Winter 1959

Calliope Fall- Winter 1959

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CALLIOPE

Western Michigan University's Creative Arts Magazine

Volume VI, Number 1
Fall - Winter Issue 1959
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The Salvation of Giovanni

Dr. Dondo:

When they sent me up here from the juvenile retention home four months ago, you said that my writing it all down on paper and giving it to you would help a lot with the therapy. So here it is, the whole story, just like you wanted it.

In the first place, I didn’t get along in school. None of the kids liked me, and most of them went out of their way to make rotten remarks at me or shove me around. I guess that was because I make for good picking, being so small and all. I remember these two big guys in particular that used to lay for me after school, especially in the winter when there was snow on the ground. They got a big kick out of throwing me down in the snow and rubbing my face with it, and saying: “Baggadonis is a big bag a donuts and he’s cruising for a bruising.” I figure those two guys ought to be in here instead of me. Maybe they never started any fires or anything, but beating up on some little guy like me and calling him names is about twice as bad as burning up a few old buildings because I got feelings and buildings don’t. I remember these guys used to make me run home after they were through beating on me. If I didn’t run, they’d just catch up with me at the next corner by going around the block and they’d get me again. Sometimes they did it anyway, because I can’t run very fast. And lots of times there’d be other kids around watching these bullies working me over. It made for a pretty good show, I guess, because these other kids just laughed and didn’t do anything to help me out or anything. I know I would of done something if I was bigger and saw something happening like what those guys were doing to me, because once I saw this little kid with a toad in a quart jar. The kid was rolling this jar down the sidewalk with the toad inside it, and the toad was throwing up, and bleeding, and everything. Anyway, I took the jar away from this kid and let the poor toad go and smashed the jar. The kid bawled too, like it had been marbles or something I took away from him. But then this kid’s old man comes out and starts giving me hell, and then he runs after me and chases me away, without even giving me a chance to explain or anything. I guess most people think that nothing besides themselves has got feelings. If you’v ever felt like a toad in a jar, Doc, you’ll know what I mean about people like that.
But getting knocked around isn't so bad as thinking about it afterwards, because when somebody's pushing you around or washing your face in the snow or chasing you, you're just scared. But when it's over, you aren't scared anymore, and you just think, and you're ashamed. You can't help but think with sore muscles or a chapped face and cracked lips all the time reminding you that you let some goon beat on you. That's the worst part of it right there; thinking about it. I remember I used to just shake for hours, and lots of times my face would heat up like I was blushing when I thought about it. I remember I had this book, too. It was called *Elements of Judo*, and it was subtitled "Science; Not Strength." It was a war-time book, and it had pictures of guys with American uniforms and guys with German uniforms. The guys with the American uniforms were always little guys, like me, and they'd all the time be throwing around these big guys in the German uniforms. I remember that sometimes I used to pretend that my pillow was one of these guys that was always picking on me. I'm telling you that I used to beat the hell out of that pillow. After I was through though, I used to feel awful silly; ashamed, I guess. Sometimes I couldn't even look at myself in the mirror without spitting on it. And that used to make me feel more ashamed, seeing my face in the mirror with spit running down it, but somehow it was kind of proper. I remember I used to think about all kinds of ways I could use to get even with these guys that picked on me all the time. I had lots of ideas alright, but if I'd had a few guts, I wouldn't have needed any ideas. I would of just called them out, but I never did until quite a lot later.

And that guy who said: "Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words will never hurt me," he ought to be in here too. What a jerk. I guess nobody ever got mad at him and called him names, just because they knew they could get away with it. And I guess nobody ever screwed up his name and called him a bag a donuts, or a wop, or a spaghetti bender, either. And I guess girls never giggled at him either. That used to hurt me a lot, the fact that these girls were all the time giggling and laughing at me. Of course I know girls giggle all the time, but sometimes I could hear them whispering too, and I could see them looking at me like I was some kind of a disease or something. I know when I used to walk by them, they'd clam right up and look the other way, but when I was one or two steps past, they'd start up again with their whispering and giggling and staring, so I knew they were making fun of me. I'll bet they're sorry about laughing at me now though, especially the ones of them that catches cancer.

I don't know if you've ever been alone, and thinking a lot, Doc, but if you have, maybe you'll understand how it was with me. Before it got bad, I used to think it was kind of a challenge to try to
answer all these stupid questions that came up inside my head. Then, when it got bad, I figured that even though you can answer most of the questions that come up from outside your head, you can never answer the ones that come up from the inside. You can just stew and try to answer them, but you can never answer them. It's kind of funny, but I don't even remember what most of the questions were, anymore, but some of them were: "What are you doing here?" "Why can't you get along?" "What is going to become of you?" "What are you going to do about it?" And the answers came out in a kind of a chorus, repeating themselves over and over. I remember one which bothered me a lot. It kept saying: "Giovanni, you're no good. You're just a dirty, no-good wop."

I guess most of the questions were kind of vague, but everytime one popped up in my head, I'd start thinking. And I couldn't stop, and that was hell, and I'm not kidding. That's why I ended up doing all those crazy things, just to keep from going crazy. Sometimes I couldn't even sleep because of all this talk going on in my head. It's not what the words said so much that made me feel so rotten. It was just that I couldn't stop them and they wouldn't quit. They wouldn't leave me any peace. They'd just keep racing through my head, and there was no end to them. When I talked to somebody, or watched television, or read, or something, they'd go away for awhile. But when I was alone, which was a lot of the time, one of these stupid questions would pop up, and these thoughts would start running and jumping around in my head like they were trying to get out and couldn't. I can't tell you how bad it got, Doc, but I'd ten times rather go to an old fashioned dentist than to put up with what I had to for even a minute.

Now I'll tell you what really screwed up the works. You see, after it got so I couldn't stand this thinking any more, I started looking for some way to get out of it. Like I said, I couldn't control these screwy thoughts, but they didn't seem to bother me so much when I was doing something. The whole trouble there was that doing things generally means being around people. And for me, being around with people means getting kicked in the teeth. So the only way I could keep these thoughts from rotting out my brains was to find some kind of entertainment I could do by myself. And I'm not kidding when I say I tried everything to keep these thoughts away before Icon finally saved me from them.

Watching television was alright for awhile, but the thing there was that sometimes when these words start eating at your brain, you just can't watch television, because there isn't one around. Maybe this sounds kind of bush, Doc, but I think the mind is a lot like some kind of a poisonous jungle, and when you're in it, alone, you have to have one of these jungle knives with you and be chopping all the
time at this stuff or else it will just kind of grow over you and strangle you. Well, I was looking for a jungle knife, and it had to be pretty portable, because I never knew when I'd be in this jungle and have to be hacking in order to keep this stuff from growing over me. I know for awhile I started reading these pocket-books, and one time in the study hall, this teacher sees me with one, and he takes it away from me because it's got this girl's picture on the cover, and she's not wearing much. Anyway, these words start bouncing around in my head, and I had all I could do to keep from screaming. I even started chewing on my collar, and when the bell rang, it was half gone. I guess maybe I could of got up and gone to the library or something, but then everybody would of looked at me and started laughing, and that would have been even worse. I tried to figure out why this teacher did what he did to me, and I finally figured he hated me because I'm a second generation Italian with a screwy name.

I remember another time I went on this whistle kick. I guess that was the craziest one of all. I used to whistle all the time, even during classes when I'd put my hand over one ear and make these little hissing noises. They'd go through the bones in my head, and I could hear the tunes in my covered ear. Sometimes I'd pretend that these tunes would drive out the bad thoughts, but they never did. The reason why the whistling never worked very well was because I'd whistle on three or four bars of the same tune for a long time, and then the tune would keep repeating itself in my head after I'd quit whistling it. Those tunes bouncing around up there were about as bad as the words.

Anyhow, I figured that these pocket books were my best bet for keeping these thoughts away. The only thing was that a lot of these books had parts in them about people a lot like me. I couldn't read those because they made me feel kind of embarrassed and uncomfortable and ashamed because they were never very good parts.

Now, this next part is pretty important because it tells how I got mixed up in this fire business. I hope that after you read it, Doc, that you'll know why I had to do what I did. It all started when I was taking a long way home to duck these bullies I told you about. You see, sometimes I could avoid them by crawling through this hole in the school-park fence and taking a long way home. Anyway, I was walking down past the Miller Street Market, and I smelled smoke. You see, this place was on fire. Well, I watched this fire because I didn't have anything else to do, and all of a sudden my eyes kind of go out of focus or something. Anyway, I go into this sort of daze, like I was hypnotized, and I just stood there and watched this place burn down. There were firemen there, but they couldn't do much because the fire was a lot bigger than they were, so I just stood in
front of the market, and watched the place burn. And, do you know that during that whole time not one of these screwy questions starts eating at me? And afterwards I felt good, too. Sort of uplifted, I guess you could say. I even made jokes with my old lady that night. I hadn’t done that for a long time, mostly because she’s busy a lot, and we don’t think the same things are funny anymore.

Now this might sound a little screwy, Doc, but I felt so good that night that I figured I owed somebody something. I mean I felt so grateful for getting away from these words that eat at me that I just figured I should thank whoever was responsible. And besides, I’m one of these guys that likes to pay his way as much as he can. Well, that night I had this dream. I dreamed that these little fire animals were running around. They had white stomachs and fiery fur. They looked a lot like a bunch of ping-pong balls that were set on fire, and they ran around about the same way. If you’ve ever set a ping-pong ball on fire, Dr. Dondo, you’ll know how they ran around. Anyway, after these little animals ran around for a while, they all came together in this big pool and formed a sort of person. Well, this big fire shaped like a person said that his name was Icon, and that he was the god of fire, and then I showed up in the dream, and Icon talked to me. I don’t remember exactly what he said, but he got real mad at me when he found out that I was afraid of him. He started screaming at me and threatening me, but I got mad and started screaming back and then I wasn’t afraid anymore. Then Icon sort of flowed into a horse shape, and I rode him. We rode for miles, and everywhere we went, we set things on fire. I didn’t get burned, though, and I don’t think I ever enjoyed anything more in my life than that horse ride. But then, without any warning or anything, the horse fell apart and formed these little animals that ran around like burning ping-pong balls. And then all of them start talking at once, only they said the same thing, so this voice that sounds like its coming from a hundred different echoes says: “I am Icon, the only true god. You shall worship me faithfully. If you do not, I would have you remember that fire is pain as well as comfort.” Then one of these little fire balls jumps at me and hits me in the chest. It knocked me over on top of these other little fire balls, and they started licking at me and burning me. I tried to fight them, but they were all over me, and when I hit one, it would bust up and make three or four new balls. Then one of them bit me inside of my cheek because it was so hot that I was breathing with my mouth open and he got in. Then I woke up. I remember my sheets were soaked with sweat, and I was afraid to go back to sleep.

Anyway, I figured this Icon would give me the works again if I didn’t play it like he said about the worshipping. So that afternoon, after class, I bought six of these big yellow candles, and I lit them in
my room and started praying. I felt real good then, I guess because I didn’t feel anything. I was just sort of dazed, looking at the flames and all. I remember I noticed the way these little flames ate away at all the wax like it was nothing, and I figured that maybe I should be more like a flame. After I went to bed, Icon showed up again, but this time he was real warm and friendly. He looked something like a transparent rubber light bulb would if it was lit and if there was such a thing. I remember he told me he was real pleased with the candles and the prayers, but he told me that I should make bigger sacrifices than candles and have commandments if I really wanted to worship him right. Well, the whole thing made me feel kind of proud because Icon was pleased with me, and I was darn sure going to try to do him right for it.

So, the next night after school, I got busy with the commandments. I thought about them a lot. This is what I finally came up with:

**COMMANDMENTS**

1. Whoever-offends-me-offends-Icon-because-I-am-his-earthly-representative. Anybody who offends Icon by harming me must be punished accordingly. If I fail to punish the offender, I become responsible for the offender’s sin, and then I will have to punish myself. I will do this by: laying two safety matches on my forearm and lighting them with a third. Then I must let them burn according to Icon’s will until they are out.

2. Since Icon is the only true god, I will break one of the false god’s commandments each day. If I fail to keep this commandment, I must punish myself by burning two matches on my forearm.

3. When the Miller Street Market is rebuilt, I must sacrifice it to Icon because it was there that I first saw the light. If I fail to keep this commandment I must punish myself by burning two matches on my forearm.

4. I will make at least one sacrifice a week to Icon; a building if at all possible. If I don’t, I must punish myself by burning a whole book of matches on my forearm.

Well, after I made up these commandments, I printed them up real neat. Then I painted this matchbook black, and I folded the commandments up as small as I could, and I stapled them into the cover. The next day I got this little fire-breathing dragon decal at the dime store, and I pasted it on the matchbook cover, only it wasn’t just a matchbook. It was more like a bible. I sure got a lot of comfort out of that matchbook. No kidding, Doc, I felt like I had something solid; something I could grab on to, and something that could
save me from these crazy thoughts that went tearing through my head. And I'm not kidding when I say that just having those matches kept me from going nuts.

The next day in school, the girls giggled at me just like always, and the fellows made rotten remarks. After school these two guys I told you about got me and washed my face in the snow again. It was a bad day, and when I figured it out, the first commandment had been broken seven times, and I'd let the offenders get away with it. I felt awful guilty about it, like I'd let my only good friend down. And besides that, I figured Icon might give it to me again in my sleep like he had that first night. But mostly, I felt guilty, real guilty, and, well, seven offenses at two matches apiece makes fourteen matches, and I guess you've seen the scars on my forearms.

After the first day, though, things were different. I got this one bully with a brick after school. I'll bet he's still drinking his dinner. I never got the other guy, but someday I will. The only thing, I didn't know what to do about the girls. They were the worst offenders to Icon of all, laughing at his representative like they did. But you can't come right out and hit a girl with a brick. I worried a lot about what to do to the girls until I read this article that said women can get cancer in the breast by getting pinched there. So I started backing them off in corners and pinching them just as hard as I could, and I hope everyone of them gets it and rots away like old lady Webster across the street did.

I guess you know the rest of it Doc. I set fourteen fires in two weeks. I won't have to give you the play by play on that, though, because it made all the newspapers. I've still got the clippings if you want to see them. As a matter of fact, I'd like for you to see them. There's a real good picture of me in one of them. Icon was real pleased about that.

And another thing, when I got caught and took down to the juvenile retention home, one of the people down there asks me why I set all those fires, and I says: "Just because I'm goddamn religious, that's all." And this guy looks at me real funny, like I was a nut or something. I guess he didn't know about Icon's second commandment. But then, that didn't surprise me much, because a lot of people are ignorant about the true religion, and how important it is, and all. I know when I get out of here, I'll just have to spread the word—for the good of mankind, I guess you could say.

Giovanni Bag gadonis, Icon's representative
I steps dead on the air: lines but sharp, steel and sweet like a knife: the way shadows starve her high cheekbones, and her eyes have something like metal, flat metal, so you can not see into them.

II now in the swinging silence never perfectly settled, my love is love of my own pain: summer skiing, slopes and a snow hotel, my stiff and indigo fingers stretching their way to her cheek (warmed from the inside), and she standing with her face up, as though my expected fingers were so much rain.
And now you sleep.
A breeze from the open window
Stirs the love-laden air,
Gently caressing and cooling
The two of us.

You sleep like a child,
Curled in contentment
As the soft night breeze
Stirs the wisps of hair
On your forehead.

Yet when the bright morning sun
Shines through the same open window
You will leave,
And the hot morning sun
Will not warm me.
The yellowed photograph had caught Basse straddling the bow of a small fishing vessel docked in the Copenhagen harbor. With his wet gold hair and Viking physique, my grandpa looked the part of the romantic rover that he was. And carrying along with this, Basse's philosophy is to feel grateful, get down to the heart of things, forget the dangers of the pleasant paths and live for the pure pleasure of living in a world full of adventure.

In 1902, when shore leaves came often, he and the other sailors rushed to Tivoli, an amusement park in the middle of “Kobenhagen,” where they found pretty girls eager to share in a good time. This festive gathering place was for Basse! It was gay, bustling and joyous! He could find salty seamen’s taverns at Nyhavn, or Old Harbor street. Here, the streets were lively at all hours with concertina music, and the corners echoed with fights or short-lived brawls. He loved this gay night life, for the “tomorrows” might find him wrecked off the coast of Norway or weak from treading water for eighteen hours after being torpedoed near the coast of Gibraltar. But in time Basse had enough of dangerous living, “und dere vas little vork in Denmark, soo me and Neils ve hear dere vas mooch vork in U.S. so ve packed oop our bags, kissed ladies goot-bye und ve vent to Ellis Island!”
He became a cook on the S. S. Yale and sailed around the Cape and South America where he spread his exhilarating love of life, not to mention 'Frisco, Seattle, and even Candovora, Alaska. He made the Barbary Coast his own Tivoli and Nyhavn and once spent $2000 in twenty-four hours. One night, in a smoky bar on the coast, Basse began a "drinking bout" with what appeared to be a friendly Oriental. But Basse lost, in more ways than one, for "Dat damn Jap took my money—what was left! By gum! I was so mad dat I knocked him down the stairs. But six veeks later dey came to me in jail und said it vas defense for myself! By gum it vas—he took my money!"

Neils Hansen Basse Nielsen feasted, made love, and took part in naval battles with the uncommon zest that he still has for smoking cigars, chewing tobacco, singing, and drinking much coffee and even more beer. But those early adventures occurred "when you work hard while you young and feel goot!"

As he talks now, I see spread before me, like changing screens, the contrast between the dapper Dane of the early 1900's and the silver-haired old gentleman of 79 years who is now as plump as a wine barrel and who bears a striking resemblance to another man from the northland—Santa Claus! He now sits looking out the window like the bronze mermaid who sits on the rock in Copenhagen harbor—ever watching the ships that come and go, looking for the mortal prince who will never return, for Basse's days of adventure are nearly over.

When Basse was 65 he and his wife Marie started a Danish pastry shop in Dawson Creek, British Columbia. Although he was in the midst of retirement and was living lavishly on old-age pension, he wanted to see if he could spread his wings again as in 1915 when he worked on Alaska's first railroad and copper mine and panned gold at the Big Delta. "So Marie und me when we heard dere vas mooch opportunity in Nort, und ve alvays laiked money, you know, und ve opened da bake shop . . . me in da back and Marie in front vit da cashyegiester—Ah! All da pengya (money)! Und joost laik old time when ve hat the tavern in farmer's market—sooch fun!" Only the second time Basse Nielsen hit the Yukon he didn't drive sled dogs from his home-made cabin to his gold strike. It was different from those days when he hunted and fished in the biting cold because he had no money even for food, and when he lost two fingers from frost bite while sleeping.

But those adventure some days are past. Grandpa is a little rounder than he was in 1915, and he has grown old. But his eyes do not stop twinkling. He still has that smiling serenity that beams with a desire to please. His natural and direct charm is definitely intact; "Vemen! Umm! I laik someting lively—vun dat tinks und I can talk to—you know I'm not educated und dey is smart. I'm not so dumb you tink
though, I'm joost sneekie!” Women are one of his favorite subjects, and even to this day he can charm the loveliest of ladies into believing that he is the greatest Dane of all! Basse's devilishly assured eyes have been known to coax the most stubborn horse to water.

He is most insulted when dinner guests refuse his food. He looks at the guest with poison in his eye, or as poisonous as a smiling Dane can look, because the guest has refused a third helping of Danish layer cake. The cake has twelve thin layers of yellow cake with intermittent fillings of strawberry jam, nuts, or custard and topped with a whipped cream icing and maraschino cherries. He is determined to gorge you with food, but he smilingly says, “you know, ve try to mak tings soo nice for our fancy guests un den dey don't eat! Und ve try so hard to mak it pleasant. Wednesday, you Mam vas here vee hat schicken, rice and curry und all kind of goodies! Cherry caffe kake with cream apple turnover. But she don't eat noting. It is vasted so ve baen eating every nite—I don't know but vee never get skinny.”

Basse is a pleasure-loving person who sets a great store in good living and likes to eat fresh, well-prepared food, coffee and pastries swathed in whipped cream, and particularly beer or potent schnapps and smorrebrod. Smorrebrod is an open sandwich with butter smeared over the layers and laid with strips of veal, beef, ham, fish, salmon, spiced herring, etc., accompanied by a drink or two, or three. Now, the Dane begins to “skol!” Having caught the eye of a person whose health he wishes to drink to, he raises his glass of schnapps, and with a nod, drinks it down. Then he roars, “Heep Heep Horryay!” three times. But he claims, “I very temperence now, you know. In old days when I drink mooch I mostly sink or fight—now, I joost talk all the teem!”

In full swing, after a few “skois,” Basse declaims in a booming voice about his birthplace, Svenstrop, Denmark, or his mother, the lovely daughter of Baron von Peilsen, or “Kobenhagen the Paris of da Nort!” Then, he will stop, reflect placidly and say “Ah! Und I could tell you tales, Tootsie, dat woul mak you hair set oop! Ya! Dere is no flies on me. I vas cerkinly un vilda Dansk (wild Dane)! Why the Germans coult not beat oos in Var II—while ve may live close ve are two minds dat don’t match. Why, Tootsie, I don't know but dey vil never get oos—dey can't break our spirit—Ve’re Dansk!”

17
Haiku is but one type of Japanese poetry, based on syllabic count. It consists of three lines, arranged in a five, seven, five, syllable form. Each completed poem contains a seventeen syllable total.

The purpose of Haiku, is to provide a picture without completeness. The last two lines comment upon the first, yet they are independent of the first line. This separateness should be as two poles, between which a spark must leap to be effective. The reader must complete the poem by supplying memories, which connect the two poles.

Matsuo Bashô, was the first master of Haiku. During his lifetime (1644-1694) he studied Zen Buddhism, which accounts for his concentration of mystical awareness in Haiku. The next master was Taniguchi Buson (1715-1783), who wrote of nature and used correlating vignettes. The modern follower of Bashô and Buson was Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902) who presented pictures of everyday situations.

Japanese poetry provides circumstance, by which people seek consolation. This accompaniment involves nature, loneliness, and poverty. The reader must supply the inclinations, to complete each connotation effectively.

Here are some examples of authentic Japanese Haiku. The translations are from *BAMBOO BROOM* by H. G. Henderson.

Toshikasa wo
Urayamaretaru
Samusa kana

by Shiki

Now that I am old
I am envied by people . . .
Oh, but it is cold!

Suzushisa ya
Ho no mika tsuki no
Haguro-yama.

by Bashô

Cool it is, and still . . .
The tip of a crescent moon over Black-wing Hill.
The following three poems were written in the Japanese Haiku form by Miss Clark.

**Haiku**

An autumn rain fall . . .
Along suburban pathways
Windows have been closed.

Creatures of the night . . .
Through the encumbering trees
Their songs drift gayly.

In homage trees bend . . .
Where water’s streaked, shining streets
Reflect changing time.

* The titles are always implied in the content.
FRIDAY AFTERNOON

As she watched the clouds drifting lazily along in their sea of blue, Susan wished to join them. The teacher's voice droned on and on, reminding her of her father's snoring on Sunday afternoon. "She's probably been teaching fourth grade since she was born," Susan thought.

She jerked restlessly and slouched down to a more comfortable position. Seven months in the same seat had revealed many good positions to her, but this was her favorite. Stiffening one leg and bracing it against the leg of the seat in front, she twisted around so she could not slide.

Cautiously, always keeping her hands out of the teacher's view, she took first her geography, then her math book out of her desk. The desks had shelves for books and writing materials. Each desk was connected to the seat in front with all the seats and desks nailed to wooden strips on the floor. She put her math book on her geography, which was larger, and pushed them to the protruding edge of the next seat. Opening her science book, she propped it up against the other two and put her eraser in front of it to prevent its sliding forward.

After much groping and fumbling in the inside of her desk, she managed to find the pen she had been using lately. Needing something to occupy her hands, she had formed the habit of boring holes in the edge of the desk where no one noticed them, and in a position where the teacher could not see what she was doing. The hole she was working on was almost one-half inch deep now, and for a moment she thought of moving on to the next, but decided against it. Maybe she would make this her masterpiece. As it was the fourth in an even row, she could make it the middle of seven. Looking at her row more closely, she noticed that each was a little larger than the last. She gave the second and third ones a couple of turns, then leaned back and looked at them. The last hole needed a few more turns to make it the right size.
Inserting her pen, she glanced at the clock, made sure the teacher wasn't watching, and took up her post at the window again. "That cloud looks like a bear with one eye," she thought. "If I were up there I could ride him. What would it be like to ride a cloud bear?"

The boy playing with the cord on the window shade moved it slightly, and a ray of sunlight hit her eye. She leaned sideways a little and glared fiercely at him. Remembering other encounters with her, he moved the shade back.

Now she began to search for some other means of amusement. The hole was big enough and she didn't feel like starting another. She tried to remember how long she had been staring out the window. "It must have been ten minutes at least," she thought, "so it must be at least 2:45, maybe 2:44." She wrote 2:44 on her desk and looked at the clock. "2:39—five minutes off." Only four minutes had passed. She subtracted 2:39 from 3:00. Just then the clock clicked and it was 2:40. "That's twenty minutes. Twenty times sixty is twelve hundred seconds." She started counting slowly but the clock did not click until she got to eighty-seven so she gave that up.

A buzzing sound attracted her attention to the seat beside her where a boy had trapped a fly. She turned to watch and saw him take a pin from his pocket. Taking a quick peek at the teacher, she leaned over and asked what he was going to do.

"I'm going to stick him through the middle and pin him to the desk," he announced gleefully.

"Don't you dare!"

"Try and stop me!" he taunted.

At first she didn't believe him, but seeing him shift the fly to his thumb and forefinger, she knew he was serious. She reached into her desk and felt for her ruler. Many hours of rubbing had brought the metal edge to a razor sharpness. She glanced over at the tormentor and waited until his attention was completely concentrated on the fly. Just as he was about to stab, she brought the sharp edge down on his bare arm. By the time he got his mouth open her ruler was back in its place and she was reading intently. His startled gasp quickly drew the teacher's attention who, looking up, checked him sharply. Waiting a few minutes until the teacher was again absorbed in her book, Susan flashed her enemy a triumphant grin, almost a smirk.

Restless again, she wrote from one to nine hundred on the margin of her book then crossed off ninety-eight, leaving eight hundred and two. The amount of time left seemed so endless that she turned to another game, that of balancing her ruler on her pencil. This was one of her more dangerous games, because if the ruler dropped on the
floor, the teacher would be sure to catch her. She was very successful for a while, and was just beginning to feel proud of herself when the ruler slipped. She caught it in mid-air. It was such a close call that she decided it was time to quit. She could not possibly have that kind of luck twice. Putting her pencil and ruler quickly into her desk, she glanced at the clock and crossed off two hundred and three numbers, then forty more.

It was time now to play her last game. This was the same game she played every afternoon just before the bell rang. Her desk and the wooden strips were islands of safety and the whole floor was a sea of poison. The idea was to see how brave she was by coming close to the floor without actually touching it. She slid further and further. She would have to hold on tight. “Almost touched it—oh—quick, feet, swing over to the railings!” She shifted quickly at the last moment and barely got her foot on the strip. “I’m slipping!” she thought, horror stricken. “It’s going to get me!” She clawed frantically at the back of her desk. Just as she was sliding off the railing, the bell rang. She was saved! She stepped firmly into the poison which parted, grew firm, and school was over for two days.
I CHRIST . . .

The affliction of the wood
is in the weight of the world—
Cold slender fragments of metal
bind me to the wood
and the world—

Alone,
in ignobile vulgus—
Encrusted with the strife
of the flesh—

My life—

I love what

MAN COULD BE . . .
the rims of the grand canyon

The Grand Canyon—a deep, wide, dry chasm filled with a multitude of box canyons, buttes, and mesas. The shortest distance from rim to rim is over a super, mule-track highway, over seven steep, winding miles down from the forested south rim and fourteen steep, winding miles up to the forested north rim. There are no drinking fountains and no eating places en route—travelers must carry their own nourishment. The Colorado River, master sculptor of the canyon, carries silt, sand, and sometimes boulders; it is too thick to drink and too thin to plow.

Apparently the Colorado River has flowed over its present course for several eons, and has always defied the surrounding, gradually rising land. The Colorado eroded the land and remained at its ancient level. Eventually the river cut a deep bed, then a canyon, next many canyons, until it sculptured myriads of canyons—many inaccessible to man.

Fascinating and breathtaking as the canyon is, its rims are equally spectacular. Both rims of the canyon are high, land-locked islands—isolated from similar areas by the chasm of the canyon and the surrounding desert. Several eons ago these islands were continuous with similar habitants, but were isolated as the land on either side of the Colorado River rose. Now plants and animals on each rim essentially are separated from other populations of the same organisms unless they possess some means of crossing physical barriers.

Life on each rim is distinct. The south rim supports its pigmy forest which seldom towers more than 10 feet above the ground. Apparently rainfall and snow are not so heavy on this rim as they are on the north rim. Here in the Kaibab forest the additional water supply supports more vegetation. This Canadian (north woods) forest, located in northern Arizona, sometimes towers 50-60 feet above the ground. This forest has its own species of deer and squirrel.
The pigmy forest, short and thin, is composed of pinion pine and scrub oak, with cedar and juniper scattered throughout. In open areas desert vegetation, such as broad-leaved yucca and sagebrush, thrives in the “forest” on the sandy soil. Because of additional rainfall available to desert vegetation on the south rim, the desert vegetation there grows more luxuriantly than it does on the dry desert nearby.

At the canyon rim Mormon tea grows, its roots anchored in the solid dry soil. The Mormons used this plant instead of the usual herbs to brew their tea. Cliff rose and fern rose grow where open areas exist. Some of the trees in the forest are parasitized by leafless dwarf mistletoe.

From this unpalatable-looking vegetation many animals derive their sustenance. Mice live on the floor of the forest. Rock squirrels and chipmunks gingerly scamper over the loose soil at the canyon’s edge. Rabbits wander through the forest, and deer roam in small herds.

Vultures soar over the rim and over the canyon in search of carrion. Sometimes they allow the wind to carry them high into the air for hours on end. During early morning and late afternoon hours diurnal birds are active, devouring insects, other invertebrates, and seeds. Nocturnal birds, such as owls, prowl the forest in search of their prey—mice and rabbits.

During the summer atmospheric conditions are such that storms build up in the morning and release their accumulated moisture in the afternoon. These storms are so regular in occurrence that they may be anticipated in a range of two hours. Occasionally a storm, with all the fury of afternoon storms, falls in the morning. As the air clears after a storm and the sun appears, single and double rainbows form in the canyon. They may rise from the depths of the canyon and disappear among the pinion pines and scrub oaks on the rim.

As the pigmy forest rises suddenly out of the desert, so, too, does the Kaibab forest. Huge boulders seem to mark the dividing line between the desert and the forest. Ponderosa pine and spruce trees dominate the area. When one of these giants crashes to the earth, an opening in the forest occurs. Fast-growing, sun-loving, short-lived poplars spring up in the giant’s place. Ponderosa and spruce, slow-growing trees, will germinate and grow in the shade of poplars. Here they will live until the poplars die or until the conifers finally shade out the poplars. Eventually the forest opening no longer exists. The forest is continuous again.

On this island the consistency of the soil differs in individual areas. Porous soil will not hold waters from rains and snows, and much moisture is lost to the vegetation growing on this soil. Here flourish grass and flower meadows. The root systems of these plants extend
deep into the soil in search of water. Deer and white-faced cattle graze these meadows. Where the soil is not so porous, plants do not need such extensive root systems in order to obtain their water. There trees tower beside the low meadows.

At the edge of forest and meadow small pines and spruces grow. At first glance, this seems to be an invasion by the woods into the meadow. Closer examination shows that these cone-bearing trees are miniature replicas of their towering neighbors. Wood borings show that these tiny trees may be as old as their neighbors. Lack of water in the porous soil has kept them from reaching their genetically-determined height.

Dotting the meadows are strangely shaped spruce trees. Normally spruce trees are cone-shaped, but some of these are bell-shaped and others have no shape. When the snows become too deep and a crust of ice forms on the top of the snow drifts, deer are unable to paw their way to the ground to feed on vegetation there. Rising above snow and ice are the spruces, not the usual food of the deer. When this is the only food available, the deer eat the needles and young shoots, browsing as high as they can stretch. If the spruces survive and continue to grow, eventually the trees become taller than the browse-line. The lower portion of the spruces are damaged permanently, but the upper boughs assume their characteristic shape.

As the winter snows accumulate, melt and freeze, accumulate, melt and freeze groves of young poplars bend under the weight of the frozen water. In the spring the poplars begin growing before all the snow and ice are gone; the frozen mass of water twists the poplars out of shape, forcing them to assume grotesque forms and so become crooked forests.

In the forest straight rows of poplars are common, as if someone planted them in rows. Nature did. When trees fall to the ground, they begin to decay. As the decay progresses, rich organic matter accumulates where the tree fell. Poplar seeds fall on this rich soil and germinate. As the poplars grow they assume the line of the fallen log—a straight line.

At the canyon’s edge on the north rim hot air rises from the depths below and spills over the rim, creating a hot dry belt for several yards. A narrow strip of desert thrives beside a cool, moist northern forest. Cacti, sagebrush, yucca, and desert animals are plentiful. Gopher snakes sun themselves on the warm rocks after capturing and devouring some gopher in its burrow. Horned toads may scamper across a needle-strewn floor just feet away from their natural desert environment.

Mice, rabbits and birds live on this island. The same species may be found in other regions of the world. But the deer and one species of squirrel are endemic—the Kaibab deer and the Kaibab squirrel.
When this land-locked island was connected to similar areas, populations of deer and of squirrels roamed the entire area. As the Kaibab forest became separated, a population of deer and one of squirrels were isolated on the island. Mutations occurred in the germ plasm of these populations, and natural selection weeded out certain individuals from the breeding population. Now these animals are unable to breed with any organism but one from this forest and of their particular species. The deer is similar in general appearance to our white-tailed deer. The squirrel, on the other hand, has tufted ears and a bushy white tail.

Both rims of the Grand Canyon are as fascinating as its depths. As the canyon continually confronts its flora and fauna with obstacles, so too do the rims of the canyon. Life on the rims has different obstacles to overcome.

MARTHA CARLTON

Silent Submission

The present stands lowly, his head bowed.  
Secluded is he, alone in the crowd  
Of past and future, who win the mind,  
And leave him destitute, behind.

The present is left, alone, unheard;  
As th calls of the future and crys of the past,  
Engulf and smother his every word.

The present is lonely. No crowns.  
The present . . . Today, drowns.
He awoke to the cry of a younger child echoing from the urine-smelling smaller bedroom next door. He gazed at the clock—almost time to get up anyway. His bare feet slid onto the cold worn linoleum; he pulled on his jeans and tee shirt and padded into the other room.

The small naked brown body of his three year old sister sat squat in the middle of the floor and it was her, in her distress, who was making all the noise. As she saw him she stopped and the merest indication of a smile came to her face, for this was Jonathan, her protector, lover, and giver of all things wonderful, coming to her aid.

With the firm but tender grasp that only a twelve year old brother could exert upon a little sister, Jonathan swept her up, patted her gently on the posterior and bounced her solidly, but with the utmost care, plonk, in the middle of the bed. This in turn disturbed the bed’s other occupant, a five year old boy who had apparently slept through all the bedlam that had preceded this interruption of his slumber.

Jim, the younger boy, growled something very nasal, rolled over and lay staring at the peeling ceiling while Jonathan, working with the skill that could only be developed from a six day a week job, slipped a tiny cotton print frock over his sister’s shoulders.

A voice from the doorway did not take his attention from the job in hand for he knew it was Betsy Mae and she didn’t really bear much looking at. Five years his junior, she was darker than he, more African in appearance and very skinny. He often thought it strange that she and Jim were so dark in comparison to Jenny and himself.

He carried Jenny into the kitchen where Betsy Mae had set breakfast, a simple affair of grits and salt pork, then carried her upon his broad shoulders to a neighbor’s house before he and Betsy Mae set out across the tracks to school.
It was a warm day and he could hardly keep his mind on what the teacher was saying. Not that Mrs. Robinson ever had much to say, but just stretched out whatever she did have trying to make out that she knew everything. What was she saying about Hannibal from Africa? That's where his people came from. The day is warm. There is a fly walking on his desk. From his desk he can see the playgrounds where a few kids are running about. Hannibal is crossing the Alps on elephants. He wonders if his great-great grandfather ever rode on an elephant? It is muggy. Clouds are forming in the distance—big black clouds.

If he looks right he can see Sally but he should not look and so turns back to the playgrounds. Hannibal has stopped to rest his army in northern Italy. Sally's brother beat him up last week just for walking with her—says Negroes are no good. The breeze rustles the trees. Marcus kills Hannibal's brother. Hannibal is defeated and Mrs. Robinson rambles on. Maybe Negroes aren't any good? Oh to get out of here and run free—to play. The day is far too warm to think. Sally, so fair, so pretty. Ring the bell, for God sake ring the bell.

They were just picking up sides for a ball game when he rushed over to join them. Then he was sorry he had been so hasty. A coolness fell over the group on his approach and although he was by far the best hitter he was the last selected. He felt the disapproval of the other boys and he did not bear their coolness lightly.

He played first base and did a swell job. His two base hit with the bases loaded was received with great delight by his own team and not an unusual amount of scorn by the opposition. His real triumph came, however, in the final innings when he starred in a wonderful double play that won the game.

Everybody slapped him on the back, "Good old Jono," but when the dust cleared and the boys broke up into groups of fours and fives, to head for home or to the drugstore, he was the only one still standing on the deserted field.

Nobody had even bothered to ask if he wanted to come, not that he could afford to go to the drugstore anyway, but they could have at least asked. He folded his limp old glove, shrugged his tired shoulders and sauntered across the field to the main street, then padded his way toward the shopping area.

The pool hall was almost empty. It was far too humid for pool, nobody wanted a shine and he had hardly had to bother to pick up a cue all evening. He longed to get home, not that there was anything he wanted there, but he was sick of sitting about. The barber annoyed him with stupid comments and twice this week Chuck had hit him on the tail with a cue. By God if Chuck does it again he'll beat the living daylights out of him even if it means losing his job.
The life which was once pleasant was now becoming more complex. Once nobody called him nigger or turned him away. Growing up had caused him some problems and the burden of his race was now falling directly upon his shoulders for there was nobody to share it with.

Two hours and three pairs of shoes later he was free to leave—a dollar sixty better off, or was he? He packed away the cloths and turned out the lights in the pool hall, then walked out into the ill lit street. A cool breeze had sprung up and a fleck of dust scratched at his face. In the distance thunder rolled like the roar from some distant battlefield. He walked toward the tracks. A whistle wailed in the distance.

He paused at the rail fence along side the tracks as a long freight was rolling slowly by. He straddled the fence and sat with hunched shoulders gazing at the box cars.

**NEW YORK CENTRAL, C & O.** One might think it strange that one of his tender age should have the wander lust. **ROCK ISLAND LINE, MILWAUKEE.** After all what did he owe this town—nothing. **BALTIMORE & OHIO, UNION PACIFIC.** For that matter what did he owe any town. **GRAND TRUNK, SANTA FE.** Seldom sees mom, except on weekends, and never sees dad. **PENNSYLVANIA, GREAT WESTERN.** History test tomorrow—Hannibal was a no good nigger too. **BURLINGTON, SPOKANE, PORTLAND & SEATTLE.** What to do—what can he do? **UNION PACIFIC, NEW YORK CENTRAL.**

The rain begins to sprinkle down as he swings his young agile body over the rail and walks toward the tracks. Standing a few feet away from the cars, he can brush their steel sides with his hand—freight cars from all over the country.

The rain falls faster. The rolling stock picks up speed. As a vertical steel handrail of a refrigerator car goes by, he quickly closes his hands around it. With a jerk his feet break contact with the ground, his hands slide down the wet rail, his fingers strain, then give way, and Jonathan slips between two cars.
WEIGHT LIFTER

JAMES JORDAN
the
memory
light

The light, the light has faded
From a candle quickly burned.
The fire too soon extinguished
Wick uncharred, wax unturned.

Now all vision lies in shadow
Upon the fading of the light;
The dimness here is hallowed
All things are now as night.

Ah see, a glow burns faintly
Though the candle now is out;
It burns within our memory,
Light within, and flame without.

The ash-like shadow within us
Leaves impressions of the past;
We search life's timelessness,
Knowing memory's light will last.
DURING DARKNESS

The water, like black velvet draped in ripples and a million puppies lapping at the shore reflect the sky, an onyx curvature set with stars like diamonds and the moon like a luminous pearl.

The frogs croak like one trillion tubas hopping and the clash of fingernails and taffeta as the owl, fear of rodents, sails somber space. Ejaculated rhythms come from the legs of crickets, the skinny ugly bookies, as they cut careless capers.

Bats' wings like tiny flattened tents joined one to another rise with rueful radar, senseless to the propelled jade and turquoise fish that slither in the oxidized ornaments of time and space.
Any and every man died one day,
Not too long ago they say.
—Anyway he died.

His brides wore black
And shed a million tears, perhaps—
—Tears are hard to count.

His load of life was great
But wood is light
—Or so they say,

Compared to steel anyway.
I stepped from the bus into the clear salt-tinged air of San Francisco. It was quite a shock after the stale, smoke-smelling bus. The bus wasn't the only damn thing that smelled. After travelling cross-country on that boneshaker, I didn't smell like any rose myself. I glanced down at my scuffed shoes, the rumpled, linty dress blues.

"What a gawdawful mess," I thought, "and the first thin g I run into will be the Shore Patrol, no doubt."

'Frisco looked good in the early morning, kind of pinkish and glowing. In spite of myself, I was excited about being here. I had travelled on cross-country busses before, and knew enough to keep well fortified with liquid amnesia.

I took another look at 'Frisco, eased a few kinks, then moved into the terminal. It was nearly deserted at this hour. I waited around a few minutes until the driver and the porter stopped gassing, collected my seabag, and went looking for a coin locker. It wasn't too hard to find. I deposited the seabag, kept the small bag with my shaving gear, and wandered over to the desk to see where I could clean up. I was directed way to hell and gone to the other end of the terminal. I started in that direction, changed my mind, went back to the locker, collected a change of blues and some clean underclothes, then headed for the washroom.

The sickish, sweet smell of disinfectant turned my stomach, but I forced the sickness back. Cleaning up was a pleasure, although shaving wasn't. I had a growth of beard that was just tough enough to fight back. I slipped out of the smelly, rumpled blues, then down to the buff. After putting on clean clothes, I felt that maybe I would survive. I cocked a clean white hat saltily over one eye, and admired the reflection of myself. The females were certainly in for a treat.
I left the smell of disinfectant with relief, walking more briskly now that I didn’t resemble a graduate of skid row. The sound of eggs frying, and the aroma of coffee enticed me over to the short order counter. I fed the hangover, much to the improvement of my disposition. The head departed by stages, and life was once more worth living.

There it was waiting for me, San Francisco, the city of a thousand delights. Fabulous stories had drifted my way about 'Frisco. Today was the day to find out if the stories were true. I moved out into the clean sunlight, and hailed a passing cab.

On the way downtown, I kept my neck swiveling to take in the sights. Seen at this hour, 'Frisco seemed clean and airy. The streets were all up and down with narrow little sidestreets branching off in different directions. The cars angled into the curb so as not to fall off the hillside. Arms springing out of little boxes signalled stop and go. We came to a park across from the Federal Building, and I told the cabbie to stop.

I got out and strolled across the street to the park. I took a deep breath of growing green things. After that bus trip the air was clean and cool and wonderful. Ever have that feeling in a strange town early in the morning, before people arrive on the scene to screw-up the works? It’s a hard feeling to define, but you’re excited, glad to be alive, and feel like you own the place. And to be in San Francisco early in the morning had its own special flavor.

Human nature being what it is, I moved back across the street to a bar that was open. They wanted to see my I.D. though, so I moved on up the street to a place that wasn’t so sticky about the matter of age. The glass of beer was served in a big lager glass, the cool foam easing over the edge gently. I took a big gulp before the bartender could change his mind, and the beer shocked its way down.

I knew I was going to get a bit bored before the night blossomed into the wild party I hoped to have. As a cushion against the boredom, I sipped away at the beer, then ordered another. My poor dear Aunt would have flipped at the thought of drinking before noon, or at anytime for that matter. Auntie was a long ways away. I glanced at the clock. I wasn’t due at Alemeda Naval Air Station until the next morning at eight. This was going to be quite a day.

The cold beer made me shiver a bit in the cool barroom. I glanced at the various garish advertisements plastered around the joint. Bars are pretty much the same anywhere. I thought about the “Cave,” a little set-up joint in Memphis. Now there was a wild dive for you. I thought about the little waitress, Chris, without too much regret. God, what a lousy temper! On the other hand she had her virtues, although not in the accepted sense of the word. A stray memory of sneaking whiskey past the Marine guard at the main gate gave me a brief
chuckle. The bartender looked pretty bored. I moved out into the sunlight.

A cab took me down to the Matson Line pier. I got out and began walking toward Fisherman’s Wharf. I’d heard about the Wharf of course, and wanted to see for myself. The sun was beginning to give out some heat. That, and the beer, made me a little lightheaded, just enough so that I didn’t give a damn. I kicked a stone into the street, feeling good. The high walls enclosing Matson’s pier were lined with trucks loading and unloading supplies, and big boxes of god-knows-what. The place was showing plenty of activity.

I moved along the sidewalk until I came to the wharf where the fishing boats were at berth. They bounced up and down in the easy swell. The sun sent silver streaks across the water, making it difficult to look at it directly. The smell of fish and salt mingled. It was a living, heady smell. I sauntered along the sidewalk, feeling light on my feet. I took another deep breath of honest-to-god salt air, and felt sorry for the poor slobs who worked for a living and couldn’t enjoy a morning like this.

A kid with a ’shine kit was sitting on the curb hoping for an early morning customer. I obliged him. He had his work cut out for him with those shoes. The kid finished and looked hopeful, so I gave him an extra quarter. Why not? It was that kind of day. I talked with the kid awhile, just killing time. We sat with our legs dangling over the edge of the sea-wall. I asked him some idiot questions, and he was nice enough to pretend that they were worthy of an answer. The heat was building up now in the still, calm air. I got up and started walking again.

I wandered into Di Maggio’s, wondering whether to eat early, or to have another brew. So I had another brew, and struck up a conversation with the barmaid. She was a pig, but friendly enough and I enjoyed her chatter. She knew plenty of ribald stories about the Wharf area. I spent the rest of the morning just gassing, kidding her along a bit, the way you will when you’ve got lots of time, and no particular place to spend it. She kept the beer flowing and I bought her a couple. She looked like a hog getting swilled when she downed them, but like I said, I didn’t have anything better to do just then.

It was getting around noon, so I decided to chow down. There were some live lobsters crawling around in a tank just waiting to be dropped into a boiling tub of water, so I ordered the complete lobster dinner. Business was picking up a bit, and the buzz of low conversation was pleasant. I sipped on a glass of beer, and wondered how that lobster felt scalding in the water. I didn’t dwell on the thought very long. The waitress brought the salad over, and I began the meal. The lobster was delicious, with that fresh, sharp taste that really takes some getting used to. The salad was crisp and cold, with a roquefort dressing, and
there was a baked potato with some sort of cheese sauce. I took my time eating, enjoying the food, and the pleasant glow I’d acquired.

I finished eating, took a look around the room, saw that there were no unattached females present, and decided to leave. I paid the bill, pleasantly surprised that it was so inexpensive. I would have to come back to Di Maggio’s again. The barmaid gave me a bright smile as I left. What next, was the question that came to mind. Well, I could always take in a movie.

I started walking back uptown, with the hot sun making my dress blues like a steaming coat of mail. By the time I got to Market Street, my breath was coming in short gasps, and my legs felt like lead bars. I stopped under the street sign, and regained my wind. I used the time to take a better look at the business section of San Francisco. Yellow taxis darted in and out of traffic with horns blaring. Pedestrians darted across streets, taking their lives in their own hands while doing so. People bustled up and down the street impatiently. There was no doubt about it, ’Frisco was a live town.

I wandered up the street looking in store windows, and just generally taking my time. A salesman from one of the jewelry stores tried to fast-talk me into buying a ring for my girl back home. I let him waste his breath for a while before I told him to shove it. Laughing, I moved up the street.

A movie featuring Sheree North caught my eye, so I purchased a ticket, and walked into the cool darkness. It wasn’t a very good picture, but the scenery was shapey. I munched on popcorn, which began to fight with the lobster. I heaved the bag of stale popcorn down on the floor in disgust. God, but the plot of the movie was terrible. I sat it out with resignation thinking that the bars wouldn’t really start roaring until early evening.

After emerging from the movie, I decided to get a couple of hamburgers at a nearby restaurant. Having filled up the chinks, I felt much better. The glow I’d had in the morning had by this time left me completely. I decided to remedy the situation with a cooling drink. A small bar down the street aroused my interest, so I moved in that direction.

The bar was a small supper club, with a minute dance floor, and a raised bandstand, with room for a small combo at most. The interior was dimly lighted with small colored bulbs. There were a few people sipping on drinks at the tables. I moved up to the bar, and ordered a scotch and soda from the bartender. I sat huddled over the drink for quite a while, waiting for something to happen. Nothing did occur for some time, then business began to pick up, and couples began to drift into the bar. Most of the couples moved to the tables, but one couple went to the bar and ordered double shots. The girl was a lush brunette, with a proud prow, and a well-rounded stern. She was wear-
ing a dress made with some type of body-hugging, shimmering cloth. She was a very sexy doll. The jerk she was with was a rugged type. He was smooth enough, but I didn’t think I would care to test the kindness of his heart. There was something dark and slightly sinister about the guy. I took more interest in the girl, but guardedly, since I didn’t want to tangle with the boy friend.

A small combo moved over to the bandstand and began to tune up. More people began to drift into the club. The combo played a few standard tunes, and got a brief scattering of applause. The bartender looked at my empty glass with questioning eyes and I nodded. The combo began to swing some Brubeck arrangements, and I started to burn inside with the hopped-up driving beat of the bass. The man on piano had a glazed look in his eye, but he pounded the keys with driving force. Music is a weakness with me. Play hot, sensuous jazz and I get crazy urges. I began to stare at the girl more openly. She knew I was looking, and didn’t seem to mind. She even seemed to like it. I could see that the music was getting through to her by the way she moistened her lips and kept time with her body. The boy friend just wasn’t with it. He kept urging her to leave. She wouldn’t go. The guy finally got up, and headed for the can. I decided to make time while I had the opportunity. We were just getting cozy when Ugly returned. Christ, was he burned.

“Mack, you just get your ass out of here before you get hurt,” he said, as he loomed over me.

“Now look buddy, I don’t want any trouble. I was just making conversation. You know how it is,” I explained. I didn’t get a chance to talk my way out of it, because he just hauled off and knocked me flat off the bar stool.

I don’t like being hit even when I deserve it. I came off the floor groggily, and when he reached out to let me have it again, I kicked him square in the crotch. He doubled up, gasping hard. Like a damn fool, I stepped back, figuring everything was over. God, it had just begun. He pulled a switch-blade on me, and still bent over, lunged at me with the blade held cutting edge up. This guy knew his business. I got out of the way, but not before he cut hell out of my jumper. I grabbed a beer bottle from the bar, and smashed it on the counter. Some damn fool woman kept screaming. Christ, why didn’t the cops come? The guy was being cagy now, circling toward me, the blade kept straight out, his other arm extended to ward off any move I might make.

I crouched low, and kept the jagged beer bottle out in front of me, backing off, just trying to keep distance between us. I wished like crazy that I had had a knife. All I could do with the bottle was mark him up while his knife could finish me for good. He made a quick slashing thrust, keeping himself well covered. I slashed downward
with the bottle. Blood spurted from his hand, but he kept on coming at me. A quick flash of the knife laid my left arm open. How in hell had I gotten into this mess anyway?

The bastard followed up with another thrust, this time he laid my cheek open. I moved in fast, and shoved the broken bottle in his face, grinding it in, flesh shredded redly. He gave an anguished shriek and dropped the knife. I stepped back, sick. He was a gory, screaming mess. Other than his sick screaming, it was quiet; a shocked, stunned silence. I ran.

The cool damp air hit me as I stumbled into the night. Oh god, I was in bad trouble. My arm was throbbing with pain, but the wound on my face didn’t seem to be too bad. I realized that I was still carrying the bottle, and I smashed the damn thing against a wall. People in the street turned toward the sound of the breaking glass. I dashed down the street, then cut between two buildings. I went into the washroom of a gas station, my brain beginning to function. I knew that I was risking arrest if I didn’t get some of the blood cleaned off me. A glance in the mirror showed that the cut on my cheek was just a scratch. I thought sure the guy had laid me wide open. My arm, though, was a different matter. It was going to require some attention. I cleaned up as best I could, even taking time to comb my hair, and scrubbed my face. I didn’t want to leave anything that would show that I was in trouble. I wrapped paper towels around my arm, and buttoned the cuff of my sleeve, took another look in the mirror, and then stepped outside.

I hailed down a cab, and told him to take me to the bus terminal. I knew now what I had to do. The first thing was to get out of this bloodstained clothing. Fortunately I was wearing blues instead of dress whites, and the blood didn’t show in the darkness.

We cruised by the bar where crowds of people were being shoved back by police. I slouched low in the seat. The cabbie made some comments about the commotion, but I just mumbled a few words in reply, and he didn’t go on with it.

At the terminal, I opened the locker and retrieved my seabag, then carried it to the washroom. I changed back into my filthy, dirty set of blues, and stuffed the bloody clothing way down into the bag. My arm was still bleeding, so I tore a strip of cloth toweling from the wall and made a crude bandage with it. Then I moved into the lobby again. I crossed the lobby trying to keep from staggering. I went outside and caught another cab to the Air Station.

I managed to get past the Marine guard without any trouble, although I had a bad moment when he leaned over to check my leave papers. He smelled the liquor on my breath, but just grinned and passed me through after telling me the direction to the squadron barracks. Th taxi left me at the barracks, and I walked in. The lights
were out, so I nosed around looking for an empty bunk. Finding one, I dropped my seabag on it, and went to the head, where I was violently sick.

I went back to the bunk, took the bloody blues out of my seabag and took them outside to a trash burner. I lit the pile of paper that was in the burner, and threw the blues on top of the flames. Now all I had to worry about was the arm. I knew damn well that a search would be made for a sailor with cuts on his body, but if I could keep out of sickbay maybe I wouldn't get caught. I went back in the barracks, and located the first-aid kit. I patched up the arm as best I could. I could only hope that his knife had been clean.

I sit on my bunk smoking a cigarette, wondering just what in hell went wrong. The day had started out with so much promise. Now, God alone knows how this is going to end. All I can do is report in, in the morning, and hope that the cops won't locate me before my carrier leaves for Korea. I don't think that I'm going to get any sleep tonight.
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