

1973

## Calliope Manuscript Day 1973

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/calliope>



Part of the Creative Writing Commons

### Recommended Citation

(1973) "Calliope Manuscript Day 1973," *Calliope (1954-2001)*: Vol. 1973 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/calliope/vol1973/iss1/1>

This Complete Issue is brought to you for free and open access by the English at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Calliope (1954-2001) by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact [wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu](mailto:wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu).

THERE  
AREN'T  
ANY  
SNAKES  
IN  
IRELAND

# THERE AREN'T ANY SNAKES IN IRELAND

fiction and poetry  
from Western Michigan University's  
3rd Annual Manuscript Day

Edited by Arnold Johnston  
Herbert Scott

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

## IN APPRECIATION

The editors wish to acknowledge the generous contributions of colleagues and friends of the English Department at Western Michigan University in the judging of manuscripts and participation in the activities of Manuscript Day, 1973.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Title is Adapted  
from the Short Story by  
Maryjane Draper —  
Clio Area High School

Copyright 1973, Department of English  
Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Mich. 49001



## CONTENTS

### Fiction

Stephen Kane	5
Kelly Ware	14
Phil Vander Weele	16
Maryjane Draper	27
Cathe Billings	34

### Poetry

David Marovich	39
Mark Katzenberger	42
Patrick Rode	44
Steve Triezenberg	47
Deborah Johnson	48
Peggy Abbott	49
Diana Green	50
Bryan Fellers	51
Carol Schulz	52
Linda Kok	53
Curt Bradner	54
Vicky Kailas	55
Pat Witsaman	56
Glyndon Sweers	57
Sandy Bacsanyi	58
Julie Martin	59
Mark Pattello	60
Kim Gilmore	61
Contributors	63



## Stephen Kane

On his first Sunday at the Methodist church Dirk could tell it was true what his grandmother had said: "I really don't boast about you dear—I just speak the truth awful loud."

Grandma Wellman had dawdled too long, as usual, in dressing for church. Dirk, sitting out in the living room all prepared, had been able to hear the arguing of his grandparents that seared through the high plaster ceiling, despite the loud hymns which Grandma insisted on playing every Sunday morning (It put her "in the mood"). They were haggling over the hat she proposed to wear. At last they had come down the stairs into the main hallway, her gloved hand delicately on his elbow, both of them looking very composed and almost regal. "I prevailed," she had said simply, smugly positioning her hat. "I still say it's nothing but a flower pot," he had said in mock indignation, glancing sidelong to see her reaction. Then the two, both at least seventy, giggled like a couple of honeymooners. Dirk had thought how corny the whole thing was; that while the hat *was* grotesque it didn't seem half worth the extent to which Grandpa Wellman had put himself out. What the hell was so important about a little hat, anyway?

Now church was over and before the organist even finished her postlude Dirk was assaulted by what seemed to him to be a thousand old ladies with flowerpots for hats, along with a thousand old men, all of them Typical Southern Indiana Farmers who nodded their heads and smiled and guffawed at inane jokes. It seemed that all the old ladies said, "Heard all about you, son. Glad to have you visiting with us for the summer." And all the old men nodded and said, "Yes sir, fine head on them shoulders." Dirk began to feel as if he was miles away, mechanically monitoring his reactions.

"... and this is my granddaughter, Sue-Ellen Mays," one old lady was saying and he found himself shaking hands with a bare-headed young woman whose eyes yanked him rudely from his distant vantage point. For one awkward moment he was trapped; examining the thinness of the hand he held, the appealing slightness in the frame of the woman before him, the straight, long brown hair that accentuated the not-quite-pallid color of her skin and the blush in her cheeks. He was trapped; listening to the shyness in her voice, looking into curious eyes that betrayed the shyness as fakery.

And then, suddenly, reality no longer held him . . . he was shaking hands with a nightmare. It was no longer a sunny June day in southern Indiana. Now it was late autumn in Wisconsin, nearly campus curfew time, and he was in the lounge of an ancient dormitory with a girl whose eyes, hair and skin were those of Sue-Ellen Mays', only a million times refined . . .

"I don't understand you, Dirk," the girl was saying. "I don't understand you and I don't know you. It's just impossible for me to keep things between us as if we had just met . . . I've got to be part of you, only you won't let me. I just have to stop things here. I'm sorry." The girl was crying now, and he got up from his place next to her. He was yawning, looking at his watch, and leaving the girl in tears as he set off for his own dorm.

Now it was three weeks later and he was being raced to a hospital after a fall from the third story of a science building. 'Attempted suicide,' the papers were saying.

It was the middle of May, and he was being released from a psychiatric treatment center. His parents were telling him he would be spending the summer with his grandparents, that he could get some rest there and maybe catch up with a little work.

The end of May, and he was preparing to leave for Sexton County, Indiana; reassuring his parents that he was alright, that he had never, in fact, been ill. A five-hour drive from Chicago and he was pulling into the old homestead, Civil War vintage, complete with rocking chairs on the porch and outdoor toilets.

A weathered old couple was coming down the stone path to greet him; he was shaking hands with his grandfather, looking into his grandmother's eyes and realizing once again that he could not force himself to kiss her leathery cheeks . . .

"To think that I actually believed you geniuses from those huge universities don't have a sense of humor," Sue-Ellen Mays laughed. Dirk determinedly forced the events of the last seven or eight months from his mind, wondering exactly what he had been saying that had so amused Miss Mays. She had, Dirk thought, all the mannerisms of the girls native to this area: the head slightly bowed so that their eyes rarely met; a way of speaking which seemed to say, "Excuse me for saying this, but . . ."; even a slight twang in her voice. But her eyes somehow told him that these outward mannerisms were only adjustments which would help her fit more easily into Sexton County life.

The old lady that had introduced them was now pestering Sue-Ellen that it was high time to go. Their eyes did not meet

as she slipped on her gloves and said, "There's a young adults' meeting at the church tonight for all of us kids stranded down here with," she paused and blushed, "with nothing to do." A slight twitch of a smile crossed her face as she squeezed Dirk's hand. "Okay, Mr. Wellman?"

Dirk nodded. "I'll try and make it, Miss Mays," he pronounced in his most precise diction. For a minute they both laughed. As her gaze fell on him he turned away uncomfortably.

A month later, languishing under the Fourth of July sun with Sue-Ellen, Dirk was still uneasy when she looked at him for any length of time. He glanced over now. She lay sprawled on the back, heels entrenched in the Lake Michigan sand, her head resting on a damp, rolled-up beach towel. The whiteness of her bikini harmonized with the shade of the body that, while not busting it, did fill the suit temptingly.

"Getting your eyes full, Romeo?" She squinted sideways at him, with that amused, twitching smirk that Dirk had come to recognize.

"Just looking at your tan—or lack of it," he replied, with a short laugh that exposed his nervousness. Sue-Ellen would detect that nervousness, she always did. For the past month every waking moment of his day was spent either being with her or thinking of her, rotely reviewing each minute they spent together. And constantly there was a knotted stomach and a black hovering tension—even more than he was accustomed to. Always there were worries of mistakes made yesterday or of miscues that might come tomorrow.

Sue-Ellen had reminded him, initially, of another girl, in another place, at another time. As the month wore on the memory simply took another form. What had been a vivid recollection of a nightmaredied, and reincarnated itself as a vague, foreboding tenseness.

Dirk had made a habit of seeing Sue-Ellen since the young adults' meeting that first Sunday night. (Except for the chance to see Sue-Ellen that meeting had been a dud, he thought. The main topic of conversation was crop-fertilization, and though the members of the group had tried to be friendly, Dirk found their corn-pone accents and crude 'Howdys' revolting.)

"My, dear, you're sure working fast on that Mays girl," Grandma Wellman had tittered as he tip-toed in at eleven-thirty that first Sunday night. "And don't be so flustered about me being here. I'm a late-to-bedder; I wasn't waiting up for you. I

was only jesting you about Sue-Ellen . . .”

Her voice trailed after him as he sheepishly trudged upstairs. “That’s okay, Grandma.” Dirk’s words had not reassured her. Why couldn’t the boy take a joke? He was far from reassured himself. How did she know so much? Defensive. Why was it that these people were all so full of corny jokes and damn fakey ‘neighborliness?’ He cursed his hostility—toward his own relatives, yet—but still could not keep the questions from his mind.

With such an inauspicious beginning Dirk had been willing to let the whole affair drop. But a chance meeting with Sue-Ellen two days later, in a 5 & 10 store, had resulted in his asking her out that night. (Dirk wondered drolly if Sexton County would consider such an episode romantic.) Since then they had met three, four, and five times a week.

Dirk’s first impression of Miss Sue-Ellen Mays had been pretty much correct. She was not from the area, was, in fact, from New York City. And though he never bothered to ask her (for fear it would offend), he was relatively sure that the mannerisms he had noted were assumed for purpose of acceptability. She was a shart chick, laughed at his jokes, and was pretty good looking. Usually she didn’t ask questions; but when she did they were the kind that triggered his worries, the kind that produced a ‘warning’ signal in his brain. He always evaded answering.

Now, on the southwestern shores of Lake Michigan, Sue-Ellen rolled over on her side, faced Dirk with a puzzled, fixed gaze and asked, “What are you so worried about, darling? So you were looking at my body, so what? Don’t be nervous, sweet, if you like my body, just say so.” She poked him in the ribs, cracked a smile and continued in a husky, sensuous voice, “I’m just *wild* about your body, tiger.”

He managed a weak grin. “I’ll bet you are, for a fact,” he countered limply. Without convincing her of anything but what she already knew; they had reached an impasse again in their conversation.

Dirk was entranced by the crusted breakers coming in off the lake, slapping down sharply on shore, then quickly retreating. The wet sand was mushy, and bowed meekly to imprints of feet, rock or wave. The breakers boldly took shape far out in the lake, rushed into shore, and receded before their own form could be destroyed.

Every Sunday morning, without fail, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir heralded the new day in the Wellman homestead. Grandma

would turn the volume of the phonograph up until their words were beyond recognition, and the piercing vibrations of the organ could only be matched, Dirk decided, by the shrill soprano of Grandma herself, singing away in the kitchen, the pots and pans adding percussion.

Many times he would glance out his second-floor window to check the weather and Grandpa Wellman would be tottering back to the house from the rickety old barn, after letting the cattle out to graze. Grandpa always insisted on doing the work around the farm himself, without hiring extra help. To Dirk the old man seemed barely able to walk, stiff-legged and arthritic as he was. But once, early in his stay, Dirk had insisted on helping load bales of hay (out of a sense of obligation), and Grandpa had outmuscled him with no problem.

Since then he had pretty much eliminated farm chores from his schedule. He didn't even see or talk much with the older man. Occasionally he'd run the tractor, or dish out slop to the hogs; once the two of them went 'varmint hunting.' That hadn't been much fun. Dirk, unsure of what he was doing, had been forced to ask help of Grandpa. The help had been given willingly, but Dirk knew that the old man must have been secretly laughing at his city boy stupidity.

Sunday morning was special on the farm. In addition to the hymns, Grandma would set out the best china at the dinner table. Instead of cold cereal there was hot porridge, instead of toast there were flaky cinnamon rolls, and scrambled eggs with ham. Sometimes even hotcakes. A real old-fashioned breakfast, Dirk thought drily.

The Sunday following the Fourth of July, which had been a Saturday, he drifted awake slowly and listened expectantly for the blaring phonograph. There was none. As he rubbed the drowsiness, after-effects of the long drive back from the lake, from his eyes, Dirk peered toward his eastern window, expecting the morning sun to slap him in the face. But the angle of the sun filtering through the long, dust-caked storms was almost vertical. He squinted his eyes and fuzzily read the clock on his bedside stand. 11:20.

A note on the stand said, "Dirk, Figured you'd want to sleep. If you want it, breakfast's in the frig. Will bring Sue-Ellen home for dinner, about 11:30. Love, Grandma." He felt himself smiling inside, knowing it would last only as long as he was alone in the house.

"You know," Sue-Ellen reflected lazily, kicking off her shoes and wilting into a field of long grass and dandelions, "it's a funny thing about real itty bitty calves." She tugged Dirk down with her and he mechanically put his arm around her. Noticing the tediousness with which he showed his affection, Sue-Ellen slipped her arm around him and pulled him closer. "You don't have to make it seem like such hard work," she purred softly. Dirk tensed up and she saw the blood creep into his face, his jaws clamped tightly together.

"As I was saying, about the calf," she sighed wistfully and motioned to a grazing field a few hundred yards away, down a gently sloping hill from them.

"You hear him crying for his ma?" Dirk nodded. "Well, when he's just born, that mama hears his cry a mile away and she'll jump a barbed wire fence to get to him. But when he gets old enough to trip around by himself on those stilts of his, she won't come running when he bawls for his milk. She —"

"Are you trying to say something, Miss Mays?" Dirk was miles away now, remembering a cold autumn night in Wisconsin. "Because if you are, don't go using some poor little calf to get your point across —"

"— she waits for him to come to her," Sue-Ellen ignored the interruption. "She knows that if that calf really wants to eat, he'll come and get it himself. When he does come she licks him and cares for him as much as ever. But he has to make the effort himself. If he doesn't, he dies."

Dirk waited only seconds before retaliating, in slow, well-spaced words pronounced crisply and sharply. He was a debater, coldly and logically presenting his case, with total objectivity.

"Now, Sue-Ellen, suppose you explain exactly what you would like from me. I can't seem to comprehend just what you're getting at. You always are rather vague in your mentioning 'shyness,' seclusion,' and whatever else you refer to. I —"

"Listen to you, even now, darling," her eyes were intently on him. "And see how you squirm just because I look at you. Why are you so scared, Dirk?" She thought a moment; stood up and then plopped down again quickly, this time sitting Indian style in front of him. "You want me to be specific? Okay . . . just once I'd like you to smile when you first see me. Or maybe touch me in a way that doesn't say 'This is my duty.' " She paused. "Could you ever just tell me one thing you hate about me?"



Dirk was staring into a recurring nightmare now, and was helpless to stop it. He stiffly wound a blade of grass around his index finger, his eyes fixed on the calf pitifully crying for milk. "Those are such simple things, Sue-Ellen," he said softly.

"I know, I *know*," she pleaded. "I'm not asking you to give me your guts on a platter, dumbbo." She smirked momentarily, hoping Dirk would notice.

"Such simple things," he repeated. "Then they shouldn't make a difference, right? I'm still the same, whether I do those things you suggested or not."

"But what is 'the same'?" she cried. "I don't really know when you are mad or happy or — Listen. Just say 'I love you.' That's all. Just, 'I love you.' " She grabbed his hands and squeezed them viciously.

The calf had stopped its crying. Dirk shook his head and rose slowly, pulling Sue-Ellen up with him. Reluctantly she dropped her hands to her sides. They walked in a vacuum back to the farmhouse.

By the end of August, Dirk decided that Sexton County, Indiana, must have invented the term 'dog days.' There were times when he seriously considered curling up under the porch with one of the miscellaneous pooches that wandered onto the farm.

He hadn't seen Sue-Ellen in nearly seven weeks now, except for embarrassing encounters at church, and he figured it was just as well. At first she had been fun, but after the first few dates her charm had worn off. Dirk had thought her a little wacky, anyway; always asking questions that didn't really have anything to do with the price of eggs. And she was so forward . . . maybe in New York they did it that way, but he preferred girls with a little more finesse.

Grandma and Grandpa Wellman hadn't been as clumsily naive about the break-up as he had expected. After a few preliminary questions they had let the subject drop, and the routine continued as it had the first month. Dirk still abhorred the way so many people in the area acted. Yet he thought he noticed a few subtle changes in his grandparents; they weren't so slap-on-the-back cheerful, so down-homey in their mannerisms.

Occasionally he even went "varmint hunting" with his grandpa. After learning the tricks it wasn't so humiliating, and when he messed up, his grandpa would blame it on the sighting mechanism or the angle or something.

Most of the time, though, he still preferred being on his own. Large gatherings turned his stomach, and he felt very helpless and unsteady when he was alone with anyone except his grandparents. Dirk talked with them a little more — mainly because he felt obligated, but because they were fun sometimes.

"Dirk, do you want to come downstairs a minute?" Grandma Wellman called upstairs. "I think I've got something you might be interested in."

As he hastily jotted down a few more notes and marked his place in the textbook, Dirk remembered once again that this was the last night he would read and study in the majestic bedroom he had called his own for three months. Soon he'd be back on campus, sharing a room a quarter the size of this with someone else. He realized that he would miss the farm, even Sexton County. Not that he was so madly in love with the whole arrangement, but leaving it all would mean having to face new obstacles and situations, both of which ignited the black hovering tension he hated.

"Dirk *might* remember this, I'm not sure," he heard his grandmother's voice as he came down the stairs. In the living room his grandparents were huddled together on the sofa, peering over a large book opened across their laps.

"I've got a few pictures here of when you were just a little tot," Grandpa chuckled. "Just a wee little tot." He patted the sofa next to him and Dirk sat down.

Grandma spoke in broken phrases as if she was actually reliving the moments and it was hard for mere spoken words to cross the time barrier. "Now this is Michael and you . . . you're just a year and a half old and a cow is something scary to you . . . but Mike is six and this is old hat to him . . . he's a man of the world . . ."

"Hardly!" Grandpa roared. "Why, if that cow had so much as grunted when Mike was that close, he would have been the first one scooting for the house!" As his grandparents cackled, Dirk found himself smiling involuntarily. Then something in the photograph caught his eye.

"What's this?" he asked. "Do I have a bandage or something around my hand?"

"Oh, hes, I think you'd burned your hand on a stove or radiator or something," there seemed to be a glow in his grandmother's words. "There isn't a child I can think of that hasn't been burned at one time or another. When you're little and just have to feel the

heat you've got to reach, I guess, even though you might be burned a few times before you find a safe distance that's still warm. But anyway . . ."

Grandma Wellman being a late-to-bedder and all, they were up past midnight leafing through the photo album. Grandpa went to bed earlier but Dirk stayed on, basking in the warmth of his grandmother's presence, feeling the heat . . ."

Tomorrow, he would kiss her good-bye.

## THE GLASS CAGE

It is cold. The rain falls and falls as if it will never stop. It is so bitterly cold, yet no snow — just unending torrents of rain. About two o'clock I begin to notice a thin covering of ice on the trees and shrubs surrounding my cabin.

My cabin set in the woods is a perfect location for observation. It had belonged to my uncle and before him my grandfather. My father took to the seas to fight a distant war, and never returned. On receiving this news, my mother took to her bed, kept to herself, and shortly passed away. From then on until now, I have lived with my bachelor uncle, who four years ago, on the eighteenth of December, was taken to fight, yet another distant war, leaving me to make my own way.

Although I am alone, I find it quite comfortable, and I prosper with each coming season. I await my uncle's return with each coming day and my hopes are high. In his last letter he said he'd come in December, I hope, for Christmas.

I have a menagerie of animals, many have come by hunger or hurt, others by chance.

The terrible rain is beginning to subside, for the time being. All I can see is a thin covering of ice on the limbs of surrounding trees. But I like the animals, know this is not the end.

I reenter the house to see how the animals are taking the cold. Cypress, the old dog, has become very arthritic from the cold, so I must move him to the chair and again venture out for wood to stoke the fire.

I return and begin to light the fire, when all at once, as if the rafters had split, there is a terrible boom and again the pounding, never ending rain. For hours and hours it continues and as night begins to fall it stops. Silence everywhere. The temperature seems to be a non-existent thing. Most of the night the animals stay huddled together on the floor, with Cypress in the chair, peaceful.

All of the late hours I sleep in warmth, but about five o'clock the fire burns low. As I shake myself from sleep, I hear, in the distance a sound. Ripping and screaming mingled in one. Cypress hears it too as he moans and growls. I am now beginning to realize what is happening. I grab my

night robe and silently slip around the cabin. Looking. As I start to put more wood on the fire, Cypress, too, awakens. To him I say, "Good morning, old thing. Cold in the chair, is it?" He whimpers and I sit beside him. He in the chair, while I crouch on the rug.

There it is again, that merciless dying sound, now it is everywhere, echoing in my ears, numbing my brain, leaving me senseless.

The light comes, and I can see it through the glazed window. As I listen I can hear no birds, no sounds of the forest in the morning. Cypress and I decide to give it a try and go outside.

As we pass through the now crushed arbor I realize that there are no longer any trees standing. The surrounding homes are smashed by fallen trees. How are we saved, I wonder to myself. The great glaze that now covers everything is as much as a foot thick.

There in front of me lies something in the ice. A great mound of dark, half under a tree, looks like a large buck, maybe.

The ice disguises the time of year and as I think, I know I have lost all track of time. Why yes, I think it must be at least December, I need to know the time and date, so I head for the mailbox, and there is a letter dated the fifteenth of December. As I open it, I realize it is from my uncle. He writes he will be coming the eighteenth, for Christmas.

As I walk back toward the cabin I think, "It really will be nice to have humans for Christmas." I pass Cypress and he still does not follow, I notice he is licking the thing in the ice and whining. As I near, the half uncovered mound, I realize it is a dead man.

Today is the eighteenth.

## THE JIM CROW MYSTERY

One musty evening in Fowlersville, Alabama, a stranger riding on a horse stopped and quickly dismounted in front of the old inn which was on the outskirts of the town. The time was about 1850, a decade or so before the Civil War. The stranger looked cautiously around, and then, convinced that no one was in sight, he opened the old rusty door and slipped inside. He locked the door behind him.

For most of the year the inn was the main attraction of the town. But during the summer months the proprietor of the inn would regularly close the place down with the explanation that he was going to visit his aged mother in Washtenaw Falls, New York. Some people doubted this — and with good reason, as we shall see.

What the stranger did not know is that the proprietor had arranged for a boy to check the inn from time to time, and that during his last visit the boy had failed to lock the door leading into the inn. The stranger could tell as he looked around that the inn must have served as the meeting place for the men of the town. He suspected that it also housed travellers. The inn, he noticed, was very old and everything in it was antique. In one corner was a ten-foot tall grandfather clock. Its black bold Roman numerals were faded, and the minute hand had an inch missing from it. But it still bore the delicate designs which had been hand-carved by its maker. But most mysterious of all was the cabinet door below the face of the clock. The door had a silver keyhole just begging for the right key to be inserted into it. No one, not even the manager of the inn, claimed to have the key that would open the door. Many visitors to the inn had tried with extraordinary keys, keys which they had picked up from who-knows-where, to open the door, but all had failed. The silver plating around the door was tarnished but still held as a reminder of the grandeur of the era of which it was a part.

In the middle of the room were three old tables arranged in the shape of a triangle. There were many dents and scratches, and some pieces and chips were missing from both the tops and the legs. But still the old heavy oak was ready to hold a man's drink on a second's notice. The counter door was locked,

but an agile man could easily climb over it. The shelves above the counter were empty – apparently empty, that is. At a second glance, one noticed an oddity – an old stuffed crow whose eyes seemed to scan the whole room at one time.

The old rickety stairs leading to the guests' quarters had been roped off before the owner had left for his annual "vacation." In the corner across from the clock were three large barrels that had formerly held beer. These, too, showed signs of heavy wear. A door led down to the cellar of the inn, but it had been locked before the proprietor had left. The stranger pulled the shade over the window and calmly surveyed the scene.

He knew this place because he had been here once before. Nobody, of course, had known him that first time because he was a complete stranger, a here-today-gone-tomorrow guest. He had made in his mind a map of the main floor, and it was he who on his earlier visit had carefully and secretly marked a shallow round hole on one of the tables.

The stranger's father had sailed the seas as a pirate and smuggler. He had also been captured and served a sentence in jail. But during his time in prison he had caught tuberculosis and had died a week after his release. He had made out a will and delivered it to his son. It wasn't a legal will; it only gave the son the house which he was already occupying since his father's imprisonment. But most important of all was the note his father had written. He took it out to read it for the fiftieth time:

You know I have wasted my life in crime, piracy, killing and imprisonment. I have brought shame upon you and wish that I could only live my life again. Since I can't, and since I will die soon, I want to take this opportunity to warn you against such foolishness. I would not have you live a life like mine; rather, I want you to be able to spend your life in comfort. Do you think I am insane? I know you have reason to think so, for I unfortunately have not a penny to my name. But just heed my words carefully and you will become rich.

As you know, I was a close friend of Blackbeard's great-great-grandson – the only close friend he

had. Before he was executed, he told me this secret:

‘I have a map hidden, which leads to all the treasure of Blackbeard. When you get out of prison, the treasure is yours.’

Now, son, read this carefully and at the right time you must get the map. I don’t know where the treasure is. Only Blackbeard’s great-great-grandson knew that, but I do know where the map is.

When you enter the inn at Fowlersville you will see three tables. Directly even with the door you enter, you will see a table leg. Part of the inside leg of this table has been hollowed out by Blackbeard himself. In here you will find the map.

That’s all I know, and Blackbeard’s great-great-grandson swore to me it was the truth. The rest you must do yourself.

The stranger had gotten that note on the day of his father’s death three months ago. Although he had no proof that there was a treasure, the thought of gold had made him gullible so that he would believe almost anything. The day after his father died, he had come to the inn and had carefully marked the spot in the table.

\* \* \* \*

Now he walked to the table with his mark on it. He noticed a knob on the leg of the table right near the top. It was in the middle and covered about half the leg. He tried turning this knob. To his surprise, it moved. This revealed a hollow opening in the leg. He saw a white slip of paper and grabbed it eagerly. It had been folded many times, but the paper was in good condition, considering how long it appeared to have been in the table leg. He unfolded it eagerly but carefully. When he opened it, he saw not a map but a note. It read: “Well, Jim (Jim was his father’s name), I see you have come for the treasure. You are the only man worthy of this.” At this the man became angry. He hated to think his father worthy of anything by a pirate’s standards. He continued reading: “The treasure won’t be easy for you to find. It will take a man with your wit and intelli-



gence to figure it out. And curses to anyone but Jim who finds this note." There was also a riddle in the note. It appeared at the end, as a postscript. It went like this: Sailors climb to this bird's nest to get a good view of the endless blue.

He pondered this question for awhile, but was completely baffled. "Sailors" — a very likely subject for a pirate to think of. "Ships" — a pirate's home. "The endless blue" — that must be the ocean, or the sky. "Nest?" He looked around the room. The grandfather clock stood as solemn as ever. The barrels held their peace. Then he turned to the counter and surveyed the shelves. "Funny thing," he thought; "that they should leave that old stuffed crow on there." "CROW'S NEST!" — of course.

He rushed over, grabbed a nearby chair, and pulled it to the counter. He hopped on the chair and got on the counter. He reached for the crow, but was careful not to damage it in any way. He took it down and went back to the table to look at it. It looked like an ordinary crow at first glance. He had shooed hundreds of them out of his small corn patch. But after looking it over carefully, he noticed that the eyes were of different colors. This was possible with a crow, but after careful examination he thought that one looked bigger and shinier than the other. He pulled on it, and out it came. It was a marble that had been placed there instead of the eye. He saw in the stuffing of the bird a scrap of paper. It was too big to get out by pulling it through the eye hole, so he took out his pocket knife and skillfully slit open the crow, being careful not to hurt or damage the paper in any way. This paper, too, was folded many times.

When he got it open, he saw a blank sheet of paper. At the same time he heard something drop to the floor. He quickly got up and searched the floor. It didn't take him long to find what he thought had fallen — a key.

First he walked over to the basement door and tried the key. It wouldn't even go into the hole. He pondered where to try next, since there were no other doors except the one leading outside. He considered going upstairs but decided against it. The note from his father had mentioned only the first floor.

He felt hungry and wondered what time it was. He pulled out his watch but he had forgotten to set and wind it that morning. He glanced up at the grandfather clock — but it had stopped running. His eyes dropped down. He set them on the small door and saw something silver. Smiling, he walked over,

inserted the key — and sure enough, it fit!

He turned the key and the door swung open. Was the small cabinet filled with gold, silver, and jewels? No. Only a lot of dust flew out. Inside was one thing: an old dirty greasy oil lamp which some old ship must have used at sea. He picked up the lamp and prepared to hurl it across the room in disgust. He decided against it, however, for he did not want to attract anyone to the inn. He decided to think about the mystery of his so-far unsuccessful treasure hunt after he had eaten the small sack lunch that he had brought with him.

\* \* \* \*

About a mile and a half away there were five quick splashes into the muddy river. Several shots were fired at the swimmers. One man shouted, "Let's head them off at the ford." The men and their bloodhounds raced through the thick underbrush and headed for a low fording point in the river.

The men swimming seemed to be making slow progress and the other side of the river looked miles away. The posse and their dogs reached the fording point. They splashed their way across. It soon became obvious that they would reach the other side before the swimmers. They stopped for a moment to take a few more pot shots. Then they started to go again, but one of the men screamed. On the other bank a long scaly water monster slipped in and dived under. Having a giant alligator swimming under water toward you is not the nicest feeling. Then one of the men felt razor-sharp teeth in his leg. He went down and blood oozed to the surface. The men all panicked. They ran in different directions and thrashed about wildly with their guns.

The swimmers, taking advantage of the bloody delay, added an extra spurt of strength to their swimming. They reached shore and, being led by one man, they ditched into the forest that encompassed Fowlersville for miles around.

Their leader knew his way very well as he skillfully led them through the forest. He had lived in Fowlersville all his life and had played in these very woods when he was a boy. They reached the outskirts of town where the forest ended. Since people were at supper, there was no sign of life. He quickly motioned the others to follow him. They ran across the dirt

road and dived into a tall grass field and began to crawl. They went on an angle toward town but going away from the road.

A half hour of painful progress found them about two hundred yards from the inn. Their leader rose, quickly looked around, and hit the dirt again. They heard all too plainly the bark of dogs across the field.

"We'll have to run for it," the man in charge whispered. "Follow me and do what I do. One, two, three, go!" The man got up and ran toward the inn. The way they tore through the high grass gave them the sensation that they were flying. Shots whizzed over their heads. The bloodhounds were closing in on them. They didn't turn back to look, but they could tell from their blood-curdling yelps. They were panting hard for breath and were totally exhausted.

One of the posse members yelled, "I'll cover the door. We'll have 'em trapped in nothing flat." Men coming from the field covered all possibilities of escape. The dogs were coming closer and closer. Then, when they were ten feet from the inn, the leader dove head first, straight at the wall. The other four men simultaneously did the same.

The head man ran his hand along the wall, and then apparently felt something that satisfied him. "Get ready to move," he whispered. He then pushed against the wall and a fake brick tipped over sideways, giving them entrance through the wall. One by one the men ducked through. Their leader was last, and as he climbed through he pushed the "brick" up again, leaving no trace of the men. Five men were standing on a narrow ledge which was on top of an enclosed tunnel-chute sloping downward to the right.

Their commander motioned without a sound for them to slide down and put his finger to his lips as a signal for them to be quiet. After their slide ended they found themselves in a cold, damp, but clean subterranean tunnel thirty feet below the basement of the inn.

The dogs, only moments after the last man had slipped through the fake wall, rushed to the spot and were baffled by finding a dead-end trail. They ran around hopelessly trying to pick up the scent. Finally they whined for their masters. Two of them came running.

"So you got dem niggers and their good-for-nothing friends trapped, do you?" one of them shouted. "I'm gonna put buckshot in their heads. Especially after what that alligator did to

poor Charlie."

But when they reached the spot they saw nothing but thin air. The men rushed back to the rest of their group. "They've escaped our dogs," they shouted. "Must have doubled back and headed for the forest," one of them said. "Let's go after them. Maybe our dogs can pick up their scent again." And off they went, dogs yelping and rifles cocked, running as fast as they could.

\* \* \* \*

While this manhunt was taking place, the stranger in the inn had just finished his lunch and was growing more suspicious and uneasy at the smallest sound. When he heard the commotion outside, he assumed that somebody was coming for his treasure.

He jumped up, stuffed the crow in his coat pocket, wrinkled up the piece of paper, and ran over to the grandfather clock, put in the cabinet all signs of his meal, and, after some reflection, placed the lamp in the cabinet also. Then he locked it with his precious key. With the key in one hand, he pulled from his belt a concealed and loaded pistol and dashed upstairs.

He was a bit surprised at the shabbiness of the rooms. Most had an old rickety bed, and a small closet. He entered a room that had a window overlooking the scene. The window was in a corner of the upstairs inn. The inn itself was of a rectangular shape with two stories showing and the basement below the ground. The door was on the short side of the wall facing town. There was a window on both parts of the wall coming together at the corner. This gave him the best view possible of the posse by the door and the runaways.

He got to the window while the mad race through the field was going on. When he saw part of the posse with their guns run in toward the door of the inn, he noiselessly opened the window several inches and took careful aim. But when he saw they meant only to set a blockade, he turned his attention to the other window and the people they were firing at.

He saw five people, four of them negroes, running toward the inn. He saw them dive toward the inn, but being right above them, that was all he saw. But from the actions of the posse he concluded that the runaways had escaped. He did not, however, believe that they were really gone. The bloodhounds would have had them by this time. It made him feel uneasy to think that

they might be around the inn. He made a thorough search of the upstairs. Nothing. He went back to the main floor. Not a sign of life. Once again he walked over the door supposedly leading downstairs. Still locked. He peeped out the window. Everything was dead as a doorknob.

He walked over to the barrels and noticed that in one of them there was a large wooden ladle protruding through a hole in the cover. He pushed on it and, to his immense surprise, the barrel tipped over sideways, forming a dark opening in a fake portion of wall.

He edged towards the opening and looked into it but could see nothing because of the darkness. His foot slipped and he fell down. The opening had been sloping downwards and he found himself sliding in that same direction. As he neared the bottom, there was a dim light and he could see in front of him a black wall. He tried to stop himself but found that this was impossible because he had picked up so much momentum. He put his arms over his head and hoped for the best.

As he hit the wall he felt it fly up and he went right through. He found that it was a piece of leather tied loosely to give it the appearance of a wall.

He was now in the same network of tunnels occupied by five other men — refugees who knew nothing about treasure but plenty about bullets, bloodhounds, and posses.

It took him a while to get his eyes accustomed to the dark. He looked back again at the “leather wall.” He wiped his hand over his forehead. He saw a tunnel straight ahead of him and to his right. He chose to go to the right mainly because it was lighter. As he dropped his gaze to the ground, he noticed a dusty wrinkled piece of paper near the mouth of the slide from which he had just emerged. He looked at it and immediately recognized that it was a map of the first floor of the inn and the tunnel system he was now in. The sketch showed very plainly the barrels and the chute he had come down on. He saw another tunnel shooting out and he recognized it as the one he was walking in. It turned left, and then right. At the upper end of the tunnel on the map was an X.

Blackbeard, he mused, must have known about this tunnel. “He surely was a cagey rascal,” he muttered aloud. What the stranger didn’t know was that John Mc Millan, the proprietor of the inn, in order to help runaway slaves, had built a system of subterranean tunnels that would have made Blackbeard turn

over in his grave! But he was to find out sooner than one would expect.

As he continued down the tunnel, he noticed another "leather wall" and it was unmistakably flapping back and forth. He stopped short. There was no wind at all. Someone had recently climbed up that tunnel!

He looked again at the map in his sweating palm. There was no sign of it on the map. His fever for treasure began to grip him and he came to the conclusion that someone was trying to get his map.

Drawing his gun from his belt he went through the "wall" and began walking up very quietly.

The proprietor, John, as he was called by the runaways he helped, had started up the tunnel which went up behind a wall of the first floor to a trap door on the floor of the second. John had hidden some non-perishable food there for just such a situation as this.

John reached the top and opened the trap door. He was greeted by the barking of dogs. The posse was returning! John quickly crawled out and grabbed the food. But in his rush, his back leg knocked down the trap door.

The stranger coming up the tunnel heard the door slam shut. He poised himself against the tunnel wall in a shadow, gun ready.

The posse was coming to the inn door and the dogs were uncontrollable in their yelps. John tried to open the door, but the old hinges were so rusty that the door wouldn't budge.

The four men below the inn couldn't hear the dogs, but they felt danger at hand.

Now the posse was in the inn, throwing things around and swearing angrily on the first floor.

John, frustrated, tried to open the trap door.

The posse started tramping upstairs. And as they arrived, they began to search the rooms.

John was sweating and tired. He gave one last tug. As if a dam was bursting, the doors flew open. When John prepared to crawl down, he was looking into the pistol barrel of the stranger. He didn't have a lot of time to think. The posse was two rooms away and he could hear all too plainly what the men were going to do to the runaways they caught. Helping runaways had made John a quick thinker and a man of quick action. In fact, he saw the gunman almost before the gunman

saw him.

John had an apple in his hand. Quick as lightning, his arm flashed back. Before a word could be spoken or a shot fired, the gunman found hard-thrown apple in his face. It hurt him, and it surprised him. The gun slipped out of his hand. John dove through the opening and threw himself at the man's legs trying to take him down with a cross-body block. It worked perfectly. The gunman fell flat on his stomach and head. It knocked him unconscious. John shut the trap door and found himself almost in a different world. It was quite dark and calm as it always was. He would never know if the posse did go into that room or not.

He carried the unconscious man over his shoulder down the chute. All the runaways met him at the bottom. But before a question was asked, John turned right, walked down the tunnel to a third "leather wall." He carried the man through this and walked up. It was not a very long walk. He reached a door, opened it, and lugged the stranger into the room that the door led to.

"He'll be O.K. in the basement," John told his companions. "When he comes to, he can walk up the stairs, unlock the door, and find himself on the first floor. I'll bet he'll wonder how he got there," John added, laughing heartily.

One of the runaways held a piece of paper that the man had dropped. "Hey, John, a treasure map!"

"Oh, that," he said in scorn. "There is no treasure! When I heard rumors about Blackbeard's treasure being hidden here I used a series of phony clues as a cover-up for hiding you guys in these tunnels. I didn't think anyone would believe it, though!"

The stranger, who though groggy was not completely unconscious, could hear what John was telling the runaways. The stranger also learned from his unintentional eavesdropping that John had once gone to visit his own father in prison. He knew that Jim (the stranger's father) was going insane and that he was also serving a sentence for pirating. Hoping to give him something to occupy his mind, John had given Jim the map of the inn where the treasure was supposedly buried. By the time he had finished writing the note about the map, he had come to believe its contents himself. That was why he willed the map and the note to his son.

This was what had brought the stranger to Fowlersville. But he made up his mind, as he listened, that he would get out of the town as soon as possible and never open his mouth about

it to anyone.

Suddenly John and the freedom-bound runaways heard something slide softly down the chute. They jumped in alarm and hid themselves. Then they heard something fall to the floor. John cautiously went over to investigate. The object he saw had apparently fallen from the stranger's pocket when John had knocked him out.

There, on the floor, was the slitted crow.



## THERE AREN'T ANY SNAKES IN IRELAND

Lorna rolled over and opened her eyes. Her tiny pink room was flooded with morning sunshine. Nudging the curtains aside, a soft breeze wafted fresh summer smells into the room. "What a perfect day," the little girl thought.

She flung the sheets aside and bounced down the creaking old stairway, two at a time. Slipping on some dirty underwear, she fell on her knee and scraped it. She hobbled quickly through the house, trying to pat the injury.

"Where is everybody?" Lorna rubbed her sleepy eyes, puzzled. The living room, the bedroom, and even the kitchen were empty. Mother was usually fixing breakfast by now. Lorna almost called her — but then she remembered.

The sunshine turned cold, and the silence of the big old house oppressed her. She sat down on the back porch, cupping her chin in her hands. The mourning doves that usually greeted her at dawn were silent. A tear splashed on her bruised knee. "Oh, Mama, Mama, . . . why? Please come home!"

But Mama was gone and couldn't hear her daughter crying, and the sun went on shining. Lorna squinted up at the yellow ball and watched its rays twinkle in her tears. Her uplifted face was suffused with sadness. "Sun, why did this happen? Why do I have to hurt like this?" she wondered.

The sun didn't answer.

The leaves on the great maples in the back yard rustled in the breeze. Lorna imagined they were whispering to each other, "Have you heard about it? Do you know?" She ran to the barn to escape her troublesome fantasy.

Her father was there, trying to fix his old Ford tractor. He gathered his daughter into his strong arms and tousled her curly black hair, gazing steadily into her blue eyes so much like his own.

"An' how's my bonny leetle lass today, eh?" He threw her into the air and swung her around, which always made her laugh. But there was no smile on Lorna's face today. She only stared at her handsome Irish father with eyes both reproachful and longing.

The smile faded from Mr. MacSweeney's face, and he gently

placed his little girl on her feet again. An inner pain filled his eyes as he kneeled in the dust with his hands on Lorna's shoulders. "Aye, darlin', I know the hurt you're feelin'. I hurt, too, here in me heart. But we must teach ourselves t' live with it."

"But why did they take her away, Papa? Why couldn't she stay here? And when will she come home?"

"'Twasn't your mother's fault, Lorna-lass. She was too sick to stay 'ere anymore. Those people will try t' help her, an' then she'll be comin' home."

Lorna turned away. "You *let* them take her, didn't you?"

MacSweeney sighed. He started to reach out for her, but suddenly withdrew his hand and stood up. He gestured helplessly. "Och, I had no choice, Lorna. She was not fit t' be 'ere alone with you children while I was workin'. For sure, lass, I would 'ave prevented it if I could. But I've you an' Scotas t' think of. You'd not be angry with me for somethin' I couldn't help, now, would you?"

Lorna smiled dismally and hugged her father. "No, Papa, I understand. And I love you," she whispered in his ear.

"And I love you, Lorna-lass. Now get along and wake up your lazy sister."

Lorna paused at the door of her sister's room, gazing affectionately at the sweet childish face that slept so peacefully. Scotas, at six, was a perfect copy of her mother. Her long dark brown hair lay in soft waves around her face that was a pink and creamy as a fresh peach. Filled with gentle innocence, her deep blue eyes were large and expressive, fringed by thick black lashes. She was a beautiful child.

Ten-year-old Lorna glanced at her own face in the wall mirror. Lorna was just as much her father's child as Scotas was her mother's. She had inherited his thick, curly black hair, his freckles, his eyes, his firm mouth and chin. The father and daughter were very close. Scotas would depend on them heavily now that Mother was gone.

"Scotas, Scotas, wake up!" The little girl opened her eyes, still a little red from crying herself to sleep, and stretched while Lorna picked out a playsuit for her to wear. "It's almost nine o'clock, lazy. Papa says to get up."

Scotas propped herself on one elbow. "What's Mama fixing for breakfast?"

Lorna slammed a drawer and scowled, angry at having been

reminded. "Mama's not here, remember?"

The memory flooded Scotsa's expressive eyes and she began to cry. Ashamed for being angry, Lorna sat on the bed and cradled little Scotsa in her arms. "Don't cry, baby! Papa said those people'll help Mama, and if they do she can come home. But we've gotta be good and help Papa while she's away. Don't cry now. Please don't cry." Lorna wiped the tears away and Scotsa, sniffing, got out of bed.

Straddling the rocks with her legs wide apart, Lorna shaded her eyes from the noon sun and scanned the horizons of her world — her father's farm. She stared at the eastern tree-line that blocked her view, thinking, "Mama's somewhere in that direction. Oh Mama . . ."

Her neighbors Eddie and Jackie were climbing over the rock pile behind her. Although younger than Lorna, Eddie was a tall boy. Mr. MacSweeney always referred to him as "that leetle devil." Eddie and Lorna had played together before starting school, but now he scorned girls. His sister Jackie was thirteen, and Lorna thought she knew almost everything.

Eddie sat cross-legged on a flat rock. Grinning mischievously he suddenly shouted, "Lorna, look out! There's a snake!"

Jackie jumped and glanced around nervously, but Lorna only glared at him in disgust, unimpressed. "Oh Eddie, stop it! There's no snakes out here."

"There are so! I saw one," he yelled defensively.

"I wouldn't care if there was."

"Well, I would!" Jackie exclaimed. She clambered onto the highest rock she could find. Eddie started throwing pebbles at Lorna.

"Stop it! Why do you have to be such a pest?" Lorna cried. Jumping off the rocks, she landed in a tangle of weeds and added an afterthought. "I don't think there are *any* snakes in Ireland."

Eddie sneered. "That's stupid! You and your ol' Ireland. Why don't you just go live there?"

"If you keep on being a brat I will!" Lorna retorted.

"Good!" Eddie gazed up at the sky in mock innocence and asked maliciously, "Where's your ma, anyway? Haven't seen her lately."

Lorna looked down in shame as Jackie said fiercely, "You

shut your mouth! You know what Mom said. You just wait — you're gonna get it!"

Eddie looked properly chastised, but the silence was tense. Finally Jackie looked at her watch. "I gotta go, Lorna. Mom said I had to practice for an hour before my piano lesson." She scrambled off the rocks. "See ya."

"Yeah, O.K.," Lorna mumbled, still staring at the mossy stones. She glanced up to watch Jackie run off through the apple orchard, thinking, "You're so lucky, with your pretty house and a mother and father and everything you want. You will never know how it feels to watch your mama being taken away from you."

Eddie watched Jackie until she disappeared into the house, and then he started his attack.

"Your mother's not home, is she?"

"Oh shut up." Lorna turned away.

"I know where she is. My mom told us. She went nuts, didn't she? Your ma's crazy!"

"Eddie, stop . . .," Lorna pleaded.

He continued cruelly, "I knew she was gonna crack up. She was always weird. Your ma's insane! They took her to a funny farm so she can be with all the other crazy people. You'll probably go nuts too 'cause you're her kid." He laughed and started to chant,

"They're coming to take me away, ha-ha,  
To the funny farm where life is beautiful all the time;  
And I'll be happy to see those nice young men  
In their clean white coats and  
They're coming to take me away, ha-ha!"

Lorna suffered silently until his teasing rose to a fever pitch and she couldn't take anymore. She suddenly covered her ears and began to scream frantically, "STOP IT STOP IT STOP IT . . ."

Eddie shut his mouth in dismay, his eyes wide in puzzlement and fear of what he had done. Lorna stood up and continued to scream at him.

"You shut up about my mother! She's *not* crazy. She's beautiful. She's my mother and you shut up! You don't know nothing. You're stupid! I hate you. I HATE YOUR GUTS! GET OUT OF HERE! GET OFF MY ROCKS, YOU HEAR? I HATE YOU. GET OUT, GET OUT . . ."

Lorna stooped and groped about blindly through her tears.

She grasped a fist-sized rock and heaved it after Eddie, still screaming, "GET OUT! GET OUT OF HERE!"

But Eddie was running madly through the orchard like a scared rabbit, and the rock fell far short of its target. Lorna watched, her hands clenched in pain, tears streaming from her blue eyes, and her agonized voice echoing over the silent fields, "I HATE YOU I HATE YOU I HATE YOU . . ."

Lorna spent the rest of the afternoon on the rock pile behind the barn, washing the stone with tears of grief and shame. She beat the unfeeling boulders with her hands, trying to make herself believe a lie. "Mama's not insane, she's not crazy, she's not, she's not . . ."

In her mind she relived the nightmare of the day before a hundred times. She had called the farm where her father was cultivating. Restraining her tears, she asked to speak with him. "Papa, there's something wrong with Mama again. She pulled out some of her hair and called me and Scotta bad names, and she threw flour all over the kitchen and clanged pans together and sang some awful song. Now she's locked herself in her room, and she's crying and laughing and talking to herself. Come home, Papa. I'm scared and Scotta is crying . . ."

MacSweeney had rushed home and found his wife chasing the children around with frying pans. She wore only a nightgown, and her beautiful brown hair, usually styled meticulously, was straggling around her wild face in thin wisps. His efforts to calm her were useless. MacSweeney's greatest fear had become reality — his wife was insane.

Sending the children to stay with their neighbor, Mrs. Jennings, he made the most dreaded phone call of his life. An ambulance arrived, and the girls watched from Jennings' porch as the men in white coats carried their screaming mother from her home, strapped securely to a stretcher.

Lorna and Scotta broke away from Mrs. Jennings' repressive grasp and ran to their father's arm as Mrs. MacSweeney was placed in the back of the ambulance. The little family wept as the men drove away.

Lorna knew her mother had been getting sicker for two years. She gradually lost control of her mind. Mr. MacSweeney took his wife to the best doctors, but he wouldn't follow their advice to send her away. The situation worsened until there was no

choice left to him. The father and his two little daughters were left alone in the big old house.

At five o'clock MacSweeney came out to the rock pile to find Lorna. She was sitting on a huge boulder, crying silently and staring at the ground. She did not look up.

"Lorna-lass? 'Tis time for supper, love." He squatted down to see her face, but she wouldn't meet his gaze. Sensing her feelings, he spoke gently, like a man calming a frightened animal. "What's bother' you, lassy? Why, you've been 'ere all afternoon, for sure. Scots and I 'ave been alone all day. We've missed your pretty face. I 'eard you this mornin', yellin' at that leetle devil Eddie. Did he be botherin' you again? You shouldn't be lettin' him get on your nerves, darlin'."

Raising her head slowly, Lorna's gaze came to rest on her father's face. A sob escaped from her as she reached out to him, and he gathered her into his arms. "Arrah, love, he spoke of your mother, is that it? My poor lassie."

Lorna pressed her wet face against her father's shoulder as he rocked her gently. Her voice choked with tears, she whispered in desperation, "Papa, tell me it's not true. Mama isn't crazy, is she? Please tell me she's not crazy, Papa!"

MacSweeney shut his eyes tightly and felt the tears well up behind the closed lids. He pressed Lorna's curly little head close to him, thinking, "My dearest Kathleen, insane! How can I tell this to our own daughter?"

He paused with indecision and Lorna persisted hopefully, "It's not true, is it, Papa? It's all a silly joke — isn't it?"

MacSweeney sighed deeply. "No, Lorna-love," he said slowly, painfully. "We must not lie t' ourselves, we must face the truth. Your mother is . . . insane."

"No!" Lorna cried out. She pushed herself away from her father, but he grasped her arms firmly and twisted her to face him.

"Lorna, listen to me!" he commanded. "'Tis true. You cannot deny the truth. Your mama is very sick. No one could 'ave prevented this." Lorna continued to look away? Desperately, MacSweeney continued. "Lassy, I need you. Don't you see that? I need you t' help me be raisin' you an' your leetle sister. I've got t' 'ave help, too."

Lorna looked up, puzzled. "You need help?"

"Aye, lass, for sure. We must be strong together."

A tear dropped off the end of her nose. She said hesitatingly, "But — *I hurt*, Papa. I feel all — all sad inside, sort of."

MacSweeney nodded in understanding. "Arrah, I know the feelin', lovey. 'Twill be a long while before the ache leaves your wee heart. But now's the time when you need t' be growin' up. There's much you'll 'ave t' bear, lass, what with your mother gone an' your sister needin' you like she will. Can you do it, Lorna? Will you be strong an' help your papa?"

Lorna threw her arms around her father's neck and hugged him tightly. "I will try hard, Papa! Really I will!" MacSweeney kissed the curly head of his little daughter, and the late afternoon sun glistened on their shared tears.

Lorna helped Scotla struggle into her pajamas. The bed creaked and swayed with their efforts.

"Scotla, hold still! You're worse than a snake."

"O-o-o-o, snakes!" the little girl squealed. She jumped up and down on the soft springs in delight, chanting, "There-aren't-any-snakes-in-Ire-land! There-aren't-any-snakes-in- . . ."

"Will you stop it?"

Scotla did a grand belly-flopper and rolled over so her shirt could be buttoned. "Where's Papa at, Lorn?"

"He's finishing the big field. He'll be home soon."

"Oh." Scotla scrambled under the covers. She pulled an old storybook from under her pillow as Lorna tucked her in and reached for the light switch.

"Aren't you gonna read to me?" Scotla screamed, bewildered when her sister ignored this bedtime custom.

"Me? But . . ." Lorna stopped in surprise. She had never read to Scotla; Mother had always held that job. "But Mama is gone," Lorna thought, "and Papa isn't here." She considered what she should do. "Scotla expects someone to read to her. I guess this is what Papa meant when he said he needed help in raising us. I have to be Scotla's mama now."

Lorna took the book and sat on the bed so her sister could see the pictures — just the way her mother had done when Lorna was little. Scotla snuggled against her fluffy pillow as her sister opened the worn little book and began to read.

"Once upon a time there lived in Ireland a very kind and wonderful man named Saint Patrick . . ."

## THE CUDDLY CATHOLIC

I never claimed to be some kind of a Puritan and am rarely described as one. In fact, the closest I've come to being in good relations with the church was when I gave some old clothes to the Salvation Army. Funny, I used to buy some from there, too. But that was such a long time ago.

PENTHOUSE APARTMENT — With private balcony and breathtaking view of downtown. Looking for something different? See this carpeted one bedroom, air conditioned beauty with Hotpoint dishwasher, disposal, range and oven. Storage and laundry facilities, private party house, all tile bath with shower. Only \$175. Call 345-8729 or 361-9472. Ask for Tom, Dick, or Harry. Singles Only.

Dear Mom,

Thought I'd write just so you wouldn't think I died or something. I know it's been a while. Well, in disappointment to you, I haven't died. In fact, I'm just beginning to live. I've met the nicest boy in the whole world, and you know what? We're planning to get married. Mom, he's Catholic.

Love,

Your daughter xx

He showed me the religion, the jews and the gentiles, the arabs, and the black panthers. I went to the church and I saw dirty stained-glass windows, the boy next to me popping gum, and the man in the back sleeping. He taught me their laws, customs, and the ten commandments, but there are really thirteen.

The Eleventh Commandment:   Thou shall kneel to pray.

The Twelfth Commandment:   Thou shall say "Amen" after every prayer.



The Thirteenth Commandment: Thou shalt not shoot  
spit wads at the nuns.

I absorbed everything. The preacher said:

“Love thy neighbor!”

“Amen!”

“Stop the war!”

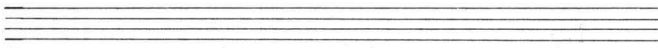
“Amen!”

“The church needs more money!”

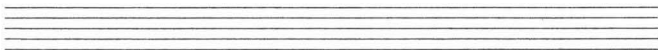
Why is a church always so quiet? And what does the priest do after Saturday night bingo? Even though I looked real hard, I never did see the nun’s hair or legs, or the bathroom.

So by now, I’m supposed to understand the church, but I have a few lessons to learn . . . I’ve heard of God, but I always get him mixed up with Noah and St. Nick.

Someone once said: “Blessed are the beasts and the children.” I joined the youth group because I always wondered what one was. All those children are beasts. They came in singing Hallelujah, but they changed the words somehow.



Hallelujah, good samaritan! Don’t you pass me by, won’t



you spread your angel wings, and to my room we’ll fly.  
Amen.

I always sing it out of key. I say my prayers every night, though. My hands aren’t folded right. I guess I have to put this cigarette out first. Well, I think about saying prayers every night. But I’m gonna wash my sins away with just some wine and bread. I’m gonna need more wine.

Yes, we’re from different lands and places. He lives in Bethlehem and I swim in the river Styx. The devil’s trident is just something like a fork to me and I keep getting fed crap. Time to pray . . . again. Holy Mary, full of grace . . . mumble . . . cough . . . yawn . . . Amen. There’s enough people here to make up for me.

## Love Story

"I love you," I said.

"I love you, too," came his gentle reply.

"Why?" I curiously inquired. I felt my stomach twitch as he put his arm around my waist. His hand fell to my knee and a gaze came from his warm brown eyes that held mine to his.

"I love you for your bright sunny smile, your long silky hair, and for your pants."

I never learned Karate. And so the cuddly catholic drops his blessing upon me, but have an abortion? Heaven's No! While the prostitute protestant hears the devil's own evil mark, the others turn away.

Holy Mary full of grace, the Lord is  
with thee. Pray for us sinners now  
and in the hour of our need . . .

Good evening Mr. Dr. Good!  
How are you today?  
Won't you look inside me, please,  
And take this child away?

It's dark now and I'm alone. It isn't even night. Cigarette's burnt down to a stub. I can't smoke it. I think about saying prayers every night. There's a crack on my wall or is it me? My rosary is broken. I lost all the beads except for two. I don't think you can pray without one.

"Hello? Hello, God? Are you there? Testing! One . . . Two . . . Three!"

I think I've blown a fuse. Darn kid! Always cries when I'm busy. Hope he's not hungry. I don't have time.

Nosey Neighbor 1: Oh, what a beautiful child!

Nosey Neighbor 2: How old is he?

Nosey Neighbor 3: Are you married?

Nosey Neighbor 4: Who's the father?

Cut my legs shaving today. Also ran my nylons. Think I'll put the hem up in my dress. No, I don't think I will. You know, you're really a beautiful kid. I remember Jesus was once a baby . . .

"God? My cigarette is out, and I have my hands folded. The kid ate my last two beads . . . does this still count?"



David Marovich

PERIPHERY

out here  
it's too dark  
to read signs  
my singing  
pounds the emptiness  
my only company  
a yelping steer  
who doesn't read  
newspapers  
i can urinate freely

a half peach moon  
swings over these  
cowering farmlands  
i can hear the slow boom  
of the battlefields  
no, the mines don't stop working  
the earth gurgles  
all night

even the stars are scratched  
by my penstrokes

the war goes on  
televisions perch  
in treetops  
vague beacons  
to these quiet men  
with sparks in their faces  
who leap through cities  
at midday  
taking the afternoon  
by surprise  
roaring through playgrounds  
blurring the shiny lips  
of sweating statues  
with my eyes wide open

they move like trees  
through the darkness

oh, they've forgotten someone  
lying quietly  
trading juices with the earth  
ice  
glitters in his ears

steel hammers  
cracking my teeth

winter comes at last  
snow  
roars louder than cannon  
i can walk through  
the ruins  
at noon  
statues crumble  
softly  
behind me  
dust on their cold lips  
dust whispering down  
the hot street  
dust on the cheeks  
of black children  
their wrinkled legs  
their bloated bellies  
standing wide-eyed  
with microphones  
in their bleeding hands  
looking back

## TRISMUS

I wanted to write a poem this afternoon  
about a soft gray light  
on the polished  
tabletop  
about shadows with no edges  
this cold appearing on the back  
of my hand  
these quiet faces  
in the sky  
that move  
vaguely  
like  
the passing of afternoon  
steel wires are being drawn  
to be used as clocksprings from my stomach  
  
the white punctures  
faces of emptiness  
  
my ears battle  
the thrusting seconds  
but nothing makes  
a sound

Mark Katzenberger

## THE WONDERFUL FAMILY MACHINE

Long live the wonderful family machine!  
Government inspected, factory selected,  
    Dr. Spock corrected.  
Pre-sanitized, sanforized, absolutely analyzed  
Complete with a sixteen year guarantee of satisfaction  
Plug it into a convenient suburb  
    and start it functioning.

Insert a nice neutral newborn.  
From the first sound of bleating,  
    appear pastel plastic pacifiers  
    bought on a grocery store shelf  
or a Playtex Baby Nurser,  
    most like mother herself  
—but not quite  
You see, children must be protected at an early age  
so, when complete, they will slide over  
    to the neighborhood drug store  
    to secretly savor silicone beauties  
    on the shiny paper porno magazines  
At the “correct” times, it is furnished with:  
alphabet blocks in all the sixteen colors  
    of a box of Crayolas  
A little record of the syrupy sweet story  
    of a sadistic killing, under the guise of  
    “Who’s afraid of the big bad wolf?”  
mass produced pencil boxes, with a list of  
    presidents on the top,  
    Required for the pre-fabricated school system  
The benevolent color TV,  
    where Big Bird teaches the alphabet,  
    Mannix shows murder,  
    and Johnny brags why he only has only one cavity.  
an electric security blanket  
    called Mother  
a six to eight-thirty weeknights plus Saturday and Sunday  
    puncheared timeclock  
    called Father



But after the guarantee expires,  
    you will find that the once solid base  
    is just a plasterboard shell  
like the giant chocolate easter bunny  
    that's hollow.  
and those blue sputtering sparks are the false precepts  
    shorting out the common sense module.

OH, that wonderful family machine is falling victim  
    to truth decay.

Patrick Rode

Golconda: gas station and diner.  
The old dog tied to the stake  
picks his way through the  
backyard trashpile.

The highway sign says  
"Only gas for 50 miles"  
The pumps that were shiny clean  
and new long ago,  
stand beside the mountain town  
waiting for the occasional cars.  
People swing in and the  
dog looks up then resumes  
his way.  
The old ranch hands chewing cigars  
and drinking beer watch  
the lady from Los Angeles pump gas,  
she dropped by about twenty years back.

Ann Reddig

## BELGIUM

Mama and Papa watched us from the house  
while we played in limited space.  
Papa, his beret pushed back on his  
balding wrinkled head, smoked  
with his thumb and forefinger  
quickly inhaling  
forcing his arm downward.  
Mama, all floured white from daily  
bread, played ahead of each  
of our moves with jerking movements  
and worried looks.  
Kept silent by window barriers.

Wartime evenings passed on in bed.  
Saving wax and candles.  
Canceling wartime talk.

We in a bed upstairs next to Grandmama,  
played silent army.  
Helped by sound from near-by Ghent.  
Army sounds belting us to sleep

Glass ate us awake as the floor caved in  
and the roof flew and we saw but couldn't hear.  
I knew I cried.  
I knew I screamed till mama found me underneath  
a rafter and a wall.  
And Brother sat in the middle of the floor staring  
and Papa lay on top of what should have been Grandmama,  
and we should have been inside  
but we could see  
Ghent burning.

Our farmlands grew army tents, green trucks and men.  
We learned to speak English  
begging for rides and for chewing gum.  
Our wine given freely, all the food we could spare,

and they gave us cigarettes.  
Protection.  
And  
orphans.

Steve Triezenberg

there weren't many cherries  
left on the trees.

steel-bodied  
pickers shaking in fully automated  
orgasm claimed them all without  
prejudice for race, color, or creed

an equal opportunity employer.

each and every tree-mother  
had her turn sooner or  
later her sons were called to  
serve the noble cause  
pre-pitted and boxed frozen pie  
food for the masses.

that september afternoon i  
found her — a tiny frozen-dancer tree  
mangled by nature alone  
in a deserted corner, ignored by  
the omnipotent pickers, she  
still possessed the fragile fruit  
of her labor, and those  
cherries were good.

Deborah Johnson

## RENUNCIATION

I slog along the sucking frozen river edge  
Where fallen cedars coddle splintered water  
Leaking through a cross-hatched sapling dam.  
Upon its bank are pointed stumps,  
From beavers' teeth  
(they only choose the childish trunks)  
Gnawed short too soon.

Don't mind those beavers  
Even though  
The stream is wider now.  
It's leeching into the summer space of pines

I used to hang from,  
Arms around the biting bark,  
Over giggles of amber.  
Even though  
The Tarzan bridge is marshed down,  
Mingling with boulders in the rapids.  
And, even though we'll have to rip up the old shack,  
Before it slides and makes a double dam—  
(I can see already the oil burner blocking trout traffic,  
Scumming out mosquito larvae.)

I can say goodbye to these.  
Not many are blessed by beavers.  
Oh — their pelts perhaps —  
But look —  
Their pursuits are  
Life,  
To be distinctive architects  
And lumberjacks.

Peggy Abbott

## DEFEAT

I stroke your arm,  
old —  
as a man would trace  
the peeling paint on his porch,  
pushing his fingertips into every crevice,  
and stabbing a flake  
under his nail —  
a keepsake of inflicted pain.  
One last stroke —  
He's walking down the stairs.  
I touch the dark hairs as they crawl  
down your arm —  
He caresses the figurehead on the railing.  
Your hands cover mine in twisting,  
unspoken force —  
He turns back, and climbs the stairs.  
I am comfortable within your life,  
as the man —  
within his wooden frame.

Diana Green

## FANTASY

The mystic druid de novo  
Feeding on patchouli and mandrake  
Sylphs dance czardas of old  
While Loki eats pentacle cake

On a raft of silvery fire  
The phantom Phoenix escapes  
His craft now an iced crimson pyre  
He drowns in a sea of landscapes

The demonic druid, he watches  
Lucifer's sylphs growing cold  
In tightening throats their breath catches:  
"Kyrie eleison de novo."



Bryan Fellers

“spring song”

the sun spit on my window today  
a rainbow ran down my leg  
and i threw up  
a thousand butterflies

dropping  
into the pit of my stomach

spring has sprung.

“poem, no. 8”

clouds gather  
impressing the stark  
blue skys

below your palm  
upthrusted towards the cloudburst  
the desert in your eye

you smile  
hoping to catch rain  
in your sieve shaped hand

but as in luck  
as in love

you'll probably  
just catch cold.

Carol Schulz

Black on white  
And I can't think  
But I'm supposed to  
So I try  
All color on no color  
And I'm confused  
A state often occupied  
By my soul  
White on black  
Still cannot think  
Though I try  
No color on all color  
Me on the world.

Linda Kok

A panting rustling sound

From outside  
I hear  
a panting-rustling  
sound.

A swish and  
a laugh,  
A friendly  
shout.

Later  
I find  
my leaves  
all scattered, right  
and left.

The rakes a  
are busy now,  
with defeated boys  
behind them.

Curt Bradner

## DESIGNS

My dog  
etches yellow designs in  
the morning show,  
leaving them steaming with  
a signature of scent.

Vicky Kailas

A CIGARETTE AFTER JAVA BREAD

Last night  
we got married  
with a smoke ring  
for a wedding ring  
    as we shared a cigarette  
    after a piece  
    of java bread  
and watched  
the streaky fog  
    conceived of  
    our 10 perfect marriages  
float through our hair  
while our wedding rings  
    slowly wilted  
    into the air.

Pat Witsaman

## OBJECTIVE QUIZ

Wake up.

It's time to go.

The words stumble through my brain  
as I wash down Battle Creek in a bowl.

I fall from my chair into a state of manic excitement  
as my feet lead me to the slaughter  
of another day at school.

My head is bombarded by dripping trivia  
as the teacher

coping with a hangover as best he can  
slices my dreams into small pieces  
and scatters my individuality before an eager crowd.

I am pushed into a square of apple pie  
to fit the ultimate goal on the assembly line,  
graduation.

After passing inspection  
then being rejected into a world  
where I will function  
wearing the brand name of my instructor  
firmly implanted  
forever  
in my mind.

Glyndon Sweers

## MONSTER

The skeleton shadow  
of our apple tree  
twisted and shivered  
its silhouette against  
the stark white snow.  
The wind  
frightened our house,  
making the windows chatter.

A sound like departing jets  
startled me,  
yet a drawn shade  
couldn't stop the wind's moaning.  
The furnace warmed my skin,  
but ice filled my bones.  
Indignant reproach  
didn't calm the inner trembling.

Through closed eyelids,  
I still saw the wind —  
lashing at the bushes  
outside my bedroom windows.  
Hurling the brittle leaves  
into whimpering piles  
beside the porch.

\* \* \*

## Sandy Bacsanyi

## COUNTRY BLUES

Do you not worry about  
the concrete-brained  
men, who, with each  
puff of steam-roller  
smoke, tighten  
the ropes that  
snuff out  
your  
life?

**WOMEN'S LIB**

I will not bow down  
He  
I will not  
said  
I will  
come.



Julie Martin

He waited her within,  
    watched her timeless hair  
glow from the hardstone walls.  
Covering sight to the breath of her swing.

On the spring's side, he rehearsed the insects'  
    swarm of his racing bike  
across the hot walks  
    upon where she lay,  
osmosis of the sun's brilliance,  
    across her chest,  
    always there.

He pretended the call of a newsboy,  
    and his performance was finished.

He had wing-tipped his tennis shoes for her,  
    planted seeds to plant and give to her,  
All stared back at him,  
    black in his room.  
They had always sweated apart,  
    his body for hers,  
She, to escape his vulgar beauty.

He still waited to rain with her.

Mark Pattullo

I-96

The concert fades out  
Oh, but so much smoother than the  
God-Damn John Lodge Freeway walls.  
Walls slim to dikes,  
dikes to houses,  
and finally  
houses to land.  
Smooth now, we're flowing

Eyes close, smiling  
and the last wheat straw joint is lit.  
The radio flicks on,  
Ahha! Grand Ole Opery, that'll do.  
A chain of stoned dominoes begin  
silent mind gymnastics  
as trains of metal monsters edge by,  
and with each monster comes a little envy  
for that country-truckin' life of  
forty-eight wheels and a long thin dawn.

Familiar bumpy moon, baby,  
and mamma wants you home by four.  
The cold glass is freezin' my ear  
but we're rollin' home on the edge of dawn

Kim Gilmore

## THE SUMMER OF MEXICO

The old Chicanos  
like swollen brown birds  
squat roundly in their doorsteps.

They twitter and croon  
for the fat of my purse —  
for the fat of the grape.  
Slim, lizardy children  
are orphans at breakfast  
and their ribs poke me, through my papaya and cream.  
I feed the greedy-beaked hands, that snap shut when  
they're full.

Grinning Senors —  
plump with my purse  
offer hospitality

in crude Spanish verse

Slump-me to my stomach — lie  
and huddle by  
their babies on my hem

"Peso, Peso American lady."



## CONTRIBUTORS

Grade, School, Advisor

PEGGY ABBOTT

11, East Grand Rapids High School, W. Brenner

SANDY BACSANYI

Northville High School, Patricia Dorrian

CATHE BILLINGS

11, Rogers High School, Wyoming, Mrs. Cantor

CURT BRADNER

12, Educational Park, Sharon Babcock

MARYJANE DRAPER

12, Clio Area High School, Mr. Fuller

BRYAN FELLERS

Northville High School, Patricia Dorrian

KIM GILMORE

12, East Grand Rapids High School

DIANA GREEN

L. C. Mohr High School, South Haven, Gary Scott

DEBORAH JOHNSON

12, East Grand Rapids High School, Willis Brenner

VICKY KAILAS

12, East Grand Rapids High School, W. Brenner

STEPHEN KANE

11, Holt High School, S. Hausen

MARK KATZENBERGER

12, East Grand Rapids High School

LINDA KOK

8, Sylvan Christian Junior High School, Grand Rapids, E. Yff

DAVID MAROVICH

Loy Norrix High School, Kalamazoo, Richard Smith

JULIE MARTIN

12, East Grand Rapids High School, Mr. Brenner

MARK PATTELLO

12, East Grand Rapids High School, W. Brenner

ANN REDDIG

12, East Grand Rapids High School, W. Brenner

PATRICK RODE

Grand Rapids Christian High School

CAROL SCHULZ

10, Grandville High School, Mr. Kornoelje

GLYNDON SWEERS

12, Educational Park, Grand Rapids, Sharon Babcock

STEVE TRIEZENBERG

Grand Rapids Christian High School

**PHIL VANDER WEELE**

8, Sylvan Christian Junior High School, Grand Rapids, E. Yff

**KELLY WARE**

9, Gull Lake High School, Richland, V. Blum

**PAT WITSAMAN**

11, Parchment High School, George Malley

