5-1949

Peter Pan, 1948-1949

Lindenwood College

Peter Pan

PETER PAN

Published by the Students of Lindenwood College
St. Charles, Missouri
No. 1, May, 1949

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To

Elizabath Isaacs,

former Lindenwood instructor in English,
with whose encouragement this magazine
was undertaken.

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FELICIA

MIRIAM REILLY

FELICIA had just pounded the heavy knocker on the big gray door as the town clock chimed seven. When the last chime had sunk into nothingness, she heard a soft padding of feet. She tensed her jaw and bit the inside of her cheek—hard. "Who is it that is coming to the door? Will I have to tell whoever it is who I am? What will I tell him? 'Good morning, I'm Felicia Morales and am coming to work for the señora,' or should I say, 'I am the new servant'? Which would be better? Oh, dear!"

Her thoughts, swooping like birds, flew to the incidents of the preceding day, how on that early morning she had fallen slightly behind her aunt as they neared the big wooden door with the brass knocker on it. The door was in a high gray wall; the wall bent down along the street and was cut into pieces by long windows with iron grills veiling them. Everything seemed so big and silent about this house on the street. Felicia had trembled with anticipation as her aunt stepped up to pound the heavy knocker. The hammering noise had not yet lost its echo when a dog from within had started an impatient yapping; it grew louder and sharper as he ran to the door and skidded to a stop. Then he quit barking for a minute to sniff through the crack of the door. Suddenly Felicia heard a shout from a child and running footsteps towards the door. At the approaching footsteps the dog resumed his loud barking, and the child screamed at the top of his lungs to quiet the animal. Fumbling with the lock, the child swung the door wide open. He grabbed the dog's collar, lest he should jump at the newcomers.

"What do you want?" the child had bluntly queried.

"Please tell your mother that if she is not too occupied I would like to speak with her," said Felicia's aunt.

"All right." Without waiting to get the words out of his mouth, the blond child had jerked the dog's head in and slammed the door. The door shook; in a minute there was silence as before. Felicia stared at the door, thinking of the ugly, pale child with the blue eyes who had just stood there. She whispered, "Oh, Aunt, I'm afraid —this big door, as big as a church door, that awful dog, and the ugly child with the blue eyes—please, let's go home."

She was nervously adjusting her shawl about her head as the door opened again. This time she saw a tall young American woman with funny, short, yellow hair, blue eyes and red, red lips. The lady spoke, but Felicia had not understood her.

The aunt answered, "Yes, señora, this is my niece, Felicia. She is sixteen years old and wants to work."

Again the American said something that Felicia did not understand. How strangely she had spoken Spanish!

But Felicia's thoughts turned sharply to the present at the sound of the heavy clinking of the guard chains being taken off their hooks. The lock unsnapped, the knob ground as it turned, and the door was slowly pulled open. In front of her, Fe-

licia saw a tall, thin, Indian man, his cotton trousers rolled up to the knee, and water dripping from his bare legs. The straw hat, low on his head, was old and battered.

This must be the gardener, thought Felicia. She swallowed hard; though the man was not a terrifying person, her eyes widened with nervousness as her speech tumbled out, "I'm Felicia Morales and have come to work for the señora today."

The gardener looked at her with an unchanged expression. Felicia clutched the paper-wrapped bundle closer to her as his gaze fully surveyed her. Then in a quiet voice, he said, "Come in, child."

Dropping his arm that blocked the doorway, he let Felicia step through onto the terrace that looked over the square patio. The gardener closed the big door gently and walked past the girl without looking at her. "Wait here a minute."

She watched him cross the patio, disappear, then return to his work pruning the rose bushes. Why had he left her standing there? Why did he not tell her what to do? Felicia sighed with despair. Though uneasy and troubled, she could not help looking about at her surroundings. To her right, a wide corridor of speckled gray tile ran around the patio. The patio was about five feet below the terrace and was broken into plots on which grew every kind of rose imaginable—roses on small bushes, on tall bushes, some blossoms as big as tea cups and others as tiny and sweet as a fringed baby's smile. Lacing in and out of the rose plots, Felicia saw flagstone paths leaping with grass and moss. Would it not be entertaining to cross the garden by leaping from one stone to the other?

Taking experimental leaps with her mind's eye, she suddenly saw a figure crossing the patio—a fat little woman. It was the shortest and roundest person Felicia had ever seen. By the time the little woman had climbed up the steps from the patio, she was panting like a running dog. With short, firm steps she waddled up to Felicia.

"Good morning."

"Good morning," returned Felicia bravely, although she felt like an inexperienced bullfighter.

"Come with me, and I will show you where your room will be." The woman continued talking as she led the girl to the back of the house. "There will be a lot of things for you to learn while you are here in this house. You will find out that the señora always wants them done her way. You'll be wise if you'll not cross her. I know. I have been with her for five years."

Felicia dared not say a word. She listened with great fear of things to come. The woman stopped her and, pointing to a door, said, "This will be your room. Your bed is there, and the bathroom is there."

Felicia nodded and stepped after the woman into her new room, a small square room lighted by a window with yellow curtains. In one corner was a yellow straw-seated chair and next to it, against the wall, a small chest of drawers; over it, a cracked mirror. All this for her! Felicia thought how lovely the golden ribbons of sunlight were, streaming in liquid stripes down the walls. It would be a beautiful wall on which to pin her picture of La Virgen de Guadelupe.

"The first thing you must do," went on the woman, as she pointed to the neatly folded brown dress and checked apron on the bed, "is to take a bath and then put these things on."

"Yes, señora, I will do that."

"My name is Maria. In half an hour I will expect you to be dressed and ready to come into the kitchen. You will hear the clock strike. Now hurry!" Maria's black eyes flashed exclamation marks as she gave orders.

Felicia pulled the brown and white checks over her head; she buttoned the three large white buttons with flying fingers and whipped the sash into place. Maria had just called from the kitchen, "Hurry!" Quickly Felicia took a final look in the cracked mirror and paused just long enough to pat a stray hair or two into her dark shining crown. As she tossed her two heavy braids back, she smiled at the distorted image in the cracked mirror. Two girls looked out at her from the glass—one had a wide smiling face, but her sister had one as long as a horse's head, her nose stretching to the shape of a stocking leg. Felicia had found two new friends who would greet her every morning. She laughed, but stopped abruptly when she remembered the day ahead.

Felicia ran to the kitchen; as she rushed in, she let the screened door swing swiftly back with a bang. Maria straightened up from bending over the oven and glared at the girl. She sputtered at her, "Do not slam the door! You are no longer on the ranch! You must be quiet; the señora is still sleeping."

Felicia gasped but said nothing. How could she tell this fiery little person that she had never been in the country and that she did not know the door was going to whip back with a bang? "I will not let it happen again," she said quietly.

"Now get over to the sink and start washing those dishes." She turned to the pot on the stove and gave the potatoes a vigorous stir. Then, as she continued to whip the potatoes, "Just one thing more; don't let my barking at you disturb you, but it is the only way you will learn. I know all about teaching young girls their work in the house, and unless someone shouts at them they will never learn." Maria gave this last part of the lecture with such conviction, banging the lid on the pot, that Felicia almost agreed with her. Wiping her hands on her apron, Maria faced the girl.

"Come, I will show you how to wash dishes."

In a short time Felicia had learned to swab the plate with a soapy cloth, dip it into hot water without scalding her fingers, and set it up on end in a wire holder to dry. It seemed like a very complicated process; at home they would not use hot water and certainly not all this soap. Well, this was different, and it was rather pleasant to feel the warm water, to watch it beat the suds into big puffs, then see them tick into nothing. She looked critically at the stack of clean cups and saucers; she was pleased because they seemed to wink playfully at her.

Suddenly she heard a deep, gruff voice behind her. It was the loudest voice she had ever heard; it was even louder than the street vendor's voice when he came to their house after he had been shouting all day. Felicia turned to see where this sound came from—a bald head was sticking through the door.

"Good morning,"—and then the head disappeared.

Maria saw the question in the girl's face and shrugged her heavy shoulders. "The master, he wants his breakfast."

A very strange way to ask for one's breakfast, thought Felicia, as she watched Maria fly about, snapping switches on the electric stove, breaking a pair of eggs into the frying pan, and pouring a cup of coffee. In five minutes the breakfast was ready to carry in to the master. Maria took the tray up in her arms. Felicia watched

with fascination the way she nudged the swinging door open with her hip. The door flew open; Maria was swallowed up into the pantry, and the door swept closed again. Felicia was horrified by the thought of having to go through that door. How fast would she have to move in order to escape being hit—and carry a tray! Oh, she would never be able to do it!

Perhaps she could try it now while Maria was out of the room. Felicia shook the clinging suds off her hands and skipped over to the door. Then, stepping very close to it, she gave a quick little nudge as Maria had done. But the door was heavy and did not swing easily; it just whispered out a short way and, with a small puff, closed. Like a book that one opens only enough to peek into, and when the covers fall, the air gently presses out. She would try again—harder; maybe this time she would not be disappointed.

Just as Felicia was going to throw her weight against the door, she heard Maria's heavy steps on the other side. With the nimbleness of a fly, she jumped back from the door. Maria burst through with a mighty power. Felicia sprang to help her with the loaded tray, her heart fluttering like a handkerchief on a clothesline, lest Maria should scold her for playing. But Maria said nothing more than, "The señora calls you to come to the dining room. She will tell you what you are to do today." Slapping the tray of empty dishes down on the table, Maria said, "Now hurry!"

"Ay, Dios mio! The señora!" Felicia suddenly realized that this was the moment that she would have to talk all by herself to the woman with the red, red lips and the funny yellow hair; there would be no Tia to help her.

Maria chuckled, "There's nothing to fear; she doesn't have horns."

"Whatever will I say to her?" worried Felicia, pressing her hands to the temples of her head.

"Ay, Dios," mimicked Maria, " 'Whatever will I say to her?' Say 'Good morning,' of course!" Then, seeing the girl's tense face, Maria went on more kindly, "Now, don't be frightened; she'll be very nice to you. Go now."

Felicia pushed the swinging door meekly and crept into the dining room, where the mistress was sitting at the table. Hardly daring to look up, she mumbled, "Buenos dias, señora," as if she were afraid her chin would fall apart if she moved it too much.

"*Muy buenos dias à usted, Felicia.* How nice your dress looks on you!"

Felicia squirmed uncomfortably. "Thank you, señora."

Nodding her head attentively as her mistress enumerated her duties, Felicia listened very hard to understand all that the señora was saying. The señora talked very slowly, making all the words sound as if each were a separate bead on a string.

"We will go to the bedroom now, and I will show you how beds are made in this house."

Felicia hoped deep down in her heart that she would be able to learn quickly. She would try *very* hard to do everything just right.

Felicia stood on one side of the bed and the señora on the other. Felicia watched carefully and did just as she saw her mistress do. First, the blankets were all whipped back into a wad at the foot of the bed; then the bottom sheet was stretched taut and tucked neatly in at the sides. The second sheet was pulled from the foot of the bed with a high sweep so it filled with air; then it was smothered into place. Next, the blankets were taken together and straightened into line, the lip of the sheet was flapped

over the blanket, and everything was tucked in. The señora then took the pillow and plumped it until it was round and fluffy. With one big sweep, the spread swallowed up the blankets and the pillow; the job was finished with a million little pats running the wrinkles off—out of sight.

"There!" said the señora. "Finished!"

Felicia smiled; it had been like playing a game to fold, and by folding, build straight and smooth lines out of wrinkles and bumps.

"Do you think that you know how to make a bed now?" asked the señora, who had not said a word during the lesson.

"Yes, señora."

"Well, then you go into the next room and try; if you hit a snag, call me and I will come." She spoke with such kindness that Felicia could not help smiling back at her.

It was not long before Felicia had finished whipping, stretching, tucking, smoothing, straightening, pulling, flapping, and patting two more beds into their daytime appearance. She stood back and admired her work. Not one single wrinkle remained. The spreads were on straight, and for some reason the beds looked happy. "They look happy," thought Felicia, "because I have made them well, and they are comfortable and proud of not having any wrinkles on their faces."

Proudly Felicia stepped out on the porch to look for the señora. Across the patio she saw the mistress sitting on a garden bench, sewing; beside her, the child was playing on the green-fringed path with a toy automobile. Felicia cleared her throat and called shrilly, "Señora! I have . . ."

"Come here," interrupted the mistress.

Felicia stiffened at the sharp sound of the voice, then stepped briskly toward her mistress, wondering what she had done to deserve the abrupt command. She stopped a few feet away from the bench, waiting for the señora to look up from her sewing. Felicia noticed that the horrible dog with black spots was sleeping in the sun, twitching at the flies. She hoped he would not wake up. He did, though; he opened one big eye, then closed it tight again. Felicia sighed with relief.

She glanced at the child, who continued playing undisturbed. His head was bent as he crawled after his toy; the sunshine on his hair made it glow like ripe wheat. When the child turned and looked up into her face, she saw that his eyes were as blue as the delphiniums blooming in the patio.

The mistress knotted her thread and snapped it off, speaking in a patient voice. "I want you to learn that when you speak to me you must not shout. First, come and see if I am busy; then if you will not be interrupting me, you may talk. Do you understand?"

Felicia nodded and meekly murmured, "Si, señora." She wanted so badly to tell her that she had finished her chores!

"Also you must remember that you are in *my* house. I do not like to have people shouting or singing loudly. Do you understand?"

"Si, senora," she said quietly; then after a pause she exclaimed, "I have finished making the beds, señora!"

"Oh, that's fine, Felicia. Now while I go and see if they are made exactly right, run to the kitchen and ask Maria to show you where the brooms and cleaning rags are."

As Felicia dashed across the patio to the kitchen, she recited—

"Buena suerte, hierba buena
y la flor de la azuceña."

She *hoped* the beds would be made as they should be!

She burst in on Maria, who was mumbling over a large pot of bubbling stew. Felicia exclaimed, "That looks like enough soup to feed all the people walking in the Plaza on Sunday afternoon."

"Tush! You are a foolish one! This food is for the dog."

"Well, it does smell awfully good."

"Of course it is good! Meat, rice, and finely chopped vegetables cooked just so. It is as much trouble to prepare the dog's food as it is to cook for fifty people."

Felicia wondered why Maria always sounded like an old hen scolding her chicks even if there were not any reason to scold; thinking this, she was suddenly startled by another outburst from Maria.

"What a parrot you are! You must not sit there talking; get on with your work."

Felicia was taken aback by Maria's gruffness, for she had not said a word. Stammering, she said, "I am to bring the broom and the dusters to the señora."

"Ay, Dios," exploded Maria. "Look in the closet."

Felicia glanced at the two closets and wondered fearfully which of the two she should look in; she dared not bother the cook again. She would have to be venturesome, try first one, then, perhaps, the second. Just as she reached out to pull open the door, Maria, not even stopping her work to look up, said in an even, careless voice, "No, it's in the other closet."

Felicia pressed her lips together and wanted to stamp her foot. Why hadn't that woman told her this before? She jerked the door open and snatched out the brooms and the dust cloths. Then she marched out of the kitchen. She was so absorbed in her little fury that she did not notice the dog, who was sleeping in the doorway. She pushed the door so roughly that it hit him in the snout. Giving a painful howl, he jumped up and crept off to whimper his hurt away.

Felicia was astounded at the docile actions of the dog; he did not growl at her but seemed to cry like a hurt child. Dropping her load, she ran over to the corner where the dog was gently pawing his nose. Timidly stroking him at first, and then caressing him tenderly, Felicia said, "I didn't mean to hurt you. No, really I didn't, old boy. Did your nose get bumped *very* hard? It's such a pretty nose. Yes, it is!" The dog began to wag his tail gently. Felicia laughed as he reached up to lick her face. "And I thought you were such a horrible brute!"

Gathering up her things which she had abandoned, Felicia did feel sorry that she had become angry and resolved to be more careful.

Felicia cleaned the living room. She swept the floors, paying particular attention to the corners; the señora had told her that by looking at the corners of the floor she could tell if it were well cleaned. Taking the dustcloth, she flew over the tops of the tables, slid around the rungs of the chairs, hopped over knobs on the radio, and carefully wiped the dainty figurines, knocking the little flecks of dust into the sunbeam that fell across the floor. Then she plumped the gaily colored pillows, as she had been told to do, and punched them back into the sofa so they would look relaxed.

She stretched her tired arms and then stood surveying her work with satisfaction. Everything seemed to be in good order. That chair over by the radio, how

big it was! Did she dare sit in it to see how it felt? There was something wonderful about the chair; the coverings on the cushions were quite worn in spots, but still she could see dull green ferns on the background and the strange umber-colored birds flying. She moved slowly over to the chair and suddenly plopped down in it. Somewhere from the inside came squeaking sounds that fainted into gentle ticks. Felicia felt herself sinking deeper and deeper. She must have sunk into another world, for as she looked up, she saw rainbows on the ceiling. Many, many, small rainbows. They came from the crystals in the sunlight, dangling from the chandelier. Oh, beautiful, beautiful!

WAGON RUTS

BETTY JOY HAAS

FOURTEEN revolutions of a
pitted wagon wheel,
Cut across my oozing
muddied flesh.

Sixty revolutions of a
jagged rubber tread,
Stretched across my
shiny licorice crest.

That's Progress!

ON THE DEATH OF GHANDI

SIEGMUND A. E. BETZ

"DRY leaf . . .unmuscled skeleton." Yet blown
By God's own wind, to knock upon our gates,
To finger with a sturdy touch of bone
At all our casement-hidden loves and hates:
Who spoke aloud, in bold serenity,
The ancient words—"prayer" and "humble fast"—
Stern law that the good future none shall see
Who shuts his spirit's eyelids to the past.

The fire consumes his little flesh, the air
Darkens a moment with that saintly smoke,
The wail across the water echoes there
Briefly.
No lamentation will revoke
That scattered dust. Nor did a bullet's pain
Compel spent goodness to turn home again.

OCTOBER INTERLUDE

JENNIFER SULLIVAN

BARB and Sandy were involved in their mother's late fall chrysanthemums. The big blossoms lay around on the ground, making the scene resemble a strange battlefield in which the soldiers still stood erect even though they had lost their heads. Sandy suddenly squatted and came up with a faded rubber ball in his hand.

"Found it," he grunted.

A smile swept his sister's intent face but was immediately wiped away as she straightened her chubby body and turned to extricate herself from the clinging leaves of the flowers.

"Sandy, look at Mother's chrysanthems. Did we do that?"

The little boy, who had already plowed out of the bed and was bouncing the ball on the hard, brown grass, glanced at the mutilated flowers in front of him.

"I don' know . . . maybe we did. Do you think she'll be mad?"

Even now some of the stalks were flattened on the ground, their crushed leaves oozing greenness. The soil which had been lovingly broken into tiny pellets was packed solid, flame-colored petals half buried in it here and there.

Still, the dirt was in better condition than the steely hard clay which surrounded the garden. The thin veneer of Bermuda that Mrs. Harmon had applied helped cover its ugliness—but ugliness was a hard thing to escape in the oil camp. The creek—Greasy Creek—which slugged along across the road, was full of sludge and crude oil discharged by the refinery. Its banks were barren, acidly black; and long ago all life had been eaten from them. The creek was always a source of wonder and terror to Barb and Sandy. When they could sneak away, they would stand a safe distance from the high bank and watch rings of color appear as the oil flowed over rocks and debris; once in a while they would get close enough to throw a stick into the moving coagulum, and as they watched it become black and oily and then sink out of sight, they would unconsciously draw back from the edge.

Behind Greasy Creek was a high barb-topped fence that completely encircled the grim structures of the refinery—the gigantic, weather-beaten cooler, furnaces with towering smokestacks, oil tanks blackened and greasy by overflow, and the flare, burning waste gases night and day like an immense candle at a funeral wake. To Barb and Sandy the flare was the whole refinery.

Another barb-topped fence circled the houses of the camp, stretched across Greasy Creek, and joined the refinery enclosure. Inside this fence the little houses, squeezed close together, resembled too many babies put into one play pen; and each was flecked with oil spewed by the winds. The only difference in the five houses was that a dining room made a plump protrusion on one side of the superintendent's home; the other four houses were exactly alike. It was in the back yard of one of these quadruplets that the battle of the chrysanthemums had been waged. And it was here that the children were suddenly startled from their contemplation of the wounded flowers by a shrill "meow."

Barb and Sandy turned abruptly and looked over the dull grass until they saw about ten yards from them a scrawny kitten. Its blue eyes, great and mattering, glowed in the small head. Great red sores splotched the dingy white fur. The kitten meowed again so that its skin was momentarily stretched taut; then it drooped back into position over bony points. Barb and Sandy stared.

Suddenly Barb ran and scooped the kitten into her arms, screaming, "A kitten!"

Sandy, who had followed her, tried to hold its forelegs in his own hands; he jumped up and down in his excitement, yelling, "Gee, he sure is little. Look how little he is!"

Barb squeezed the sharp little bones against her own well-covered ones. "Oh, Sandy! Do you think we can keep him?"

"Well, gosh, he sure is skinny."

"Won't Mom be surprised?"

"Let's go show it to her."

The children hurried toward the dingy back porch, carrying their precious cargo between them.

As the back door slammed, Mrs. Harmon looked up from the potatoes she was peeling for supper. I wonder what they've been up to this time, she thought. If Barb has fallen down again, she'll have to stop playing with the boys. They're so rough.

She saw Barb and Sandy appear in the kitchen doorway, the kitten still in Barb's arms. Her slightly amused expectancy changed to horror.

"Barbara!"

Barb immediately dropped her plump arms to her sides and clasped her fingers behind her back as she always did when her mother called her Barbara; the kitten fell sprawling on the floor, protesting with a feeble yeowl.

"Hey, it hurt itself," murmured the imperturbable Sandy, bending down.

Barb, forgetting her reprimand, joined him. "Isn't he cute, Mom?"

Mrs. Harmon hurried across the room to put herself between the children and the cat.

"Don't touch it, Sandy. The kitten is sick, and I don't want you to touch it."

The children looked around their mother for another observation.

"But, Mom, look how skinny he is," Sandy directed. "We should give it something to eat."

"And, Mom, we could make it well. You can fix anything," Barb confided.

Logical argument, Mrs. Harmon thought. All parents should have a course in logical argument.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," she said as she looked at the two pair of anxious eyes; "while you're washing your hands real well, I'll take care of the kitten."

She herded the children over to the sink, then turned toward the kitten. It was still sprawled on the floor, either too weak to stand up, or without any desire to move from the warm linoleum. Mrs. Harmon picked up some rags and went over to the kitten; she carefully caught hold of some healthy skin at the nape of the neck and carried the limp form to the back porch where she put it down on the rags.

Ugliness; ugliness, she thought. The house . . . that yard . . . now the children want this kitten, starving and diseased as it is. She quickly turned her back on the kitten and looked out toward the refinery. It will be awfully hard on them . . . why

is it that youth suffers so much, she wondered. It's as though with every grief a bit of childhood is killed.

The sound of the children's approaching voices startled her from her abstractions, and she quickly moved toward the kitchen door before the children came out.

"Back inside, you two. Let's look for something to feed the kitten from."

Barb and Sandy reluctantly allowed themselves to be pushed back into the kitchen, at the same time craning their necks for a view of the porch.

"Say, Mom, what do you think we should call it?" Sandy pondered as his mother reached for a Mason jar lid on one of the high kitchen shelves. "You know, I think 'Billyum' would be nice. I always wished you'd called me 'Billyum' so you could call me 'Billy' for short. I like 'Billy,' " Sandy continued.

"Yes, but maybe it's a girl—then we should call it Alice. Don't you like Alice, Mom?"

Mrs. Harmon was pouring thick yellow cream into the jar lid, scarcely hearing what the children said, only dreading the next few hours.

"Don't you, Mom?" Barb insisted.

"Children, you shouldn't be naming the kitten. You haven't even been told you can keep it—it's very sick and it might make you sick too."

"Yes, but if we took care of it, it'd get okay," Barb stated.

"It would be kind, too," said Sandy, recalling his Sunday School lesson the day before.

Mrs. Harmon put the cream back into the refrigerator and looked at the children. Her voice sounded the way it did when they were sick, and she came to them in the middle of the night.

"When your father comes we'll talk about the kitten . . ."; then suddenly changing her tone, "but now you two generals march into the living room and pick up your soldiers. They're all over the floor, in the chairs—it must have been quite a battle."

"But you're going to feed it now. Can't we watch?" Sandy asked as he began to follow his mother toward the back door.

"The soldiers might not like it if you leave them under the pillows too long. You'd better go rescue your men."

Mrs. Harmon watched the children start off toward the living room, grumbling a little and looking back toward the porch once or twice. Then she carried the cream out to the kitten and watched it as it violently lapped the liquid into its tiny mouth, choking a little in its eagerness.

The shadows outside became more indistinct in the watery sunshine as the afternoon wore on. The whistle blew loudly from the refinery.

"Pop'll be home pretty soon," Sandy declared as he reached for a lead machine-gunner peering from behind an antique cup on the mantel.

"Well, let's hurry, Sandy, so we can ask him when he comes," Barb prodded; Sandy was too likely to put every soldier he found into another skirmish, instead of the big cardboard box where they rested between battles.

After a few more skirmishes, they carried the box into their bedroom and then hurried to the kitchen. The lack of bustle in the small, warm room made them pause inside the doorway. Their mother was standing with her back to them looking out of the window over the sink. She was very straight and still, and they saw her hands

clenched on the sink, the knuckles as white as the porcelain. The children thought they could almost hear the quiet, just as they had been able almost, but not quite, to see the colors in white which their father had told them were there.

"Mother," and Sandy stopped, startled by the noise of his voice.

Mrs. Harmon turned around and the children were surprised to see patches of red below her eyes and an unfamiliar smile on the lips that were so cool on their foreheads every night.

"Has Daddy come home yet?" Barb asked, looking at her mother curiously.

Mrs. Harmon nodded her head gently, but said nothing.

"Well, did you ask him, Mom?"

Mrs. Harmon nodded again and suddenly Barb and Sandy began to feel afraid. But this wasn't the kind of fear they knew when they heard boards creaking in the middle of the night. This fear had crept up on them; there had been no creaking boards or funny noises to warn them it was coming.

"Mother, where's our kitten?" Sandy suddenly gasped, and then he started for the porch when he got no answer. Barb, now aware that she must also get to the kitten, began to hurry after Sandy.

There was nothing on the creased bundle of rags. The fear had now become a wave which began to rise higher and higher until, as the children suddenly looked up and saw across the road a small white blotch and close to it the broad, jacketed back of their father, the giant crest broke and pounded down upon them. The children raced out of the back door, screaming with horror. They could only run and scream and see the sun gleaming on an object in their father's hand and a small white splotch on the edge of Greasy Creek.

They had just reached the road when the gun went off and the kitten fell over the bank. For a moment they stopped; then they began to run again toward their father. Mr. Harmon heard the cries for the first time and turned in alarm.

"Kids—no! Don't come down here."

The children didn't stop; they were soon upon him, beating and tearing at him.

"You killed it. You killed it. You killed it," came through their sobs over and over again.

"But, kids, your cat was sick." Mr. Harmon tried to hold the pounding fists. "It couldn't have stayed with us. You might have gotten sick, too—or even Mother." Perspiration was standing out on his forehead. "It was too far gone—I couldn't help it. Kids—don't you see?" he pleaded.

But the soft, round little shoulders still shook with the sobs of childhood; and with the grief cutting at them, the children pulled themselves from their father's encircling arms and fled.

"But, kids, it was sick. I had to do it," Mr. Harmon called after them.

The chubby legs did not halt, and even after they had disappeared, childish sobs could be heard, until they too at last were lost, leaving only a breath of pain in the air.

VIRGIN MOTHER

RITA BAKER

BLUE and blue and still, Maid
Blue of quiet sea-peace,
Darkly blue, your eyes have paid
Black, black sea-peace.
The night has come and seen and gone
In silent gloom from tortured Son,
O Maria.
Do you see Him still—is it done,
Maria?

You dream. Still and deep is blue
Lost in your eyes, Maiden,
In more than your eyes. You knew
The blue was His, Maiden.
For come of God and light and gold
Your dream is here, untouched, untold,
Maria.
Who will say what peace it holds,
Maria?

HAPPY TO KNOW YOU

MARCIA MORRIS

"PLEASE, Mother!"

"Don't be silly, Marcia. Now as I was saying . . ."

"But, Mother . . ."

"Now, Marcia, can't you see that she's dying to hear. Of course, she wants to know how Mr. Gimble started his business. Now as I was saying . . ."

Immediately I knew that this plain little sales girl in the Washington branch of Gimble's would know the entire history of Mr. Gimble's life before she could retreat from my mother's bombardment.

I slowly inched down the row of counters hoping that no one would notice my resemblance to Mother. Why, oh why, does she have to do things like this . . . always trying to embarrass me . . . even if I am just fifteen years old . . . well, fourteen and a half . . . I know you—well, you just can't be so bold with strangers . . . My thoughts clicked on.

I picked up a pair of pink nylon anklets. Just what I wanted. I looked at the price tag. I gasped and laid them back down . . . Can't help being like that . . . politician's wife . . . thinks she has to shake hands and introduce herself.

". . . Mr. Gimble started his store with a little pack mule and he went from place to place selling needles and . . ." She was talking so loudly I could hear her clear down there. She was preparing herself for the story. She laid her packages down and leaned her bulk against the show case. The words kept coming.

"Please, lady, do you want these handkerchiefs or not?" That was the sales girl. Her face was getting cloudy. But that didn't stop my mother. Nothing could. I started back down the aisle. Maybe I could rescue that poor clerk. I caught hold of Mother's arm and tried to drag her away.

". . . And then he started a store in Vincennes. That's a town about thirty miles from Princeton. Did I tell you about Princeton? We live there. It's in Indiana and it's a real nice little town and . . ." Mother shifted her weight and glanced toward the elevator. "Why, hello, Alice. I'm so happy to see you! Did you come to the convention, too?"

It was Miss Nelson, my history teacher. I hid behind Mother's blue suit skirt. She couldn't see me there.

"Why, yes, I did, Agnes. My, it's nice to see someone from home. I suppose you've been having a wonderful time?"

I took another look at Miss Nelson. We called her "the lady with the rainbow hair" at school. She was fifty, trying to look thirty. She looked sixty. The entire front of her dress was decorated with medals and ribbons. She was molded in a gilded cage. She yanked at her cage.

"I certainly have. The only thing—I haven't met a single celebrity. I'm not going to leave this town 'til I meet somebody famous."

. . . Oh, oh, I've heard that tone of voice before . . . in for it now . . . be here forever . . . never get out of this town . . . Miss Nelson again . . . this ought to be good . . . The phrases crowded into my mind.

"Why, Agnes, haven't you heard? Mr. Eisenhower is going to speak at the convention tonight! Isn't that perfectly thrilling? And he's so good looking, too."

"Not really! Why, why that's wonderful! I'm going to shake hands with that man if it's the last thing I ever do!" The look on my mother's face . . . never seen anything like it, except on her . . . it's inspiring . . . mingling of . . . what's that word . . . of rapture and determination . . .

"Marcia, we have to meet him! Come on, we're going back to the hotel and get ready to go!

Instantly I knew what that meant. I would have to wear my white formal again. All pages had to wear white and although I wasn't nearly old enough to be a page, I did look like one and got in free.

"Are you going to buy those handkerchiefs?" I knew better than to ask that. The clerk had given up long ago and Mother had completely forgotten about them.

"No. Haven't got time! We've got to go!"

She rushed out of the store without a word to Miss Nelson. I followed her. I can always get through the crowds easier when I follow her. We pushed and shoved through the rest of the Daughters and finally got to the street.

She threw up her hand. Three taxis whizzed by. The drivers must have known her. At last a sucker stopped. She gave him a dirty look as if to say, "What kept you so long?" She practically collapsed into the seat and piled all her packages on the floor.

"George Washington Inn, and hurry!" she commanded.

"Where's that?"

"Well, it's in Washington." Mother was always so definite about locations.

"I had that figgered out! But, where?"

"Well, do you know where the New House Office Building is? It's right in back of that. I wish you'd hurry!"

"Mom! The meeting doesn't start 'til eight! It's only five-thirty, now!"

"Marcia! Must I correct you right here in front of all these people? Well, driver, what are you waiting for?"

I settled back in the seat . . . might as well relax now when I can . . . there's the Lincoln Memorial . . . my dad must be like Lincoln . . . must be . . . so patient . . . there's the Capitol . . . stands for justice . . . wish my mother would take notice . . .

"Driver, stop this cab!" Mother clutched the front of the seat as if her getting up would help the cab stop any better.

. . . Oh, my gosh, what's wrong with her now . . .

"Look, lady, you said you wanted me to hurry, didn't you? All right, I'm hurrying."

I suddenly felt so sorry for taxi drivers. I saw his disgust with her, and knew just how he felt.

"Mother, what now?"

"Don't you see who's on the steps? It's MR. EISENHOWER!"

"But, Mother, you can see him tonight . . ." It was no use—she was already out of the cab.

"Get those packages, Marcia." . . . Packages! . . . what do you think I am . . . pack horse? . . .

"No use waiting, driver. This will take a long time."

"Thanks, Miss, but who's going to pay me?" . . . gosh, I forgot . . . where'd she go . . .

"Mom, you forgot to pay the man."

"Oh, I'm so excited! Here, and don't forget to get the change." She handed me a five-dollar bill. I paid the driver and gave him a tip for the trouble he had had . . . Mom will probably shoot me . . . feel so sorry for him . . .

"Hurry, Marcia! We can still catch him!" . . . oh, well . . . let her have her fun . . . that's what Dad said to do . . . go along with her . . . everything she wants . . I remembered my instructions.

Mr. Eisenhower was just getting ready to get into his car when Mother pounced on him. She grabbed his arm and nearly wrung his hand off with that hand shake of hers.

"Mr. Eisenhower, I'm so happy to meet you! I'm Mrs. Howard Morris from Princeton, Indiana, and this is my daughter, Marcia. We've come all the way from Indiana just to hear your speech tonight."

"I'm very happy to know you, Mrs. Morris. And you, too, Marcia."

"Be sure and look for me tonight. I'll be sitting on the front row of the Indiana delegation. Wait 'til I tell my friends that I've met THE Mr. Eisenhower."

"Yes . . . Well, I must go prepare for my speech . . ." . . . Maybe he doesn't know it but he's trapped . . . oh, Mother . . . why . . .

"How is your family, Mr. Eisenhower? You have such a lovely wife. I'm so anxious to meet her, too. Will she be at the meeting tonight?"

He kept edging closer to the door of the car.

"No, I'm sorry she couldn't make it this trip. Maybe the next time. Well . . ."

"And how is that darling grandson of yours? You know, I saw his picture in *Life* magazine and I said to my husband, 'Howard, outside of our own children, that's the cutest baby I've ever seen!' " . . . and Dad said, "I think it's kinda ugly myself."

"He's just fine. The whole family is just fine. Well, I must go now. Goodbye.—I'm very happy to have met you."

He jumped into the car and drove off before Mother could say another word. She would have.

"Oh, Marcia, wasn't he the nicest gentleman ? Just wait until I tell my bridge club. They'll be so jealous. I wish I could have asked him if he were expecting a third world war."

LA-BAS

PATRICIA UNDERWOOD

WHEN, in despair, I walk alone at night
To think and feel the wind caress my face
With cool and careless lips that take to flight
As yours so often do in my embrace,
I dive again into your pool of love
Remembering pain from depth where light is dim,
Where bottom forms no links with those above,
Recalling bursting lungs, no strength to swim
Because I found your peace in coral caves
And saw your soul through water mist and shade
And learned too well the wisdom of the slaves
To love that has become and is not made.
I walk alone and weep my quiet tears
Because I have all else except your fears.

THE ARRIVAL

PATRICIA UNDERWOOD

A SOUL is empty sky
After the sun
Before the moon
Until love comes
With night
And one lonely star.

AUTUMN FANTASY

JANE MORRISEY

I SAW
A silver elf
Dance darkly on the lawn
And madly leap a soul's length to
The sky.

With eyes
Squeezed shut, he slid
Along the Milky Way
And whooping, shrieking, splashed in depth
Of night.

And then,
I watched him hop
The stepping-stones of stars
To nibble crumbling edges of
The moon.

But soon,
He flung himself
Exhausted on a star,
A moon-tanned spirit hidden in
Its light.

MIRAGE

J. JEWETT LANGDON

"COME on, honey, drop those dresses and hang 'em up later. I've just got to have help on these lines. Drew jumped all over me 'cause I didn't have them straight. Hurry! I'm going out tonight." A highly dramatic voice was issuing from the recesses of the crowded room which Dot and I occupied. (Dot was taking seriously this summer theatre on Cape Cod.)

"But, Dot, I've just got to . . . Oh, all right, I'm coming," I answered. I didn't want to sound eager. Mother always told me to let people come to me for friendship, but Dot was different from anyone I'd ever known. The words *vivacious* and *coquettish* best described her. They also described everything I didn't know and wasn't. I guess I came closer to worshiping her than anyone else I'd ever known.

While I read her cues from her "sides," I also ironed her dress for that night.

"Gollies, Dot, I bet this dress makes you look like a Spanish princess with your black hair." I practically groveled at her feet.

"Oh, it's just some ol' rag I picked up. Come *on*, honey, what's the next cue?"

Dot woke up only in time for her usual lunch of black coffee. After everyone had finished, George and I, with the rest of the cast, huddled in the small patch of shade afforded by the grandson or daughter of some Pilgrim's home. Drew, our director, announced that we would run the play straight. Everyone took his place. Dot settled herself by Drew and held the book. The play progressed by leaps and jerks, and at four o'clock we took a break.

"See you at the beach, actors. I think we're in shape to open tomorrow. Everybody up and ready by seven. We'll put up set and run it again on stage before eight-thirty curtain. Get plenty of sleep tonight. You'll need it." For such a dark Adonis, Drew certainly carried a lot of authority. And he looked right at Dot. Her dark eyes laughed back at him while she solemnly nodded yes. I mentally promised him I would hit the sack by ten.

"Coming, honey? Wear your mauve bathing suit and bring your camera. I want to take some pictures," commanded Dot. "Oh, hello, George, darling. Wait for me by the door and bring Pete along with you for my roommate. We won't be long. Hurry, pet."

"Foltow your mistress, 'pet.' See you here in a jiffy. How about bringing your 'sidet' along and we'll go over our scenes together?"

"Hurry! . . . dear," cut off any lengthy statement I might have wanted to make.

"Swell, George," I flung over my shoulder as I dashed after the retreating Dot.

Once in my cluttered room I pulled out bathing suit, towels, sun-tan lotion. Then I turned to Dot. She wasn't even in the first stages of dressing. I helped her dig for her suit under a pile of rumpled clothes. While she got ready, I gathered up her belongings for the beach.

"Come on, Dot. The fellows got here hours ago. If they don't move pretty soon, they'll take root and grow."

"Let them wait," she replied, as she carefully applied a bright red to her full lips. "Don't you know *anything* about men?"

"Well,—I always thought—"

"That's surprising! Ready, honey?"

Outside, the fading afternoon sun made long fingers of shade across the path. The sand would be transformed into minute jewels within the hour. Everything was right. I pranced along in my new mauve suit with George, Pete of the bifocals, and Dot. When we got to the beach, we discovered that a take-off of our modern dance class was in progress. Dot clasped George's hand and joined, but Pete preferred Shakespeare. My mauve bathing suit—and Shakespeare! Nuts! Dot wanted me to take pictures, so take I did. She had such artistic taste. Every picture had a different set of men in different poses. As the sun drowned itself in a corner of the bay, I ran out of film and all of us went up the path to dinner.

* * *

"You can't be stepping out tonight, Dot. Drew asked us not to. Gollies, we open tomorrow night!"

"Honey, I'll be there. Why do I have to stay in this hole just because some director gets bossy? I'll make it for the opening, baby. Don't worry. Now help me. You're the only kid around here that doesn't make me nervous. I don't know what I'd do without you. You're sweet."

Kid, huh? You're only ahead of me by a year. But you did say that you didn't know how you would get along without me. "Sure, Dot. What can I iron?"

After Dot left and I had hung her clothes on three or four hangers, I tumbled into the narrow plank I fondly called my bed. All night long I dreamed that I was whirling around on a pair of gold stilts, when all of a sudden someone knocked them out from under me. Down, down I fell into a depthless pit with turbulent winds tossing me about. When the sun's harsh rays awoke me, the bed covers looked as if an Indian on hot coals had danced in them.

Dot waltzed in with the air of one who had been in a marathon. Her complexion wasn't on in an orderly manner, but her morning coffee gave her the needed energy to announce that in a few moments we would be rolling forward on our start to stardom. We sang our way to the theatre and unpacked the cars. We built our living room, ate our sandwiches, and smoothed the stucco of our parts. Dot kept me pretty busy getting black coffee for her. She forced herself to laugh, make jokes. Ever since morning she had acted strangely. I worried about her for a while, but with so much to do I had to stop thinking, and attributed her condition to my imagination.

Around three o'clock we took a break. "Anyone know of a good bar in this town?" Dot asked in a strained voice.

"Sure, I know one that looks out over the bay," Drew replied. "You kids deserve some refreshment after that last run. Follow me, but just don't get plastered. Remember, we got a show to do."

Dot gave Drew what I call a sultry look. "I thought you'd know of one." Then she turned to me.

"Come on, baby. I'll educate you."

Drew looked at her rather oddly and George said, "Leave our June alone, Dot." Just as flat as that he said it. Something quivered in the air, but I couldn't tell from

which direction it came or where its objective was. It didn't matter. Tonight I'd be up there on that stage making people laugh, and now I was going to my first bar. Gollies!

The bar faced the water as Drew promised. Knotty pine panelled three walls, but ships, sails, docks, and the sunset made up the fourth. I put on my best sophisticated face, held onto George for support, and sauntered over to the tables.

Everything went fine until Dot's sixth rum collins.

"You think you're a pretty hot director, don't you, Drew?—Answer me! Don't you? I think you stink! You're lousy. I hate your guts."

The sun touched the little waves with beaten gold. A boat whistled for the bridge to be raised. The bartender put three ice cubes in a glass. I heard the sharp sound they made as they struck against each other. The pet Great Dane stretched and yawned his cavernous mouth. I saw and heard all of this. Surely, surely I hadn't heard Dot just now.

She started again, on and on endlessly, saying the same things with horrible new words. Now she cried. Now she screamed. Now she just talked. Drew quietly sipped his drink; George ignored her, looking at me. I sat with my mouth open, my eyes open, my ears open to the sounding fury confronting me. — *Stop her, somebody. Stop her! Please, God, don't let her talk this way. Stop her! STOP HER! STOP HER!*— I felt sick. I wanted to slap her, scream at her—I wanted to leave. George turned to me and shook his head.

"You had to know sometime, June."

"*I don't want to know; I don't want to listen; don't—want—to—*," then I choked on the rising hysteria that filled me.—*I can't cry. I won't! Fight, you dope. Fight!*—

"Come on, Drew. Let's get her back. I'll take Dot. You help June. She needs it."

"I don't want George to help me. I want Drew. I love that louse. Hear me? I love that—that—louse!" With a last effort Dot lurched toward Drew and clung to him, sobbing.

Somehow we managed to get Dot back to the dressing rooms. Pete went for coffee while Drew tried to slap sense into her. She kept repeating, "I love you. I love you. I love you."

With George's steadying arm around me, I moved mechanically toward the steps outside.

TWELVE O'CLOCK SCHOLAR

MARY LOU MATTHEWS

As we got into the cab, the driver said, "Where to, ladies?" He was very tall. He had a long thin nose and quick eyes. His dress was that of a typical St. Louis taxi-cab driver, and his speech seemed like that of all the hurried cosmopolitans in the world. He was polite, as polite as city taxi-cab drivers know how to be. When he asked us, "Where to, ladies?" we told him we wanted to go to the "drug store across from the bus stop in St. John's."

He heaved a sigh, stopped the car, pushed his cap farther back on his head, and said, "Of course, you know that there are any number of bus stops and drug stores in St. John's?"

Finally we remembered that the bus stop was by the St. Louis County Transit Company on St. Charles Road. He gave an exaggerated sigh of relief, shifted the gears, and took off with such speed we had to grab our hats.

"You girls go to school in St. Charles?" We told him we did.

"At that girls' school?" Yes, again.

"Ah, girls," he said, "you're missin' half your life. D'ya ever have dates? Know any fellas?"

We set his mind at ease that we weren't entirely out of contact with the outside world. We had just been to see "Hamlet" and had dinner at the Crossroads.

He sniffed when we told him where we had had dinner. "The only guys you'll meet there are the ones who have flunked outa school. Now, for really good hunting, go to Medart's on a Saturday afternoon. That is, if you set pretty high standards on your men."

We started talking about the movie we had just seen, "Hamlet," because we were afraid any sarcastic comment at this point might not be appreciated by our driver.

"You like that play?" inquired our friend.

We told him we were very much impressed by Laurence Olivier, and the entire cast, for that matter. Had he seen it?

"Yeah, I saw it. Pretty good. Ya' know, I'm a college graduate, myself."

We were open-mouthed by this time.

"Got my degree in Commerce and Finance at Washington University."

I guess Betty was thinking the same thing I was, because she is very inquisitive by nature, anyway. She asked him, "Are you working to own your own cab?"

"Lady, I own this cab."

"Then why do you spend your time driving it all the time?"

He sighed again, and said, "Lady, I'm driving this cab so's to meet the general public, because I'm writing a book. And incidentally, are you studying to be a detective?"

There was a long silence after this. I glanced at him for a minute, while he pulled to a stop for the light. His hands were resting on the wheel. I always notice people's hands when I first meet them, and his were very beautiful. They were long

and slender, and his fingernails were clean. The veins stood out on the top of his hand, and I thought to myself, "He should have been a sculptor or a surgeon with hands like that." The light changed, and skillfully dodging the traffic, he shot across the boulevard.

"Yeah, I'm a college graduate. Met my wife in college. Cutest girl on campus. Asked her for a date one night, and I sure was floored when she accepted. We went bowling down at the Arena. She wasn't a very good bowler, but she seemed to have fun.

"And why did the cutest girl on campus go out with an ugly mug like me? I'll never know. Maybe she was fascinated by my manly physique. Yeah, that must have been it. We started 'going steady,' you kids call it now. Made a pretty good lookin' couple, too. She's little and dark, and after I found out her favorite flowers were violets, I always took her some. She'd wear 'em on her collar, or in her hair. Really set off those black eyes of hers. Yeah, we started 'going steady.' "

"When were you married?" I had to ask it. This was such an incongruous cab driver I didn't think he'd mind.

He didn't answer for a long time. I thought he'd chosen to ignore my question until I noticed he seemed to be listening to the motor of the car. He threw in the clutch, raced the engine, and muttered something about "Got a bad knock in that fan belt."

He lit a cigarette and said, "August, 1932, the nuptial vows were exchanged. I should have known then what I was getting into. She didn't like my choice for best man. She very subtly implied that he looked like a prize-fighter, had no 'polish,' and that 'mother would never approve of a person like that in the wedding picture. Well, I said to myself, A girl gets married once in a lifetime, so she might as well have a fashionable wedding, complete with socialites. So I asked one of my playboy fraternity brothers to be best man. He was from a 'fine first family,' threw money around and looked like Rudy Vallee, which was O. K. with the old lady, *her* mother, that is. My mom wanted me to be happy, but that didn't go."

He had lowered the window to let out the cigarette smoke. He looked at me, and asked, "That too cold for you?" I nodded yes, so he took another puff from his cigarette, and raised the window after he had thrown it out.

"Go on, please," I said.

Reaching under the sun visor, he pulled out a surprisingly clean cloth and wiped the frosted windshield, on my side, too.

"I had a little money my dad had left me, and we bought a house. It was really more expensive than I could afford, but she wanted to live in that neighborhood with the so-called 'elite,' so we did. She said, 'To get ahead one must put up some pretense of well-being because to make money one must seem to have money.' We got along fine those first few months. You've read stories about the happy bride and groom at home. That was us, all milk and honey. I had passed my C. P. A. test, and was making about $350 a month, even with the depression. We were pretty lucky, I guess."

He slammed on the brakes to avoid a small dog that had run in front of the car. "Sorry," he apologized.

We were getting close to the end of our trip and we all were afraid he'd leave with an unfinished story. The girls in the back seat were unusually quiet, and were

hanging on to every word.

"One night she asked me if I didn't want to ask some of my friends over to play cards, and she would ask some of hers. In other words, let's have a party. Sure, I said, let's have a party. So I asked my old beer-and-pretzels crowd over for a little poker. She spent a week cleaning and washing windows and asking her friends. She even had a portable bar sent out, which we couldn't afford really, but I didn't say anything. She was so excited about the thing."

A car swerved in front of us, almost catching our fender. He swore under his breath, and then excused himself.

"The 'party' turned out to be a brawl. Not literally, ya' understand, but a sort of a verbal brawl. The day of the party I had picked up a pup in the street on the way home from work. It was a skinny little thing, dirty, had been in a couple of fights, but it had a good face. Ya' know, a dog can have a good face, just like a human. Well, she didn't understand that. She's the type who likes cats, and thinks dogs are dirty and smelly, much less this 'mongrel' I had brought home. I put him in the basement, and before I cleaned up I gave him a bath. He looked like a lost thoroughbred then. Of course, he wasn't really, but he looked like a good dog. That night when her friends and my friends were there, hers playing bridge and mine playing poker, I thought I'd try to break the ice and bring the pup upstairs. I went down and got him to show our 'guests.' Well, she turned a million colors when the little thing came running in. He jumped up in one of her friends' laps, and acted real affectionate. The friend jumped up like he'd been shot and started brushing his trousers, just like the dog wasn't clean, ya' understand, but he was. Then the dog jumped up in Hilda's lap. Hilda is one of my good friends and always will be, I guess. She petted the pup and made over him like he was a baby. I looked over at my wife with a pretty satisfied look, I guess. She had a look on her face that might be called disgust. She marched over to make the dog get down. Just then he ran into the dining room and got under the table. In no uncertain terms she made me get down on my hands and knees, pick up the dog, and take it downstairs. I was pretty humiliated.

"The party broke up soon after that. When they had all gone she gave me the devil. Why hadn't I told her all my friends just drank beer, before she'd bought the portable bar? I told her she woulda bought it anyway, to impress *her* friends. She said I'd humiliated her by letting that 'beast' jump all over people. I told her she had made a fool of me, getting the dog out from under the table. Yeah, we really had a row that night, but later I apologized, and the next day I took the pup over to Hilda's. She looked at me kinda funny, and said she'd take good care of it until I wanted it back."

We stopped for another stop light, and I heard someone whisper, "He *ought* to write a book!" He either didn't hear it, or was just indifferent to their comments.

"We didn't have any serious quarrels until Christmas. Oh, now and then we'd have a fuss about her cooking, but nothing serious, ya' understand. She wanted to have open house Christmas, which was fine with me. I said it was fine we were having the gang over again. She stirred her coffee and said, 'Well, we're not going to mention it to those friends of yours who came over to the card party.' Just like that, she said it. 'Why?' I said. I didn't understand what she meant. Then she told me that her mother didn't approve of 'that kind of people,' and besides, what would

the neighbors say if they saw them drive up in those old cars? I really blew my top then. What was wrong with people who drank beer, liked dogs, and drove old cars? If she hadn't liked my friends she shouldn't have married me in the first place. I called her a snob, and asked her why we always had to be in the public eye? She called called me a pig and said her friends were Somebody, not just white-collar people, and she refused, absolutely refused to be held up to ridicule!"

We were at St. John's now. He stopped at the bus stop, but none of us made a move to get out. He tilted back his cap and continued.

"Well, that was the end. I packed up and got out that afternoon, and went over to stay with Mom. She went to live with her mother, and I sold the house. I let her get the divorce; she found the most expensive lawyer she could find, and charged me with mental cruelty. That was O.K. My friends knew better and I didn't care what her friends thought.

"Well, ladies, you have my story now. It's not too unusual. They come a dime a dozen, these cute gals with dark eyes who look good with a bunch of violets. But take away the violets and whadda ya' got?"

We were trying to figure out our share in the fare. He reached over and clicked the meter. When we handed him the money, which was lacking fifteen cents, he laughed.

"It's been a real pleasure. Go to school eight more years, and learn some arithmetic."

Then we remembered our big question.

"But what are you writing a book about?"

He smiled negatively. "Well, my dog and I write at night after work. We write about a snobbish brunette who looks good in purple and who refuses to be ridiculed before the eyes of the world."

He slammed the door and made a U turn at the intersection of a boulevard and busy highway.

SECURITY

NANCY STARZL

THEY built their shell on rocks,
And molded it carefully of steel beams
And stones and mortar to withstand
The wearing of the wind and tide,
And pulled the walls around them.
They could not see or hear,
But they felt safe.

I thought I knew you could not bind
Yourself within a rigid form,
And so I built my shell
Of tangled green seaweed and
Bits of stark, bone-white driftwood
Upon the sunny, sandy beach.

I sat and watched the tide come in,
And saw the gulls whirl paper-like against the sky,
And heard the breezes spank the waves.
The dazzling sea-sand warmed my feet;
The misty sea-spray bathed my face.
My shell hid nothing.

Then lightning scrawled across the sky;
The brackish sea crashed 'round my shell
Tearing the seaweed;
Splintering the wood.
The sand stung against my face
And made me breathless.
My shell was gone.

And through it all I saw their shell;
The concrete walls repelled the storm.
They couldn't feel the wind or rain,
Or see the storm beat at the door,
They couldn't hear the heavens scream,
But they were safe.

WHITE CHICKENS

PATRICIA UNDERWOOD

THE wind is very cold tonight. I can hear it chilling itself in the dead trees, singing, crying. Last night I walked down a muddy road alone and without my shoes. The moon was cloud-flecked, but the light that shone on me was naked. There was a farm with no one around. I walked through the barnyard and listened to the animals make night sounds among themselves. Someone had forgotten to close the chickens up. They watched me for a while and then came to nestle about my feet and my legs, white, soft, and warm. I reached down to pet them and let them know they made me warm. But they fled on their scratchy chicken legs. I stood still for a long time before they would come back. I didn't try to touch them again. Soon I left, and the chickens stood watching me slip in the mud. If I had fallen they would have been frightened, just as I would have been.

When I got home the mud on my shoes had dried, and my toes were stiff. The people wanted to know where I had been; they thought I was losing my mind. But I smiled at them. They had never walked in the naked moonlight in their bare feet; they had never felt white chickens nestle around their feet and legs. They had never been alone.

YALLER GAL

PATRICIA UNDERWOOD

WHEN Cissy was a little thing in pigtails and calico, the black pickaninnies would tease her by calling her yaller gal. It made her angry enough to stick her tongue out at them and stamp her feet. And she would run home to Mammy Lou, who would pat her on the head. "Don't you fret none, chile," she'd say. "Leastways you ain't got no kinky hair. You just be proud you's yaller. Yer ma, now, she warn't much darker'n you is, and she never fretted." Mammy Lou sighed. "Jes' don't you worry, cuz she didn't care, an' you shouldn't neither."

But Cissy did care. She stood on tiptoe in front of the cracked mirror, her spindly legs pushing her up so she could see her face. It wasn't white, it wasn't brown—just in between, just yellow. None of the folks around had skin like hers, and, up yonder, all the folks had white skin. When Cissy followed Mammy up to the Eliot house, the white folks would turn to stare at her, and she imagined that they were calling her yaller gal too. Once Cissy scrubbed her face as hard as she could with a stiff brush, but the yellow color stayed. And then she'd tried to make herself dark with mud, but the black wore off quickly and in spots. Mammy Lou had been angry that time. "You jes' content you bein' th' way you is," she'd shouted. "Nobody 'ceptin' Gawd kin matter that, an' Ah reckon He laks you th' way you is or He'd do sump'n 'bout it Hisself!"

But it wasn't Mammy Lou who was like a yellow bug among a bunch of black ones, and it wasn't Mammy either who hated to be teased about her skin and called yaller gal.

When Cissy was fifteen, Mammy Lou took her up to the big Eliot house, and instead of putting her in a corner of the kitchen with a few toys as she did when Cissy was young, or setting her to work washing dishes or peeling potatoes as she did when she was older, brought her through the house to a little sitting room where Mrs. Eliot was writing letters at a desk.

Mammy had told Cissy for years and years that it was a great honor to work for the Eliots. "Why, Ah bin a-wukkin' for 'em fer almos' all mah life, ever since Ah wuz a young'un, younger than you is even. An Ah bin tellin' Miz Eliot 'bout ma young kin, an' she say to bring you on up when you 'uz ready to wuk. An' you's to be a reg'lar maid, not wukkin' in th' kitchen lak me." Mammy also told Cissy to mind her manners and to act like a lady. "'Cuz you's had a good fetchin' up, an' you gotta ack lak ya knows sump'n. An' you'll get good money fer a nigra gal so's you kin he'p me out some." Cissy was instructed how to behave toward all the people in the house—respectful to the white folks, smart and quick with the other servants. And she knew everything that Mammy Lou ever told her by heart.

But Cissy hadn't wanted to go up yonder to work; she was afraid, afraid to be among all the whites because she was different, not like blacks are different from whites, but like she, all alone, was different from both of them. About a month before she was to go she cried and shouted to Mammy Lou, trying to make her understand that

she just couldn't go.

"Ah won't go, Mammy! They'll look at me and call me yaller when they's mad!" Cissy stanped her foot on the floor. "Ah jes' won' go! Ah'm a-gonna set right here an' not budge fo' the res' o' mah life! Folks ain't nevah gonna git th' chance to call me yaller gal 'cuz Ah ain't agonna let 'em see me! Ah ain't! Ah ain't!"

Mammy Lou had gotten an awful look in her eye and come over to where Cissy was hopping up and down with clenched fists and tear-streamed cheeks, and she'd slapped her hard across the mouth. Cissy was still, tasting sweetish blood together with warm, salty tears.

"You jes' hesh, now, you silly gal," shouted Mammy, "an' git them fool notions out yer fool haid! You *is* yaller, an' ain't nothin' you kin do but *stay* yaller! An' you's gonna go wuk jes' lak Ah allus tole ya, an' you's nevah ta say ennythin' 'bout bein' yaller ta me agin! Ef ya jes' gone an' bin natchurl when ya's little 'stead o' runnin' ta me an' bein' sech a silly, ya'd be happy 'bout ever'thin'. But ya nevah did, so now yer plum' set on bein' silly! Now git!" And Mammy had struck Cissy's buttocks with her heavy wooden cooking spoon, which she'd been waving in the air, until Cissy scrambled out of reach.

Crying herself to sleep that night, Cissy wondered whether or not there were other yellow-skinned people having the same troubles she was, and she dreamed that the devil himself—just like the one Brother Thomas preached about at Sunday meetings—was chasing her, only his face was yellow like her own, and he carried Mammy's big spoon instead of a pitchfork. In the morning she looked at herself before she slipped into her clothes and saw red splotches where the spoon had stung the skin through her thin dress; and her full lower lip was swollen and discolored. She never mentioned her complexion again to Mammy, not even when the husky black cotton pickers passed her when she was in the yard hanging out clothes, rolling their black eyes and humming "yaller" under their breaths. Nor did she say anything to Mammy when the man at the store pulled her in a corner and asked her if her breasts were as yellow as her face. Cissy had bitten the crawling black hand on her shoulder and run out of the store with her rounding breasts throbbing in anger and shame. "Ain't nobody evah bin nice to me 'count of Ah ain't lak other folks," she sobbed to herself. "An Ah ain't evah gonna be nice ta nobody neither."

But she had to do what Mammy said, so now they stood in front of Mrs. Eliot's desk waiting for her to look up at them from her writing. Cissy studied the room carefully while they were waiting. She'd never seen carpets before, thick carpets that made her look down at her feet to see if she were really walking. There were big shiny tables standing around the room with little lamps and delicate china figures on them. And the chairs were large, soft-looking, covered with silky material. The glass in the windows gleamed among the white lace curtains. Cissy couldn't keep her eyes off the fine things in the room; she didn't see how such things could have existed without her knowing about them before this.

At last Mrs. Eliot looked up and nodded at Mammy Lou. Cissy saw that her hair was grayer in front than on the top, that her mouth turned down at the corners, and that her skin was whiter than any she'd ever seen.

"This hyar's Celeste, Miz Eliot, jes' lak Ah tole you 'bout." Mammy gave Cissy a shove, and Cissy stumbled in her new shoes on the soft carpet. She felt uncomfortable in her dress; it was tight across the chest. Meeting the other woman's eyes defiantly, she waited for her to say something about her being yellow. But she didn't. Mrs. Eliot looked at Cissy absently, toying with her long pen. "Yes, yes, Mammy," she said. "We need another upstairs girl, and if Celeste will learn quickly, be neat, obedient, and clean, she may work here." Mrs. Eliot turned her clear, impersonal eyes from Cissy. "I'll ring for Pearl to come and take Celeste to her room and get her started on the right foot." She rang a little silver bell which stood on her desk, and, while Mammy was thanking her, a thin, tired-looking black girl appeared in the doorway. "This is Pearl, Celeste," said Mrs. Eliot. "You and she will work together, and you will share her room."

When Mammy Lou died the next year, Cissy could scarcely remember having been anywhere else but in the Eliot house. She wore the neat black dress with a white apron and cap almost constantly, and she had become accustomed to the thick carpets so that her steps were soft and sure. Mrs. Eliot seemed pleased with her because she never said a word to her unless she wanted Cissy to do something. At first it had been rather difficult with Pearl always staring at her when she undressed for bed. "You got the lightes' skin Ah evah did see fo' a nigra," Pearl often said. The first night she had called it yellow, and Cissy had turned upon her with blazing eyes, telling her not to say that word ever again. "Ah'll tear ev'ry kinky hair ou'n yo' haid effen yo' evah call me yaller agin!" Cissy hissed furiously. "Ah've had jes' 'bout enuff o' that ta las' me a long time." From then on they were on a neutral basis, never having angry words about anything at all. And too, at first, it seemed strange to Cissy to be around so many white people, hearing them talk and taking care of their rooms for them. She was timid; it was months before she began to feel at ease. But they never mentioned her being light-skinned at all. Cissy was relieved.

Before Mammy Lou died she called Cissy down to the old house to talk with her. "Ah want ta tell ya somethin' befo' Ah die so's you'll hear it straight an' not be a-wonderin'," Mammy looked very old and very weak. She told Cissy that her mother had a white father, and that Cissy too had had a white father, which made Cissy more than half white. She told her about her mother, how pretty she was, and how she'd loved her little baby girl before she died. "An you's even prettier'n she wuz. Don' nevah fo'git that."

At Mammy's funeral Cissy cried, not so much for Mammy, but for her pretty, dead mother and for herself. But she remembered what Mammy had told her, and sure enough, when she looked at herself in the big mirrors in Mrs. Eliot's bedroom, she saw that she was pretty, really pretty. And from then on she combed her long hair carefully, braiding it in high coils about her head. And she bought some coloring for her lips which she sometimes used on her cheeks. When no one was upstairs, she could sit before a mirror for a long time, tilting her head this way and that, watching her eyes. She imagined that if she wore powder she might look almost like a white woman, but she never had the courage to try some, even though Mrs. Eliot had a large silver box of powder sitting on the top of her dressing table.

One day Mrs. Eliot called her in to her study, telling her to prepare the largest guest room for her brother, who was coming to visit. And in a day or so Cissy heard her talking to some of her friends. She said that she hadn't seen her brother for almost five years. He had been travelling in the Orient. Cissy wondered what the

Orient was like—it sounded so far away. And she wondered what a man would look like who had come from such a far-away place.

In another week when Cissy was carrying the morning mail and tea to the bedrooms she found the door shut to the room she had made ready. He had come. That night there was a party at the Eliot house, and Cissy had a chance to see him. He talked to all the ladies, making everyone laugh, and he was tall; he had blonde hair and blue eyes. His large white teeth flashed evenly when he smiled, and he smiled so often that Cissy was quite sure that everyone must be dazzled.

The next morning she knocked on his door as she had been instructed to do, with the tea-tray balanced in one hand so that she could straighten her skirt. "Come in," said a deep, drowsy voice. She walked into his room with her eyes on the floor, and placed the tray on the small table beside the bed. Pulling up the shades and lowering the windows, she glanced at him out of the corners of her eyes. He regarded her lazzily, yawning and stretching the sleep from his body. Just as she was ready to leave he sat up suddenly in bed. "I travel the world over," he said, "and come home to find a lovely girl with honey-colored skin bringing me my tea." He grinned at her. "What's your name?" he asked, "and to whom do you belong?"

"Celeste. An' Ah don't belong to anybody, Ah guess." Cissy was surprised to hear her voice come out so smoothly. She was certain that something inside of her had just snapped in two, and she wouldn't be able to speak because of it. The man surveyed her where she stood rooted to the floor. "Not only honey-colored skin, but a honey-colored voice to match," he said. "You must promise me that you will come in every morning to wake me up; for if you do, I'm quite positive that my day will also be honey-colored." And the man laughed aloud, beginning to pour his tea.

Cissy closed the door carefully behind her, standing still until the dazzle moved away from the front of her eyes. Honey-colored. *He had called her honey-colored!* And he had smiled at her just as white folks smile at white folks and black folks smile at black.

Cissy thought about this man all the rest of the day. Pearl caught her gazing into a mirror. "What you thinkin' 'bout, Cissy?" she questioned. Cissy picked up her dusting cloth. "Min' yer own affairs, an' Ah'll min' mah own mahse'f," she said quickly.

The next morning Cissy was disappointed when she knocked on the door because there was no answer. He was sleeping late. Later on in the day, after the Eliots had left on some sort of an excursion, Cissy went in to straighten his room. As soon as she was inside the door, she felt his presence. There was a faint, clinging odor of perfume which she traced to a box of long cigarettes wrapped in bits of thin tissue paper. But the same smell hovered over the fat, pale green cakes of soap among his shaving things. She picked the soap up wonderingly. The surface was smooth and soft in her hands, so unlike the coarse brown bars she used for cleaning, or the hard white ones used for bathing. When she put it back in place and lifted her hands to her nose, the smell had become a part of her. Wandering about the room, she touched everything she could find of his. On the desk there was a leather box, small and curiously carved in design on the top. His clothes were out of sight in the closet, all but one jacket which hung over the back of a chair. This Cissy ran her hands over, feeling it rough, yet pliant under her fingertips. She put it around her shoulders and

hugged it close to her, feeling its warm weight and smelling its man smell. A white man was so different from a black one. Cissy wondered what her father had been like, and her grandfather. They had been white, too. Did they look and act as this man did?

Thursdays were Cissy's days. She usually had the whole afternoon to herself, sometimes walking to town with Pearl. They would look in the store windows and buy candy before they walked home again. But this Thursday Cissy didn't want Pearl with her. She had been watching Mrs. Eliot's brother, noticing that when he rode his horse, he always came back from the woods to the north of the house, and if she would take the road she might meet him on the way.

He had been especially nice to her the last few days. He always talked to her in the mornings, and when she met him any place in the house, he smiled a smile that was just between Cissy and him. But it was his eyes that made Cissy wonder. He looked at her as though she were something special, something that pleased him very much. Cissy thought more and more about her mother. Had her white man looked at her like that?

Cissy scuffed her feet at the sticks lying in her way, and looked down the road to see whether or not the horse and rider were in sight. Yes, there was something coming, way down the road.

Pearl had given her some funny looks before she left the house, finally following her to the door. "Ya wouldn't be off to see ef ya could fin' thet white man, would ya?" Cissy hadn't answered her. "Ah know why ya don' want me with ya today," Pearl continued.

Shet yer black mouth!" snapped Cissy. "Ah tole ya once ta min' yer own business, an' Ah meant it!"

"Ya can't fool me! Ya bin hankerin' after 'im evah since he come."

Cissy had slammed the screen door behind her and glared at Pearl. "Yer jes' mad 'cuz he likes me an' won't look at you!"

Pearl leaned against the screen door, her voice rising to an angry shrill. "Ah don' want ta have nothin' ta do with no white man! Ah'm not crazy lak you! It's jes' yer yaller blood thet makes ya lak ya is. Ah knowed since ya first come hyar that sump'n would happen. Yer a yaller gal, an' all yaller gals is no count!"

But Cissy had run down the steps and out toward the road before Pearl had a chance to say anything more. She hadn't even felt like shaking her as she'd once threatened to do. She might miss the horse and rider if she did.

Cissy could make out his figure for sure. He was walking the horse slowly, looking straight ahead. She could even see his white teeth flash in the sun when he smiled and waved at her.

DOCTORATE OF NIAMH

LORRAINE PECK

This monologue concerns a woman professor who sacrificed the realities in life for the supposed satisfactions of her soul. I have used some of Yeats' symbols in this poem for two reasons: (1) Yeats preferred a love of the soul to a love of the body, and (2) the lands and peoples with which Yeats dealt reflect the intangibles which the woman of my poem prefers.

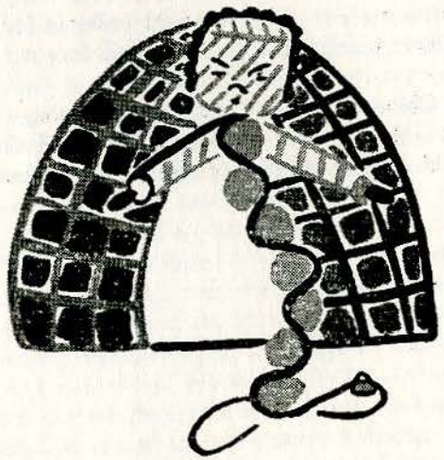
THERE'S my last paper graded for today,
Waiting to be put aside. Now I may
Settle back and let my thoughts fly
Through the Druid twilight of Niamh. They sigh,
And with the swans at Coole glide by,
Wild and white, their clamorous wings beating
Against the cloudless space of mind—entreating,
Tempting, calling, sobbing to my heart to fly along
Beyond the tallest shadow and a bird's last evening song.
My student's t's are strangely crossed—Chinese junks sailing
On blue lined waves, and dotted i's scaling
The milk-pale, paper sky. Oh, why is it this I see?
In everything that belongs to day there comes to me
The brush of gossamer dream gowned in jovial fantasy.
My desk is smooth and hard—like commonplace things
That offer my fancies no toe holds, and yet fancy swings
Through leopard-spotted trees and chins itself on a yellow gumdrop
Called the sun, and in its whirling seems never, never to stop
Unless a tear drops on its wings, and then it hangs from a star
Until it dries in the breeze of sighs that come from far
Within me. It was my choice, this life I took.
I felt the velvet of the gown and took the book
And scoffed at the ring that would tarnish—or so
I supposed. Yet there are times when I do not know.
The veil between images and truths hangs in tatters.
I've tried to mend it at times, not that it really matters,
With patches called Einstein, 12 B. C., Chicago, and the like—
Concise dates and names and places that build a dike
That is firm, but not too firm, and strong, but not too strong
To dam the whirling, churning, foam-dappled dreams that throng
Too suddenly against it. God! but this room is warm,
And the air is syrup-thick and sticky; the sky, rain-gray with storm.
A blue veined arm grabs a dusky cloud and crushes it until
It groans with deep-throated agony. Then all is still.
Sometimes I too am that dusky cloud, but not where it shows,
For I have worked here twenty autumns, and no one knows

That my thoughts are naked women that swing their hips
And flirt with weak-willed delusion, and touch their full lips
To the ear of my conscience, until it grabs passion by the hand
And dances in stops of gaudy pagan rapture through each land
Of desire and lust and love. Whoever said conscience was a guide?
For in these cyclonic moments, I find I must hide
My eyes from mocking reason that jabs its bony claw
Into my soul, and rakes a furrow deep and red and raw
Across my brain. Ha— ha— I really must laugh at times,
For who would guess that *I* could be guilty of such crimes?
My very spectacles simper "demure," and my plain dark dress
Whispers "intellect" as I walk in chastity so shadowless.
Nor do my students—named automatons of resignation—ever glance
Into that land beyond the ridge where deathless I may dance,
For there I hunt with Cuchulain the red-eared doe in joyous serenity;
Running beside the invulnerable tide, as shadows blur into eternity,
And as the moon hangs in white cheese clusters from darkened tree,
Oisin comes and claims me queen of his kingdom along the listening sea.
I had my chance for home and child and man of brief-case mind,
But I turned my heart away, for in Oisin and Niamh I find
Love that flies as white-winged souls above the ragged hill of age,
To roost at last in virginal sleep where ends their mortal pilgrimage,
And then comes wakeful death, and this wreck of a body will rot
Away and leave my soul unbound, and heavenward shot,
I'll don the Mask and return home. But now—why, what's this?
An error I had not seen? My thought balloons led duty amiss.
Ah! there—I have marked it in red, but red does not join this white
and blue—
It strikes the Chinese junk like murdering cannon, and splits it in two
Until it would sink if it were not here in my mind alone, but real.
Oh, God! I kissed the red rose of love just then, but it's the thorn
I feel.

CANDY ESKIMO

JO ANNE SMITH

I DREAMT I was a candy Eskimo
With a peppermint head and a gum-drop toe.
I lived in a house so funny and white,
With ice-cube curtains and a lemon porch light.
For food I had some polar-bear steaks,
But every one gave me tonsil aches.
I had no relish or Worcestershire cheese,
So I dreamed up a special called "Blubber-nut Freeze."
My bed was a mattress of cabbage and rice,
With a trap for a pillow in case I heard mice.
I lived in this land, and traveled by kites
Over mountains of frosting and sugar-plum lights.
I was happy and frosty all the time I was there,
And if I hadn't awakened I still wouldn't care!



THE STRAW HAT

DIXIE WILLIAMS

THE shimmering heat rising from the sidewalk struck their faces as they left the quiet, cool dimness of the theater.

"Gosh, picture shows sure are mushy." Willie, known only to her grandmother as Wilhelmina, twisted her ten-year-old face with disgust and banged the toe of her scarred moccasin on an inviting wall.

"Some day, Willie, you won't think they're mushy. In fact, it won't be terribly long—" Her mother's voice trailed off as she quickly glanced down at her daughter. The sight of the freckled pug nose and long, tightly-braided pigtails which stuck out from her daughter's head at right angles reassured her. Willie was not a glamor girl yet.

They were both silent as they walked along. So far, so good, Willie thought. Gosh, I'd die if she thought I liked Tommy.

Tommy—the name made her ache just to think of it. It hadn't been that way a month ago, why, not even a week ago. It had been exactly five days. Willie remembered the scene vividly.

Tommy was just Tommy, her next-door neighbor, and they were sitting on the curb discussing the latest cowboy movie at the neighborhood show. They heard the yelping dog as he tore around the corner. The long string of tin cans tied to his tail almost drowned out his barking. Tommy whistled sharply and the dog skidded to a halt. He lay down in the street and covered his eyes with his paws and looked as if he wanted to die. Willie felt a quick stab of pain in her heart; she swallowed a lump in her throat. As Tommy approached the pup, it began to shake and whimper. He bent over it and gently lifted the string off; then he rose. His freckles stood out against his white face and there was murder in his eyes. He stalked off and Willie scrambled to her feet and ran after him. As they turned the corner, she saw the boys.

There were three of them, grimy, dirty, and another kind of dirt in them that could not be washed out with soap and water. Willie knew them; they had the dubious honor of being the three toughest boys in school. She felt sick. Tommy didn't have a chance. The three boys waited silently, grinning in anticipation as Tommy approached them.

"Whad'dya' want, pretty boy?"

"Mama's baby!"

They taunted him, and Tommy flushed and took it. As if a signal had been given, they rushed toward Tommy, and Willie turned away. She was crying, crying for the puppy, for Tommy, and though she didn't realize it, for the three boys who had never known, and would never know, the fun of making friends with an eager, wistful puppy.

Tommy had won the fight. The three boys didn't cry and run for home—one by one they dropped out and watched respectfully from a distance. When the last one had finally admitted defeat, they turned and silently walked off. They had finally met someone who could beat them, and they couldn't understand it. They

didn't know that while they were fighting only for the thrill of fighting, Tommy was fighting for something—for the honor of a skinny pup.

Willie had never noticed that Tommy was taller than she was. Why—the thought startled her—he should be, he's two years older than I am. It's funny, but I've never paid much attention to him. He has the cutest nose.

Her mother gently shook her by the arm. Willie blinked.

"Didn't you hear me, dear? I said 'Look at that darling hat in the window.' "

It *was* darling—it was perfect. A light powder-blue straw brim gently rolled back from the face, and the straw caught the light and almost sparkled. A shiny blue satin ribbon caught up a small bunch of flowers in the back.

"Oh, Mother." It was a whisper. Willie thought that if she looked at it much longer she would cry. If she had that hat to wear, Tommy wouldn't tease her about her freckles and pigtails and discuss cowboy movies with her, just as if she were a boy. He'd notice her—he'd have to.

"Mother, may I please have it?" Willie caught her mother's hand and squeezed it.

There was doubt in her mother's eyes. "Well, I don't know, Willie. You don't have any pretty dresses to wear with it. All you ever wear are blue jeans."

"Please, Mother," Willie's voice broke. She couldn't say any more. If her mother said "No—"

"All right, honey. You might as well have *one* pretty thing to wear."

Willie blissfully ignored the salesgirl's sirupy talk. "It would look much more petit, Madame, if you would let her hair hang loosely and not in pigtails."

Her mother agreed, and soon Willie walked out of the store—the proud owner of the most beautiful straw hat in the world.

As soon as they arrived home, Willie retired to her room. Quickly she changed from her second-best dress to her first best, a simple little blue-and-white-striped cotton. Deftly she unbraided her hair and brushed it. It reached almost to her waist, and the pigtails had made tiny waves in it. Now—breathlessly she placed the hat on her head. She gazed spellbound at her reflection for a few moments, and then whirled and ran out into the yard.

At first she couldn't see Tommy, but then his head popped up from behind the hedge that separated their yards.

Desperately trying to be graceful, she minced across the yard. Her knees were weak and she felt dizzy.

"Tommy." Her voice sounded strange to her.

He looked up and smiled at her. No, he wasn't smiling—he was laughing!

"Boy, do you look silly! Who are you dressed up for—the President of the United States?"

Silently she prayed, Tommy, don't—please don't. Someone made fun of you once, and I didn't laugh at you—I cried for you.

But, mercilessly, he went on, "—And besides, that hat doesn't look good on you. It's—well, it's for a girl!"

Willie glanced back at her house. I don't think I can make it, she thought, it's so far away.

She began to run.

"Hey, be careful! Don't trip over your hair!" Tommy was trying to make a joke, trying to make things right again between him and his best pal—his best pal.

Standing before the mirror in her room, Willie slowly removed the hat—the beautiful straw hat. She knelt before the dresser and pulled out the bottom drawer. It was the drawer in which she kept all of her cast-away dolls and toys. She stuffed the hat far back in the corner and closed the drawer.

She stood up and began braiding her hair into tight pigtails.

SEQUEL TO LONGINGS

VIRGINIA TOWNSEND

NOW I stand forever on the doorstep of a dream,
Fearing to turn back
For the way is not found twice.
Slow to enter
For I loved too much my seeking.
I cannot knock,
I need not call;
My fingers clasp the sought-for key,
But I stand forever on the doorstep of a dream,
Slow to enter
For my longing and my seeking
May give dreams a deeper meaning
Than the ending of desire.

BETRAYAL

JANE MORRISEY

SLOWLY
She wanders down
A sodden trail of grass
And shudders at the slimy touch
Of leaves.

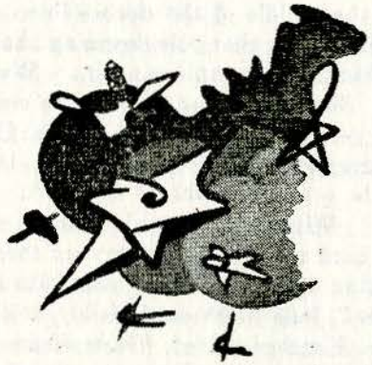
One wish
Alone remains
From her now darkened dream—
To see the tarnished symbol of
Her love.

Grasped tight,
It dully gleams
In Judas fist of night—
That last of thirty silver coins,
The moon.

AFFINITIES

JOHNSIE M. FIOCK FILDES

HAVE you paused breathlessly to hear a voice
Which rose up like a tidal wave to you
Above all voices? Could you still rejoice,
Trembling, to feel a casual touch anew
In greeting or farewell? And would you own
To me how other friendships guttered out,
Like wax-starved flames, and you remained alone
By cobweb-stuff of mind walled in about?
Late comes the spring, and late the autumn lasts,
Late wing the southward birds, and late the dawn
Comes winnowing up through stratumed vasts,
While on the chessboard stands one tardy pawn.
If you have known in your own place and time
This which I know, then I would have you come—
Wraith from the past, or ghost of morbid rhyme—
Sit here beside me while the pendulum
Inexorably treads out Time, and Night
Pinions the Earth. Observe where far and high,
Beyond the ebon forest rim, to sight
Revealed, the first star penetrates the sky.



THE SWING-TREE

JANE HALL

JULIE sat on the front porch of her house with her family. There was Charlotte Violet, the doll with beautiful golden ringlets, whom Julie considered a most adorable child. And there was Myrtle Pansy. Even Julie admitted that Myrtle Pansy was no beauty. She had an ugly crack across the side of her face, which was disguised by the colorful blots of rouge on each cheek. Julie thought this latest addition a marked asset to Myrtle Pansy's appearance. Right now she was contemplating the advisability of changing the doll's long braided hair into a boyish bob. It was quite a problem.

The front porch of Julie's house was in reality the lower step of the back steps. Julie thought the back steps made an ideal play house. She had only to move up one step and there was the living room, or the kitchen, or any room she wanted it to be right at that time. Another step up and she was in the upstairs bed rooms. Of course, there were times when the locality of the upstairs bed rooms was precarious. When the traffic in and out the back door was unusually heavy, sleeping children were quite likely to be knocked from their beds as the screen door swung open.

A door slammed and Julie looked up to see the next door neighbor, Mrs. Fletcher, coming out into her yard laden with a huge basket of dripping clothes. Julie's thoughts abandoned the problem of Myrtle Pansy's hair, and turned to Mrs. Fletcher. She remembered how cross she had been yesterday afternoon when Patrick had turned his jelly sandwich upside down on the kitchen table. Patrick was always doing something to make his mother cross. He could always think of exciting things to do. Julie wondered where Patrick was now. Leaving her children sprawled on the steps, Julie started toward the Fletcher clothes line.

"Hi, Mrs. Fletcher. Where's Patrick?" Julie inquired as she leaned against the shaky pole that supported the middle of the clothes line.

"Watch out, now or you'll knock that pole down, and have this line on the ground. I sure don't feel up to washin' all these things again. Washin' a mess like this is a day's work for anybody." She paused and inspected a small boy's shirt. "I'll declare, I don't see how kids get clothes so filthy." Mrs. Fletcher secured the shirt's shoulders to the line with trap-like clothes pins.

Julie, now sitting on the ground, stared at the shirt. The arms were flapping in the air like a scarecrow. With a hat it would make a pretty good scarecrow, but Julie supposed it would be hard to make a hat stay up there with clothes pins.

Mrs. Fletcher was talking again. "I hear you folks are movin'. Where to?"

"Up on Sandford street," Julie brightened visibly at the thought of moving.

"Sandford street," Mrs. Fletcher mused, "Now where in the world is that?"

"I don't know exactly," Julie answered quickly, "but our new house is real nice. Lots nicer than this one," she added, indicating the unpainted box-like house from which she had just come.

"Oh sure! Sure! Why I'll bet it's a mansion up on Easy street." Mrs. Fletcher

laughed as though it were extremely funny.

"No ma'am," explained Julie, "it's on Sandford street. Mama told me." Mrs. Fletcher laughed some more. This time even louder. Julie liked to hear her laugh. She laughed kinda' like Santa Claus. The kind of laugh that comes from way down deep and just tumbles out. Mrs. Fletcher stopped laughing, and looked serious.

"What's your Pop doing now?"

"He's not doing anything," Julie answered, thinking what funny questions Mrs. Fletcher could ask.

"Hasn't got a job yet, huh?"

"No, he stays home now."

Mrs. Fletcher picked up the empty basket and started toward the house.

"A real nice house. I'll bet!" she mumbled, shaking her head.

Mrs. Fletcher must not be talking to her. Julie didn't say anything.

Mrs. Fletcher opened the door. "Tell your Ma I'll be over before you leave. When you leavin'?"

"Tomorrow."

"Well, tell your Ma I'll be over." Mrs. Fletcher lifted the basket through the doorway, and the door slammed behind her.

Julie returned to the back steps and her neglected children. Moving! Julie could hardly wait. They had never moved before. For as long as she could remember they had lived in the very same house. She remembered how excited she had been the night Daddy had come home and told them, "Well, we're going to move. I found a place down on Sandford street that will do for a while. The man said it was the best he could do for the money." Julie hadn't listened to the rest. Just that was enough to make her feel all prickly inside.

That had been a week ago and Julie had been thinking about the new house and planning for it ever since. She had pictured exactly the way it would look. It would be white with a big yard. There would be flowers around the house too. Probably peonies or nasturtiums, Julie thought. Mrs. Fletcher had peonies and nasturtiums in her front yard.

Julie had told Patrick about the new house.

"Reckon maybe you'll have a swing-tree in your yard?" Patrick asked.

"Sure, I will. Better 'n the one ole smarty Clara Morris has too, I'll betcha'," Julie answered assuredly.

"I sure hope you do. Clara's such an ole pot about her swing. Just because she has the only one on the block." Julie didn't think Patrick liked Clara very well either.

"You can come swing on my swing any time you want, Pat," Julie had told him with an air of superiority.

She would miss playing with Patrick, but there would be lots of other kids to play with. The new children would probably have birthday parties and invite her. She could see herself walking down the street to a birthday party, all dressed in a blue organdy dress covered with ruffles that stood out. Julie had always wanted a blue organdy dress. Mother had told her maybe she could have one some day. Probably after they moved she would get it.

"Julie, come here." Julie was awakened from her thoughts by her mother's

calling. She jumped up and ran inside and into the kitchen where Mother was packing the everyday dishes into a big cardboard box.

"Take this over to Mrs. Wolfe's and tell her 'Thank you very much'," Mother said, pointing to a pan over on the cabinet. "Tell her that the rolls were delicious, and we certainly enjoyed them. Then come straight back. I want you to help me pack these things. This business of moving is a job."

"O. K., Mom." Julie picked up the pan and started out the door.

"Hurry now, I need you."

"O. K. Mom, I'll run." Julie streaked across the yard. She hurried through the alley to Mrs. Wolfe's back door, gave her the pan, and was back home in just a few minutes.

"You want me to wrap these cups like you're doing, Mama?" she asked.

Mama nodded her head. "Be careful and do it real well. We certainly don't want everything broken when we unpack."

Julie wrapped each piece carefully in the pieces of old newspaper. She was thinking of the time they would be unwrapping them in the new house.

"Mama, what time tomorrow are we going to move?"

"Soon as we can get ready, I guess. Daddy said the van was coming in the morning."

Julie looked up from her pile of newspapers and dishes. Mama sounded tired. She looked tired too. Sometimes Mama looked so pretty, but today she didn't. Her face was red like Julie's was when she had been playing baseball in the summer time. Her hair was all stringy. Little wisps had escaped from the knot, and were sticking to her neck. The sleeve of her dress was torn, and the dress was awfully faded. Mama surely had had that dress a long time. Julie guessed Mama would be glad when everything was moved. She would probably get some new clothes and look pretty again after they were living at the new house.

"Mama, will you be glad when we're moved?" Julie asked.

"Of course, I'll be glad. You don't think I enjoy all this mess of getting this junk packed and moved, do you? Don't ask so many questions."

Julie started on a pile of plates. Take a plate from the table, wrap it in the inky-smelling paper, and put it carefully in the box on top of another plate. Then take another plate. She folded some of the paper with square corners, others with crunched-in corners. Wonder if ink would smear off on the plates? She was silent as long as possible.

"Tell me about our new house." Julie was so bubbly with the idea of moving she simply couldn't be quiet any longer.

"There's nothing to tell. It's just a house. That's all."

That's the way with mothers, Julie thought. They don't think about all the little things like trees for swings and playhouses. All they think about is furniture and dishes.

That night Julie went to bed early. She thought she would never go to sleep. Looking up at the ceiling covered with web-like shadows, she would think, "Tomorrow night I'll be in the new house. I won't sleep in this little room any more. I'll have a big room with lots of windows. Wonder if there will be a window seat like the picture in 'Our Home' magazine. A window seat all piled with flowered cushions!

Wouldn't that be nice? It would be fun to sit on flowered cushions and look out a big window. Would tomorrow ever come?

The next morning when Julie awoke, sun beams were streaming through the window. Today! Tomorrow had come and now it was today. Today was the day. Today they were moving to the new house. Julie jumped out of bed and began putting on her clothes hurriedly. Oh bother! Why did pinafore buttons always have to be in that place right in the middle of her back that she couldn't reach from over or under?

"Mama, button me," she cried, running into the living room where Mama was getting more things ready for the van.

"This is pretty early for you, Kid! Thought you were the member of the family who was the lazybones." Julie hadn't seen Daddy over in the corner.

Mama brushed the dust from her hands with a dish towel and buttoned the despicable button.

"There, you're buttoned. Want your breakfast now?"

"In a minute." Julie inspected the sofa cushions piled in the corner.

"Daddy, do you suppose we'll be moved by lunch time? Will we eat lunch at the new house?" Julie was bouncing madly up and down on the cushions like a jack-in-the-box.

"Calm down, will ya'? We'll be there soon enough. Go eat your breakfast." Daddy slapped another piece of paper around the radio.

"Drink a glass of milk, and there's some cereal on the stove. Go on now, so I can clean up the rest of the dishes," Mama said.

All morning everyone was in a rush. Mama rushed getting the last minute things ready. Daddy helped the van man put their furniture into the big red van. Julie rushed too, trying hard to mind Daddy and stay out of the way, and still not miss a precious moment of "moving." She saw the living room rug all rolled up being shoved into the gaping doors of the van. Daddy and the man had a terrible time getting Mama's dresser through the bedroom door. But now everything was loaded. The house was completely empty. Julie couldn't believe that one truck could hold every single thing that had been in their whole house.

The heavy doors of the van were shut, and as Julie watched from the front porch, the man started the motor, and the van rumbled down the street. Daddy came back into the house wiping his face with a handkerchief already dripping with perspiration.

"Ready?" he asked, looking around for Mama. "Could go down to the store and call a cab, I guess, but we might as well take the bus. The nineteenth streetcar goes a few blocks from the place."

Mama came out of the empty house carrying her purse and a coat over her arm. The three of them started down the street.

"I kinda hate to leave. We've lived there a mighty long time," Mama sighed.

"Yea," Daddy was watching his feet as though he was scared he would trip. "Hurry, that's our bus coming."

On the bus Julie sat in the seat behind Mama and Daddy. She would probably ride this bus lots from now on. It was the bus to her new house.

She tapped Daddy's shoulder.

"How far?" she asked breathlessly.

"Just relax. You've got a nice little ride yet. What are you so worked up about, anyway?" Daddy looked at her as though she had done something bad.

Julie just smiled and didn't answer. Daddy wouldn't understand anyway. He had moved before.

The furniture must be there by now. Would the men unload it before they got there? She hoped so. The house would seem more homey if it had furniture in it. Wonder how many miles they had come? Surely it couldn't be much farther. It seemed hours later that Daddy reached up and pulled the cord. At last!

Julie tripped over her feet getting off the bus.

"Which way? How far?" she pleaded.

"Just turn around and follow your nose, and after three blocks, there you'll be."

Never had three blocks seemed so far. Three blocks. That's crossing two streets. They crossed the second street. This must be the block.

Julie looked at the first house. No that couldn't be it. It was just a tiny house, not even as big as their old one, and it wasn't white, but a dirty gray. Anyway, there was a little girl playing in the yard already.

She stared at the second house, and the third and the fourth. Why, they were all just alike! All the houses on that block were just alike. She must have counted the streets wrong. This was the wrong block!

Daddy and Mama turned in at one of the houses.

"Here we are. I see all the stuff is unloaded." Daddy stepped up on the porch and looked in the door. "Yep! All here in the middle of the floor. Lord, what a mess."

Julie couldn't move. No! This wasn't the house. She wasn't going to live here! Her new home was white. A big white house with flowers in the yard. Daddy must be teasing. He was just a big tease. That was it. She ran into the house. No. There was the furniture. This was her new house!

She walked back out into the yard stunned. Julie thought she was going to cry. She looked up sharply. A little girl was waving to her from the house across the street.

"You gonna' live there?" the child with matted yellow hair called to Julie.

"Yes." Julie almost choked on the word.

"I'm sure glad folks are moving there that have a kid. That's the best swing tree in the whole block." She pointed to a large elm tree crammed into the tiny yard. "What's your name?"

"Julie," the little girl answered. "Come on over and play."

THE SUN SHALL NOT SMITE THEE BY DAY

RITA BAKER

MIKE wandered quietly toward the dim old barn behind the house, blinking to prepare his eyes for a change from the harsh brightness of a late August sun to the queer cool darkness of this place. He liked to sit in there on the big mound of straw in the corner, his bare feet wriggled into the yellow roughness, and watch the sparrows dart in and out, from sun to shadow, as they cared for the noisy young in their nests under the rafters. Once he had climbed up to the big gray nest that stuck out a little from the corner, and had seen the hungry yellow beaks that gaped blindly toward the sound he made. It was too dark up there to see much, and he had to hang on so carefully to the rafter to avoid falling that he couldn't see very clearly, but he knew they were there, and that one was littler than the others, and that they weren't very old, because he had only been able to hear them for a day and a half now. He had wanted, when he was so close, to offer food, but he had none then, and anyway, he knew that the Mama bird would kill a young one that had been touched by a man. He could still imagine, though, how it would be to feel the beak closing around a bit of food that he held in his fingers. Maybe some day the Mama bird would forget to come back, and then she wouldn't mind if he fed them just once, so they wouldn't die.

A sparrow dived in through the open square of the doorway, making harsh sounds in her throat as she disappeared in the cool shadows. Mike ran a few steps to follow her flight. He came inside.

"It's Mike." The taller boy's voice came, strangely quiet, from the far corner. Mike strained to see the two muddled figures.

"What you got?" he asked. They were looking at something between them, back there in the shadows.

"You wanna see it?" The taller boy stepped forward, holding the big gray-brown object carefully in his hands.

"I climbed up and got it from up there . . ." the other boy indicated the corner rafter. Mike followed the pointing fingers to a ruffled-looking, empty place where the nest with the baby birds had been. The parent birds were wheeling restlessly up and past them and back again. Mike looked back to the round object in the boy's hands. He could see clearly now the five gawky young. There was one smaller than the others. The runt.

"I cut myself too," added the second boy proudly. "Look."

Mike looked up briefly. "What you gonna do with 'em?"

"Kill them. The nest is for my collection."

Mike hesitated a moment. "Give 'em to me?"

The older boy watched him for a long minute. "No. You didn't help none."

"Just one? You can keep the rest."

"No. Why d'you want it?"

"I . . . just want it."

"I bet you're a sissy and afraid to kill 'em."

Mike avoided his eyes. "Just let me have one." He kept his eyes on the floor. The rough cement and ravellings of straw hurt his bare feet above the cool dampness. "I won't care about the others."

The older boy again shook his head. "You're a sissy."

His friend laughed. "Little boy sissy," he taunted.

Mike shuffled a dirt-stained foot. "Just one . . ."

"No!"

"Not even if I make the others die for you?" He kept looking at his feet. The father bird dived across the nest held by the tall boy, nearly tangling in his rough hair.

Let's let him have it," the boy decided. "If he can do like he says. C'mon."

He handed Mike a chunk of vivid orange brick and dumped the squalling birds out on the floor. Mike scooped out the runt and set it down behind him, away from the two watchers. It was small and pinkish and kind of ugly. Mike lifted the brick carefully, looking at the huddled mass on the floor. He raised his brick higher, and let it fall suddenly with the full weight of his arm. His first victim wriggled only once. Its neck dangled awkwardly. He could see it would never have reached so far back naturally. The taut skin across its throat flickered as he looked at it, and he picked the brick up again quickly, striking three more times. He waited then, not saying anything, while the two boys laughed and told him not to cry. They left and walked out into the bright day outside. He noticed that they had forgotten the empty nest. A couple of down feathers floated back into the sunlight just inside the door and settled on the edge of the shadow.

"You're not gonna die." Mike picked up his scrawny sparrow and cupped it gently in his palm. "I'm gonna feed you pretty soon, and then your Mama won't mind if I take care of you for a while till you grow up. She wouldn't keep you now anyway." He sat down on the straw pile again and leaned up against the barn wall. "You're awful little. You'll have to learn to eat and drink from my hands, so's you can grow big and strong. Aren't you cold here without any sun?"

He felt the bird huddle up against his thumb. It made him feel strong and relaxed and protecting, until his eyes happened on the four dead birds near the door. A slight whispering sound from near his feet startled him into looking down. A slim gray snake glided across the floor toward the door. Mike could imagine that the glistening back would feel smooth to his hand. He watched the snake as it swallowed first one and then another and another of the tiny birds, then moved soundlessly and more heavily on to the yellow patch of sunlight inside the door. It coiled there, in a long black circle, basking in the warmth. The beady eyes were fixed on the one remaining bird on the floor. Mike was glad it stopped after the third, because that meant it was full. He looked back at the bird still huddled in his hand. It was cold, and should be in the sun or in his house where it could get warm again. The bird chirped, and stirred a little. Mike picked up a piece of stick from the straw beside him and aimed it carefully with his free hand at the sleepy snake. It jerked around and slipped outside.

Mike rose carefully and walked toward the house. The sun didn't feel so warm now; he must have been inside the barn a long time. The stones of the walk outside the door didn't burn any more; pretty soon it would be dark, in the early evening, and if it got dark fast enough the stones would remain warm after the air cooled, and he

could put his cheek down against one of them to feel the sun again. He opened the screen door and stepped inside.

As he watched his mother make a nest of a pint strawberry box, lining it with cotton until it just fit the shape of his bird, he thought, It's name is Jack, because I like Jack.

"What'll I feed him, Mom? What'll I feed Jack?" Mike could feel the hunger himself as the bird's beak gaped open. "Does he want water—can I make him drink?" He looked at it helplessly.

It gaped again. He held a drop of water on his finger to the point of its bill and watched the round drop of liquid slide down the bill into its throat. It swallowed, and suddenly began to chirp noisily. Mike fed it bits of bread dipped in milk until it was full. When it stopped eating, it slept.

For a week or more it slept and ate and made chirping noises from its throat. Mike liked to put it on the window sill for a while every day to nap in the sun. It liked the warmth and would quiet down, and Mike could watch it. Asleep in the sun like that, the bird reminded him of the gray snake curled up in the barn, gorged and asleep from the neck on down. Jack went to sleep all over, and slept hard, and woke up hungry. He liked it when Jack woke up and he could feed him again. Usually, though, he would let him yell for a while before he fed him, so Jack would get used to being more grown-up and not be so babied. It was kind of hard to make himself hold back that way, even though it was good for Jack.

* * *

Today it was extra warm outside. The days always got like this just before September, and made it twice as hard to stay inside. The sun was clearer and there were only warm shadows, and it was much nicer than inside where the light only slanted in through an open window. Mike moved his bird from the window sill inside to a window ledge out in the open. The ledge was higher than his head, and he had to climb up on a box to set the nest up there, but he wanted Jack to have a nap in real sun. He wanted him to feel the yellowness go clear inside as it did in himself. He wanted Jack to sleep long and hard and deeply, and to wake up hungrier than ever so he could feed him. He wasn't going to have to wait even a little while this time, because Jack would be waking up from his first grown-up, outside sleep. Mike wriggled down from his box and sat down to wait.

He saw the shadow of a butterfly skim across the grass. He chased it quietly with his eyes, and when the painted body settled a little distance from him, he reached over stealthily to touch the folded, quivering wings. They spread and flew, and left him touching only the curve of a grass blade. He had been cut by a single blade like that once. The sting was almost there again in the light contact.

He heard angry, almost hurt-sounding chirping from Jack's strawberry box. "You can't get up yet, you haven't slept enough. Go back to sleep and then I c'n feed you." Mike stopped listening to the noisy bird. The sounds went on for a long while, but he listened instead to a katydid beginning the song of the trees that comes in late afternoon. The sun made warm speckles on his head . . . Jack had no right to wake up so soon. There were many, many katydids now all, together, so loud you could hardly hear anything else . . . Jack must have gone back to sleep; he couldn't hear him any more.

Mike stretched himself out flat on his belly to soak up more of the yellow sun. He felt his shirt with the back of his hand. It was very hot, almost burning. He imagined how Jack must feel, so warm and good in his nest. His first real sun bath, just as he was growing up with his first real pinfeathers. Mike grinned to himself and watched out of the corner of his eye as the end of a grass blade wiggled when he moved his lips in the smile. Almost without knowing it you could move things or change them. He could even see the tip end of a skinny earthworm bend itself toward him and then away as he shifted his weight. That was silly to be out in the open sunlight where any hungry bird could catch it for supper. He wondered if Jack could be hungry yet. "Maybe I better wake him," he thought. There were still no sounds from the strawberry-box nest on the window ledge.

Mike climbed up on the wobbly box and reached for the nest. From where he stood only the berry-stained edges were visible. Jack didn't seem to be waking up. He must like the sun an awful lot to be so comfortable and sleepy. Mike lowered the box to the level of his chest and looked in. Jack still didn't look disturbed. Mike nudged him with a curious finger. Nothing happened. He nudged again, and an eyelid parted. The half-feathered neck loosened and jerked back to an impossible angle. The dried skin over its throat was taut, and Mike could see, even with his eyes shut, the throat of that first bird he had killed with a brick. He began to cry, and he wanted to take Jack in to his mother, but she wasn't home. He couldn't hold Jack here, hurt and dead from the sun and unfeeling and not hungry any more. Tears were beginning to streak the dust on his cheeks, and he put up a rough finger to wipe off the wetness. He suddenly had to get to the barn, and when he stood just inside the door, breathing heavily, he threw the limp sparrow down and ran away without looking back. He ran into the hay field behind the barn and when he tripped over a big rough root he just lay there, face down. He would wait for the gray snake to finish its work. Then he would tell Mom and she would have it killed. It was a long time before he noticed that the katydids were slowing down on their song of the late afternoon. Pretty soon he knew they would begin on the song of the night. Before that he must go home.

THE JOURNEY

NANCY STARZL

THE two dim shapes stopped in the shadowy gloom, and peered hesitantly about. Bound together by a cloak of doubt, which they wore nervously, they began to converse in quiet tones. Not knowing what lay ahead, they could only speculate and reminisce about the past.

"Do you remember," one said, "walking through the open country or following a brook that was laughing gently to itself?

"Or a naked tree, tall and austere, against its canvas of blue; the pureness of the heath aster, with white petals outlined against the green, or the raucous call of the midnight-black crow on an Iowa farm?"

"Do you remember," interrupted the other, "the 'shushing' of leaves, or the monotonous, metallic chirp of the cricket; the grassy slopes stretching to meet the sky, or a single, timid morning glory trying, with frail tendrils, to conquer a split rail fence?

"Did you ever stop to watch a chipmunk, soft, and tawnily striped, chitting busily with his neighbor, or hear a wind moaning through the tree tops, or smell the scented air near a newly-blossoming lilac tree?

"Do you remember a single delicate snow flake, or a gently feathered blade of crab grass, or the fan-shaped leaf of the ginkgo tree? The sunset, streaked with copper, or the more subtle attraction of an autumn-colored leaf, or the yellowish blossom of the tulip tree?"

"What can we find There that could compare with earth?" the figures whispered, as they shuddered and moved into the gloom.

THERAPY

ELIZABETH ISAACS

To all hurt things
Who waken suddenly
And find presumptuous pain again,
I would bring peace.

I covet calm
For them and search myself
For soothing balm of still content
And quietness.

I would draw up
From sorrow's well-springs deep
Long draughts of sympathy to pour
On vibrant pain.

I search for ease
For all who give up life
A little at a time and wait
With certainty.

AFTER DREAMING

AGNES SIBLEY

He who awakens suddenly
From peopled night
May feel important colloquy
Cut off by light.
In such dream-threaded sleep
Who knows what talk
Has played with lightning on the steep
Mountainous walk?
Of verities that discourse found,
Momentous choices,
Nothing remains but darkened sound
Of distant voices.

SI MALAKAS, THE STRONG ONE

REMY JA RODRIGUEZ

Sometimes near the setting of the sun, when the hens gather their young chicks under their wings to roost, and the acacia leaves fold to sleep, and the eerie glow of the sunset spreads itself horizontally over the rolling, uneven silhouette of the Zambales mountains, there is peace and beauty. The gold light of the dying sun casts winging streaks of scarlet on the placid streams of *Sapang Bato*—a dead mango leaf falls and the water curls into circles, spreading wider and wider until they disappear, and the stream is still again.

There *Si Malakas* the water buffalo, luxuriates, hock-deep in the boggy swamp near the clear stream, with the palmate *buyo* tree for his roof, unmindful of the milky heavens over his head. There he wallows, on hottest nights, sinking his majestic bulky body in the thick slime; his tapering hairy tail wagging diligently to and fro in the misty air and dipping into the churning mire with a splash and a spatter. There he bumbles stertorous grunts as if chanting a primordial serenade.

In the far distance a mufflled bark of a dog is heard. Night creeps in hurriedly and the village of *Sapang Bato* sleeps through the droning lullabies of the crickets.

II

End of March at last! These dwindling days of the sultry *Marzo* were welcomed by *Kuya* Ped and me with impatient gusto. *Kuya* Ped always counted the days with his pudgy, chocolate-smudged fingers . . . *lunes* . . . *miercoles* . . . "Our *vacation grande* starts on Friday, no? Hurray! No more *Philippine Readers*! We'll get rid of that old *titser* of ours!"

"Hurray!" I joined *Kuya* Ped's triumphant war-whoops as we merrily clattered down the ancient, creaking steps of the Malate Primary School to go home.

But our little hearts knew our happiness was more than getting away from the platter-pale countenance of *Mees* Cleta, our teacher; more than leaving behind "Little Miss Muffet" or "Jack and the Beanstalk" in our *Philippine Readers*. Yes, more than that.

Within a few minutes, we barefoot brown moppets toddled into the house and rushed to Mother, who was busy cutting dresses out of red calico. It was *Kuya* Ped who began.

"*Inay*," he said, pulling Mother's flouncy mauve skirt with the restless eagerness of a bell-ringer. "School is about over. Remember what you promised us, ha?"

Inay didn't say a word except, "*Por Diyos*, my children!" And the spongy skin of her face drew into a network of secretive wrinkles; two lights gleamed from those mellow chestnut eyes, and a tender smile curved her thin lips. But she continued humming the sewing machine.

III

Saturday morning. The thin hot air beat like a whip lash as the train sped by. The heavy iron wheels revolved endlessly on, measuring the rails by the mile, advancing with a sonorous *chug, chug, chug*, as it traversed a sea of green rice paddies.

Kuya Ped and I held our breath. We were unusually quiet during the trip and *Inay* eyed us doubtfully. We said not a word, but our little hearts thumped with cheery optimism.

The train drawled, gave three hoots, and stopped with a jerk that jolted our backs on the hardwood of the bench. *Inay* then gathered a couple of sizable suitcases, and *Kuya* Ped and I, clasping *Inay* by the skirts, got out of the train.

The sun was hot. Like every March in *Sapang Bato*, the sun shone hotly through the air that reeked with the sweat of panting carabaos tethered on a bamboo pole behind the railroad station. Their day's work was done at last. The sacks of *palay* had been hauled from the creaking, resilient bamboo sledge drawn from their backs. A colony of treacherous flies hovered around their slimy tails. The dead *cogon* grass crackled and smelled from underneath the idle carts. Above the bumpy asphalt road, oily waves of heat shimmered in the sun.

Kuyo Miguel, *Tio* Irineo's eldest son, was there to meet us; he was a stocky, square-built fellow with arms disproportionately long. Like all the boys in *Don* Garcia's *hacienda* he looked reticent and mature for his age—a sunburnt tao, wiry and alert. He wore a wide *buri* hat and a palmetto cape over his tawny body.

He seized *Kuya* Ped and me and carried us in his arms. Along the dusty road we went—past the humble roadside huts, bamboo-framed with roofs of thatch, that looked crispy and brown against the backdrop of swishing bamboo canes.

There at the end of the road stood *Tio* Irineo's *Villa San Jose*, a languorous nipa house made inconspicuous by the overspreading mango trees, a house that squeaked and creaked with age. I looked at *Kuya* Ped; *Kuya* Ped looked at me. "Well?"

Inay's promise had not been forgotten.

IV

A couple of days later, two pairs of short, healthy brown legs raced along the winding rusty railroad tracks—a stray dog trailing behind. The rails were hot in the bright sun. Presently, the legs came to a halt.

"Look, *Kuya* Ped!" I whooped, gasping for breath, while my arm brushed off the hot, salty perspiration which was oozing down my chubby neck. "It's . . . *Si Malakas*!"

From out of the choking *talahib* grass, a ponderous, dark beast emerged, clumsily nodding his outthrust head with its wide curving horns. He dragged his bulging body toward *Kuya* Ped and me, his broad feet sloshing through the rice paddies, past the thorny herbs of *makahiya*. He stopped for a moment as if to rest. The sun was at its zenith and thickened on his thick, black hide which looked like a glistening coal. *Si Malakas* was also sweating, flinching. Muddy perspiration ran profusely from his rump, from his hind legs which sheltered an open angry wound; it trickled lazily down his dilated snub nose. Dazzled by the noonday sun, his slumbrous eyes widened and glowed. *Si Malakas* moved slowly to us. He was noisily ruminating some young *talahib* grass to the rhythm of staccato grunts. We knew it was his welcome to us.

"Well, Pedrito and Nenita!" Those glowing eyes told us so. "It's about time you pay this old creature a visit. Is Manila spoiling you? Come harvesting time and we'll lord it over the rice field again."

But there was something queer in his eyes; the glow was sad and deep. Our

minds were yet too young to comprehend the meaning of a lost glitter, though we felt.

"*Kuya* Ped, why was *Kuya* Miguel angry last night, ha?"

"He said *Si Malakas* wouldn't let him come near the barn."

"What did he mean by slau . . . slaughterhouse, ha?" I cross-examined my big brother.

"Keep quiet!" *Kuya* Ped hushed. "*Si Malakas* wants us on his back. Come on, Nenita. Up! Jump!"

And up and above the paddy field, we perched our legs on *Si Malakas*' ample back. Once again, *Kuya* Ped was *Kulafu*, the lord of the jungle, traversing the wilderness with *Si Malakas*, the strong one. (I was *Mahinhin*, the mate.) Once again the long grassy *talahib* stalks rose before us like an impenetrable thicket of sturdy oaks and *narra* trees and knotty *yucan*, shooting skywards like unnerved Japanese sentinels.

How I idolized *Kuya* Ped as he stood assuredly over the advancing frame of *Si Malakas*! His hair waved crazily in the raw March wind, his eyes shone like pools of black, while an oversized, made-over army T-shirt dangled over his browned shoulders. *Kuya* Ped was the lord of the jungle! His eyes roved around the "wilderness" of *talahibs* and rice stalks searching for jungle enemies. To our minds, the rice frogs were transformed into scaly crocodiles that ogled treacherously in the swamp; the earthworms, limbless and slender, inched their way along the sodden earth like creeping snakes.

Time, however, had caught up with *Si Malakas*—his steps were no longer sure and nimble as usual, but were heavy, counted, and trudging. His toilsome drag was discordant with *Kuya* Ped's jovial war-whoops. But slowly we reached the stream, the Strong One's favorite haunt. *Kuya* Ped and I then got off, while he awkwardly bent his hind legs. Freeing himself of the jungle lord and the mate, *Si Malakas* succumbed to the inviting stagnant water, gurgled as he sank deep in exquisite relaxation.

Kuya Ped, not to be deprived of his lordship, sauntered a little farther from the stream, near the dipping meadows of prickly herbs thickset with unheard of grasses. Nearby stood a lone guava tree, gnarly with age and stripped of its leaves; its bare branches interlaced into a thousand fingers pointing to the murky clouds that were already gathering in the west. Beyond the stream, at the foot of the Zambales mountains, was an abandoned *castillo*, an ancient mansion supposedly owned by an eccentric Spanish count long before the Philippine *Insurrectos*. What grandeur it must have boasted was negated by its sway-back roof heavy with growing moss, by its gray, rain-soaked stone walls crumbling to the ground, and its window panes, gloomy and opaque with dust. *Kuya* Ped was heading for the *castillo*.

"Huwag! Don't, *Kuya* Ped!" I warned him as I remembered the ghost that my cousin, *Kuya* Miguel, claimed he saw from there. "*Asuwang*, the witch, will devour you. Not that guava tree!"

"Aw, poof! Such superstition!" He snorted. And before I could breathe a word, his stocky legs scaled the knotty trunk of the guava tree. Having settled himself on the first main branch, *Kuya* Ped stood valiantly, sniffed the air, thumped his fledgling's breast and burst forth in a squeaking, guttural cry, "I am *Kulafu*, the lord of the jungle!"

As he was about to swing from the whiskery end of an old rope tied to one of the upper branches, I heard an unusual swish through the rising stalks, and the stray dog

began to bark angrily. Something hissed and rattled. There among the green, near the guava tree a python wriggled. It coiled. Its sleepy, shining head reached slowly upward, ready to strike *Kuya* Ped's foot. My brother was frigid and still on the branch two feet above the ground.

The dog stood tensed, its hair ruffled and its bobbed tail quivering. His barks became more and more snappish and sharp. The yelps distracted *Si Malakas* from his reverie.

Clumsily *Si Malakas* lifted his weighty frame and lumbered to the origin of the noise. As he swung his body forward, his heavy fore-feet fell on the advancing python. The snake, furious and bloated with anger, struggled from beneath his hoofs; then slid quickly up his hind legs. Flickering its tongue, the snake feasted on the now reddening wound of *Si Malakas*. Swiftly it slithered to the beast's head and coiled around his neck, pressing him tighter and tighter. Mustering his last strength, *Si Malakas*, the Strong One, thrust his head violently to the ground so that one end of his horns slit through the python's heavy, slender body.

I could not move. My feet felt the cold ground rumble and quake. Dust upon dust billowed through the air amidst the convulsive snorts and terrifying lurches. The guava tree quivered; dead yellow leaves rustled to the ground. At last there was a strangled moan.

A body fell. The ground no longer shook. There, lathered with mud and dirt, *Si Malakas* lay still—noble in his death. Pierced by his horn was the dead python, drenched in its own blood. Below the cumulus gray clouds, a lone buzzard swooped.

V

The sun is setting again, and the shadows of the acacia trees lengthen across the naked trail to the Zambales mountains. Another mango leaf falls; the water ripples into widening rings. But the boggy swamp remains untouched. Yet, if one listens closely, he can hear occasional grunts, muted and far away—on and on, like deep-toned bells that cannot be silenced. Somewhere near the streams of *Sapang Bato*, *Si Malakas* still chants his primordial serenade.

STAR SHADOWS

BETTY JOY HAAS

REFLECTIVE star—spilling light in ruffled lake—
Tell me, are shadows always dark?

Quiet girl—of distant splintered lake
Poised on damp and heavy dock.
Search the thin, reflective waves,
Do they echo, do they mock?

Wise star—is my strength my own?
See me now on liquid,
Again through darkened sphere;
Trace me vainly in the sunlight,
Yet, know you, I am here.

Your shadow shimmers on far-off pool,
The moon your sun at night.
Are shadows always dark?
I answer—stars are always bright.

HEAR MY LOVE

BETTY JOY HAAS

HEAR my love
In fragile violin heights.

See my love
In red-violet spindle
Of the apple blossom core.

Feel my love
In diamond dust
Blown from frozen prairie snow.

For I'll never form hollow chords,
I'll never say, "I love you."

CAPTURED MOMENTS

MARGERY BARKER

SHE caught her breath sharply, sucking it in in small, frightened gasps as a child might, and lurched unexpectedly, heavily, with the movement of the train, against the nearest chair. Her hands pressed against the rough mohair, failing to break the fall. She tripped awkwardly, crushing her slight body against the soft fur of a well dressed woman. The seat occupant, an elderly matron, twisted her shoulders in annoyance and withdrew farther into her coat, heightening the girl's obvious discomfort.

Clumsy, she thought. Her tone was hesitant, almost pleading. "I'm sorry—the jolt . . ." Her brief smile was twisted with embarrassment. The girl swayed, groping for balance. Awkward. How does one act natural in a situation like this? Has anyone noticed my confusion?

The singing of the rails beneath her feet muffled her hurried apology as she scuttled in retreat down the aisle, slipping gratefully into the first empty seat. She sat down quickly, whisking a red beret from her head, nervously fluffing out soft bangs of hair.

The young man beside her turned sidewise, regarding her with mild interest. Not pretty, he decided. Not what Cyn would label glamour. Scared maybe. Scared and traveling alone. Funny how the light catches in her hair, making kindling fires like a beach at midnight. Beach fires . . . crisp tang of wood smoke. He turned the phrase over in his mind, enjoying the taste. He tried to imagine explaining that to Cynthia and smiled at his absurdity. Cynthia who clipped along on smart French heels and said, "Picnic? Oh, let's not."

The girl cupped a small black purse tightly with one tense hand, smoothing the wrinkles from her travel-creased suit with the other. It's going to be all right, she thought, forcing herself to relax. She raised her eyes, risking a glance over the tops of the chair backs filling the coach.

At the end of the car she distinguished the arched erectness of a fur-trimmed collar and shrank back instinctively.

I never say the right thing, she thought. Remember Ned? Cissie had brought him over, Cissie bright and bubbling with laughter. She had tried desperately to make small talk, anything gay or witty to keep him interested, but something clammed up inside of her. He had left early, as all the others did, making appropriate excuses. The dreadful conversation between Cissie and Mother.

"Leave her alone, Mom. Don't push her; she'll blossom out."

"But Janny ought to be dating, having fun like the other girls her age."

"Traveling far?"

She started at his voice, noticing his presence for the first time, his fair complexion and friendly smile. She twisted a small pearl ring on her finger nervously.

"Just to Cincinnati." Was that too abrupt? "Back to school after the holiday." She made a grimace and he laughed.

"You, too? I'm bound for Rochester. Same old routine of classes again. Been

nice, though."

Damn these heaters, he thought, twisting his long legs uncomfortably in the close confinement of the seat. "It's hot," he complained. "At least they always manage to keep these trains in direct opposition to the weather." He glanced out at the bleak, snow-patched landscape. "Guess that's why I'm all for airplanes. Ever flown?"

"No, I haven't travelled much, but I want to. There are so many places I'd like to see . . . Mexico, Bermuda . . . Look!" She pointed to a glazed pond, bright with skaters. A small boy chugged forward with all the energy his tiny body possessed. He grinned, catching her amusement.

"Determined little guy, isn't he?"

They lapsed into silence and he pulled a crumpled pack of cigarettes from his pocket.

"Smoke?"

She hesitated before accepting. "Please." She searched for something to say. "Have you ever skated at night when the wind's so cold it seems to cut?" Was that the right thing? She waited to see if he understood.

"Sure. Hockey games, crack-the-whip, and cocoa afterwards?" He remembered feeling the wild freedom of gliding across the ice, the sting of snow upon his cheek. He smiled at her. Just a kid, he thought. Wonder if Cyn liked to . . .?

She leaned back inhaling slowly. He's nice. Her tenseness eased a little. She twisted, pulling her skirt straight beneath her and turned, noticing an old man across the aisle. He dozed, head nodding against the window, a briar pipe dropping from his tired hands, the hands of an old man. Once she had caught her father sleeping like this, lines of fatigue molding his face, and she had been shocked. He's aging. The thought had chilled her somehow.

A colored porter inched his way through the car, juggling a large tray of food.

"How about a cup of coffee to keep us awake?" He jingled the change in his pocket.

"Sounds good, and I think we might need it."

The steam from the paper cup seeped through her fingers, warming her whole body. She sipped cautiously as he glanced over at her in amusement.

"It won't bite."

"Go ahead and burn your tongue, not me." He drank deeply and winced. She burst into spontaneous laughter.

A chubby little girl in pigtails slipped from her seat to stand beside them, drawn by curiosity.

"Hi, there." The child smiled self-consciously, suddenly aware of her own boldness, and skipped back to her mother.

"Funny thing about braids. I've always wondered if they make a girl's hair curly?"

"They might help some. When I was little I wanted long curls, too. It took me a long time to learn you can't have everything in this world that you want."

"Maybe so, but that doesn't stop you from planning. I have some mighty tall dreams stacked up for the future. I'm studying to be a construction engineer. I've got to get ahead if it takes all the fight and energy in me."

"Life's such a busy wheel, struggling, hurrying for what? You can only squeeze

in time for really living, for doing what you enjoy most. Is success really so important?" She stopped, realizing the ease with which she was speaking. Strange that I can talk so freely to someone I don't even know.

"Go on." He regarded her with new interest, and she felt his attention.

The ride ended too quickly. She wanted to capture this new-found confidence, to keep these moments forever.

"This is where I get off to transfer. You've been an awfully nice companion."

"It's going to be lonely now. Look, if you ever stop by in Cincinnati, call me up, and I'll show you a wonderful town." Had her eagerness shown through?

He grinned. "I will! Goodby and good luck, Janet."

She watched him as he turned to wave and smile once more.

"Goodby."

GARDENIAS

JANE MORRISEY

YOU are
The heavy scent
Of urban rainy days,
Sophisticated spring pinned to
My hair.

THE ANALYSIS

MARY COOK

SOME think the world
Is cold and dead,
For joy and laughter there
Have wed
Each other in a game of scorn,
Using the rose to hide the thorn.

I rather find them quite undone
Who hide the simple
Honest fun
Of wishing on the evening star
In *Wall Street Journal*
Or late *Bazaar.*

They knit their brows and
Voices raise
To shout the woes of
Coming days;
"The prices up, the fashions
Down—
No hope for us in field or town!"

By these two papers I implore
That prices halt, gowns snub the floor.

SOCIAL INCIDENT

JANE MORRISEY

FROM one
Whose hands once held
Eternity for me—
"I'm sorry but I can't recall
Your *name.*"

BESSIE'S BIRTHDAY

NANCY GAINES

BESSIE sat and fanned herself industriously with a large cardboard fan. It was oppressively hot in the small courtroom, and the September sun was laying warm yellow fingers of sunlight on the marred floor. Her shoulders sagged as if burdened by a heavy weight; her head was bowed slightly. Drops of perspiration gleamed on her temples, and her eyes were heavy from lack of sleep. Hands folded passively in her lap, she sat as if utterly indifferent to the rest of the world.

The courtroom had been overflowing with shuffling humanity, and the judge in desperation had declared a fifteen-minute recess. Now the room was partially empty except for a few curious onlookers who kept casting idle glances at the dark figure settled heavily on the front bench. A large black hat crowned with a crimson flower rested upon her head. Her cotton dress was bright blue, also dotted with conspicuous red flowers. Gold loop earrings dangled from her ears and accentuated the darkness of her skin. She would have been a handsome Negress had it not been for a series of tiny scars scattered over one cheek. She was stout, and as she waited, she breathed heavily as though she had been running some distance.

"It jes' doan seem right," Bessie was muttering softly to herself. She remembered Lee when he was a little boy skipping rocks down by the creek just like all the other little boys his age, and playing baseball in the hot, dusty street, coming home with his pantlegs torn and his face streaked with dirt and sweat. She remembered his fishing all one August day, finally bringing home one catch that was no bigger than the fish in their goldfish bowl; but he had been so happy and proud—proud that he had "hepped Ma out." She recalled the day he had come home with his arms full of wild flowers, yellow and purple thistles, and said, "Happy birthday, Ma." It had been a September day much like this one . . . yellow and orange and golden brown around the edges . . . "My boy wudn't try to kill nobody," she said to herself.

She twisted nervously in her seat as the thought of the last few days rose again in her mind. She was glad Larry Marks hadn't died after all. "Jesus, please help my boy out o' this scrape," she murmured silently, as she glanced uneasily at the clock.

People were beginning to file back into the courtroom once more. A reporter entered, fussing importantly with a confusion of stubby pencils and well-worn notepads. Bessie watched him rummage officiously through a mass of papers on a small desk in the front of the room. Her mind wandered . . . Gradually she became conscious of a stocky, robust man approaching the reporter.

"How's things, Frank?" the man inquired jovially, as he pulled up a chair and sat down heavily.

"Comin' along right well, George," Frank answered agreeably. "Been a little busy lately with this case."

"Say, speakin' o' the case, Frank, I was wonderin'—maybe you'd give me the dope on it. I like to know the truth o' what's goin' on in this here town, an' I can't get nuthin' out o' these here blamed rumors that are floatin' around." The words

sounded a little muddled because of the enormous wad of tobacco that the speaker kept shifting from one side of his mouth to the other. He leaned back comfortably. "Some folks say one thing and some say another," he went on. "So I thought to myself, 'Well, I'll just go ask Frank, and he'll put me straight on the whole deal.' "

("Loudmouth," Bessie thought.)

"There's not a lot to tell, George," Frank began. "This nigger, Lee Parks, got tight on the fourth o' August and caught his girl out with another fellow. So he tried to kill her.

("Know-it-all," Bessie muttered.)

"Larry Marks was the sheriff's deputy for the nigger end of town that day, and he tried to stop this Lee from shooting the girl."

("Shootin' was too good for her anyway.")

"Instead, Larry got himself all shot to hell. They thought he was goin' to die for a while, but it looks like he's goin' to make it now."

("Shouldn't been stickin' his nose in where it don't belong.")

"Anyway, they're tryin' the nigger for carrying a weapon without a license, drunkenness, and attempted murder."

"Well, in my opinion," began the wad of tobacco . . .

At this point, Bessie's attention was turned from the words of wisdom about to be uttered. She was distracted by a rising buzz of speculation and turned her head to see a Negro girl enter. The girl was attired in a red dress and green patent leather shoes. The rust of her skin was in strong contrast to the ruby red of her lips, which were well coated, in fact obscured, with lipstick. A bunch of violets was tucked coyly behind one ear, and she chewed a wad of gum nervously. Bessie's left eye almost closed in a grimace of dislike. She remembered the first days of the trial, when Georgette had taken the stand.

"Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?" babbled a nervous little man with a green necktie.

"Yassuh," Georgette had replied as she batted mascaraed eyelashes slowly.

MacCauley, (he signed his name John William MacCauley III), arose and strode grandly across the room. He smiled confidently and began:

"As I understand it, you were talking to an old friend on August fourth, and Lee Parks, the defendant, came up and began to annoy you. Is this correct?"

"Yassuh," replied Georgette.

"Very well. You were doing nothing to prompt this conduct?"

"Nawsuh. I wudn't doin' nuthin'."

"Would you say that Parks attempted to take your life at this time?" inquired MacCauley eagerly.

"Yassuh. He was drunk, and he said that he was gwine to kill me for sho, and I hopped out o' thet car, and I started to run, and I hollered for all I was worth, and—"

At this point, Mr. O'Fallon arose. He was, and looked, tired and fortyish; his eyes were a faded blue like a workshirt that had been washed too often. A pale blue tie clung weakly to his shirt collar and made him look more tired than ever.

"May I ask the witness a question, Your Honor?" he inquired mildly.

"You may," came the bored answer.

"Just what was the witness doing in the car?"

Georgette looked confused. A long pause. "Talkin' to a friend," she replied softly. Bessie's indignant grunt had sounded above the light laughter that floated around the room.

"That is not the point," MacCauley put in pompously. "We are here to try the intentions of the defendant, and not the actions of the witness. And now if you please, (turning to Georgette), "will you answer 'yes' or 'no' to this question? Did Lee Parks try to kill you on August fourth?"

"Yassuh. He sho did," Georgette breathed, as she glanced at Lee, who sat with bowed head.

"That is all," said MacCauley triumphantly. "Your Honor, I think it is plain to the jury that Lee Parks is guilty of attempted murder, and that in the name of justice, he should be convicted of such."

Yes, Bessie remembered. "That wuthless fool girl," she muttered as she glared at Georgette, who turned her head and stared fixedly out the window. Other people were beginning to file slowly back into the courtroom, a faint look of expectation on their faces. The judge entered wearily, and the buzz of conversation diminished.

"Mr. O'Fallon, the jury is ready for your summary of the defendant's case."

Mr. O'Fallon rose softly as though he were afraid of waking someone, and stood before the jury. He coughed into a blue-bordered handkerchief, folded it carefully, and replaced it in a hip pocket. Then he began to speak:

"Ladies and gentlemen of the jury," and he paused; "in considering the case of the defendant, I would like for you to keep in mind the fact that he was provoked beyond any limits by the faithless and trying conduct of the girl he loved." Mr. O'Fallon looked over the heads of the crowd and stared intently at a fly crawling slowly up the wall. Another pause. Then he went on. "I also wish to bring to your attention the fact that during his twenty-five years spent in this community, his conduct has been beyond reproach"; (a timid wave of the hand) "and that under the circumstances he acted as any normal person, hurt and frustrated, would have acted." (The fly had almost reached the ceiling.) "True, the defendant was under the influence of liquor, but no doubt many of us have been in a like state as many or more times." His eyes swept accusingly over the crowd; then he went on. "We all know the defendant's reputation, and it is certainly not one of a vicious nature. Without doubt, had he been more himself, he would have made no attempt on anyone's life." Another pause. Mr. O'Fallon coughed nervously. "I beg of you—consider the fact that this was not the first time he had found the girl he loved being faithless to him. He was provoked beyond the limits of human endurance at last. May I close with the statement that there are probably many in this courtroom today that would have acted in much the same manner under a similar set of circumstances." Mr. O'Fallon looked immensely relieved. He sat down wearily and applied the tired handkerchief to his damp forehead.

There was a respectful silence, finally broken by the imperious tap of the gavel. "Court adjourned for decision of the jury."

The jury filed out solemnly. The crowd straggled toward the door. The fat man rose and slowly chewed his way out the entrance. The reporter stretched, looked at his watch, and made his way importantly up the aisle.

Bessie sat very still. She saw Georgette rising to leave, a thin flame of color in

the bleak courtroom. Suddenly Bessie could stand it no longer. She rose ponderously and called, "Jes' a minute, girl." Georgette paused fearfully. Bessie plowed toward her like a steamboat getting under way. Reaching her, Bessie grabbed her arm with one hand, and with the other powerful paw, she landed a terrific blow on Georgette's well-rouged cheek. Georgette staggered and began to cry in whimpering gulps. Her tears made dark streaks in the coat of powder.

"Now you get out o' heah," breathed Bessie softly but venomously, "and doan you ever let me ketch you in this here town agin. 'Cause if ah do, ah'll cut yore yaller heart right out o' yore body." Georgette rolled her eyes wildly and looked vainly for assistance around the empty courtroom. Then with a terrified gulp, she turned abruptly and tottered on too-high heels toward the door. Bessie watched her cringing, gaudy figure disappear through the doorway, and then she waddled slowly back to her seat. She felt better, but somehow she wanted to cry, too.

Thinking back on that day years later, Bessie could not remember exactly what she had done. She remembered the jury coming back into the room. She remembered the heavy, oppressive stillness that descended upon the packed throng before and after the pronouncing of the verdict; she could recall the voice that said, "We find the defendant guilty of attempted murder"; and she remembered the pronouncing of the sentence—four years in the state penitentiary. She remembered all this, but the events that took place in the next hour were vague. She must have begun to cry, because Lee had come and put his arms around her,.

"Don't cry, Ma. This is goin' to make a man out o' me." But those words only made her cry harder than ever.

Bessie ploughed determinedly through the puddles of water that covered the broken pavement, her galoshes making squishy sounds as they hit the wet street. "The last time I'll get to see my boy." She tried to hurry. Laboriously she climbed the rickety steps to the jail and pushed open the door. Water flew in all directions as she shook her umbrella energetically. The sheriff looked up kindly, his blue eyes mild, his graying head encircled in a ring of smoke that issued in regular puffs from a battered pipe.

He laid down a copy of "The Town Reporter," faced Bessie a bit uncertainly, and said, "I'm sorry, Bessie, but you can't see Lee today."

Bessie stood very still. Drops of water ran down the black umbrella, off the tip, and made a little pool on the floor.

The sheriff coughed and went on. "You see, we just don't allow prisoners to have visitors on the day o' their leavin.' I'm real sorry, Bessie, but that's the law."

Bessie leaned heavily against the ink-stained desk. Still she said nothing.

"Guess I should have told you yesterday," he went on, "but I just never thought. Too bad. It would have saved you comin' all this long ways. Bad out today, too." The sheriff looked out the window to avoid Bessie's stare. "Sorry," he muttered once more.

Bessie stood there for a moment in a widening pool of rainwater. Finally she turned, opened the door carefully, and clumped down the stairs. The click of the closing door made a ripple in the pool of silence. The sheriff watched her form disappear down the street into the rain. He shook his head and sighed, tapped his pipe on the back leg of the chair, and began reading once more.

Bessie went to work that morning. She had a daily job with the Northguts, one of the white families in town. Mrs. Northgut missed Bessie's usual, "Good mornin,' Ma'am"; and the familiar strains of "My Old Kentucky Home" did not float softly through the house while the breakfast dishes were being washed; only the faint tinkle and click of the glasses as they were put away, and now and then a weak splash as another dish was placed in the washtub gave any indication that another person was in the house. When noon came, Mrs. Northgut told Bessie that she could go home for the afternoon if she wished. Bessie accepted the offer with alacrity.

"If you want to wait until I go to town to do my errands, I'll drop you by home, Bessie."

"No thanks, Ma'am." Bessie spoke quietly. "It's cleared off. Ah doan mind walkin'."

Bessie gathered her paraphernalia under one arm and trudged toward home. The rain had disappeared and left in its place a sapphire sky dotted with white powder-puff clouds. It was a yellow and orange day—golden brown around the edges.

When Bessie walked into her three-room cabin, she sank wearily into a dilapidated chair. A spring was broken in the chair, and it uttered a long ping of indignation at the weight with which it had been so suddenly burdened.

"Oh Lordy," Bessie thought. She had meant to have that chair fixed. It really should be done.

She looked at the faded cotton curtains hanging wearily at the two small windows. And she must wash those soon and starch them this time. She had been so busy these past few weeks. Plenty of time to get things straightened around now. When Lee came back she would have new curtains, and yes, she would save her money and have a new chair. Must go back and sweep the kitchen floor. Couldn't sit here all afternoon. She looked through the small doorway out into an even smaller room that used to be a back porch, but that was now a kitchen, or a reasonable semblance of one. She saw the cracks in the linoleum. Must have a new kitchen floor when Lee came home. Her eyes wandered over the room, the pale walls, bare except for two needlework designs, one bearing the statement, "Jesus loves me," and the other saying, "God bless our home." Finally her eyes came to rest on the iron four poster bed. It was then that she noticed a small bundle lying at the foot.

She rose with an effort, walked over to the bed, and picked up the parcel. It was a suit of clothes. On it was pinned a note written on tablet paper, and scrawled in heavy black pencil. "Dear Ma. The sherif brout me back her to change close. Here is my sute. Rekon I wont be needing it fore a spel. Wish you had been her, but figered you was at work. I love you, Ma. Lee."

The room dimmed before Bessie's eyes, and she sank slowly down on the bed and covered her face with her hands. Through the muddle and confusion that grasped her mind, she could feel the breathless silence of the room, broken only by the flap of the shade as it was blown against the window sill. The window was open, and a gust of warm, sun-filled air brushed against her forehead. She could hear the faint laughter of the children at the schoolhouse. It must be recess time. Some of them were playing baseball now. The metallic chirp of the alarm clock sounded painfully loud. She sat there immovable, and she didn't lift her head from her hands.

Suddenly she became conscious of someone prodding her gently on the knee. She

looked up to see the little boy that lived next door standing before her, his eyes brown and wondering. His yellow shirt was splotched with mud, and bits of dried mud were clinging to his arms. One of his pantlegs was torn at the knee. "Ma said it was your birthday, Aunt Bessie, so I thought I'd bring ya a present. I didn't know whut to get ya, but I thought you might like these." He held forth a bouquet of wild flowers, some of them already beginning to wilt. There were purple asters, yellow thistles, and even a few dandelions hanging head downward in a rather pitiful state. Some dried mud was still clinging to the asters.

"It was kinder hard gettin' em," he was saying brightly, "but there was gobs of 'em down by the crick, all colors, and I figgered—well, happy birthday, Aunt Bessie."

Bessie knelt and gathered the child into her arms.

CHRISTMAS EVE

JEAN KIRALFY

ONE breath ahead of dreaming,
  One breath short of fear,
He lets himself down in the well
  Of darkness. He can hear
Mysterious whispers rising;
  Tissue and tinsel shine.
In his heart the phrases sing:
  Perhaps those things are mine!

One breath ahead of sleeping,
  One breath short of song,
He feels his slow way upward.
  Oh, may it not be long
Until the sun spills gold dust
  All up and down the stair,
With tender love to welcome,
  And smooth his rumpled hair.

THE CREEK

KAYE McCLATCHIE

WITH the index finger of my right hand I pressed the little black button. I could hear the double gongs sound in the hall. Their tone was of the best Chinese quality. Just as I drew my finger away, a maid, dressed too frivolously for the small service she performed, said, "Good mornin'. I will take your coats if you wish. The other ladies are in the livin' room."

"Bet Mrs. Bremeldon has coached the poor kid for hours."

"Yeh," said Margaret. "Probably the only good English the girl's ever known."

We walked into the lavish living room and sat down in the only available seats. It was what could be called a nice party, a party attended by young women who had put on soft cotton dresses and expensive play shoes to come and while away a morning over cool drinks and small sandwiches.

During the course of an hour and a half a yellow chambray dress was stained by coke spilled because of an unexpected slip of the hand; a lovely little Hepplewhite table was marred with smoke-like rings put there by dripping green bottles, and the dining room table was expertly cleared of its sandwiches and potato chips by a hungry mob of eighteen-year-old girls who imagined themselves much more sophisticated than they were.

"Margaret, I feel just like a sheep in the flock."

"See what ya' mean. Sorta stifling, isn't it?"

"The smoke in here doesn't exactly help either. Let's go."

Margaret and I made our excuses and formalities to Janice and Mrs. Bremeldon. We walked out, leaving behind the idle talk and smoky room.

Once outside in the late spring air, we experienced a sense of release. Not wanting to go home right away, we started out for the rolling stillness of Indian Hill. As we walked along, neither of us had much to say. There was no need for conversation. We stopped at the creek which twisted through the hills at a feverish pace as if it were angry because it had to work so hard, while the gentle mounds could just lie there peacefully soaking in the sun. We took our shoes off and put our feet down into the drab, gray current. We felt no coldness; only a sensation of pain, pain that slowly crept up our legs until our entire bodies throbbed with it. But it was a good kind of pain, a kind that gives you a sudden awareness of the omnipotence of nature.

"Hey, let's run down to that hill; see, the funny lookin' one?"

"O. K., but, for Lord's sake, hurry!"

At first, we more or less dog-trotted, getting our breath easily, but then simultaneously we felt a need for speed. We ran with our arms flung out loosely, our legs almost disjointed by the pull of the wind. I felt no sense of breathing nor of moving. I looked down at the ground and saw nothing but a blur—a blur of green, each blade of grass indistinct from the others—a blur of black, each clump of hard earth smeared across the ground. I felt as if I were standing still, the ground below me rushing past in violent motion. I was not moving. Something was propelling me forward with

no assistance at all from my limbs.

Slowly and quietly the earth stopped its maddening rush. We hurled ourselves down on the ground, sprawled out on our backs, paralyzed, fastened firmly to the cold earth. Then the need for new air seized and overwhelmed me. My body was motionless except for my chest which rose and fell as the brittle air attacked my lungs, making them ache from cold and urgent need. My throat throbbed jerkily from the furious speed of my heart beat. Would my lungs ever get enough air again?

Gradually the violent throbbing lessened, and I once again breathed slowly, smoothly, with no sensation except relief. I lay there for a long time in a black coma, my mind completely blank, my body completely insensitive to the surroundings.

"Maybe we'd better go back."

"Yaaaa,—I—I guess so."

We got up lethargically, first rolling over on our stomachs, then with great effort pushing ourselves upon our knees, and finally standing erect, feeling somewhat as a new-born colt must feel when, for the first time, he tries to support himself on his weak, spindly legs. We walked back, every muscle in our bodies tired and relaxed.

Our hands hung limply, our feet dragged, sometimes stumbling, our heads swayed wearily with the movement of our steps. We stopped for a moment at the creek, still moving in its frantic way, unable to change the course it so obviously disliked. Somewhat sadly we turned towards home.

NOW IS HERE FOREVER

BETTY JACK LITTLETON

WHY speak of what has been and what will be?
They are the same. Now is here forever.
Now the gray-throated sky sings through never-
Ending hills drawn round its cloudy knee.
Now snow-filled moments in the mind's winter—
Softer than thought, than dimly dawning day,
Melt into spring—summer—autumn—away
Through timeless time where none may leave or enter.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

It may be only a pleasant dream, but in the minds of the editors lurks a persistent hope that in these pages are represented some future Brontes, Dickinsons, or Steins. At any rate, we "present with pride" some comparative veterans and some who for the first time are seeing their creations in print.

Among the freshmen, NANCY GAINES, of Clinton, Missouri, has had poetry published in the *National Youth Anthology* of 1946 and in *Songs of Youth* (1947); "Bessie's Birthday" is her first short story. MARGERY BARKER, whose home is in River Forest, Illinois, contributed to the *Literary Tabula* of Oak Park High School and won honorable mention in Lindenwood's Christmas story contest of 1948. KAYE McLATCHIE, of Winnetka, Illinois, comes from a family interested in the writing game; her sister is a journalist and her father a member of the advertising staff of *Time* magazine Speaking of families, we should mention next that MARCIA MORRIS's mother writes poetry for fun; Marcia is from Princeton, Indiana. She says that "Happy to Know You" is a story of "true experience—after a fashion." And NANCY STARZL's father is editor of the Le Mars *Globe-Post* in Iowa. Nancy hopes to major in science; she has a slight mania for introducing words like "protococcus" into her poems—very effectively, too. DIXIE WILLIAMS, author of "The Straw Hat," hopes to major in art; one of her poems was published in *The High Times*, high school publication at Springfield, Missouri. J. JEWETT LANGDON, of Hornersville, Missouri, will major in drama; she acted in a summer theatre in the East last year, and from that first-hand experience she gets the background for her story, "Mirage." VIRGINIA TOWNSEND lives in Kirkwood, Missouri. She is majoring in liberal arts and has had both poetry and prose published in the *Linden Bark* this year. JANE HALL, of DeWitt, Arkansas, hopes to teach; she is especially interested in writing stories that show a child's point of view.

Members of the editorial staff have taken time out from sorting and criticizing manuscripts to contribute some prose and poetry of their own. RITA BAKER, of Leavenworth, Kansas, has previously had poems published in a national anthology of high school poetry and in two issues of *The Husk*, the literary magazine of Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, Iowa. BETTY JOY HAAS's poems, "Wagon Ruts" and "Hear My Love," won first prize in the Poetry Society contest at Lindenwood last fall. She is a sophomore from Neosho, Missouri. In the annual contest sponsored by Sigma Tau Delta here on the campus, PATRICIA UNDERWOOD, of Knox, Pennsylvania, won honorable mention in 1948. Pat is president of the Poetry Society this year. LORRAINE PECK, of Troy, Ohio, is a junior, majoring in English and history; she says that none of her writings have been published before, but she has a fine time collecting rejection slips.

Among the other upperclassmen, MIRIAM REILLY, a senior, was born in Mexico City and spent most of her life in Pachuca, Mexico, before coming to Lindenwood; "Felicia," and other stories she has written, have authentic local color. Miriam won first prize in Lindenwood's Christmas story contest in 1945 and 1947. JENNIFER SULLIVAN, a sophomore from Wichita, Kansas, is majoring in biology. Some of her writings were published in *The Messenger*, a high school paper, and she has been

a frequent contributor to the *Linden Bark*. BETTY JACK LITTLETON, a junior, had a poem published in *The Rectangle*, national magazine of Sigma Tau Delta, in 1948. Her home is in Miami, Oklahoma, and she is majoring in English. Another English major is MARY LOU MATTHEWS, from Neosho, Missouri, who entered Lindenwood as a sophomore this year. Mary Lou's passion for proofreading was much appreciated by the staff of *Peter Pan*. REMY RODRIGUEZ is from Manila, the Philippines; she is particularly interested in English and journalism and last year was a member of the reportorial staff of *The Evergreen* at Washington State College. She won first prize in the Christmas story contest last December.

Five former students are represented. MARY COOK, of Bloomfield, Iowa, is attending the University of Iowa this year. JEAN KIRALFY, whose "Christmas Eve" won first place in the Poetry Society contest in 1945, is now at the University of Alabama; her home is in Columbus, Georgia. JANE MORRISEY, of Joliet, Illinois, was graduated from Lindenwood in 1948. She has spent the past year in London. A contributor to Volume II of *Lindenwood Verse* in 1943, JOHNSIE M. FIOCK FILDES has continued to write poetry and has sent much of it to the Poetry Society for criticism. She is now living in Olney, Illinois. JO ANNE SMITH, of Lebanon, Illinois, attended Lindenwood from 1945 to 1947. While studying music, she writes in her spare time and hopes soon to publish two books, a collection of verse for children and a novel entitled *Grandpa Had Three Wives*

The faculty is represented by SIEGMUND A. E. BETZ and AGNES SIBLEY, members of the English department, and by ELIZABETH ISAACS, former instructor, who is now on the faculty of Cornell College. One of Dr. Betz's poems, "Journey for a Child," appeared in *The Atlantic* in 1947; and Miss Isaacs' poem "Decision" was published in the spring issue of *The Husk*.

Special thanks go to MARIE KOCH, who illustrated the magazine and designed the cover. Marie is a senior from Oak Park, Illinois. An art major, she has been invaluable not only to *Peter Pan* but also to other organizations on the campus, for which she has made posters and designed program covers. Her works have been exhibited by the St. Louis Artists' Guild and at Michigan State University and the Springfield Art Museum.