

Humpribs



and Tender Springs

SELECTIONS FROM CLASSES
IN IMAGINATIVE WRITING
CONDUCTED BY DR. CLINTON
F. LARSON AT BRIGHAM
YOUNG UNIVERSITY, 1956-57

HUMPRIS AND TENDERLOINS

"I, the salvor, align
The compass to my will, stand for the windlass
And crane and the steel maw over water
To salvage incontinent history:
The images like coral
Form in the brown blood and hamper the ships---
The moral of Sargon is here like the continental divide
Or the new Sierras. . . ."

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THAT STREET

The rest of the town people spoke of it as "that street." Nothing more. It was a narrow old street, crooked, with gutters smelling of stale garbage and dampness. The bleached out sign on the crumbling stone buildings had long since lost all meaning, now they only aged emblems of better times for the old street.

He lingered in the street for a while, trying to decide if he should go on or not. Finally, almost as if had been pushed, he went through the door. He stopped inside for a moment to let his eyes get accustomed to the half-light.

It was a hollow cave of a room, with rude looking stone pillars supporting the ceiling. The ancient bar stretched along one wall. Behind the bar, a mirror so dirty it would barely reflect had a diagonal crack running down to a place where the corner had been broken off. Around the rest of the walls were gaunt-looking cove like booths and arched tables. The lights were almost hidden by old stale smoke which hung near the ceiling; only very little new blue and brown smoke was curling up to mix with the other. The room was almost empty.

He ordered a drink from the puffy, unshaven bartender. And while he waited, his eyes wandered about the dingy room, searching each booth. They searched until they stopped where a woman sat alone. She was dressed in all black, rough heavy black, and there was a bulky looseness about her. She looked up, all too knowingly, and then let her eyes drop back to an untouched drink.

He got his drink and made his way to the booth where she was.

"Mind if I sit here?" he asked, taking the seat opposite her.

"No I don't mind," she said, lazily glancing up from the untouched glass.

He drank part of his drink and noticed that she also lifted hers to her lips and sipped only a little of it before putting it back on the table.

He did it very deliberately, as if she were trying to make the wait last the entire night. Their eyes met for a moment, they both knew, and looked away, embarrassed for knowing. Neither of them spoke for a while. The only sounds which disturbed the reverent silence in the room came from the gurgling of bottles and the hoarse muttering of the dirty bartender.

"Not much going on here," she said quietly. It was her experienced part.

"Perhaps we could find more someplace else," said he.

"Yes, perhaps," and even as she said it she tipped her glass and emptied it. That was a sign.

"Shall we go now?"

"Yes, all right."

He took her arm and they left. They wandered along the little street, stopping and looking in open doors, until they found the place they wanted. It was like the first, dimly lighted and dirty, and in the back a tinkling band waited at a few dancers.

He bought a bottle from the bartender, took two glasses which had been polished on a dirt spotted apron, and found a table near the dance floor. He took the glasses and polished them with a handkerchief from her purse.

"This is better, isn't it?" he said.

"Yes."

"They even have a band."

He put the glasses back on the table and he filled them with the bubbling liquor. Their eyes met as the glasses came down, and this time they were not embarrassed for knowing.

"Could we dance?" she asked.

"Yes, of course we can," he said.

He corked the bottle and pushed it deep into the pocket of his jacket. They made their way through the scattered tables to the small corner which had been cleared for dancing. He pulled her close and they started to dance. She pushed hard against him, her firm, hot stomach searing through the heavy black knit. The band played loud and harsh, with a fast wild beat.

"Let's have another drink," he said after they had danced awhile.

"Yes, good," she sighed, out of breath.

They drank at the table, and then went back to the dance floor. A fight broke out at the bar and afraid the police would come, they left, wandering once more in the mean little street.

"Where can we go this time?" he asked.

"I don't care," she said. Then, "To my hotel, I suppose."

"Where is it?"

"At the end of the street." She pointed to where a dim red neon sign blinked on and off on the front of one of the old buildings.

"Yes--yes that will be fine," he said, almost hesitantly.

"Here, this is it," she led through the door.

The hotel was like the rest of the buildings on the street. The carpets had worn through, and the drapes had had all of the pattern bleached out from hanging so long. One dirty light bulb burned from the high ceiling, affording only a shadowy sort of light.

He followed her up the steep staircase, and to the room on the right. She fumbled in her purse for the key, found it, and swung the door open. The light from the hallway shone on the bed. It was amide. She didn't turn on the light in the room.

He dropped his hollow sounding shoes on the thin carpet and let the rest of his clothes fall on top of them. He got into bed naked and waited. He could hear her undressing in the bathroom. The sound of heavy wool brushing against the washbasin and soft tinkle of metal buttons hitting the floor made him wince a little as he lay there waiting.

"Why am I here?" he wanted to shout. He wanted to shout it so loud the sound would burst the door open and fill the hotel full, then go roaring into the mean little street. He wanted it to gurgle out of the bottles and fill the empty, waiting glasses, to roll down a cracked mirror and spill over the bar, and into the gaping cracks in rough wooden floors which would take it back to the street again.

He listened for an answer to his shout; it came from the window. It was from the street, pulsating through drawn shades. It flashed on and off on the bed. He snut his eyes hard, but it still came through the tain lids. It went tingling to the end of his body with each beat of his anxious heart. On and off--red and black--on and off-- And she slipped beside him.+++

Douglas Hall

The milky morning air refracted in crisp light crystals where it almost splintered brittly against the frost studded lawn. Pale grey dawn intruded untidily upon the precise flower beds and pruned shubbery of the small compact yard. Torment leafless trees stood deliberately upright. Sniffing diligently to unearth any virile scent in the frozen sterility, a pitiful yellow mongrel offended their virtuous tableau, sending a swirl of steam into the crystalline air.

Miss Frontiss saw him thus upon opening her pale stiff draperies to peer cautiously at the winter cold. She rapped sharply on the window, the chilled glass making staccato reports through the brittle air; CRAT! CRAT! CRAT. The mongrel slunk away his tail dragging defeatedly between his legs.

The trespasser vanquished Miss Frontiss turned back to the mirror with her small triumph. The mirror, as always, reflected her in perfect righteousness and virtue. Miss Frontiss graciously nodded, accepting the tribute, but there was no doubt in her mind that any dissenting faction should ever prevail against her absolute concept of RIGHT.

She took the hearth broom and flicked an errant ash into the peach colored bed of coals. The reflections of the glow from the fireplace on the heavy cream walls mellowed the next room. The room, indeed, looked like an extension of the Rembrandt on the wall, the same dark womb-like tones enriched with spots of pale peach and salmon colors. Miss Frontiss had carefully placed a fragile vase here and a baroque doily there as if to compensate for her own austere appearance and the room did suffice to create a comfortable world that helped ignore the mediocrity of life as a school teacher.

The room shut out reality as the garden wall shut out her immediate neighborhood. She steadfastly refused to acknowledge that every morning she walked past shabby houses and through cluttered alleys to the bus seat that was like an escape hatch into the world of Rolland Hall. There Miss Frontiss was the mainstay of Latin and Ancient History for some seventy-two girls of various ages and dispositions and certain wealthy backgrounds. She even did her shopping on the avenues near the Hall. She looked upon her shabby neighborhood as an archway through which she passed to get from her work to her inner sanctum and likened it to the houses of Mexico.

Until recently the archway had been rarely existent, now it was inconvenient. The inconvenience was personified as the rough unshaven man who'd rented the shack across the high protective wall. Miss Frontiss had been properly disgraced at his untidy appearance and adequately appalled when her surreptitious investigation disclosed that he was an artist, an artist in all the bohemian, dedicated, crude sense of the word and he lived so close to her secure world!

Then, too, there was the added discomfort of the huge, rangy, black dog that lived with him and made occasional predatory forays into the tidy sanctuary of her garden. Miss Frontiss' leather-bound encyclopedia had indicated that the dog was a Doberman Pinscher, but she preferred to refer to him in disgust as "that animal". That animal that growled at her each time she passed the next door house on her way to the bus. That animal that interrupted her garden and her thoughts with all his black and vulgar masculinity, and brought with him the secret suspicion of hers that his master laughed at her and disdained the comfortable island she had created here in the midst of shabbiness and disorder. Not that he should ever have had the chance to see her cozy apartment but for the day he'd knocked on the door and asked to use her phone. The bulk of his shoulders beneath the striped T-shirt and the chisled angels of his big hands had filled her with a momentary electricity. Years of discipline pushed words out of her mouth to tell him there was a pay phone at the newsstand half a block away. Then she hastily closed the door against the nearness of him. After he'd gone she could smell the vital odor of sweat and linseed oil he had left, alien in the rusty air of her pale room.

Miss Frontiss aptly dismissed the whole unpleasant incident from her memory and twisted her hair into a stinky coil on top of her head which she reinforced with bobby pins. Hair safely in place, encased in a coat of dull aluminum wool, she advanced upon the day. From the fortification of her horn-rimmed glasses everything fell into orderly precision as she stepped into the garden. She gasped suddenly as she noticed the slinking form of the Doberman. She stood rigidly silent beside her door, leaving it ajar in her despair.

The animal's body glided with a springy motion, his padded feet roved restlessly like a big cat, he sniffed everything he passed, moving beligerently toward her.

SPELLING LIBRE!

He looked up and saw her, his head lowered and menacing, his amber eyes fathomless. He opened his mouth slightly in a grotesque grin that revealed the point of one fang. Deliberately he moved over to her and began sniffing around her ankles. She shuddered at the steel cold contact of his nose against her knee. She recoiled, and the dog moved away from her as he noticed her open door.

She stood passively aside until she saw him go toward her apartment, toward her sanctuary to defile it with large muddy feet, to sniff indecently at her personal belongings, perhaps to roll sensually on her sofa or bed. The impeccable virginity in her moved her to action. She turned on the dog and lashed at him with her purse.

Whether or not the blow struck was inconsequential, the animal had been attacked and he turned his intent to the absolute destruction of the transgressor. Miss Prentiss' mind crystalized for one awful moment, and she saw clearly the bunched muscles of his thighs, the black bull neck and the greedy cavern of his multi-toothed mouth. Then her senses thawed. She heard the guttural hatred in his growl and met his lunge uncertainly. She fell back against the wall and breath was pushed up from her rib cage into the frost-tainted air. Out with it came a single piercing cry of fear and utter desperation. She put her hands out against his second onslaught frantically as if warding off fate itself.

She felt the sharp pain of tearing flesh as the dog's fang penetrated her hand. She stood stunned for a moment feeling the numbness of the wound and the tingling "inside" feeling of the fang in her hand. Then she jerked away, blood streaming thickly along the inside of her fingers. The dog snarled and through that sound she heard the man's guttural call to the dog. The dog paused and she was able to stumble inside and slam the door.

Once safe she regarded the deep tears in her flesh, slightly blue at the edges of the perforated areas and pulsating with dark angry blood. Each throb increased the pain in her hand. The arch of it rose steadily to a crescendo which made dull red clog her sight. She fell slowly forward without feeling the impact of the floor. In fading consciousness she remembered the door---it was unlocked. The man was knocking on the door urgently. "Are you all right?" "Are you in there?" "Are you there?" Blam...blam...big fists against the wood. I didn't lock the door. No! He can get in! He can get in!

Marion Woolf

Poem; coming home

Far flung plains; stark against the sky
Where rugged mesas jut
Their shadow-scarred peaks;
Cloud piercing rimrocks
Against the wide winged sky.

Fallow fields lie quietly
In burnt gold tones of autumn done.
They lie in the dawning hours
Slowly coming out of purple
As the morningstar evaporates
Beneath the still fierce sun.
Concloves of arch angel clouds fill
The wide winged sky,
Sunshine trumpets mark the day passed,
Winds wave brittle stubble
In the evening earth.

Marion Woolf

SPARE THE ROD

Mrs. Marshall looked over the heads of the thirty bundles of perpetual motion called Section B, sixth grade. "Education doesn't have a chance nowadays," she told the ceiling, "not with all the new-fangled distractions. No discipline in the homes, either. Spare the rod and they will hit you with it, I always say."

She rapped several sets of knuckles with her skin-polished ruler and stilled, momentarily, the restless breeze of whispers.

Norma sucked a smarting fist and pelted Mrs. Marshall's corset-armoured back. "Who do you think you are, old slat-fanny, whacking me like I was a little kid? I hate you, old prune face. You won't let me do nothin', just like my dad." Her thoughts side-stepped the grammar lesson, an unintelligible blure of verbs, nouns, and prepositions dusting her mind, and skidded back to the breakfast-time wrangle with her father.

"Everybody wears lipstick. You want me to be a freak? Mom 'ud let me. Why can't I? Why can't I? The slup, slup of dun-hued coffee, well creamed, had been his only answer.

Norma crossed her eyes at Rita, hating her red lips. Rita raised one eyebrow and popped her gum in puzzled interest as Norma's grimace became a smirk. Her anger lost in sudden remembrance of Kathlyn and her promise, Norma squirmed impatiently as the spineless afternoon crawled on.

The four o'clock freedom bell stirred the excitement that sogged like too much bread in her stomach. She forced her desk drawer closed on the nest of notes, gnawed text books, red-slashed assignment papers, and gum wads; then sidled down the hall as Kathlyn hissed a command in their original secret code. "Eat-may ee-may tee-ay he-tay est-ray oom-ray."

With one foot on the toilet handle--the noise a precaution against spies--Kathlyn clutched Norma's arm and demanded: "you ain't gonna chicken out, are you?"

" 'Course I ain't. Kathlyn, you sure it'll work? What if my dad won't let me go spend the night with anyone?"

"Look, I told you there's an American Legion dance tonight and your old man goes to all the dances. He'll be glad to get rid of you."

Norma nodded.

The two girls sauntered out of the restroom, then scurried from the building as Mrs. Marshall advanced down the hall.

"What's eating you?" snapped Father, his irritation mounting as he realized Norma had been bumbling around all evening. "You been up to something?"

The staccato voice of a sportscaster interrupted with important news, and he didn't think of his daughter again until the phone call came--some husky-voiced female inviting her to spend the night with Mary Francis. Husky-voice didn't sound like a matronly housewife. He smoothed his tone and suggested maybe he should bring little Norma over, but at the reply he hitched one suspended shoulder and let his chest sag back to his stomach.

"All right," he said, "Keep an eye on her. Don't let her get away with anything."

He rattled the daily crime spread belligerently and took his place with the furniture.

Norma burrowed in the shambles of her dresser for pajamas, then tiptoed to her mother's room. The dusty stillness of the room, changed only by the powdered film of time, pushed the memory of the woman into her thoughts.

Norma walked to the closet, unconsciously holding her breath.

She wrapped the rhinestone studded pumps in the pajamas and closed the door against the loneliness that pushed against her in this room.

"Behave yourself tonight," came from behind the newspaper. "Don't try playing hooky tomorrow, either. Hear me?"

"Yah," she said, rebellion returning, and with it, excitement. "Gud-night, Daddy."

While Kathlyn dressed, she snickered about the phone call: "Norma, your old man is really a dope. He even tried to make a pass at me."

Norma giggled nervously as she tried to straighten the uneven smear of lipstick outlining her mouth. She removed the rhinestone studded pumps and wriggled her toes against the tingle from their tightness.

"Yah, I guess he is a dope, to make a pass at you," she retorted. She pictured her father, bushy eyebrows barely visible above his newspaper, then saw again for a moment her mother's room deadened with dust. No wonder she went away. He hates me, too, she thought.

Norma forced her feet into her mother's favorite high heels again, the shine of rhinestones only a little too glassy, and followed Kathlyn from the room as the doorbell rang.

They left the darkened house and Norma's shrill laugh echoed Kathlyn's as the stocky men helped them into the car.

-- Ellen Bonelli --

THE PARASITE

A parasite is one who feeds on the flesh of its fellow beings. Incapable of life alone, unable to nurture itself, it regenerates itself by sucking at another's blood. Evil is the human parasite, for he feeds on the blood and flesh of mankind. More evil is the female human parasite, for she is unsatisfied with one life and must prey again and again.

As the young tendrils of the parasite curl sweetly around the huge tree, she charms those who brought her forth. She grows and strengthens her grasp, sucking its life away, until at last, she forsakes them for a younger, stronger tree.

Now, the new tree must give nurture to her, for she needs his lifeblood to sustain her. Slowly, slowly, even as the time passes, his life is drained; he has nothing left to give.

The parasite begins to wither and to seek a new giver of life. She grasps at the air around his dead branches, seeking the life he gives no longer. Down, down her tendrils droop, groping for new life. Suddenly, one touches a tiny branch in its path. With sensuous grace, it curls gently around it, sliding down until it reaches the trunk. With deliberate twists, it soon encompasses the slender trunk in its grip. It coils closer and closer as tiny feelers probe beneath its bark. Food, at last!" There is new life! She sucks hungrily, drawing its life into herself.

The sapling falters in its growth upward and begins to wither and droop. Drop by drop, its lifeblood is drained away. Its life waning, at last, its branches hang in lifeless stillness, the promise of its life unfulfilled.

The parasite writhes in hunger, for she must have blood, she must have life! Shoots dart here and there, searching for food, the all important. Food...life... she must find food....

But, alas, all is gone; there is none there for her to cling to.... and she dies.

Barbra Sweatt

CAVE-IN

Nick punched the button that stopped the loader and nodded his light at the buggy operator who reversed his position and stamped on the forward pedal. The coal-laden shuttle-car moved like a ponderous beetle out the entry toward the ramp, complaining every foot of the way. As the sound of the machine became remote and the roar of the loader's motor gradually disappeared, Nick turned to his helper.

"Sam, maybe you better check the roof again. We're too far ahead of the timber to suit me."

Sam lifted his pick and walked to the loader. He climbed over one of the monstrous spiked arms and onto the broad, flat head, where he could more easily reach the roof of the mine. He placed the fingers of his ungloved left hand against the smooth rock and rapped the head of the pick against a nearby spot. A clear, anvil-like tone resounded at each blow.

"She sounds okay to me, Nick. Not a bit drummy, and I can't feel any vibrations. Of course, that might not mean anything; the last federal inspector that was here says you can't tell anything through more than six or eight inches and the stuff that came down in those other pillars is close to two feet thick."

Sam descended from his perch.

"She's pretty heavy, though," Nick commented. "Look at the way some of the cap-pieces are squeeze down over the tops of the timbers. That damned Martelli! If he wasn't always belly-achin' about percentages, I'd pull out of here now. I can't see where he gets the idea that the Third Left crew gets five percent more coal out of the pillars than we do. We've stayed in everyone of them just as long as we could."

"Aw, he can't make us stay just because he's mine foreman. The safety committee will stand back of you when it comes to something like this."

"Yes, but that wouldn't stop his dirty little digs about percentages and yeller streaks. We'll try and get a couple more buggies before she breaks loose."

The shuttle-car came up the entry, whining for a load, and soon went out, whining because it had one.

"Listen," Sam yelled above the dying motor. "She's a-talkin' to you!"

Above the final low hum of the motor came the sound of wood that is punished beyond endurance. The incalculable weight of a mountain forced from the timbers high-pitched squeaks like cornered mice. Cap-pieces were inexorably compressed until many of them were only half their original thickness. The rock overhead was making small pop-corn noises, and throughout the area little flakes were dropping regularly. The coal that was left in a small stump reaching from floor to roof was shooting small pieces like a careless boy with a flipper, while larger pieces occasionally broke loose and tobogganed to the bottom of the pile.

The two men stood silently facing each other, listening intently. Between patches of coal dust their faces showed the color of toadstools. A timber in the third row out cracked like a shot as it snapped in the middle and bowed grotesquely.

"Get goin', Sam! She's comin' in!" Nick reached for the starter button with one hand and the high-gear lever with the other.

Sam stooped to pick up the heavy cable that was the loader's life-line.

"Get out of here, you dumb sonofabitch!" Nick screamed at him.

Then Sam dropped the cable and ran.

The popping from the rock had increased to a crackling, then a rumb-ling, and larger pieces were falling. As the massive shovel-head of the loader lifted and the machine began to slowly pick up speed with its twin tracks clawing desperately for a foothold, the roof dropped.

First, a report like a charge of dynamite, and a tremor throughout the mine; then a wind like a localized hurricane that carried a suffocating mixture of coal and rock dust; then the rattle of a few hesitant pieces of rock; then--nothing.

The Old Canary

There were rats in that road I was on. I was some thirty miles from town, but the air was clean. Occasionally a wild canary would flutter from the top of a cottonwood tree.

I checked the speedometer mileage--four miles south. Although there was no name on the mailbox, I tried it anyway. The drive-way was much smoother than the road. Some chickens snapped awake as I drove into the yard. I stopped beside a pickup truck and an old grey car which had the hood and doors removed.

An open porch leaned on the sadder house. The two story building withered from a thirst for paint. The house, as well as the other buildings in the yard, silently reported enduring years of blizzards and droughts. A boy--about the size of my six-year-old nephew--appeared from one of the buildings. Noticing the car, he scampered behind the row of blossoming raspberry bushes.

I stepped out of the car and--hesitated. There was no lawn. Out on the south side of the house was a lilac bush. It bloomed heavily with a light purple. Then a dog sprang out from under the porch and yapped disapproval. A small voice from the grove beckoned, "Here Touser, here Touser." Reluctantly, the dog obeyed and whimpered to the trees.

Then, through the corral poles slipped a middle-aged man. He was tall and walked as if on stilts.

"How do you do?" I began.

"Howdy."

"Could you tell me--is this the Shubert place?"

"Yes, this is it," he replied.

I let the car door fall shut. "I am the county coroner, and I am here concerning the..."

"Well, I'm just a neighbor," he broke in. "'Been help'n them out."

"Oh, I see. Well maybe you could help me a little," I said. "I have to make a report for the records and for the paper as to the cause of death."

"You mean whether it was suicide or something like that?" he asked.

"Yes, that's it. Can you tell me anything about it at all?"

"Well, I was the first one over here after he done it." While the broad-shouldered man was speaking he raised one foot on to the bumper of his pick-up and leaned on his knee. "It was Mrs. Shubert who came over to get me. That's my place down there." His long arm aimed to a group of trees farther on down the road. "You know, it's funny how a woman could be so calm and yet be as white as that woman was. She said 'Will you come help me out down my boy. He's hung himself.' Well, when I got here--it was overthere in the barn--" He indicated a high building at the far end of the corral. "I went in and the old man was standing there. He wasn't any help at all. Well, Virgil was over near the corner, his knees were touching the ground. And all those ropes were a mess, so I took my pocket knife and while I held him, I cut the rope just above his head. Then I laid him down and loosened the rope from his neck. His face was sort of purple and cold."

The screen door opened and a large man stepped on the porch. He was tall and stout, about 40 years. He wore a pair of thick frame glasses very close to his eyes. A scar bisected the middle of his forehead. The neighbor got into his old car and slipped out the driveway while I stood there.

Taking a deep breath, I approached, "How do you do?"

The old man remained motionless. Two chickens were scratching the ground around the old door-less car, but I could hear the faint short breaths.

The screen door opened again and a thin woman came out to the porch. The creak under the porch sounded each step made by the heels of her black shoes as she walked to just ahead of the old man.

"How do you do, man?" I said, just as my throat stiffened.

"Hello." Ridged tendons in her neck supported the drooping face.

"I'm the county coroner and I, uh--"

"Yes?" There was devotion in her voice.

"I, ah, I would like to look at your barn." That was all she said.

"Yes, you may look around all you like," she said.

"Thank you, man." It was like a tornado had just passed over without striking. "I won't be long." I started to get the car.

"But please, mister," she added, "don't ask him anything about it." Her fingers trembled. "He hasn't been the same."

I remembered the stern face and nodded. They turned into the house. I turned, crawled through the corral gate, and reached the barn. Two white-faced calves were racing through the fence to the adjacent pasture. Farther out, the herd grazed on the steep hillside.

A door was open. Inside, in one corner behind a row of stanchions, a tall boy stood up. He was about six feet tall. In his hand was a tangled rope.

"Hi, there." I eased up to the stanchions.

"Hi." He was strong but his voice wasn't quite natural.

"Are you a brother?" I asked.

"Ye." He looked at me.

"How many brothers do you have?"

"I've got six--five." He fumbled through the ropes.

"Where are they now?"

"Oh, they're at Table Mountain School. One at Little Rock."

"How old is, uh--Virgil?"

He sat back down on the stool. "He was twenty. He was the oldest. I'm next." His eyes were avoiding mine. "He was in the last fall and got a job. But when spring started he was needed here, so he had his car home."

"Didn't Virgil and his Dad get along?" I asked.

"Oh--I don't know--I guess so. He'll like you, he'll like me?" His words became firm.

"Your father said that I could look around. He said he'd find he--was found?"

"Ye." He looked up at the rafters.

"I know it is hard to talk about, but just how did he die?"

His eyes widened. "Do what?"

"Ah, he did he--hang himself?"

He looked directly at me. "He didn't hang himself!"

"What?"

"It was an accident." He dropped the rope. "Why would he want to hang himself?"

"An accident? Well, how did it happen?"

"He used to use these ropes to get his back straight. He twisted it or something while he was doing some lifting on his car."

"Oh?"

"I saw him in here before and that is what he said he was doing."

"What was he doing on his car?" I asked.

"I don't know exactly. I think he was trying to take the engine out."

"Why didn't you or one of his brothers help him?"

"Cause Dad thought we should be working or pulling weeds out of the ditches, instead of working on cars."

"Where did he get the car?"

"He bought it in town while he was working there."

"I see, but how could he help his back in here?"

"With a loop around himself and over that rafter," he pointed to a notch where a rope could have been strung through. "And he would pull himself up and somehow snap his back in place. And-- he must have..." His voice went shrill.

"Yes. Well, thank you very much."

I turned to walk out. From the door I heard him unbling to himself over the ropes. I got to the pole fence, crawled through it, and--hesitated. I walked on, and as I passed the old hoodless car I looked in at the engine. Several wrenches and engine bolts were lying around. The front part of the engine was propped up by a board. I got in my car, started it, and backed around. Glancing back, I noticed something else under the old car. It was a heavy blacksmith's hammer.

--William H. Southwell

The Wind

The wind, the busy farmer of the sky,
Is gathering his cotton crop today,
Picking fat puffs of cloud or passing by
Others too thin and weevily to pay.

Then piling all this crop into a cart,
I've heard its wheels rumbling as it rolled.
He hauls his clouds to where the setting sun,
In honest trade, will turn them into gold.

--- Jayne Orton

SUCH STUFF AS DREAMS ARE MADE OF

In her ninetieth year, the shadowy form of Ethel Vane, a lady poet, was returned to Mother Earth in the precise method Ethel herself had prescribed for her own burial. A strong iron box, free from cracks and drafts and dampness, had earlier been anchored in the deep dark hole. Then, when songs had been sung and poetry recited by her friends, Ethel was left alone in her mauve velvet casket banked with flowers.

As requested, the workmen waited until the last limousine had rolled away, before they lowered the remains into the safety of the iron box, screwed the lid down tight, and locked it with an iron key.

"With all these precautions," announced the caretaker of Fairmount Cemetery, "I'd say the coid lady ought to rest easy till Gaby's trumpet sounds. Fill on all the flowers, every last spray of roses, 'till there's not one inch of the mundane earth to be seen. Her majesty's orders, my boys! Tombstone's ready, too, except for the date of her death. And that can be sand-blasted right here on the grounds," he continued.

"What about perpetual care -- that pervided for?"

"O indeed! Evergreen blankets to warm her each winter. Flowers -- purple petunias -- to be planted in the two marble urns each Decoration Day. Right thoughtful to provide all the comforts for her new abode..... Well, goodbye, Ethel. And blessin's on you for the generous tip for each of the diggers!"

At seven o'clock the iron gates of the cemetery swung slowly shut; to protect the city of the dead from the vandalism of the living. Within the green acres of lawns and shrubs and trees, the birds went about their living patterns, quite oblivious to the fact that a poet who made songs to match their own, was now a permanent dweller among them.

Ethel Vane knew not how long she had been resting there in her lavender satin gown on quilted satin pillows -- whether it was a day or a millenium there was no one to inform her. All she knew was that she awoke rested and renewed, just as she would have done any morning on earth when she felt in the creative mood.

Why not write a poem to record this new experience? But how? Stupidly, she had neglected to bring paper or pencil with her on this important journey.

Ah, she would record it in the heart of her best living friend -- little Lucy! And Lucy would transmit it to paper for all the world to share.

Ethel engraved the poem of her experience in the heart of Lucy, then hovered over the circle of poets gathered to hear the inspired creation.

Lucy read aloud:

WHAT IS DEATH?

Ah, do not say that death is death
A silence where no voice is heard.

Death hath a voice unmoved by breath--
Sweet meditation, but no words!

"Any comment on my idea?" queried Lucy.

HER idea--the plagiarist!

Ethel felt an irritation rising and slowly smothering her. The allergies, the hives of earth -- and no room to swell in!

---Ann Hafen

POET'S PRAYER

O Poetry, spare us the blame
For rhymes committed in thy name.

And may we never be that poet
Who bores to tears and doesn't know it!

--- Ann Hafen

SATAN'S ANGEL

He was not deformed--deformities can be beautiful. He was merely universally repulsive.

"The same thing for you tonight, Mac?" asked the bartender.

"That's right," said the ugly man, "only make it a double."

"Ok. Just a secont--here."

"Thanks."

"Better pay now, buddy, we had to carry you out last night you know."

"Yeah. Okay."

"What you want to get drunk like that for?" asked the bartender, looking away from his customer's face.

"Jesus Christ. Oh Jesus."

"Egscuse me a minit Mac, I got another customer."

"Sure. Sure."

"Now what wus we talkin' about?" asked the bartender to the rings on the bar.

"Nothin'. Gimme another double."

"Ok, Mac, if that's the way you want it. Hey! Where you goin'? Come back and pay for that last drink."

"Keep your skin on. I'm just going over to this lady's table. Excuse me pardner. Let me through; damn your big fat feet. Can I buy you a drink, Ma'am?"

"Sure--oh--ah excuse me, I thought you were somebody else. Really I would like it, but I have sort of a date."

"Yeah. Yeah I get the picture. Jesus Christ, don't look away like that."

"It's not that. I'm sure you're charming, but I just have a date."

"You don't have to explain, I get you. Thanks for nothing."

"Hey! Bartender, mix up another double. I'm coming back to you. Look out, bud, or I'll kick your ass."

"Criminy, you sure got a loud voice; ain't you ashamed?" said the bartender to the air a few inches in front of the ugly man's face as he wedged himself into the crowd in front of the bar. "Here's your drink."

"Shut up your godammed hole and let me drink."

"You bet, buddy, I don't need nobody to talk to."

"Before you go, fix me another drink, and one for my friend here next to me. Thanks. You want a fight, comrade? I didn't think you would; you'll drink my whisky but you won't fight with me. Crap, I can't even pick a fight; anybody would look like a chickenshit beating up on me. Can you feature the neave of that broad turning me down cold like that? Did you see it? Did you? Wait a minute. Where is she going now? Good Lord, not that big Marine. He's probably dumb enough to take it too. She's sure talking hard; by God she's done it; the silly bastard is going with her. I sure do hate big guys like that don't you, comrade? You ever been turned down cold. I suppose you have with an ugly face like that. What are you looking at? Don't look at me like that! Come back! I'll buy you another drink. No. No! Oh god no. For Christ's sake, bartender, gimme the bottle."

"I better call a cab for you," said the bartender. "Why you crying about an old whore like that for?"

"God. If someone would just look me in the eye more than once."

"Hey buddy, where you goin'? Let me call you a cab--oh well--yeah I hear you. One beer coming up. Who? Ah, I don't know who. He's just some drunk, been coming in here lately--he sure as hell is. Bout the ugliest I ever seen, I believe."

"Look out," said the ugly man to the averted faces along the street.

"Third floor," he said to the elevator operator at his apartment house.

"God, you're ugly," he said to his pseudo-self in the bathroom mirror.

"You can't even get anybody mad enough at you to kill you and you can't kill yourself, either. Damn I wish I wasn't so ugly. I wish I was different than I am. Oh, how I wish."

He felt the muscles tighten in his calves and thighs; he felt his shoulders swell with power. He gritted his pointed teeth, growled deep in his throat, and flew out the window looking for a big Marine.

-- David Crafts --

MRS. FARLEY GETS THE GHOST

My parents had gone out of town that weekend to attend the funeral of a close friend and left me with Mrs. Farley, who had once been a neighbor to us. Mother had kissed me and left me standing just inside the screen door, reminding me to be a sweet girl and mind Mrs. Farley.

"You were just a baby when I lived next-door to your mother," she said as we went into the living room, her arm around my shoulder. I sat on the old fashioned sofa which had colorful little yo yo scarfs pinned to the arms. I was fascinated by the what-not shelves loaded with brightly painted china dolls and teacups. Mrs. Farley sat in the straw-back rocking chair opposite me and it squeaked as it received her weight.

"What grade are you in?" she asked, taking a worn leather Bible from the table beside her.

"Fifth."

"That's fine. Do you like school?"

"Yes mam. When the teacher lets us draw and paint. And I don't like Arithmetic." I sat stiffly on the edge of the sofa, fingering with the hem of my dress.

"What are your hobbies?" she asked, apparently trying to save the lagging conversation. I crossed my legs and settled back against the cushions.

"Most of all I like to swim and skate and ride my bike and go to the movies." She glanced up from leafing through her Bible and back to the pages.

"Yes," she sighed, "I used to go to the movies until it came to me that it was wrong." I became interested.

"You mean it's wrong to go to the show?"

"It's bad influence on a young mind. Puts evil thoughts and all manner o' vain imaginations in your head."

"But I just love to go to the show, and cowboy pictures aren't bad at all."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, putting on her rimless glasses, "Them's the worst kind. With shootin' and killin' and all manners o' carryin's on!" I felt a little hurt as I recalled how my favorite Western hero bravely chased after the villan or rode out across the plain to rescue the runaway stagecoach. She adjusted her glasses and lifted the Book closer to her face.

"I don't know which is worses on our young folks today--picture houses or funny books." The attack on funny books stung me even harder, but I knew that I would get nowhere by protesting. She sighed as if the world's iniquities rested solely on her shoulders. She looked up at me over the tops of her glasses.

"I s'pose you'll be a-wantin' to wear lip paint too?" I uncrossed my legs and sat closer to the sofa's edge.

"Mother says I can wear light pink when I turn thirteen." I thought hopefully of the day when I could own as many tubes as I liked and line them up in a row on my dressing table.

"Hit's a pure sin," she mumbled, and my heart sank some more. "No wonder there's so much meanness in the world today. Women flauntin' the body the good Laud gave 'em, smearin' their face with paint, kinkin' their hair...to parade themselves before men's eyes." An unclean sensation began in my stomach and traveled upward. This time I felt angry with her.

"But my Mother wears lipstick!"

"Yes," she answered, watching my face. "Your Mother's a good woman. You see," she hesitated, "what's wrong for me might not be wrong for your Mother." I was satisfied, and so was Mrs. Farley, but I pondered for a moment over the possibility of the thing.

We ate our supper on the little breakfast table in the kitchen. Mrs. Farley cook-

ed a boiler of hot buttered grits, a pattie of sausage each, poured two cups of "sassy-frass" tea, and cooked hoecakes of egg bread to eat with watermelon rind preserves and butter. "You're going to church with me tonight," she announced, so after the dishes were cleared away and leftovers put in the cupboard, I changed into my pink starched sundress and slipped on my white sandals. Mrs. Farley fluffed my sash into a huge bow and tied my hair back with a pink ribbon.

As we walked, the houses became fewer and farther apart. "We jus' moved in our new churchhouse," she said, as we approached a red brick building trimmed in white. Below the low fat steeple in bright neon lights flickered the name "Assembly of God." It was 8:00 o'clock and not quite dark. Groups of men and women stood chatting on the lawn, while children ran in and out among them. I noticed the familiar face of a girl I knew at school. Judy Ann, laughing back at the boy who pursued her, raced by and nearly stumbled into me. When she saw me she smiled breathlessly.

"Hey! Do you belong to our church?"

"No," answered Mrs. Farley, "she's visitin' tonight. Come sit with us, Judy." Two women approached us walking arm in arm. Their faces were pale and without makeup.

"Well, Sister Farley! We missed you at Church last Sunday."

"Yes, I know, I been aillin' with this ole summer cold and couldn't get out. But I'm 'bout over it now."

"Did you hear? Martha Jean got the Holy Ghost last Sunday night for the first time," she said proudly, circling her arm about the younger woman's waist. She was taller than her mother, and her wrists were bandaged and the under part of her forearms were streaked with mercurochrome.

"Yes mam!" continued her mother, "She was at the altar for two hours and she prayed so long and beat on the floor so hard she pure rubbed the skin off'n her arms." The girl smiled modestly. "But she didn't leave that altar 'till she got the Ghost." I stared amazed, at the bandages until I became aware that she was staring at me.

I followed Mrs. Farley into the middle aisle and sat down. Light played on the brilliant colors of the stain glass windows and shimmered on the blue velvet choir curtains behind the pulpit. I admired the deep vase of yellow chrysanthemums on the altar table. The pianist took her place at the piano. Mrs. Farley nudged me with her elbow.

"That's Sister Johns, the preacher's wife." The robust woman smiled pleasantly at the congregation. Her fingers darted over the keys, jazzing an old familiar hymn. Brother Johns stepped to the platform and announced three times, the page number in the hymnal. I stood and sang from a ragged book. Mrs. Farley sang through her nose. The voices around me were neither smooth nor in harmony, but loud and flat in nasal tones. On the last verse of the hymn, Bro. Johns removed his coat and loosened his tie. He grasped the sides of the pulpit with both hands and began to relate the cold and brutal murder of a certain man and His strange and wonderful gift to the world: The Holy Ghost. His voice grew thicker and his breathing quickened, until his noisy intake of breath became a part of his message. He hung on the ends of his words and his voice rose and fell as if he were chanting. I felt ill at ease and glanced at Mrs. Farley, but could detect no reaction in her face. I looked over at Judy Ann but her face was expressionless. A man down on the second row of the left aisle shouted something to the preacher and another sanctioned it.

"Amen, preacher, amen!" This seemed to give the man more vigor and determination.

"If ya haven't got the Holy Ghost yet, why havantha?" he shouted at them. "Have ya prayed to the Lord? Have ya repented of yer sins? Then my brothers and sisters if ya haven't and you want yer souls to be saved from the depths of that awful hell, then come follow Jeeesus, and cast yer burdens on the cross!"

"Amen!"

"Cast your burdens...on the cross!"

"Glory to His Name!" I whispered to Judy and she bent her ear closer to my face.

"What's the difference in the Holy Ghost, and just any ghost?"

"Well," she batted her eyes intelligently, "the Holy Ghost is...holy!"

"Now, my brothers and sisters, you may call me a "hellfire preacher", cuz that's jus' what I am. I don't know o' nothin' I'd rather preach about!"

"Amen!"

"Cuz I don't know o' nothin' I'm more feared of, I ain't a-feared o' what any man

kin do ta me...I ain't a-feared o' dyin', but let me tell you that ever time I think o' them hot flames leapin' up around them lost souls in torment prepared for the wicked, I get soooo upset, that I can't help but preach about it!"

"Amen, brother!"

"What did Jesus say? He said, 'Believe on me and thou shalt be saved.' Yessir, thas' all we have to do. Be lieve on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Halleluiah!"

"Yes, my good people, Jesus hung bleeding on that tree...bled at every pore. He spilt that precious blood for lost souls like you and me. And that blood's got savein' power!"

"Praise the Laud!" A man at the end of our row jumped up and raised his eyes to the ceiling and lifted his arms straight above his head. Trembling began in his hands and coursed down his arms until his whole body shook convulsively. "Praise the Laud," he cried in a quivering voice. My heart beat faster and I blushed with a shame I tried to suppress. Bro. Johns, seeing that he could not compete with this man, used that moment to wipe the sweat from his face. He rolled up his shirt sleeves and leaned on one arm at the pulpit. The man in the audience ended his praises abruptly and took his seat. A man on the row in back of him leaned forward and understandingly patted him on the back. Bro. Johns continued his sermon.

"But that blood was not spilt in vain. It'll wash us whiter'n snow! Do you believe it?"

"Amen!"

"Amen!" A chorus of amens rang throughout the room. Then he screamed at them, his plump face firey red, nearly bursting with the intensity of his message.

"Then why doncha get like it?" A faint mumble fused with a series of groans and one or two wails. The elderly lady two seats down with gray hair pulled back into a neat bundle, mopped her face and repeated quietly to herself, "Blessid Jesus. Blessid Jesus." I listened to the soft cooing of the old voice and saw a wrinkled hand clutching a small testament lying open in her lap. I could not decide how I really felt. Mrs. Farley fanned herself vigorously.

"Oh dear Jesus it's hot!" The mixed odor of perspiration and cheap powder seemed to grow more sickening and I put my handkerchief to my nose and breathed through the cloth. The revolving fan at the altar served only to circulate the warm damp air.

At 9:30, Bro. Johns concluded his sermon. A few left the church, some remained seated and others went down to the front. Men and women knelt before the altar, praying aloud, and the words of each, mingled with the prayer of another. There were cries for mercy and deliverance, and as the prayers became more fervent, intense screaming and sobbing rose from the altar. I gazed with wonder at the kneeling figures, and marvelled at this strange power that seemed to possess them—that filled them such a desire to receive it. One dark-haired man uttered strange noises, and spoke in a language I could not understand. He appeared to have no control over his tongue nor his body, as he swayed from side to side and rocked to and fro on his knees, jabbering in an unknown tongue. A woman gave a piercing scream and her head bounced in uncontrollable jerks. Her body wrenched and she cried out as if in pain. "I'm so happy!" she shouted and fell prostrate on the floor. I looked away and avoided looking back for several moments. A young woman paced up and down the front wringing her hands and pleading for forgiveness. Sister Johns took her hand and led her to the altar and knelt with her there. I felt deeply concerned for one lady who had prayed and wept continuously. She rose, brushed her skirt, and strolled over to a lady seated near me. I listened closely to hear what she might say. She pinched the material in her dress sleeve.

"Hattie, do you remember when I bought this dress? Well did you know I've had it for jus' this long, and it's already coming apart at the sleeves? Dern cheap material." Fragments of conversation drifted up to me from the rows in back.

"Hoooo! My husband can't come to church...got to hit that bottle every Saturday night so's he can be good an' stewed come Sunday. Never touched a drop till I married 'im...goes to show you can't never tell about a man!"

"Well, Minnie, you've got one problem and I've got another. My husband's self-

righteous. Don't need to come to church...think's he's good 'nuff!" Judy Ann took my hand.

"Come go down with me." Mechanically I obeyed and self-consciously followed her down the aisle. I saw Mrs. Farley kneeling in the group and I felt better when she looked up at me and smiled. I found a space directly in front of her and got on my knees. At first I was aware only of the mumbles and groans and audible prayers of the others, but I tried to push them from my mind and concentrate on my own prayer. Then I heard Mrs. Farley, and the lady beside her was praying with her and slapping her on the back, saying "Seek 'im, sister, seek 'im!" I glanced around at Mrs. Farley. Tears were streaming down her face. Suddenly she made a lunge forward and her hands caught my shoulders, her fingers digging into my flesh. She screamed in my ear until I thought my head would burst, and I flung her hands from me and jumped to my feet. I stumbled over feet and legs, ran up the aisle to the exit and threw open the door. I sat down on the stone steps, plunged my fingers into my ears and buried my face in my lap. A slight breeze stirred, cooling the dampness in the collar of my dress. I tried to relax, and raised my head and breathed the fresh air freely. I took my fingers out of my ears and listened deliberately. The still air was pierced only by the sounds from within the church. Above the clamor, I thought I heard Mrs. Farley.

...Pat Middleton

Means Toward An End

At risk of being branded an outright sadist (of funereal bent), I have chosen to set forth my views on a subject which has long captivated me; namely, witty deaths among famous people.

Destiny has ruled that we must all pass on at a given time; yet, some inspired beings among us have seen fit to meet this decree in a charming and original manner. It is to these long-departed spirits that I would respectfully dedicate this effort.

We are all, no doubt, familiar with the escapades of the dynamic dance innovator, Isadora Duncan. Heralded throughout Europe for performing barefoot in gauzy, often-times transparent, togas, she carried initial successes to this country in 1909. The fact that she was soon to welcome a "little stranger" did not hamper Miss Duncan's stage career in the least, and attired as above-described, she continued to perform and entertain widely. For unnamed reasons, numerous American groups (peculiarly noticeable in the Boston area) failed to take kindly to the visiting artist, and she presently returned, thoroughly offended, to the Continent. It was here that she attempted to regain her strength and composure by embarking with selected friends on assorted gay, cross-country tours. One day, a speedy open car was acquired and an excursion to Nice suggested--Isadora, for this event, choosing to wind a great flowing scarf about her neck. As she sped over the highways, the lady allowed her scarf to flutter gracefully behind the car, while her traveling companions harveled at the French scenery. One of them, at length, was startled to hear a creak from Miss Duncan and turned to find her a decidedly azure shade, head lolling off to the side. The car was stopped directly and it was only then discovered that her scarf had inadvertently become entwined in the spokes of the left rear car-wheel. By this time the Breath of Life had escaped and little else remained but to cart Isadora home to be placed on a bier.

Another figure fabled in our time, Gertrude Stein, also departed in a distinct, though less spectacular, manner. Having repeatedly shaved her skull in search of

diversion, the celebrated authoress eventually took to her bed for lack of anything more droll to do. Her friends and companions (noticeably one Alice B. Toklas, a hand-maiden of sorts) soon began to fear for the great lady's well-being and consequently spent most of their time at her bedside. As she lay paling and chortling softly to herself one blanching day, the watchers suddenly drew closer, for many of them seemed to sense the end. The room was utterly silent and no human sound audible until Gertrude called at once sat upright, glassy eyes searching the heavens, and demanded "What is the answer?" Scarcely had her comforters voiced their astonishment at this queer demonstration when the lady again bolted up to implore "What is the question?", whereupon she fell back and slept. Seemingly satisfied with her latest outburst, Gertrude presently emitted a sigh, turned her face to the wall, and expired. Her nonplussed compatriots exchanged wondering glances, arranged a sheet over her form, and withdrew to prepare for the Last Rites. No one has ever attempted to penetrate the mystery of this death-bed scene.

Too involved to receive more than brief mention at this time are the respective demises of Ernest Chausson, famed French composer, and Vachel Lindsay and Sara Teasdale, two widely-acclaimed American poets.

The two poets, no doubt tossed together by their art, soon proved to be greater than friends to one another. But theirs was an impossible affair from the outset and, finally realizing this fact, they resolved to take steps. Vachel, who gallantly seized the initiative, retired one evening to put a bullet through his head, after which Sara matter-of-factly poured herself a cup of Lysol and foundered.

These are but a few of the many examples which I might recount in an article of this nature. I trust, however, that they will be instrumental (despite their native terseness) in motivating all of us towards a more picturesque and meaningful end.

---Steven McDonald

Outspoken buttocks in pink beads
Invite the necessary cloudy clinch
Of bandy eyes.... No extra mufflings here.

---Hart Crane

And it came to pass in the days of Franklin that war cometh upon all the land and upon all the seas, yea, and even within the air. For lo, the people of Adolph in the land of Germany did seek with much desire to overcome the people of other lands, yea, even unto bringing them into bondage. And behold, the people of Adolph in the land of Germany, and the people of Benito in the land of Italy, and the people of Tojo in the isle of Japan, sweareth an oath each unto the other that they should go forth together and do battle against the people of all other nations and bring them into bondage.

And the armies of Adolph did go forth even unto the land of Poland and doeth much slaughter and smiteth the people with great fear, insomuch that the people of the land of Poland did become servants unto the people of Adolph. And the armies of Adolph goeth with all their weapons upon the land of Belgium, and the land of Holland, and the land of Denmark, and the land of France, and upon many other lands, and bringeth the people of these lands into bondage. And behold, the armies of Adolph desireth to eat of the bear of Russia and they pursueth him even until the time of winter, and lo, they findeth him extremely unpalatable and his lands inhospitable, therefore they seeketh to make a meal of the lion of Britain. And lo, the people of Winston in the isle of Britain were very stubborn and fought with much courage, and with many weapons of war from the land of America, until at last the people of Franklin in the land of America did also march forth into battle against the people of Adolph and the people of Benito and the people of Tojo.

And it came to pass that Franklin sent forth a decree unto all the young men of the land of America between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five years, that they must come forth and enter the ranks of the armies and prepare to do battle. And all the young men came forth as they were bidden and many there were who were taken into the armies of Franklin, and also many others there were who returneth again unto their homes because they were smitten with afflictions and infirmities.

And behold, of the young men who went into the armies of Franklin, one was called James and he was the son of William of a village in the land of Wyoming in the land of America. And when James, the young man, departed from his home, there was much weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. And of those who wept, none did weep so magnificently as Ruth, the young woman who was the betrothed of James. And she did water her face with many tears and did strain her throat with loud lamentations and she did swear an oath unto James that she would send him an epistle each day until he should return. And James did swear an oath unto Ruth that he should also write an epistle unto her each day.

Then James did go forth into training to become a soldier in the army of Franklin, and he did frequently curse his officers and Franklin and Adolph, and many others did also come under his cursings, for he did dream of Ruth and did desire to be with her. And he saith, War is hell, and at times he goeth into the town and drinketh much wine and drowneth his sorrow. And each day he writeth an epistle unto Ruth and each day he receiveth an epistle from her.

Then cometh the time when James sailoth across the sea unto the land of Britain to increase his training and prepare to do battle against the people of Adolph. And lo, still he curseth his officers and Franklin and Adolph, and many others. And he saith, War is hell, and he goeth to a pub and slurpeth much warm beer and forgetteth his sorrows. And lo, he meeteth a young woman of the people of Winston, and she was pleasing to look upon and they did find much in common to talk about and they afterwards spendeth many joyful hours together. And each day he writeth an epistle to Ruth and each day she writeth an epistle unto him.

Then cometh the time to do battle against the people of Adolph who are in the land of France. And lo, James goeth in with the first assault and wadeth through the water with missiles all around and seeth his comrades die, and he runneth up the beach and diggeth beneath the ground and

surviveth. And after many days of running and digging and seeing his comrades die, behold he receiveth a rest. And he saith, War is hell, and he goeth into a small cafe and drinketh much wine and cognac and drowneth his sorrows, and lo, he meeteth a young woman of the land of France who is interesting to look upon, and their language is not the same, but they getteth along with signs. And each day he writeth an epistle to Ruth and at times he receiveth many epistles from her and at times he receiveth none, because the times of delivery are irregular.

And it came to pass that the armies of Franklin did drive the armies of Adolph back to the land of Germany, and Adolph taketh his life and that of his concubine and his armies did surrender. And Benito and his armies from the land of Italy were beaten earlier, and the armies of Tejo from the isle of Japan were being driven back, and there was peace in the land of Germany.

And behold, James saith, Occupation duty is hell, and he goeth into the town and drinketh much beer and schnaapps and drowneth his sorrows, and lo, he meeteth a young woman of the land of Germany who is the widow of one of the elite troops of the armies of Adolph. And she is beautiful to look upon, and behold, they consoleth each other in their sorrows and they spendeth many hours and many days together. And each day James writeth an epistle to Ruth, and each day he receiveth an epistle from her. And he thinketh, Lo, the time soon cometh that I shall return to my beloved and joyous will be that day.

And it came to pass that one day James readeth an epistle from Ruth and it sayeth, This is to be my last epistle unto you as I soon marryeth a young man who was rejected from the armies of Franklin and who has gathered unto himself many riches during the time of war.

And behold, James saith, War is hell and women are fickle. And when the time cometh for him to be released from the armies of Harry, he who cometh after Franklin, lo, he chooseth to remain in the city of Paris in the land of France that he may learn to become a painter...after the philosophy of Diogenes.

--Keith N. Wright

The earth was warm underneath as I ran up the hill, and my hair felt pleasantly dirty. The breeze in back of me sent me flying over the ground. At the top I felt I had only to lift my arms and the breeze would carry me up and away. The top of the hill felt the full strength of the wind. I stretched my face toward the sky and let the air cool my neck and forehead, slightly damp from running. The sun was hot, and seemed to vie with the wind for supremacy over a small lone tree, whose leaves, though slightly wilted, turned and bent joyfully with the breeze. Only the wind affected me; I stood rejoicing in its free, changing moods.

I sat on the wooden railing on the front porch, clinging to another post, until the wind brought the rain and sent me to cover. The sky was dismal and fascinating, making a perfect setting for the primitive music the wind was drawing from the trees and the eaves of the cabin. It was a wild sweet song, yet a terrifying song, and I can't explain why it brought me elation and hope. The sky turned darker and an occasional lightning flash outlined the huge pine trees as they bent to and away from the wind as though to escape its fury. When the torrent of rain came a few minutes later, I sat watching from a window and saw that the wind was not so violent now, letting the rain continue its story of anger.

It was an hour before sunset as I lay motionless on the bank of the river. The things of the night hid themselves, leaving the valley to itself for a while before the things of the day became alive. The air was still and everything was quiet. The chill of the ground crept into my body, and the dreary nothingness of the hour crept into my heart. A small breeze appeared out of nowhere and woke up the river; it aroused quiet little waves which gently nudged the cattails near the bank. The breeze grew stronger, as though the coming sun gave it encouragement, and it drove the gloom out of my heart and brought peace. A squirrel woke, his chattering soon bringing the area to life, and little animal sounds swept from tree to river to grass on the breeze. The early unwarm sun, the water creeping slowly along the banks, and the scarcely visible signs of life were swept together by the wind of my contentment.

—De Anne Dorny

JONATHAN

The mist of dusk-time crept down the side of the mountains and billowed softly in each small glen. The various chirps, grunts, rasps, and other noises from those small animals who inhabited the valley were muted or stilled as though in deference to the approaching night which was creeping in with the assurance that comes from long practice. The homes of these small folk were shut off from the world as the mist enveloped each tree and covered each hole in the earth. The shrouded trees patiently stood firm, lonely looking—even fearful. The wind wailed around in their branches and created a reluctant stir in the heavy damp mist.

Jonathan sat at the crude opening in the similarly crude attic loft he called "his" place. His parents were willing to call it his place and willing to see that he occupied it most of the time. His dazed-looking eyes looked out upon the valley and saw the ponderous cloud rolling down the mountains—he did not comprehend very much but he felt the sadness rolling into his heart. His unintelligent eyes betrayed his cheated mind but there was a very human glimmer in their dullness as though his heart and mind did not communicate but his eyes were connected to his heart.

Jonathan watched the leisure scene. Below in the yard his father was putting competent-looking implements in their proper places, and Jonathan's brother was tending goats and cows which he had just brought down from the upper valleys. The ragged kids stumbled after their mothers seeking a feeling of protection, yet strayed, and bleated curiously and with a sham bravery. The first regular task of many boys was bringing home the flocks, and Jonathan's brother had been goatherder for three years.

Jonathan noticed that the mist had reached the bottom of their valley now, twining cold and dismal fingers around the trees that were near the barn. The family finished up their tasks and, shouting gayly to shatter the gloom, hurried into the cottage. Blackness fell quickly and was not a pure clear blackness but was oppressing. It shut you off from other homes, and shut you up within yourself if you were alone, and if your heart was

not light the thoughts imprisoned there make poor company. A familiar despair shadowed Jonathan's eyes. He sat quietly and looked out his window although he could see nothing, and he wasn't really unhappy, except for that nameless sadness.

He heard his mother's guttural voice calling him for supper and answered in a voice just as guttural and perhaps a bit more thick than he was coming. When he entered the fire-lighted and love-lighted room he felt the warmth of the fire and of the love; he felt the warmth of smiles and couldn't discern the pity that tinted them. They ate a meal that fit the spirit of their home—healthy, crude, and satisfying.

The mist was shut outside and none crept in, but solid comfort seeped out through cracks under doors and around windows. Jonathan felt this solid comfort and was fortunate not to feel the tension his being there caused. He heard his brother and father discussing some new job in the village but only became aware of their conversation when he realized someone would be needed to herd the goats and cows. He listened and heard his mother suggest that he could herd the goats and cows and saw his father nod. All the mist rolled out of Jonathan's heart and followed the solid comfort out through the cracks around the windows. He got up and stood a little straighter and a little prouder than usual and announced that since he had to get up at 4:30 to take the goats and cows up to the grassy upper valleys, he'd go to bed now. He climbed the ladder to the loft and before crawling in between rough coverlets he sat by his window to look out. Moonlight diffused through the mist and objects could be seen again and all the objects were cloudy and cobwebby and damp with dew. A small helpless sound came from the barns and Jonathan smiled a little and the human glint glowed in his dull eyes. Security comforted him as he slept that night and the moon gleamed all night on the serene hills.

—De Anne Dorry