

---

---

Spring, 1964

Vol. XVII — Nos. 3 and 4

---

---

# Manuscript

THE LITERARY MAGAZINE

OF

WILKES COLLEGE

Copyright 1964 by Wilkes College

Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

66387

## Staff

EDITOR — Harris Tobias

FACULTY ADVISOR — Dr. Philip Rizzo

FILM EDITOR — Edward Lipinski

SECRETARIES — Joyce Cavallini

Stephanie Boyle

ASSOCIATE EDITORS — Barbara Lore

Barbara Gallagher

## Members

Regina Watkins

Mildred Gross

Florence Greskiewicz

Modene Hendry

Jane Jancik

Darlene Moll

Andrea Templar

Noreen Considine

Christine Orlando

Beverly Hanko

Carole Vercusky

Norma Falk

Gerri Bock

Patric Mc Garty

Leonard Glassberg

Iris Collins

Jack Hardie

Marc Hirschman



# Contents

COVER — <i>Jack Hardie</i>	
THROUGH YOUR EYES — <i>Harris Tobias</i> .....	4
AN ORDINARY DAY, WITH TEARS — <i>Marc Hirschman</i> ...	5
ACROSTIC — <i>Clark Line</i> .....	7
THE MAIDEN AND THE SHELL — <i>Harris Tobias</i> .....	8
CHANGED — <i>Mary Ann DeRemer</i> .....	9
THE SAND CASTLE — <i>Anne Marie Micklo</i> .....	10
SEASON — <i>Harris Tobias</i> .....	13
ANGELS OF THE LORD — <i>Beverly Hanko</i> .....	14
THE FIRST SUPPER: A PRAYER — <i>Jack Hardie</i> .....	18
ON WAKING UP — <i>Carolyn White</i> .....	19
MEMORY — <i>Harris Tobias</i> .....	20
ISOLATION — <i>Barbara Tengowski</i> .....	21
THOUGHTS FOR AQUATIC MINDS — <i>Jack Hardie</i> .....	23
THE KILLING AT CRAKLEY'S TAVERN — <i>David Foglietta</i> .	24
THE TIME HAS COME — <i>John Galinus</i> .....	26
THE ANGEL AND THE BABY — <i>David Esler</i> .....	27
"THOSE WHOM THE GODS FAVOR DIE..." — <i>Carolyn Ide</i>	32
EXTRAVAGANCE — <i>Andrea Templar</i> .....	34
SONNETS I & II — <i>Harris Tobias</i> .....	36
OLD WOMAN — <i>Mary Ann DeRemer</i> .....	38
THE SALT OF THE SEA — <i>Gary Krommes</i> .....	39
THE BLACK FIRE ESCAPE — <i>Jack Hardie</i> .....	41

## Through Your Eyes

I have seen you smile when  
The swollen wine-sun  
Reeled its weary way below the leafless skies,  
And daylight, bleeding, slowly died.  
You smiled then  
And sighed, "The sunset's lovely."  
And I truly loved the sunset through your eyes.

*Harris Tobias*

## An Ordinary Day, With Tears

My grandfather, Irving Shapiro, died on November 22, 1963, the same day that President Kennedy died. I remember my grandfather sitting up in his hospital bed to complain about using the bedpan. In fact, my grandfather was asserting his God-given right to crawl to the bathroom at about the same time that President Kennedy's motorcade sped toward its bullet. Kennedy reached the unexpected eruption of gunfire; my grandfather never reached the accustomed flush of the toilet bowl.

All life stopped for Kennedy's funeral, and all death, too. A nation closed its shops and scurried home. Even those tabernacles of tears, the funeral parlors, were resting their lachrymose eyes. We couldn't find one open. Finally an uncle discovered a director of inhumations who remained on duty, and my father and I drove to select a suitable rotting place for our departed. We had not driven three blocks before my father turned on the radio.

"A day of great tragedy has dawned . . . a day which brings . . ." intoned the announcer. My finger struck the station selector before the tragedy of the day was repeated.

"For God's sake let us sit upon the ground and tell sad stories of the death of kings." Sir John Gielgud chanted Richard's mewling words from a rock-and-roll station. I snapped off the radio. The rest of the trip was silent.

"Here's a nice serviceable model," droned the funeral director. "Of course, we have less expensive models in the next room." My father sportingly waved off the director's offer, and the three of us trudged through rows of silk-lined coffins. At last we came to a bronze coffin resting on a two-foot high pedestal of purple velvet; the bronze coffin was seven feet long and seemed to have sufficient strength to withstand the Apocalypse.

"We're very proud of this one," said the funeral director as he stroked its rich golden side. "Its exactly like the one that they're going to use for President Kennedy. The only difference is that

this one costs two thousand dollars and Kennedy's costs ten thousand. Tragic about the President, wasn't it?"

We nodded.

My father and I got back to our house just in time to see the videotapes of the assassination. Mrs. Kennedy glided through her sufferings; her Camelot faded into the mist of a November afternoon. We let the television picture evanesce with her dream.

I went to watch my grandmother who was cooking supper and being consoled by my mother. We did not have sufficient provisions to feed all the relatives who had gathered there; my mother was forced to defrost the Thanksgiving turkey and cook that. My grandmother keened noisily as she basted the turkey.

"Irving," she wailed. "Irving, you're going to miss the Thanksgiving dinner, Irving. I made all your favorites, and now you're going to miss them, Irving." Hecuba could not have lamented with more vigor.

I was gripped with a sudden desire to see Mrs. Kennedy again. I turned to leave the kitchen, then turned back. I meant to kiss my grandmother and mutter some palliating phrases to her. As I moved to touch her cheek, I noticed that tears were streaming down her face and dripping onto the turkey. I stepped back and started to laugh, but my vision blurred. And the kitchen, and my grandmother, and the turkey basted with tears all ran softly down my cheeks.

*Marc Hirschman*



*Acrostic*

O Emily when I behold thy shining eye  
Each quiet breath within me whispers soft that I  
Must surely love thee with a greater love than e're  
I dreamed existed. And with every sigh I sigh  
Love pours its silent beauty forth to where  
Your own true love for me is uttered with a stare.

*Clark Line*



## THE MAIDEN AND THE SHELL

Once upon a time there was a beautiful maiden who lived with her fourteen ugly step-sisters in a dank old castle by the sea. One day, after being beaten and scolded by each ugly step-sister in turn, she walked along the beach; a wave spoke to her and said, "Take the magic shell which is at your feet, rub it, and you shall have happiness." Hearing this the beautiful maiden picked up the shell and ran back to her room in the tower. That night, after doing the chores and dressing her step-sisters for the ball, she took the shell and rubbed it. She was instantly transformed into an ugly step-sister and lived happily ever after.

*Harris Tobias*

## CHANGED

He is old and slouched now  
But I tell you I knew him  
    When he was young  
His head is bald and his eyes are sunk  
    But when he was young —  
Now, he can't walk the lane in line  
    properly straight  
    But when I knew him —  
He stumbles now  
But when I knew him,  
    When he was young  
He fell drunk in the gutter

*Mary Ann DeRemer*

# THE SAND CASTLE

Allison Pemberton Coe was born on November 13, 1931, a day approximately forty-two days before her predicted delivery time and the only thirteenth which fell on a Friday that entire year. She was delivered by emergency Caesarean section in the master bedroom of what would be her home, a rich and rather haughty room which endured the consummation and death of many marriages within its walls, but which nevertheless felt a sense of outrage at the red and squalling infant who invaded its serenity. Later the quiet hostility of the house was directed at the pale, thin, angular ten-year old who devoured with bottomless eyes the marks of the fairy queen mother who inhabited it, on evenings when she entered for her good-night kiss.

"Yer very commin was a misfortune and a mistake, Miss Allison Coe, and as shurr as I'm tellin yeh ye've got no place t'be in this worrld." These were the ill mutterings of Eileen, the Irish maid whom Leonard Coe had doubtfully engaged after the death of Hannah four years before. Hannah had been a fixture of the house for as long as Leonard could remember and had competently raised three generations of Coes to maturity. Eileen, however, had had little experience in raising a six-year old girl, and had even less patience for the endless imaginings and dreams which came to make up the world of the girl growing spitefully up to ten. Eileen's own catty mutterings had often resulted in sharp, if rather empty, reprimands from Allison's mother, yet the quick Irish spirit within her could not be so easily discouraged the days when Wellfleet received raw, cutting breezes and relentless sheets of rain from the famed Plymouth Bay, and Allison was confined to exploration of the four stories at 76 Wellharvest.

Allison's best friends there were an old and musty dress form which had stood guard over the garret since the death of Grandmother Pemberton, whom Allison had never known, and Amanda, which was the name of the beautiful and so grand figure which greeted her in the mirror after she had raided the steamer trunks



and, with all the discerning sense of a fascinated pack rat, loaded upon herself every piece of motheaten fur and gaudy jewelry which her small person could support.

She would sway in time to the music of raindrops upon the slanted, slated roof and imagine herself the center of a whirling circle of dancing couples, flashing by in a dazzling kaleidoscope of color and action, a scene which she had briefly seen many times, after she had slipped from her bed with a ready pretense of thirst and traveled through the darkness, ever so quietly and ever so slowly, one step at a time, to the second floor landing. There she would gaze, with all of the longing of childhood for adulthood so clearly mirrored on her face, at the people assembled. Always, however, her eyes would restlessly scan the swirls of smoke and glitter of jewels until she found her mother, and once more safe she would return, quickly now through the coldness of the wide halls, to the comfort of her dreams.

Every third Sunday of the month, Allison was allowed to sit with the ladies in the front parlor for an hour, right next to her mother, and she always nibbled slowly and lingeringly upon the three pink-iced cakes which were allotted her, for she had discovered early that their slightly anisette taste appealed more than any other to her mother. On these occasions the everyday severity of her appearance was softened by the addition of a starched white pinafore and an equally-starched pastel hair ribbon, tied in what she called Alice-in-Wonderland fashion around her straight black hair. "Alice in Wonderland! With yer skinny arms and muddy skin it's a wonder yer not Alice in the Coal Celler!" And with this and a final tug at the pinafore, which never seemed to stay in place, Eileen would send her to greet the guests.

Allison loved summers in Wellfleet best, and for three free and lazy months she no longer had to spend mornings in the library with Miss Jamison, practicing reading, learning division, and remembering that Mississippi was "M-i-double s-i-double s-i-double p-i." Instead, she rose at 7:00, busied herself with practicing stitches, for Cook had promised to start a sampler with her soon, and at exactly 9:00 she would begin the trip downstairs, taking each step

slowly and relishing every second of the next brief minutes; all too soon she would arrive before her mother's door, knock almost silently, and enter quickly in order to run to the side of the bed and watch her mother emerge lazily from the cocoon of sleep.

One morning Allison entered and found her mother already awake and dressed. She gazed perplexedly at the tall, untanned woman before her, and almost immediately Eileen entered, returned her upstairs, and told her that she would spend the day at the beach with her mother. Allison dressed with infinite care, driving Eileen to fits of Irish mutterings with her insistence that the red bow would look best with her outfit, only to decide in favor of the blue once the red was firmly anchored in her hair, and then to worry out loud about the possibilities of the yellow. Finally, however, she descended the stairs once more and for a blissful hour sat quietly by her mother's side, trying desperately not to squirm upon the sticky oil-cloth seats. She found herself with a wonderfully-new feeling of experience once they arrived at the beach, for although she had been there innumerable times with Eileen, her mother had always preferred the coolness of her own home, and she was aloof and uncertain in this alien setting.

They walked along the edge of the bay, Allison splashing bare-footed in the water, and they came upon a majestic castle sitting beyond the reach of the waves, a perfect castle for a queen, its sand towers and walls eroded to the very image of a Medieval ruin. They paused here, and in slow, halting words her mother told Allison that there would soon be a baby in the house, a brother or sister for Allison's company.

In an instant she was older and infinitely wiser than her ten years, and knew how greatly she would be able to help *him* grow up without the fairy queen helping him at all, as she had grown up, living upon dreams and visions which no amount of scattered days upon a beach together would ever fill. So there, yes, things would turn out for the best. And with a silent sob she raised her foot and slowly demolished the majestic double turret.

*Anne Marie Micklo*



## SEASON

Listen to the seasons change,  
Theirs is the rhythmic counting of the wheel.  
These leaves have seen the spring  
And felt the verdant kiss of summer  
Long before their fall;  
And yet we too have heard the change  
But knew as autumn fell around us that  
Beneath her numbers strewn,  
All the fields of summer lie  
In wait to bloom.

*Harris Tobias*

## Angels of the Lord

Pamela watched as the fat flakes tumbled from the white sky, hit the glass wall of the classroom and melted against the warm panes. She hated to see the saplings on the campus droop beneath their burden of snow, so she turned her attention to the delicate flower in the margin of her notes. How was it that the fragile winter birds always survived, she thought, and sketched a chickadee absently into the doodle, supplying him with a summer sun.

There was a note of exasperation in the voice of young Sister Blanche who spoke from the front of the room. "I think you girls should realize that it's time you were making some definite plans. In four short months you'll be out in the world, and some of you are still waiting for an angel of the Lord to come and tell you His will."

Pamela pushed the deep waves of her black hair behind one ear and scratched her neck. It's so hot in here, she thought. Why does that woman worry so about planning the future? Poor Sister — always worried. God doesn't guarantee a tomorrow here, remember, Sister?

Sister Blanche continued her sermon, "The Lord needs young men and women to enter his service. If you have a particular calling and ignore it, believe me, you will have to answer for it . . . on Judgment Day." Sister scowled, groping for stronger words.

She was speaking for Pamela's benefit especially because, it seemed to her, the girl had so much to offer. She had youth and health — a strong back for God's work, a good mind and a compassionate nature, but she would have to be guided into some path — a nurse maybe, Sister was thinking, with her long hair caught neatly under a crisp cap and the soft features of her face turned into a helpful, tender smile.

But most people who knew Pamela got that impression — that she was living out of contact with the *reality* of suffering and

trouble. It wasn't that she was naive, really; it was just that she had an inordinate faith in the naturalness of things working themselves out because, for her, they always had.

From the time she had arrived in the world — late, her father had quite despaired of having a child at all — her father had always used his considerable means to keep her warm, and toy-surrounded, and cuddled in strong, concerned and manly arms. Pretty as a child, Pamela remained pretty always while her father, ever proud of her beauty and her femininity, envisioned her as she filled out, going black-veiled to Church, being the proper young woman with prayer beads and chaste thoughts.

But it was her mother who carefully managed her love life. For Pamela's mother had blamed her own years of barrenness on an unfortunate love affair of her youth, and so vowed to shield her daughter from any such unhappiness by allowing her to date only those males who seemed to be the most stable and least dangerous. But her daughter had never shown any resentment because of her restrictions. In fact she had continued to tolerate the company of a certain aspiring lawyer after even her mother had recognized him as a decided bore because, as she had explained, "He's just the kind of person who needs somebody to listen to him, Mommy. He seems so happy with me as an audience, and I can't disappoint him, not so soon." But the aspiring lawyer had come and gone with Pamela in fact not knowing when he no longer came.

No serious problem had ever been allowed to scorch Pamela personally. She had never found herself in any dilemma from which her father's money and strength and her mother's tact and insight couldn't extricate her. It is true that when she read of people living in squalor or jilted in love, her eyes would grow hot with tears, but the tears would fall unseen, and everyone had always made it so easy for her to turn the page.

When the class had been dismissed, Pamela, having read in the Sister's set face signs that her vocation talk had not yet spent itself, escaped from the impending tete-a-tete to the room across the hall where the negative members of their debate team were setting



up their material. Plump Sister Ann beamed at her and asked if she were staying for the debate.

"Certainly, Sister," she smiled. "I have to see Father's face when the great men of HTU finally suffer defeat."

Sister chuckled, "That's what'll beat them, too—confidence."

One of the team glanced up from her file box, 'Would that your terrified debaters had some,' she added.

Pamela laughed, "Ah, such modesty." But that was Phil's laugh, subdued and abruptly checked. It amused her to have unconsciously imitated it.

When had she first heard him laugh? She thought back to when they had met through the debate league only a month ago, really; how good it had felt to accept a date without a middleman and with Mommy's approval afterwards, too. He had never laughed then. She thought about his face — a serious face, and about how the terror shining from his dark eyes had frightened her at first, and then attracted her because he was so very like a shy animal who had been wounded and needed care, a cat who had thrust a probing paw too far into an insecure woodpile and was caught in bewilderment and pain. She had cared, and her care had helped him, urged him to get up again, to use himself well again. She had known satisfaction from that, heartfelt satisfaction which she wanted to prolong, to make permanent. Surely they could be married by the end of the summer, she thought. But he'd better hurry and get around to asking her; Mommy would need months to make the arrangements —

"They're here, Sister," a girl announced from the doorway. "The debate team's here. Pamela, Phil's with them."

Phil was indeed with them this time, mounting the steps in agile strides beside Holy Trinity's moderator.

"I want you to meet Pam, Father. If it wasn't for her they might be dragging the river for me now. I don't know — her presence, it was such a spiritual comfort as even her tears were."

"Have you told her yet that you intend to join the order, Phil?"

"No, not yet, but I think she must know."

Pamela watched from the landing, rocking impatiently against the bannister.

"Pamela," a voice called from the hall. She turned to see Sister Blanche beckoning, her head framed in the window against the white sky. "Pamela, come back and help Sister Ann with the coffee trays, please," and then with a smile and a raised eyebrow she teased, "come, clear the way for the men; you may be knocked over, they are coming up so quickly."

*Beverly Hanko*



## THE FIRST SUPPER: A PRAYER

(to be read aloud with fervor and love at deathbeds,  
funerals, interments, and other such festivities)

There's a black frosting  
on my Birthday cake this year.

Black frosting, hear?

And a candle for every spirit past  
among us . . . Such a blaze!

But wait:

The Birthday room's gold, red with light,  
Yet above each waxing wick there writhes  
A thirsty, flaming tongue of Hell-black night.

Black fire, my God!

Black fire!

Black fire!

Such a Birthday this will be:

I'll freeze my fingers in the flames,  
Splinter their ice in *Hailing* staccato,  
Blaspheme my altar-Ego's Names,  
And *Ave* my Id in La Belle Dame's Id-grotto;

Come, dance with the flames;

Come let's go to the Music,

Singing "Glory be to God in the name of the Son."

O, Glory be to God in the name of my Father's son.  
Yes, Glory be in my Name,  
Eclipsed and midnight Sun;  
"It is an Ancient Mariner . . ."

He stoppeth Three of One;

Call me Ahab.

Seek my soul in the belly of the whale;

Black Knight, I seek Thine, God's Unholy Grail

from which I'll quaff my Birthday wine

and fill the belly of One Day, Mine,

with its gold, red sun

set fire,

My Blooded Sire,

Singing then, Amen. Amen. Amen.

*Jack Hardie*

## **ON WAKING UP**

I have seen a cat stretch and yawn on waking,  
Annoyed at being in this indifferent world again.

### **STRETCH AND YAWN.**

I have seen a baby cry on waking,  
Afraid of being alone in this fearful world.

### **LIE AND WEEP.**

I have seen a child laugh on waking,  
Happy at being in this joyful world again.

### **SIT AND LAUGH**

I have seen an adult on waking close his eyes,  
Not able to face the blows of this world.

### **GIVE UP AND DIE.**

When I wake, I lie and stare blankly.  
"The world," they said, "is what you make it."  
I make it nothing  
And find it everything.

*Carolyn White*

## MEMORY

Look for me in places where we've walked —  
Places where my shadow fell on yours,  
Where, as I took your hand,  
I listened to the lilting of your talk;  
Look, for I'll be there  
Beside you brushing whispers through your hair,  
Laughing, as we did when I was there beside you  
Softly brushing whispers through your hair.

*Harris Tobias*

# ISOLATION

As she sat back in the seat, her thoughts were desultory and aimless, like the idling motor of the bus. The driver entered, jumping into his seat like an acrobat. The bus lunged forward, in protest. As it gained speed, she felt her anxiety dissolve into the sway of the mechanical motion.

Once they left the city, her gaze rested on the squared-off fields of clumpy growth that rolled past the window; they lent their serenity and order to her thoughts. Just as she became accustomed to the green and brown fields, they gave way to serpentine hills. The bus twisted, as if on some forested roller coaster, reaching a peak, then plummeting down, down, only to writhe its way up again. At times the woods became so thick as to obscure the sky which showed through only above the thin penetration of the road. She felt encapsulated, like some burrowing animal eating his way through the earth into the sunlight. The cool, dank smell of decaying leaves, mixed with acrid ferns and moss-covered soil, was sulphurous and mingled with the hot piston smell of the bus.

Suddenly, without warning, a town appeared, breaking the mystical silence. It was one that would repeat itself many times before the journey ended; fire house and police station waited side by side; bowling palaces and restaurants signaled in neon; local natives tread their way lackadaisically over familiar paths. At a two-by-four station, the bus stopped to pick up new passengers. They entered in a silent procession of people and suitcases, nomads who would share two or three hours of their life, and then disappear into anonymity. After a shuffling and scuffling of feet, everyone was settled in his seat. The driver waited, impatiently, at an intersection until several cars backed up to allow its passage; he moved his arms in a rapid succession of semi-arcs, and once again they cruised along.

Houses thinned out and yards stretched into the familiar rolling fields. Amidst these leafy, bristling patches that rippled in ordered productivity, there was interjected a rocky, scrubby piece of ground that seemed alien to any living thing. In its center stood



a grotesque, oddly-shaped tree with rubbery limbs and cracked bark. Its roots were spidery and superficial, and could not go very deep into the unyielding soil. Her eyes traced the outline that seemed frozen in time and space, while just a few yards away, earth and man showed a soft compliance.

The rain that had threatened all day now splashed on the front windows of the bus. Two blades of steel slashed at them in wet agitation. The land became obscured by a beaded liquid that hung to the windows. The breathing of the passengers became heavy and laborious and clung in smoky vapors on the windows. The sporadic conversations enveloped themselves in this miasma, and their words hung several minutes before dissolving into the air. The glowing phosphorescence of the bus's instrument panel further irradiated the charged atmosphere. She sat up in her seat tense, hypnotized by the flowing sounds and motions around her.

Houses tightened against each other. Traffic lights and octagonal signs gave robot-like warnings. The bus complied, slowing its pace. Finally, the bus ground to a halt in the back lot of a tunnel-like station. People moved out of their seats like creatures awakening from hibernation, groping and squinting. She filed out with them, walking through the station's waiting room which was long and narrow with one entrance and one exit. The exit led on to the Main Street. She looked left, then right, realizing there was not one face she knew in the thin night crowd. Signs flicked on and off searing themselves with their heat and the futility of the messages sent into the night. She remembered the grotesque little tree, and started down the street.

*Barbara Tengowski*



## Thoughts For Aquatic Minds

### *Autumn*

October blood —

red maple, geyser-sprayed aloft:  
mourn the dying whale.

### *It's a Small Fish*

It's a small fish

that thinks it's swimming free  
(while in the belly of a whale)  
until digestion starts.

### *Sea*

There! On the horizon:

An island or a cloud?  
But this means nothing.

*Jack Hardie*

## The Killing at Crakley's Tavern

Id wuz a sad experinence fore me de dey I saw Peter Wumpwert cruciously kill an stab hiz fiancée, Mary O'Rourke in Crakley's tavern. Id seamed ad de instance thad Peter had went bazerk 'onna count 'a Mary was gigglin' her eyes ad annudder fellow whom hiz name I cannod resemble ad de momnent.

Id wuz nod befour a shord tyme lader wen Rudolph starded to rotitate hz eyes toward Mary, whom wuz sitting anear de pinano wid Peter and witch de pinano wuz playn de "Star Spangled Banner." Id wuz wen Peter reconcized bye de side ob his eyes thad Mary wuz payn moor intenton ad Rudolph dan she wuz ad him thad he had become vary ennoited. Ad dis momnent, Peter became vary furrinous an assid yung Rudolph widder id wuz nice iv he stobbed grazing wid hiz eyes ad hiz fiancée, Mary.

Ad dis instance, Mickey Crakley, de oner uh de instablishment, had a inspicious beleaf thad dey wood stard a ryot in hiz joyent and assid dem as dey wood com doughn. In de vary nex sekon, id seamed thad Peter had a stroke of epenlepsy an he reeched into hiz dung-ar-ees an pulled oud a nife of wtch de blade wuz about seven-an-a-half inchez in lent and witch sparrkled like dyemonds in de sunset. Wid de nife, Peter strucke id in Mary's head about nyne tymes widoud stobbing to take a breadth of hiz lungs.

Rudolph wuz shocked ad dis site an ran away into de nite-tyme an ubb to dis dey wuz never scene afterwords. 'Tis beleaved bye knot a fhew persons of de towyne in witch de merder accrued thad Rudolph crawled into de grave of Mary one nit afore dey barried de corpus a de girl, an dey constipated deir love fore each udder. Dis beleaf iz so supertitiouslous helled thad her epintaphe reeds:

IN DIS GRAVE LYES  
DE CORPUS' OF MARY  
O'ROURKE AN HER  
LOVER? RUDOLPH,  
WHOOS LOVE COULD  
KNOT HAVE BEEN  
CONSTIPATED ON  
DIS ERT BECAUSE  
OF DE JELLOSY  
OF PETER WUMPWURT

R. I. P.

*David Foglietta*

## THE TIME HAS COME

the time has come  
to look for the time  
find a person with a watch  
with no hands or equal hands  
the time has arrived  
and we missed it  
we'll have to wait  
for the next one

the time has come  
to believe in something  
a pin a button a spoon  
something  
but really believe and hope  
here is the end of a rope  
that goes around the corner  
hold on to it for a start  
I gave the other end to someone  
to pull for a start

*John Galinus*



## THE ANGEL AND THE BABY

It had not been raining for at least an hour, but everything was in that state of pleasant wetness which immediately follows a heavy afternoon rainstorm. Like a tiny yellow phantom little Andrew, dressed in his garish rubber-coated rain smock, came skipping through the puddles, being careful not to miss a single one. The floppy rain hat, sitting cockeyed on his head and partially obscuring his face, gave him the appearance of a Cape Cod fisherman about to brave a roaring Nor'easter. From his left hand swung a blue metal lunch box, the thermos bottle inside clanking back and forth as Andrew flailed the box. In time with the clanking of the box, he chanted, "Step on a crack an' break your mother's back."

Occasionally, he would break his rhythm to stare into a plate glass show window, his little nose flattened against the cool glass. At the bridal shop he lingered longer than at the others. On the opposite side of the transparent barrier stood a beautiful lady enveloped in yards of shimmering satin which billowed down about her feet and trailed off behind her. The lady was so beautiful, almost like the angels Andrew had heard about in Sunday school. He stayed at the window until the section in front of him became fogged by his breath.

As he turned back to the bleak sidewalk, he nearly stumbled into a well-dressed woman pushing a baby carriage. The woman stopped and smiled down at Andrew. He placed his hands on the edge of the carriage and stared at the frail creature inside. The baby was asleep; the blankets pulled up around it rose and fell as the infant breathed. Andrew restrained himself from reaching down to touch the baby's soft white face. The woman smiled again, then started off down the sidewalk. Andrew watched her go. Not a word had passed between them.

Soon Andrew approached the street where he lived. It was a run-down area in a poor section of town. The age-worn houses, tall and ugly, in various stages of deterioration, stared ominously at Andrew like huge slate-gray tombstones in a graveyard. At the end

of the street was Andrew's house, a two-story wood frame structure identical to the others except for a few minor details.

Andrew walked to the back of the house, for the kitchen was there. The kitchen was warm and busy and smelled of pleasant odors. And best of all his mother would be there. Andrew opened the big door and stepped inside. His mother was at the far side of the room, washing dishes.

"Oh, Andrew," she said when she saw him, "You're soaking wet! I'll bet you were running through puddles again. You're going to catch a horrible cold!"

She helped him out of the yellow raincoat and pulled off his galoshes.

"Now, run upstairs and put on some dry clothes. Oh, what am I going to do with you?"

He turned to run upstairs, then impulsively turned back and hugged his mother. "Hi, mama . . ."

The disheveled woman, tired and irritable from a full day's housework, suddenly found herself unable to be angry with a small boy and his innocent love. As he scampered out of the room, she shook her head and smiled. A world catastrophe could be facing her, but those two little words, "Hi, mamma," had the potential to make everything else seem insignificant.

About ten minutes later Andrew was downstairs again. Waiting for him on the kitchen table were cookies and a glass of milk. His mother had taken a break from her housework and was sitting at the table with a cup of luke-warm coffee.

"Now, Andy, what did you learn in school today?"

"Miss Lawson told us 'bout Goldilocks, but I already know 'bout her an' them ol' bears."

"Well, what else did you learn?"

His mouth was full of ginger cookie. "We learned how to pledge al-ee-gents to the flag."

"Well, how does it go?"

"Aw, I can't 'member all of it."

"Well, try."

"Okay." He placed his right hand in the general area of his heart. "I pledge al-ee-gents to da flag of the 'Nited States of 'Merica an' . . . an' . . ."

"And to the republic . . ."

"An' the 'public for which it stans. Ah . . . I can't 'member no more."

"You're not trying. One nation, under God . . ."

"One nation, under God . . ."

"Indivisible . . ."

"What?"

"In-dee-vis-able!"

"In-dee-bis-ible . . ."

"With liberty and justice for all."

"With liberty and justice fer everybody." His voice trailed off.

"No, for all!"

"For all." A pause. "Mamma?"

"Yes, Andy?"

"What's it mean?"

"Well, honey, it means, I guess, that the United States is a strong country whose people believe in God. I think it also means, or is supposed to mean, that everyone in America has the same chance to succeed. Do you understand?" She knew he didn't.

"Not izakly."

"Well, I hope you will someday. Now run along and play. I have to make supper for you and your father."



The slender woman busied herself with the preparation of dinner. In bursts of childhood energy, Andrew was in and out of the kitchen and all around his mother.

"Mamma?"

"Yes, dear?" She was peeling potatoes at the sink.

"I saw an angel today."

"Did you? Where?"

"On Main Street. She was in a store window an' she was real purty."

"Did she say anything to you?"

"Uh-huh. She said I is a good lil' boy!" he giggled.

"Ooooooh, really? Well, she'd better come here and live for awhile!"

A pause. "Mamma?"

"Yes, dear?"

"Do babies always sleep?"

"Now why do you want to know that? Of course not. You sure didn't when you were a baby. You kept daddy and me awake many nights."

The door suddenly burst open, and a handsome young man dressed in work clothes came in.

"Daddy!"

With a sweep of his muscular arms, he scooped Andrew from the floor and swung him back and forth. Andy giggled. He liked to play swing.

"How's my boy today?"

"How was your day, Al?" Andy's mother asked.

Still swinging the boy, Al walked to the sink and kissed his wife. "Oh, pretty good if you like pouring cement. How was yours?"



"Oh, pretty good if you like doing housework." They both laughed.

Supper came and went; they washed the dishes and retired to the simple living room. Al chose his favorite chair, settling down to read the newspaper. His wife eased into her wooden rocking chair, and Andy scrambled up into her lap.

"Mamma?"

She sighed. "Yes, dear?"

"What's a nigger?" His mother jerked back in surprise. From across the room came a rustling of newspaper.

"Andy! Where in the world did you hear that word?" Al asked.

"At recess today. A boy called me that, an' everybody laughed. I don't like him. What's it mean?"

"Oh, Andy, Andy," his mother said. She carressed his head in her soft brown arms. "Oh, Andy. You'll find out soon enough . . ."

Andy rested his head against his mother's breasts and thought about the angel and the baby.

*David Esler*

## **"Those Whom The Gods Favor Die --"**

"A lot has happened in the half-century since I last was here. Why do the trees look so black and broken now? The land used to have a fresh, golden complexion, like a happy, healthy girl but it has become a crippled, gray-faced, old witch.

"The roads, enclosed by towering dark trees, meet in a sprawling, crooked cross on a somber grey canvas, across which a giant stick of charcoal has brushed twilight. These three roads hurry to hide their grey skirts around their corners, but the lane stretches straight and broad and grey, a dim, distant band of trees preventing it from fading into the sky, like a straight, broad river crossed by a dark bridge just at the point where it joins the ocean. Many times I used to stand here, waiting to walk these roads, golden tan in the sunlight, deep, moist brown in the shade of the trees which bend their gossipy, green heads together over the sparkling brook and its bridge, but facing the long walk home, up that lane, broad and flat like a long stage, heat waves shimmering like gay chorus dancers while the trees swirl back their dusty green skirts with distaste from its indignity.

"The trees used to stand like an array of stuffed, grey corsets with green chiffon draped over and under them. I knew the grass and the view from each tree, the way the land rolled, each hill and tree different, yet alike because of the half-shade and protecting branches. Now they all fade into the grey; only a few, nearer old friends stand, ashamed to show their black, deformed branches but held in place until Time relents.

"See this scraggly tree. Each branch, each twig is crooked in a million places, until the only part with any order or semblance to a tree is the broad black trunk. A tangle of black grapevines claws at its head and drags on the ground like the heavy, royal mantle of a majestic witch. The grapes on that vine never were too good, but the tree was good for climbing sixty years ago. It was so close to the mailboxes that the grass and shade under it made a cozy hide-away where I waited for the mail. I used to stomp down a little nest in the grass, leaving a fringe to hide me from the mail-

man, and imagine my private games while the tree reared its branches like a protective, indulgent mother.

"Seen from the top of the lane, this big maple used to tower above the apple trees. It was the first tree to change colors in the fall; at the bottom of the lane of green trees, this one burst into a torch of orange and yellow, waiting for some giant to raise it in an Olympian salute. The boys used to try to throw stones up over it while they were waiting by the bridge for the school bus. The stones rocketed straight upward, clawing past the branches and arcing into the sky, and an instant later raked downward, ripping the branches and plunking, lost, into the earth, while the tree stood impervious to this brief, man-made flurry. The branches are old now; the bark is wrinkled and black. It is big, though, a regal queen whose reign will never end.

"The bridge still stands; its wide concrete surface used to be a perfect place for lovers to sit. The edges have been pounded and chipped away by countless hands, idling nervously through the twilight, since a generation before me. I wonder if there are traces of the curvaceous mermaid that some long-forgotten boyfriend drew. The bridge is crumpled and grey now, barely discernible in the dusk. It looks so small, like the burial mound for an old, useless woman.

"Poor land, its husband died a long time ago, but it can never die. How lonesome immortality is.

"Well, come on. I am an old woman, and this cold air hurts my bones. Besides, there is no sense in standing around looking at old ghosts."

*Carolyn Ide*



## EXTRAVAGANCE

Sarah and her mother walked down the dusty road hand in hand the way eight-year-old girls and their mothers do on hot, summer days when they're on their way to town.

"And Momma, Miss Richards said we could all wear our new party dresses, and we'd have ice cream and cake and —"

"You can't have a new dress, Sarah," was the short reply. "I'll have to fix one of Betsy Jo's over."

"Yes, Momma."

The leaves nodded on the trees as though the sunlight that poured on them were a heavy rain. The dust kicked back on Sarah's ankles and burned like the ache of slight bumps.

"Miss Richards said Emmaline looked like an angel last year. Could I have Betsy Jo's blue velvet dress?"

"Not velvet in the summer, Sarah. It'll have to be the white one. You can have a new bow, though."

"Momma, when I grow up, can I live where Emmaline lives — up on the hill? Miss Richards says Emmaline is lucky 'cause her father works in a big office or somethin'. Where does Paw work, Momma?"

"Your Paw works where everybody else does, honey, on the farms."

Sarah knew where her Paw worked, but somehow in her fairy-tale imagination she had hoped to hear a different answer. But they were getting closer to town now, and Sarah was busy taking on a new appearance. Her eyes widened in excitement and her hand jumped inside her mother's, in an unconscious hope to break free. Her steps doubled themselves and attempted to awaken her mother's lulling pace.

"Sarah! You settle down now, hear? And you better get them crazy notions of livin' on the hill out of that head of yours. There ain't no houses left up there. Everybody's in them that ever gonna be."



"Yes, Momma."

Her feet jerked at their stilted pace as they entered the five and dime. There Sarah saw hair ribbons heaped on the counter; piles of blue, green, pink, yellow ribbons splashed their colors for Sarah.

"I like the yellow ones, Momma, because they look happy. Like buttercups."

"No Sarah, white. It'll go with anything."

"Oh Momma, please, yellow, please Momma?" Her voice broke, half from hope, half from childish heartbreak.

"All right, Sarah. But don't give me no trouble after."

They left the store, Sarah's both hands clasping her small paper bag. They walked home on the hill side of town, Sarah's pace once more emulating her mother's. She gazed at the hill, and her eyes rested on a small white sign posted on a picket fence. "For Sale," it read.

"Oh Momma!" Her hands grasped the ribbon's brown bag as they had grasped her mother's. "Oh Momma," she cried, "I love you."

*Andrea Templar*

# Sonnets

## I

Hush my dear. I know too well how other's praise;  
They would compare thee falsely to the skies;  
They would like' your youth to summer days,  
And to the star-stunned nights compare your eyes.  
To them yours would be nought but goddess flesh,  
China white and smooth as silky curd.  
How trite their endless riming on your breasts;  
They make a sham of beauty with each word.  
But I delight in loving without show,  
Without the hollow phrasing of a line;  
For our true love and honest hearts are so,  
That mixed with beauty all becomes divine.

Sincerity and beauty are the tools  
By which lovers are made gods and poets fools.

## II

How well I love the motion of your hand,  
The whisp of sunset hair above your eye,  
Your laughter, tinkling, youthful, as the sand  
Adds grain on grain to blot all teardrops dry;  
In this pale of awful sadness you are strong,  
With summer roses always in your flesh,  
Your passioned breath is life's defiant song,  
Immortal youth, your kisses constant, fresh  
Keep my soul young. And though our lips grow old  
I'll cling to you as ivy on the elm,  
We'll listen to the fertile marigold  
And share a love no time can overwhelm.

Fear not cruel time, my love, for it is truth  
That I, not time, will wear the flow'r of your youth.

*Harris Tobias*

## OLD WOMAN

Old Woman, aged with time  
Your hands are rough and worn

I weep for you,

I weep with you

If I were strong

My shoulder would be yours

But I am young and weak

I am lost in my own fear

*Your* fear is of age and death

*Mine* is youth

Weep for me

Weep with me.

*Mary Ann DeRemer*



## *The Salt of The Sea*

The mountains are unspeakably, frighteningly old; once they were the beds of glaciers that marched down from Canada like Goths moving on Rome. They brought Boreas and his brother Death; they wore off the peaks of the then young mountains and carved out valleys and hollows that would mother a dark and lonely breed of men. And when the ice began to retrace its steps it left an inland sea, a leviathan playground, that Noah could have navigated; you can still find fossilized seashells on mountainsides that were once the shores of sapphire lakes.

The men that inhabit this land seem to have been born on the western slopes of the ancient mountains in the early dawn. They are marked by a peculiar characteristic; they feel that they have a knowledge of or an affinity with the prehistoric icefields and the waters that once covered their lands. Take one of these men to see the ocean for the first time; put him on the coast of Maine and watch his reaction. He will look, and he will say, "Of course, this is the sea. I knew it would be like this" — and he can board a ship and circumnavigate the sphere, and when he returns to his hidden mountain home he will say that the sea is not so much; it is only a place where there are no trees. But once he has been at sea he will long to return; he will go to it like iron filings leap to a magnet. These are strange men who will leave the warmth of their hearth-fires to seek communion with Boreas in the grey North Atlantic dawn; strange and lonely men indeed.

Of the troubled men who have gone to sea there are few that have returned with the same impression. A smith said that the only good part of the sea were the breakers. The granite-shaping force of the white waters stuck in the smith's heart; the granite shores were his anvil, the breakers his powerful forearm, and the spray the sparks that rang off the red-hot iron under his hammer. A farmer saw it as an immense farm, unbounded, stretching beyond the horizon on all sides; to him it was a grain field undulating in the wind that swept down from the Greenland ice-fields.

Of these dark men there was one, an old carpenter, who had never seen the ocean. He was a short, withered old fellow whose trunk and legs might have been formed from a piece of oak; his head was a bust of mahogany, and his hands were blocks of the hardest pine. His beard was blonde with sawdust, and he sneezed every time he shook his head. And the only thing he wanted before he died was to look on the ocean, to see what it was that had covered the mountains before men built their houses in the valleys where the rivers and streams, the last vestiges of the mighty glaciers, ran back to their original source. So he stole away from his house and his old wife on a night when the moon was in shadow and followed the river to the sea.

The river stretched far before him; it coiled and uncoiled around mountains and across rich farm lands; it was as serpentine as a man's life, twisting this way, then that way, now meeting a mountain and curving away to find another path, turning white as it churned through rapids, and plunging over an occasional waterfall; in some places it was clear and straight and deep, but it was troubled more often than it was calm. As it grew in length it was fed by many streams; it became slow and wide, and finally it would die at sea.

Soon the carpenter reached the wide part of the river, and in a short time he came to the sea. He walked along the dunes by the beach, and he looked out across the Atlantic, cold, grey, inscrutable, and immense. Over the horizon, beyond the old carpenter's sight, there were chalk cliffs and Chantilly lace, Maderia wine and windmills. To the south there were casks of rum, birds of paradise and ivory tusks, ebony people and ebony wood, swamps and the Mountains of the Moon; and around it all was the sea, wider than sight and deeper than the soul.

But he knew none of this. As he looked at the sea he thought about what he saw. Ah, it is as I knew it would be, he thought; and what is it but a place where there are no trees.

*Gary L. Krommes*



# THE BLACK FIRE ESCAPE

## I.

Veto stared unbelieving at his frozen hands. The flesh was blue. He pulled stiffly, desperately at the sleeves of his too-small coat, stretching them down over the backs of his hands. But the weak stitching gave way under his arms, ripping wide, and savagely the wind bit and slashed through the flapping cloth and clawed fresh wounds into the tender flesh of the old man's back and arms. The wind snatched away his cry of pain, muffled it in the snow. And suddenly, out of the raging whiteness appeared the opening, dark, an alleyway. The figure stumbled toward the vision and was drawn inside.

But the wind followed. He was no warmer even though the snow filtered only lightly down between the tall buildings. He moved back cautiously through the new darkness, his eyes straining ahead. Garbage cans! He hurried toward them. Three in a row they stood grey and dented: stained, chipped, truncated Doric pillars. Spilled rubbish danced about their bases on the bricks. The old man blinked his eyes, clearing snow from the lashes: a bound bundle of newspapers appeared atop one of the cans. The wind had caught a loose top fold, inflated it to a slapping sail which strained toward the black sea beyond. The man attacked the string which lashed the bundle; it cut deep blue-red lines into his numb fingers; they burned. And the string snapped and uncoiled and immediately the wind swirled away the top layers of paper. The white shapes flapped, startled from him, rose, darted about, eddied in corners, and were swept away, fleeing into the darkness down the alley. Wind screamed through the electric wires and clothes lines and strutted iron fire escapes above him. Again Veto heard his own distant voice screaming to awaken from the nightmare, the unreal dream: a lighted window floated suddenly high above him, anchored against the wind.

Veto craned his neck to better see the window; he sensed a warmth beyond it, inside. Snow flakes hung like particles of dust in the block of yellow light which jutted from the window. The shadow of a woman fell across the bricks of the opposite building.

Veto smiled. He had seen the approaching danger, the sail on the horizon. And he had turned away from the sea and away from the temple. She stood far above him, waiting on the windswept hill, her robes full with the wind, her neck and breast white with the sun, beckoning to *him*, to Veto! And he shouted comfort to her. But she raised a hand in protest. And the hand jerked down and she became a silhouette behind the yellow paper shade and Veto found himself stuffing the folds of cold paper into his coat, around across his back, under the arms and over the shoulders. The paper was stiff, crisp: its soiled yellow, white with the abrasive dry snow. His shirt was thin; creases and torn, raw edges burned hot into his flesh. His breath rose in thick white clouds.

Soon his coat was stuffed full, inflated round with the paper and he was warmer. From one outside pocket of his coat he removed the long and slender bottle again. He twisted off the cap and raised the green glass mouth to his, tipped the bottle back for an endless moment, finally pulling it down and gasping, sucking in the cold wind. He shivered convulsively. Trembling fingers then fumbled with the bottle cap. It fell. Annoyedly he kicked and the cap clattered off across the bricks into the darkness and the bottle returned open to the pocket.

Veto stooped and untied his shoes, then sat. The bottle tipped, fell from the pocket, rolled away from the man. Red wine poured slowly out onto the cold bricks. Veto sprawled violently backward toward the bottle snatched it up and held it to the light of the high window. Half had spilled! A quarter left. He felt for the full, sealed bottle in his other pocket, found it safe, then carefully set the open bottle upright in its red puddle on the bricks and looked in the direction that the cap had disappeared. It was nowhere to be seen. On his knees he crawled about, groping with senseless hands for the tiny black metal cap in the darker shadows. It was gone.

Sitting back against the wall, he removed a shoe and swathed the bared foot with paper, forced the shoe back on and, repeating with the other foot, pulled the laces tight, knotting them. The remaining papers he wadded up inside his pants legs and down under his belt. Then his huge, stuffed body rose stiffly to stand. He



picked up the bottle, slipped it again into his pocket and swayed grotesquely out toward the street. But the snow had changed to sleet and freezing rain; the wind lashed at the old man with a new fury. He wore no hat. He had seen one in another can. He hurried back, dug it out, held it up. It was small. The band was ripped away. It was a Western cut, a boy's abandoned cowboy hat. Veto forced the hat down onto his head, adjusted the string and drew the wooden bead firmly to his chin. He left the alley again with a final backward glance up at the high window. It was dark.

## II.

Later, the rain and snow had stopped, but the wind was even stronger, strangely soundless. Veto walked a deserted street and somewhere a heavy bell tolled Three.

A traffic light at the corner ahead swung ponderously in the wind, its colors slowly and monotonously changing. The icy street and sidewalk glared the yellow as he walked. Glared the red. Glared again the yellow and he hurried toward the corner, stopped, stood waiting at the curb. Veto almost laughed aloud. His hands, the buildings, the ice everywhere gleamed suddenly an emerald green and he stepped, only then, obediently into the empty street, chuckling, his huge and wadded body lumbering through the green, into the yellow, safe to the opposite curb. He steadied the bottles at his hips as he walked.

And ahead he heard the noise. He could hear the music and see the light spilled out into the street. There was shouting. It was The Blue Hour. He knew the bar well.

Closer now, the music beat a hot fever, increasing, now decreasing tempo. Veto reached again for his bottle, raised it high, tilted back his head. The walls about him changed the yellow, green . . . . He drank and could recognize a trumpet squealing, drums. Veto felt himself suddenly marching the beat, his stiff, stuffed legs swinging up and out and ahead and down in what became a dance, newspapers crackling, rustling to the rhythm. Toward the lighted patch of sidewalk Veto glided, hips swinging time, hat-brim flapping wings in the wind. He stopped before the half-curtained window, balanced himself up on toes to see over the top.

Inside, the lights were yellow, bright. Blue smoke gathered at the ceiling in threatening clouds and Ruby danced on the small runway behind the bar, just as the posters outside promised. Ruby spun and writhed to the throbbing of the drums, strutted from one end of the bar to the other, obscenely thrusting her hips, her bosom toward the sea of shouting, bobbing heads and waving arms. Her flesh was a golden-green in the light, her brittle hair a lurid yellow, her costume scarlet, sequined blue. She shook and the sequins glittered.

Pluto stood behind the bar with his back to the girl above, his huge arms folded across his chest, his cigar tip a glowing ember and the blue-grey smoke thickly steaming from between the smiling, opened lips. The big man's body suddenly jerked forward; he quickly drew a beer at the signal of the hand that clutched a limp, green dollar. The yellow liquid frothed white over the glass edge, spilling sudsy foam. Pluto wadded his huge apron into his heavy, hairy hands and wiped down the wet, black bar. The Blue Hour fairly overflowed with the shouting men and Pluto sneered a satisfaction through the cloud which followed his head.

The torrid music swelled to a deafening crescendo and Ruby twisted, writhed away from the top of her scanty costume with a teasing, taunting gesture, smiling, laughing with gleaming lips. A string of red stones glittered about her slender neck and her full breasts glowed a new yellow-green, tassled with shimmering blue. But outside the wind seemed almost to slice through Veto's clothes, his papers. He dropped from toes to heels and huddled down against the window, conscious again of his hands and feet, the coldness, and a dizziness now from hunger. It had been warm on that summer day, the picnic. The sun blazed and Ruby danced through the tall grasses, laughing with her mother as the two picked the flowers, red and yellow, spun the huge bouquets. Veto startled. The thunder rumbled protest and the earth split wide. Blue sky thickened red. Red burned to a black, blacker than night: *black fire!* He had seen the petals scattered on the ground and he had called her name, her mother's, and there had been no answer. Silence. And the music pulsed and screamed in terror. Clouds darkened. Wind whistled and howled. And the door flung open



beside the old man. A figure stumbled out into the street: "And stay the hell out!" came Pluto's voice. The door slammed shut.

"Godam tight bartender!" shouted the unsteady man at the closed door. The man was young, unshaven, hung with an immense and shabby coat. He turned, began waveringly to walk away.

"Wait!" Veto cried after him. The new man turned again on awkward feet to face the caller. Veto hurried up to him with a stilt-like walk, newspapers crackling. "Pluto throw you out because you couldn't pay?" he asked with eager sympathy.

"Hell, no!" was the answer. The words were thick, loud: "Got more money than I can spend!" He licked a thumb and shuffled imaginary bills through his hands, counting to himself with mumbling lips; in the humor Veto could see himself, younger.

"I don't believe you," he challenged calmly.

"Calln' me a liar? Think I don't?"

"Are you as hungry as I am?" suggested Veto.

"C'mon," snapped the younger man, "I'll buy us coffee, maybe food. Last'a the crummy big spenders, I am!" and he made an awkward gesture, leaning far forward, sweeping the sidewalk with a hand and almost falling. He caught his balance, stood up, peered drunkenly at Veto, bellowed: "What'r you a lousy cowboy or somethin'?"

Veto remembered the hat, reached up, tipped it graciously, "Howdy, Friend," he heard his own voice as from a distance.

"Where's the horse, Cowboy?"

"Ra'tch'onder," the old man drawled, "hitched afore th'saloon." He indicated a fire hydrant and the other man scanned the dark street, eyebrows expectantly raised.

"If you're buying, then," grinned Veto, "I know a place, the original Greasy Spoon. We'll walk. Best coffee this side the Mississipp', m'friend."

"Apple's my name, Cowboy," said the younger man, extending an arm and hand from the tent that was his coat.

"I'm Veto."

"What th'hell kind of a name is that, Old Man?"

Veto did not know.

"And hey! How many coats'n pairs of pants you wearin'?"

"Newspapers," Veto heard himself answer matter-of-factly. "Keeps you warm." He fingered the thin-worn lapel of his coat: "Somebody's old smoking jacket!" he said with pride. "Good-looking, eh?" Veto showed his friend the leather patches on the elbows, the Botany label inside. "Salvation Army issue. Real class! And moderately priced too."

"Prob'ly 'bout four hours singin' hymns?" estimated Apple.

"That's about right."

"Four hours!" Apple shouted. "Four hours!" He sang: "Bring-ging in the Sheaves! Bring-ging in the Sheaves!" Veto joined. "We will go re-Joy-sing, Bring-ging in th'Sheaves!"

"Third Verse!" yelled Apple. "Hot soup in an hour!"

"You've been?" laughed Veto, jubilant.

"God'm soup's lousy too, ain't?"

"Well!" Veto heard himself saying, slapping his companion on the back, "Any friend of God's is a friend of mine!" The words echoed hollowly down the empty street; the men laughed insanely with one voice.

"Then let's have coffee!" gasped Apple, giggling, turning to walk.

"But first . . . wine!" Veto halted his friend with a hand on the shoulder, "Got a whole quart here!" He produced the new bottle from his other pocket, holding it up triumphantly, then peeling the black plastic band from the neck, "We'll celebrate."

"Cigars, too, Old Man!" added Apple, producing two of the thick brown dowels from beneath his coat. The top came off the bottle; the cigars were unwrapped and lit. The wind had calmed. The two men drank from the shared bottle and smoked as they



moved down the street toward the restaurant, a half-block and a turn from The Blue Hour.

Icy sidewalks gleamed with a surface like hammered steel and ahead; from around the corner, Veto saw the shimmering words GOOD

FOOD reflected faintly red upon the glazed concrete from neon-lit tube words above. They rounded the building and made their way toward the square, warm glow of windows and entered at the small glass door, encrusted with cracked and fading decals: Lucky Strikes and gum, 7up. A tiny bell tinkled welcome as the door closed behind them.

The men took opposite seats at a booth, Veto first removing his bottles with care, placing them on the table, balancing his hat atop one. His newspapers crackled and rustled loudly as he wedged the immense body between seat and table. The tiny restaurant was white inside but filled with yellow light, like a porcelain cup of golden wine. The waitress stood across from the men behind a counter, absently rinsing glasses, fitting them into a rusted rack to drain. There were only a few other people in the restaurant. It was quiet.

"Coffee!" ordered Apple, shouting. The word had come to his mouth like a function. The dreaming waitress showed no response only continued her rinsing of glasses.

"Coffee, hey!" the young man repeated.

"Keep the shirt on, Mac!" the waitress rasped abruptly. "Hold the horses!" Veto found imaginary reins and pulled. Apple laughed.

"What'll it be?" asked Apple aside, mimicking the woman's tone. "Black or cream?"

"Not black." Veto propped his tired elbows up onto the cheap, yellow, linoleum-covered table, etched with the lace of glass and cup-rings. The men stared at the rude waitress. She casually, indolently continued the rinsing. She was tall, perhaps in her thirties, spidery, too thin for the yellow-grey uniform with the collar of last year's style. Her small apron was mottled with the

prints of greasy hands and her wren-brown hair, lifeless under the lights. Her tight lips were yellow-pink, carved into a grimace.

"May we *please* have coffee, Miss?" Veto found himself calling, sing-song words, "With cream?"

She turned to stare at him with cool blue eyes, impatient eyebrows; glared as she slowly dried hands in the apron, sneered through the deliberate motions of lighting a cigarette. Veto could hear his papers in the awkward silence. Finally, she pivoted, took from the shelf of cups and saucers beside her and slowly drew the measured thin and hot, reeking liquid. The coffee steamed like winter breath; she carried it to the table.

A tiny bottle of yellow cream perched on Veto's saucer edge. The old man raised it between thumb and forefinger, high, as in a toast: "Ah, the milk of human kindness," he sighed and awarded the waitress a dramatic wink; "What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?" Apple giggled. But Veto felt strangely numb, as he had in the alley; the waitress, Apple, the restaurant swam before him confused, then only slowly again settled into a reality upon which his eyes could finally focus, his ears could hear.

"Putting up with the likes of you," the waitress answered sourly. "Thirty cents!" he heard her say.

"We ain't bums! And we'll pay it all later." said the haughty Apple. "Bring us some bacon and eggs, maybe toast. OK?"

She turned and glided to the counter, shouted the order through a tiny window: "Blue-plate A. M. Bacon!"

"Christ!" came a loud voice from somewhere far away, "I'm cleanin' th'godam grill!"

"You'll have to wait," called the woman. Veto glanced nervously at the clock above the counter. Three-thirty. He knew that *she* would finish at four. There was time. He knew there was time. He began to perspire in the heat of the restaurant. Apple noticed:

"Take out the crummy papers if y'r hot, Cowboy," he said kindly.

"I'm burning up," and Veto began removing each wadded sheet, opening it and folding it neatly, building a pile on the seat beside him. The stack grew as high as the table top. The other man watched with interest.

*I'm* not a bum, Old Man; I'm a millionaire in disguise. What's yer excuse f'r being where you are?"

"It's a long story," answered Veto.

"Ain't I buyin' yer time with food?"

"Well, maybe you wouldn't remember or weren't around," he started, "but Veto used to be a big name here."

"I don't remember."

"Quite a few years ago. Ran my own bar, *Veto's*. Now it's The Blue Hour." Veto could hear his own voice faintly.

"Yeah, I remember now. That's right. Owned some buildings around here, you did, huh? Big landlord. Yeah."

"And Pluto owns it all now . . . what he hasn't sold."

"So I hear."

". . . forced me bankrupt. These five years I've been bumming and begging. Everywhere. Never cared what happened. Now I'm back."

"What *did* happen, Veto?"

The old man paused before answering, poured wine from his open bottle into the creamy coffee; it sank like a blob of jelly into white pudding. He drained the cup and called for another.

"Did you see the dancer at Pluto's?" he finally went on.

"Damn right!" exploded Apple. "Ruby!" he lowered his voice: "Real mover, eh? Real gem!" he chuckled. "Pluto's girl too, aint she? Man, but she's built! I *mean* stacked! And whad'ya mean did I *see* her? Who the hell doesn't?" Apple made great shaping gestures with his hands; his voice dropped lower to an excited whisper: "Why? Whad'you know about the babe, Old Man?"



"Ruby" — said Veto quietly, hesitating, "Ruby is my daughter." The waitress clattered Veto's second coffee onto the table. She rattled and spread the silverware. Ice tinkled in the water glass she placed before him; Veto could hear Apple mumbling apology; he heard the waitress say that the food would be there soon. Veto poured more wine into the new cup.

### III.

Apple felt himself becoming more sober now. The effect of the alcohol wore quickly away; his flesh tingled cool. He stared at the old man across from him, at the chopped, thin, greying hair and yellow wrinkled face, the tautly-tendoned neck. There had even been humor in the stuffed jacket and huge deformed shoulders, pillowing the buried head on either side. But Apple could no longer laugh. The old man's eyes dreamed unseeing, focused on nothing. Apple tensed with new awareness: *he* would be the old and broken man before many years. Had Veto been he? Apple could hear the old man mumbling, the words as his own: "She looked so much like her mother. So much like her mother. And her mother was killed in the storm, in the lightning. There was thunder and she was gone. There was only Ruby. And she grew. And everything we owned half and half, my Ruby. But this Pluto came along: sweet talk and promises, his ugly love. They took it all. And I was an old man." Apple stared dazed at his hands, looked up across in terror, saw a young and unshaven face floating. "And now she dances, Ruby, for his money. He keeps her in the apartment that was ours, mine and her mother's, treats her like dirt, *forces* her to dance, I *know*." Apple listened horrified to the rambling: nonsensical, disjointed, jumbled. "The buildings. The Blue Hour. Run-down, ruined. The fire escape. Even the fire escape, rusted now, rotted black with soot, dirt, decay. Used to paint it myself; every year; height made me dizzy. Doctor says bad for my heart, the height. Run-down." Apple found his own voice, "God'm shame," he whispered. And Veto's tired eyes came to focus on him; they wrinkled at the corners and the old man smiled. Then heavy plates were slammed down rudely upon their table. The waitress stood above them.

"Two thirty-five with the coffee and tax," she announced. "Pay now!"



"And eat later?" laughed Apple, relieved at the interruption, hastily snatching up his fork and knife.

"The money or you don't eat at all!" she answered angrily.

"My friend Apple, here," said Veto gently, smiling up at her, "he has all the money."

Suddenly Apple looked confused at the man, as in a mirror, then angry, defiant: "Whad'you mean, Old Man?" he shouted. Turning to the waitress, he pointed accusingly at Veto: "He's got it! I aint got no money!" The woman spun to glare at Veto. Apple frantically stuffed egg into his mouth. The toast disappeared under his coat. Veto could only shrug with arms and shoulders.

"Who has the money?" she demanded. No one answered. Veto sat mute, Apple's mouth was full and chewing. People had turned to stare from other booths and counter stools. Veto fingered his fork apprehensively, raised it again.

"Get out, then, you bum!" she suddenly screamed. "Try to free-load here! Get out! Get out!"

"I ain't no bum!" Apple shouted rising hostile from his seat. Veto rose also, cautiously; he slipped his bottles into his coat pockets.

"Then put that toast back!" she ordered.

"I ain't got'cher lousy, god'm toast!" denied Apple hotly.

"Put it back!" and she pulled open his coat and the two slices of limp, greasy toast fell soundlessly to the floor. The angered waitress thrust a hand at Apple's chest, catching him off-balance, toppling him backward into the seat.

He coiled, lept up and struck the woman hard across the face with an open hand. She fell. He sped toward the door. "Police!" someone shouted. "Police!" A customer rushed to help the waitress. Veto heard the door jingle madly and slam behind Apple.

"Get him!" wailed the fallen woman, pointing at Veto. A huge, bald, hairy-armed man with a dirty T-shirt and sagging ro-tund belly came storming from the kitchen: "Christ!" he sputtered,

"What the hell's going on out here?" "Get him!" fumed the waitress. "Police!" another voice bellowed. "He struck the woman!"

Veto ran for the door, holding his bottles steady, leaving the papers, the hat behind. Reversed sides of all the door decals screamed THANK YOU,

COME AGAIN. COME AGAIN and he was suddenly outside. Apple was gone. The wind buffeted the man, lashed again through the thin jacket; his pants legs fluttered wildly. Snow and sleet drove in slanted lines at the street. Veto heard the voices behind him. He ran.

Down the street, past the dark Blue Hour; the traffic light still slowly pulsed its monotonous green, yellow and red through the snow. He hurried through the colors, ducking into every inset store front, momentarily out of the wind. Most of the stores were closed, abandoned, plastered with FOR RENT, FOR SALE signs, the glass of the windows whitewashed halfway up inside, soaped with childish scrawlings: arrow-skewered hearts, initials, obscenities.

Veto had not eaten more than the single mouthful and was more faint now with hunger. His body burned with the new coldness, his face distorted in the wind and blazed red. He darted into another storeway and sagged against the door. An icy tremor shook his body. The hands and feet no longer felt his own. The old man breathed painfully, sobbed, then, through watering eyes, read the great, blue decal inside the adjacent window: AIR CONDITIONED INSIDE. The huge letters were pictured carved from dripping green-blue ice. A tiny, laughing penguin pointed gaily to the bold-face legend: COME IN AND BEAT THE HEAT!

A noise bubbled from Veto's throat and became a strange laughter, then a whimpering. Fiercely he reached to his pocket and firmly grasped a bottle by the slender neck. He swung it far above his head and smashed it down into the center of the gaudy, glaring decal.

The huge window split, shattered. Heavy slabs and spears of the thick plate glass crashed loudly to the sidewalk. Veto knew a sudden pain in his hand, another across his thigh. He saw the blood.

A window lit above the street. There was an angry voice: "What's going on there? Who's down there? Call the police! The police!" Other windows lit about him. He heard running feet. Again he ran.

Down the street. Around a corner. Through an alley. Across a second street. His breath came again labored. Into another alley. He heard shouting and pursuit.

"He struck the woman! Ran without paying!"

"Smashed the window!"

"We could hear him run!"

"Christ, what the hell's going on out here?"

"He was down there, Officer, in the alley watching me undress! I heard him shout!"

"Police!"

"He came in alone, sat there mumbling. I should have known he had no money, should have thrown him out at first!"

"We could hear him run!"

Veto ran. Ran now toward *his* building. He would find his Ruby as he had planned. He ran in the new direction. He knew not how long. His lungs burned and forced great billows of steam into the night. His hands ached numb and the snow and sleet caked heavily on his shoulders and his back and in his thin hair. He tripped on something unseen. Invisible things caught at him, brushed against him in the living night. He stumbled again, and at last, in an alleyway, an endless row of garbage cans, he sank to his knees and sprawled forward, twisted, still.

He listened in the darkness for chasing feet. He found only silence. He was alone. His watering eyes were blind. He was no longer conscious of his painful breathing. The snow fell lightly.

## II.

Instinctively, Veto reached to his pocket. Somehow he had not lost the other bottle. Then he inspected his hand. It was badly



cut. He felt faint. His leg throbbed steadily, monotonously. The pants were drenched to wringing with blood. It dripped slowly red onto the cold bricks; droplets on his trail from the lighted street glittered red, tiny scattered sequins. Shapes of the alley began to spin about him. Blood pulsed loudly through his head, drums beating wildly, heavy footfalls pounding down streets somehow far away. He staggered to his feet and looked outward toward the street, then up. Again he began the strange laughter. This was *his* building. He would see *his* Ruby *now*. She would welcome him. He could see her rich brown hair, cool blue eyes, hear her softly soothing voice.

There was a noise behind him in the alley, laughter, breathing. He turned, strained his eyes back into the darkness. A woman stood there watching him, motionless in the filtered snow. He could barely see her. The wind howled suddenly more shrilly, insanely. The figure seemed to begin to dance, to dance away. He followed, stumbled, picked himself up, pursued. She disappeared into a door off the alley. He, too, entered his old building, followed the fleeing white figure through doors, floating down narrow corridors, up winding stairways, down, through dark rooms, gliding silently past sleepers crying into pillows and moaning into dreams, past restless bodies tossing in uneasy sleep, past whispering lovers, past empty beds. And always ahead the figure stayed just beyond the edge of darkness, dancing, writhing, taunting, laughing. Down an endless hall they raced: the nightmare-she, the ancient man, then through a broken door and high into the night, onto the fire escape.

Wind and snow burned his sweating neck and face. The teasing form above him rose ever higher in the complex iron strutting. Veto grabbed feverishly at the thin, cold, black-iced railing; the coldness seared his hands. Up the black fire escape the pair rose higher; Veto afraid to look down.

The vision halted at the highest floor, halted at what would be Ruby's back door. A light was on inside. Veto stumbled up the remaining steps, but the figure suddenly disappeared. Somewhere he heard a long, wavering, screaming wail. He clutched at the top railing, looked over the edge into the abyss: she plummeted straight down away from him, eyes rounded and unseeing, mouth



gasping-wide, arms flailing, livid yellow hair streaming out behind; Veto felt his bottle gone; it had fallen from the pocket. He heard it shatter on the bricks below, ending the full-throated scream. It echoed up and down the alley between tall buildings. There seemed again to be a quiet.

## I.

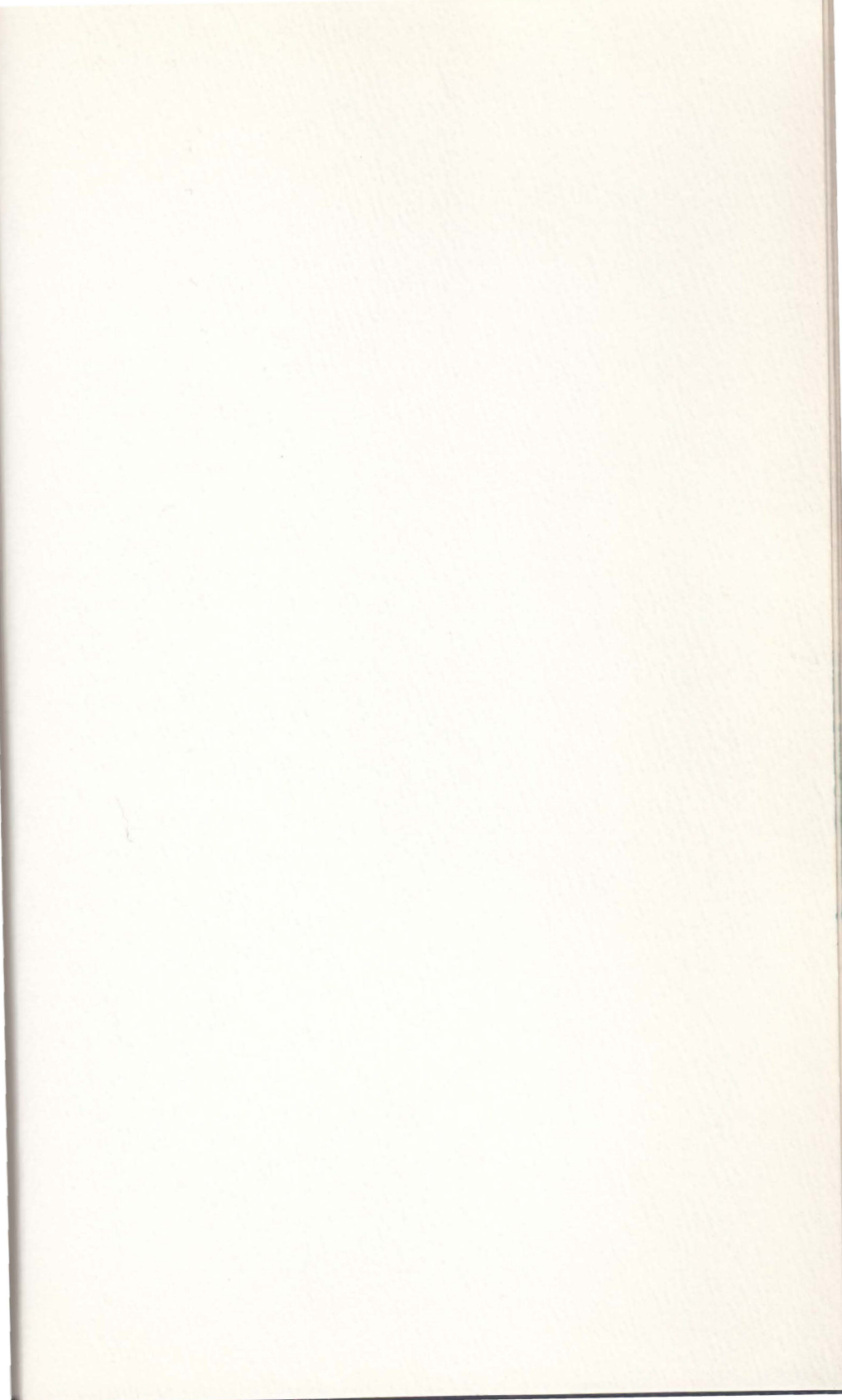
The old man collapsed against the cold black iron, dizzy with the sense of height; he felt himself falling, spinning, faster and faster. But he could not scream. The wind whistled by and a pulsing pressure built in his ears and he hit the water far below and soundlessly sank. Deeper and deeper, the water thickened darker and was warm and smooth. Then came the bouyancy and then he began to slowly rise. The color of the water changed gradually from the black to a dark emerald, then to a golden-green and to a yellow and he could see the sunlight playing, sparkling on the surface above as he rushed to meet it.

He crashed through the surface and the shore rose only a few feet away, covered with the long, green grasses that trailed thickly into the water. There were flowers: red and yellow and inviting hands waited to pull him from the water and he reached up, happy, smiling.

But the hand that touched and caught his was as white as death and as cold as ice.

*Jack Hardie*







4596