

SOWER 1974



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AWARDS

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HAL EVANS COLE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE ARTS

Portrait Connie Gibson

BECKONING TO THE PLAINS

What is it that calls me to the home of my fathers . . .
the autumn foliage
Sheds her coat for the winter sleep and in her heart
she does not compromise—
She is the mighty force of wind enthralled.

For me her sleep is rapid in pace and my passions turn
to her promise of spring,
Just as Cather would condone it becomes more real now
than before.

My thoughts,
and they I trust,
Reminisce the evening song of the bird on the golden field.
But, alas, the horizon falls not with a curtain
but always another performance—
As with her silhouette
She captivates the closing day and unfolds the blanket
of the prairie world
. . . timeworn windmills,
decrepit barns, and
spears of grass bending low to the whistling wind.

As the early dwellers once inhabited the land
My soul reaches out for an experience of the color
and freshness
They once found.

Giles Bronson

BIRCHES

(Credit due to Mr. Frost)

Wandering on an old farm path one morning, I paused to watch a young boy climb a limping birch tree, one of several that bordered the cow-path. He took great pains going from the low, heavy branches to the thin, uppermost ones, always conscious of his balance. He paused a moment, standing against the aqua sky, shaded amongst the golden, shedding leaves. All was silent but for the lattice-work of branches clicking upon themselves in the wind. The sun illuminated each leaf with the golden aura of autumn. The white, paper-like bark, etched with streaks of black, curling and peeling into delicate scrolls, laced the arching trunk.

The boy grasped one of the topmost branches in his two tight little fists, then flung himself outward, kicking through the air 'til his weight drew the branch down to the earth. He tumbled to the ground, laughing and sputtering, plucking the cobwebs that stuck to his blond hair and tickled his face. One eye was reddened from a twig poking it, but the boy began his conquest of the tree all over again.

As he began his ascent, the farmer stomped up the path and shouted angrily, "Get out o' that tree! Stupid kid! — you're gonna break those branches off!"

Startled, the boy dashed off through the woods before the irate farmer could get close enough to grab him.

The farmer growled, "Damn kids — look what they done to my trees — all bent and limp. What with that big ice-storm last winter that nearly broke the branches and now this kid, it's a wonder they ain't all dead."

I answered, "You know as well as I that the ice bent those trees more than one little boy could."

He muttered back, "Well . . . kids shouldn't be doin' that anyway. They should be playin' baseball like other kids instead of swingin' on my birches."

"One could do worse," I thought as I walked on down the path.

Bob Coffey

Mourn for my birches,
His honor the powerman
Has found them guilty.

Doug Bro



Jade by Tricia Groat

THE DAWN

Without desires — merely because the lilly-
of-the-valley had called —
we sat on the old bank.

The night settled over the earth like a
black hen. Occasionally she clucked
— motherly; — we were glad
and felt safe under her heartbeat
and the powerful wings.

You sat, thoughtful, in silent waiting —
a little sensible chick, who has
nothing more to do than wait for the morning.

Until the night rises — like a hen,
cautiously, so as not to step on the
little ones; — and the sun sought out your dark hair,
before it looked for anything else.

And you turned your face toward me,
bewildering as a new day and like
the fragrance of many kinds of flowers.

—translated from the Danish of Nis Petersen
by Diane Nicolaisen

AWAKENING

As the last of the dull red sun's rays reluctantly disappear behind a horizon of an ominous cloud that threatens rain, a fourteen-year-old boy throws his right leg over his ever-present friend and companion, the only slightly rusty, black Schwinn bicycle. Although home is not far away from his place of departure, the city swimming pool, he takes the long way around town because he feels something that he never experienced before. Maybe it is the sweet smell of an approaching thunder shower mixed with the gray, choking fumes of the not-too-distant fogger that is trying to rid the town of that ever-present mosquito, or it just may be because that pint-sized blonde former enemy smiled at him so funny earlier in the evening. As he rides through the little town, that strange new feeling seems reluctant to leave his mind. It is as though his eyes are really opening for the first time. The sights and sounds of this special summer evening make this fourteen-year-old realize that he just might be growing up.

The town is noisily quiet as he pedals through the rapidly approaching darkness. It is as though the little community is a small child begging for a chance to stay up longer before being put to bed for the night. The children of elementary school age seem to be in a mass exodus from the pool to their homes where their parents would be waiting for them. The adults all seem to be doing the same thing—sitting in their front yards with spouses, friends, and neighbors discussing the weather, gardens, the plight of today's young people, and whatever else adults talk about.

In his pensive mood, the boy watches the other kids on their way home. To him, they all seem like sheep until he realizes that only last night he was doing the same thing. Tonight he decides that he would rather be like the high school kids, who seemed to have more fun. They just seem to be starting to come alive at the time the adults and younger children are ready to settle down for the night. He hears the deep-throated rumble of the "glass-packed" mufflers of the cars of the boys who are old enough to have money enough to drive their own cars. Wearing the standard mode of dress dictated by their peers and the season, rapidly fading cut-offs and light-colored shirts, these kids congregate at the pool, too, but usually they don't stay long. The boys end up looking for girls and the girls really don't make much of an effort to hide from the guys, the young man noticed.

He also noticed that the kids his age seem to be in a state of transition. Some of them act like the elementary kids and stay at home and play their night games, especially hide-and-seek, a game that possesses a special type of excitement when played in the dark. The rest of the kids his age are quieter and more secretive at night. Many times in his "younger days" this young man wondered what they did at twilight in this community that is blinking its eyes trying to stay awake.

He reaches his house when the pink-and-green glimmer of the street light begins to filter to the street below. A new sound, the relentless chirping of crickets, pierces the dusk, as does the whining sound of a pestering mosquito that is beginning to take liberties with his left ear lobe. He can hear the effortless chugging of the Illinois Central train on the tracks not far to the south of town. Dogs are barking and those "kids" are yelling and having their fun shuffling through the darkness that envelops the neighborhood, rustling the bushes and knocking over trash cans in their haste to make it to base before being caught.

The traffic of the cars of the teenagers picks up now, but the young man knows that this would not last for long. At the pool, he had heard of an almost weekly event, the kegger, that sinister enemy of all parents and the local cop.

"Would I ever go to one of those?" he asks himself. Ironically, in his mind, he shouts, "Never!"

Something now pounds in the back of his mind. Something that tells him not to go into the house but to do something else. He's not sure what it is, but he knows he must go somewhere. This, too, he had never felt before. He shouts in the general direction of the large white frame house, "Mom, I'm going up to Tom's for awhile!"

"Be back at ten!" is the reply.

"Hey," he says to himself, "I never thought she'd even let me leave, much less be home half an hour later than usual!"

An invisible force pulls him through the streets, now fully illuminated by the powerful lights on those tall silver poles. In the back of his mind he knows where he is going, but the rest of him just laughs at that stupid thought. Yet, three minutes later, there he is, nervously approaching the yellow ranch-style house of that girl who smiled at him.

"I'll just ride by on my way to Tom's," he mutters. But then, there on the front steps he sees that little blonde pixie. His heart begins to pound. What should he do? Should he ride up the driveway or pedal by in the darkness on the far side of the street?

She quickly answers that question for him, "Hi, want some popcorn?"

"Hope nobody sees me," he mutters as he rides in to satisfy a more developed male craving, his hunger.

Dave Stickrod

Dream

gusty breeze that swirls
the settled dust of thoughts in
the caverns of my mind.

Deb Schou

WOMAN

Woman, ignorant woman,
You don't know the strength
That dwells within you.
You don't know your in-born force
That operates beyond your imagination.

When the soul of a man returns and seeks refuge,
Exhausted,
From his lonely travel of dreams,
Your innocence laughs: "Still playing an ugly duckling
That will never be a swan?"

But woman,
You misjudge
The worth of tears a man sheds as a token of his agony,
The strength of despair he exerts against the wall of limitation,
The price of sacrifice he pays to live out his Pan-Egoism.

Ah, woman, please understand
With the gentleness of Madonna
And embrace his soul with all its childish waywardness and pride.
Let him rest and sleep in your soft arms,
And when the sun shines new in the morning
See him off to his adventure with your encompassing smile
And whisper into his heart:
"Everything is all right, my love, there is nothing to fear."

Ah, woman, incomprehensible woman,
Be aware
That your ignorance makes you wiser than the wisest of men;
Female instinct knows life and grips its root fast.
Man was born out of your womb;
It was you who gave him flesh and blood
And perhaps — his soul.

Reassure him ease of peace with your faith.
Understand, with your eternal ignorance even greater than God's
That he hates you because he loves you.
Recognize, in his despising look, his sincere reverence toward you!

Akira Okada

THE ESSENCE OF WAR

Proper propaganda trumpet, vicar of hell,
We are all entrapped in your demonic spell.
Tell us now of your essence, do it in fact;
Show your real presence, and delete the tact.
"I the trumpet, am a golden Gatling gun."
"My radiance can blacken even the sun."
"Hate, glory, and pride I harmoniously chord."
"That you may live and die by a sword."
Listen! there it is, the trumpet blast;
But not again, for this is the last.
The tale is told, the soul is sold,
The hearts of men have all grown cold.
One last blast but out of key,
Mankind bound or forever free.
Creation devouring creator; the world ends.
The universe roars its approval for the show it attends.
But time, life's sterile friend, marches on and on
Untouched, unchanged, uninterested, though his companion gone.
He's oblivious to the floating wisp of humanity undone,
The sole reminder of a war ended before it had begun.

Thomas Walker

MEMO TO AN ARTIST

Paint Birth White
Paint Life Gray
Paint Death Black

Linda Jo Johnson

WE HALF-HUMANS

No, let us be humans! said
one ape to his mate.
It was a sunny summer day
millions of years ago.
As said so done. And now and then
on our long wandering
we ask ourselves . . . and answer: Yes,
we feel a little change.
And the absurd wonder happens
in our bizarre heart,
that we become more human, the more
we know we are not.

—From the Danish of Piet Hein
by Jan Mogensen

from THE PETIT PRINCE (a grown-up fairy tale)

* * *

It is then that the fox appears.
"Hello," says the fox.
"Hello," answers the tiny prince politely, turns around but sees nothing.
"I am here," says the voice, "under the apple tree."
"Who are you?" says the tiny prince. "You are very pretty."
"I am a fox," says the fox.
"Come play with me," offered the tiny prince. "I am so sad."
"I cannot play with you," says the fox. "I am not tame."
"Ah, excuse me," says the little prince.
But after thinking, he adds:
"What does tame mean?"
"You are not from here," says the fox. "What are you looking for?"
"I am looking for men," says the tiny prince. "What does tame mean?"
"Men," says the fox, "have guns and they hunt. It makes things very awkward. They raise chickens also. It's their only interest. Are you looking for some chickens?"
"No," says the tiny prince. "I am looking for some friends. What does tame mean?"
"It is a thing too forgotten," says the fox. "It means to create some bonds . . ."
"Create some bonds?"
"Sure," says the fox. "You are yet to me only a small boy who resembles a hundred thousand small boys. And I have no need of you. And you have no need of me. I am to you only a fox who resembles a hundred thousand foxes. But if you tame me, we will need one another. You will be unique to me. I will be unique to you . . ."
"I'm beginning to understand," says the tiny prince. "There is a flower . . . I think she tamed me."
"It's possible," says the fox. "You see all sorts of things in this world."
"Oh! It's not on **this** world!" says the tiny prince.
The fox seems very intrigued.
"On another planet?"
"Yes."
"Are there hunters on that planet?"
"No."
"That's interesting! Are there chickens?"
"No."
"Nothing's perfect," sighs the fox.
But the fox returns to his idea.
"My life is monotonous. I hunt the chickens, the men hunt me. All the chickens look the same and all the men look the same. So I am bored a little. But if you tame me, my life will be sunny. I would know the sound of footsteps different from others. The other footsteps make me hide underground. Our bonds will call me out of the ground like music. And then look! You see, over there, the field of grain? I don't eat bread. Grain is useless to me. The field of grain means nothing to me. And that is so sad! But you have gold-colored hair. It will be wonderful when you have tamed me! The grain, when ripened, will be a remembrance of you. And I will love the sound of the wind in the grain . . ."

The fox sits and watches the tiny prince for a long time.

"Please . . . tame me!" he says.

"I want to very much," says the tiny prince, "but I don't have very much time. I have some friends to discover and many things to learn."

"One is familiar only with the things that one tames," says the fox. "Men no longer have the time to be familiar with anything. They buy everything already made at the stores. But as there are no sellers of friends, men no longer have friends. If you want a friend, tame me!"

"What do I have to do?" says the tiny prince.

"You must be very patient," answers the fox. "You sit down, first of all, a little far from me, and like that, in the grass. I will watch you from the corner of my eye and you will say nothing. Language is the source of misunderstandings. But each day you can sit a little closer . . ."

The next day the tiny prince comes back.

"It's better to return at the same time," says the fox. "If you come at four o'clock, at three o'clock I will begin to be happy. The more the hour advances, the happier I will feel. I will discover the price of happiness! But if you come at no special time, I will never know at what time to prepare my heart . . . You must have some ritual."

"What is a ritual?" says the tiny prince.

"It is also something too forgotten," says the fox. "It is the fact that one day is different from the other days, one hour from the other hours. For example, the hunters have a ritual. They dance with the village girls on Thursdays. So Thursday is a wonderful day! I can walk all the way up to the vineyard. If they would dance at no special time, the days would all seem the same and I would not have any vacations."

So the tiny prince tames the fox. And when it comes near the time to leave:

"Ah!" says the fox. "I will cry."

"It's your fault," says the tiny prince. "I didn't wish any harm, but you wanted me to tame you . . ."

"Certainly," says the fox.

"But you are going to cry!" says the tiny prince.

"Certainly," says the fox.

"Then you are gaining nothing!"

"I am gaining," says the fox, "because of the color of the grain."

Then he adds:

"Go see the roses. You will understand that yours is unique. You will return to tell me good-bye, and I will make you a present of a secret."

The tiny prince goes to see the roses:

"You do not resemble my rose at all, you are yet nothing to me," he tells them. "No one has tamed you and you have not tamed anyone. You are like my fox was. He was only a fox resembling a hundred thousand others. But I made him my friend and now he is unique."

And the roses were very embarrassed.

"You are beautiful but you are empty," he tells them. "One cannot die for you. Certainly, an ordinary passer-by would believe that my rose resembles you. But she alone is more important than all of you, since I grew her. Since I put her under a globe. Since I protected her with a screen. Since I killed the caterpillars for her (except two or three for butterflies). Since I have listened to her complain, or brag, or even sometimes be quiet. Since she is my rose."

And he goes back to the fox.

"Good-bye," he says.

"Good-bye," says the fox. "Here is my secret. It is very simple: one sees no better than with the heart. The most important things are invisible to the eyes."

"The most important things are invisible to the eyes," the tiny prince repeats, in order to remember.

"It is the time you have spent without your rose that makes your rose so important."

"It is the time that I have spent without my rose . . ." says the tiny prince, in order to remember.

"Men have forgotten this truth," says the fox. "But you must not forget it. You become responsible always for what you have tamed. You are responsible for your rose . . ."

"I am responsible for my rose . . ." the tiny prince repeats, in order to remember.

* * *

—from the French of Antoine de Saint Exupery
Bob Coffey

Self Portrait by Jean Knudsen



PRELUDE TO SPRING

Winter's aftermath is bearing
the hues of day within my
being
—all glory manifested
by the capture of innocence.
Festival of Aphrodite
assigned, the annual choir—
receiving
the new life in accordance
. . . Renaissance,
created, fulfilled and unequalled
The morning dew
thrusting earth's resources
trumpantly
An annual metamorphosis
rejuvenating on a paramount harmony.

Giles Bronson

The dry, dusty air
showered
by a light rain
slipped into a green robe
laced with apple blossoms
and scented
with the light fragrance of lilac.

Deb Schou

ONLY AS A SINGER

If I would have my songs be fit to sing,
Then I must bare my soul to all the eyes
in this cold world; and doubtless feel their sting,
unless I could some camouflage devise.
Shall I describe to all my joy and pain
As though I bid a stranger time of day?
And if one likes my song, shall I know gain,
And if one not, with spurned despondence pay?
Shall I sing, that another may decide
if I'm correct, or even vaguely smart?
Is there no way to sing and also hide,
Provide protection for my wary heart?
But worse, if I expose my soul stripped bare,
And have it met with cool, unseeing stare.

Tricia Groat

THE INDIAN OF SPRING

Nature was continuing her cycle. Winter was discarded, and the sun penetrated the earth, freeing it of the frost, solitude and fear of winter. Like a small girl timidly meeting the schoolmaster, spring was approaching. Trees, long barren, were stretching their limbs, brown buds reddening on each twig.

In this country, a worn trail was cut in one of the hills. It followed a fence-line up the middle of the hill, dividing the fields of the farmer. In late spring and summer one could hear his voice echoing up from the valley in the early morning air. "Ca-boss, ca-bos-s-s . . .," and his cows would leave their pasture and follow the trail down to the barn.

An old Indian woman lived over the hill. Her hut was in a grove of ash trees, where no road nor any trail led. Even the fence-line, when it reached the grove, went around it and ran back to the road.

Each spring the old woman would make her journey to the village. The farmer's children first saw her sitting on the crest of the hill. Her grey and black hair reflected the sun, her short, heavy body draped in brown. After a while she reached up and grabbed hold of a fence post, pulling herself to her feet. Then, picking up her sack, she shuffled down the hill and once at the bottom, stopped by the fence.

Ceremoniously, she cradled the sack in her arms, and crawled between the wires. Then carefully she laid the bundle on the ground, released her clothes from the barbed wire, and clutched her bundle once more. She walked behind the farmhouse to the road as soon as she had overcome the obstacle of the fence. The children always watched her then. Fearing she might see them, they chanced glances at her, bobbing their heads up and down, one at a time. All three agreed she was a witch who carried little children tied up in her sack.

"As long as she never sees us, we'll be safe," the oldest girl told her sisters. And they made an oath under the kitchen window that if any one of them would ever be snatched by the old witch, each girl would swear she was an only child, to protect the others.

"Even if she threatens to let her wolves bite my arms and legs, I will never say I have two sisters."

The youngest would swear on the dictionary, but the two oldest had been to the church in the village, so they swore on the Bible. They knew it was just like the book of the preacher's wife, and even had the same marker. Their father had given them the Bible.

* * *

By the time she was eight, Jennifer felt obliged to protect Melissa and Sarah. Yet now Melissa was old enough to lean over the kitchen sink and see out the north window. This year Melissa was promoted to sentry.

"Jennifer, it's the witch! She's coming!" The witch had already made it past the fence.

"Get down, Melissa!" Sarah said, running into the kitchen behind Jennifer. She was the first to the west window. Jumping up and down, she stopped only when Jennifer laid the dictionary down for her to stand on.

"Are you sure?" she asked.

"She's coming!" Melissa abandoned her post to join the lookouts at the west window, where all three could spy on the old, evil witch.

When the old witch walked by the window, Jennifer saw that her head was just above the tree's lowest branch. The witch seemed smaller this year.

The witch passed the house, heading towards the road. She crawled through last year's growth of horseweeds, their tall, brown stalks breaking with a cracking noise the girls could hear through the window. Jennifer watched her scale the bank and pause on the road, her brown image silhouetted by the white rock, then continue on another year's journey.

* * *

Summer passed. Autumn was late coming. Late frost and warm days. The pasture was green and lush till mid-November. Jennifer's father let his cows graze. Big, strong and laughing, he had only milked cows for fifteen years. In all that time he had never seen such weather. Neither had the older men. It was good weather.

In the mornings, after milking, he would walk to the house, and set a pailful of milk inside the kitchen door. Pausing for a moment, he inhaled a deep lungful of the hot, warm smell of coffee and breakfast. Then quickly kicking off his boots, he walked in and washed his hands at the kitchen sink. No sooner was this done than Jennifer, the early-riser, came, waltzing up to him in her nightgown, rubbing her eyes.

"Mornin', Daddy," she said.

"Morning, Jenny," Daddy said. He bent over, swept her up and hugged her—all in one step to the kitchen table. Then he sat down and bounced wide-eyed Jenny on one thigh.

Reaching around his side, Jenny tugged at the corner of the red handkerchief sticking out from Daddy's hip pocket. Daddy laughed, pulled out the kerchief (a little faded, a little dirty) and started tying knots in it. In a few moments Jenny would laugh at the mouse he had made of it, screaming with delight when it crawled up her arm.

"Daddy! Put that dirty thing away!" And daughter and Daddy laughed one more time before Daddy followed Mommy's order.

* * *

Winter finally came. It blew in overnight, covering the ground with snow and making the morning air crisp. Steam seeped from white piles of manure. Cows with frosty whiskers radiating from their noses sent steamy "moos" drifting up to the cupola.

The second morning after the snowstorm, Daddy was late for breakfast. When he finally sat down at the table he told Mommy, "I can't find the brown-eyed cow."

Jenny listened, sitting on his knee, holding the red handkerchief.

"She might have crawled through the fence, so I'm going up to the pasture after breakfast."

Mommy nodded.

Jenny said, "Daddy, do you think the witch ate the cow?"

"No. I don't. And don't you call that woman a witch." Daddy bent over to look straight into Jenny's eyes.

After breakfast, Daddy went out to find the cow. By noon he was back again and he had brought back the brown-eyed cow.

"Where was she hiding?" Jenny asked.

"Oh," he coughed. "Up in the pasture," Daddy coughed again. "She was stuck in a snowdrift."

The next morning Daddy was late for breakfast again. But no cows were missing. He patted all three girls on the head and kissed Mommy.

"I should quit smoking that pipe," he said and then coughed a few times.

"You should wear another sweater," Mommy told him.

A winter thaw two weeks later made puddles for Daddy to slip in, letting milk slop over the top of the bucket as he fought the slush to get to the house.

"Good morning, Daddy," Jenny said as he set the milk inside the kitchen door.

"Mornin', Jenny." The words rattled from deep down in his throat and he slowly stepped back out to the porch, closing the kitchen door before coughing several times into his bandana. Then wiping his eyes, he bent down to pull off his boots.

* * *

Winter ended after a very, very long time.

The old doctor in the village said it was the moist air. The air had been extremely moist all fall and winter. It had been hard on the villagers, too. The disease was a mystery to the grownups.

Jenny remembered what the doctor had told her as she held Sarah up to the north window.

"She's getting closer. Let me down!" Sarah squirmed out of Jenny's arms and ran with Melissa to the west window. Jennifer was the last one there.

Soon the familiar brown shape passed by the willow. The old woman's head hung lower this year. Reaching the white rock road, the woman paused. Taking a faded, red bandana from her sack, she wiped her forehead, then tied it in knots and dropped it in her sack.

Doug Bro

WHITE BEAUTY

Furry white flakes blanket the earth,
Looking so warm as they fall.
The time of white beauty is come.
Breaking all contact from the outside.
Colder and colder grows the house.
White flakes still falling,
Bringing the time of white beauty
And death.

Pat Knuth

THE SNOW-BABY BLAZE

There was a spark, an ember,
somewhere in the February snow;
And gradually, that tiny, heated light
prevailed as it endured,
Becoming more intense, immense, day by day.

It was kindled and fed by abstract little things,
and grew more vivid, colorful
with each snowball snowfall.
The snow-baby fire burned on
through the winter,
and flowered in the spring.
It blazed into May,
with each surf of hot color
reaching, leaping blindly up into infinity.
Enhancing, entrancing, the oranges and yellows
billowed and dipped,
Becoming more intense, immense, day by day.

But July came all too soon;
And somehow, throughout the heat of the summer,
there seemed a subtling of the snow-baby blaze.
It was still living, but it was no longer alive.
The crackling and popping of growth
were all but silenced;
And the jumping licks of yellow and orange
dulled into lumps of dimly glowing amber.
As slowly as it had once grown and blossomed
it was diminishing,
Becoming less intense, immense, day by day.

Born in the purity of winter's frost-cold white;
Amidst the splendor of the fire colors of Fall,
The snow-baby fell;
The fire went black in Autumn.

Rita Graham

ETHICS NO. 7

The glaciers had been receding for 10,000 years now and the interpluvial heat had parched the landscape yellow-brown. There was no breeze to cool the Oduvai highlands or clouds to silence the sun. A Pleistocene woman was squatting at the top of a small cliff chipping a pebble against a harder stone. One of her mates was down on the savanna at a mud-hole, lying on his stomach pawing in the mud; there had been water there yesterday. For several days she had been feeling very strange. Maybe it was hunger, maybe it was the heat, but her mind had been doing unusual things. She happened to be up to see the sunrise this morning, and somehow it fascinated her. The sun came up very fast and the horizon went through the whole spectrum of colors. The colors made her feel different, like not being hungry. It made her feel good to watch it. All day her **homo erectus** mind had been discovering its latent sapience. She cracked the pebble against the stone again and watched the way the flakes fell off—the patterns the cracks made. It all made some kind of primordial sense. She looked out across the savanna, looking but not really seeing. It was like a reflection in water, waves of light shimmering through waves of heat, distorting the landscape into wavy patterns of light and dark. A moving shadow in the corner of her eye brought back reality with a snap. A stranger, dragging a dead animal, was moving towards the mudhole. She had never seen anyone from outside of the family; they were an endangered species. Instinct told her to shout a warning, but some hazy kind of curiosity kept her still. Her mate had not yet seen him coming up from behind. She watched with more interest than the usual Pithecanthropine could muster. Her mate was so involved with finding water that he didn't notice the stranger until he was less than 10 meters away. When he heard the dry crunch of the stranger's footstep, he whirled around and barked a warning. He stood up slowly, snarling. The stranger stopped and stood confused, moving his head from side to side as if blind. Her mate slowly picked up a hand-sized rock and suddenly ran at the stranger. The stranger threw his hands over his head and offered no resistance to the attack. She could hear each blow land with a crunch and the screams of the stranger carried a sound of despair she had never heard before. The stranger was soon a lifeless lump, but her mate kept smashing the rock against his head and chest. Her mind was reeling, the hideous crunches of stone against flesh and the now-silent screams echoed louder and louder inside her skull. Her stomach was throbbing from the inside, a strange feeling worse than hunger. Suddenly her stomach heaved and she lurched forward, her vision going black. In the seconds before she passed from consciousness her mind was screaming the first human feelings of "Thou Shalt Not!"

Chris Warman

Raindrops trickling down
Tiny jewels of water
Cover all my pain.

Willadeen Stubbendeck

Introspection Imagination

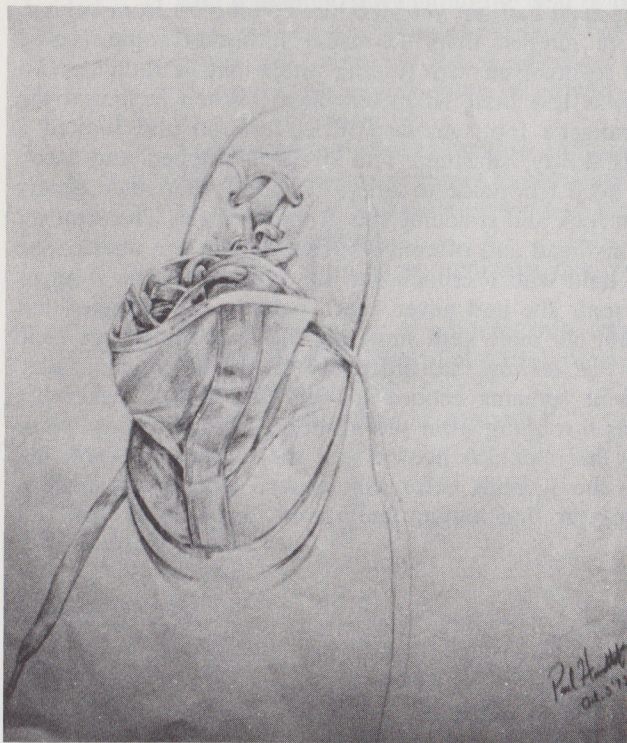
i have touched
infinity —
it
was hot . . .
intangible
impossibility
created an entity
achieved
by only
those for
now.
i have touched
finity —
it
was cold . . .
a sect
of untouchables —
shameful shallow
communication
without meaning.

Mary Staby

NOTE FROM A SUICIDE

dying?
i know i am
so are you
it's just gonna take
you longer
bitter?
i don't think so
not anymore than you
i'm not afraid
to show it.

Linda Jo Johnson



Paul Hundtoft

THE UNATTAINABLE CLAIM

"Desire for the fruits of work must never be your motive in working. Never give way to laziness either. Renounce attachment to the fruits. Be even-tempered in success and failure; for it is this evenness of temper which is meant by Yoga. Work done with anxiety about results is far inferior to work done without such anxiety, in the calm of self-surrender. Seek refuge in the knowledge of Brahman. They who work selfishly for results are miserable."

—Sri Krishna to Arjuna
The Yoga of Knowledge,
Bhagavad-Gita.

There I was, walking down the hill from Dana, as usual. The wind whipped about, never quite sure where it was going, and consequently going in several directions at once, or nearly at once, anyway. Besides the wind, it wasn't a bad day, which was of great comfort to me as I flapped down the hill, feeling rather like seaweed in a seastorm.

"Goddam bloody wind!" I announced through a mouthful of hair. Nice mouth.

In a fit of acute observation, I noticed a little piece of the moon in the sky. It being two o'clock in the afternoon, I wondered what the people on the other side of the world were doing for a moon tonight. Maybe they have the other three-quarters of the moon. How does **that** work, anyway? I finally decided that they just mustn't have a moon tonight, and stopped worrying about it. Not that I was really worried. Anyway, to get to the point, I was on my way to work, and did eventually get there.

It was a Thursday night. This may not sound significant, but it is. For some reason people come out on Thursday nights. Whether it is because they can't wait any longer for the weekend, or they've given up trying to make a success of the week, I don't know. But they do come out. In hordes.

My first table was a mother of four with all four along. Five hamburgers. From that, and a look at Lois, my fellow waitress' tables, I could tell that it was going to be one of those nights. As soon as their order was in, the youngest one started screaming,

"Mommy, I want my hamburger!"

—Look kid, if you want instant food, try the Dairy Queen. It's more your type anyway.

A waitress must maintain a certain frame of mind if she's going to come through a night at work without becoming hysterical or upset. This frame of mind must be established before or shortly after the beginning of the first table, and is rarely attained, much less maintained. My night was shot.

In about half an hour we were swamped. Lois and I, as well as being upset because we couldn't give any of our tables decent service, were also mad. We needed another person to work on Thursdays, and our need was not about to be met. Therefore, we merely handled our tables; we did not take care of them. Obviously, this is not only harmful to business, but to the tips as well, which can safely be considered high on the list of main concerns.

"Waitress, could we have our coffee?"

Oh, no. I forgot their coffee. And they've finished eating. Oh, well, you wouldn't have tipped if I bought your dinner for you. Don't think I don't remember you.

Lois scuttled by on her way to the bar, making a noise like a car engine, minus the muffler. Making strange noises is Lois' substitute for hysterical fits. It saves time.

As one of my tables decided to join one of her tables, we exchanged looks of extreme profanity. One of my old ladies was nagging me for her seven hundred and first cup of coffee, so I made the rounds with my coffee pot. At one table I poured everywhere except in the cup. I was more or less in a hurry. The young man kindly told me not to be nervous.

Nervous! I haven't even had time to eat my all-glorious cheeseburger, which has been sitting under the lights for an hour and a half. I don't have time to be nervous.

As I fairly galloped down the aisle bearing dinner for two, I began to wonder whom they belonged to. I had forgotten to consult my tickets before leaving the kitchen. Out of eight possible tables I spotted a likely couple and deposited the plates in front of them. No objections. Good. I coffeed them and left.

I went back to the kitchen and found my cheeseburger sitting off to the side. After informing the fry cook that I had recommended the salmon and therefore it had better be good or I'd kill him, I sat down to my "meal." My tables could wait.

The main rush was over, but eight weighwatchers arrived just in time to keep things lively. These ladies have starved themselves all day in preparation for their meeting and are fitting to be tied. No matter who had the last table, we take turns with them.

Excuse me, madam, but would you mind not being such a diddle-brain and move your God-forsaken salad bowl before I drop this hot plate right in your lap?

"Waitress, it's too dark in here."

If you don't like it, leave.

"Waitress, my coffee is cold."

So is mine.

"Waitress, the salad bar is empty."

Good.

"Tricia, you have another table of eight."

"Tell them we're out of everything."

"Are you ready to order?"

"Uh, we thought we'd have a drink first and wait to order."

Too right, you'll wait.

"How would you like your steak done, sir?"

"I don't think I want any soup."

"Would you like corn, spaghetti, or mostaciolli?"

"What?"

"Would you like corn, spaghetti, or mostaciolli?"

"Neither."

"I would like a filet, well-done."

What a waste.

"Lois, there's a table that sat down without waiting for the hostess again. Whose turn is it?"

"I don't know. I don't care."

"Maybe if we ignore them, they'll go away."

"I think I'm going to die."

"Me, too."

Just as Lois and I knew we were collapsing, we found out that we were closed and managed to find our second wind for clean-up. We scrubbed, stacked, cleaned, covered, threw out, put away, tore down, set up, dismissed our last tables, swept, mopped, turned things off, compared tips, checked everything, and staggered into the bar to groan and compare experiences over a good strong drink or two. Or three.

Tricia Groat

ALONG WITH THE LETTER

Why is an orange an orange without knowing so?

Why does it hide inside

sweet compartments so modestly?

Why isn't an orange a grape,

and a grape not an orange?

The world is a workshop, full of wonder;

your feet can't walk, even if you try,

without stepping on unknown beauty.

Even when your whole life seems meaningless

this beauty will keep you going.

Just once, if you please,

look at something in a new way.

Just let it grow in your mind,

and you can see the world as you wish —

upside down, inside out, backwards and forwards.

It will cheer you up when you are low and sad;

it will make your unreal self real.

Tyltyl turns his diamond;

you, too, should push your magic button,

and please look at the orange carefully.

Translated by—

by Takamura Kotaro

Akira Okada

In the darkness of night

Warm body laden with prolific moisture

Clutched the sleeping form

Bare of its usual colorful apparel and

Now veiled with a blanket of whiteness.

As the ardent body embraced

The rounded form

Its warmth fused with the coldness of the earth,

Forming fog.

Deb Schou

THE F.A.C.T.*

Thou shalt not kill!
Unless, of course, the child is unborn,
Unbearable, unwanted or unnecessary.
Until birth it's unhuman.
Scraping scalpels scratch and rip
Tiny unformed limbs that threaten
Unknown, unasked names.
Unpleasant, unneeded accident of nature.
Unfeeling undertakers undo life unto
Swirling, swishing, flushing tombs.
Underpaid considerably at thirty dollars.
Undermining the Hippocratic oath.
Understandably unstoppable in an
Uninterested, unknowing,
Ungodly society of uncivilized
Parent rats.

*The Flush A Child Tenet.

John Brooks

A DUEL

Oh darkness, you are everywhere.
Giver of despair, supporter of light, the eternal enemy of man!
You block my way like a knight of night
And badger me into doubts.
But, look here, oh awesome darkness!
I've come back to my battleground to fight
A fight to become myself.

Oh ruthless darkness, you came one day without a herald
Like a winter blast with frozen edges.
Your frigid fingers touched my soul awake
And suspended her between bondage and freedom.
Like a child into day-dreams I escaped your fear;
Like a puppet you toyed with my fate.

But now the show is over.
For the first time, oh great darkness,
I have courage enough to stand on my ground
And stare you straight in the face.
You gave me the spirit of a warrior,
And with it I answer "yes" to your challenge.
Don't spare me the brunt of your naked love
Till I slay you with a filial love.
Let us petrify words for a duel, oh blessed darkness,
My untamed fire within burns hungry for your soul!

Akira Okada

THE BONNIE BELLES FRAE 'YONT IN SPAIN

'Twas there this fair lass in Barcelona,
With snow-white teeth an' hair black as coal,
She waited at a pub by the harbor,
I'd guess her age 'bout 18 years old.

She smiled at me ev'ry time I came in,
An' then she'd serve me me stoup o' bran'y;
Inside o' me me heart went a' flutter;
This bonnie lass was meant for me.

Saw I the consul in Barcelona,
So hittle-skittle a wife I'd get;
But all he quo' was, "Ye'd best not do it,
For sneaky dames, down there I've met."

So quo' the consul in Barcelona,
To the dance I went a wee bit low;
There I saw her and her newest lover,
Which broke me heart, as ye might ha' known.

I sat an' chugged down me favorite bran'y,
Perhaps a bit much I guess I had;
Then made me way to that pretty belle's dearest
An' wi' me fist clubbed that daurin' lad.

But then, before I knew wha' had happened,
'Twas there a knife in me auld right arm.
Out spurted blood on all those aroun' me
An' o'er that lass who I once had charmed.

I laid in sick bay for one whole month,
Stiff was me arm for a long, long time;
Sa' all the while was I kept from sea,
While the two got married. Lord, what a crime!

Sa' now I tell ye, "Ye Danish sailor,
Those southern belles ye should leave behind;
But smart ye'd be to catch a blond bonnie
In auld Denmark wha'r the best ye'll find."

—Trans. from the Danish of Hugo Seligmann
Paul Johnson

NO PARKING

Roger stood trembling as he peered into the frosted pane of the door. His head bobbed up and down to capture one last look at himself. He felt a slow strangling sensation around his neck. He took one feeble stab at the doorbell and then quickly whisked back any stray hairs behind his ears. He remained at attention to await the outcome. No one came to the door. He slumped a little, then straightened his coat and boldly plunged for the doorbell. He quickly gained a cool air of confidence.

The door gave way slowly to the hand of a balding man of forty or so. Roger was never good at guessing the ages of adults. He was a round man. His head was so round that it looked like a basketball with features painted on it. The round face looked straight into Roger's face, then the man let out a low snort and said, "Come in."

Roger stepped rigidly into the hall and felt the man's gaze upon the back of his head. The door closed with a dull silence. He heard the round man shuffle toward him, so he cleared his throat in anticipation of some deep conversation. Thoughts flashed wildly and desperately into Roger's mind as he groped for something to say. All he could think of were things like, "Wasn't last night's basketball game exciting?" No—he probably doesn't even like sports. Or how about, "What do you think of the state of affairs of the world, sir?" No, no, no—he didn't want to fight with the guy. Instead, he looked at the ceiling and was about to comment on the beautiful light fixture when the round face spoke.

"Becky will be right down. You know how women are." The balded man gave him a wink and a grin, then slowly rocked on his heels. "Ah, yes—women like Becky and her mother have been making such entrances for years." He silently tossed his head from side to side and let out an all-knowing chuckle. While he did this, he glanced at his wife in the next room.

Roger stood there nodding in vague agreement and trying to remember his latest idea for striking up a conversation. He inspected his foot as he pivoted it in slow circles. He twisted his body into a distorted shape and quickly whirled himself out—hoping the round face had been too lost in his thoughts to notice. However, the round face was staring thoughtfully at a white strip on the boy's head. He pointed to Roger's forehead and asked, "What happened?"

Roger grabbed for his forehead and answered, "I got hit by a no parking sign."

"A what—a parking sign?"

"Yes—it's one that says 'No parking this side between 3-4 p.m.'"

The round face looked down in embarrassment and mumbled, "Oh, yeh."

A long pause gave Roger time to think of some more interesting conversations. He seriously considered asking about whether or not the man thought it would snow, but such an idea was disrupted by round face.

"I thought you might've been in some kind of fight; but you say it was a parking sign?"

"No."

"Huh?"

"Uh—it was a NO parking sign, I mean." Roger looked desperately up the rail of the stairs to catch any glimpse of Becky.

"Did it cost much to fix your car? I mean, to have a sign fall on it and to have the driver injured, I imagine it cost a pretty penny."

"No, sir, I don't drive. The sign fell on me."

"I see, but how, for heaven's sake . . ."

Becky came lightly down the stairs. There was a glow about her face and a mist that smelled of sweet ginger spice. Roger paused in utter amazement and relief at the sight of her.

"I'll be ready just as soon as I grab my coat, Roger." She breezed past into the closet.

Round face looked puzzled at Roger and made one last threatening demand, "How did you get that cut?"

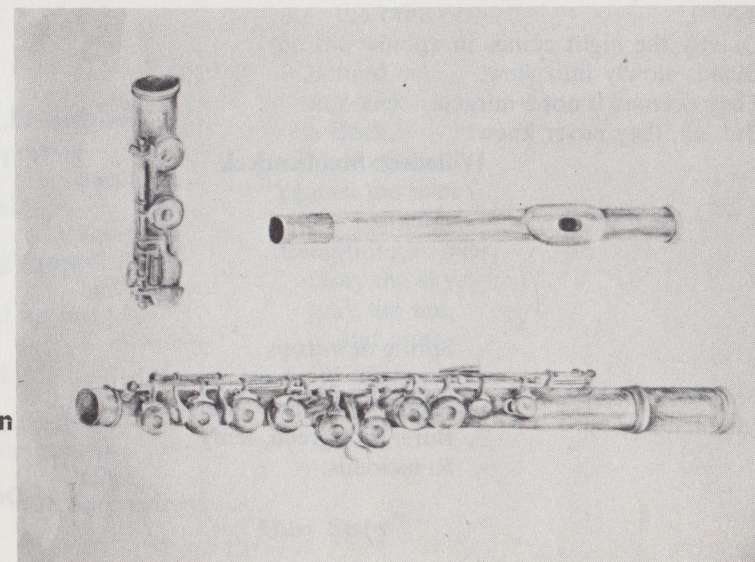
"You see, sir, I have this 'No parking' sign in my room—on the wall. Well, I was messing around on the bed—trying to see if I could touch the ceiling. Well, anyhow, the sign couldn't take the jarring so it fell down and hit me on the head, right here. See?"

There was silence as the man stared at him. Becky returned—ready to go. The two of them left with the round faced bald man staring at the door as it closed.

Becky's mother stepped into the hall. "Why was Roger wearing that white strip on his head?"

The man turned and said, "You see, there was this parking sign—I mean a NO parking sign and . . . uh, well . . ." He looked at his wife's expectant face. "Oh, never mind, the kid was in a fight." The round man retreated up the stairs.

Willadeen Stubbendeck



Jane Nielsen

MOTHER'S CURSE

"Now shall your gardens burn;
No man remains to harvest.
Now shall your seed fall upon the rocks.
You saw the sterile spring,
And danced in its black rain.
Fools, you wondered at the opening of the buds
Revealing the swollen maggots.
Now shall your skin burst with rot,
The oozing sores shall encrust your skin
And in its white hair shall insects breed.
Eat the soil! Too soon
Will its snakes swallow your children.
Drink the blood of the goats;
Dead, they can offer no more.
Sleep with the fattening rats;
Their hair is your last comfort.
I will not share him with you!"
And the mother took her Christ from the cross.

Doug Bro

Warm fingers stretch out
And meet the new morning sky
The sun rose today.

Willadeen Stubbendeck

Funny laughing lines
Ripple past her eyes and mouth
Smiles replace the hurt.

Willadeen Stubbendeck

Squirrel
Bushy-tailed imp
mumpish
With nut filled cheeks
scampered up
Old asphalt roads
of bark.

Deb Schou



Kathy Andersen

THE LAST DISCIPLE'S VISIT

The house he left four years before
Had rotted since they'd locked its door.
I broke the bolt and, since they'd gone,
I calmly paced its dusty floor.

The desk where all his work was done
(his tea was drunk, his chess games won)
Still wore his symbol carved in pen,
Though faintly worn by rain and sun.

The window where his smiling men
Had gazed, now slapped its shutters when
The wind would moan a dusty sigh,
Like notes from a master's violin.

I waited for the evening sky
To darken some, so I could try
To leave unseen. And when I left,
The road was empty, dark and dry.

Doug Bro

9,000 FEET UP GRANITE CREEK

hot-spring fog at dawn
rolls
 down
 the
 valley
just above the water
 fluid glass burbles
 jaybird echoes
 white-sound wind
polysonic fugue from a blue
 green crotch between
 mountain slopes
of not quite silent
 organ pipe pines
 pale green creepers
entangle hyper chipmunks
 puff-cheeked
 wide-eyed
hustle, rustle, tumble
 back
 up
 the
 valley
to hide by the hot-spring.

Chris Warman

A DECISION

The substance of the beach was black
For ceaseless waves had washed the gravel.
To the sea I turned my back
And homeward I began to travel.

A pool left by the morning tide
Displayed the gems of common sand
So beautiful even though beside
The creamy shells held in my hands.

Sparkling, dazzling, specks of white
Within the blacker sand resided.
Shells and sand were each so bright,
Which to take? Sand, I decided.

Bob Coffey