Fall 1960

Calliope Fall 1960

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CALLIOPE
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Jim Jordan  
John Church  
Cover adapted for printing by Joy Harrison
"There is something in the autumn that is native to my blood." Autumn—when our Garden of Eden draws near the cloak of winter, shedding the dress of summer—is the most beautiful of seasons. Leaves of autumn, like the flowers of spring, add to the beauty of fall. Autumn leaves are etched into the mind as a little piece of fall, combining and merging with the season to bring out its integral, intrinsic beauty. The cold days of an October sun burn away the early morning sparkling silver-white shield of dew to reveal frost-nipped leaves drenched in autumnal hues. The rampant reds, purples, and yellows scream out their gauntlet of colors, if only for a moment. Then, one by one, they loosen their grasp and float serenely downward, laying a carpet of unrivaled richness. The once copious canopy of foliage has been transformed to a shroud of crisp, crackling leaves ready to be kindled into a roaring bonfire. Eager hands rake the leaves of the oak, the ash, the maple, into ridges—into piles—into mountains, brown and lifeless. Children, pink tinged ears with mittened hands, scamper through, crawl into, roll over, and play on these mounds of amusement with the greatest of gusto. Time after time handfuls of leaves are thrown into the air, blown and scattered—for sheer pleasure. Finally, as dusk approaches, they are again in a leafy conical pile ready for the torch. A match, a spark, a glow—a wisp of piercing smoke curls up—suddenly a flame bursts out. The first burns its way forward leaping from leaf to leaf. Like Mount Vesuvius, the whole pile is engulfed in tongues of fire. As chestnuts begin to snap and crack, bang and burst like the 4th of July, the shimmering heat of the bonfire disseminates the chill of evening. Then slowly, ever so slowly the fire recedes, retreats to the heart of the porous pile, eating itself up as it goes, leaving skeleton-like forms on translucent ashes to the mercy of the night. The leaves of autumn are gone. They have served their purpose well.
Vacancy

Sun laced the room
With its burning strands,
Piercing walls crumbled
Under shattering shadow,
The black pulsing
Veining all form
And throbbing, like death,
In the breath of dust.

The steady blaze of glass
Kindled a living fire,
All in motion flaming
Illusion of reality; then,
From dust was roused
The spectre to promise
Of life, breathed
On the window and
Pressed to the pane.

There was no delight,
There was no pain,
Only a cold indifferent
Barrier standing blankly
Against dust and breath;
Dust settled endlessly,
Breathlessly, on the web,
Dust that had not
Been turned to clay.
He
Comes
In ebon darkness and spreads the shadow of his brooding
Wings around me. He hovers o'er me, beating his
Wings against my face, his "pinions wounding
Me," his talons tearing at my soul, his beak pecking
At my heart, and pulling forth the memories
Burrowed there. They wail in pain, he
Answers with his taunting cry, then swoops
And perches in my hair, and bends
his head to drink
My tears.
He walked alone along the shore that night as he had done every night for nearly three decades. He told himself that it was no different now; the lake was still sighing breathlessly as the waves slid quietly onto the sand. The beach itself had changed little; the dunes had shifted but not enough so that anyone who hadn’t grown up with them as he had would notice. But it was different—the watermelon rinds hadn’t been floating in the water before, and he couldn’t remember noticing any bathing cap straps lying on the shore, half buried and twisted around a beer can. Even the waves dashed back from the shore as if the land were cold and frightening.

Maybe it was the summer people, the ones that had bought his lot near the road for their hotel. At the time it seemed that he could be doing little harm. He had had to move his shack closer to the lake, but the shoreline was his favorite of places. The money was useful, too; in fact it was necessary because he had had to pay the taxes that he had been ignoring. He grumbled at just the thought of taxes. Paying someone else for land he owned. He wouldn’t have done it if they hadn’t threatened to take all his land away. Yes, maybe the summer people were responsible for changing his shore. What kind of people were they, destroying the natural beauty of life? The young ones may have done it; only the week before he had been out in the dunes and had found a foot trail. It was against his principles to follow a trail, but this time his curiosity got the best of him. As he walked he had seen the glow of a fire, and then found himself in the midst of a group of teenagers. The scrambled from under blankets and tried to hide beer cans and cases. One of the boys had offered him a beer, saying that a man needed pink elephants for company when he was alone in the desolate dunes. The old man had just murmured and walked away toward the lake.

Much as he hated to blame everything on the youngsters, it couldn’t have been the older summer people that had changed his lake; they didn’t come down to the beach itself more than once a season. A swimming pool had been built behind the resort on the second lot he sold. He had questioned the resort owner about the necessity of a pool so near the lake. Evidently the quarter mile walk through the dunes was too much of an effort for the older folks. Huh, he had already walked over a mile down the shore and hadn’t even noticed the time nor the effort. All he had noticed was the night air; it was strangely warm, almost stifling.
A wave slid against his foot, stealing the sand from beneath it. As he sat down to take off his shoes, he remembered how he and his brother had gone without shoes all summer, how they ran and splashed through the waves and tumbled down the dunes. The thought of his brother brought tears to his eyes; their favorite place as boys had been the hill with the towering white pines at its peak. It was gone now, and so was his brother. The old man had had to sell the lot with the hill for money, money he needed, money for his brother's funeral. His brother had taken a job with a construction firm and had been working on the roof of a high building when he had fallen, fallen to his death while doing something he didn't believe in. The old man looked up at the hill. It didn't seem as high as it had when he was young. The twin pines were gone, replaced by a large modern house and carport; a house with drapes drawn over a picture window facing the lake.

As he sat there the air seemed to get thicker. It must be the smoke from the road builders, but even they must stop sometime; they wouldn't be working this late at night. The thought of a four-lane highway touching even a corner of his land—what had been his land—made him feel sick inside. He could see the young man from the U. S. Highway Commission as if he were standing in front of him now. He had fired questions at the old man faster and faster until his speech was but a jumble of swear words. The old man knew what the government man was there for; he had heard the summer folk talk of how wonderful it would be to have a U. S. highway come almost to their door, how it would make the trip to town so much faster and easier. He had taken the young man's first offer; he didn't need the money nor did he want it. According to the government, he couldn't have the land, so he blindly signed the deed.

He wept, wept as he sat on the thin strip of land that was left. The air was hot. Hot enough to smother a man.
THOMAS A. DONOVAN

Around this Beauty; Night

Willows sound a whistle,  
To the frosty morn;  
Reeds of windy passage,  
Wake the starting dawn.

Willows sweetly whisper,  
Careless notes till noon;  
Guides of winding pathways,  
Drive the flaming ruin.

Willows sweetly whisper,  
Chants of joy today;  
They sing of seeing Beauty,  
In a drying day.

Willows softly swaying,  
Know our joy tonight;  
We meet in silent sleep,  
Around this Beauty, Night.  
We meet in silent sleep,  
Around this Beauty; Night.
For Someone’s Sake

Rained-on-Rats: Crawl in gutters-gray; Scrimp and scrap for food and pay and curse at those who do not; Scurry from the flood and run to run to hide in stoned-up-goods, alone, to eat their rotting meat.

Rained-on-Rats: Rule the frozen snow; Scratch and crucify the call and rant at those who do not; Scurry from the pack and run to run to hide in snowed-up-goods, alone, to eat their rotten meat.

For Someone’s Sake:

Melt, Warm, Cherish the Voice Who Cries in Beauty’s call And can not move at all. at all.
Epilogue

(a dialogue between the queen and gardener)

“For God’s sake, let us sit upon the ground”
And talk of gentle Richard, crucified.

He lived a life far greater than the men
Who loved the bitter battle and the blood.

But rebels wounded him with horse’s hoofs
And horse’s hoofs must leave a hard, cruel scar.

But use these scars to his advantage Queen,
He loved the image that they did envoke.

“God save the King” and no man cried Amen.
Would no Amen reach highest heaven’s ears?

Ah then! Let gentle Richard save himself.
He led a life of virtue and of grace.

“But dust was thrown upon his sacred head”
His sacred tears then turned the dust to mud.

But mud then made a life mask of his face
In memory of the gentle poet King.

“Mine eyes are filled with tears, I cannot see”
For gentle Richard’s gone, he lives no more.

Then dry your tears, my queen, for he once said,
“We’ll make foul weather with despised tears.”
It was the first Saturday after his eighth birthday. He was leaning over the lower section of the cowbarn door, shooting his new pump-gun at tin cans in the barnyard, and watching the sun clear the rows of corn stubs on the horizon of the hill—when the first cry of the cow came down to him on the morning air.

At first he was not sure of the sound; there was no other noise except the occasional shuffling of animals in their stalls and the sporadic clatter of the milking machine as his father moved it from cow to cow. But then the cry came again, low and bleating, each utterance complete and final, shattering the silence. He turned to his father, who had heard the cry and paused waiting for the recoil of the sound.

"It's old man Fisher's cow," he said to the boy, anticipating his question. "She must be calving."

The boy looked out over the half door in the direction of the cries. He could see the dark roof of Fisher's barn protruding on the horizon of corn stubs. He watched the roof-top as if waiting for a sign, and listened closely to the constant cries of the cow; then he abruptly turned away from the door and walked back to where his father was finishing the milking.

They took the milk cans over to the milk house. The wind was stronger now; it blew down on the boy, cutting his thin face, bringing tears to his eyes.

"She really seems in trouble," his father said, coming out of the milk house and looking in the direction of Fisher's farm. "Maybe we'll drive up there a little later. What do think, boy?" He rubbed his hand roughly, playfully, across the top of the boy's head, and walked passed him toward the house.

The boy watched his father walk slowly up the hill, then cradling the pump gun in his arms, he turned and headed toward the small creek behind the barn. It wasn't much of a creek. Just a dried up hollow that cut across the lower section of their land. Most of the year it was dry, but in April, when the snow melted and the spring rains started, it caught and carried off the water that washed down the hill. Now, in November, the creek was dry, filled only with matted leaves and driftwood.

The boy moved up the creek to a clump of tall pines which grew along the bank. He could see small sparrows cluttered in the branches, looking, from that distance, like tiny balls of dark cotton. When he began to shoot at the birds he couldn't hit them at first; they flew off in crazy circles as the pellets whizzed past them. He was just growing
tired of his game when a pellet caught a bird, sending it tumbling through the bare branches onto the bank of the creek, among the dry leaves.

Holding his gun majestically, glorying in his kill, he walked over to it. The bird flipped convulsively in the brown leaves as its life drained out. Then it lay still, panting, blood trickling from its beak. It stretched its ruffled neck once, gasped for air, and died, freezing into a numb form. The boy felt nauseated at the sight. Straightening up quickly, he glanced around to see if anyone was watching. With his left foot he kicked leaves up over the bird; he did it swiftly, and turning, walked back up the hollow to the barn.

His father was waiting for him at the barn door and the boy wondered if he had seen him kill the sparrow.

"I'm going up to see Fisher's cow," his father said. "If you want to come, put your gun in the house. I'll wait for you in the truck."

The boy ran to the house and put his gun inside the back door; then he went down to where the truck was parked next to the chicken coop and climbed up beside his father.

Fisher's farm was two miles from their house. A group of wooden buildings isolated in the center of flat corn land. When his father turned the truck off the highway and up the dirt road, the boy could see the cars and trucks of other farmers parked in the yard between the house and the barn.

His dad parked the truck, and, climbing out, walked across to the farmers, grouped around the cow by the barn door. The boy hurried after his father, grabbing him by the trouser pocket.

The farmers turned away from the cow as the two approached, and clearing apart, let them pass inside the circle. It was a big brown Swiss, secure in a stanchion and with its four legs tied together with rope. The boy could see Bill Jerkins' oldest son, Clifford, standing directly behind the cow. It was when the boy followed his father around the circle that he noticed Clifford had his hand and arm stuck up inside the cow.

"Do you feel anything?" a small, stout man asked.

The boy suddenly felt sick, and he clutched his stomach, breathing deeply to ward off the squeamish feeling.

"Can you feel the head?" the stout man asked. He was a huge faced man with heavy layers of skin rolled down his short neck. He looked from the cow to the farmers who formed the circle. "My hands are just too damn big," he said, almost in apology. "I can't get in there."

"Old Clifford's doing all right, Doc," one of the men said, "but then, he has lots of practice." The men laughed, and the man who had said it looked at their faces and grinned widely with tobacco stained teeth.
“Well, it ain’t never felt like this before,” Clifford answered, picking the cigarette from between his thick lips. They laughed again and the boy glanced curiously at their faces, then at his father, who was staring at the cow.

“What’s the matter with the cow, Doc?” his father asked.

“It’s the calf, Mr. Warren; he’s setting wrong. She won’t drop him.”

The cow cried again, pulling at the ropes and swinging her head around to look at Clifford. Her eyes were brown and wild. The hurt inside her, it seemed to the boy, balanced itself in her eyes. She cried again, extending her neck in the stanchion, pushing the pain out as far as she could.

“Where’s Fisher?” his father asked.

“He’s up in the house,” the veterinarian answered. “He doesn’t want me to do anything Mr. Warren. When he called me over this morning he told me I couldn’t touch her; he just wanted me to tell him what was the matter. Maybe you might go talk with him and see if he’ll let me work on her. She’ll die, otherwise.” He watched the boy’s father through small, sorry eyes that hid in the heavy dark skin of his face.

“Maybe Fisher is scared you’ll do the same thing to the cow as that doctor did to his wife,” one of the farmers said. “He ain’t never got over that.”

“Well, I’ll go talk with him anyway, Doc. Maybe I can reason with him.”

His father, turning straight around, dropped his hand gently on the boy’s shoulder and directed him to follow. They walked silently up the slight hill toward the barren farmhouse that stood frozen against the November winds. The boy listened attentively to the sound of their feet on the hard ground, and when they stepped up onto the porch, the hollow noise their shoes made, walking to the door. His dad knocked on the broken screen door and stood back, patiently waiting for it to open.

The boy drew his coat tightly around him and faced away from the wind, which whipped around the corner of the house. It was colder now. The sun had slid behind snow clouds and as he looked back across the yard he saw the shadow descend on the cow and men. It came first across the corn fields, then the trees and the yard, engulfing them, and then ran up the side of the barn out of sight.

The door of the house opened slightly and his father spoke friendly to two white flashes of eyes which appeared in the small opening.

“Morning, Sadie, I’d like to see Mr. Fisher, if he isn’t busy.”

The door opened slowly, cautiously, and his father pulled back the broken screen door and stepped back, patiently waiting for it to open.

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“Morning, Sadie, I’d like to see Mr. Fisher, if he isn’t busy.”

The door opened slowly, cautiously, and his father pulled back the broken screen door and stepped into the house.

It was dark in the room and the boy caught the strong animal odors as he stepped inside. As his eyes adjusted to the darkness, he noticed
that they were in the kitchen and that it had been a colored woman who had opened the door.

"The old man is in the front room." She said walking away from them. Her voice flowed like music and the boy was startled by the sound of it. He had never heard a Negro's voice sound so lovely.

A chicken flew up from the floor and landed on the table. It walked gallantly across piles of dirty dishes until the woman grabbed a broom and slapped the bird off the table.

"Place full of damn animals," she muttered, kicking out at a small dog lying under the sink. She turned around and looked at the boy and his father. "I told you he's in the front room." She tried to snap out the words, but they came through her thick lips mellowed and lyric.

"Thanks, Sadie," his dad answered, nodding and smiling, "we'll be out of your way in a minute."

His father, holding his hand, crossed behind the kitchen table, and walked down a long dark hall toward the front room.

Unlike the kitchen, the front room was large and well lighted by two windows which looked out on the barn. There were a few pieces of furniture scattered around. In the center of the room sat Fisher, in an old rocking chair. He was a small man with a tiny head resting uncertainly on a long neck. The blue working overalls which he wore hung loosely on his body.

"Morning, Mr. Fisher," his father said when they came into the room.

Fisher glanced up quizzically and studied them, then he motioned toward two chairs.

"Morning, Warren," he said, after they had settled themselves. His voice was brittle and bird-like. They were quiet again. The boy, sitting close to his father, watched the hollow cheeks of the old man move slowly in and out like a shrunken bellows.

"How about a drink?" Fisher asked his dad, not looking at him, but moving back and forth in the rocker.

"Oh, no sir," his father answered, waving off the suggestion.

Fisher nodded and then tilting his head back shouted.

"Sadie . . . Sadie . . . come here." He settled back then into the rocker. "That damn woman," he muttered. "Ain't worth the money I give her."

Heavy shuffling footsteps came down the hall and the bulky form of Sadie appeared in the doorway.

"What the hell you want?"

"Bring me a bottle of whisky, the good stuff, and some cups." He pulled up in the chair and glared at the woman. "And hurry about it!"

She stood regarding him with white, flashing eyes, then, turning, she said softly, as if only to reassure herself, "I ain't no nigger slave."
"The veterinarian wants to know about the cow, Mr. Fisher," his father said, after the woman had left.
"I ain't going to be telling him all day."
"What's that?"
"Nothing." He jerked the word out.
"She'll die. Have you heard her out there?" His dad's voice rose as he pointed toward the barn.
Fisher pulled himself painfully from the chair and walked crippled up over to the window which looked out across the yard.
"That cow has been giving me nothing but trouble since I got her. Now she has got a calf stuck up inside her all wrong. Well, let her die; let her die." He turned around and looked at the boy and his father. "Look at them," he said, spitting out the words and pointing toward the barn, "all of them out there waiting to violate that goddamn cow. Well, let them wait till they freeze up like corn stubs; they won't touch her." He walked slowly back from the window and sank exhaustedly into the rocking chair.
Sadie came back into the room carrying the bottle and two cups.
"Do you want one for the boy?" she asked.
"No," Fisher answered quickly. "The boy's too young; he'll have enough time for that without my encouragement."
The woman handed his father the cup, filled it half way with whiskey, and then walked over to the old man. Holding the cup herself, she filled it full with whiskey and then gave it to him.
"You're going to lose both the cow and calf," his father said again to Fisher, "If you don't let the vet . . ."
"That fat old slop," the old man said. "Him and his dirty hands. I'd rather have it die than let him at her." He pulled himself up in the chair. "She wouldn't die, anyway," he added with conviction.
"All right; I'll tell the vet." His Dad stood up and set the cup of whiskey down on the chair.
"I'll tell him myself," Fisher interjected, starting to rise.
"No, you ain't," Saide called from the hallway entrance. "You ain't leaving that chair." She pointed at him to remain seated.
"I'll do what I damn please," he shouted back, his weak voice betraying him.
"I ain't having you go out there and die of cold. As long as I'm working for you and trying to keep you alive, you'll listen to me." She stood big and motionless in the entrance of the hall.
Fisher watched her for a moment.
"Is this the way you'll beat me? . . . waiting till I'm too crippled to fight back? After all these years of living off me. I should have thrown you out with that bastard son long ago." He turned away from the woman and said to himself, "But you live to regret those weak
moments . . . take pity on someone and they'll stay around long enough to humiliate you for it.” Fisher stopped then, cutting off his rage and turning looking at the boy. “Remember that, boy! Don’t take pity on any of the sons-of-bitches.” He sat quiet in the chair, his small hands grabbing the arms of the rocker in desperate determination.

The boy and his father followed the colored woman down the hall and back into the kitchen. When his father went to open the back door the woman spoke to him.

“You mustn’t mind the old man; he ain’t feeling well.”

His father nodded and said he understood, then opened the door. It was still cold and the cry of the cow hit the boy again.

They walked down to the grouped men in silence and when they reached them his father slackened off his pace and stopped.

“Fisher said to leave the cow alone,” his father told them, raising his voice so that they all could hear. “He said he doesn’t want the cow violated.”

“She'll die,” the veterinarian stated flatly, and the boy noticed the corners of his small eyes sparkle with tears.

“The old man’s crazy,” Clifford butted in. He had his arm out of the cow and the boy saw traces of blood dried up on the elbow of his right arm which he had missed when cleaning himself. “Let’s go ahead and turn the calf around.”

“No,” the vet answered, turning slowly and gathering his equipment. “We’ll leave her alone. It’s Fisher’s cow; let her die.”

“Come on, son,” his father touched the boy’s head, “there isn’t anything we can do here.”

The boy followed his father up to the truck, looking back only once at the cow. She was standing quietly in the stanchion with swelling pregnancy, let alone to die.

When they reached home the boy left his father and ran across the yard to the barn where he picked up a shovel, then he walked down to the hollow where he had hidden the sparrow under the leaves. He had forgotten exactly where he had buried the bird and it took a few minutes of shifting the leaves carefully before he found it again. He dug a hole in the ground, and lifting the still bird with the shovel, dropped it into the hole. Then he filled the hole and covered it over with leaves. He wanted to do it thoroughly, completely, so that tomorrow he would not know where the hole was located.

When he had finished he ran back to the barn and replaced the shovel, wiping the dirt off it so there would be no trace of digging. He suddenly felt very relieved, and sighing deeply, started to walk back up to the house. It was then that he noticed the cow had stopped crying. The crying was there in the wind, strong and constant as it had been since he first heard it, and now it had stopped. He glanced around, looking over the horizon at the black roof for a sign, an
explanation, but there was only silence and the cold November wind.
He started again to walk slowly toward the house, trying to reason out what had happened that morning. He did not understand. He did not understand old man Fisher sitting crippled in his rocker, nor Sadie, big and motionless, with a voice like music standing in the dark hallway. He did not understand what it was to violate the cow or anyone else, nor why the veterinarian with his fat hands cried because he could not help the cow. He did not understand any of these things, nor did he understand why it hurt him so to see the small sparrow lying still in the dry brown leaves.
He stepped slowly up onto the back porch of his house as the sun broke through the clouds. It was high in the sky now, and brighter than it had been that morning. He wished, standing alone on the porch and remembering the morning, that he had not begun the day.

DIANA SCHELLENBERG

Terminus

Where have I walked? In a fearsome wood
Where briared, gnarled giants stood
In dreary twilight solitude,
Dying without the sun;

A mountain wasteland, blackened, scarred,
A land so desolate and marred
It offered not the scant reward
Of even a sweet bird song.

Unearthly cries in the deadened air
Rode each chill wind that touched me there
And tangled round me like a snare:
“Come, die with us here!”
A winnowed tree 'gainst a moonful sky,
The blue-white night,

Loneliness and I

All stood watching worlds drive by.

Inwhimsoned by the heavensome crowd,
In wonderment I asked aloud,
  "What Systemed Unification
Binds God and Man and Heaven?
  "What Natural Legislation
Governs Morning, Man, and Me?
  "What Divine Ordination

Summons Nature's flow . . .
  but Silence mocked,
    "rocks in space and a dead tree!
      you're quite mad, you know."
c. c. gasta

new highways

the lemmings have guides now—
they shuffle slowly.
(sometimes they push or scratch)

I saw a man contort once.
his hands clawed God,
his voice searched sky, garbling hatelove.

fascinating!

we gasped, flannel thrown at us,
muttered first and then shout shoved
at his writhing hairy nakedness.
we didn’t terror though, when he stripped the plastic skin
at us.
we remembered, soothed him.
we’re good at this.

the gray mass moves,
no more blood-coursing rush,
and I anguish why that sea seems reluctant?
they don’t jump — they slip off.
the man? he’s smooth and happy and shuffling now.

only the damned vomit life.
Frank Shumann sat crouched in a ditch, his rifle in his hands. He wondered what was behind the hedgerow in front of him. He could hear the sound of exploding mortar and the spurts of machine-gun fire behind him. He was terribly frightened. He slowly extended his gaze from one end to the other of the hedgerow; he spotted an opening and decided to make for that opening. He crawled along the ditch, trying to make as little noise as possible on the fallen leaves, stopped in front of the opening, looked around and then scurried through. What the hell, a graveyard! He dropped behind a gravestone and peered carefully around the right corner. He saw no movement. He turned back and twisted his six-foot frame into a sitting position, his back leaning against the stone. He laid his rifle across his legs and removed his battered helmet. His dark hair was matted and badly in need of cutting. He rubbed his dirty hand across his grimy, bearded cheek. He looked around and noticed broken and shattered gravestones that were covered with dirt and filth. He knew that someday the war would end, but the collection would be bigger. He turned his gaze upward and watched the wind tear the dead leaves from their branches. Once they had been green and fresh, but now the wind carried them to earth, to dust . . .

He was tired. How long had it been since he had had sleep? Was it a day, two, or three? He wanted so badly to go home. Home wasn’t a big town, just a small farm town where you knew everybody. It was a funny town in a way. In the summer the streets were always crowded with transit workers, but then again, with the beginning of fall, like now, the streets were practically deserted. The one and only drug store was out of date but there were plenty of taverns, modern too. God, what he wouldn’t do for a beer, just one beer. Joe, his younger brother, liked beer too. Poor Joe. He was in the war, too. He said that he’d be one of the lucky ones to go home; he just knew he would. Yeh, Joe was right, but poor Joe; he went home in a box, a stinkin’ pine box; just like Frank’s whole company, wiped out, dead. How cruel this war was, how damn cruel . . .

Off in the right corner of the graveyard, perhaps fifty yards in back of Frank, Klaus Schmidt crawled noiselessly behind a gravestone. He was tired, so dead tired. He propped his rifle against the grave-
stone and then leaned his tired body back. He removed his helmet, laid it on the ground and then, as befitting a tired man, he ran his hands through his blond hair. He pulled his knees up and dropped his head on them. He closed his eyes for a few minutes, then suddenly jerked up. What had he heard? He looked around carefully but saw nothing. His nerves were jumpy from constant fear and lack of sleep; but he didn’t dare go to sleep; it might cost him his life. Maybe that wouldn’t be so bad after all. No, he loved life too much, and he wanted to get home to his wife in Bonn. They had only been married for two years, two wonderful years. Klaus was soon to be a father, maybe he was already, he didn’t know. He wondered if it would be a boy or girl, but Klaus really didn’t care. He just wanted this damn war over before the baby came. What could a baby do in wartime? Not a thing. There’d be no place to play or grow up decently. He wouldn’t even be able to take the kid on picnics. What fun’s a picnic with nothing but rubble and ruins to look at? Tears began to form in his eyes. He bowed his head and the pent up tears burst forth as water from a broken dam. His tired body shook with each oncoming flood.

. . . Frank snapped back to reality with a start. He grabbed his rifle and got to his knees. He huddled behind the stone and carefully put his helmet back on his head. He peered cautiously around, but seeing nothing he settled back once again to his sitting position. He’d give anything to stand up, walk aimlessly across the graveyard and out onto the road. Just walk away. Well, why couldn’t he? There was no one here anyway, no one but the dead. Out of habit though, he sat there motionless, trying to decide. He firmly clutched his rifle in his hands and sat in a position much as a little boy who wanted to get a closer look at the treasured toy he held in his hands.

. . . Klaus lifted his head and rubbed his hand across his tear-stained face. His face was left smudgy from the tears and the filth on his hand. He suddenly stood full upright. He didn’t know where he was going; he only knew that he had to get out of this damn collection field. Everywhere, everywhere were constant reminders of death. He turned and began walking toward the road. A light wind began to spring up, tearing the leaves from their trees. Klaus had a sudden chill. Suddenly not fifteen yards in front of him a man stood up. Both saw each other at the same time. It appeared as though they were going to speak, for they stood facing each other for almost a full minute. Almost instinctively, Frank fired. Klaus was knocked backward by the impact of the bullet that ripped a path into his stomach. He slumped to the ground, and with his last effort he squeezed the trigger of his rifle and watched the American drop to his knees, then over on his face.

The wind was brisk now. The dying and dead leaves whirled and swirled and covered the ground much like the lid on a box.
A Figurine finished
A painted portrait
Stable, sure
Moments stunned in time

But what is flux

Two figures in the evening dusk,
Talking. Not certain they wish,
But still searching other thoughts.
She the dreamer thinking,
Can we hold these moments new.
He the thinker dreaming,
Where will it all lead.
After the moments, the casual view.

She glanced at him, and away.
Then: can he have the next day?
No, sorry.

Stunned.

Were the moments too, then, stunned?
The frozen comment,
Her halting in the hall.

So he resigns, in kind, to wait.
To stand silent for the time.
Till her awakening of
What they are not.
Figurines,
Nor portraits fixed
In paint.
November

Our roofwater-rainwater drips
Into the brownleaf bed.
The slate sky settles, wetting
The leaves now dead.
The trees whip, nodding truth
To the steady wind blowing
Down from the
Northern latitudes.

The seawater-slatecolor clouds
Run before the steady wind.
It dries the leaves and
Leaves the tree still bowed.

I wait the rising moon.
It comes, tacking against
The Northern wind,
Watching the land and me.

Haiku

Cool morning, The air
Is crystal above the lake.
The red leaves whisper.

Yellow field. The leaf,
The worm, the faded grasses
Are of one color.
Lay Me Gently Down

(counseling and guidance: a sometimes farce in sprung rhythm)

Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you yakkety-yak.
Oh Mother, gently lay me down;
Do not bruise my little bones.

Out of the Cradle Endlessly . . .

They enter the new world naked,
cold, uncertain of all
save that they enter.

Into this dense jungle of illusions comes a well-lubricated ghost. (There is little left under the sun but to let the dead bury the dead.) He has a diploma which qualifies him to deal in transactions of the heart. And there came this weary one; his dignity denuded by neglect.

song of Tom

It was my first day in the new school. God! What a hick joint. Five hundred kids in the whole damn school. Back at Central there were that many in one grade. Dad and Mom didn’t want to live in the city any longer and they moved out to this stinkin’ suburban section. It must’ve been the first day for that teacher, too. He comes in with a big we’ll-all-gonna-get-along smile and writes his name on the board. Mr. Don Farrel.

“Mr. Don Barrel,” I says in a voice a little bit too loud. The smile kinda drops off’n this guy’s face and when it comes back, there’s a lotta surprise in it. One of them brown-nosing girls that always sit in
the front row gives out with a big, sexy smile and says, “How do you do, Mr. Farrel?” Already I was fed up with that jerk place. Five hundred kids, smelly little gym, and too many old lady teachers. But they got fed up with me, too. Later I beat the hell outta the senior class president, and one night I threw an empty beer bottle into the study hall. Some bastard squealed on me, and there I was: back in the principal’s office. That was when they asked me to leave.

*I Think We are in Rat’s Alley
Where the Dead Men Lost Their Bones.*

The grotesque gestures of the holy man build a facade of phantasy. This sacred sachem in his scattered yard wags his broken jaw and with pen in hand begins his idiot’s inventory, and harmonizes his treasured trash of talk.

*When I Heard the Learned Astronomer
How Soon Unaccountable I Became Tired and Sick.*

*Song of Richard*

I never could understand why the boys flocked around that Jane. I guess she was pretty, but I don’t know how they could get any studying done. Goodness, some of our assignments were so long. And then the way they talked about her! It was utterly horrible. The follows laughed when I asked them about it; they said I wouldn’t understand and they grinned and asked me why I never went out for football. Mercy, I can’t see any connection at all. My boyfriend Herman would get sulky when I tried to talk with him about it. I think Herman felt a little jealous. Poor Herman.

It really bothered me though; more than anyone knew. I couldn’t help thinking of my mother and of how I loved her and how much she always did for me. She bought me all kinds of things, and she loved to go to the theatre with me. Sometimes she would take both Herman and I; she approved of Herman. She said he was quiet but likeable.

I loved my mother. I tried to be good and often I would put on an apron and help her with the dishes. And then we would have lovely
talks. Oh, she would tell me of all the wonderful things she wanted for me, and of how we would achieve them together.

So I just couldn’t bear to hear the fellows talking the way they did about Jane. After all, she was a woman. The talk about her was downright filthy. I—I guess some of them even slept with her. I can’t understand it. I suppose there are many disgusting people in the world.

*Dawn Has Yet to Clear the Doubt*

He has made his bargain with books, but people are strangers in the courtyard of his heart. Daily he rants over the ruin of the heavy-laden.

*I Have Seen Your Painted Women Under the Gas Lamps*

song of Herman

Maybe you never hated dames the way I did. Maybe you didn’t have to; I had to, just to keep my Ma outta my mind. You shouldda known my Ma; no, I wouldn’t wish that on anybody. She wanted my Dad out. My Dad was a easy-going guy, but she wanted rid of him. How Dad ever come to marry that bitch is a mystery. She laid my head open with a heavy belt buckle. Then she heaved a jar of cold cream at the baby. My Dad buys things like a lamp and a end table for her but she smashed the lamp and gives the table to the junk man.

I busted my leg practicing football at school. A guy named Farrel usta help the coach an’ he took me to the hospital and calls my Ma. My old lady was into her daily bottle and she told Farrel to take care of his own goddam business; she couldn’t be bothered with all this crap at school. I got so I hated that bitch so much I couldn’t bring myself to have much to do with any dame. I ignored ’em in school.

Then this kid Dick kinda took to me and we became half-assed friends. I mean, he didn’t like dames, either, but for different reasons. It turned out good for awhile because I didn’t want any girls for friends and I didn’t get along too well with the guys. Too quiet, I guess. Dick and me did all right, only he was one different guy. I can’t even tell you about it all.

My Dad finally gave the witch a divorce and then things just went
to hell. I never knew where I was going to live the next week. That, and the Dick started gettin’ funnier ideas. I flunked a grade, and when I turned seventeen I headed for the army. T’hell with it.

... *There is No Star*  
*In All the Shrouded Heavens Anywhere*

The counselor-god ground out a ream of rules. His brain could be heard ticking in his bloated head like a cheap alarm clock. In all his time and training he did not know that the helpless ignorant are like dead fish on the beach: forces first rot the meat from the eyes, the windows of the soul.

*As Contagion of Sickness Makes Sickness,*  
*Contagion of Trust Can Make Trust.*

“*Blood,*” Screamed the Skull-Faced, Lean Witch Doctors.

song of Charlene

“Where were you born?”

“On a doorstep.”

“Sure, everybody was. Don’t get smart. Now try it again.”

The girl leaned forward and tensed. Her eyes flashed. “I said on a doorstep, smart-ass, goddam cop.”

The night officer stood. “Look, you little bitch; I’ll—”

“You’ll what? My uncle did this,” she beat her palm on her belly rounded by the six months of life in her. “What can you do, big man?”

The officer sat down and sighed. “O.K., kid. Then let’s start with your uncle. You live with him? Where’d he get you?”

“He’s not my uncle. He wants me to call him uncle.”

The officer laid his pen down and flicked an ash from the desk blotter.
After a moment he raised his eyes to the girl and tried a smile. "This—fella. Who is he?"

"George Milnor. Uncle George Milnor. He's a phony."

The officer did not reach for the pen. He folded his hands and said, "Tell me about phony Uncle George Milnor."

The girl leaned her head back against the file cabinet. "Uncle George rescued me from a big, redbrick building where I was carried by a milkman who found me instead of an empty milk bottle on a step in an alley.  I screamed all the way.  Newborn babies often scream; especially when hatched by milk bottles." She looked down at her stomach. "This one won't see any milk bottles but it'll scream.  It'll scream because it's born."

The girl let her eyes rest on the picture of the Commissioner of Police on the opposite wall.  Her eyes were large, dark, and just moist enough to shine about as much as the glass over the photograph of the commissioner.

"And Uncle George?" the officer asked.

"Uncle George is a phony, like I said.  His wife is a bitch so he handles every dame but her.  His meaty clammy hands drove me nuts since I was nine."

"How old are you now?" the policeman asked quietly.

"Fourteen."

They sat silent.  The snap of the automatic Western Union clock sounded like a cannon.  "Did Uncle George name you so I can call you something but 'kid'?"

"Charlene.  He leers with his brown broken teeth and says, 'smilin' Charlene.'  The lousy stinkin' smelly rotten bastard."

"Charlene, don't get mad now but whyyra' here?"

The girl's eyes jumped to the officer's face but she saw he was quiet and waiting.  "Believe it or not I go—I went to school.  They thought I was gettin' fat." She laughed with a sound like a needle scratching a record.  "Then the schoolmar'ms caught on and said, 'Out.'  "

"What did Uncle George say?"

Charlene looked away and the officer counted three swallows sliding
down the slim throat. "He said," she stopped and this time a kind of water ran over the surface of her face. The officer waited without speaking. "He said he was no damn midwife and hasn't got any money for little bitches that can't keep their pants on. And he said nobody'd believe it was him and maybe it wasn't him. But that's not true. His wife was right in the kitchen and he slammed me hard against a hot radiator and it hurt so I didn't care what happened. And now school and—and, I came, h-here I am—."
She laid her cheek on the desk blotter and every muscle in her body let go. The blotter dissolved and the helpless night desk officer let his hand rest lightly on the girl's head.

And Why Do You Cry, My Dear, Why Do You Cry?

Little Girls on Hands and Knees That Throw Their Hair Before Them Over Their Heads to Dry in the Sun.
(Little Girls, Oh Little Girls.)

The sobbing air is too much for all the automated Kleenex. ("Ne cherchez plus mon coeur; les bêtes l'ont mangé.")

The eunuch of kindness sets up a twang of cunning cacophony. He wishes he had but to balance the attendance records. Problems depress him, and he must prepare a speech for PTA.

Oh Teacher, deal with me kindly;
I can only try again.

We are the Greatest City
The Greatest Nation,
Nothing Like Us Ever Was

And the Only Listeners Now Are . . . The Rats . . . and the Lizards.

song of Jimmy

The kid was a bully—a big, hulking guy that pushed little kids around. He had fuzz on his upper lip but wasn't a bad looking guy. The
principal called him in when he had something on him. It didn't make any difference that Jimmy sat with his hands deep in his pants and a scowl on his face. The principal reached for the record file.

"Living in town, I hear," the principal waited. There was no comment. "Is that true?"

"Yep."

"Who do you live with?"

"My aunt."

"But your folks live out here." Again no comment. The principal could afford to smile. It was Friday and he wanted to get home. "Well, Jim, this is your last day at Oakview school. We're overcrowded and you don't live in the district." He looked up at a sound and was surprised to see Jimmy crying. This was new to the bully role.

"What's the matter?" the principal asked. Jimmy cried and laughed at the same time. "I wouldn't laugh," the principal said; "this isn't very funny."

Jimmy sat up. "I can't live at home. There's too much racket."

"What kind of racket?" the principal asked.

"Drinking racket and fighting racket." He began to snifHe again.

The principal noticed two teachers waiting in the outside office. He lowered his voice. "Jimmy, would you like to settle down over the weekend and talk to me again Monday?"

The boy raised his head and nodded. The principal noticed he didn't look like a bully.

_The Emptiness of Ages in His Face,_

The doctor of discard thumbs his files. Tests and scores hammer people into place; these files fit each man to his appropriate statistic.
song of Charley

I thought I'd die laughin' only Miss Deck didn't think it was very funny. She turned red and pink and brown and didn't say nothing. She was O.K.; she just didn't know much about where Ol' Wash lived. But she give us this assignment in Art class for Monday night.

"Draw something for me tonight," she says. "Draw something you see around your house." Geez! She sure didn't know Wash.

So Wash goes home and looks around the house at night. There ain't no pretty flowers, or pianos, or nothin' like that. But in the corner of the other room—Wash's got two rooms—sits this pail with a cover they use for a can. Wash really does it up brown. He draws the pail, handle, toilet paper settin' alongside n' all. He even has this little bitty puddle on the floor where somebody missed. Wash was pretty proud when he shows this to Miss Deck. But like I say, she asks what it is and he tells her. She turns red and I hide behind the closet door and die laughin'.

* What is This I Hear of Sorrow and Weariness, Anger, Discontent and Drooping Hopes? *

* Life Is Too Strong For You— It Takes Life to Love Life. *

Oh God, consider my condition; Ere I come to curse Thee, too.

(Office hours: 10 to 12; 1 to 3)

* My Lord, What a Moanin' *
this is not intended to be free verse
studies have shown
that the mind and eye
coop-erate most readily
when the material to be assimilated
is divided into
short logical phrases
without the confusion
of conventional punctuation

this facilitates the reading
by a factor
of 2.134527-avoid writing out numbers
and there is a less easily measured
increase in clarity of expression

unfortunately these benefits
are completely offset
by financial considerations
such as the rising cost of
paper.
I
Beyond these distant dunes lies El Akim
Where once a city stood that ruled the land
For miles about; yet if one looked, 'twould seem
A tale, a wall half buried in the sand,
Where once ten wells flowed forth and gardens grew.
The caravans that passed paid tribute there
And every son of Islam's desert knew
The wealth of El Akim, and sent his share.

In decades past the Turks o'er swept the wall,
Whose crest has not been buried yet. They slew
The men, they stopped the city's wells, and all
They left behind was waste. A bleeding few
Survivors fled from El Akim that night;
Their tribe is poor, that once o'erflowed with might.

II
Long years have passed since El Akim did 'change
Her shining mantle for a shroud of sand.
Yet now behold the darkened dunes! A strange
And mournful sight doth greet the land!
Two men approach the vast entombed site,
One youth, whose glist'ning eyes see naught but peace;
The other, old, with eyes bereft of light
That see a throbbing world whose pulse did cease . . .

The old man's voice defies the deadly calm.
—My son, says he, the wand'ring I have known
At last shall end. This sacred spot, the balm
To all my worldly cares, will be my home.
Go forth, ye sole survivor of our race;
Go find your joy in yet another place.
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