Winter 1957

Calliope Winter 1956-57

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CALLIOPE

Volume IV, No. 1

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This publication, due to the Student Council-Calliope agreement of this fall, is partially supported and under the organizational supervision of that student body.
# CONTENTS AND CONTRIBUTORS

## PROSE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Peculiar Guy, page 5</td>
<td>U. Harold Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invader, page 9</td>
<td>Bryce Forester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of Mud and Fog and the Cold, Dead River, page 13</td>
<td>Richard Hauck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Note, page 20</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dreamflower, page 24</td>
<td>Dick Embs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgotten Steps and Falling Snow, page 30</td>
<td>James Kahler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hustler, page 39</td>
<td>Gene A. Castle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before the Thaw, page 43</td>
<td>L. A. Diebold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Crazy Old Man Upstairs, page 51</td>
<td>John Provancher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty Miles, page 59</td>
<td>Terry Caszatt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## POETRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaving the Rivage, page 4</td>
<td>James Kahler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirements, page 4</td>
<td>James Bull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Perceiving A Child, page 8</td>
<td>John Murphy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Hamlet, page 11</td>
<td>Sherwood Snyder III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kleiner Gedanke, page 12</td>
<td>Diane Peacock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary Creation, page 12</td>
<td>Karen Gernant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Poem, page 18</td>
<td>Lola DeLong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech From My Several Mouths On Opening Day</td>
<td>John Murphy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to an Imaginary English Class, page 19</td>
<td>Shirley Havice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Am Alone, page 21</td>
<td>Max Steele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tall Men, page 22</td>
<td>John Murphy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghost Story, page 23</td>
<td>Sherwood Snyder III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamble, page 28</td>
<td>James Bull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son, page 29</td>
<td>Karen Gernant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter Divorce, page 29</td>
<td>Diane Peacock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pour Attendre, page 31</td>
<td>Lola DeLong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Christmas, page 32</td>
<td>John Murphy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lover as a Tree in Autumn, page 32</td>
<td>Max Steele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neversaint Tomorrow, page 37</td>
<td>James Bull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion, page 37</td>
<td>Max Steele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Quested, page 37</td>
<td>Lola DeLong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening, page 37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EDITOR'S NOTE

With the cooperation of Student Council the Calliope has greatly augmented its size this semester, so it may now better serve both the growing student body and the faculty members of this college. It is, of course, true that these material increments should retain a modest position—they should provide the skeleton for the heart, the heart being the time, energy, thought and sometimes genius now formed on paper between these covers.

And when these covers, with their enclosed paper, finally rot upon some shelf of gone college days, belonging to a person who has long since forgotten his books, perhaps some of these thoughts, some of these jokes and some of these authors shall not be quite so forgotten, not quite so dead.
Leaving the Rivage . . .

I grew old when young
and heard the death knell
sadly sung.

I tried hard not to hear
and ran nowhere
out of fear.

I emptied my life of all pursuits
and hid myself alone to eat
of bitter fruits.

But the grey thing found and visited me,
I protested the time, it is much too soon,
I cried bitterly.

He came closer and smiled
and put me aboard a ship
that had already sailed.

. . . James Kahler

Requirements . . .

I don't want much out of life:
A job,
Good pay,
Nice house,
Fine wife,
Stocks,
Bonds,
Land,
And such;
Cars,
TV,
Hi Fi . . .
Not much;
And in the realm of hard-found things,
Where can I buy some angel's wings?

. . . James Bull
A Peculiar Guy . . .

by U. Harold Males

You say you knew some peculiar guys? Well, friend, let me tell you. I knew the most peculiar guy of all. Wasn’t too long ago. Spring of ’52, matter of fact. I was in Korea at the time. Wasn’t there more than three, four weeks at most. Just long enough to get this here leg of mine messed up. Almost as good as new now, except it bothers me some when the weather’s bad.

Much obliged for the beer, friend.

I saw this guy the first day I was in the outfit. The company had been in the line a little too long and I was a wise replacement fresh from the states. There were four of us replacements. The company C.O. had asked for fifteen. We stood outside the C.O. bunker waiting for someone to make a speech, flinching every time a shell went over. The C.O. took his time. It wasn’t too long before some of the newness wore off and we began noticing things. That was when I spotted this guy I’m telling you about.

He was sitting across the road from us sharpening a knife on a whetstone about a foot long. He was like a machine . . . twenty five licks on one side . . . spit on the stone . . . twenty five licks on the other side . . . test it on his thumbnail . . . spit on the stone, and then the whole routine all over again. His face had a look on it that you sometimes see on old men watching a stripper. It was almost as if he was in love with that knife.

No company supply ever issued a knife like that one. His pig sticker was a home made job with two blades, each about eight inches long and the handle was in between them. Both blades were double edged. It was as nasty a piece of fighting equipment as I’ve ever seen. One sheath for it was fastened under his armpit on a shoulder holster sling. The second was attached to the first by a shoelace and lay in his lap.

While we watched, a non-com came up, started to walk towards us, then angled over to the knife sharpener. He sat down alongside him, took a cleaning kit out of his fatigue jacket and started to clean the knife sharpeners’ carbine. The guy glanced up, but never stopped sharpening his knife. About the time the sergeant was wiping off the carbine, the other guy decided his knife wasn’t going to get any sharper. He stood, waiting for the sergeant to finish, then took his carbine without a word of thanks and walked up the road past us.

He barely glanced at us from under his helmet. One look was plenty. His face had changed completely. The only message coming out of those eyes now, was hate . . . pure murderous hate out of a pair of the bluest eyes I ever saw. I don’t ever want to be looked at like that again. Then he was gone.

The carbine cleaner came over and introduced himself as the company First Sergeant. We shook hands all around, then he went inside the C.O.’s bunker. In a little while, he was out and had given
us our assignments. I was now the property of the first platoon. The Sarge gave the others directions to their outfits and told me to tag along since he was going to the first platoon anyway. I'm a friendly bird, so just to make conversation of course, I asked him what's with this knife sharpener. All I got in return was a blank look and a short, 'You'll find out soon enough.' I did.

His name was Radiman. James D. Radiman the third, no less. Rumor said he had a sockful, or at least his old man did. Rumor also had it that he owned a couple of college degrees. He never said anything about it either way. Matter of fact, he never said anything, period. He was sort of a company mascot, but not a tame one. The C.O. didn't send out patrols to take prisoners, he just sent out Radiman. If he didn't get sent out, he'd go anyway. He'd take his carbine, which was never used, his two bladed knife, and leave our lines after dark. If the C.O. told him to get a prisoner, he'd bring one back after daylight. Prisoner or not, there was always blood to be cleaned off that knife before he got any shut eye.

In the morning, he'd make his way past our outposts, bloody knife in hand, the prisoner ahead of him. They'd march up to the C.O.'s bunker and Radiman would squat, knife ready, daring the gook to try something. The gooks never did though. They'd stand there, eyes on that bloody blade, shaking like they had the flu. Radiman's eyes never left the gook and they never stopped hating. Soon someone would take the prisoner away and Radiman would start cleaning and sharpening his buddy.

The hate would leave his eyes, to be replaced by that look of love. This was the only time Radiman's face softened. Otherwise he hated. If he was looking at mountains, he hated mountains. If he was looking at food, he hated food and if he was looking at himself while shaving, he hated himself. He hated everything, except his knife, and everybody, with no exceptions.

No one knew why he hated. We only knew that he did. We hoped he wouldn't get killed, because if he kept bringing in prisoners, we didn't have to. That's the reason why the Sarge used to clean his carbine. Radiman never used it, but the Sarge figured he might need it some day, so he kept it cleaned for him. He never pulled any details either. That was our small way of paying him for the prisoners. When he wasn't out prowling, he was either sharpening his knife or sleeping. We even did his laundry for him and cleaned his mess kit. He never thanked us. We didn't look at him when we returned his gear. We couldn't take his hate.

He never received any letters, yet he always showed up for mail call. He'd stand off to one side hating, just hating. Mail call in the service is normally a pretty happy occasion, but it wasn't so in that outfit. Radiman sure put a damper on things. The clerk would get nervous, mispronounce names and try to hurry it up like it was painful or something. There wasn't any kidding around like there usually is at mail call. When it was over, Radiman would either sharpen his knife or go to sleep. One of the men said that he once heard Radiman
crying like a baby in his pup-tent. I told him to come off it. Radiman didn’t have tear number one in him.

He never talked to any of the men. Wherever he paused, conversation stopped. We’d crack a few bad jokes and then fidget silently. He’d move on to some other bunch and the same thing would happen. After he left, the talk would start up again, but it wasn’t the same somehow.

For three weeks I watched him hate. Then we got the word from headquarters. Something was brewing out front from our lines and they didn’t know what. Radiman was told to bring in a prisoner. He spent the rest of the daylight hours sharpening his knife. After dark he lit out and we settled down to spending a jittery night waiting for his return.

Just after daybreak, he passed through our outposts with his prisoner. This time however, he wasn’t walking. He was riding this gook piggy-back, one hand locked in the gook’s hair to steady himself, the other holding the knife against the gook’s throat. He rode that gook right up to the C.O.’s bunker, then he fell off and rolled in the dirt. We had the gook covered, but he just stood there grinning. He wasn’t scared like the other prisoners. The Sarge knelt down and cut away Radiman’s bloody fatigues. He had been knifed and a loop of intestine was sticking out of the gash. I was standing in back of the gook and saw that the back of his uniform was covered with blood from carrying Radiman.

Radiman was dying. The hatred was gone from his eyes and he was gazing up at the men with that look, which had previously been reserved for his knife alone. When he looked over at the gook, he beamed even more. You’d think he was thanking that gook for killing him. Someone put his knife in his hand as if to comfort him. He pushed it away in annoyance. He coughed awhile and then he was dead.

The Sarge was squatting next to Radiman, balancing himself with his grounded carbine, bayonet pointing skywards. None of us were paying too much attention to the gook. He just walked over to the Sarge’s carbine, sort of bowed down over it and there was the bayonet sticking up out of his back. We tossed the gook in a hole and got Radiman ready for Graves Registration. Then we scattered back to our posts and prepared for an attack.

No one had told us to get ready for an attack, but we felt that we were due for one. We were right. That night they hit us hard, mortars, machine guns, the works. Those damned bugles of their’s were blowing all over the place. We threw them back all right, but not before some of them had broken through. The last of the fighting was hand to hand. Our casualties were heavy and I was one of them. Damned grenade went off right next to me. Loaded my leg up with shrapnel so bad, they thought they’d have to cut it off. Didn’t have to though. Almost as good as new now, except it bothers me some when the weather’s bad.

Yeah, that James D. Radiman the third was the most peculiar
guy I ever knew. He and that damned knife. It’s a hell of a note, when a guy has to get himself killed in order to rejoin the human race.

Well, much obliged for the beer, friend. Got to shove off. Be seeing you.

On Perceiving a Child...

This child wending her way
down the terrible staircase
like a cautious brook
moving between defiant rocks
and singing a bright babble
of October over the color of leaves
and the life that remains
imbedded in this hill,
skips down, down, down
the staircase.

Her eyes, oriental in this mist,
are ancient as praise and wonder.
Green rubber bands secure
dark hair that Adam touched,
and a pink printed dress
enfolds a prophecy of flesh
made parodox made flesh.
Now she does not fear at the sound
of Wolves, the City or of Winter,
but descending learns
a million tricks.

Tomorrow is already habit
in her limbs while her song
rings beyond wisdom
as she skips down, down, down
the staircase
to womanhood.

... John Murphy
For a long time now Cush had been looking for a home; he was cast out, hated. It was no fable that he was unwanted; wherever he went he was cursed and fought. People turned milky with fright when they heard his name. It was as though he and Despair were constant companions.

Somehow, Cush was different. He didn't know how—he could eat and sleep and talk just like the rest of them—but they would never like him; they always tried to get rid of him.

"They cut my brother once, and took him away, but they won't get me. I'll hide where they won't find me, and I'll eat and sleep and grow fat. Then I'll tell them where I am; they'll grow all squirmy and be afraid. They'll try to catch me, but I'll run and run, and be everywhere."

Cush reached a great open spot. He sat down to rest, for he had come a long way and the tubes had been very crowded. All through the tubes there was always a rushing and crowding. He had been near their heart once; it was even worse there, and so noisely—lub-alub-alub-alub. Not at all like it was here; here it was quite and warm and moist. The softness beneath him undulated in a sensuously soothing way. There was food nearby. He would make this his home.

Cush stretched, sighed, and then settled down into the wet softness. He purred to himself contentedly as he sleepily inhaled the war'm vapors floating about him.

He began to grow—not too fast, for he might be discovered if he took too much to eat. The time must be just right to announce himself. Slowly he spread out into the plushiness surrounding him, until out of the sky poured the most delicious liquid, and when he drank it he felt all wild inside. There must be more of it for him! There was, and Cush drank and drank as though he might never drink it again.

Cush forgot everything in his ecstasy. He grew and he vibrated, carelessly dumping messages virtually screaming "here I am." But Cush didn't care. Such joy was worth being discovered. He could run when he had to.

And soon he had to. The blissful drinks from the sky ceased, and the warm velvetiness beneath him became strangely chilled and quiet. Even the throbbing of the tubes grew hardly audible.

Suddenly, from above came a blinding flash of light, and his air grew rough, dry and odorless. They were attacking him once more! As the stern glint of sharpened steel pressed down upon him he tried to run, but try was all he could do. He had drunk too much and eaten too long.

The blade of metal slashed into his sides, bit his back and deftly cut under him and around him. A dull red of pain squirmed before
him as he was wrenched from his home without which he could not live.

"Good Lord, it's hot in here."

For once he was right; it was pretty warm.

"Smoky, noisy, hot, and it's only the middle of April . . . where’d I put my cigaret?"

They had been going for about an hour now. It was just going to be a small party, but there are always those jokers you didn’t invite that always manage to drift around with that ya-jus'-gotta-let-me-in look on their freeloadig faces.

"And then the two of them . . ."

The usual cultural minded group was listening to jokes.

Big Ben was trying valiantly to mix drinks, but between Clyde’s insipid suggestions and Ben’s random sampling (to insure the best), Ben was more mixed than anything in any of the glasses.

A few forced laughs floated over from the culture group, and Clyde shifted his interests to a half-open window in the far side of the cloudy room. He leaned on the sill trying to get a bit of unused air into his lungs while the room behind him hummed hypnotically. A conversation from months back found its way into his thoughts.

"That might not be your last, Mr. Addison. Be careful what you eat and drink; it can start again."

The party droned on like a hive of drunken bees.


The glass dripped cool in his hot hand. His head seemed to clear almost as soon as the amber liquid slipped between his lips.

"Swell—little more."

The clock twisted its face to read several hours later. His stomach began to get sick.

"C’n hol’ my likker. He di’n’ know wha’ he was talkin’ ah—bowt. DOC!"

His insides wretched violently. He bent over and tried to sit down—he thought he did. They picked him up and rushed away . . .

. . . the sweetness of the ether spoke to his foggy brain only as cheap perfume. The knife cut easily separating flesh and muscles. The slit widened, skilled eyes of the surgeon sought out the ulcer on the walls of his stomach. Blade, hand and mind moved in unison. The unwanted visitor was eliminated.
My Hamlet . . .

My Hamlet the envy of a heart
no longer of my dominion
youthful
    handsome            mooded of moods and delicate in soul
in thought
in dreams
so young    not so
but who
can know    not I for My Hamlet does masque
    intent

two poles
this or that?
    and what of those
    pleasure plateaus
    where searching goes
    My Hamlet's heart or mine

is it to think yet not to know
    to love yet not to show
for codes man nurtured
    ages fed
    have come to vermiculate the bed
of pure emotion outside the gloried realm of flesh
reasoning

would that sophistic shawls shed easily

My Hamlet the vestige of myself
wandering through the perplexing labyrinth
of logics disregard for feeling
    painfully so

if I could but be My Hamlet's answer
    his consolation
    his bearer
    his reason for
    but
there it lies unspent
for in the spending so comes the tragic end

. . . Sherwood Snyder III
Kleiner Gedanke...

Die schonen braunen Augen,
Die sind mir doch so lieb,
Mein Herz sie konnen stehlen,
Wie ruhig stiehlt ein Dieb.

Was tu' ich in der Welt,
Wo auch ich dort mich find;
Noch seh' ich sie stets vor mir,
Obgleich sie nicht da sind.

... Diane Peacock

Contemporary Creation...

Spin your wheel, O Potter, spin your wheel.
With clay-creation at your fingertips, spin your wheel.

"Nothing old today;
All is new."

Spin your wheel.
Create.

"To create is old.
To mold and imitate, new."

Spin your wheel and
create create create create,
O Potter.
Breathe old life into new.

"Create...yes.
My hands will shape and create.
The modern will be made of old.
I will create."

Spin your wheel, O Potter—

... Karen Gemant
Little, stinking, worthless, piddling wars . . . Korea, Indochina, a dozen others . . . were history . . . and now this little hunk of world; worthless, barren, war-shattered country apart from home, apart from the world, the scene of another piddling war, one of several past and many to come before the world would or could resolve itself into peace or total conflict.

And Second Lieutenant Edward H. Haley had but one thought and that was the thought; the thought of these stinking, piddling wars. And here he was, fighting in one of them, he and his platoon, second platoon, Fox Company. And here they all were, what was left of them, trapped neatly by a large enemy in a small part of this piddling war.

Well, crap, he had done his damndest to avoid a situation like this. He had held his platoon from retreating long enough to cover the rest of the battalion that had been in real trouble trying to get back to the relative safety of the line separating the Reds from the U.N. forces. And this was like all the little wars that had been and were yet to come, just two armies piddling around piling up casualties.

Anyway, here he was, surrounded, practically, just like in the movies and books and TV. At least he knew approximately how they stood in relation to the enemy. There were only a few troops behind him, across the river, blocking his retreat. The Reds had not yet had time to really dig in back there after they chased all the U.N. troops out of the swamp leaving only his platoon and they had done a damn good job of covering, he knew.

So that was the only way out, back over the river and through the thin line of enemy into what was by now no-man’s land and then back to the lines.

Damn it all to hell, he thought. How had he ever in a million years got himself bucked up against a stinking river? That was lousy tactics and against every book and it was a stupid move. As an officer, Haley, you stink, said Haley. But your Sergeant over there and a couple of the other RA’s told you there was no other way we could have gone except down the river because the Reds had jumped it above you and you had to chance trying to get below them but they were too fast and now here you are. So we will have to cross the river. And we’ll have to cross the river right into their thin line. Thin line, crap, it will be tough to crack; we will be like big fat green-headed
Mallard ducks sitting on a city park pond where it wouldn't even be sport to shoot them.

The R.A. sergeant was his biggest help; he had seen Korea, long ago, and a couple of the minor actions since then. He had a fine combat sense, Haley knew; he was like a hunter or trapper of two hundred years past when it came to playing and winning the game of hunt and be hunted called war, infantry style.

Haley was glad the sergeant was close to him. He did not know exactly how he had come to win the respect of his men. He was, after all, the lowest form of Army life . . . second lieutenant, ROTC graduate, college boy, and Jesus Christ, second lieutenants were a very highly expendable commodity, especially when most of them got knocked off early and many of those were knocked off by a slug from an M1, not an enemy rifle. But once the sergeant had told him he need not worry about getting his in the back, because he was doing OK, knew when to admit he did not know what the men knew, and had held up under fire and had led the platoon as well as any man could have and had kept his mouth shut except when he had something to say that was necessary. And now that he knew combat and had been tried in battle and found not wanting, he was secure in the knowledge that his men trusted him and would not question his words if he should as much as breathe the command, the much maligned and misconstrued motto, "Follow Me."

He moved quietly among his men, listening to their low conversations, checking on the wounded, the wounded who could walk and fight and the wounded who would have to be carried across the river and through the enemy. He listened to the men who talked of the fight behind them and the fight before them; but he heard mostly among his men talk of home, the states, their women. And it was not the rough, crude, filthy talk you heard in a bar or on a corner, but it was the talk of lonely men, tired men, tortured men, of their women and their talk was love and lust was never.

And he thought, too, of the women; of his woman. Of the women he had always known, the sweet, unspoiled girls he knew in high school and the husband-hungry college broads who were not hard to make if you worked it right. He thought of the few girls who had become very close to him, with whom he had shared his most private thoughts, his greatest problems, his darkest secrets, if he had any.

And he thought of Anne, who was Love Itself; who was so like him in every way; who knew him and his thoughts; who never had to tell him anything or listen to him try to explain his feelings, for each was the other; their understanding was Completeness in Itself. And he thought of Anne, who was back there, back home, alone, with perhaps his memory to give her something to wait for, something to build her living on.

You are an egotist, Haley. But you know better. You know how she feels because you are like her and she is like you. And you know what she is to you. She is the only thing that keeps you alive here and now in this stinking living burning hell.

In the distance, the nightly artillery duels began. Dusk had
passed; it was dark, except that the moon, full and bright as daylight was just beginning to show.

Crap! That moon really screwed things for you, boy. Crossing that river tonight will be suicide. They are waiting for you, idiot. Just waiting, drooling, hungry; they know you are over here and they are waiting for you to cross that river and let the moon cut you all into perfect silhouette targets for their snipers to plink at all night, just for fun. Crap! Maybe ol' Sarge will come up with an answer; he's got to!

So he started looking for Sarge and while he was, he could not keep the thought of her from his mind. He wished to God he had married her. No, he could not have; they had known too well what could happen; he might never return; the odds were against his returning, in fact. She must be free.

He had her love to think about, her wonderful, beautiful love which she had given so freely, so honestly. Their love had broken the rules, he knew, it bothered him more than a little. They had talked about it and had cried a little over how easy it was for kids to slip up and it was really tragic when you thought about it, and maybe it was common and maybe it was not so common, but their love was and they were as close as he felt it was possible to be; and he wished she were his wife.

And now her letter in his pocket where he could touch it and it reminded him of the place where he was and it drove his mind and his body to all extremes that he might now survive.

He could pick out a couple of the various U.N. artillery batteries if he listened and tried to determine their direction. But he wasn't sure of their exact positions, only sure of their direction, the direction he wished to go.

He found the sergeant, and the sergeant had an answer. The sergeant had felt of the air and had tasted and smelled the feeling he had found on so many nights alone in the swamps along the Big River that divides the States, the feeling that crept along the River at night, even on a stark white night like this, the feeling that promised a murky, grey dawn, a changing night before dawn; a night changing with the coming of thick, thin-coffee colored fog.

And fog would be their saviour. For when the fog rose steaming, cold, slow and grey from the marsh, the mud, from the still slow river and made itself into a great grey everything that would hide the moon, cover even the night, then the platoon could cross, and meet the enemy before their existence was known. With the fog as cover and the moon hidden, the breakthrough would be possible, even probable.

He briefed his men, each one, and told them to rest and wait.

And the cold pre-dawn was only greyness and blindness and it was their saviour. Quietly, like hunters in the cold grey damp of the deer camp at dawn who prepare to move and stalk and surprise their ghostly quarry, the remaining few had moved slowly at the first real darkness from their cover into the river, into the great grey everything.
The crossing was slow and frightening and hell. The river was shallow and cold and dead and death was the word the river spoke. And the men crossed and waited for all hell as they crossed and waited.

The enemy must know we are here, said Haley to Haley.

In fact, through the night and even now, the enemy was occasionally sniping into the greyness, a report and a flat splat that told of alert men plinking at shapes, at imagined forms, at wisps of fog; men that were alert and frightened but secure because they, too, knew the odds.

They were ready, indeed. His men knew and he had told them although he needed not to tell them that they must hold their fire until they had been positively discovered, and then they were to shoot like hell and break through. He hoped and was certain that they could make the shore before discovery, for there was a good stretch of muddy beach between the water and the enemy's cover. And if they could make that beach, they would make it through, as many as could, as many as would, and he would have done his best to save them.

The fog was there, all right, but it was lifting now, not fast, but he could see the signs. They were nearly across. He only wanted to get them there in time, before the great grey everything ceased to be.

He was at the uppermost end of the line, the sergeant at the lower, his men spaced evenly between them. The next man to him, he could see, but barely, and that was all.

He reached the shore, and he crouched low, his knees in the mud, the reaching stinking mud. Somehow he had always managed to find the mud.

But here at least the mud was a beach, and the beach was the place to get a run up for breaking into the cover, and through the thin, thin line. He hoped the line was thin; it could be nothing more than the advance guard of Red troops, for he had certainly outrun most of them. Perhaps, even, there were no troops here at all.

He started down the beach, behind his men kneeling, laying, crouching in mud at the edge of the water. As he passed, each moved off on his own, into the brush. It did not take him long to pass the few remaining. He did not hold much for the wounded that were being carried by the bravest, the greatest, in his command, for they would be slow, and the thin line could stop them.

Behind him the firing that he had expected but still could not believe existed broke out. He knew that the firing was blind, at noises, for the fog was still the Dominant, and it was their saviour. He came to the sergeant, and with a parting word of comrades, watched him run, bayoneted rifle ready, into the cover. They would meet again, beyond that thin, thin line, and organize. And return. Haley moved farther downriver, out from behind the sergeant.

He stopped. He turned into the beach, and stood, hesitant, in the edge of the river. Without warning, for fog has no warning, no need for warning, no desire for warning, as it is and must be with all that is natural and beyond men, the great grey everything split a little and revealed the cover's edge and in the cover's edge stood a
man with a rifle, an enemy, a sniper who had risen upon hearing the parting whispered word of the comrades, a sniper with a rifle, loaded and ready. The man shot him.

Lieutenant Haley spun hard into the water when the bullet ripped a hole in his chest. It blinded him; it stunned him; it hurt him; he screamed as he spun into the water. But as soon as he fell, he rose again; he was not aware of any power that caused him to rise, perhaps it was his anger, his fear, or an undefined. He got up from the river water and spat blood, and his mouth filled again with his own life and he spat it out again. He rose out of the water and turned with hate into fog towards the cover and he raised his carbine and when the fog again revealed the man still standing waiting he gained his vengeance.

You son of a bitch. He touched the trigger once lightly and because the carbine fires very fast, once was enough. Seven spent cartridges splashed sizzling hot into the flat, dead river. He saw the holes appear in the man at the edge of the cover; they described a fine parabolic curve beginning at the man's right hip and ending at the man's left shoulder. Six neat holes, for one had missed. The bullets tore into the man's abdomen, his chest, ripping through and carrying life with them into the fog. Haley felt pity. You son of a bitch.

Haley felt the great, deep regret and sorrow consume him. He staggered a step in the water towards the edge of the mud.

At least, I was not shot by my own in the back at least I think I did OK maybe the edge of the bank is so far away but I know it is just a few feet. Just a few really just a few Jesus Jesus it hurts it hurts...

Another step, slow, crooked, lurching finally, a step towards the edge of the mud.

Crap... this is maybe what it is like dying OK God here's your man and he is a mess because he did not listen to other men when it came to You but I tried to find the Love and the Truth and all I had was the Search that is all well maybe I will know soon... maybe not... no reason I can't make it I am quitting I am a dying pessimist dying before death... quitting giving up. I'm not done I can make it it is not too hard the edge is just over there Jesus, Jesus, blood tastes queer... for God and country... and her and the letter, the letter blood tastes...

He stumbled and fell. His knees were in the water, his elbows in the mud. He raised his head and looked high through fog into the great grey everything.

Jesus! Jesus Christ! It hurts!... and then he screamed one word, one word to the fog, the world, the enemy, the universe, himself.

ANNE!

He screamed the word once, and he died. He died with his feet in the cold dead river, his carbine under him, his face in the mud.

And back where home was a girl learned of his death. The great sorrow, the great regret, found her, too; and her grief was beyond grief; and no man can describe the bottomless, blank, despairing feeling that is realization of loss beyond loss.
And the woman prepared herself to face a society that would condemn her now because of their Love and she would stand alone were it not for the many who understand and know of Love; but she was strength itself with that which they had shared.

She was glad now that she had written and told him of the result of their Love for now he had died knowing that he lived within her. And she felt within her the stir of Life, small, deep within her belly; the stir of Life that would someday understand, and love, and search for Truth and Love and Completeness as they had done; and society and degradation and the blindness of men could never touch them because of what they would be and what he had given them.

And she looked out the window of her tiny room and her first tear shone at last and faded and became forever.

Why being afraid to be afraid
Do you draw away?
When I am searching for no one
There is always someone
Who finds me searching
And sadly looks away.

The sky is blue with bluebirds.
Don’t go! Don’t go!

You are drawing away again.
But I have just come from the garden,
The apples are red like blood,
And there is sweetness.

Now you are close enough to touch.
Are you no longer afraid?
But the wind is sobbing!
The apples are bleeding!
And I am afraid
I am afraid!

... Lola DeLong
Speech from My Several Mouths
On Opening Day
To an Imaginary English Class . . .

For Richard

Blackboards are no better
Than hieroglyphs of love
On toilet walls; song is
And is internal. This chalk
Excretes our common lot
And the error of collected loss;
Wisdom is a solitary thing
And is made within like music.

Like music your soft blood
Flows warm within, and moves
In harmonies of red and blue;
Beauty is forever in the cell,
And changing, makes feeling.

Makes feeling felt, and so
We are concerned with feeling
Which is song. Books will
Say your senses are for song;
Deaf to the felt mancrazed
Lisp of lies, some part
Of you will sing somehow.

Sing somehow, you orphans.
Beyond my failing mouths,
Books, chalk, and all charted,
There are pigments and rhymes
For every hour, every bird
That flies, and sighing within,
They murmur of our lives.
I will help you find them,
And will, barring my several mouths,
Share the loneliness they own.

... John Murphy
Why did she send another note home? Now they'll be mad again. The last time they made me join the boy scouts—said it would teach me how to get along with people. It's not that. I tried to tell them, but they didn't understand—wouldn't even listen, in fact. I like people—I like to watch them and try to figure out what they'll do next. It's like being at the movies and watching actors in a story, but more exciting because it's real. And you can find out what you like or don't like about people—and it helps you know how to be. I like to listen to them, too. Sometimes they say funny things and make you laugh. Sometimes they tell you something you didn't know before. But whatever they say it's theirs—and it tells you something about them. Anyway it's fun just sitting back and looking on—being only eyes and ears—more fun than trying to think of something to do or say and knowing you can't. I never could. I've tried but I guess not hard enough. Others don't seem to have trouble—it's almost natural with them. Why is it so hard for me? I want to be able to get along with people—if that's what it's called—so Mom and Dad won't be mad. I wanted to like the boy scouts, too—thinking they knew what was best and believing it was me that was wrong. I camped and played games trying to like it—but I couldn't. There was always something—like when we played baseball. The kids were more interested in winning than anything else. Some of them even pushed the others around and told them what to do—Billy, especially. He always had to be captain and pitch. And if he threw the ball too high, it was always somebody else's fault for not catching it. Nobody really liked him. I didn't when he kept telling me to chatter. I didn't tell him not to—and the noise bothered me. There didn't seem to be any sense in it. I guess it was supposed to make the other side nervous and build ours up. It seemed a waste of time though. The only ones that got riled up were those who were already nervous. And it only helped those on our team who were already confident—I guess that's the word I want, anyway I know what I mean. It's kinda like false courage because it leaves as soon as you meet a team better than yours. For me the best thing is to practice until I know I can throw, bat, and catch good. Then this knowing—coming from lots of playing—will get me through the game. And nobody can take it away, because nobody gave it to me. I made it myself and only I can destroy it—through neglect—I don't like baseball anymore—or the boy scouts. I'm just not interested. People have different interests—they can't all like the same things. And it seems a good thing too. Otherwise everyone would want to be doctors or engineers or something else and nobody would want to be teachers or secretaries. Someone has to teach and type up papers though. But they couldn't be very happy if they didn't like their jobs. And it doesn't seem right to spend your life doing something you don't like and being unhappy. Then why is
there something wrong because I don’t like baseball and the boy scouts? At least Miss Steward thinks there is—and she made Mom and Dad think so. She told them I was moody too. I’m not—anyway I don’t think I am. But I like wondering about things. It’s fun. I do it mostly when I’m fishing. Lots of times it’s more fun than catching fish. And I discover new things—well, new to me. It’s funny how you can get a different slant on things that way. Like the time I saw two squirrels playing together—having fun chasing each other up and down a tree and through the grass. One of them bit the other, but they were back playing in a little while—and I knew they forgot easy. I realized then for the first time that squirrels don’t have wars and kill each other. And I wished I was a squirrel. But as I watched I saw them spend most of their time looking for food—and I worried whether they would have a warm place to live in the winter. They didn’t have time to wonder (maybe dream)—like I did. And they didn’t do things for the fun of doing them—or for the feeling of knowing you can. They couldn’t be very happy! And I was glad I wasn’t a squirrel.—I’m happy. I don’t know how I can tell except I feel quiet. I like everybody, and everything seems so pretty—like sunshine and blue sky and green—especially faces, even when they’re not smiling. This hill always makes me feel this way. I’m glad I came. It’s so high and I can see so much and so far—the tops of trees barely hiding the houses beneath, further back the town with it’s tall buildings, and above it all the dying sky. It makes me seem small in size but big in seeing.

I better get home now.

* * * * *

“I’m getting tired of getting notes about Dick. When are you going to do something about him? He’s going to have to learn sometime he can’t do as he pleases all his life. It’s about time he realizes there are other things in this world besides himself. Why can’t he be like Johnnie?”

I Am Alone . . .

In a world of knowing
winks
And little jokes and
pastimes
Made for two
I am alone!

. . . Shirley Havice

21
tall men...

my tall men number far past four
upon nothing they close the
doors of absurd absolutes
or preposterous faith
even these doors they will not close
upon closers

my tall men do not claim the ultimate
or say
yea surely this is true
for he has said it was so

he (whos tall men number only four)
said unto me
i hate all those men
because of what they have done to you
(o bleeding heart)

he (whos tall men number only four)
and claim the only one)
wished to save me
to convert me
from my prodigality

why (he asked) don't you come back and live with us

i sleep under the same roof as you
every night of the week
day of the year

yes
but you do not live with us
you go off to your tall men
you do not go with us unto the church weekly
as you once did
you live with the tall men
not us

he hated the tall men
yet he bought volume upon volume
of their works
and sat and stared at the closed covers

one night he came to me
and asked to visit them with me
we listened to their souls flow out
and looked upon their creations
and read their thoughts

yet he could not understand
he asked me to explain the souls
of the tall men
and i
i tried in one dimension to explain the soul
of great artists
he could not understand them because
he knew only his four tall men
and shut his mind to others
and came no more to us

he sat and looked at the volumes
he had purchased
and would not open
would not know

he hated my tall men

... Max Steele

Ghost Story...

Haunted, haunted, my house of bone,
Cluttered with your absence.
The not of you is memory,
Marking your unpresence.

Clouds and vapors shaped like you
Flood the airy moment.
Separation must be sensed;
My skin is drowned in torment.

Dream awake or dream asleep,
The nightmare is perception.
Desire sees but cannot gap
The hole that is the ocean.

... John Murphy
The Dreamflower . . .

by Dick Embs

There was no doubt that it was an animal. He watched the huge, indescribable thing lumber awkwardly across the plain. At first he tried to look away and ignore it, but his inherent disgust and loathing of the animal forced his attention back. From his point of view, the creature was a horrible anomaly of nature, a thing to be shunned and despised.

Suddenly it turned, flashing in the sun, and began moving in his direction. Panic seized him, and his whole body stiffened with terror as he watched the thing approach.

No! Go away! he shouted at the monster. Stop! Leave me alone!

It was now towering over him. He quailed before its immensity, and would have turned and fled, had he possessed the power of motion. Instead, he could only remain in helpless horror while the thing remorselessly extracted him from his lifelong position.

I hate you! he screamed as it lifted him into the air. I'll kill you, you hideous beast!

* * * * *

Mars can be a very dull place.

Ruby stared idly through the little mica window at the Martian landscape beyond. Three weeks ago, the beautiful, fantastic colors of the sky and sand would have thrilled her deeply, but now she scarcely noticed them. Twenty-one days of living in a small pressurized hut in the middle of nowhere had dulled her enjoyment of life.

Her husband, John, was away most of the time collecting various specimens of Martian plant life. Ruby spent the days either dreaming of the distant Earth with all its pleasures and memories, or attempting to drown her loneliness in household chores. Although she still loved her husband, she cursed his work in botany, and even wished that space travel, despite all its benefits for mankind, had never been developed.

A buzz from the airlock startled her. John must be back already, she thought, stepping languorously to the door.

John stumbled through in his bulky survival suit, carrying a large plant of some kind. Ruby shivered briefly from his coldness, and then, sighing, helped him to remove the suit, which was already dripping from condensed moisture. He began speaking as soon as his helmet was off.

“Do you see what I’ve got?” he blurted.

“What’s that?” she asked softly, glancing at the plant in his hands. It looked like a shabby, uprooted cornstalk with very thick, green leaves.

“Don’t you know? Honey, this is a dreamflower,” he replied, making a gesture which showered her with droplets of water.

“A . . . a what?”

“A dreamflower,” he repeated. “It’s a native plant, very rare, and
I was extremely lucky to find it. They sell for a hell of a lot back on Earth!"

"Ah? A lot of money? Lots?" Her voice broke in astonishment. "Imagine what they'll say back at the institute," he said proudly. She looked at the plant in awe. Earth seemed very close to her now.

Hatred burned in his body like acid. He tried to control his disgust just long enough to decide on his next course of action, which he hoped would rid him of the animals—there were two of them now. Filthy, horrible creatures! They were almost pitiful; never at rest, they moved here and there and back again, always unable to find peace, hurry-scurry, never pausing to reflect and improve the soul.

He was not concerned with the new environment they had plunged him into; his body was very adaptive. But it was obvious that they intended to use him as food.

Therefore, knowing full well the shortcomings of animals, he evolved a plan of murder. It was simple. First, he would charm them into submission by growing flowers, and after they were helpless, he would kill them. But there was little time. He must act quickly.

It would be best to work at night, for the animals seemed to subside at that time.

"John, come in here—quickly!"

Ruby stood very still in the middle of the room. She was wearing a nightgown, and her hair, still uncombed, hung loosely upon her shoulders. Her bare feet ignored the icy tile. She was oblivious to everything but the dreamflower, which stood in its pot, lighted by the bleak Martian dawn.

It was in full bloom.

Huge, pendulous blossoms covered half the plant. They were a deep, royal purple in color, and resembled clusters of orchids, with incredibly smooth petals surrounding long, delicate stamen. Eyes wide, Ruby walked forward and brushed her fingertips across the cool flowers. Their heady, exotic perfume filled her nostrils.

"You need me, honey?" John called from the bedroom.

"Look at the flowers," she said in wonder.

He appeared beside her. "You know, it's damn strange for a Martian plant to grow flowers. There aren't any insects here for them to attract."

"And they grew overnight," she murmured.

He shrugged. "You never know what you'll find next on this cockeyed planet."

She hugged herself for warmth. "Oh, by the way, what'll we do with the money we get for the plant?"

"Well, I could use it for my research here."

"No! I mean, don't..." She sighed and began again. "Why don't we go on a vacation or something? It'd be awfully nice to get back to Earth for a change."

He laughed and clapped her on the shoulder. "Oh, come on now,
honey, what’s wrong with Mars? Clean air, no disease, low gravity, etcetera.” Then he grew serious. “Ruby, my work here is important, both to the institute and ourselves, and I just can’t go running off now. Maybe we can visit Earth next month. Okay?”

“But—” she began, and let her voice trail off. His words seemed to batter her into submission, and she could only nod her head timidly.

He forgot the subject at once. “Better not pick any of these flowers, honey. The plant can’t bear fruit without them.”

“Bear fruit?”

“Dream-apples,” he told her.

* * * * *

His plan was working perfectly.

The animals respected and admired him now. He was sure of that, although his only proof was the fact that they had not hurt him yet. Anyhow, the final task was at hand.

Through some imponderable process, his body began to synthesize several kinds of lethal nerve poisons. He stored these in his roots with great care until his blossoms became ripened fruit, and then gave each a heavy dose of the poison. This was very hard to do, for he did not know how much poison was sufficient, while too much would shrivel the fruit.

But he knew one thing for sure: when the animals dared to eat the products of his labors, they would die quickly, and in agony. A wave of sadistic glee welled up in him. He could hardly wait.

* * * * *

It was very early in the morning. Ruby closed the bedroom door softly behind her and tiptoed into the living room. The light was dim, and she could barely see the dreamflower in its place by the window.

A slight feeling of guilt nagged at the back of her mind. She paused and held her breath, listening nervously to the semi-darkness and hearing nothing but the distant whisper of a vagrant Martian breeze. There’s nothing to worry about, she told herself. John’s safely in bed and I can see if the dream-apples are coming out yet.

Her hand found a light switch and snapped it on. She squinted through the sudden brilliance and gasped at the sight before her.

The dreamflower was covered by a dozen, bright red spheres that hung from its limbs like big drops of blood. Ruby trembled in amazement and her heart seemed to fill the room with its pounding. She found it hard to accept the fact that a plant could bear fruit overnight.

Still trembling, she stepped forward and examined the alien thing. Its fruit looked exactly like cherries to her, except for the size, which was the same as that of an average crabapple. She grasped one to feel its texture, and it fell easily into her hand, as if it were meant to be plucked.

Temptation overrode her fear. She brought the scarlet dreamapple to her lips and took a bite. After that, she took another bite, deeper this time. When the whole thing was gone, she took another one. And then another.

“Wowee!”
Ruby whirled around and flung her arms toward the ceiling. An ecstatic sense of power and freedom had seized her, and she felt herself grow to tremendous heights, until she was larger than Mars itself. Her hands could crush the little red planet like a biscuit, if she chose. Well, almost. No, not quite; she’d need some more power.

Whirling again, she plucked another dream-apple and shoved it into her mouth. Its pink juice dribbled down her chin and onto the bosom of her nightgown, but she hardly noticed it. She kicked off her slippers and pirouetted barefoot on the cold floor.

John walked into the room, making sleepy, grumbling noises. He stopped dead in his tracks when he saw her. Ruby stood on her toes, flung her arms upward again, and shouted, ‘Look at me, Johnny! I’m a nymph!’

“Oh, My God,” he mumbled.

She clasped her hands petulantly. “Well, I couldn’t sleep, and I got so bored lying there in bed and I wanted to try out a dream-apple, even if you told me not to. They won’t kill me, will they?”

“They won’t do anything but make a souse out of you. Now come on back to bed.”

“No!” She stamped her foot and glowered at him. “I won’t go until you promise to take me back to Earth. I haven’t been there for months.”

“We’ve been through that before,” he said, grabbing her arm.

“To hell with your botany!” she screamed at him. “We’re going to sell the dreamflower and use the money for rocket fare to Earth. I’m sick of this rotten planet!”

“Are you coming or aren’t you?”

She wrenched herself free and skipped back a few steps. “I’m going to stand right here by the window, and I won’t budge, ever,” she said vehemently, “until you agree to take me to Earth.” Then, after a moment’s thought, “And I don’t care if some passer-by sees me. I’ll just take off my nightgown and wave it at him!”

He sighed wearily and regarded her defiant pose. “Okay,” he said crestfallen. “You win. I guess it’s about time we went home, anyway. Now will you come with me?”

Ruby stumbled weakly into his arms. The exhilaration had worn off, and a heavy, comfortable torpor had taken its place, pervading throughout her body. But she stopped suddenly as John was guiding her back to the bedroom.

“Just a minute,” she said. “Forgot to thank my benefactor.”

She turned and blew a kiss at the fruit-laden plant. “Oh, dreamflower, baby,” she said happily. “I love you!”

* * * * *

Triumph! An animal was dead at last!

He remembered with joy the events of the past hour. One of the animals, the smaller one, had eaten some of his fruit, and instantly began to feel the effects of the nerve poisons. It had spun around in circles and gesticulated wildly with its upper pair of limbs, as though it were in horrible pain. He had waited eagerly for it to drop
dead, but the other animal had appeared and taken the smaller one away.

Anyhow, the thing must have died in agony. He felt satisfied for the first time in days, and a stimulating sense of victory flowed gloriously through his body, causing his leaf-ends to tremble imperceptibly. After long hours of toil and planning, he had finally killed one of those filthy, disgusting beasts.

But a few bewildering questions began to mar his enjoyment. What were these animals and where had they come from? He had never seen anything like them. They were incredibly large and strong, and had the astonishing ability to change their appearance, which they had done so often that he could hardly tell them apart.

Like all animals, though, they were ugly and despicable. The familiar loathing and revulsion welled up in him again, and now he knew what his mission in life must be. He must grow more tempting, poisoned fruit for the animals to eat.

And he must kill again. And again.

Gamble...

Love is yet a question
Answers still are sought
Gamble!

Life is an alternative
Death is cheap when bought
Gamble!

Roll the dice
Draw your card
Embrace your crystal globe
Gamble!

Take the chance
It may last
So don contented robe
Gamble!

... Sherwood Snyder III
Son...

I found my son in a heap by the side of the road
His bones were broken and his blood was all around
The cars whizzed closely by me
Saying look out or you'll be next
And so I pulled my son away from them
He didn't mind, no he being there now
He changed shape from one mangled mass to another.

'Get home, there!' the voice said
Surprised, I lifted my head and ran from the voice
I ran to the house and scratched on the door
Until they let me in

'Where have you been, girl?'
This voice was warmer
The stove looked warm too.
I curled up and slept until dinner.

... James Bull

Winter Divorce...

Stars kiss their snowflake-twins
And the moon's artificial glow
Embraces all the earth.
    a couple clings together...
    the darkness fades
    the sun appears
    the moon recedes
    the stars twinkle in a different land
and

The couple drifts apart.

... Karen Gemant
Forgotten Steps and Falling Snow...

by James Kahler

It was mid-winter and night with soft large snow flakes lazily drifting down to the ground. Big and luminous in the light of the street lamp they settled atop parked cars and buried the footprints of a hundred forgotten steps.

“What'll it be bub?”

“Scotch and Soda.” Funny that he can't remember what I drink. Every night I order the same thing, but he doesn't remember, he doesn't know anything but, 'what'll it be, bub?'

“Buy me a drink, honey.”

“What kind?”

“A scotch and soda would be nice.”

“Waiter, another scotch and soda.”

“You’re nice, ya know that.”

“I bought you a drink.”

“I know it. She took on a stupid, hurt look. I've been watching you lately. Every night you come in here and drink all by yourself.”

“I like it that way.”

“Where are your friends?”

“Some are married some are dead.”

“Dead?”

“There was a war.”

“Oh.”

They both took a drink.

Every night you try and forget, drinking yourself into a stupor and then some wide-eyed bitch tries to drag it back up again. Sometimes you're successful and forget what you're trying to forget, but it never lasts. Sometimes it's a girl in a crowd that for an instant looks like her and your heart pounds and you begin thinking of that long happy time when she was yours and you knew it. But then the damn war came and almost from its beginning your dream of becoming something great and having your only love for your very own, began to die. It began to turn brown and curl up at the edges like a piece of white paper thrown on a fire and it didn't take very long to burn.

“Why weren't you killed?”

“I've got rotten luck.”

“You're awfully bitter.”

“Yeah.”

But she was so damn beautiful and she understood you better than anybody ever had. They told you people never had trouble having babies anymore and you were five thousand miles away. And when you come back it was to two little bumps of dirt and a couple of pretty inscriptions that turned your stomach so that you never went back again.

30
"My name's Mabel, what's yours?"
"Harry."
Harry caught the waiter's eye and held up two fingers.
"Where do you get all your money, Harry?"
"Why?"
"I mean it costs money to drink like you do."
"I've got a rich uncle."
"Oh that's nice what's his name?"
"Sam."
"Gee, I've got an uncle named Sam, he's a contractor, you know builds houses. Ha ha."
"Mine's in government."
Harry finished his drink and ordered two more.
"Did you ever do anything before—"
"Before I started living off my uncle."
"I didn't mean to—"
"Yeah I used to be a writer before the war."
"What happened after the war?"
"I started drinking."
"Why?"
"I don't know," he said, "There's just nothing else."
"Don't you do anything, now?"
"I try damn hard to forget and you're not helping any." He had said it hard with an ugly twist to his face and it scared her.
"I'm sorry, Harry I . . . guess I . . . better go now."
It had stopped snowing when he stepped on to the street and everything was covered under a blanket of snow. He walked under the street lamp leaving a crooked trail of footsteps and disappeared into the great nothingness called night. It started snowing again.

Pour Attendre . . .

Sous la neige la douce fleur,
Sans danger ru froid de l'hiver,
Se blottit, comme fait mon coeur,
    Contre la terre.
Avec allegresse, j'ai concu
Mon attente, finie toujours,
Cor printemps, pour moi, est venu
    Avec Amour

    . . . Diane Peacock
Modern Christmas . . .

A snow bird in a leafless tree
Noticed me as I walked below
For his song changed.
No longer the joy of birth
And the gift of the hour
Invaded the earth as a shining star.
Barren white with artificial glitter
Flooded holy night into man's day.

And still the bird sang on
In a false note the carol of goodwill.

Now a red man stops me
And his twinkling eyes betray no calm
While children tug at the coat
Of their why.

I walk away with the echo of
The bird's song still in my ears.

... Lola DeLong

The Lover as a Tree in Autumn . . .

Now that loss has become all probability
And ruin the burden of our grief,
I stand in decline like any autumn tree
To offer you the substance of a leaf.

Leaves mean that we are mortal;
All things must fail some way in breath.
My gift is a visible portrayal.
This leaf contains our current death.

Accept this leaf as I accept your smile;
Let both assume some secret shape of pain.
Know that leaves begin anew as flowers
To know that ruins may grow in love again.

... John Murphy
neversaint tom orrow . . .

finality embelishes
begin of doctrine

for we
it seems to them
must put our hands
into the wound
and even then we
it seems to them
will not realize which
it seems to them
is finality

which way did curiosity go
over the sleepy guarded walls
to see if the fire
still burns

. . . Max Steele

Opinion . . .

I like everything:
A snakey eye, a hornet's sting,
The sound of locusts on the fly,
Stampeding hippopotami.

Oh, I like everything, it's true
But I especially like you;
I never know what to expect
Or what new things you will dissect.

And curious as I am, too,
I'll no doubt end up killing you
For since I like all things in life
I like this highly-sharpened knife;
Though you may not know it, dear,
Your death is oh so very near.

You lucky soul! (To have, in me,
An understanding entity);

These everythings I like so well
Have brought to me a note of hell
And going there, as sure you must,
Don't forget . . . I like dust.

. . . James Bull
miss quested...

damn people
sing goddamn to them all
i have been tricked
i sought an answer and now find
there is none

he has his rock and wild swan
he has his god almighty

and he
he has his rats

and now
and now i have nothing
for the sake of organization
i have nothing

damn them all anyway

i will pull this death white blanket
of sno fluries
over me
and commit suicide
once more

... Max Steele

Evening...

Purple
And lilac time,
The depth of a pool,
The twilight!
Yes, this, but more—
Purple
And flight,
Inspiration,
Pain!
Purple
And oblivion.

... Lola DeLong
The day-room was motionless and still, like a cake that was waiting to be eaten. A light burned dimly, a light not meant to illuminate but placed there merely because rooms were supposed to have lights. A history of the past decade was present in the Time magazines lying coverless on the floor. A few chairs and a chrome-clad studio couch, new enough in period to be modern, but in such bad physical condition to be called junk, were planted around the floor like the instruments on an offbrand dashboard.

The screen door flapped and a soldier entered. His hat was blocked in the style of the regiment and the tailored uniform smacked of regular army. He picked up one of the Time magazines and started to read the predictions about the coming presidential election. Looked like "Ike" in a walk, he thought, better get some dough down. He threw down the magazine and lit a cigarette. He rolled the end around in his mouth and cupped it with his hand as he drew large mouthfuls of smoke into his lungs. He picked up the Time again. Better look like I'm not waiting too hard, he thought. No sense in being too obvious. This will be four paydays in a row I've cleaned 'em. Better let 'em wonder a little. What a batch of live ones in this camp ... and I thought I wasn't gonna like it here.

He thought back about the other times. Sgt. Snow, the fatalist, too nonchalant, too come-what-mayish. What the hell he don't even know when to stay. The original get-it-over-with-quick guy. Win or lose, one or the other, but get it over with quick, make it quick. Sgt. Davila, let me cut, they gotta be cut. Cut and then cut right back, what a jerk he is. He thinks cuttin' is all you gotta do to keep the game honest. Cpl. Fairey ... maybe he is ... the only thing he needs is a fifth of whiskey and an over-sexed blonde and he wouldn't have to lose his paycheck every month to prove he's one of the boys. And those damn twins—they're the ones I gotta watch. Send the money to ma, Jesus, let her work. I get tired of that "how about givin' me ten." If they want dough, let 'em keep some. Sure, lose a little, keep a little; I don't want all the dough they get.

"Hi, lucky!" It was Sgt. Snow.

The hustler looked at him like he had interrupted a very personal conversation. "Oh, whata ya say pal, I just thought I'd catch up on the news," he said.

"Gonna have a little game?" said the sergeant.

"O.K. with me," said the hustler. Funniest thing, he thought, bout like one of them young chicks on her first date with a soldier, they act unprepared and casual but they know all the time what's gonna happen. I bet his heart was poundin' all the way over here.

A helmet liner came sailing through the door. "I'll kick ya in the moon if ya ever do that again, even if ya are my own brother."
"Aw hell, Jim, I just said you drank a little."
"Yeh, but you know how that worried ma. She's liable to have an attack or somethin' if she thinks we're out here whorein' around."
"O.K., I'm sorry; I won't do it again, I never meant no harm."
Jesus, thought the hustler, the old lady probably had a bottle stashed all her life, probably that's why the old man left, couldn't go the booze rout. What a couple jerks.
"Where the hell's the fairy?" asked one of the twins. "We could have a little game if he'd show up."
"Probably over in the orderly room with his nose up the captain," said the other.
"Naw, I saw him at chow," said Sgt. Snow. "He said he'd be over as soon as he took his A's to the cleaners."
Time I get done with him he won't have no money to get 'em out, thought the hustler.
"Ever see this one?" asked one of the twins. "Pick a card; go ahead pick one." The hustler took one. After piling and counting and figuring to himself, the twin turned a card. "Six a dimonds, is that the one?"
The hustler felt mean. "Hell no," he said.
"Geez I musta miscounted," said the twin.
Yeh, miscounted, they miscounted when they passed out brains, thought the hustler, didn't have any left over when it came to him.
"Here's Fairy!" said Snow. "Deal 'em."
"Sure, deal 'em boys," said Fairey. "I'll win a pile and go to town and have a gay time."
They sat down to play after the usual relocating of the furniture. "Where's that cushion? Can't play without my lucky cushion," said Davila.
Lucky, huh, lucky to be livin', you stupid spick, thought the hustler.
They cut for deal. Sgt. Davila won. It was the one hand the hustler didn't mind losing nor did he have any control over it. Even the best have to touch the cards before they can control them.
"Same as last time? Two dollar limit, three raises, and the limit on an open pair or last card. Right?" said Davila.
He knows the damn rules anyway, thought the hustler.
Davila riffled the cards and put them down for the hustler to cut. The hustler waved him on. "Naw cut 'em," said Davila. "They gotta be. Then if I win nobody will have any kicks coming."
"Sure pal," said the hustler, and he was tempted to cut them one-handed. Cheat, huh, I'll do the cheatin', me and nobody else.
The game was five card draw and the hustler got a chance for an open end straight. "Pass," he said.
"Pass," said one of the twins.
"I'll crack it," said the other. "Two bits."
"Raise it two bits," said Snow.
"Out," said Fairey.
"Out," said Davila.
"I'll try you once," said the hustler.
“How many?” said Davila.
“One,” said the hustler.
“Can ya draw five?” asked the first twin, and he threw his hand in the discards.
The twin that opened said, “Give me one.”
Snow said, “One.”
“O.K., bet,” said Davila.
“One dollar,” said the twin.
“Make it two,” said Snow.
The hustler squeezed his cards looking at the jack he had when he drew. Then the ace he didn’t have came in and he smiled to himself. “Make it four,” he said without emotion.
“Geezus, what the hell you got? He don’t stay unless he’s got ’em,” said the twin. He glanced around the table trying to salvage some advice out of the eyes that glared at him. “Call,” he said and threw in three more dollar bills.
Snow ran off two bucks and then another two. “I didn’t get in here to call,” he said.
The hustler quickly threw in the last raise and he felt prepared to hate Snow if he won. He didn’t very often have the helpless feeling of wondering if the cards he held were good enough.
The twin grinned sickly and called.
Snow threw down an eight high straight. The hustler put down his ace high. The twin threw his cards into the pile in the middle of the table. They passed the cards to the hustler. It was his deal.
The cards felt warm and friendly now. They were things you could depend on. No jealous ace could get you in trouble. Not when he was your slave and these cards had no individual personalities to worry about. They were part of a regulation deck and these 52 were slaves in the hands of the hustler. Rat-tat-tat, like a machine gun he ran the cards into their respective slots. Deal ’em, win, deal ’em, win.
Two hours had gone by and so had Sgt. Snow. He was now kibitz- ing over the hustler’s shoulder. The hustler had lost four hands—one before Snow quit and three afterwards. It’s tough for even the best to operate with five cards and a nose in every hand.
This could very easily be the last hand, the money needed only a little centralization and the hustler would have it all; but Snow must go. The hustler was dealing rat-tat-tat. He hocked up a big mouthful, turned his head away from the table and spat right in Snow’s face. “Geez, I’m sorry pal,” he said. “I didn’t know you were sittin’ there.”
Snow left.
The hustler won the hand and all was over but the crying.
“Let me take fifty until next payday,” said the first twin.
“Me too,” said the second twin. “We were s’posed to send fifty apiece to the old lady.”
“That’s tough,” said the hustler.
“Come on, you got plenty,” said the twins. “The C.O. would hate to hear about these games. Ya know how he is about gamblin.’”
I knew those two hicks would cause trouble, cursed the hustler,
a letter to the captain from their old lady about not gettin' any money and he'd wonder why. I guess there'd be a coupla guys willin' to tell him, too. "I ain't givin' ya back no money, but I'll play ya one hand a draw for fifty against next month's pay. Deal? If you lose or if ya win you'll never play again with me, ok?"

"Yeh, yeh," chimed the twins.

"You deal," said the hustler shoving the deck to the first twin. He didn't want the cards to tempt him.

The twin dealt.

The hustler picked up aces over fours.

"How many?" said the twin.

The hustler threw away one ace, one four and a queen. "Three;" he said. The twin dealt him two aces and a four. The hustler laughed to himself, geezus, I can't even lose fair he thought. For the first time in his life the hustler cheated to lose. He palmed away two of the aces and stole two different cards off the discard pile.

A fist hit him alongside the head and he went off the chair, angry feet pumped into his ribs. Voices screamed, "Ya cheatin' bastard, no wonder ya been a winnin'."

And just before everything living passed him by, a small but clearer voice whispered to him from his dark place on the floor, "never give a sucker an even break."

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miles and miles runs the glaring white expanse of highway
miles and miles with no bend or turning
miles lined with palms and mangroves which cast no shadow
from a cloudless sky a fiery sun casts its merciless searing rays on a prison road gang sweating and tired on a prison road gang rejected world's children

... Pauline Hylkema
Clayt trudged heavily across the yard, bending low to shield his face from the stinging wind and hard, dry snow, and carrying a rifle under one arm while he rubbed his hands together frantically in an effort to keep the blood circulating in his already numbing fingers. It was unbearably cold. Almost too cold to snow.

How he had marveled at his grandfather's vivid description of the terrible winters in Minnesota. He would sit on the hearth and picture the huge, billowy drifts that could pile six feet up the wall of a cabin and trap a man, separating him for days from his own barn where livestock pawed the barren floors of their stalls for some hidden bit of hay. Clayt, himself, could remember winter days that were so bitter that even the snow seemed frozen fast in the sky. But the old man had seen seventy-one hard, cruel snows that began in October and continued steadily until mid-February. Sometimes the spring had come at the expected time, sending great rivers of melted snow and swirling slush down the slopes, across the plains for hundreds of miles to the Mississippi. But sometimes it was postponed by a final winter blast that threw high drifts against the cabin once more. The old man had said there was nothing worse for morale than a cold spell after the first February thaw. Made a man fit to go stomping around the house like a spooked billy-goat. Real "spirit-bustin'" days he had called them. And Clayt could see why.

He felt pretty low as he kicked open the shed door and hung up his rifle before entering the kitchen of the farmhouse.

"Was he . . . was he out there, Clayt? Did you see him? Did you see your Paw, Clayt?" Mrs. Mills stood by the table, wringing her hands nervously.

"No."

The young man shook his head and began brushing the snow from his boots.

As though a great sadness had been revealed to her, Mrs. Mills dropped her hands and stared first at the floor and then in the direction of the steamed window. She brought her eyes slowly back to her son, standing in the doorway, and looked unbelievingly at him. "But who was it then, Clayt?"

"Weren't nobody, Ma. Dogs agin." He moved to the stove where the burning wood sent sparks snapping up the stove-pipe. "Five, maybe six of 'em," he continued. "I got one. A gray bitch. A great, big, shaggy, gray bitch—goddam her stinkin’ hide!" He kicked his boots into a corner and started pulling violently at the buttons of his overcoat, mumbling something under his breath before going on. "Them filthy curs! Them nogood, thievin’ bastards! They got another calf—tore her wide open! Spilled her guts right there in the snow, an’ then never touched the meat! Worser’n wolves, by Jesus! Why, they’re jist killin’ to be killin’!" He peeled off his coat and tossed it into the corner with his boots.
In his shirt-sleeves, the young man appeared much slimmer. He was built well enough though, and had nice features—in spite of his stubby growth of sandy whiskers. His eyes were blue, a very deep blue and looked as though they should belong to a much older person—as though they had seen more than their share of the world’s tribulations.

Mrs. Mills walked to the window above the sink and looked wistfully into the coming darkness. “If only your Paw was here, Clayt. If only your Paw was here—he’d know what to do.”

“Oh dang it all, Ma. Don’t start harpin’ on that now! I kin take care of this thing by myself, and there ain’t no use frettin’ me about how Paw woulda done it cuz I got enough troubles as is! Where’s Mary Jane?” Clayt stalked into the next room to avoid hearing more laments from his mother.

“She ain’t got back from town yet,” she called after him. “Jules Macklem’s gonna fetch her home in his wagon. Says our buck board’s wheels ain’t big enough to make it through the drifts. Says his two horses can make it better’n any team in the county.” And then in a whisper, as if it were an important secret, “I say he’s fetchin’ your sister home on accounta he’s sweet on her.” She began making giddy little sounds and clapping her hands like a small child. “I know—your Paw was that way with me. Always goin’ out of his way when he was courtin’ me!” Suddenly her high-pitched voice became low and sad. “I do wish he was here now though, Clayt. I sure do wish he was with us.”

“Damnation!” Clayt thought to himself. He slumped into the huge, overstuffed chair by the fireplace.

At first Clayt’s mother had taken the death of her husband quite well. The shock and sorrow had passed with time, and she seemed to be herself again until, quite suddenly, she became obsessed with the idea that her husband was not dead—that he was just away and would be back soon. She had convinced herself of this and nothing could shake her belief. For more than ten years she had lived away from reality. She seemed to forget the night Clayt’s father died—the moaning, the wet bed clothes, the smell of sickness that reached into every corner of the dark room. But Clayt had remembered.

He was only eight when Thomas Mills had died; and, although he remembered little else of his father, Clayt could never forget that night, twelve years ago, when he stood terrified by the bed and looked at the still form under the blanket. He would remember too; because, from that night on, he and his mother and younger sister had been left to face some pretty hard times on the isolated, little midwestern farm.

The crops had never been plentiful, but the past season’s drought had hit the Mills’ farm harder, it seemed, than most of the other places in the area. Nothing could be marketed, and even their own pantry looked depressingly empty. Somehow, however, they had managed to get through the long winter well enough—only to be hit by a freak arctic blizzard that promised to delay spring for at least another couple of weeks; and, with their scant herd snowbound in
a long ravine a half-mile from the house, hopes for a coming season were also dimmed. The last bit of bad luck had occurred earlier in the week, shortly after the snow set in. A pack of wild dogs was roaming through the neighborhood, killing livestock—even boldly attacking a lone man.

Clayt took all these things hard. He cursed his luck and angered easily during those terrible months—the days of sitting while the snow piled higher, and the nights of waiting—waiting for another day to come and go. Waiting and listening—listening to the shrieking wind and crackling fire—listening to his mother bemoaning their fortune—listening to her carry on for hours about the tasks that were too much for Clayt—listening to her cry, then seeing her lapse into hours of staring silence only to begin babbling like a child—wondering where Clayt's father was—why hadn't he come home for supper? Where was he? He should have been home by dark. And shouldn't Clayt go looking for him?

And often times he had gone—gone looking into the treacherous night when his mother's raving grew too unbearable or when he just wanted to be away. He didn't know why he looked or what he was looking for, but he looked. Surely searching couldn't bring back his father. Or maybe—maybe, if his father was the man his mother thought him, he would come back alone—plodding triumphantly through the snow-filled ditches, stomping magnificently through the door into the kitchen to his sick wife. Clayt wished it would happen like that so he could leave his place forever.


His mother's voice drew Clayt's eyes from the fire, across the room to the window. Then, hearing Macklem's team in the yard outside, he got slowly up and went into the kitchen.

Mary Jane tittered happily as she and her escort stepped carefully from the wagon, through a huge drift, to the back door where they stopped. Then they were quiet and Clayt knew that damned idiot, Jules, was kissing Mary Jane. He felt sick every time he thought of that fat, greasy-looking blowhard touching his sister. Kissing was bad enough, but he knew they weren't always looking for eggs when they went into the barn, and he would have told his sister so if he weren't so embarrassed about the whole matter.

"Where's Jules goin' so fast?" he asked as Mary Jane opened the kitchen door.

She blushed, partly from the sudden warmth of the room and partly from hearing Jule's name mentioned. "He had to hurry and do chores at home. But he told me to say evenin' to Ma—er, you too, Clayt." And then quickly, "I'll fix some supper now. Will you build up the fire, Clayt?" She cut short her brother's piercing glance and began rushing about, banging pots and pans and talking idly about a dress she had seen in the window and about what Jules said concerning the weather.

Mary Jane was a pretty girl, short and slender with her brother's
blue eyes and sandy hair; and her cheeks dimpled when she smiled, which was generally when Jules was around. Clayt could never figure out what it was his sister saw in Jules Macklem. He had never liked the man, and Mary Jane sensed it from the beginning. The meal was eaten without conversation.

That night, as he lay in bed listening to the cold stillness outside, Clayt was momentarily relieved at the faraway howling of dogs. It was easier to think about this kind of thing. It felt good to be able to forget his secret family problems for awhile. A man hadn't ought to get weighted down too much by one thing. Yes, tomorrow he would be busy. Tomorrow there were the dogs.

Gradually the wind came up and snow began sifting through tiny cracks in the attic roof onto Clayt's bedding. Somewhere in the distance, a hungry animal bayed mournfully, and the herd shifted uneasily into a tighter huddle.

* * * * *

Clayt rose much earlier than usual. It would still be dark for two hours, but he wanted to leave before his mother was up. She was always worse in the morning—crying and wandering about from room to room, peering under beds and into closets. He just couldn't stand it day after day. A man's got his breaking point. Sometimes he just plain runs out of patience. Clayt felt all the tensions and anger welled up inside himself. Each day they throbbed more and more, trying to pry open his tight lips, and upset the whole household. He knew he had to let off steam—kind of ease the pressure. Maybe, he thought, he could even scream good and loud and long when he got far enough away from the house, from Ma and Mary Jane. That always helped. He stole silently down the ladder to the room below.

The house was cold and quiet. Square patches of gray revealed snow-caked windows that hid a white world from view. The kitchen floor made his feet ache with cold, and he went quickly to the stove where his boots and heavy stockings had been placed to dry. The stove gave off a slight glow where one last chunk of wood lay burning feebly in the great bed of ashes. Carefully he lifted the lid and shoved a few small sticks of kindling wood into the center of the tiny flame. He waited until the faint crackling grew louder and then proceeded to fill the belly of the stove with larger pieces. When he was satisfied with the result, he finished dressing, laced his boots and stood for several moments warming his whole body and listening for a sound from the quiet fields outside. Faintly, at first, then much louder and nearer, came the unmistakable wail of a dog from across the Mills' property.

He buttoned the heavy coat, took his cap and gloves from the hook behind the stove and opened the door leading to the shed. A footstep sounded behind him; and, startled, he turned to see a shadow move toward him from the far side of the kitchen.

"Where you off to, son?"

He felt the hysterical eyes searching for his face, the frail body, clothed in a night gown as it shuddered in the open doorway.
“Where you off to, Clayt?” Her voice trembled and she moved closer to the door.

“T’m goin’ out, Ma. Maybe get me another bitch. Heerd ’em last night and again jist now.” He twisted the doorknob nervously for a brief moment and then spoke again to the small figure in front of him. “You ought’n be standin’ in this draft, Ma. You’ll take cold. Now you git yourself back to bed—it’s early yet. I’ll be back before afternoon.”

“Clayt! Oh, Clayt! Fetch your Paw home, will you please? Please, son! He’s out there for sure! I know he is! I heard him during the night callin’! He was callin’ us, Clayt—callin’ all our names—yours an’ Mary Jane’s—all of us!” She was heaving breathlessly and rocking to and fro as she spoke. “Clayt, oh, son! He’s comin’ home at last—your Paw’s comin’ home.” Then, as if she had been thinking aloud, she changed her tone and spoke incoherently about fixing hot soup for Clayt’s father and getting some dry stockings ready because his feet would be wet and cold—and chattering lightly about how pleased Mary Jane would be—and scolding—telling her son to hurry along.

He led the pitiful little woman to her bedroom, placed her under the covers and listened as the broken snores already sounded in the room. Sometimes he envied the ability of his sick mother to fall so rapidly into a deep sleep.

The buildings around the farmhouse were black against the vast stretch of snow, broken here and there only by fences and lone trees. Passing between the tool shed and chicken coop, he headed for the narrow trail that wound three miles across the Mills’ place to the Macklem farm. Jules always traveled the same route when he called on Mary Jane.

The snow had failed to cover completely wagon tracks during the night, and Clayt could easily follow their ruts as they zig-zagged across snowy plane toward the ravine where they would cut sharply to the right and go on to the Macklem place. Midway between the ravine and the farmhouse Clayt stopped.

Four, five, six. Six sets of dog tracks led from the left side of the trail and fell in behind the wheel ruts. He gripped his rifle tightly and peered vainly into the white darkness ahead. He hesitated for several minutes, wondering if it wouldn’t be better to wait for daylight before continuing. He looked back and saw a light in the kitchen window, glanced once more at the dog tracks, and went on. A hundred yards further he again stopped, staring horrified at the trail before him.

How could he tell her? How could he explain to Mary Jane the way he had stood and stared at the snow around the wagon—spattered with gore, with the blood of a mangled man? How could he paint anything gentle or consoling into that scene? The horses, hamstrung and stiff where they had dropped. The look of terror on a dead man’s face—a face ripped by savage fangs until the cheek bones were bared of flesh—a face he hadn’t liked but could do nothing but pity as it lay watching, unseeing, in the gray light. The lips,
bloated and parted wide—the lips that he had sent desperate, agonizing pleas—heard, mistaken and unheeded into the night. His head ached and his knees felt wobbly as a terrible nausea crept into his stomach. High over his head, a great, white snow-owl glided silently, looking down with unblinking eye upon the dark objects below.

For several moments, Clayt stood trembling in the frosty air—unable to draw his eyes from the gruesome sight. He waited—as though the whole terrible thing might disappear. The rifle dropped from his hand, and he just stared dumbly at the print it made in the crusted snow. He passed a mittened hand across his dry, cracked lips and turned toward the house. Without thinking he began to move—machine-like. Back along the trail, across the yard and into the kitchen.

Pale and helpless, he stood in the doorway, looking dully at the tear-streaked face.

"Where is she, Clayt? Where's Ma? Didn't you see her? You got to find her! Clayt, she’s gone lookin’ for Paw and her eyes, Clayt! Her eyes—they was awful—just awful!!" She shook him roughly, screaming his name between each sob.

Slowly, his eyes lost their haziness. He became aware of the bright room and the frightened girl standing in front of him. Turning he staggered stiffly back through the kitchen door to the open doorway leading out of the shed. "No!" he whispered hoarsely. Then gradually louder until his wild screams were filling the air. "NO! NO! NO!"

A tall, barren tree stood against the gray dawn. One last flake of snow drifted lazily past the young man’s uplifted face, and a faint breath of warmth came out of the southwest and touched his brow. The horizon cast a red hue over the country side, and along the eaves, small droplets of water formed and sent hundreds of miniature cascades down the side of the building.

He followed the tiny footprints with his eyes. Out, across the fields toward the ravine where he lost them from view in the dazzling whiteness of sun on snow. Where he looked and could not see, he heard—the hideous, piercing sound. Then—silence. Shadows formed, lengthened and faded, undisturbed by the day that had borne them.
In the Coffee Grounds...

Aye, We've wandered,
My shade and I,
From the bogs and valleys,
To the scudded sky.

And we'll go together,
And when I'm wed,
He'll live with us
Till the day I'm dead.

Then he'll break the fetters
From this hank of hair,
And soar eternally
Above the air.

And then, this bag
Of dispirited clay,
Cloaked, in wood
Shall ever lay.

Beneath the bog.

... Gavin Alexander

Request...

Let me come to you
I offer more to you than others
Their promises are hollow meanderings of hope.

You can't help but like me
You think of me as part of you.

Shall I come to you forever then, dying one?
I speak of your body
The soul is yours.

... James Bull
Zuruckkehrende Winde...

Die warmen Winde regten sich wieder
Aber es gab keine Bäume in Garten
Oder in den Parks von München wo einmal
Sie mit Blättern und Kindern spielten.

Die Winde bliesen durch den Rhein
Und die Weinberge vom Mosel Tal,
Aber sie fanden nichts,
Nichts als das kühle Wasser des Flusses.

Die Winde bliesen über das Land,
Durch jedes Dorfchen und jede Stadt,
Durch jede Kirche und das
Alte zerstörte Rathaus.

Dann weinten die Winde in Verzweiflung,
Wo die Leute waren?
Aber dustere Lippen, in Stadtkellern
Und Grabern in den Felden, sparchen nichts.

Es schien, dass die Welt eine Wüste geworden wäre
Und der Frühling nimmer ankommen werde.

... James Keats

Frogs sang in the moonlight.
The breeze stirred and
Apple blossom breath floated
Over the one who walked there
Listening to the frog songs
Of the sunrise
And the sunset,
Of green moss
And the dust.
Looking up she saw the stars.
She winked at them while
The breeze blew apple blossom breath.

... Lola DeLong
The Crazy Old Man Upstairs ...

by John Provancher

The psychiatrist was asking Mrs. Sara Downsby, owner of the apartment house, why she thought the old man was crazy.  
"Well, sir," she replied shyly, "he talks to people who just ain't there."

"Can you give me an example?"

"Oh, yes, sir. Like the other day I went upstairs to ask him if he wanted anything from the store. Well, he had his door open and he was mumbling to someone named Madeline and looking straight at that old, broken-down chair he has. But, like I say, sir, there wasn't nobody sittin' in the chair."

"Is he upstairs now?"

"I think so, sir."

"What is the number, please?"

"It's number nine, sir."

"Thank you."

The psychiatrist started to climb the stairs when Mrs. Downsby warned, "Be careful, sir. There's no telling what that crazy old man might do."

Upon reaching the landing, the psychiatrist saw that the door to number nine was slightly ajar. Cautiously, he strode towards the door, and, upon reaching it, peeked in. The old man in the room was directing his conversation to the chair. But Mrs. Downsby was right, no one was occupying the chair.

"So you loved me, Madeline. Yet, in the same breath, you said that you couldn’t understand me. Is love possible without understanding? No, my dear, only one facet of love, sex, is possible without understanding.

Through the years philosophers have speculated, ‘What is love?’ Well, is it not sex, compatibility, ego glorification, and a vast, uncontrollable amount of fear? We love because we fear the maddening effects of loneliness. Fear, then equals love and hate. And the degree to which we love is directly dependent upon environment and heredity.

And you, Roseanne—you and your principles of right and wrong. We are taught from birth principles of right and wrong. And yet, we later learn that right and wrong are determined by what we learn and are relative to our desire to be accepted by our particular culture or society. There is no right and wrong in nature—there is only self-preservation, propagation of the species and survival of the fittest.

Life has too many paradoxes.

And, further, Roseanne, we are taught to abide by these principles and love one another. But how can we love one another when we cannot understand one another—this being the result of not being born or trained equally?

Yes, Madeline and Roseanne, these are only a few of the important
questions you must answer to get real meaning out of life. I have been asking these questions and neither of you could realize their meaning, this is why you could not understand me.”

The psychiatrist listened intently, but the old man spoke not again. Then, hesitatingly, he moved away from the door, walked towards the landing and moved slowly down the steps.

At the bottom he encountered the inquisitive Mrs. Downsby. “Well, where is he?”

“He isn’t coming, Mrs. Downsby.”

“Why not? He’s crazy, ain’t he?”

“No, Mrs. Downsby, he isn’t crazy. He’s an intellectual.”

“What’s an intel—whatever it is?”

“That’s an intelligent individual, Mrs. Downsby, who is called ‘crazy’ by ignorant human beings.”

Naturally, Mrs. Downsby was quite bewildered by the psychiatrist’s final words. And, by the time she finally comprehended what he had implied, he had passed through the door and was walking across the street.

Duet...

black bird spinning high in the sky
where it is cold and bleak and the air is rare
black bird with ebony wings
glints up above and heaven rings
with the slashing crashing of sinewy wings
black bird with a calloused heart
like a hard worked thumb becomes a part of the struggle to live to live
black bird swooping down to the ground
to the dust and the dirt the toil and the soil
black bird with a piercing scream
echoing through a fantasy dream
clinging stinging like the strike of a beam
black bird with a tortured mind
raging pleading seeking to find
a royal place to die to die

... Bryce Forester
The wicked days of witch’s glee
Are passed in misty memory,
And heros wail their empty calls
Down tired ages of empty halls
While these sad solomons of now
Preface their play with solemn bow
And beg their plot of hallowed earth
Before they prove their sometime worth.

Both in front and after time
Rise two peaks: each sublime
While in this trough of wretchedness
We tell ourselves, ’tis blessedness

We dreamed a dream one sunny day.
We dreamed and we were young and gay,
But now in later times we say,
“Wake up you sleeping beauty!
Go do your wicked duty!
Rise up from oft that couchy bed;
Go and make battle with your head
Upon that wall that yonder lies
Reaching its limits to the skies.”

But that was oh, so long ago,
Before the time the histories know,
For we have left our clean, cool caves
And gone in search of deep, dark graves.

... Philip Greco

smuggled out...

ha ha ha
you cant get me
sickle wielder

i committed suicide
to find out whats beyond
not to get away
from whats behind

... Max Steele
Emotions and the Drums...

Because the drums live in the walls, thicker than thoughts the shaking theme of sounds not really sound grows through, stains the walls, mumbles up the rusty sink, and softly gathers in the corners with a whispered, steady breath. Because everytime I hear them thumbling, they come and listen low for me; because everytime they play another day away, gone by, that one night’s drumming takes within myself a quicker place, I search the street for cliff-deep ears to throw the drum beats down, but find they cling to silence underneath my tongue and let the thoughts already dead go tumbling in their stead. It was because of his insanity—the crazy love he had for drums. He drummed that craziness about like seeds; one caught in me to be a thriving weed that must be talked out by its roots before one night becomes my everyday, and everyday is dark. In my room above the hotel bar the jukebox drum muffles in my very bed, my hearing turns to thought again, then I jump up to pound across the throbbing, veined linoleum and pounce the closet doors apart; I look inside and see once more huddled around my peeling coat the sound of drums, the sound of drums.

Walking down the dust dried street my feet repeat the name Emotions that they called him by. You heard him hunched above his drums, his hands a winding blur of dancing mice, and you forgot the clumsy way he shifted anxious arms and stumbled off alone to hide. You thought you saw a pain fanned fire creep up into his eyes and lighten wide, you called him pure Emotions, and you forget or rather reconciled his talk that broke in jolts to nine parts straining stutter one part bomb of word. (You hear him and recall the boy before he earned a well used set of drums, the boy called square who couldn’t talk or catch a ball, exploring the sound of wastebaskets with spinning spreading hands more feverish than good legs on a cripple, discovering a new language that brought with trace of fear a world you never knew you knew and twisted about your gut until his knuckles bled and close-nosed teacher bawled him out to
tears. Hearing him you see again Emotions playing after work and six o’clock each night on the empty stage, and the janitor finding him sometimes asleep between the sticks at dawn, and how he looked at you and me and saw something just a little more than only the two of us and said it on his drums.)

O Christ, I think so hard it almost hurts, that night it wasn’t really me.

That night. That night. The girl’s breasts turned slightly up at just the angle of her lightly tilted nose, and her walk was something underneath the thought you never really dared to think, and she was Ricki’s broad. The image then of Ricki appearing in distorted sections through the flaked glass window down the stairs of Packard’s Drugs. The sight of Ricki in now and dim in the thickening swirls of smoke (where we always met at eight to read the horny books and play the high-strung screeching juke and cover the ceiling up with dangling, wet end wrappers off the straws and joke about each other for a laugh), his changing face a platitude of wrath. An item in his voice beyond an honest bitterness, he roared above the castrate trumpet in the box; his broad had broke away, scared to bang so much I thought, and he recalled the tension thread of shocks she shivered underneath Emotion’s spell of drums, and how at times she touched her ear across his mouth.

Telling Ricki that Emotions only found with her the times when he could almost talk and she was never more than friend with him coaxed oaths that fell like empty heat when clouds are searched for rain. Sharp remarks that worried up my throat forsook their form, for they were words (my instinct might have known) that bred from feelings cut against my reign of disbelief, the run of life I thought I chose.

With change of tone I didn’t understand, my argument came to a close. Pensions to the code of unrestrained relief rushed up to fill the instant wedge of my spurred down dissent. I was gang again.

A plan not really thought by anyone of us, within the group grew high demanding active shape. Ricki’s fist hacked the air about until his own excitement turned him out, and the gang followed him, and I went with the gang.

(Remember that the gang meant more than friends, meant something noticed in the corner eye of those who stepped aside your path, meant your words were heard, meant something very close to life. Remember for the little good
it does, that you were young, that you
were young and didn't know.)

Before the auditorium’s slab-like door we paused
to turn black collars of our jackets up and
fire the cigarettes. The etch dull coals
shone on the whistling tails of smoke like
heads on snakes, and in the squirming muscle
of my throat, raw whiskey gnawed its fang.
Ricki pushed the door aside, and we slid in,
not walking hard, but loping slow and all relaxed,
and blood flowed down to limp loose hands to give
the feel of loss of weight. Emotions centered underneath
the one moist cloth of light, worked in a softly
broken roll, his yellow shock of hair tasseling in a hidden
wind above his arch of brow. His eyes intent and colored
faraway against a weaving pattern of his mind, he never saw
us as we covered the aisle past row and row of closed-clam
seats and came up on the stage. He never saw us
until the shape of Ricki cast dark upon the table
of his drums, and then his stare still reached
the back of the dim hall, and the rhythmic
rolls softer now shushed shushed. Sprung
Ricki’s knife blade side of hand down on the wrist.
The drums stopped. In a moment of quiet.
Eyes (blue ice, turning in an orbit out in space)
meeting up to Ricki’s, fastening there. Scared.
Defiant. Ricki yelling about the girl, his
brittle echoes breaking about out deep in
the auditorium. And I seeing the silent seats
a watching, crouching crowd. Ricki demanding an answer.
Emotions keeping up his eyes. And I knowing
the talk he wanted couldn’t come; his
only voice would be the sound of stutters.
And Ricki chopping vicious chips of words,
and Emotions holding still the eyes,
and Ricki halting short upon the balanced point
of violence, and the long menace of scrutiny,
and the long drag, and the long snarls of smoke from
the nose, and at last the quiet words spat through the lips:
I think maybe we better teach this boy a lesson.
Cigarettes flipped to the floor, were tapped by heels
like nervous hoofs. One went back to snap the light,
and for sharp seconds I stood among the couching
crooked shadows on the stage, seeing the reflected
bulb cradled in the curved mouths of all those empty
seats like so many teeth. The shadows rose.
A rush in sudden darkness knocked him off the chair.
One of us grabbed his arm, the other came to me:
we held them straight and wide apart. Ricki’s
hand whipped back and forth across his face. 
I felt small movements in his muscles like flutters caused 
by birds. Much I couldn't see, but I saw Ricki's fist 
poised apple-like above his head, just about to fall. 
It fell and hard, he hit him hard hard hard. 
Ricki's hands pranced in and out, and maddened 
by the steady silent stare, ripped into a grotesque 
rocking dance. Something either sweat or blood flecked 
to me its smell, and in the whirl of whacking sounds and 
belting fan of fists, I could not tell if specks were spots 
before my eyes or bits of blood from him. The stone 
hard knots rocked up and down and up and up again, 
and growing weary slowed, one more, the high 
gouged swing of under arc that caught him 
even there. He cried out once, his belly quirked 
into the stiffened lift that almost tore out from our 
grip. We let him drop, and limply he collapsed. 
We all fed flame to new-mouthed cigarets, 
We loped slow and loose down the stairs. 
We padded that easy way upon the long dark aisle 
past row and row of empty seats. 
We were almost half way to the door when 
we heard it. It started very low and soft as crisp leaves 
bobbing in a stream of air, but built up louder louder 
like the clap winged chatter of a pack of pigeons 
scattered. Emotions was playing his drums! 
In the dark we couldn't see him, 
but we could hear that shudder 
swelling louder and faster 
singing faster and harder 
and pounding into 
steady driving thunder 
that roared and howled 
and burst about us like 
a shattered hell of flailing hail that followed us up the aisle 
and through the door and all the way down the hall and 
out into the street. And then I heard it still, and hearing it 
thought he had a crazy love for drums, and hearing it wished 
then that I could be so mad, and hearing it wish now 
that I could talk that night's work out and down 
and rid my thoughts and sounds forever of the sound of drums. 

... Douglas Hodgman

57
The River...

Strong, muddy arms stretch to the sea,
Long, blackened arms, bulging with life,
Embracing a tree and tearing it free,
Life-laden arms stretch to the sea.

Clean, gentle arms stroking the land,
Quiet, graceful arms, weaving a mat,
Growing warmer each day, thin and grand,
Smooth, lovely arms stroking the land.

Dry, withered arms pleading with springs,
Brown, twisted arms cracking with plague,
Clawing in bed where a cricket sings,
Ugly, dead arms pleading with springs.

Tired, pale arms waiting at rest,
Bleak, weakened arms stiff with chill,
Thickening with crust and watching the west,
Still, hoary arms waiting at rest.

... L. A. Diebold

First Fall...

The radio whispers praise for their devotion,
But now they merely stare and nod.
Regret displaces any fond emotion.
The panel light becomes the eye of God.

She weeps for mother and thou shalt not.
He thinks of pigs he once saw on a farm.
Pigs are free because they cannot plot,
Nor do their kisses end in harm.

The homeward drive is taut as any race.
Sighs pound the windshield like the sea.
Time, who locked them in their first embrace,
Returns the damaged apple to the tree.

... John Murphy
Tony knew the muck bottom was on the other side of the sand dune. He began to climb and the dune was big and steep. His tennis shoes filled as he climbed and the sand shifted down on his feet and it irritated him. Then near the top with the sun and the dizziness and his whole body throbbing with pulse, he stopped and looked down at the beach and then at the water and he didn’t care about his shoes.

Then he was on the top, into some low scraggly vegetation and he tried to see back up the beach where he had come from. But his tracks were gone, swallowed up in the sand and he smiled. Twenty miles and it had been that easy. Then he was on the back slope going down and the sand was cool because of some pine trees. He stopped under a big pine tree, took his shirt off and kicked off his shoes and dropped heavily to the ground. He didn’t think about anything and he lay there his body still pulsepounding. He liked the feel of his throbbing wholebody; feeling of physical awareness of his life, his body on the ground and smelling the pine needles and being close to life.

An ant crawled rapidly over his arm and the pine needles were making their mark and he liked this feeling. He stretched comfortably and a light breeze from the water came in over the dune and dried his sweaty body. Then he felt a need for more comfort and he rolled up his shirt and put it under his head.

He lay that way a while, then he sat up and looked down the slope of the dune—down the slightly winding pine needled path and there was some yellow showing at the base—yellow of the onion weeders’ shacks which looked bright and clean from the sun and height. Then he looked up and the muck bottom stretched out big, heavyblack above the trees on the lower slope of the dune; and the onions, hair-like, showing, and he could see human forms on their knees along the rows and they didn’t move because of the distance.

Tony got up and put his tennis shoes on and started down the dune path. He trotted lightly downwinding; and he got closer and the yellow shacks lost their bright clean look and they were dirty. He stopped by a shack which had no screen door. It said office and Tony laughed silently as he looked at the shack and thought of the word. He looked inside and there was a table and chair and a bed with no mattress. There were flies and they flew around the room, but they liked the blanket which hung half open over the door of a little bathroom, which was empty. Tony stood at the doorway and the flies moved and the pieces of cloth which hung over the windows blew in and out and there was a crude smell in the air, but he liked it.

“What the hell do you want?”

Tony turned and the man was in back of him.
"I'm looking for a job."
The man moved superior toward Tony slowly, and his red shirt was dirty and his stomach was hanging; yet he moved superior. His eyes were yellow with some brown and there was matter in the corners and they looked expressionless.

"A job doing what?"
"Weeding."
"You're lying."
"No," said Tony. He laughed. "I'm here to weed onions." And then the sun had found him again and he began to sweat.

"I'm Kaminko, the foreman here; and I never hire people like you."

"What is the matter with me?" Tony held back the laugh.

The foreman began picking his nose with a broad dirty grained finger.

"You don't belong here on the muck bottom."
"I came twenty miles up the beach for a job."
"Who is after you?"
"Nobody, nothing," said Tony.
"If something is after you, twenty miles isn't enough."
"It's enough if you will give me a job." Tony's eyes showed his laugh.

"You won't be happy like that if you work here."
"I would try."

Kaminko turned and looked out over the muck "Everybody will hate you then."

"I'm not hard to get along with," said Tony.
"I am," said Kaminko. "But if you want a job, then you work on your knees like us."

"Sure."

I would like to see you on your knees," said Kaminko and his eyes tried for an expression, but there was none.

"You will if you give me a job," said Tony.
"Down on your knees and you are the same as the muck. You are nothing then," said Kaminko.

"I was nothing where I came from," said Tony.
"You're lying," said Kaminko, "because I saw you come over the dune and you came from town. You came out here to laugh at us."

"I came here to weed onions," said Tony.
"It's hard for you to lie to me, isn't it?"
"I'm sweating from the sun," Tony laughed.

"You people from town give me cramps," said Kaminko. "You never work and yet you have money and you laugh at things which aren't funny and you're happy. But you're not going to be happy here because I'm going to hate you and the Mexicans will later." Kaminko stopped and then he thought of something else.

"I have been to town only once," he said proudly. "My father died a year ago and the funeral was to be in town. It rained and there were only a few of us there and I hated the people from town because they were happy and nothing ever happens to them and I
wouldn't pay for the funeral because of the rain." He stopped and he seemed confused. "That's why I hate you," he said. He turned and began walking away.

"You won't be here long," he said.

"Where do you want me to start?" Tony yelled at Kaminko.

"I don't give a damn," he said; "anyplace." Kaminko kept walking and went into the office and Tony heard the bed springs.

Tony walked and a breeze fanned his chest and the muck was spongy. He found a row of onions nobody was working on. He got down on his knees and the muck was hot and burned through his light summer slacks and he thought about them and he hoped they would get dirty quickly.

There was a Mexican working the next row and his clothes were dark and colorless and said nothing. His hair was long and black and his arms, brown, hung big-veined from the heat. He had stopped to rest and he was on one knee and his head rested on the other. Tony moved out the weeds from around the onions and caught up to the Mexican.

"Is it always as hot as this?" asked Tony and he blew some sweat off the end of his nose. The Mexican moved heavywearly and brushed his bare arm across his eyes and began weeding. He didn't speak.

"Hey, I just made one enemy. Wait a minute." The Mexican stopped but he didn't look around. Tony weeded and laughed and caught up to the Mexican.

"Who was your first enemy?" asked the Mexican.

"Kaminko," said Tony.

"Kaminko is first enemy of everybody." The Mexican began weeding again.

"You didn't answer my first question," said Tony.

The Mexican turned and looked at Tony. He was handsome, but he was scowling.

"Why don't you bother someone else?"

"Because I want to talk to you."

"Well, I don't want to talk to you." The Mexican began weeding faster and Tony worked hard to keep up.

"My name's Tony. What's yours?"

The Mexican stopped again and sighed and wiped his right hand on his pants.

"My name is Andean Roca." He reached over and they shook hands.

"Now let us work or Kaminko will come out here."

They began weeding again.

"How long have you been working here?" asked Tony.

"Too long."

"I think I'm going to like it."

Roca turned and he was scowling again. "You won't like it here," he said. "Not you ..."

"Why won't I like it here?" asked Tony.

"Because you are what you are."
"I agree," said Tony, "and that is the reason I left my old life and came here."

"You may have left your old life but you have the stench of it on you and even I can notice it. You will never escape that."

"It's my clothes," said Tony, "and they'll get dirty."

"It's more than that. It's something that will drag you back."

"No, I have gotten away from a life that I hated and people whose values were warped and I'm here and I know it will take time, but the true values of life are here in this simple life and I will know them."

"You have a great illusion," said Roca.

"What about you?" said Tony. "What is your illusion? You don't talk like an onion weeder. Why are you here?"

"Because I like the atmosphere and all my good friends are here," said Roca sarcastically.

"You are a cynic then."

"I am like many people who have lived and worked in this life and who die very bitter—cynics if you like." Roca spoke quickly and sharply and he put his irritation into his hands and tore at the weeds.

"They died bitter because they were blind," said Tony.

"Blind of what?" Roca spoke louder.

"The values that are here."

"There is nothing of value to this life to be blind about," said Roca.

"I will learn more about life here in two days than I did in the twenty years of my old life." Tony spoke quietly and he stopped weeding and then the sun went under.

"If there is anything of value here, then you must be able to weed it from the unpleasant and this is a very unpleasant way to live." Roca still sounded stubborn, but he had stopped weeding.

"And since you have lived this life, you have found no values?"

"None," said Roca. "This life—my life, to me has no value."

"That is a dangerous way to think," said Tony.

"I don't think so," said Roca. "This life has a way of beating you to your knees. I have been beaten for twenty years and I feel no danger about anything."

"Why don't you run away from it?" asked Tony. "I did it."

"Because I don't think you have really gotten away. I don't think it is that easy," said Roca—"to just walk a few miles up the beach. I couldn't get away even if I wanted to because I'm a part of this muck bottom—this life."

"Then you're blind too," said Tony.

Roca turned and looked at Tony and then the sun came out and it was hot.

"I could hate you for that," said Roca.

"Hey you!" It was Kaminko and he was shouting at them. He moved toward them quickly for a short distance, then stopped.

"Get going damnit!" Kaminko yelled and he stood there looking at them.
“Bastard!” Roca said this softly and he kept on weeding. “He yells just like that to his wife.”
“You mean Kaminko makes his wife weed?”
“Sure and his grandmother too.”
“What’s wrong with him anyway?” asked Tony and he laughed.
“He’s a bastard,” said Roca and they both laughed.
They weeded and Tony’s knees were beginning to hurt from the harsh, dry muck.
“You have gone to college, haven’t you?” asked Roca.
“Yes, I went for a while.”
“It’s funny,” said Roca, “that I wanted to go to college so badly and then my mother got sick.”
“What about your father?”
“People said that my father was a man of great ability and drive but that when he was frustrated in his efforts he tried to escape through the bottle. He did not escape and he died very bitter and very hard. He was an idealist and his world collapsed on him and he nearly killed my mother too.”
“Your mother is still alive then?”
“Yes, she is still alive, but she will die soon probably, because she is very sick. I’m working my way north to see her and be able to pay the hospital. No, I did not want to become cynical,” said Roca, “but so many things . . . so many and I couldn’t help it.”
“I’m sorry,” said Tony, “about what I said. You have a right to be cynical.”
“I guess nobody should have that right,” said Roca, “and I used to try to fight it. My father always said to look at tomorrow and a better day. I have looked and there never is a tomorrow.”
They stopped weeding and sat and stretched and the sun wasn’t so hot now.
“No, I should be sorry,” said Roca, “to depress you like this.”
“You’re not depressing me,” said Tony.
“I know,” said Roca, “it’s because you find me interesting. You are probably finding one of your so-called values in me. I shouldn’t talk so much,” said Roca and he tried to laugh.
“Hey, Roca!” It was Kaminko again and he was running toward them and he ran as if he were mad.
“Watch him,” said Roca, and they both stood up. Kaminko stopped a few feet away and stood looking at them and his yellow eyes said nothing and then he laughed.
“Roca, them Juniga boys are back and they’re parked over the dune.” Kaminko quit smiling and moved big toward Roca and spoke again. “I don’t want none of your troubles, Roca, not any of them. Understand?”
“No trouble,” said Roca, and he didn’t look at Kaminko, but at the ground.
“Now I mean it, damnit.”
“No trouble,” said Roca. “I’m going to Mother Arderius’ as soon as I’m done.
“Well, get the hell going then.” Kaminko walked away and his
shirt didn’t look dirty now because the sun was going down.

“He’s a great man,” said Roca and he didn’t look up and then he laughed.

“Yes, I admire him greatly,” said Tony and they both laughed.

They began weeding again and it was cool towards the end of the row, but the mosquitoes were there and then it began to rain—suddenly, pecking the muck, cratering it, and it cooled Tony’s knees. They both stood up and the Mexicans were running and laughing across the muck towards their huts.

Tony began running for a pine tree.

“Come on,” yelled Roca. “Come on with me.” They began running and the rain came down harder.

They ran to the last shack in the row at the base of the dune. Some dogs began barking and they were under the shack which had cement blocks under each corner and they stayed there because they didn’t like the rain. Roca spoke to the dogs and they stopped barking. Then the rain stopped and everything was quiet and the muck was blacker and then a sudden breeze went through the pines and some voices floated down from the line of shacks.

“It was quitting time anyway,” said Roca and he was laughing and out of breath.

Tony turned and looked at the shack and a large woman stood behind the screen door watching them.

“Juniga boys are back,” she said and her voice was deep.

“Kaminko told me,” said Roca. “I have so many friends who want to visit me,” he said and he began laughing again.

“You better stay inside,” said the woman.

“I’m not worried,” said Roca.

The large woman disappeared from the screen door.

“That is Mother Arderius,” said Roca. “She has been very good to me.”

“Who are these Junigas?” asked Tony.

“Some of my close friends,” said Roca and they both laughed.

“A nice atmosphere and good friends,” said Tony and they laughed harder and then they sat down on the homemade steps which were worn and wet.

The large woman who was Mother Arderius brought them plates of food.

They ate in silence and the water dripped off the edge of the roof into little puddles around the shack. The line of huts were lit up now and a cool wind for August came in from the lake and Tony shivered, but he liked it. The dogs came out from under the shack and lay at their feet.

The large woman who was Mother Arderius, came to the door again.

“My boy says they’re on top of the dune now.”

“How many?” asked Roca.

“Three.”

“Maybe we better tell Kaminko,” said Tony and he looked up at the dune which was dark.
"No, he wouldn’t care anyway. These Juniga boys have bothered me before and they are nothing." Roca laughed.

The water had stopped dripping off the roof of the shack and there was going to be a moon. They handed their plates back to Mother Arderius and the dogs went back under the shack.

"You know," said Roca, "I have been thinking about what you said. You know, about running away from this life." Roca stopped and it seemed to be hard for him to speak.

"When we were running across the muck through the rain . . ."

"Yes? . . ."

"And then the rain began coming down harder and we ran faster, I felt very strong," said Roca, "and I felt bold and I think I could have run over the dunes and away from here. I even felt like I would never die and I know that sounds foolish, but don’t laugh."

"I know what you mean, because I have felt the same way before," said Tony.

Mother Arderius was at the door again.

"They are coming down the dune," she said. "You better come inside."

"They won’t come down here," said Roca and he laughed.

"What are they mad at?" asked Tony.

"They are mad because I have better pants." They laughed and the air was cool clean and Tony kept watching the dune path.

"You know," said Roca, "I haven’t laughed so much in a long time."

"That’s good," said Tony and he thought he could hear some movement on the dune path.

"It must be good to be able to laugh at life."

"It’s easy for me," said Tony, "because I have had an easy life."

"I think I could learn to laugh," said Roca.

"I know you could," said Tony and then he saw them and there were three of them and they moved out into the open and stood by the edge of the pines at the first rise of the dune.

Roca saw them.

"I guess I should go and talk to them so they will go home to bed," he said. He laughed. "I have so many friends." Roca moved suddenly and began walking toward the three men.

"I’ll go with you," said Tony.

Roca stopped and turned.

"You wait here. I don’t want you to see what kind of people are my friends."

"Are they that bad?"

"They’re rotten," said Roca, "and they probably want forgiveness." He laughed and he began walking toward the three men.

The three dark forms at the edge of the pines stood waiting and then Roca had reached them and they were talking.

Mother Arderius came outside.

"You better go up and help him," she said.

"He said to wait here."

"He has too much pride," said the woman.
Tony started toward the group of men and then he saw the arm, fast swing arc into Roca and then the cry.

Tony was running and he saw the three men as they ran off across the dark muck.

Roca lay on his back and his hand was on his stomach.

"In the stomach," he said. "The worst place and I couldn’t get out of the way." His voice was weak.

"I’ll get you back to Mother Arderius."

"I would not make it," said Roca. "You better leave me and get away. They are not far away and if they know you saw them . . ."

"I’ll get you back to Mother Arderius." Tony was on his knees.

Roca didn’t hear him.

"I couldn’t have gotten away," He twisted violently on his side. "My beautiful life," he said and then he died.

Tony stood up and then he heard them and then he saw them and they were running at him from the blackness of the muck.

Tony began running and he thought about it and he did not want to run. He wanted to turn and shout and ask them why they were chasing him, but he ran hard up the dune path and his chest began to hurt. He ran and stumbled and ran and then he was on top of the dune into the scraggly vegetation and it tried to trip him. He could see them now and there were three of them. Then he was going down the dune and the sand shifted and carried him down. He nearly fell when he hit the beach and he knew they were closer.

Tony nearly fell when he hit the beach and he knew they were closer. The heavy sand on the beach held him, gripped him and he ran awkwardly and wildly. One of them was getting closer and Tony could hear him grunting with each step. It was almost time and Tony knew the man had a knife. He would die here on the beach, he thought, and he couldn’t get away. Suddenly Tony dodged to the right toward the water. The man ran blindly, arm out and then stumbled and fell.

Tony was on the hardpacked sand near the water now and he was running hard. He knew he had gotten away, but he ran wildly on and then he began to cry and it hurt him and it was hard for him because he had forgotten how. He ran and cried and the dunes and the water and the moon swam. The he stopped running and looked back and he saw them standing on the beach looking at him. He looked at them and he wanted to turn and run at them, but he knew he couldn’t.

Then Tony yelled.

"I’ll be back," he said and it echoed down the beach and the three men stood motionless watching Tony.

"I’ll be back," Tony yelled again and then he turned and started trotting down the beach and he thought of the twenty miles, but he knew he could make it.
Thoughts While Gazing
Into Portage Stream . . .

What saves us for God's sake
From these gobs of gunk, these
Turds swimming in procession?
They could climb the banks
And take the city in a day,
Flooding doorways up to chins
And erecting in piles, as
Monuments of industry, the wash
Of pulp from mills beyond the town.

Surely these kids must be strong
Of stomach to defy the stream
And play along its banks like
Tiny naiads in the kitchen sink.
They will not be taught to pity
A million generations of dead fish.
Leave that to the poets.
So for a moment I assume all conscience,
And if there is a moral in this ditch,
It is this:

It will be death by Rinso, friends,
Not war or the outrage in our livers.
Cities dump their despair in streams;
Streams overrun and conquer cities,
And artfully shaping cultures from our clay,
They drown us everlasting in our waste.

... John Murphy
The Art Gallery . . .

A pyramid of countless stairs guarded at their foot by lions larger than lions roaring forbidding ascent but up through parting ranks of pillars and pedestalled plaster casts into a hall, a great huge hall with gilded mirrors to the past subjects well imagined improved by artistic toils dumb shows performed on canvas by a triumphant cast of oils ideas once residing within the artists breasts now brushed eternal in form and hue a rich harmonious mass as grateful to the eye to see as to the ear a symphony authentic cadences to sight a pyramid of countless stairs guarded at their foot by lions smaller than kittens purring . . . Sherwood Snyder III