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Inkpot '66

The prospect of editing a magazine such as the *INKPOT* at first excited and later frightened me. Such a publication as this can easily become an un-read volume of meaningless trivia. The staff of this year's *INKPOT* has endeavored over the course of this past semester to make our publication a bit more readable, a bit more interesting, and above all more worthy of being read. It is in this spirit that this publication has been created. It is the hope of the entire staff that the content of these pages creates in each of its readers a truly enjoyable reading experience.

Ron Jackson, Editor

Time, Dimension, and Space

The first is the realm of time.
Though it can't be bent or folded,
It bends the non sublime;
Through it, each life is molded.

The second is dimension,
Which determines time's direction.
It holds life in suspension,
Calling out for man's inspection.

And last of all comes space—
The habitat of man,
Which houses our feverish pace
As best as such a realm can.

Time, dimension, and space
Are pillars of the human race.

—Gregg K. Wene

On Impending Academic Failure

(Thoughts while in the presence of a book)

Oh book, by dust long berated,
It time were time again
Surely thy pages would be liberated
Freed of my imposed mental blockade—
Thy clouded skin could be cleansed as thy heart;
Thy novel sight might dispatch a ray to pierce my stockade.
Then thy leaves would have no newness,
Of nothing should they fortell
That is to me material anew.
. . . But, ah, wishfulness is akin to foolery,
And time is time, as is now.
Hence depart I must, in payment to coquetry.

Ronald Thomas

The Million Skipping Feet of Rain

JUDY TAYLOR

Lucinda sat watching the rain splatter on the windowpane and then trickle down the pane to the sill. She sat on the window seat watching the funny little patterns made by the drops of rain.

"Lucinda, come and eat your lunch, darling."

"Mommy, I'm coming."

Lucinda was just four when her father died. That seemed so long ago although she was merely a year older now. She had loved her father dearly and had often asked her mother when her daddy would return to help her grow up, for every child needs a father.

Lucinda was exceptionally brilliant for her age. She was born of parents of good stock and intelligence, being sired by a New York capitalist who was Vice-President of United Oil Unlimited and having a mother who was Miss America of 1960. Her mother was a Vassar graduate, and her father ranked fifth in his class at Yale. Lucinda got her intellect from her father and her beauty from her mother. Lucinda's baby blonde hair glistened like gold and looked like brushed velvet lying on her shoulders.

Lucinda switched off the light in her room and started to leave. Remembering that she had not put away her toys, she picked up Amy from her bed and put her on the shelf above her stuffed tiger and the elephant her father had given her; she stuffed her Annie Oakley outfit into a drawer and hung up her guns. She somehow felt that she was getting too old to dress up and play such childish games, but after all, she was only five. Smelling the rich odor of fried shrimp, she hurried to the kitchen where her mother was just setting the table.

"Mom," Lucinda said as she sat down at the table. "Mom, why don't you get married again? I'm sure Daddy wouldn't mind. You're lonely, Mom, and soon I'll be going away to school. Mr. Harless loves you, Mom. He told me he loved you. I wouldn't mind having him for a father."

"Oh, Honey," cried Mrs. Nostrand as she embraced her daughter.

Rhonda had just turned twenty-five; she felt almost ancient. She was having a difficult time managing a household and raising her daughter. She somehow found time to give parties for charities and entertain old friends who loved to drop in for weeks at a time just because they thought she might be lonely. She did not like having them around because she was reminded of Dick so often.

"Mommy, don't cry."

"I'm sorry, dear. Thank you, but I'm not lonely, because I have you, and you are all I need or want. Please don't ever go away."

"I won't, Mother. Not ever."

They heard a car approaching the house. Lucinda ran to the window to see who was coming. She loved having company. Living in the country, she had no playmates with whom to share her toys. She was used to conversing with older people as she had done with her father.

The doorbell rang, and Mrs. Nostrand opened the door to stand face to face with Mike Nostrand, Dick's younger brother. He startled her; he was so much the image of Dick—5'11", blonde hair, blue eyes, and the most cheerful smile in the world. He was a debonair guy of the world. Life belonged to him. Seeing him standing there was as if Dick had suddenly stepped back into her life.

"Well, what did Santa Claus bring you? Aren't you even going to ask me in?" he asked.

"Forgive me, Mike, but for a minute . . . Please come in, Mike. It's so good to see you again. Sit down. Where have you been these past few months?"

"I've been in Arabia for eight months directing work in the oil fields," Mike answered.

Just then Lucinda decided she was ready to make her appearance and greet her father's brother. She did not like Mike because he did not seem as concerned over her father's death as he was over the reading of the will and what was left to him. He had left abruptly after they had announced his allotment. However, she must appear to like him for her mother's sake.

"You look as beautiful as ever, Miss Lucinda," commented Mike.

"Hello," she said as she walked to his side.

"I brought you a present, Lucy. It's a present all the way from Arabia. Come with me, Lucy; it's outside. Coming, Rhonda?" he asked.

"Of course, Mike. I'm dying to see what you brought from Arabia that was too big to bring into the house," she stated.

"Come on and find out."

They went out to the car to which was hooked a small trailer. Mike opened the gate and led out a white pony.

Lucinda cried with joy, "He's gorgeous. I love him. May I ride him now?"

Mike helped her on and led her around for a while. Finally, they went to the stable, and Mike put him in a stall.

Lucinda suddenly asked, "Know what I'm going to call him?"

"What, dear?" asked her mother.

"Lipzeig."

"Why such a name as Lipzeig?" questioned Mike.

"Because it sounds foreign, and he is foreign to this country."

She threw her arms around Mike's neck and embraced him, saying, "Thank you very much, Uncle Mike. I love him already."

They walked back to the house together. After supper, as they relaxed before the warmth of the fire, Mike told them all about Arabia. Lucinda fell asleep in Mike's lap. He carried her up to her room. Rhonda tucked her in and rejoined him in the living room. They talked quietly and reminisced for a few hours and then went up to their rooms.

As Rhonda undressed, she wondered why Mike had decided to pay them a visit. Why was he here? She had not seen him since the will reading. He had never written to her; so she had no idea where he was. There was always something mysterious about Mike. He was so jovial and outgoing, yet so morose and reserved. She had never quite understood him in the six years she had known him. Dick had been so much more stable than Mike. Mike had wandered around the world squandering him money at the races and on crazy adventures, such as the one in Arabia. Dick had had a large bank account, three ranches, several oil wells, and money invested in stocks. He had bought this lovely house for Lucinda and her. He had not understood the reason for her wanting to move so far from civilization and to a house which looked like a castle. The house was the strangest abode of anyone in the country. She was crazy about her castle, which stood tall and erect, having towers which looked as though they tipped the sky. On the outside, the castle was fortified by a narrow ditch dug around the entire dwelling, reminding one of a moat. Dick had been so sweet that he had filled the ditch with water and had a drawbridge constructed. Red roses and thorns grew along the outside walls, making her castle appear to be standing in the middle of old England. They felt as though they had a wall around their house to keep out the rest of the world. She was very happy here among the things she loved.

She suddenly felt the pain of wanting Dick by her side again. A coldness and fear swept over her just like the night of his death. Tonight seemed so like that deathly night. The rain was pouring down, and Dick had been to New York. The clock had struck two o'clock. She could not sleep; so she decided to go downstairs and make a cup of coffee. Just as she was pouring the coffee into the cup, she heard a thud, and Sandy, their nondescript mutt, barked. Rhonda ran to the door and peered out into the rain. She saw something lying in the driveway. Her heart stopped beating; she ran outside and found Dick lying there. She heard footsteps fleeing into the rain. She turned sharply but saw no one. Dick had

been rapped on the head with a sharp object and was bleeding profusely. She called the hospital, but by the time the ambulance arrived, he was dead. Now, she recalled the events of the entire evening. Why had Mike come when she was just beginning to have sleepful nights? She decided what she needed was a cup of coffee. She put on her robe and walked to the kitchen. The night was miserable. The rain was pouring down.

Rhonda poured her coffee and went to the door to watch the rain. She saw something in the shadows. The form belonged to Mike. What was he doing in the rain? She opened the door, and he walked in, completely drenched.

"Hi, Rhonda," he said.

"What were you doing outside in the rain?" she asked.

"I felt like a walk in the rain. I wanted to see the old place again."

"In the rain?" she asked.

"It's more beautiful that way. Don't mind if I do," he said.

"Don't mind if you do what?" she asked.

"Have a cup of coffee with you."

They sat and drank coffee for a few minutes.

Mike suddenly said, "Rhonda, why do you live here all alone? This is no place for you and Lucy."

"I love this place. It's my whole life."

"Rhonda, come back to New York with me. I'll sell the house to someone, and you and Lucy can begin a better life."

"No, Mike. I can't leave. I wouldn't be happy in the city any more. I'll never leave my castle."

"Rhonda, I'll buy the house, and you can visit here in the summer. She shook her head. "Rhonda, I must have this house," he said in a cruel, uneasy tone.

"Mike, what do you mean?"

"Rhonda, I'm going to get this house!" he yelled as he put his hands around her neck.

Was he going to choke her? She screamed and ran out of the house. He ran after her. They were both running through the rain. A bolt of thunder cracked above her, striking her memory back to that deadly night. Trembling with fright, she realized these footsteps chasing her between the million skipping feet of rain were the same she had heard a year ago. It must have been Mike, but why? This house, her castle—what did it hold for Mike?

"Dick—oh, my darling—what were you protecting me from? What did you give your life to save?"

Tripping over the cracked sidewalk, she heard the footsteps closing the gap between them, and as she turned, she saw the cold face of the murderer. She felt a sharp pain and the trickle of warm blood down

her face, falling to the ground in the midst of rose petals which symbolized the mingling of her blood with Dick's.

And at his Feet, a Well-breakfasted Cat

ROBERT RAY DARRELL

Things were looking bad—real bad. It seemed like even the sky would dry up and crack. At first, people joked about it. The farmers and merchants would discuss the weather and laugh about how they'd like to trade a mule for one of them hump-back foreign horses. But after a while the joke was over. Five weeks . . . Six weeks . . . And now, eight weeks since the last rain—and that hardly more than a sprinkle! Otis Simpson's cattle were droppin' off like flies. Old Jack McChord's well was the first to go, then the Campbell's, Harkin's, Jackson's and Hays', until every well except the one in the middle of town was dry as a bone and even she was gettin' low. Stag, Colorado, was dyin' of thirst, with no relief in sight. Yes, things were lookin' bad. And then came Professor Jeromy R. Perkins.

Hardly anybody saw him come into town, but there he was Tuesday morning, bright and early, poundin' a big bass drum and spewin' out big words that nobody but the schoolteacher and a few more could understand. The wagon he was in was sure a sight to behold. The edge was painted with some kind of blue paint, with curlycues and points all around. Inside all this, in big black letters, was his name and a bunch of things about the Professor. As near as I can remember, it said: PROFESSOR JEROMY R. PERKINS MAKER OF POTIONS AND POWDERS BREAKER OF SPELLS AND PRODUCER OF PRECIPITATION. ALSO SELL GENUINE GOLD WATCHES AND REAL AZTEC JEWELRY. Us youngins was the first to see him, but soon most of the townsfolk was gathered round, along with some of the farmers in for their ration of water, listenin' and pointin' and scratchin' their heads and chins. The grownups too was readin' the signs and tryin' to figger out the funny marks all around the wagon, marks that nobody had ever seen before. Well, that's how it all began.

"Come on! Come on! Come in close but don't crowd each other! Come on! Come!" Boom! Boom! The drum almost as loud as the Professor. "I'm Professor Jeromy, and as you can see by my sign, I've come to save your fair town. I'm a producer of precipitation—a rainmaker, if you please. Yessiree, Rain is my middle name." Boom! Boom! "Gather around and browse

around. Notice the craftsmanship of the Aztec jewelry. Come closer! Come closer!" Boom! Boom!

"You're a fake!" It was Jake Harkins. "You can't make rain. I seen a rainmaker in Texas one time. He took the people's money and sneaked out of town one night! You're a fake just like him!"

The Professor only laughed. "Why sir, you are entirely correct. That man was indeed a fake. And, you are justified in being a skeptic. But I assure you, my good friend, I CAN make it rain! My great, great grand pappy caused the Jamestown flood. I can change a desert to a swamp and a cactus to a maple. I guarantee rain, and scientists from all over the world have tried to discover how I do it. I play the music that makes the sky shed tears of joy! I'll break open the skies and make this God's country again!" Boom! Boom!

Well, with that, Jake only hympphed and began mumbling and scratching his head with the other men and 'lowed as how this feller sounded like he knew his business, and anyhow what did they have to lose? While they talked, the women looked through the calico, knives and other wares.

"Reckon how much he would charge to make it rain?" Sam Clayton was always the first to think about money.

"And who's to say he won't skip town with it?" Jake Harkins again.

Otis Simpson, with his hands in his pockets, stared at the dust at his feet and spoke. "Bein' as I'm losin' more cattle by each day, it'd be worth plenty to me for rain. It's a long piece to town every day for water."

The men folk argued and scratched for nigh onto half an hour before they approached "the rainmaker."

"Mr. Perkins, we been talkin' and we wonder, just in case you could make it rain, how much would it cost? Just in case, mind ya. We ain't shakin' or nothin' yet." The men all shook their heads in agreement. Clayton had put it just right.

Professor Perkins tilted his head to one side and put on his sincerest face. "Gentlemen," he said, with a tone of regret, "were it not for my traveling expenses and the loss I take in selling my watches and jewelry so cheaply, I would gladly dampen this parched earth for nothing more than the pure satisfaction of helping my fellow man. But, alas, life is not so kind nor so easy anymore."

"Sure, sure. But how much?" Sam Clayton knew how to do business. His general store had been doing well til the drought. Again the others nodded their heads.

"Yes, yes, the little matter of price. My good friends, my usual fee for an area your size is \$750,

but since your need is so great and you are such fine folk, shall we say \$500 in advance? Of course, if I must wait very long, the price will rise, because I could be making money elsewhere." The Professor was a clever man, too. His eyebrows raised as he seemed to stare in each man's eyes at the same time. Looking pensively toward the ground, the men turned and walked away to discuss this important proposition.

That Wednesday night there was a meeting of the Roundtable. Actually it was of sort of town and country council meeting, but the schoolteacher, its first chairman, had called it the Roundtable to make it seem more dignified and important. Anyway, there were twelve voting members, six from the farms and ranches and six from Stag itself. Otis, Sam, and Jake were on it, as well as Ira Hays, Mac Thomas, Pete Kessler, Joe Campbell, Sr., and others who were looked to for leadership and good horse sense. Jack Farnsworth, the banker, was the present chairman. At 8:25 the meeting was called to order, though the talking had been going ever since the first two got there.

"This special meeting has been called to discuss whether or not we should hire that so-called rainmaker to make rain for us. The floor is now open for debate."

Ira Hays stood up and was recognized. "Well, you all know me, I guess. I'm a rancher from the western side of the county. Just like a lot of you, I depend on cattle to make my living and my cattle depend on water. You storekeepers lose my money if I can't sell my herd for a profit, and the bank has loaned me money, so it loses too. We gotta have rain. I say if this feller can make rain, give him what he wants." At that, he snapped his head in conviction and sat down. There was mumbling amongst the men until Farnsworth rapped a hammer on the desk and recognized Jake Harkins. Jake looked all about him, slow and probin'-like and spoke his piece.

"I ain't sayin' we don't need rain. Everybody knows I am as bad off as the rest, but I'm against makin' jackasses out of ourselves. This guy is just like the rest. He's a fake and a crook. Ain't nobody but God can make it rain. They ain't no sense it throwin' good money away. The drought can't last forever. This 'rainmaker' won't make anything but fools out all of us!" The mumbling started again.

So it went on. There was arguin', fussin' and testimonies given left and right until finally it was time for a vote. When the hands were counted the yeas had 5 and the nays had 5, with two, Mac Thomas and Will McCrory, not knowin' which way they wanted to vote. Well, it was still a standoff an hour later, and an hour and half later. All the swearin'

and cajolin' and back slappin' didn't do any good either. After a while some of the others weren't so sure either. Then, in he walked. Professor Perkins had come to plead his case.

"I heard you good people have been unable to reach a decision," he started in a helpful voice. "I want to tell those of you who doubt me that I can honestly say I have never failed to produce rain in my life. My techniques are so complex and so scientifically based as to make it impossible for me to explain them to you. I promise that if you put me under your contract, you will be swimming in the creeks and pools within 48 hours. But, unless you reach a decision quickly, I am afraid I must travel on. The choice, my friends, is yours."

After that it didn't take long. Those who had seen the Professor for the first time were duly impressed and confronted by the prospect of his leaving. The Roundtable quickly decided to commission the rainmaker to 'make the sky shed tears of joy.'

Professor Perkins left notice that he would produce rain with his equipment at eight o'clock Friday night, providing of course, he was paid his \$500. Friday morning Mr. Farnsworth withdrew the money from the city's account and handed it over to him and there was much handshaking, although inside he still had his misgivings.

Friday night came and the drought was on its ninth week. About seven-thirty the rainmaker started setting up his apparatus. He carefully pointed two cannons, one directly North and one South. On top of his wagon he placed several instruments, one which spun round and round and another which wheried and squeaked as it went up and down like a pump. Into a large boiler he put some coal, which he weighed out to exactly 145 pounds. At eight o'clock it all started. Nearly everyone in the county was there, even Ralph McGruder, who had been hobbled up during the Civil War.

"Gather round, my friends, but don't get too near the cannon. You shall now witness a feat which defies the imagination." With that he pulled down a lever and took the tarpaulin from a strange looking machine. Slowly two disks started spinning, getting ever faster and faster. One was white with a red, jagged line spiralling from the center toward the edge. Along the edge were the same strange symbols as were on the wagon's outside. The other was painted in different colors and made you feel funny to look at it when it was spinning. And at his feet was a fat, well-breakfasted cat. Then he boomed on the bass drum and all of a sudden the blackness was lit up with red and blue and yellow fireworks, exploding into a million fiery pieces. Then the cannon

proclamation appeared on the screen. The same invisible man read the words aloud. "The laws of your society are considered archaic in our age. You may *continue* to be bound by them, but if you so decide, then your signatures are required upon another document. If they are not signed, then all laws binding you in the past are null and void."

"More papers to sign. Nothing has changed," she said. He stared at the paper, unable to sign them. Lena signed the document unhesitatingly, and shoved the paper toward him. He picked up the pen, but the paper blurred before his eyes, bringing to mind all the other papers he had signed. Weariness and doubts assailed him.

"Eddie, sign the paper," she said nervously. "I don't know," he said.

"You do not know! Well, who else will take care of me?" she asked.

"That is all you really care about. You only want someone to take care of you!" he said. Lena started yelling. "But I am beautiful again. You carried a torch for me in our first life. Surely, you are still capable!"

She grabbed the paper and waved the document in front of his face. "Sign the paper," she screamed.

He took the document and tore the paper into many pieces. The door slid soundlessly open. He could almost smell the plants, the trees, giant oaks and saintly maples, in the March wind. He had a whole new life ahead. This time he was going to live his way.

The Sun Cut Itself on a Sharp Hill and Bled Into the Valley

MARY LOU SMITH

Margaret straightened up from examining the tiny potted cactus on the porch and walked over to the door. She hesitated, then pulled open the door and walked in. As the door slammed behind her, she remembered too late the sleeping baby, and the immediate otucry of the two-week-old child confirmed her fears. For a moment, Margaret was tempted to let the baby cry, but then she rushed into the bedroom to get her before her mother could get up. To Margaret, the oldest daughter in the family, automatically fell the job of taking care of baby Alice until her mother recovered from childbirth. There was a community hospital only a few miles away, but Mrs. Turner had a deep distrust of strangers, especially male doctors, and had insisted on giving birth to all her nine children right in her home. "If it was

good enough for my mother, it's good enough for me," she would say.

Now, as Margaret picked up the baby, she wondered about the future of the child. Probably she could look forward to the same future as almost any female born in the mountains of Eastern Kentucky. She would grow up, go to school, possibly graduate from high school, maybe even work in town for a year or two; but eventually she would settle down and get married, probably to a coal miner, and devote the rest of her life to raising a brood of children, just like her mother did. And for what purpose? So her children could go out and do the same thing?

"But not me," Margaret vowed to herself. "I'm going to get out of here and do something." She had been accepted at a college in Ohio, and Miss Thompson, her high-school English teacher, had sent Margaret's application to an agency that arranged scholarships for deserving students. Her mother and father had reluctantly agreed to let her go to college, providing she got the scholarship, and so each day Margaret would eagerly, yet fearfully, wait for the mail to come.

Her brother John laughed at her. "You'll see," he said. "You'll get out to that college and everyone will laugh at you. They'll make fun of the way you talk and the way you dress, and you'll come back crying, convinced you aren't smart enough, and wishing you'd never gone." John had gone to Chicago looking for a job, but had had no success. Everywhere he went, he was told either that he didn't have the training or that there was already a long list of applicants ahead of him. People had laughed at him and called him a hillbilly. No one could laugh at John and get away with it, so he had ended spending a night in jail proving he was as good as anybody else. The next morning he had hitchhiked home.

"But I won't be like that," said Margaret aloud as she fed the baby her bottle. "I'm going to get an education and come back and show these people how wrong they are. I'm going to learn all I can, and then come back and teach them." The baby laughed up at her. "Don't you laugh at me too," whispered Margaret, holding Alice close to her. "When I get enough money, I'll come get you and take you back with me."

"There you go dreaming again." John had come into the room, unnoticed by Margaret. "You'll learn the hard way like me, I guess, but you'll learn. Supper ready? I'm hungry."

"It'll be ready on time, when Pa comes home," said Margaret through clenched teeth, as she put Alice back in bed.

"It better be. Sis?" She didn't answer.

"I brought the mail home." He threw a letter at her.

"John!"

"Well, what?"

"It came!"

"I know. Aren't you going to read it?"

"I'm afraid to." With trembling hands she slit the seal and drew out a sheet of paper. As she read it, her face lit up, and then she ran over to hug her brother.

"John, I got the scholarship. I really did!"

"That's great, sis. I'm really happy for you."

"Are you, John?"

"Sure, if that's what you want, then I'm glad you got it."

"I'm glad you're glad. Oh! It's almost time for Pa to be home!" She rushed to get the beans and cornbread off the old wood stove. As she poured the milk, she heard the chain squeak on the well outside as her father drew some water to wash the coal dust off his face and hands. She called her brothers and sisters in to eat and then her father came into the kitchen and sat down at the table.

"Well, Margie, what are you smilin' so big about?" he asked.

"Oh, Pa, I'm so happy! I got the scholarship to go to college!" He looked at her a moment, then began ladling beans onto his plate.

"Well, that's right nice, Margie," he said, with a small frown on his face, "if you're sure you want to."

"Oh, Pa, I've never been so sure of anything in my life!" She paused in the act of buttering a piece of cornbread for one of her younger brothers and looked at him in alarm. "You will let me go, won't you? You said I could go. The scholarship covers everything."

"Now, now, don't get excited. I know I said you could go, and we'll try to work it out. Truth is, I never thought you had much of a chance at that scholarship, you being back here in the mountains where them college people have never been."

"But Pa. . ."

"Course, I know you're plenty smart and everything, and I'm glad they know that."

"But Pa, why shouldn't I go? If I'm smart, I ought to have a chance to use my brains, instead of letting them go to waste back here!"

"Well, I'm not so sure you'd be letting them go to waste back here, but like I said, we'll try to work things out."

"Work what out. It's all been worked out!"

"You know, Margie, I'm kinda worried about your mother."

"Ma? What's the matter with her?"

"She's still feeling pretty weak. I went to the

miner's hospital today to get some medicine for her. The doc said he'd have to ride out and see her first."

"But she'll be okay. When Timmy was born, she was in bed for a long time, too."

"Well, we'll see. Did you take your ma's supper to her?"

"Oh, I forgot," she mumbled, and hastily got up to fix a plate.

Her mother looked very pale and tiny in the big bed, but she gave her daughter a weak smile as she brought in her plate.

"How are you feeling, Ma?" asked Margaret, as she straightened the covers on her mother's bed.

"Oh, some better, I guess. I heard you talking about that scholarship. Don't you worry, honey, we'll get you to that college, if that's where you want to go."

"Oh, Ma, don't worry about me. It doesn't really matter so much."

"Yes it does. I know it does, and we'll do our best."

Margaret leaned over to kiss her mother's cheek. "Oh, Ma, I love all of you, and I don't want to leave you, but I want to get an education! I want to do something."

"Yes it does. I know it does, and we'll do our best."

"All right, Ma." Margaret walked back into the kitchen and began clearing up the dishes the rest of the family had left. When she had the food put away and the water put on to heat, she called Sary, her fourteen-year-old sister, to do the dishes, and then went outside to sit on the front porch. Her dad and John came in from milking and sat down beside her.

"Beautiful evening, isn't it?" said Mr. Turner.

"Sure is," said John.

"The sun going down behind the hills, leaving all that color behind—yep, it sure is restful to look at."

"You know, Margaret," said John, "I just don't understand why you want to go off and leave this valley. Why, just look out there, how pretty it is. The whole valley's just like one big red rose, with the sun shining through on the clouds and the trees."

"I know the valley's beautiful," said Margaret, "But underneath all that beauty is ugliness. It's just like a rose—beautiful on top, but underneath there are thorns like ignorance and poverty."

"You and your talk about ignorance and poverty! What makes you think the outside will be any different? There's poor people there too, and as far as ignorance goes, why, we're a lot smarter in some ways than the people out there. You don't know anything about the outside except for that cactus there that Miss Thompson brought you back from Arizona," John said, pointing to the plant on the corner of the porch. "And for all your talk about roses and thorns, don't forget that a cactus has thorns, too, only they're on

the outside, with nothing to cover them up."

"But once you get past the thorns, you get to the real plant! Did you know that cactus plants grow in the desert, and people who are dying of thirst can get water from the cactus if they can get to the inside? I know there's plenty of poverty and ignorance there, too, but there's also a chance to get better. Your fate isn't decided before you're born."

"If you're from here, it is," said John. "Those people will trample you under their feet, and then laugh at you when you try to get up."

A car had pulled up while they were speaking, and a man with a bag got out and started coming toward the house.

"That must be the doc," said Margaret's father. "He said he'd try to stop by tonight."

As the man walked up on the porch, John and his father got up and went over to talk to him. Then all three walked into the house, and Margaret could hear conversation drifting out as they entered her mother's room. She sat there thinking about the events of the day, wondering how so much could happen in so short a time. What if she couldn't go to college? It would be terrible to have an education right within her grasp and then be unable to take hold of it. If only her mother were all right! Of course, even if she recovered completely, she really needed someone to help her. She hadn't been well at all for quite a while. But Sary was fourteen! She should be able to help. But Sary hadn't even finished high school. "If only I knew what to do! If only I knew what was the right thing to do!" she thought.

Her father and the doctor came out on the porch, and she heard the doctor say, "I don't think there's anything to worry about as long as she stays in bed for a few weeks."

"Thanks for coming out, Doc," said Margaret's father. "Sure do appreciate it."

"Sure thing. Anytime."

As the car went on down the road, Margaret waited for her father to say something to her. He came over and sat down beside her.

"Well, Pa, what did he say?"

"He thinks your Ma's gonna be all right."

"Does that mean I can go to college?"

"Well, she's gonna need an awful lot of rest, but Sary's gettin' old enough to help out when she's not in school. Looks like you're gonna be able to go."

"Oh, Pa!" Margaret hugged him. "I'm so happy!"

"Well, we want to make you happy."

Margaret hugged her father again and went upstairs to bed.

The next morning she woke up feeling happy. At first she couldn't remember why, but when she did,

she jumped out of bed and went down to fix breakfast. She couldn't afford to waste time if she were going to college.

When she got to the kitchen, she found her father already up and roaming around. "Your Ma's feelin' a mite worse this morning," he said. "You'll have to keep a close watch on her. Don't let her try to get up and around."

"All right, Pa," said Margaret.

When breakfast was over, she cleaned up the kitchen. Sary would soon be doing this every day. She then went out to work in the garden for a while. Suddenly she realized she would not be able to hear the baby if she cried, so she started walking back toward the house. When she came closer, she heard the baby crying so she started running. By the time she reached the front door, the baby had stopped crying. When she got to her mother's bedroom, she realized why. Her mother was standing there by the bed holding Alice in her arms.

"Ma," she said, "you shouldn't be up." She gently took the baby from her mother. "You get back in bed. I'll take care of Alice." Mrs. Turner took a step towards the bed and almost fell. Margaret stared in horror as she realized her mother's nightgown was covered with blood. "Ma," she whispered. The cry of the baby woke her to action. She hastily put the baby back in bed, and letting her cry, went over to lead her mother to the bed. "Now you just rest a minute," she said, "and I'll go get John. Then she ran out of the house to the barn where her brother was working. "John!" she cried. "Ma's bleeding! Quick, go get the doctor." John stared at her a minute, then dropped his tools, ran to the pick-up, and started toward the hospital.

As the dust settled around her, Margaret dropped to her knees with her face in her hands. She would never get to college now. Even if her mother got better, she could not go off and leave her. She remembered the night before on the porch, how the sun had seemed to cut itself on the sharp hills and bleed into the valley. "Even the sun doesn't have a chance here," she thought. "Even the sun has to bow down to the mountains. I was a fool for thinking I could overcome them. John was right; I'll never succeed. I don't have a chance."

The Question

EDWARD APPLEGATE

I opened the door with my key. My roommates were playing cards. I smiled at them, then I said, "You know guys, that girl that was the Campus Queen last year isn't bad—not bad at all. I just saw her

walking up the campus—by herself. It seems that a girl like that would have every boy here following her."

"Well, why don't you ask her for a date?" yelled Smitty, as he laughed with the others.

"I'm going to," I said, as I took off my coat.

They looked at me with unbelief at first; however, when they saw that I was serious, their faces grew solemn.

"Are you serious?" called Smitty.

"Yes, yes I am. And I'm going to call her right now."

I left the room and went out into the hall. I looked all around hesitantly, and tried desperately to instill some confidence in myself. Suddenly, there before me was the phone. As I went closer, I felt as if I were a child going out to see his dog that lay dead in a street. Slowly, hesitantly, I picked up the phone. I was not nervous; I was petrified. I dropped the dime into the slot and began turning the dial as my eyes called out the numbers to my brain. Her phone started ringing, and I listened closely. Then when I heard a voice asking me with whom I wanted to speak I could hardly answer for lack of courage.

"Miss April Wright, please."

I stood there, thinking about what to say to her. Then it dawned on me, I must be a nut! This was hopeless! What would I ask her? She's not just a girl—she's a campus queen. She rules a kingdom just the same as Elizabeth. Boys will be all around her tonight. It would be useless. Once again, I started to hang up the phone, but before I could, a voice like clear spring water running over gleaming rocks said, "Hello."

My whole body was shaking. I felt sick. My stomach ached.

"Uh, hello," I said, feeling very miserable. "April Wright—is this April Wright?"

"Yes, who is calling?"

"Uh, this is Tom, Tom Butler. I know you don't know me, but I called to ask you something."

I couldn't get the last part out. I just couldn't. My tonsils were stuck in my vocal cords. Surely I would be paralyzed for life.

"And what is this something, Tom?" she asked.

Tom. She had called me by my first name. Wow!

"I'd like a date with you for tomorrow night," I said. My confidence grew as each word tumbled out.

"Oh, and what time will you come by?" she asked, as if accepting my invitation.

"Well, how about seven or seven-thirty?" I asked.

"Fine," she said. "Good-bye, Tom."

"Oh," I said, as my mind came out of its dream world. "Good-bye."

I put the phone down and turned toward my room. As I walked casually down the hall, I could feel my chest expanding with pride.

"That wasn't so hard," I said, as I opened the door to my room.

"What wasn't so hard?" asked Smitty, as he looked up from his cards.

I smiled at him, but said nothing. Finally, he resumed playing cards. I lay down on my bed, thinking. I could hear the flutter of each card as it left Smitty's hand—just as if they were the seconds going by—the seconds that were telling me 'it won't be long until tomorrow night.' Soon I'll be a part of that kingdom. But I wonder, will I become king—or jester?



The Lightning Scourged the Sky With a Brilliant Whip

DARBY THOMAS

"Damn this God-forsaken pittance of a home!" groaned the farmer's wife, uttering the words in a manner which suggested years of repetition. The groaner sagged in a crude wooden kitchen chair as she stared vacantly out the only opening in the room, a lopsided doorway. The aperture framed a late

August afternoon: an aging, dried oak tree, two wild-looking hogs, lolling in its meager shade, the dusky Kentucky foothills lying on their backs in the distance. The entire scene appeared hazy: shimmering waves of intense heat and lazy fine dust intermingled to powder the landscape and blot out any shiny points of interest. But Leticia was not noticing scenery. She ran her long fingers once through her straight red hair and turned back to the room in disgust.

Thirteen years ago she had been a junior in college, and what had made her drop out? What had been the real reason? She had loved Jim, then, she guessed. His hair was brown and curly, his eyes unusually large and so blue that she had melted each time she felt their attention, his awkwardness atoned for by his impressive height and huskiness. So she had married Jim and moved to this farm to raise two kids and . . .

"Tish, ain't you got dinner ready yet?"

Startled to hear her husband's voice, Leticia realized that the sun had dropped dangerously low in the sky. The sunset cast an unhealthy dullness over the heavens; night was approaching on swift, padded paws, and Leticia hated the nights.

"I'm tired tonight. Fix yourself something."

"What about the kids?"

"Tom can take care of himself—no reason for a twelve-year-old boy to depend so on his mother. I'll worry about Patricia."

The wrinkles in Jim's brow deepened, the wrinkles that had never existed thirteen years ago, and his jaw tightened.

"Seems to me you could fix for two as easy as one," Jim half-whispered.

"Well, I can't," his wife shouted, "so leave me alone about it. And if you can't find anything to eat, it's not my fault we can't afford better. You and your hogs! Should have stuck with vegetables; at least they're clean, and they don't stink! Close your mouth—I know what you're going to say. The beans and potatoes are still in the hill. I suppose soon you'll be out there with that damn mule plowing again. Can't even manage a tractor—you have to use an ancient plow, like a two-bit, good-for-nothing hill-billy, because that's what you are, Jim!" She was exhausted, but her face retained its violence and disgust, perhaps merely from habit.

After a brief silence, Jim spoke, his voice actually tender, "Maybe you ought to go visitin' somewheres tonight, Tish. You're wrought up as a treed coon."

"Visiting?" she shrieked, "Visiting! And just who do you want me to visit tonight? One of these ignorant sluts I'm forced to call neighbors? They hate me, and I'm glad! They don't talk of anything but

babies, canning, and husbands." She laughed bitterly. "I doubt if a single one of them ever heard of Rembrandt or Emerson or Beethoven! Ha—go visiting!"

"Looks like a good stormin' tonight," Jim mused, peering through the doorway.

Suddenly, a little girl emerged from one of the two bedrooms that comprised the rest of the house. She closely resembled the man standing nearby, as did her brother, except for her eyes. The child's eyes were melancholy, dark, and brooding. A half-hidden fear lurked behind each glance, giving the girl an unnaturally old appearance.

"Patricia, dear, have you brought your dress?" Leticia's tone softened noticeably and introduced an unexpected quality of concern. "We'll hem it tonight."

The girl silently handed a bolt of colorfully-flowered cotton to her mother and waited. When Leticia realized that Jim was not going to leave the room, she abruptly turned her back to him and knelt on the floor, fumbling with the material.

"This dress will be lovely, honey, just like Mother used to wear, I promise. You'll make all your little school friends green with jealousy." A hint of unpleasantness smirked about the woman's mouth.

"I don't really need a dress, Mother, and I don't want to make anybody jealous."

"Nonsense; you just don't know about such things. I remember all the parties and clothes and fancy perfumes when I was young. And someday you'll have all those things, too, Patricia. Only you don't throw them all away. I won't let you!"

"Mother, sing that little song with the funny words you know. I like to hear you sing, even if I can't understand."

Then, Leticia smiled and sang a bright French tune she had learned as a student. And as she sang, the bare kitchen visibly relaxed. When the song was ended, a precious glow warmed the crude, flat wood of the walls.

"That sure is going to be a pretty little dress, Patty," beamed her father.

With that foolish revelation, Jim was caught with his barriers down, his emotions unguarded.

"The girl's name is Patricia!" observed the woman on the other side of the room. No blast of polar wind could have frozen the tiny enclosure as quickly. Jim did not move. Patricia watched the icicles of hate forming in every corner, felt them forming deep within her own being. A giant demon had sucked all the air out of her lungs, and she felt the familiar fear of being alone and empty.

Jim disappeared before his wife's fury, and Leticia sighed.

"Guess you kids better be off to bed now; run

along and tell your brother." Then, rather wistfully, she called, "Good night, Patricia . . . May all your nights be good ones."

She cleared the refuse from the table and scrubbed for a few minutes at the filth. But the futility of her efforts made her cease and search out the same chair to sag in. Tomorrow would be Patricia's seventh birthday, this year on the first day of the week. Jim would insist upon observing the sabbath, no work of any kind. Sundays were always hell; the man and the boy were in the house with her, then, impossible to ignore. Well, she could take another long nap in the bedroom.

She rose and swayed to the open doorway. Soon the blanket would have to be tacked over the open space, to keep out the night's chill, except that no blanket could keep away Leticia's chilly fears.

She looked at the fields in the silence of an abnormal calm. Those fields were what she hated; that acre of weeds and dirt and a handful of seed and hope were her enemy. The fields had promised to bear fruit, to lead to abundance, to satisfy her demands.

"But they're a failure, just like Jim," she thought, "and I hope those seeds get flooded right out of the ground. I hope they float to kingdom come and never come back. What good will those rotten fields be then? They'll just be weeds and dirt, no seeds and no hope."

Suddenly, she remembered Patricia's birthday gift, hidden in the only safe spot, Leticia's bed, the one place she could be sure Jim would not bother her secrets. Now she ran to get the doll, no cuddly baby doll with dimples and a young smile. This toy was grown-up and had long, red hair.

The rain and the wind had started now, lashing furiously at the tiny structure. The blanket could not do enough good when the wind whipped to the north.

"Best in the store . . ." Leticia murmured. "Oh, she'll like it all right; she has to."

The girl had to have every luxury in life. She had to grow up with the proper standards, knowing that this contemptible community was far beneath her. Somehow, Patricia must go to college and have fun and marry well-to-do. Somehow, no one must know that her father had been a slop-slinging pig farmer. (Jim would say, "There's more money in hogs nowadays, Tish; you oughta know that from readin' that city newspaper you get.") She must have the chance to know wealth and happiness.

"And she will," Leticia swore, her eyes glinting dangerously bright in the dark, "She will!"

The boy Tom came running into the room.

"What the hell are you doing up?"

"Ma, come in here quick! Somethin's wrong with Patty!"

She did not stop to comprehend the boy for the nickname, but flew to her daughter's bedside.

Tom was right: Patricia was not even moving. In the darkness, her mother could barely perceive the still form on the cot. At the same moment, she heard the rain pouring through the now open doorway and saw the empty bottle marked "Strychnine." She turned on one knee, and all the revulsion and childish terror on her face exposed her helplessness. The lightning scourged the sky with a brilliant whip. Jim's face showed plainly; the sneer was unmistakably hateful, that of a man driven lunatic.

"Seven years bad luck, Tish!" he screamed.

A Wild Cavalry of March Winds

SUSAN ELLIS

I always love to come here this time of day. The forest is so halcyon. Just now the melting orange sun can faintly be seen through the thick foliage. I call this place *my* little woodland, for it is mine. I do not mean that the deed is mine, but I mean that spiritually I own this place. Sitting here on the mossy rock, I recall the first time I came here.. That beautiful summer day seems so long ago and so far away.

Elizabeth and I were walking down Old Johnson Road. The summer sun was baking our shiny heads and cooking our bare feet. There was an old train track about a mile past the Johnson Road and Sycamore Lane crossing. Along both sides of the track were vines of wild strawberries. I threw myself over that old white washed fence, the one with the "no trespassing" sign that was worn and cracked, and I madly started picking the berries. Before I knew it, my pinafore was bright red. Oh, I could hear Mom say, "Strawberry juice is next to impossible to wash out." Elizabeth was in the same predicament. We gathered our little wicker baskets together and sat on the track trying to find a way out of our sad state.

All of a sudden, Elizabeth came up with a mighty intriguing idea. We would take the old miller's path on the far side of the track and go to the church. Brother Matthew and Sister Claire would hide us till Mom would be feeling more kindly to us. Elizabeth said that she heard Papa say, "The church's doors are always open," so she knew they would take us in.

This trip to the church was the first I'd ever made through my part of the forest. Poor Elizabeth was pulling me along by the hand and I was crying about

being lonely, afraid, and tired. We finally stopped at a high circular plain surrounded by trees. A little creek trickled past and Elizabeth and I ran over to this source of fresh water. We lay flat on our tummies and our hair was falling into the stream—the hair was getting more saturated than our mouths. When Elizabeth raised up, she saw a bright light reflected in the creek. We turned around looking for the source of the brilliance. We screamed with delight: the sun had caught the metal steeple of the church and reflected itself and guided us on. Even then I hated to leave this place. This forest spot held some unique spell over me, but Elizabeth was soon at my side tugging me on.

Running, rapidly down the path, we were making our way toward the church steeple when a huge form blocked our passage. A husky voice roared out at us, "Where you gals of'ta?" We stood trembling before this awesome intruder. "What—cat got your tongue?" We wanted to run quickly, but we couldn't move. Then Elizabeth, probably because she was the older, summoned up enough courage to answer his inquiries.

"We're on our way to the church."

"At this time of day? Naw, you kids oughta be at home suppin with your Ma and Pa. You can't fool me. You kids is runnin away."

"No, we're going to see Sister Claire."

"Can't hardly believe that. Now come on and I'll take you back. What's your names, where'd ya be living?"

Mom warned us about strangers, but Elizabeth seemed to forget. I guess she was scared and not thinking too clearly. Whatever the reason, she answered, "I'm Elizabeth and this is Rachel. We live in the valley."

The dark stranger started roaring with laughter. We couldn't figure his cause for laughing. Still chuckling, the man said, "Now how'd ya suppose I'm to git ya back home, if that's all I'm to know. Poor kids, ya probably be frightened by the likes of me. I'll git ya to the church. They'll see that ya git home. Boy, won't they be surprised a seeing me there. Now, little gals, you don't go telling that I took you to church. Ha. Ha. Me a goin to church."

The man took each of us by the hand and we silently passed through the forest. In a short while we were in a quiet glen and in front of the parsonage. Sister Claire saw us coming and ran out to meet us. "Why, Conley Stone! What brings you out this way?" Then recognizing us she questioned us also. "My goodness, Elizabeth and Rachel! Why aren't you home? Why'd you come out here?"

The mysterious stranger, who we now knew to be

Conley Stone, told of finding us in the forest and suspecting truancy.

Elizabeth interrupted and told the parson's wife our problem with the strawberries. The man started chuckling again and Sister Claire smiled down at us and spoke to the man. "Thank ya kindly, Conley. Sure ya won't stay and eat? I'll be feedin the girls 'fore Matt and I take them home."

"Naw, gotta be goin. Gettin late ya know."

"Yes 'tis. Good evenin."

"S'long. Bye chillun."

After we ate the parson and his wife took us home. They explained our story. Mom wasn't angry at all. I think her behavior had something to do with Conley Stone. Although she didn't say anything to us, I heard her remark to Brother Matthew and Sister Claire, "So Conley brought my babies to you. If that doesn't beat all."

That summer passed into fall. Many seasons rolled by; then I found myself in the forest again. It was one of those early fall days, brilliant sun and crisp wind. I was teaching school. Since I was new, I was still caught up in the excitement of this different situation. I was planning a leaf study, so that Saturday I would early in the morning rise and go to the forest. Taking a box for my leaves and a basket for my lunch, I was on my way.

The woodland was gorgeous, so many different colors. I was so caught up in my surroundings, that I forgot the reason for my coming. I wandered aimlessly along and soon found myself in *my* spot again. The stream still ran past, the trees still enclose the circular plateau, but one thing had changed. Instead of my companion being Elizabeth, there was a man in the forest.

He was sitting in front of an easel, very intent on his work. He was oblivious to my presence. I don't know how long I stood there; a silent witness to an artist's personal production. I could remain silent no longer; I approached this stranger. "Pardon me, but what brought you to *this* spot?"

He turned quickly about and revealed a handsome yet annoyed countenance. "I was just about to ask the same of you. In answer to your inquiry, I often come to this spot to do my work."

"Do you live here in the village?"

"No, the forest is my home."

"I don't think I understand."

"It's the legacy of my father."

This statement intrigued me. The rest of the afternoon we sat and talked. I watched him recreate the scene that was now *our* spot. His name was Stone, John Stone. The name sounded vaguely familiar.

The afternoon drifted quickly into night and John

left. I didn't realize then that I was never to see him again. I sat there recalling the sweet pleasantness of the afternoon. The name still haunted me. Suddenly, I remembered why his name was so familiar—he could only be Conley's son. Now all that he had said was understandable. Of course he lived here, this was his father's only legacy. I left this spot thinking how Conley had taken me from the forest and how John had taken me back again.

The tranquility of the evening was suddenly disrupted by a wild cavalry of March winds, returning me once again to my senses and to my husband, awaiting me at home.

Our Love

Ten million soldiers dying
A single baby crying
The land below, the sky above
The beauty of the universe
Show love

And though we cannot estimate
The time to change from love to hate
We love it now lest we be late
For love

And this cruel world shall never know
The feelings that we tried to show,
The love we had, but didn't know
Our love

For what we had was true and sure
The happiness both kind and pure
The love we had would long endure
Our love

Alas we know that where and when
Our love might dwindle now and then
But we'll stay true and our souls mend
With love

And at the dawn of each new day
We pledge that we'll not go astray
We solemnly in silence pray
With love

And so we still go on and on
With each long night and each fresh dawn
We'll love this love until it's gone
Our love

—Gregg K. Wene

Logical Professor Appleby

I'm a wise young man
with a Ph.D
and still not married
said logical Professor Appleby.

I once wrote a thesis
on women, said he
I've studied their inner thoughts
said logical Professor Appleby.

Women are animals
they mean nothing to me
not enticing at all
said logical Professor Appleby.

But out his window, Professor Appleby
chanced to see
A curvy blond
that attracted he.

I once asked the Professor
his thesis to see
He's thrown it away and discarded the results
said Mrs. Professor Appleby.

RAY TUSSEY

Pondering Bethany's Dead

My feet disturb the dormant, quiet earth,
As I trod this hungry ground that's winter-pained,
The soil is frozen; and the awful dearth
Of winter keeps my glad spirits chained.
I stand upon your steps, O' peaceful church,
And gaze upon your markers scattered 'round—
The cold wind stings my face—my senses lurch
To be in the presence of these under ground.

It seems so strange to be so very near
These fallen denizens; and yet so far
Away. And I do feel a passing fear,
And want to hurry to the waiting car.
But it lasts only a moment; so I stay,
And declare aloud: "My senses do play pranks."
So, at the close of another winter's day,
I sit among the silent army's ranks.

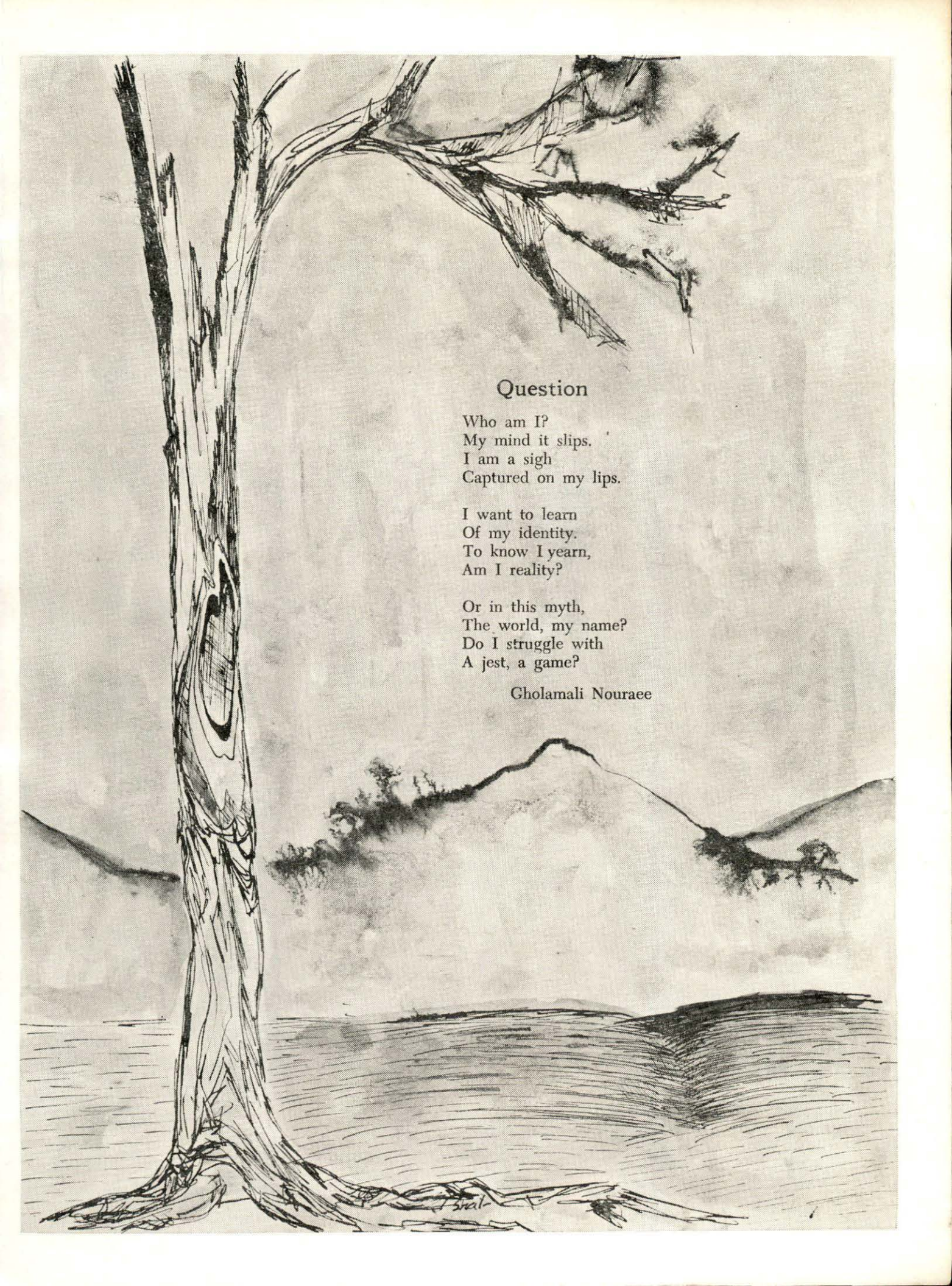
Who were these dead now still? Where did they live?
They lived within this valley, wide and free,
They worked and sweated—gave all there was to give,
And they moulded a richer land for you and me.
They fought the elements with strong mind and hand,
They built the sturdy house which stand still,
They lived next to—and worked a growing land,
Yet all their labors brought them to this hill.

They bettered posterity; and any mind that's sane,
Will appreciate the shining deeds they've done;
And feel each sad heartache and biting pain,
And understand what joys they had to shun.
I can see just now before my mortal eyes,
Just what they saw; feel everything they felt;
For each and every human body dies,
And by and by the stench of Death is smelt.

And now these dead are of a different breed,
Set far aside from this living world we know,
For now they do not have one mortal need,
Within their beds beneath the frost and snow.
They regard me as a stranger, I am sure,
And gaze at me from eyes of greedy bone;
They will regard me as a thing impure,
Until I rest beneath my marble stone.

They do not appreciate my being here,
This cruel fact deep in my brain I know.
No living thing; to Death is ever dear;
Thus I retreat with steps so sure and slow.
I cast a backward glance as I pass the gate;
I shall be passing on now, I expect,
For due to the whims of Life and Luck and Fate,
I am a stranger; yet to join this sect.

SAMUEL L. BEVARD



Question

Who am I?
My mind it slips.
I am a sigh
Captured on my lips.

I want to learn
Of my identity.
To know I yearn,
Am I reality?

Or in this myth,
The world, my name?
Do I struggle with
A jest, a game?

Gholamali Nourae

Books

LINDSEY TAYLOR

I blame my parents for my financial plight. Their income is too meager to insure me a leisurely middle-class existence, yet it is too large to qualify me for the Appalachia bill. Thus, a problem arises. On the money I can collect and the amount they allow me for "foolishness," I am unable to satisfy my vice—buying books.

Lest the reader form an unfavorable opinion of my parents, allow me to explain that they are not unmerciful tyrants. They have a legitimately sound case. You see, I only buy volume upon volume—I never read them.

There are reasons for this form of neurosis, which writer John Updike justifies in a selection he labeled "The Unread Book Route." However, Updike only traces his volumes from the front door to a lofty backroom where they achieve some form of dusty immortality. Allow me to explain the irrational motivation that compels one to request the books to be dispatched to the front door in the first place.

A book, regardless of its aesthetic value, represents, if nothing else, work. Do not regard this as trite. Think for a moment how little actual work is done in America today. Further serving to set a book apart is the fact that it is the creative work of one man. I feel that if a man is willing to insert into a book the love of labor that takes place between inspiration and publication, then the least I can do is buy the thing.

A book, every book and any book, tickles my imagination. If it is clad in a gay, arresting cover I feel I have been promised an interesting content. If the cover is dulled by drab coloration and unsightly design, then here is a sure sign you have a classic, a book so good the publisher knows it will sell, despite the appearance.

I mentioned earlier that I never read these books. This does not mean that I do not read. Read I do—as voraciously as time will allow. However, I only consume books that have been checked from a library. This, too, I can explain.

A library book does not belong to the reader; therefore it can be consumed critically. I mean, who can criticize something he had paid five dollars, (or as the latest trend dictates, ten dollars, for), as is the case with bought books? But a library edition serves as a most useful tool for an aspiring Clifton Fadiman.

This is not to contend that the librarian is a poorer selector of reading material than I. Quite possibly she is better. (She only has to answer to the board of directors, rather than parents.) The books I buy, though, represent a specific portion of my life. This differs from what the library stocks, in the sense that the library's selections are directed toward the general public. My books represent me; they are in a sense, an identity.

One day I will read the books I have purchased, including the one on amateur beekeeping. But even if I did not intend to read these books, I will still have them on record in my home, serving to present a cross-section of the writing produced by my generation. By referring to my books I will be able to tell not only what my generation believed, as reflected by the passages of their literature; I will also know how I felt and thought as evidenced by the selections I have felt it necessary to buy.



Cats that Sleep Fat and Walk Thin

BEAUDIN KIRK

A cold March rain drizzled down from a dark German sky, covering Berlin like a wet blanket. Here and there over the city, isolated lights sparkled defiance to the dark, moist night. The streets were dead and empty, the city asleep, except for the slow, measured beat of lonely sentries along lonely sections of the east side of the Wall of Hate, a wall pitted, scarred, and bloodied along the east side, a symbol of suppression and despair. The Wall—considered to be the dirtiest word in the vocabulary of East Berlin.

Hans stopped his lonely patrol to light a cigarette, and turn his collar higher against the rain. Tomorrow was the day, he reflected, tomorrow. Another demonstration for peace and cooperation between the East and West would take place, a common occurrence as of late. But this demonstration would not remain peaceful, for a massive break for freedom was planned, along this weak section of the Wall. Those fools, those poor, idiotic fools! If only they knew how many of them would die just so four men could break for freedom. The result would be cold-blooded murder, like hogs in a slaughter-house, but Hans and his three companions were willing to do anything for the freedom of the Western world. Hans flipped his glowing cigarette butt away into the dark night, and resumed his lonely pace into the night.

Three very intense men sat in a small, dingy kitchen, drinking strong black coffee, not far from the section of the Wall where their friend Hans patrolled every night. The kitchen was dark and gloomy, and the faint rustle of a rat in the foundation could be heard now and then. The rain beat dismally against the now almost opaque window, its glass covered with layers of grime and filth. Although the entire scene was dark and heavy, the hearts of the men were light, and their minds tensely active. For tomorrow they would gain freedom, light, and happiness. Each nursed a dream, a hope, a desire, so strong that even the death of friends and acquaintances and strangers was no object. The sole object, at all costs, was to cross the Wall, and see what the Western side was like.

There was young Jon, a big, powerful, agile youth of 19, an excellent athlete with a fine mind. The other side of that wall meant many things to Jon—a Western education, with freedom of thought and expression, the chance to develop his fine athletic body freely and in the manner and sports he desired, and, most important of all, Trudy—the beautiful blonde he loved and wanted. He spent many hours thinking of her and writing to her. Soon he would

be with her, and marry her, and then they would go to America. America—his ultimate goal—to be free, to study, and perhaps a chance to learn to play football. That was the sport he ached to learn. He had heard and read that football was the ultimate sport, the sport that required everything of an athlete—endurance, speed, strength, agility, fast judgments, and good thinking. To Jon, football was the Spartan motto: "A sound mind in a sound body."

Walter was the second man of the group. Middle-aged, but hard, Walter was cunning and experienced, a good friend but a bad enemy. He had steel-gray eyes that could say the final word with a glance, and he had an iron will. Walter was, in fact, the actual leader of the four, and had conceived the escape plan. His desire for freedom was strictly material and completely unemotional. Walter was the truly dangerous member of the group.

The third man in the kitchen brooded darkly over his coffee, staring away time into the bottomless black pool of his coffee. Over and over in his mind a seething hatred of the Communists fed itself upon bitter, never-forgotten memories. Thomas was without a family, except for a little daughter he had been able to smuggle into West Berlin to relatives, just after his wife had been murdered by the Reds. Yes, murdered! Martha had given birth to their fourth child on the cold filthy floor of the hospital lobby, because admittance and treatment were refused until all the proper forms were filled out and stamped. The baby died within two hours, and Martha died three days later from an infection in the uterus. The hospital had killed his second son too, because food poisoning was diagnosed as appendicitis, and the wrong, useless operation was performed. His oldest son was shot to death trying to scale the Wall to freedom. Thomas absently played with his marriage band, and thought of what the ring meant to him, and to the little girl he would see for the first time in a year tomorrow.

Hans came in at precisely 2:05 a.m., his watch duty over. He was the key to freedom, the needed man in their break, for as the demonstration turned into a riotous break for freedom through Checkpoint F, Hans would quickly blast open a small military access gate three hundred yards from the checkpoint, and the four men would quietly slip into the world of the West.

Hans hung up his wet overcoat and asked, "Is there more coffee?"

"On the stove," replied Jon slowly.

Hans poured himself a cup, settled in a chair, and Walter began to quietly question him on details of the escape.

"Is everything set for tomorrow?"

"Yes. I have traded watch duty with the man on duty at the access gate from noon 'till four."

"Will anyone else be on duty at the gate with you?"

"Yes, one, but I will send him to help at the checkpoint and tell him I will watch the gate."

"How many guards will be on duty at the checkpoint?"

"Six or eight."

"How much time do we have before other guards start arriving?"

"About a minute. It will be sufficient time."

Walter paused in his questioning for a moment, then turned to Thomas.

"Does everyone in the demonstration understand how their break will be made and at what time?"

"Yes. The peace demonstration will reach Checkpoint F at 2:00 P.M., and at 2:04 P.M. they will suddenly break for the checkpoint gateway, attempting to overpower the guards and proceed into the British sector. It should be interesting to watch."

Jon shifted uneasily in his chair. "It doesn't seem right to get so many people unknowingly killed just so we can escape. They think everyone will make it, and nobody get killed, but the guards will shoot many of them before the mob ever reaches them."

"Shut up, kid!" snapped Walter. "Look, the crowd has a good chance of succeeding. The guards are used to the demonstrations now, and will not expect anything. And there will only be a few of them. We're giving ourselves an extra safety margin. Now, if you'd rather take your chances with the crowd . . ."

"No. No, you are right. I'm sorry; I wasn't thinking clearly."

"Okay. Then we're all set. We meet back here at 1:45 tomorrow, except for Hans, of course, who will be on duty. Leave one at a time, quietly."

Hans left last, and walked briskly back to his small room in a dilapidated rooming house. He let himself in quietly, hung up his things, and then began to talk calmly and earnestly with the East Berlin Colonel who had been comfortably awaiting him.

Tomorrow was now today, and the incessant rain continued to forlornly blanket the city. Berlin was now awake, and people moved coldly and wetly about their business. The day wore on, slowly for some people, not so slowly for others. The morning was

one of idleness and waiting for some, and for others one of busy preparation. This day would be one to remember.

The demonstration, two hundred strong, formed at 1:30 P.M., and began its usual march along the wall towards Checkpoint F. A short distance away, in a small, dingy kitchen, three men met for the final time.

"Are we all ready?" asked Walter.

"Yes."

"Yes."

"Good," said Walter. "We have but a few more minutes to wait. After all of these years of waiting, a few minutes will be nothing."

Outside the demonstration could be heard approaching the Checkpoint, singing their songs of peace and freedom, and carrying their signs and cards. But this time knives, clubs, boards, chains, and a few pistols were concealed among the group, women as well as men. They sang their songs loudly and robustly, and all of them failed to hear the sound of heavy vehicles approaching and stopping. The last word of their favorite freedom song ended on a high note, and then kept right on going to a screaming pitch of hysteria. The mob broke for the checkpoint and freedom. But suddenly Communist soldiers were everywhere, scores of them, and deadly gunfire poured in from all sides. Tanks rolled up, and opened fire with their machine guns, and began to reap a grim toll.

As soon as the first shots were fired, Hans sent his partner quickly to the skirmish, then turned and blasted the gate open. As he turned back, his three comrades burst around the corner of a building and came hell-bent for the gate. Hans waved them on, and as they came close, he gave a tight, clinched grin, and cut them down with his machine gun, leaving a bloody heap five yards from freedom.

Hans was pleased with himself. Today would get him a promotion. He had fully briefed the Communists of the escape attempt, where and when the break would come, and Hans himself had killed the ringleaders. Yes, today was his day.

A military jeep screeched to a halt in front of Hans, and Hans snapped to attention. The East Berlin Colonel in the right-hand seat exposed the pistol in his hand, and quickly and efficiently shot Hans once, in the head. Then the Colonel's jeep moved towards Checkpoint F to examine the carnage his men were reaping there.

A Night as Cold and Damp as a Dog's Nose

TOM MOORE

The mouth of darkness blew a low, howling wind at the high rock walls of the mansion. In his lonely room, James was reading a "Captain Marvel" comic by flashlight. Maria tiptoed into the darkened room and spotted the orange of the light beneath the mound of blankets. She thought at first the moon had come to spend the night with her brother. After poking what looked like James' back, she crawled under the blanket into the small, stuffy world of a child's hideaway. "Mother and father haven't come home yet," she whispered.

"Uh huh," James mumbled back.

He was engrossed in the adventure before him. Holding up the roof of his private cave with his head while supporting the magazine in one hand and the flashlight in the other was all he could concentrate on at the moment. Suddenly he became disgusted and threw the book on the crumb-laden sheet.

"I knew he would get killed!"

"Who?"

"Captain Marvel."

"Oh." After a pause, she repeated, "Mother and Father haven't come home yet."

"I know it."

At nine years of age, James knew a lot that other boys of his age didn't know. He knew that his little sister was pretty and, like him, was lonely. He knew that his parents were not getting along and that they went somewhere every night, but not for entertainment.

Maria was scared. He knew that. Her large room across the hall from his was dark, dreary, and lonely. Each night, Maria came to James' room for companionship. Then he would walk her back to bed and tell her a story he had read. He spoke in a low voice so that the maid downstairs would not hear them. If she did, she would come stomping up the steps and lock each child in his room. Being locked in at night was the one thing that James could never bear. He imagined that he was a very important prisoner when the door was locked at night. He was well fed and cared for, but not free. James felt like a prisoner of war or an ousted duke or somebody really *important*.

But he still did not relish the thought of being locked in. If he could get his small sister to bed before their parents came in, and if he did not disturb the maid, the house was his to explore.

This night, Maria was especially hard to get to sleep. The wind scared her. It was cold and rainy outside. She wanted a drink of water. Finally she fell asleep, and James was ready to go exploring.

He had never been in some parts of the old stone house. The attic, if there was one, fascinated his imaginative little mind, and he visualized suits of armor, old photographs, and funny looking clothes.

Instead of going upward, looking for an attic room, James slowly tiptoed down the broad main stairs and into his father's massive study. James knew this room better than he knew his own. As a small child, he had hidden behind the leather chairs scouting for Indians. He had told visitors to the house that it was he who had shot the rhinoceros that hung over the fireplace.

"How stupid can you get?" he said aloud, even though no one else was in the room. "I couldn't even say 'rhinoceros' then."

A special key, one on a green string, was James' goal. The key had been in the top drawer of his father's desk earlier in the day. The key was like no other James had ever seen. There were two holes in the top of the key and the key was elaborately carved to represent the face of a person or some sort of mask. The green string passed through one hole and back out the other as though the mask had two green eyes and a green bridge across its nose.

Most keys were made out of gold. This one was silver. The key had an unusually long set of undulations on the working end—six, to be exact. There weren't many doors in the house the key would fit, but James had one or two in mind, and he meant to try them.

All of the drawers in the study were usually locked. James' father kept everything from gun shells to fish hooks in the various shelves and drawers, and he knew the hazards of such objects around small children.

But James was a natural-born snoop. Just because a chest was locked one day did not mean that that chest would never be unlocked again. James burned with curiosity to know what was behind a locked door or cabinet. His imagination ran wild at the thought of the myriad wonders that lay behind a tiny lock.

What would this wondrous key unfold? Would he be able to get the key? Would the drawer be locked? James had to drag a chair over to the desk to reach the top drawer. Climbing into the chair, James pulled on the brass knobs and the drawer slid open. The sought-after key was beneath a pile of old letters—just where the key had been earlier.

Silently mounting the stairs, James stared at the key dangling from the green string. There were very

few locks indeed that could accommodate such a long stem. After reaching the second floor, the adventurous boy continued to the third in search of a suitable nest for the oddly decorated key in his hand.

He had been told not to go wandering about the house. His father had said, "Prying is an infringement on the rights of others. I trust you, son, and I know you won't go into unauthorized parts of the house."

James remembered this talk his father had given. The lecture was a follow-up to James' latest punishment for snooping. But a nine year old going on ten often disregards reasons and reality in favor of illusions. James' mind was on fire with all the possibilities the key held.

He stumbled along in a trance, gazing at the key. The boy came to a small door in a dark, terrifying end of the hallway. He had never ventured this far from his room at night. Outside, the rain came down as though the pelts of water would beat down the stone walls.

"Why isn't it snowing?" he thought. "The weather is too cold for rain."

The key fit in the elaborate silver lock of the small door. James marveled that a door so small should have a key so big. The door made no noise upon opening, as though someone used this entrance often. James felt along the wall for a light switch. The one he found produced no light—only a loud, ominous click.

James nearly stumbled over a small table about five feet from the door. Little light showed from the hall to let him see. Finally the boy found a table lamp and turned the switch.

The room was like any other. A double bed, a small desk, many children's toys, and a large rocking horse comprised the furnishings of the room. The bed was covered with a colorful spread of yellow animals on a white background. The bed looked like any other except that there were no pillows at the head. The gay bedspread draped over head and foot to give anonymous proof that no one slept there now.

Toys were everywhere. A set of cap guns and holsters hung from a peg on the wall. Plastic army men, some of which were broken, were piled care-

lessly in a cardboard box at the foot of the bed. A large red balloon, long since gone flat, hung by its lifeless string from a leg of the desk. James thought how much the balloon was like his mother—once so full and smiling, now so lifeless and haggard.

The rocking horse was of a faded white, with large red polka dots. The horse had a faint, sad smile on its chipped wooden face and seemed to be saying, "Ride me, ride me."

But James showed no interest in the toys or the playhorse. He had similar objects in his own room. Mumbling to himself, James wondered, "Why are they here, locked up in this cold room?"

The small desk had a thick, fitted top of marble and did not look at all like it belonged in a room like this. The legs of the table were tall and thin and looked too fragile to support the heavy marble.

On the desk lay a large manila envelop and a picture album. The urge to examine both was irresistible to James. The album was thick and heavily bound in leather and brass. The pictures inside the album were fascinating to James. His mother and father had over thirty pictures of their wedding. James saw what he thought were the grandparents he had never known. The grandparents were happy and kind looking. Farther along in the book, James saw his mother holding a baby. "That must be me," he thought. "But the date is wrong. This says 1953. I was born in 1956."

He curiously turned the next page to find a similar picture, again of his mother and the baby, labeled "Martha holding Jason, 1954."

Who was Jason? What was he doing in the arms of James' mother?

He finished the book by looking at pictures of himself and Maria as children and turned to the manila envelop. The return address read "Midcrest Retardation Center."

With tears in his small brown eyes, James turned to the window facing the driveway. The headlights briefly searched the wall of the house as the car swung into the drive. "It's as cold and damp as a dog's nose out there," he muttered.

This Is The House

Once in this house the children sang and played,
And once the housewife ironed and washed the clothes,
This tranquil homestead in the forest glade,
Was not a mansion, but was what they chose.

No longer is the dog tied to the tree,
No longer by the fence do flowers grow,
Sly Red Fox prowls, and weary winds blow free,
And silence reigns when winter brings the snow.

The only laughing's that of mountain rills,
The wind's at night; the gentle breeze by day.
This lifeless house—nestled between the hills,
Where lone and mighty woods stretch far away.

A family's love is not imprisoned here,
Not felt in hearts or scribed in poet's line;
Just as the boards—the love and pain and fear,
Have all succumbed to dread effects of time.

The slopes they cleared and ploughed have been reclaimed,
By the eternal forest and the rocks.
What man once owned and sweated on and claimed
Belongs once more to 'possum, 'coon, and fox.

A thousand stars are shining in the sky,
The moon lies low upon a crown of hills;
And strange it is that poets wonder why,
The seasons weaken man and bring him ill.

Some of these prodigals sleep sound tonight,
In foreign beds buried deep in the town,
While others rest in darkness, out of sight,
Nearby beneath a quilt of native ground.

Is that the sound of laughter as of yore?
And on the porch—is it the fair-haired Jane?
No, just a rat across the rotted floor,
And just a moonbeam on the window pane.

SAMUEL L. BEVARD

Empty House In The Night

The wind on ancient, weather-boarded walls,
Sings dreary notes in dreary dark of night,
The empty beds and chairs and silent halls
Are void of warmth and life and merry light.
The trees watch o'er the yard as shadows creep,
The stream goes on its journey to the sea;
And roving waters see a house asleep—
On bed of earth where lonesome wind is free.
But lurking shadows steal across the floor;
Ghost fingers touch the dusty window pane.
The souls of those who long have gone before.
Return when skies are dark with clouds of rain.
These misty figures still and all alone.
I know among these ghosts there walks my own.

SAMUEL L. BEVARD

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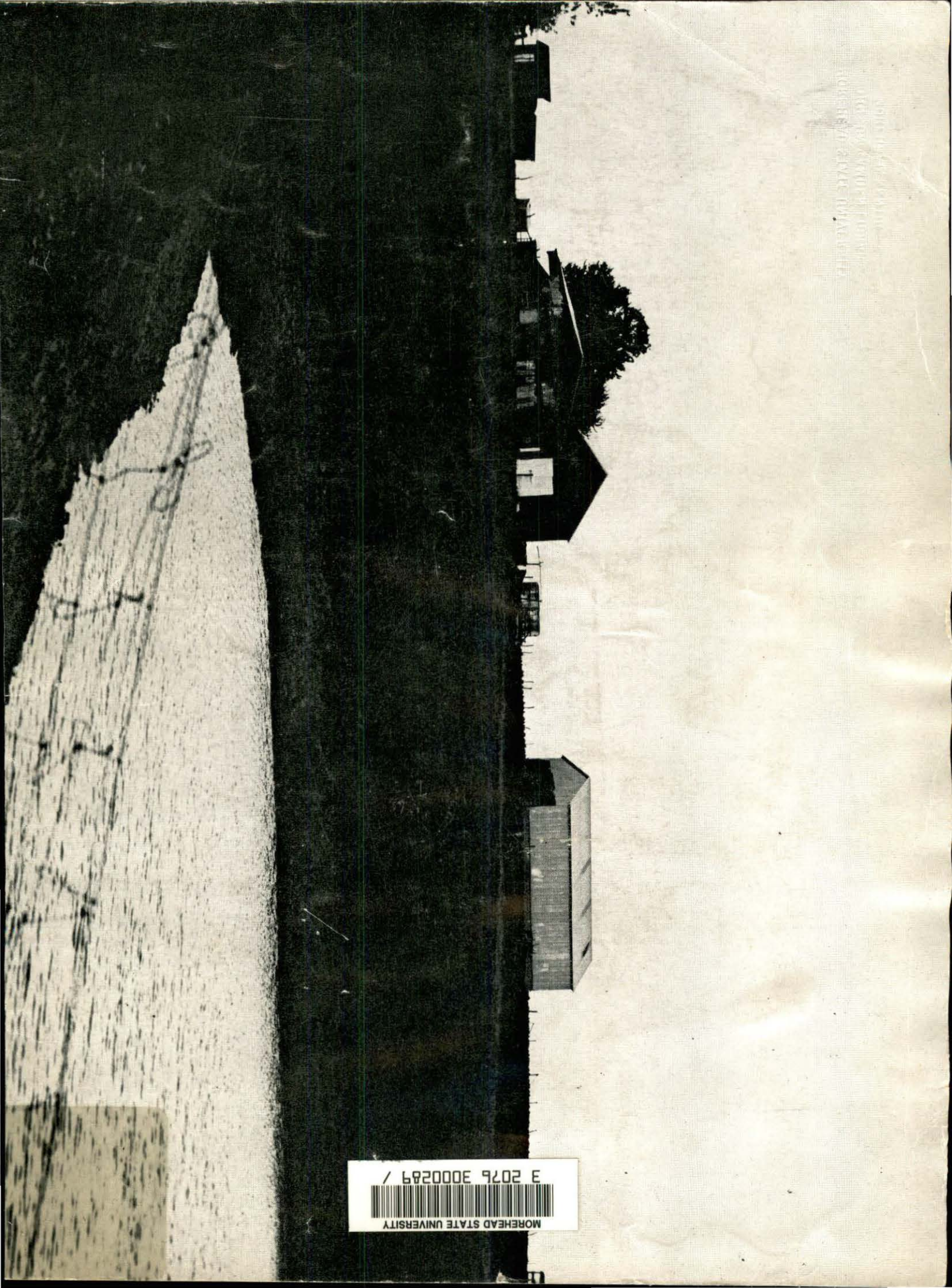
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