatening, however. I'm not sure she expected an answer, but she marched off awkwardly before she got one, mumbling, "Jesus, Jesus." I'm not sure what He had to do with any of this either. She may have been crying. I hoped so, for that act would have been more indicative of life, it seemed, than her pregnancy. At least from what I could see. And that started me thinking better, even if I didn't feel better.

It was a crappy May day of the usual Philadelphia type, with a hot-mustard heaviness about the air that could make a butterfly sweat and made me wonder about the validity of Eliot's observations. A water main, one of those necessary arteries that usually run unnoticed beneath the city, was the center of attraction in the next block. It had burst. I was forced to the wall in order to bypass the crowd and used that moment to take a good look myself.

Black men were going in and out of a hole in the ground and looking muddy. The mud was the color of old carnations you might find pressed away in your sweetheart's diary. (Sweethearts did such things, according to my now profane granny.) The crowd was enjoying the show, as this section of town is usually devoid of amusement until after nightfall, and made it difficult for the men to maneuver. I asked a man leaning on a spade how long it would take to fix the lead. "We're waiting for a new length of pipe," he answered. But then it's always something new, isn't it? And I walked on.

I stopped at the next corner to wait for the bus that would take me to the El, which pulsed inevitably, like old blood to a lung, if not regularly, downtown. I had a beautiful view of the river, which was only a few blocks further on, and which was not beautiful. As I said, it was warm – so I could see the odor of the river. When waiting for anything I always seem to light up a cigarette. Smoking is one of the few things I really enjoy, even though the Surgeon General has tried his best to make me feel guilty. IT'S A SHAME. IT'S BAD FOR YOU. That Surgeon General really has a fine job! Or so I thought, back then. Yes, I was well past pondering the religious significance of the month of May, though I was raised a Catholic (God bless you, Mom); likewise, I could not reminisce in any romantic sense about old Billy Penn and his historic treaty with the Leni-Lenape that was signed only a few blocks and a couple of hundred years away. (There is a marker in a small park there commemorating the event. Someone told me that the tree beneath which the treaty was signed had been destroyed by lightning – but it is my contention that the local curs pissed it to death.) So I tried to enjoy my cigarette and thought of a friend who had moved to New York some months earlier. He wanted to be an actor and had promised to write, but never did. Was that a good sign?

The bus came. The El came, too. From the Girard station to Second Street is but several eye-blinks of a ride, so I soon found myself on a muggy Market Street with thousands of other souls who had nothing better to do on this Saturday morning but horde into center-city and pretend they were going somewhere. The acquisition of an Elvin Bishop album for dubious purposes is actually a rather slim excuse for braving robbery, the varieties of sexual molestation, and sudden death. But then I guess the libido has a mind of its own, immune to such fears.

I really hustled to Third and Chesnut, as I wanted to make Betty's by lunchtime. But the Fire Department was there ahead of that. All the sounds I

could never afford were reduced to a smoldering blob of polyethylene. And the crowd. I discovered that my senses are really dulled in the face of disaster, for without my knowledge I had become enmeshed in a net of backsides and armpits. A mounted officer arrived and attempted to direct the flow of pedestrians – which I imagine was much like trying to direct the flow of air through a blocked sinus. I had become part of a living mucous. The man next to me, who was about forty-five and wore a red jacket with the letters "JV" stitched over his heart, said, "Kids! I bet it was a bunch of dirty kids did it." As I was never much good at psychology or sociology, I always heartily agree in these situations, whatever my convictions. The crowd was moving and the man twisted and grunted an approval to my response that forced a new crease between the "J" and the "V".

There went my discount record! And time was bouncing ahead on a pogo stick. The "JV" man and the rest of the crowd filtered off, leaving the cop and his horse looking lonely among the ashes, with only a few firemen in their tawny coats standing about and smoking cigarettes. In the haze that one refers to as sunlight in Philadelphia, I could see my distorted reflection shimmering in the sleek black spotted here and there with rainbowing pools of oil. My second-favorite (and more expensive) sound shop was at Seventeenth and Sansom, so I had some walking to do. If I had asked Rocko for a lift I could have saved myself bucketsfull of sweat. But wouldn't that have been a hell of a thing? Guilt had not as yet sprung from my motives, and I certainly didn't want it to – so on I trudged up Chesnut Street, avoiding the thrashing elbows of the walking dead.

I was familiar with the cashier at the Eleusinian Note on a so-so basis. He shaved his head and went by the name of Eldred Alborak. After detailing the necessity of my obtaining the Bishop album and of the difficulty I was having finding employment, he immediately opened a charge account in my name in that place where the dollar never whispered. He did this on two conditions: that I listen to the advice he was prepared to offer, and that I consider it gravely. Being a miser at heart, I discounted the time factor and asked him to proceed.

"Paul," he said, "it's not a good thing you're contemplating."

"Good, bad," I retorted, remembering Dr. Pjarik, "what's the difference?"

"In these days of declining traditional values, one must seek out for himself those truths so personally fulfilling." He rubbed his reflective pate, perhaps for emphasis, as if it were a magic lamp.

"I shall certainly think this over, Eldred," I said.

"I hope so." And he handed me the record, the keys to the kingdom. I left as if I had stolen it from a brother, but not before I had confounded him (and myself, I must confess) by saying, "Watch out for the rhinoceros." What excuse may I offer for my subjugation to my unconscious?

It was hot late-morning, but in my haste to make the concourse (a subterranean system of avenues, replete with shops and clubs and even an ice-skating rink, that terminated with the entrance to the Market Street Subway) I forgot how sick I was, forgot the jabber of Eldred Alborak. Down two flights of steps, through a pair of dust-coated glass doors, and I was flowing beneath the city like a hungry white corpuscle with its work cut out for it. Mr. Bishop would have been proud of me, hustling, but transporting his work in a brown paper bag with the tenderest of fingers. Somewhere below Sixteenth Street a woman stopped me. I had seen her step out of The Hiding, a shop which sold leather goods at outrageous prices, with two lumpy shopping bags. The bags were on the ground when she took me by the arm.

"Excuse me," she said, "can I get to the Market Street Subway from here?"

I told her yes and figured her to be an out-of-towner, as the natives always refer to the M. S. S. as the "El." They're connected, true, but they go by different names for obvious reasons – though no one bothers much about that. Familiarity, it seems, breeds a certain illogic. The woman looked to be in her fifties, and was the type of woman in her fifties whom I despised. Her hair was long and not quite stylish, of an unnamable hue streaked with silver. A mismatched false addition hung from the back of her head, looking coarse and much like a horse's tail that had been dipped in glue. She was short and heavy, with a large bosom and an aquiline nose so sharp it reminded me of a scimitar. Her brown eyes were large and flecked with gold. They were so big they looked greedy, as if they wanted to capture everything within their brownness. She wore a lavender suit, the pants of which were of some form-fitting material that made her belly look like an extraterrestrial melon. She was covered in cheap jewelry, except for an oversized diamond on her left hand that I assumed was real – but then I am no judge of stones. She detained me

for several minutes, talking without hardly taking a breath about the humidity and the price of shoes. When I made to leave, she took me like a mad doctor by the wrist.

"Would you mind, " she said in an unshy voice, but lowering her eyes, "carrying my bags a ways for me? They're full of fruit and heavy – for a woman."

Apparently, she hadn't the forethought to ask if I were going her way in the first place. Or perhaps she was plain pushy. No matter, I wanted to be on my way so I took up her bags. "Full" was about as accurate as saying that the Statue of Liberty is somewhere north of Mexico. There were apples, bananas, peaches, pears, and some odd-looking things I'd never seen before. It looked as if she had just robbed Eden. And the bags were heavy. The woman adjusted her stride to that of my longer legs and walked so close to me that we were continually bumping. Her suit, I noticed, was cut in a spreading semicircle above her breasts.

Her name was Mary Matero, she said, Matero being her maiden name. She talked like a climbing fever. Among strangers, especially when they approach me, I prefer to be quiet and attentive. Such people always seem to want something. So far, all Mary Matero wanted was someone to carry her bags – but I doubted this would be the case for long, though she seemed friendly enough. The city breeds suspicion, I guess, like a swamp does mosquitoes. She changed the topic of her monologue several times, stopping herself only to discover my name, then settled on the subject of her husband. I was forced to slow my pace as she halted to light a cigarette (was she waiting for something?). Finally I had to stop entirely when she said that she must rest her legs, as her doctor had advised against undue exercise. We had barely traveled the length of a city block. Though I am, as I said, somewhat fearful of strangers, their stories never fail to captivate me, as they are usually hectic and intimate.

"My husband," she said, "wanted only three things. My body, my money, and Jericho Hanes' body. Jerry was my hubby's bisexual lover. Of course I didn't find out about that until recently. We're getting a divorce and he's living full-time with Jerry now. From the day of our marriage he tortured me financially – I'm an interior decorator, originally from Phoenix, and fairly wealthy. " She ruffled her hair, then smoothed it back. "But he was such a fantastic lover, you know?"

I nodded as if I knew. Though a decent listener, I seldom offered any information about myself. To my closest associates I was something of a mystery. I thought Rocko might know that when this day was history – if I ever got away from Ms. Matero.

"Yeah, I've been married four times. All my husbands turned out to be bisexuals. Do you think there's some plot involved here?"

"I don't know," I said.

"Maybe, huh?"

I informed Ms. Matero that a moderate speed was expedient, as I had an important appointment. The woman conceded with a sigh that visibly lowered her bosome. She stopped talking for a while, just stared at me in much the same way as a growing number of people were staring at her as we passed, and then asked me if I felt all right. I said no, that I was sick, that I had had too much liquor the night before.

"That's bad," she said as we deposited our fares in the hungry boxes and passed onto the platform. New lights had just been installed overhead (you could tell – they weren't dusty) and a crew of men in greasy green overalls was hosing down the platform. Whenever the subway stations are being cleaned, that faint but permanent tang of stale urine is reinvigorated, so that an imaginative person might think himself to be resting in the dark humid underside crease of some great Earth Mother. But me? I became nauseous. Ms. Matero was undaunted, however, and related to me the most memorable of her childhood experiences before the "El" came and stole us away.

Inside the car, Ms. Matero produced a small mirror from her purse and realigned her face with pudgy fingers. The puerility of her expression as she examined her features negated in me any thought of vanity. While she was occupied, I took a closer look at her bags of fruit. My stomach is a most accurate timepiece (it was past twelve now) and may have had something to do with my curiosity. Anyway, those strange fruits I mentioned earlier were looking cool and delicious and tempting. But I was not so forward as I am now, and instead of just asking for one I sat back and reconciled myself by closing my eyes and attempting to conjure their flavor.

"Are you sleepy?"

"No," I said, "just relaxing my eyes. I have a headache."

Ms. Matero told me about her four husbands. The first was a banker who was indicted for embezzlement. The second was an electrician who, after

the divorce, committed suicide in a manner that Ms. Matero said was too gross to mention. The third was, like herself, an interior decorator. He stole the designs she had been working on for five years (her personal dream house) and ran off. The last one, she said, was very poor but extremely personable – and he went through her savings like a hawk through pigeon-flesh.

"Did I mention that they were all bisexual?"

"Yes," I said.

"Not that I hold that against them. No doubt I'll marry again. I love everyone, you see. But between two people – there should be something special. Just between the two. Don't you agree?"

"Yes, definitely." I hoped Betty hadn't made plans for the afternoon.

After Second Street the train surfaced and ran for a while by the Delaware. From the layout of cranes and bulldozers and concrete foundation-work, seen from this height as an industrial arabesque, it appeared that a construction company was going to town. Many dwellings had been demolished to make way for what was coming. It was then I realized, I think, that building is such a destructive business.

As the Girard station came into view I had to stop Ms. Matero in the middle of an anecdote concerning her father, and she seemed a little hurt that I was leaving so soon. She was going all the way to Bridge Street. But then she smiled and reached down and came up offering me one of those odd fruits. I took it, almost as a reflex action. I don't know, but somehow it seems I had expected more an apple from her hand. And when I stood, she took my hand in hers.

"Still feel sick?" she asked.

"A little."

"Do you believe in love?"

"Sure," I said, eyeing the open door. "Sure."

"Then you'll be all right."

I had started to accept the incongruity of her manner and had no trouble swallowing that remark, whatever it meant. It was somewhat sad watching the doors of the train separate us. I waved as Ms. Matero passed onward, clutching the fruit and the record together in one hand.

Did I mention her eyes, how soft they were? They were brown with flecks of gold, precious malleable gold.

On the way home I was hungry but could not bring myself to set teeth on that luscious fruit. For no reason I could think of, I suddenly wanted the fruit as a souvenir, something to extend my brief relationship with Ms. Matero into the future. Her final words came back to me like a submarine losing ballast, and I thought . . .

From the entrance to my building I could see children playing on the yellow mound of clay up the street. Apparently, the main had been repaired and life could proceed without further threat of water damage. That the children played upon a scar seemed not to bother them.

There was a phone in the first floor hallway. It was black and hard and made a sound like a roach's back slowly cracking as I dialed. Its ring was anemic and died quickly.

"Hi, Betty. Paul. Look, I couldn't get the album."

She said that was okay and asked me to come over later. She would fix supper. "No, sorry," I said, "I'm gonna be really busy tonight." She reminded me, rather harshly, that I was unemployed, broke. "How do you know how broke I am?" I asked. She hung up.

Upstairs I bounced, and the first person I met was Dr. Pjarik. I asked him if he didn't think it had turned into a pretty nice day.

"Day, night," he said, "what's the difference? A little more sun, a little less moon."

"That's a big difference," I said, watching the doctor retreat into the isolation of his room. Alone, I guess, it doesn't make any difference. I could hear him mumbling in there, something about rain.

Miss Ms. Mrs. Saltzman opened her door, looking timid now under splotches of perspiration. "I heard voices, she said."

I shoved the Bishop album into her hands, telling her that a man had stopped me on the stairs and asked me to give it to the pretty pregnant lady on the second floor.

"Really? What did he look like?"

I shrugged. "He was gone in a second."

"Was he tall and a little heavy, with black hair?"

"Could have been him."

Later, I cleaned my four walls and floor and ceiling. Did I tell you how nice my place looked when it was straightened up? Then I called Rocko and some other people and asked them over that night for a card game. I had to borrow some money from my landlord (I gave him a hot tip once), but what the hell. And I put Ms. Matero's fruit on the table where everyone could admire it.

When Rocko and the rest came, we could hear Elvin Bishop coming through the walls at us. We welcomed him, then played and ate and drank and laughed a great deal. But we never got out of hand.

And yes, the doctor was wrong. The skies are not cloudy all day.

# ROADS

## Edward Gorman

At the time I was between women. A few months previous I had lost another round to the works of Anais Nin, or some other dyke, and was rediscovering with reluctant pleasure the small and sticky joys of onanism. For the first time since I'd been able to get a genuine atomic hardon, which probably coincided with my first Confession (after all I needed something interesting to confess), I found myself not looking for a woman, having lost something incalculable and essential to the last two, vastly different and exactly alike as they were.

Male friends were no comfort because I had no male friends. There were guys I discussed politics with, or boxing, or literature, but nobody I wanted to talk to about myself. And I didn't want to hear about them – writhing admissions of cancer fears or temporary impotence or silly revenges on silly bosses – Christ. Maybe this is because I spent six years as a self-diagnosed alcoholic drinking in bars and taverns populated mostly by gabby males. After a while you find yourself incurious about the mysteries of your gender – there seem to be no mysteries left. They all get talked out at grinding length or laughed out or punched out or puked out. Besides, and I've known this since the time I smelled my first womanly odor, men can neither redeem nor ruin me, only women can and that makes women the only thing that matters.

The spring was some solace. Out here, and in a town this size, so close to the country, spring surrounds and invades like an army of nymphs. People go a little crazy in touching ways. I walk around a lot, especially along the river that seemed year by year to grow smaller and more languid. Factories took endless shits in it now. I avoided any place that held memories of the last two women. I had come somehow to see them as one and their specter held enormous terrible power over me.

I saw my son sometimes, not nearly enough, and not well. At twelve he was beginning to resent the glibness of my conversation. It was party chatter, superficial and circular, intended to conceal the fear and failure of its roots. But I didn't know him – was he even really mine? – hadn't taken the time in my drinking years – and now he baffled and frightened me a little.

Nor did my work give me any satisfaction. Ten years ago, a would-be playwright on a fellowship in a nearby university town, I'd taken some pride and amusement in getting such a job. My working-class parents were pleased to say that their son was something as admirable if vague as a "continuity consultant" at a tv station. Even writing and directing local used car lot commercials was fun. At first. But no more. Now work was something I did comatose.

One morning I put on a suit and went to Mass. Without thinking, I'd expected to hear Latin with its peculiarly comforting and mesmerizing rhythms. I had not been to Mass, obviously, in many years. Now it was said in English. After the offertory an effeminate boy in a wrinkled T-shirt and dirty jeans brought a guitar to the side of the altar and sang a folk song about the Virgin Mary. In the old days castratti had had an androgynous dignity.

During this time I could not read anything more formidable than magazines, preferably ones with photographs of pink moist vaginas, which I would use as inspiration for my self-violation in the can where I ran the water faucets hard so the people in the apartment below wouldn't hear me, and squirted cold silky baby oil on my cock as a lubricant.

I tried bowling, tennis, handball, swimming; I suffered inexplicable nosebleeds, vomiting, the runs: I jerked off in the can, the living room, the kitchen, and once in front of the tv watching some little sixteen year old shake her cunning heartbreaking ass; I even bought a new bed, no longer wanting to sleep on a mattress whose ghosts took the shape of come spots and menstrual blood.

Mother of Mercy, could this be the end of thirty-five year old Cliff Doyle?

I knew the trouble of course – I had memorized whole passages of Graves' *THE WHITE GODDESS* – I needed to be bathed and balmed in a woman's juices, redeemed or ruined in some new way by some new woman. Only fresh pain can make you forget old pain.

She called the first week in April. It was a terrible phone call – awkward and groping – unrelieved by humor or the promise of sex. Would I mind? Would she be imposing? Did it make any sense?

I did mind; she would be imposing; it made no sense but it offered a diversion, perhaps she would be gorgeous or reveal some rewarding secret, perhaps it would jar me from my funk, and so I said yes, of course.

Besides my father, David Lipsky was the only man I have ever loved. I loved him, except sexually, in the way I love women – a part of that love, the part that gives it tension and thus sustains the possibility of growth, being hatred. Lipsky was a fellow would-be playwright at the same university I was. We were great friends and great enemies. He was a poor Jew from Boston, blond and fierce in a Nordic way he cultivated, with an incomprehensible talent for subterfuge. He was among the first to organize war protests, to demand greater academic freedom, to smoke dope openly in the student union. I never quite believed his seeming idealism, suspecting that his real passion was for chaos. I told him once that he could have made a good living organizing lynch mobs. I had hoped to piss him off. Instead he seemed flattered.

He was not so talented at writing, his taint being the bombastic. He'd had a few one-act plays produced theater groups in the east, which was more success than I could claim, but when I knew him his social life interested him more than his writing. He always said, "The greatest aphrodisiac is the spoken word." And apparently he was right, because he had murmured poetry into some of the most beautiful cunts on campus.

Except for the jocks and the more flamboyant fags, Lipsky was the most famous person on campus. It helped that he was older, had been in the Army, and appeared in complete control of himself even when he was frightened or being ridiculous. It also helped that he had been able to create a fierce and intelligent persona for himself that he was completely comfortable with, one that was carefully balanced internally, kindness with brutality, candor with deceit. He liked and enjoyed his persona as much as his friends did.

While I didn't quite believe that he would ever have much success writing – his stuff was too livid, congealed – I knew he would impose himself on the world in some strident and memorable way, be wealthy, have the sort of women who could make you weep, and truly like himself in some way I could only envy and never emulate.

And then he died. He was twenty-seven. One day in the middle of campus he fell straight down dead from a heart attack.

Lipsky liked to get stoned and drunk at the same time, usually with cheap vodka and joints the size of sausages. One night in such a state he told me how his seventeen year old sister had come to lose her virginity three years earlier, in 1965.

She had called him from Atlantic City, from a hall phone in the sad hotel where the deed had been done. He was not sympathetic.

"You know who the fuck she gave her cherry to? A plumbing salesman. Can you believe that shit?

Jesus Christ. And you know what else? The bastard was married. He told her that afterward. He said he'd like to see her again – how much he liked Jewish girls because they were so intelligent – but that he was married and didn't want to hurt his wife. Can you believe that shit? Man, my fucking little sister is such a lame it's unbelievable. I mean she could have at least given it to a football player or a cop or some suffering little bastard she met at synagogue – but a fucking plumbing salesman! Can you believe that shit?"

I don't know what I expected her to look like. A female version of Lipsky perhaps. Imagining how a woman will look based on limited information – an anecdote told about her; hearing her voice on the phone – is a stimulating game. Because she could be beautiful in some improbable crushing way, the woman that ineffable almost religious part of you has been waiting to meet. Her smile will cause you to burst into MGM tears of joy and her snatch will taste like blueberry pie.

I was to pick Barbara Lipsky up at eleven o'clock the next morning at the airport. The only thing I knew about her was that her first man had been a plumbing salesman – which, her not being my own sister, I found touching in a comic way.

Despite the awkwardness of our phone conversation, with all its gray implications for our time together, I pripped for her visit fastidiously, I spent an hour in the gym, had my best sportscoat dry-cleaned, and sat under a hair-drier while a woman with large pieces of food lodged in her teeth waited to get at me with scissors again.

I did not sleep well that night. For a time in my life I was proud of having insomnia, the way some people used to be proud of having shrinks. Insomnia seemed fashionable, out of Hemingway. Men who Know pay a Price. I sometimes imagined that I was an actor and my insomniac episodes scenes from a movie. A handsome actor, of course, but one whose face was emblematic of some terrible burden long borne. The camera – ala Hitchcock – is shooting down from the ceiling. The room is dark. I am barely illuminated. The soundtrack is devastatingly appropriate – something brooding and menacing in equal parts. A close-up now. I am smoking a cigarette with Bog-

art intensity. And the look in my eyes would have made Mussolini weep. What does this man know? How much longer can he bear this knowledge? The poor sonofabitch.

But the romantic aspect of my sleeplessness did not last long. Soon it became a mosaic of fatigue and headaches, scratching one's balls, one's belly, one's arms, tossing so hard your body was literally tender in the morning, and sitting on the bed-edge in the kind of stupor you associate with the retarded.

The night before I was to meet Barbara Lipsky, a new misery was added to my insomnia. I began to wheeze. I wondered if lung cancer sounded that way. Or throat cancer. I wondered if the wheeze were a precursor of a heart attack. (I would never read a medical book to confront my suspicions – if I did, I'd go on a hypochondriacal binge that would end in suicide, like Baudelaire's man who so feared death he killed himself.) After the wheeze finally went away, I began to scratch. Some old girl friend had apparently given me the world's first case of retroactive crabs.

Around four a.m. I got the runs. I was glad I was not playing handsome doomed actor now. One's image would suffer from sitting on the can taking an endless splashing shit the consistency of undiluted tomato soup. What the hell was going on?

After a glimpse of her, I knew that she had indeed given her cherry to a plumbing salesman and probably had been grateful to him. At twenty-eight, despite eye-makeup and bright lipstick and a huge cheap plastic purse, Barbara Lipsky looked like a sad synagogic teenage boy. Her astigmatic eyes kept blinking in the sunlight, like some sea creature who finds itself inexplicably washed ashore, and her nostrils were red from running. She kept dabbing at her nose with a ratty little piece of Kleenex. The first thing she said after our introduction was, "I'm sorry about coming out here, you know?"

I led her out of the airport to the parking lot where my five year old Toyota sat rusting in the fine April morning. She had only one bag, a gaudy formidable one covered with fake travel decals. I stuffed it in the back seat. I paused before going around and getting in the car. I felt trapped and sorry for myself. She would not be a diversion at all but a burden. Even a mercy fuck was out of the question.

"David wrote me a letter about you once," she said as soon as we were headed for the expressway. "He said you were kind despite yourself."

"I'm not sure what that means," I said, wanting to play no word games, at least not with her.

"Neither am I. David was always the bright one. I barely got through high school. I was always stupid. David even got the looks." I glanced at her to see her expression because the tone of her voice was perplexing. She was saying terrible things about herself in a voice without bitterness or embarrassment. Her face was equally as blank, except for her fishily blinking eyes.

"Did David ever go to synagogue?" she asked after awhile. In lieu of conversation, I had been pretending to fiddle inordinately with the radio.

"I don't think so."

"Do you think he believed in God?"

I looked at her. Obviously she wanted me to say yes. "No, I don't think he did."

"I do. Do you?"

"Sometimes."

"I do all the time. Otherwise there'd be nothing to live for. Otherwise David wouldn't be alive right now in heaven."

"You believe in heaven?"

"Yes," she said, "but I don't believe in hell. Life is too cruel. God wouldn't punish us by sending us to a place like hell."

I wanted to stop the car and jump out and walk around. Oh, I would get back in and drive her to her hotel all right. But just for right now, for a full minute, I needed air and solitude.

On the surface of her shiny plastic purse you could see the steamed imprint her fingers made. Her hands must have been rushing, roaring with sweat.

I drove quickly. She told me her plans. She would rent a car and drive to the University, walk around and see all the places David had written her about. And if it was all right, tonight we would have dinner.

"It'll make me feel closer to him, you know?" she asked. "He's ten years dead in a couple months. You're the only person I can really talk to about him, you know?"

Then she didn't talk any more until we reached her hotel. "I had to come out here. My own life – ain't going too well at the moment. I thought maybe this would help me a little bit, you know? But I mean you don't have to have dinner with me, you know. I mean I'll be all right alone."

"I'll pick you up at eight."

"Can I just tell you one thing?"

"Sure," I said.

"I don't mean it against you – I just think you were wrong about David."

"How?"

"I think David did believe in God. And that's why I think right now he's in heaven. "

"I hope you're right," I said.

That afternoon I had to direct a commercial at an appliance store. The owner, a chubby bald man suffering from terminal double-knit, always appeared in his own spots, usually, if at all possible, with a girl in a bikini if he could think of any way conceivable to work her in. "I mean, I don't want to make it obvious," he would say without smiling.

We did it in two takes, him fluffing only twenty-five per cent of the lines and only one piece of action, which made this, for him, a performance that Olivier should envy.

Then I went home, calling my office and saying I was out scouting locations for the next day's shooting, a commercial for our children's afternoon program, our program director wanting me to come up with something "simple but exciting." He was fond of such clues.

I lay naked on the bed, appreciative of the breeze, but haunted somehow by its sweetness and warmth. And then of course the depression came, like a literal invisible wave washing over me and some terrible buried part of me, perhaps nothing less than my center, trembled and made me dizzy.

Poor Barbara. Poor poor Barbara. But I did not feel half as sorry for her as I did for myself. I felt almost bitter that she had turned out to be who and what she was. She was not capable of redeeming or ruining me and I blamed her for it.

A block away a schoolbell rang. Jesus, to be a young kid again on a fine April day like this. To be in love in that pure total way only the very young are capable of. We congratulate ourselves on our sophistication these days but what we lament is our innocence. Only certain French song writers seem to understand that and they learned it from F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Barbara, why couldn't you have been Natalie Wood?

I did not wear my best sportcoat. I wore my third best sportcoat. Nor did I take a shower. I simply shaved, washed my pits and changed underwear. I no longer cared about the impression I made – in fact I hoped she did not like me or find me interesting or handsome or comforting. I hoped her afternoon had been so miserable that she would be on the plane tonight.

Around seven, a few minutes before I'd planned to leave, the phone rang. Was I Cliff Doyle? They had found my name in her purse. Could I drive down right away?

I talked to her mother several times in the next week, before the body was flown Track to Boston, before and after the funeral, and then one night late when I bought a pint of bourbon that I was trying hard not to open. The trouble was, the trouble always was, there was nothing to say except I'm sorry. Her mother told me about Barbara's husband and her husband's mistress and the child Barbara had recently miscarried and about Barbara's weekend at an EST seminar and about Babarra taking an overdose of sleeping pills a month earlier. Mrs. Lipsky was trying to make sense of it. It made no sense, of course, not to me, not to her, and probably least of all to Barbara, sitting naked as she had in the tubful of warm water, the razor huge and final in her frail fingers, visions of heaven gorgeous and awesome in her mind.

Then I had my phone number changed, unlisted, because I knew that Mrs. Lipsky would keep on calling me until I resented her. I felt guilty about this but I had to do it.

For unclear reasons I started going again to triple-X movies. And I spent my first money on a massage parlor, being worked over rather frantically by a young black chick with an improbable pot belly and an odd tiny lump on her right breast that I did not have the courage to mention. And I started walking again, sometimes so long and hard that I had to take my shoes off because of the blisters. Obviously this was a pilgrimage but to what and for what I didn't know.

I did not think very often of Barbara; I'd hardly known her. I had identified her corpse but her face in death did not look very different from her face in life. She had died a long time ago anyway; perhaps stillborn. But I did think a great deal about her brother, Lipsky friend and enemy. He would scorn my present state, kick me square and metaphysically in the ass, and so in my mind I wanted to talk to him, great rambling chunks of narrative about the ten years of my life since his death. It would help.

One day at the library I ran into an old girlfriend. It had been pleasant but never serious and I was glad to be with her after my two month seige of celibacy. She perfumed herself in just the right way; the tip of my tongue tingled when I was finished going down on her. And then we balled and I kept my eyes closed all the time and simply rode and clung to her energy, to the feel and taste and smell and dream of her. When I came I died a sort of death, a beautiful, peaceful death, Roland under his tree in Spain, honorable and noble, about to be received by God.

We shared the inevitable cigarette afterward. "You're quiet these days," she said. "Is something wrong?"

"No – there's just a friend of mine I'd like to talk to. There's all kinds of shit I need to tell him."

"Why don't you call him?"

"He' s dead."

"So what? I talk to my dead father all the time. I tell him everything and he helps me. He really does."

Lipsky, I hardly know where to begin.

# THE TAPES AND WRITINGS OF BILLY MILBURN

*Chuck Mackie*

(1) "Somethings are meant to happen; in the cosmic dance they move their toes while others suck their collective thumbs and roll over backwards. It's as if there is a hierarchy of power within moments – pieces of time. Those in high favor of whomever it is that would govern such moments would undoubtedly receive the lubrication necessary to make the seconds, the milli-seconds, click off like an Authentic Replica Tumbling Bullet Spark Spitting M-16 does in the hands of a nine year old as he fights his back-alley wars in the hot summer of Stingrays, Sunburn, and Surrender."

"Some of them are collisions but none of them are accidents. Some start with a bang while others creep slowly like a spider in a cold room. This one started with telephones."

(Telephone rings)

"We don't have any apartments for rent."

"Yes, I'm sure. As a matter of fact, I happen to know that this number is not now and never has been Doonybrooks Gardens Apartment Complex By The Lake."

(Telephone slammed violently into cradle)

(2) Stumbled into another one. At the stiff meeting I mentioned an off-the-will idea I had. In an effort to settle the old thinker down a little bit, I stayed home (my God!) and watched the tuber last night. Caught a show called "Whatever Happened to the Class of '65" and then got that ol' creative spittle. Why not parody the show and write a story along the same lines w/ the Class of '75 substituted in there? So I mentioned it, just off the top of my head, and now I'm writing it.

Call Shirley.

(3) "Are you ready?"

"Yeah. Let's get the show on the road.

"OK"

"Hey, don't sit on the sofa. It fucks up my reception."

"OK, uh, can I put my tape recorder here on the desk."

"I guess."

(crashing sounds)

"Shit you dropped it."

(quiet crashing sounds)

"I hope its not broken."

"This thing cost me sixty bucks."

"It's still running."

"Here I'll just turn it off and rewind it and . . .

(click – blank space)

"Alright, this is tape one, interview one. Article subject: The Class of '75, subject being interviewed: Thomas Valentine Barns, also known as T. V. Barns. In high school he was easily identified by the large black circles under his eyes and the TV Guide under his arm.

(pause)

"How long have you been watching TV, T. V.?"

"Huh?"

"I just asked you how long you've been a tube boob?"

"Well, I've been watching the tuber since I was little, just like everyone else and besides, who says watching makes you a boob, I mean, lotsa people do it."

"Yeah, I know that. Don't get uptight. I'll admit that even I do it too but, man, that's all you ever do."

"I don't know about that, last fall I went to a Star Trek convention in Atlanta and I'm going to L.A. in June to appear on the Gong Show."

"Really."

"Yeah, I like the tuber; it's got a lot to offer. Sometimes I even dream about it. One time I dreamt that I was inside my TV, you know, and it wasn't just a picture tube and all that junk but a world with people living there, actually living their lives. And you could go the Little House on the Prairie and Hollywood Squares and those people would be there but they weren't actors or anything, but real people living in real houses with real neighbors, real problems and real lives. I've had the dream more than once too, it's really nice."

(4) "Ready?"

"Sure."

"OK, this is tape 1 interview 2. Class of '75, subject being interviewed: Space Vincent, originally named Michael Edgar Vincent. In high school you could always tell if he was around by the smell of coconuts. He wore coconut cologne to hide the smell from the incredible amount of drugs he smoked. You knew he smoked a lot cause he smelled like a whole grove of coconuts and he never managed to talk much."

"Hey, that's pretty funny man, you use words real well. You want another bong hit?"

"Not right now."

"Well . . . I'll take one."

(sound of match being lit and gurgling water)

"What have you been doing since you left high school, Space?"

"Jusaminute."

(whooshing sound of a breath being exhaled)

"Uhh, not much, just goin' to school, ya know."

"What have you been doing here?"

"Drugs."

(sound of one person laughing)

"No, I mean: what have you been studying, what are you majoring in?"

"I'm an English major, but I don't know if I'll keep up with it. I'd like to get into art; like, I'd really like to learn how to make ceramic stuff or I might even get into history or something, I don't know man."

"What are you taking now?"

"Drugs . . . no, seriously. I'm only taking 3 courses, I just don't seem to have enough time to do the full load business. I'm taking English Comp., Creative Writing and A Basic Intro. to P. E."

"Interesting schedule; you seem to be pretty heavily into writing."

"Yeah, I been working on a few pieces lately. You wanna hear one of my outlines?"

"Sure."

"It's in the blue notebook; you seen it?"

"Uhh, no."

"How 'bout pickin' up that cushion over there. Is it there?"

"No."

"Wait a minute, I see it. Over there, under that shoe. Yeah. Thanks."

(sound of rustling pages)

"Here it is. OK, it's tentatively titled 'Microcosm.'"

"OK."

"It's about this scientist who gives a speech at some convention or something in which he claims that the world, our world is actually a part of a gigantic body. Not much of it, like he says that it's probably just an organ. His theory is scoffed at and pretty soon his life gets bad. He loses his job and his buddies from college avoid and personally insult him. Then his wife splits and he goes nuts. He catches a flight to the Middle East, causes a case of acute appendicitis, and the earth is removed. Hows it sound?"

"Interesting. When are you gonna finish it?"

"I don't know, when I get time. You wanna another bong?"

(5) 1/31/78  
Kleenex  
Cat Food  
Matches  
Airwick (2)  
Wheaties  
Milk  
Coke

Phone bill

Rent

Dear Cindy,

Thought I'd take a pause from Routine and send a tentacle of information. Sorry, I haven't called but the cash flow has been at a trickle.

I'm working on a piece for the Poop. Kevin's still working there, record reviews I think. The piece I'm doing is a sorta take-off on the Class of '65 Book/TV show thing. It's about our class, the Class of '75 (get it), and I'm interviewing T.V., Space, and Crazy. I have to meet Rife in about half an hour. Remember the time he tried to organize a simultaneous toilet flush to ruin the plumbing when we were freshmen? High school seems to be getting more like a faint memory every day.

Gotta flash. I'll finish this later.

(6) "This is interview 1, tape 2. Subject being interviewed: Crazy Rifenberry, real name Phillip Iceburg Rifenberry. What have you been doing since high school, Crazy?"

"After I got out of high school I went to work for my brother a while; he had a pipe factory, but he wasn't very good at business and he went broke. Then I went to the West Coast for a while, I stayed there about 3 months but my parents got on me real heavy to get back in school so here I am."

"What did you do out west?"

"Looked for a job mostly. I stayed with my aunt for about a month, but she didn't like me much so I moved in with a girl I knew out there. Then, like I said, the folks pushed me back into school again."

"What sorta things have you been doing in school?"

"The first thing I did was get rid of my roommate. I put dead birds in his desk and stuff like that, he was gone in a week."

"You live alone here?"

"Yeah."

"Nice size room."

"Thanks."

"What's this thing on your ceiling?"

"Oh, that's a system I designed that closes the window when the door opens and opens it when the door closes. It's so it doesn't get too drafty in here when we party."

"Interesting."

"I guess."

"What kind of courses are you taking now?"

"I'm not."

"What?"

"I'm not taking any courses."

"How come?"

"I don't wanna. I'm just gonna hang out a while."

"Are you doing anything now?"

"I go see movies a lot, I'm interested in that. I saw one yesterday about this college professor. He's at a party and someone is talking about this dead dog when all of a sudden all of the furniture inflates, the people turn into potatoes and he keels over. Next thing he knows, he's on an island in the Caribbean; sitting on the beach with a beautiful tan. A phone next to him rings

and he picks it up but he doesn't know how to answer it; he's got no idea what's going on. There's a woman on the other end and she says that he's her husband. Then . . . well, I don't wanna ruin it for you. Maybe I'll go work in Hollywood."

(7) "It's funny how much people change while they change very little. I can still look back at old high school friends and see them as two people: what they were and what they are. Better yet, I can see them in little stages of change. I'm able to look at them as they always have been and what they've just become. I can see them as they are."

(telephone rings)

"No apartments for rent."

"I said no apartments for rent."

"Yes I'm sure. Call someplace else. Leave me alone!"

(telephone slammed violently into cradle)

(8) "Have you considered going into T.V. as a profession?"

"A little bit, not much really. I do think up ideas for shows sometimes and I think I might like to do something like that for a living. In production probably but definitely not in commercials. I hate commercials."

"You said you . . ."

"Wait a minute."

"What?"

"Could you move that aerial a little to the left?"

"This one?"

"Yeah. A little more. There. Thanks."

"What show is this?"

"Starsky and Hutch. That short Mexican guy just shot an old lady."

(Pause)

"You said you sometimes think up ideas for T.V. What kind of ideas do you have?"

"Oh, mostly game shows. A few soaps, I had one idea for the perfect T. V. show. You could have continually running soap that was on 24 hours a day. You follow people through their lives into a half-an-hour. You'd gain a lot in terms of realism that way. I don't know if any station would take the risk though."

"That's an interesting idea. You said you hate commercials. Why?"

"Doesn't everybody?"

(9) "Were you staying in L.A. while you were on the West Coast?"

"No, I lived in the Bay Area most of the time. My aunt lives in Frisco. I did spend a week there though. We went on a few studio tours. I saw Farrah Fawcett once."

"Really."

"Yeah."

"Did you like L.A.?"

"It's OK. I think I could get used to it. I saw a really good movie while I was there. It was about this guy who had been paralyzed from the neck down from birth and he was deaf, dumb and blind too. He was born normal, with all his faculties, but the doctor dropped him on his head minutes after he was born. The only thing he ever saw or touched was steel and the people he saw had masks on and robes. He created a whole world in his head made up of people with masks, bright lights, antiseptic smell, and echoing sounds. The whole movie took place in his head. It was pretty interesting."

(10) "Maybe a little later."

"You sure? This is really good rainbow."

"No thanks."

"Alright. You got any matches?"

"I don't know, let me check."

(pause)

"No, I don't."

"You seen any lying around?"

"No."

"OK, well . . . just forget it. Oh, here's some. I had 'em in my pocket. You want another hit?"

"No. Later."

"Alright."

"Have you been doing any other writing?"

"Not much. I got one idea but I can't figure out how to finish it. It's a true story, I actually witnessed it going on. It's about this janitor and a graffiti-tiest who have a war on the walls of a bathroom. As soon as the graffiti-tiest

writes something on the wall the janitor takes it off. It starts off pretty mild, pen versus soap and water, but after a while the battle heats up, magic marker against Pine-Sol, and then it graduates to full scale war, knife facing off with acid."

"You say you saw this all happen?"

"I had the shits for a week. I was in and out of the john all the time. More in than out really."

"Why can't you think of an ending?"

"I got better. I don't know what finally happened with those two. Whoever they are."

(11) 8/24/84

Happy b-day to me.

T.V. is working in advertising.

Space is doing drugs.

Crazy is dead.

# SHORT SYNOPSIS ON TRUTH

*John Besler*

Feb. '76

(Dedicated Especially To All Profound Intellectuals And College Freshmen)

Rodger and I were downtown. We were walking.

It had already been three years since we'd been laughing and bitching together. We knew precisely how and why everyone was fucked-up, as I'm sure you do also. As social critics and philosophers always do.

We had mastered the rhetoric of contempt and held humanity under a microscope. You would have loved us.

We were a mixture of the loser and the sage, and had something to say about everything. We knew the true truth.

We had summarized the times with the accuracy of the poet and the spirit of the tormented humorist, and had left it with few secrets. In our anger and mockery we were always proper. We were correct. As I'm sure you are.

We were self-styled, but deeply versed in the art of the rooming-house expose'. We could quote Eric Fromm and Bertrand Russell and Henry Miller and George Orwell. We could take careful aim and hit the proverbial bullseye with every word. We were the undiscovered spokesmen for the true individual.

We agreed with the best, and wanted to pass it on. We knew who the enemy was and why they wouldn't let us do anything.

You know what I mean, don't you? Of course you do. You know the truth about the true truth.

We were right and they were wrong. We knew the truth. We knew the lies. All the models of idealism and criticism were there to prove us proper.

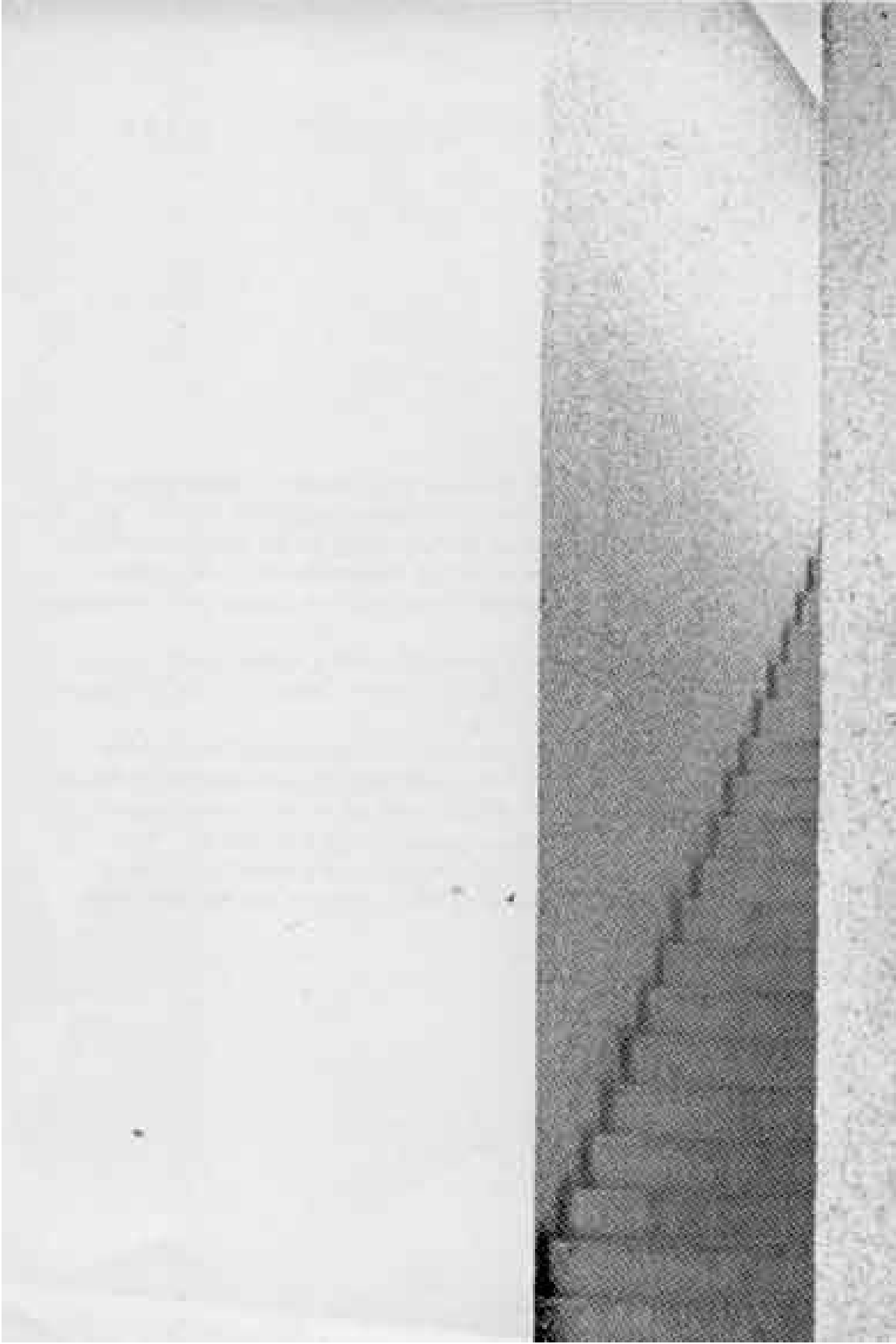
We were sheep in a rare flock, a dying but booming flock, a desperate flock but our death was enlightened. We conformed to the right people. We never knew how to feel good because we suffered from the truth.

Rodger and I were walking downtown. We looked malnourished and destitute that day. We always did.

We looked hungry.

I was so amused by my wit, that I still remember it, and I'd like to share it with you in a quiet spirit of irreverence.

"You know Rodger, for these people being wrong about everything, they sure look healthy."



## Notes on Amy Brophe

Amy Brophe is a student at Cornell College who was enrolled in Coe's Advanced Studio course in Fall of '77. She became involved in photography as an Interim project in 1976 and has been working independently ever since. The photos shown in this issue are the result of a semester study in France.

"Perhaps the most difficult task I undertook abroad was trying to avoid "cliched" shots, which I have to admit were often most enticing."

Ms. Brophe's photography is in attempt to achieve both formal and psychological impact through the medium of the series. We find her work to be quite successful. She plans to spend many more years exploring "the combined challenge of discipline and creativity," which she feels photography provides, though not necessarily as a career.

