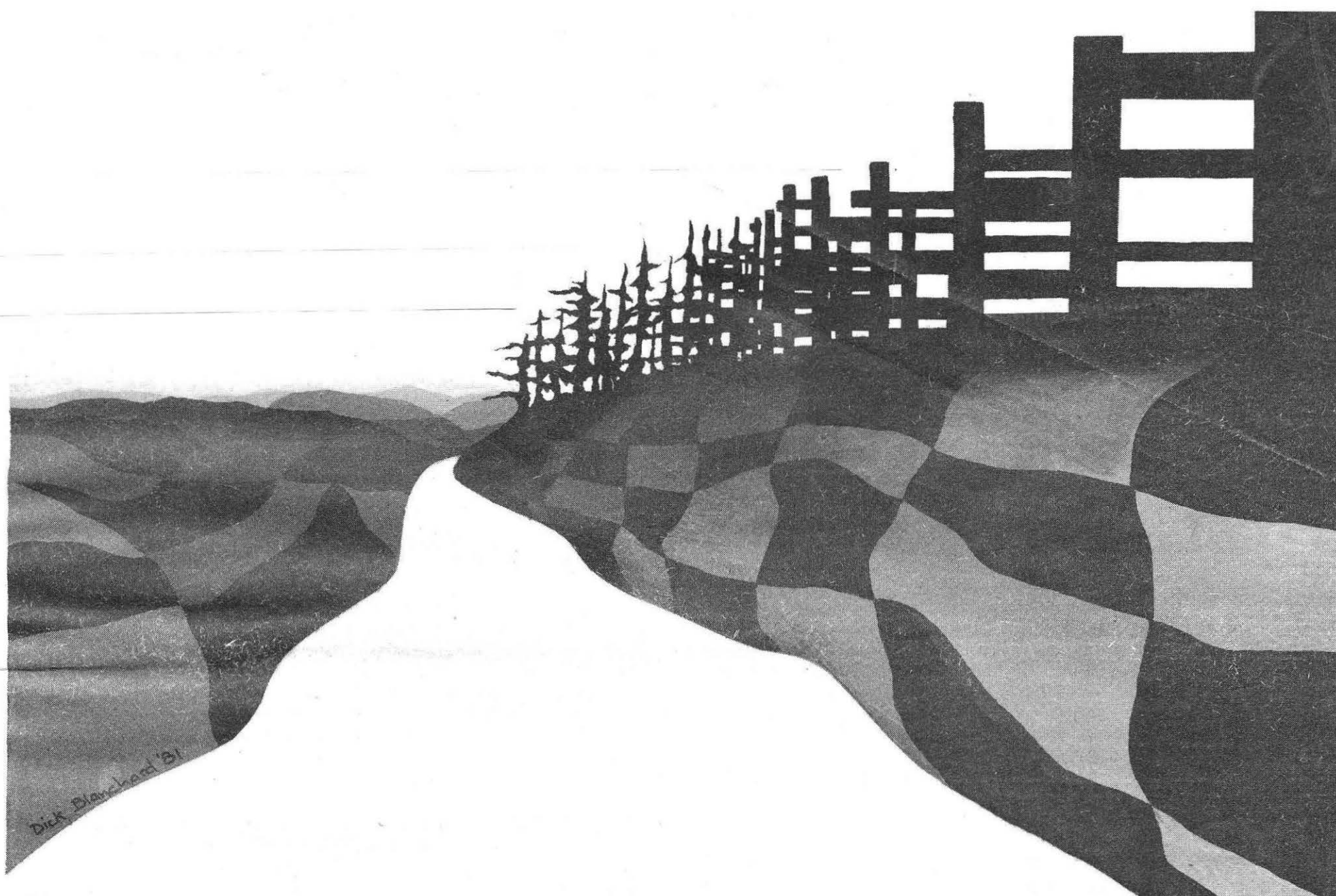


KENNEBEC:

A PORTFOLIO OF MAINE WRITING



January Thaw

*I shrug the stall door open
out through the leeward drift
First time since snow, since the bare
earth of Thanksgiving.
The yearling steer strains
against his chain,
Rotates his spike horns
like handles on an auger
Making me reach over — a matador in boots
— to slip the links free.*

*Heavy with habit he pivots,
squeezes round and leaps the gutter
But stops — three hooves on the doorsill
— seeing all is white.
His ears scoop forward, tell him nothing,
nor his memory, chained
All his calf winter long in the barn.
I rap the shovel sharply
On the tapping board; he quivers,
then charges into the sun.*

*His mother, nine Jersey years
of winter piled deep
Inside her idle bony head,
turns round with all
The bovine aplomb of one
carrying young.
She descends into the gutter
one leg at a time,
Molasses her way to the door
and recognition of the season.*

*Outside, she goes no farther
than the first length of sunshine;
He bucks, struts, butts his way
clear to the barbed wire fence.
She finds four holes to stand in;
he tears at drifts with his horns,
Stems, rogue-locomotive, hooves
flickering in pairs,
Around in circles, blinded by the glare,
into his mother's side.*

*She... takes no notice. Him,
staking his bulsy claim,
Perforating this grasslessness
with his emptyheaded dance.
All age and wait, salt and water,
she tongues her nostrils,
Re-claims her pasture with a slow smoking turd.
I sight the far treeline:
Gate open, stream frozen.
Throw them fine hay. They will not stray far.*

...from the Russian of Osip Mandelstam

GOLDFINCH

*Tilting my head, I'll join
your silent stare at the world:
its winter light, though dazzling,
prickles like chaff.*

*Your boat-stem tail, your yellow-
black breast feathers pouring
like paint— Hey there, you Beau
Brummel: can you see yourself?*

*Above your beak, the air
takes the colors of fire; it's the hour
for Eyes right! Eyes left!
But rather
than watch this, we fly away.*

David Walker
Freedom

Sleight of Eye

*Leave the tent to its watch pocket
Of pine. Watch the fire vanish
Into dawn. The Saco River tips
Its sky of constellations into nebulae
You step across. Say Hot damn
While sun sprays Chocorua's chin
In a shimmer of tumeric. Ain't nothing
Like a valley. Morning waves through telescopes
Of warm gin bottles. Words leap, needle
To mouth, their wings glittering
Code. Feel the world breathe underfoot
The way a wad of cellophane moves
In transparent flame. Ride the northern water
While afternoon gathers in slate
Strains of twilight. Pine needles crack like nibs
Of hummingbird spine.
The odor a pyramid might squash
And distill over centuries
Hovers close to them.
On its frame the tent flaps
Tendon shreds. In plain sight
You disappear.*

David Steingass
Madison, Wisconsin

No Piece of Paper

*I saw him first—
in his yard
polishing his Mercedes
his face wearing
a brighter gleam
than his hand gave.*

*Then I saw her—
harried from running
to kitchen, job, and bed
speaking of equality and love
rattling like a dented pot
on a hot stove.*

*And I wondered
when a shiny new one
would take her place.*

Minnie E. Bowden
Belfast

From Here to Yucca Flat

Hunkered in the broccoli I am, weeding, basking in the good things of life, when my peace is shattered by the thunderous clatter of hoofbeats. Never, in my little world of nanny goats and homebrew and organic cabbage, have I heard such a sound. Full of fury and vengeance it is, ironshod hooves pounding the pavement. Shivering with terror, I crouch in the cornstalks. Below me the roadway is empty, but the clatter of hoofbeats grows louder, louder, as rounding the corner they come, forty-five degrees off vertical, two towering figures on wild, snorting steeds. Cutting they come, crouching and springing up my driveway, gravel pelting like hail on the pavement below.

"Hyah!" Foam flecks flying, feet rearing and prancing, black hides glistening, riders viciously reining. "Whoa theah, Devil!" "Whoa theah, Satan!" They come to a halt in the chard.

Horses pawing. Eyes squinting: "Who that over there, Clint?" The woman, black-clad with silver spangles. Tall, lean, tough. Long shadow penetrating the cornstalks like a finger accusing.

"Don't rightly know, Babe." More squinting. "Hey you! You there, skulkin' around in the cornstalks. Come on out here, Sonny, let's have a look at you."

Behind me only the summer squashes — nowhere to go. I emerge from the cornpatch and stand among the radishes, wiggling my toes in the warm soil, eyeing the jackhammer hooves of the two wild stallions.

"Har, har, looky there, Clint. He don't even have no shoes on."

"Hey, Sonny," calls the man.

I dig my toes deeper, draw strength and courage from the rich, earthy soil. I look the desperado in the eye. "Welcome to Daffodil Acres," I manage to say. "What can I do for you?"

The desperado hoots. "Hear that, Babe? Daffodil Acres!" Howling and knee-slapping. Loosening of reins. The stallions drop their heads and grab mouthfuls of chard.

"Hey you, Satan! Hey you, Devil! Git away from that stuff! Rabbit food. Shrink your balls."

Heads yanked up, but already a softening in the eyes of the stallions. They nicker at me softly. I offer them carrots, one in each hand. Whips whistle, lashing my wrists. Too late — the horses have eaten the carrots. I shake my hands free and step back, freeze in the cold cross-glances of Clint and Babe.

"Try that again, Sonny," hisses Babe, "and I'll shoot your balls from here to Yucca Flat." She draws a shiny six-gun and aims at my crotch. Instinctively I cover with my hands.

Clint roars. "Har-de-har-har, now don't he look like a little lady, all barefoot and bashful." He leans forward in his saddle. "Now you listen to me, Sonny. We're two hungry, thirsty hombres, and it don't seem to me like you're showin' us much hospitality. Now you throw me one of them there tomatoes, Sonny." He points to the tomato patch with the barrel of his six-gun.

Craftily, I select the finest, ripest tomato of the lot and toss it to him. Six shots ring out in rapid succession. Tomato pulp plasters the pea vines. "What I mean to say, Sonny," Clint sneers, "is rabbit food ain't hospitality." Coolly, he blows smoke from the barrel of his revolver.

"B-b-but, that was an all-organic, Burpee Beefsteak," I stammer.

Clint's eyes light up. "Beefsteak," he echoes thoughtfully. He slips from his saddle and stands tall in the parsley. Babe slips down beside him, fully half a head taller. Great hips. Clint's fingers dig into my shoulder. "Let's you and me go on up to the house there, Sonny, and talk about beefsteak."

I hesitate, watching the stallions demolish the chard. Babe taps the base of my skull with the barrel of her six-gun. "Beefsteak," she says. "Remember?" Behind her, the stallions head for the goat pasture, nickering and calling softly. We head for the house, the barrel of Babe's six-gun riding the knuckles of my spine.

Inside, Clint slaps his gun on the kitchen table, covers it with his hat, tips back in a chair, feet on the table, gouging the Minwax polyurethane finish with the points of his spurs. Across from him, Babe leans, elbows on the table. She toys with her revolver, removes her hat, shakes long, raven tresses loose over her shoulders. She is stunningly beautiful. I gasp, pretend to cough, glance out the window, see the stallions nuzzling the goats through the pasture fence.

With a splintering crash, Clint sinks a spur in the tabletop. "Beefsteak," he roars. I shudder, cast through my mind — lentils, tofu, the casserole in the oven?

Babe saves the moment. "Whiskey," she drawls. "First whiskey, then beefsteak." She is grinning now, lounging in her chair, full, spangled breasts straining at satin like ripening eggplant.

Clint sinks his second spur in the antique oak. "Whiskey!" he thunders.

"I-I'm sorry," I stammer, "but I d-do have herb tea..."

"Sheeit!" Clint struggles to free his feet.

"Herb tea!" mocks Babe. She eyes me down the barrel of her six-gun. "Where?"

I point to a box on the windowsill. Kapow! Glass shatters, mellow mint rises, falls, settles like volcanic ash. "Whiskey," hisses Babe.

I glance out the window. The stallions have jumped the fence and are gambling with the goats. I take heart. "I d-do have some homebrew," I offer.

"Homebrew," whispers Clint. "By god, homebrew! I haven't had homebrew since I was knee-high to a rattlesnake. Sonny, bring on the homebrew!"

I control the shaking in my hands, remove a six-pack of homebrew from the refrigerator, manage to pour it off into a pitcher without the telltale cloud of sediment. The mere sight of the clear, bubbling liquid gives me courage. "Homebrew," I declare proudly, setting the pitcher on the table and fetching two thick mugs.

Clint squints at me through one eye. "Nother glass," he says like a blackjack player calling for a fifth card.

I comply, fill the three glasses to the frothy limit. "Prosit," I offer.

The Puzzle

*I have measured winter in chunks of wood
carried from the stump
found standing dead and dry,
carried again as split fractions,
carried to a pile of ash out back,
carried finally to the plants in spring;
but the cutting is my introduction.
I shake the hands these dead fingers form
almost as I shake apple trees in August,
looking for the early ripe fruit
to drop. I shake with saw and axe and match,
all the time measuring, as if I knew
how much it took to get me through.
And it comes to me
as if it were coming back:
I have held every piece
so many times, I can almost remember
this as the piece the saw cut through first
back in the fall, the piece
that will finish this puzzle,
the one I put together, for the hell of it
face down, while marking time each winter,
the same puzzle I am so relieved to forget
Each spring.
It will all come back.
It will be so easy. It will be
as easy as flipping the pieces over
and putting them together again
as a picture, knowing each one
by the feel of it, but
discovering the scene
for the first time.*

J. Barth
Aina

From Here to Yucca Flat (continued)

"Drink, you asshole," says Clint. He blows his froth on the table. Babe follows suit. I sip. They watch me closely, then drain their glasses.

Clint belches, pounds his empty mug on the table. "Couple of *thirsty* hombres," he mutters. I refill their glasses.

I sit back, sipping and watching. Babe catches my eye. "Drink," she orders. I drink, and she refills my glass. I drink that too. I am not worried. This is my homebrew; I know how to handle it. I feel my courage rising.

Clint slides his mug across the table to Babe. "Fill 'er up, doll," he grunts. Babe slides the mug back.

"Fill 'er yourself, Clinty," she says, sweetly sharp.

Clint jerks his feet off the table, then shrugs at me and refills his glass. "Don't s'pose it much matters who pours the stuff," he mumbles. I detect a slight slurring of his speech; I watch him rub the spur gouges in the table with his thumb.

"Oh, looky!" cries Babe, draining her glass and pointing out the window. "The horseys are playing with the goaties."

Clint glances out the window. "Good for 'em," he mumbles. "New friends never hurt no one." Turns to me. "Nice place you got here." He continues to rub the gouges in the table with his thumb. "Got some putty, Sonny, I'll patch those up for you."

Babe watches his shrewdly, then smiles knowingly at me. I shiver. "Shh," she whispers, "he's just a big pussycat."

I smile and wink at her. "Casserole in the oven," I say. "You get that. I'll get the putty."

She moves gracefully, if a little drunkenly, to the oven and fits an apron over her holsters. I place a can of putty in front of Clint and watch as he works it into the gouges with the butt of his six-gun. Babe dishes out the casserole — bean sprouts, lentils, brown rice and tofu. We eat hungrily.

"Mmm," says Babe.

"Good enough for ten hungry hombres," says Clint. I watch him wolf down his third helping, wash it down with a glass of homebrew. I stand up, clap him on the shoulder. "Well, Clint old boy," I say cheerily, "time to get to work. After the dishes, there's some patching up needs doing down in the garden."

Clint grins up at me. "Sure thing, boss. Nothin' like some good, old-fashioned work to make a man feel good." He moves to the sink and rolls up his sleeves. I collect the six-guns and drop them down the compost chute, then sit at the table, close and katty-corner to Babe. She has removed her neckerchief and

Beech Leaves

*It's hard to ignore them. The winter woods,
Niggardly as a modernist painting,
Abet them. There are no restful blurs.
You can see past everything*

*To those saplings whose leaves, though slightly curled
And almost transparent, are all still there.
The settlers (books say) stuffed pillows with them
Thus refuting the devil's eiderdown snares.*

*Their delicacy surprises. How is it they've gotten away
With being indifferent to all skeletal pride?
One might suspect that these dead
But clinging leaves were in touch with something denied*

*By all other categorizable cells,
Had mastered some Pharaoh's strategies,
Consulted one of the more idiosyncratic
Holy books. They rattle in the breeze.*

*I thrash amid reverie's false depths
Until a raven commences to caw.
A mocker and reminder of the baser facts,
I must agree with it that there are laws,*

*That it's only January that lends these leaves
A mantle of invincibility.
Men and ravens know another season
Is coming when beech leaves will part meekly*

*To become part of that undistinguished
Detritus now hidden beneath the snow.
What has been gained? Only this —
That, like man, these leaves cling to what they know.*

Baron Wormser
Norridgewock

holsters. Behind me, the splashing of dishwater and clinking of plates — here, Babe, soft and lovely. I stroke her thigh and gaze deep into her eyes.

"Dishes all done, boss," Clint sings behind me.

"Wash out the sink." I order without looking around.

Splashing of water. "All done, boss. What next?" I slide away from Babe. Clint is drying his hands on a dishtowel.

"Follow me," I say. I lead him down to the garden, show him the work that needs doing, several hours worth of patching, replanting and weeding. "You're a good boy, Clint," I tell him. He smiles at me gratefully.

Back at the house, Babe is reclining on the sofa. I stand, gazing down at her. "You'll want to take those boots off," I say softly. "Be right back."

"Clint," I call from the window. When you're done with the garden, I want you to hitch up those horses and plow up the north pasture."

"Sure thing, boss," he calls back. "Be done by nightfall."

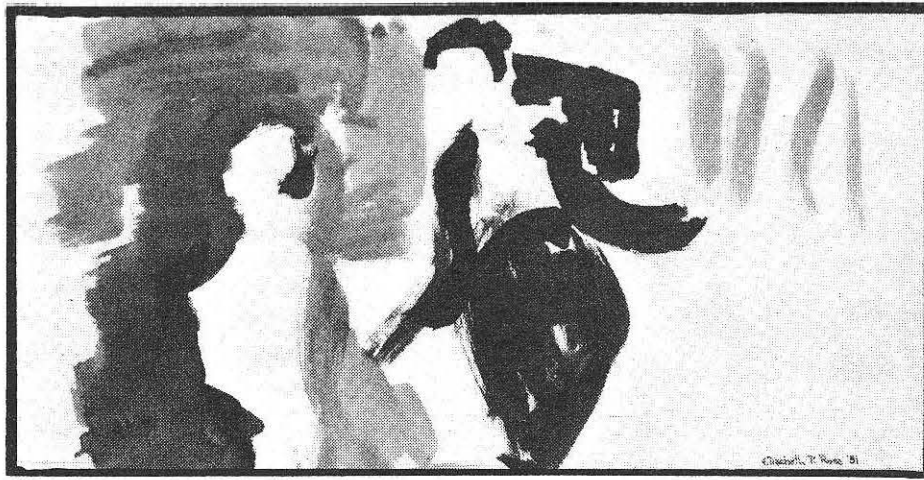
I return to the sofa. Babe is struggling with her boots. She looks ravishing. "Here," I offer, "let me help you off with your..."

And so it goes, day after lovely day — tofu, bean sprouts, fresh organic produce from the garden, dawn until dusk, Clint laboring in the garden, splitting cord upon cord of winter firewood, growing stronger and healthier by the hour; myself, day after day, languishing in bed with Babe; herself, finding more and more pleasure in our simply homesteading virtues. Until, one morning, it happens — Babe gazing at Clint in an odd and curious manner. I watch them closely, then slip away to the barn.

Satan was always my favorite. Through my weeks of languishing, several things there were that I did not neglect. One was Satan's diet. Nothing organic or homegrown there. Straight urea-laden Purina feed it was, 20% pure protein. Now, the stallion paws at his stall. His coat glistens, his eye is wild. I cinch the saddle tight, ram the bit into his mouth. From a grain bag, I pull Clint's hombre outfit, meticulously altered during Babe's afternoon naps, complete with spangles, holsters, and six-guns rescued from the compost chute. I don the outfit and mount the stallion. Brandishing the six-guns, I sail over the pasture fence. With scattering gravel and thundering hoofbeats, rounding the corner I go, forty-five degrees off vertical. Due west! Ironshod hooves pounding the pavement. "To arms, to arms," I cry; "the zucchinis are ripening." Behind me, the sounds of Clint's ax ring through the air, and the softer sounds of Babe, calling the goats for their morning milking.

Hans A. Kirchels
Buckspout

Love, Your Magic Spell



"Good morning, Sun, my friend," Alice Harris murmured to the scarlet glow rising behind the pines standing sentinel on the ridge, as she ran water into a heavy oatmeal-encrusted pan.

Another Monday Morning — they seemed to come closer together as she grew older. With her housework caught up over the long lonely weekend, she made plans to hike into the village through the cool sunshine. She would visit the Sandy Branch library and spend a lazy afternoon reading in front of the fire. Dinner would be easy. Charles liked the same things every week — a roast for Sunday, leftovers on Monday, hash on Tuesday, chicken, chops, fish, and then baked beans with fishcakes every Saturday.

As if summoned by her thoughts, Charles materialized from the hall, wearing a navy blazer, blue tie and grey trousers of well-pressed flannel. He was almost sixty and still handsome and dark-haired, wearing the same size and some of the same clothes he'd had when they married.

I haven't aged much myself, she thought. A little overweight, but round-cheeked cheerful faces wear well — even if short hippy figures tend to fat.

She sighed as she remembered how her heart had leapt in just that way the first time Charles appeared in the doorway of her family's Victorian home overlooking the bay in Portland, just after the War. So many years ago. He'd been visiting her brother James. How handsome he'd looked in his captain's uniform.

"Something's burning," he warned. Alice rescued the bacon and served him the usual — bacon, oatmeal and toast.

"Aren't you eating?"

"Oh, I've been up for hours. But I'll have some coffee with you." She smiled, hoping to prolong his amiable mood.

Of course she'd eaten. Last night she'd gone to their bedroom without dinner. His tirades always upset her for hours. She'd been ravenous this morning.

"Maybe I'll be late tonight. I'm driving down to Portland."

"That's too bad. I think I'll walk down to the Four Corners today. I may stop in at Susie Prewitt's." Charles approved of her friendship with Susie, whose husband, as chairman of the school board, influenced the purchase of large amounts of insurance (from Charles). Susie was sweet but totally absorbed in children and cooking. How limiting it must be to spend your whole life raising children, first your own, then your grandchildren, and even their children.

Charles cleared his throat. "If all goes well, I may sell that twenty acres up on the ridge. There's a group from Boston planning a housing development. They figure there are plenty of young couples and retired couples who want to live in ski country. Get

away from crime and pollution, you know. If I get a good price I can invest it. Do you realize what that means?"

Silently, Alice shook her head. Of course she knew, but he was enjoying his announcement.

"I could retire for good." He grinned, showing his large perfect teeth. (All mine, he sometimes boasted. He never went to dentists. Charles really, truly believe that all disease was somehow a matter of carelessness.)

Replacing his napkin in its silver clip, he rose and came around the table and kissed her cheek. "And then we can really get organized around here." He waved jauntily as he walked to the garage.

After the blue VW ("plenty big enough for the two of us") dwindled down No Name Road, Alice turned to get the tranquilizers hidden behind the cups, but withdrew her hand. Better to stay alert. It was time to leave.

Something in Charles' plan abruptly reminded her of Madame Olga — dear Madame, plump and olive skinned, leaning forward over the tarot cards, her black hair spread in disorder over her dark blue satin robe.

"So, my sweet Alice, you allow life to carry you along. You are a leaf, a tender green leaf, on the tumbling river of life. You are not in control. Other persons lean over the water, they push you this way and that, and you think you are helpless. But I see in your palms, in your stars, that good things could come to you in spite of yourself."

Perhaps the housing development would bring friends, companionship, children.

Spirit, guide me, Alice implored, striding along the hard-packed dirt road, emboldened by the warmer air to wear a wool skirt and knee socks instead of the usual slacks. Leaves were budding on the maples that lined the road. Soon there would be tulips around the cottage. Any day now the woodchuck would appear to sun himself on the hillside boulder. Last spring she'd watched him the first day after he shuffled out of his burrow under the boulder, stuffing the young leaves of surrounding bushes into his mouth with both front paws like a greedy child, his reddish brown fur ragged and scruffy after the winter's hideout.

Alice had made no close friends in Sandy Branch. There had been only two intervals in her life when she'd been completely happy — when the children were small and she'd stayed at home with them, and the few years after they'd finished college and she'd quit her job at the hospital. There had been time then for her to take courses in everything from psychic development to French, to join women's groups, to meet several close friends for lunch and lectures.

When Alice had entered Madame Olga's tiny self-development group in Portland and had been introduced to theories from ancient times when women had been the dominant sex, of reincarnation and Karma, of the uses of mysticism and Yoga, her whole life had turned around. But these things she'd kept secret. She didn't attempt to explain them to Charles or to the children.

Alice had a theory that in her past life she'd been a domineering man, perhaps a plantation overseer or ship's captain. Perhaps in his next reincarnation Charles would be the recipient of some of the orders he'd handed out in this life. She hoped he would be able to adjust. Before her parents had died, she and Charles had lived with them and taken care of them, and Charles had never complained.

Yes, the years in Portland had been good. Then Charles had decided that they should move to the mountains, buy a retirement home. She missed the comfortable old house near the bay. She missed her friends and her children, who didn't like the little brown shingled cottage or cots or pull-out couches. On holidays Alice and Charles usually visited Charles, Jr., in Boston or Mary in Connecticut. Neither of the children was married yet.

She was approaching Four Corners where the state highway intersected a graded road that circled a lake. A drug store, Elks Hall, grocery store and an old white frame building which housed the post office and the library. Visitors ascending the steep road could see from a long way off the tiny village, the only visible structures for miles up the mountain. Everything else was hidden by evergreen forests.

Alice kept her visit to the library and post office brief. She began the walk home, carrying her books and mail in a white string bag. She wished

she had friends in the little village. When Charles was home to stay, where could she go to get out of the house? He'd be telling her how to do everything, watching her, planning everything, picking up the mail. She thought again of Madame Olga.

"Always remember, my children," Madame had intoned sternly, "the principal component of the Universal Consciousness is the communication of love to other beings, both human and otherwise. The power to give and receive love is the reason for our existence. Without it, we are nothing. Without it, we would perish, in the body and the spirit. It is love that sustains us all. Without love we can waste away."

How true, Alice thought, and surely Charles loves me. It is just the expression of his love that is twisted. She longed for love that would surround her in warm rosy clouds, so tangible she could touch it.

Somehow the idyllic life Charles had promised had never developed in Sandy Branch. Oh yes, there was the fishing and hunting, church suppers and occasional boozy dances at the Elks hall, but everyone seemed cemented into their own lives, with their own friends they'd known since nursery class, their own siblings and cousins and children. . . .

After lunch Alice stood at the kitchen window looking out at the hillside. She smiled when she saw the woodchuck ooze up the boulder, quickly survey the area, and sit for a long time with his face turned up to the sun. He was still there when she went out to the kitchen an hour later for a glass of water. Last summer when the garage was under construction, he'd peeked out at her, like a curious monkey, from under a pile of lumber on the dirt floor. Several times when she drove up No Name Road she saw him sitting upright at the roadside, almost as if he had been waiting for her. Almost as if they were communicating.

Charles came home after dark. "All settled," he reported as he shed his trenchcoat. "Getting colder out. I've sold the back field. Now I can really retire, have a permanent vacation."

Vacation from what, she thought, as she made his drink. Charles had never pushed himself. Money had come easily to him. Anyway, it would be nice to have neighbors. Her sadness lifted a little. Her love, after all, would see her through.

"Love is all." She heard again Madame Olga's deep voice. "Without it we would all die." The voice was like a moonbeam from the top of the spruce tree near the garage.

She jumped a little, suddenly hearing Charles' voice.

"Yes, now I can show you better ways to manage." She jumped a little, suddenly hearing Charles' voice. "I'll even do the shopping for you. You'll be like a queen." He sat down at the kitchen table.

landscape with heron

*the heron is not
prosaic; reclusive,
oversize, he's
always vaguely
oriental.*

*he makes his
watchers poets.*

*we're standing on
the pier; we came
to see the sun-
set. but he got
there first, and fixed
us—*

*all the colors
move around him—
seaweed brown comes
in as grey and
metal blue goes
out;*

*our poem
is informed by
beer and twilight.*

*down in the clam
flats he's looking
for some food. when
all the shades are
one, he doesn't
know they're one with
him. he may ac-
knowledge one in-
trusion — a couple
of goddamn poets
drinking on the
dock.*

*he may look
up one time and see us,
shapes against the dusk.*

Archie Hobson
New Gloucester

The Lost Mooring

*Someone stole our mooring
while we were lying off an island
in Casco Bay.*

*Stole it from the harbor,
left us with no where to tie our boat.
Adrift in the harbor,
we cannot leave for Carleton Street,
can not resume our studies
or start careers.*

*The boat drifts with the tide.
Someone must remain alert
always
to keep us where we are.
We dare not plan trips,
who can look to the future?
Keeping the boat from crashing
is all we can think of.*

*As we eat dinner it drifts.
We argue because no one is in control.
Each of us has his own thing to do.
We leave in the dinghy
while the boat swings listlessly.*

*It is useless.
We cannot concentrate ashore.
Back we come to argue more.
Who will be responsible
for this ship
with no mooring?*

Ruth Evans
Portland

Somebody's Brothers

*Hunting season: Sixth day
4:30 a.m. in an all night store*

*Six men
in an old,
lethargic Torino
came into the store
boasting, gloating—
they'd just run over an otter.*

*"That", one explained,
"is what's in the trunk."
Several of them remained outside
clustered,
gang-rape style,
poking sticks into the blackness
of a huge trunk.*

*"Broke its back
but it's still alive—" voice cold
as the grey morning fog
circling his car.*

*"Otter pelt's worth fifty bucks!"
He headed for the door,
opened it a crack,
threw over his shoulder:
"Oughta pay for our huntin' trip!"
I locked gazes with washed-out eyes;
A draft of chill morning air
sweeps between us.*

Jan Johnston
Augusta

Love, Your Magic Spell (continued)

Had anyone else ever loved him, she wondered. Do I? Really? The children had rebelled at an early age, had ignored him most of the time. He'd never seemed to notice.

Madame Olga claimed that everyone had free will. But her options? She was too old to go back to work, too tired, too afraid of muggers and burglars and rapists. And Charles needed her.

In the morning, after breakfast, Alice cleaned the living room, carefully navigating through the furniture-crowded rooms and shoveled ashes from the fireplace. As she carried the pail of ashes down the back steps, Charles approached from the field, whistling and carrying a rifle.

"Well, I did it, I got that old wood-chuck," he said proudly.

She stared at his bland, handsome face. "Why, whatever for? What was he doing?" A cold tingling feeling swept over her.

It seemed only yesterday she'd surprised the furry creature on the stone wall, not six feet away, round bright eyes, faintly striped face, motionless,

mesmerized by her startled gaze. His every hair had quivered in suspended motion.

"Oh, you know, Alice, what they say, because he was there. Anyway, they get into gardens, eat everything. From now on things around here will be different. There's work to be done."

That evening before the fire, she studied Charles' contented, relaxed posture. She even managed to meet his gaze serenely as he talked of his plans for retirement. But now her heart lay calm in her cashmere covered breast. There would be time.

Summer crept unnoticed up the mountain until overnight there were radiantly hot and perfect days. In the evenings Charles sat behind a magazine, though sometimes she caught him slyly observing her. She went about the cottage as usual, performing her chores without comment, accepted his corrections silently, responded cheerfully to his conversation. But she knew her answers were vague, her attention elsewhere. Often she listened in her mind to Madame

Olga's long-ago lectures.

On such an evening he sat holding his sports magazine and furtively watching her. Suddenly, from the corner of her eye, she saw him grasp his chest, as if from a tremendous blow. He writhed about yet seemed pinned in his chair, his thin lips working soundlessly, his eyes pleading to her. Then he managed to choke out — "Oh, my God!" But Alice did not look up from her knitting. He thrashed about, tried again to speak, slid to the floor. His body twitched convulsively. But not until the clock hands had turned a full half hour did Alice move from her chair.

After the funeral, when the last of their Sandy Branch acquaintances had left the house, Alice and her son and daughter relaxed in the living room.

"It's so fortunate that Gramps left the Portland house to you," Mary said. "You'll be able to move back as soon as the tenants leave. I know you've missed Portland and the old house. I might even come back there to live with you, if I can find a job."

Charles, Jr., was puzzled. "It's so strange Dad should die just when he was beginning his retirement. Mother, you should have stopped him when

he took on all that outdoor work, building up the stone walls, breaking up a garden. He never did that kind of work before, not heavy work like that. It was too much for him."

"Well, you know how he was."

"And he was so dead set against doctors," Mary remarked. "If he'd had any pain or any warning he probably wouldn't have even mentioned it. Remember how he used to get so angry over doctor bills that he threw them on the floor and stamped on them?"

Alice rose and went into the kitchen.

When a late fall sun drew the scent of roses upward all around, Alice and Madame Olga sat at the umbrella table drinking tea. Gulls wheeled over the calm waters of Casco Bay. A ferry announced its departure.

Alice leaned toward her friend. There was only one thing that still occasionally bothered her. "Tell me, dear Madame Olga, do you think that if somehow our predestined life pattern should be interrupted, we would have to return to this planet to live out that pattern before we could proceed to another life plan?"

Virginia Liscomb
Gray

Jonah

O calf of self, O baffled, tethered, veal! In a lake of cold moonlight, aluminum and stars, he's up along stone ridge, shuffling in his sleeping bag, inch-worming shoulders and hips through rip-stop goosedown, seeking the curve in the lip of Mother's uncastellated battlement, sleep and vista. Powerline Frankensteins stalk and/or stagger on through the valley. It is hardly night, what with cascades of snowcaps afloat in the east like a natural Egypt, and beside him, restless with sunburn, his wife. Well, well, well, Jonah and the whale, Mulholland Drive, a jeep road anywhere, and this cosmetic wiring of Mother, the Christmas tree effect. But the rock is flat, the dirt real, the grass, trees and cactus breathing. This is a test of life in the country.

ii

Now an errand in the cave of winds, opinion, rumor, and matter-of-fact factory, the house of fame. We hear her employer, a lawyer, volunteered her welcome here a typewriter company ambassador. O the old songs, the sad blather: Today I saw you on the street and my heart fell at my feet. Sugarbabe, I saw you with somebody new. They lie on my tongue like mushroom stones and I speak: "Dear Alphabet Sam: I know the dwarfs who hammer your vocabulary labor by levity uninspired, as sweat in an angst intense, but this latest limpness tiptoes toward enema success!" Ho ho ho. Now through the downstairs shoemaker's, on whose table sits a leather seal, stitches livid, for sale: a her. "I don't want to buy a raw doll," I murmur, and as Gepetto, heart-pierced, from behind his arras rears, the seal breaks loose, flailing and bleeding, flapping hatchets, lasts, knives and shoes.

iii

We tempt Death. She enters with a roar of blue water. Safe to savor Mostro's mucous and sea flavor near the glottal chandelier, in a blossom of membrane dark. Through Gepetto's plateglass pane, in the hurry of her alibi design — her "I can't be there. I'm too busy, dear" — I see her chestnut, her racehorse toss of hair. I think of Secretariat here, her stallion hips. That's it, a puppet in her wake, a donkey-boy in Nineveh with its ice-cream trees, my nose aches and grows — wooden brain, a liar, and everybody's Jonah, in cold ocean today, all tomorrow on dry land.

Kenneth Rosen
Portland

Letter to a Younger Brother

I was the continent and wise in the ways of the world. You were an offshore island of soldiers and crusading knights. Your magic dragon accompanied you, faithful as I never was. Now the channel of age and awareness between us is drying up fast. We are in a common world, playing both these roles. An ocean separates us but as far as I'm concerned it is a mirage over dry land.

G. M. Clark
Bowdoin College

The Great Scratcher

Every damned night the devil came with his iron fingernail drew naked women and copulation, and breathed obscenities on your door.

You called him The Great Scratcher and wouldn't let him in. The cat's eyes you appreciated but never his.

On your kitchen wall The Angelus mirrored your devotion as resolute as the kerosene burning in the lamps.

You were sent away to a big house where people like you waited for devils, or angels,

and in one terrific night your house was aflame and ended as a glow on the southern sky.

Among the blackened timbers in the cellar in the yawning mouth of the dead furnace is old Scratcher up to his eyes in sorrow and wishing he hadn't whispered in someone's ear, you were crazy.

Kris Larson
East Machias

The Lady Wrestlers

1

My mother and I are watching the lady wrestlers on television. We want to be entertained. Our eyes are riveted to the safe, thick glass. The screen turns mythic, but I turn away and watch their shadows grapple on the darkened wall. I shudder aloud. My mother frowns and walks away.

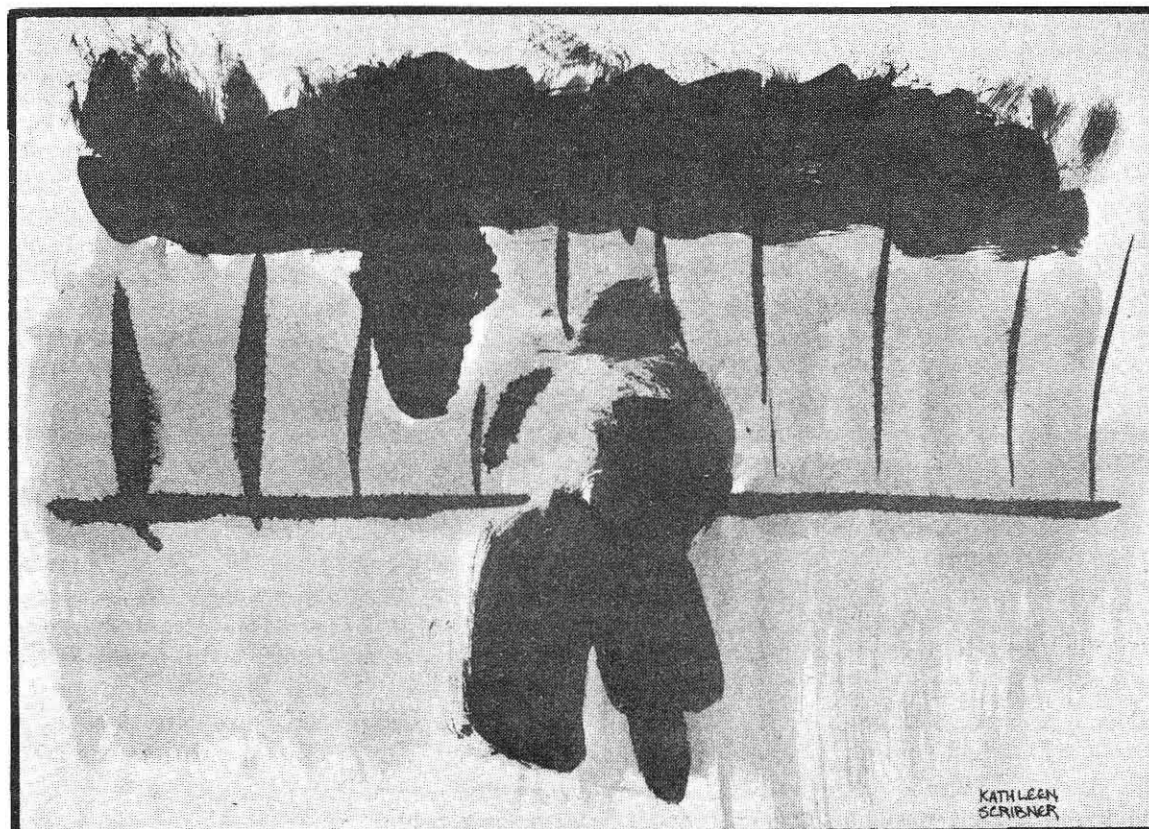
2

Once in the British Museum, squinting in the unnatural light, I picked out the details of an ancient relief from Halicarnassus, where you posed with rolls of tape and bandages on your legs. The neck was bent and narrow under the weight of a steel helmet. This empty field dreams of the battle in every scar of earth, as the body dreams of refuge in revenge, the mother dreams the child. Achillia and Amazon, I want to ask what sacrilege has brought you to this arena?

3

I remember two women, pinning each other to the mat; sweat dripping under their armpits, those stains that ringed the tight-drawn crotch. When I hold my eyes in my hands, I see the unarmed skin between my fingers, the flesh and bones that beget history, as two women at the edge of ceremony enter the ancient stadium. One is a vulture as big as a house. The other has the face of a harpie, dazed, alone in her terrible circling.

Kathleen Lignell
Stockton Springs



KATHLEEN
LIGNELL

Sarah S. Kurland came to America to join her husband in 1905, at the age of twenty-four, with three young children, from a small town near Bialystok near the Russian-Polish border. Thirty four years later, her family grown, she set out to write her autobiography. The resulting "The Story from the life of an orphan", handwritten in unschooled "Yiddish" English and filling a hundred and thirty-four pages of a dime-store composition book, was her legacy to her children and their children to come. What is printed here is my condensation of the "plot" of Sarah Kurland's life. I have pulled phrases verbatim from the source, standardizing only spelling and punctuation where necessary for comprehension. Sarah saw herself objectively, as a character in her story, and I have taken the liberty of rendering this account in the third person as a gesture toward that spirit that "goen give them a des-cribing."

Lee Sharkey
Skowhegan

The Story from the Life of an Orphan

In a little city, S, used to live a family, with five children. The father was one from the greatest persons of his time. The boys which they suppose to become rabbis, he used teaching them. Everybody was knowing him from far and from near. Suppose when anybody was in trouble for they need advice, they came right to that great man.

Now yet I begin my describing about that young mother. She dies and past away. When the young mother was thirty three year old she left and past away from the live world. God take her into the other world. Was very very necessary, for all of them, and especially for the young mother, to live and raise her children, but they can't help. So is the nice world certainly not for everybody. She said, God why so young and I most to go in the dark grave.

Then begin awful sadness, quiet nights dark days for the young unlucky orphans. Months past away when others peoples begins to forget that not long before, used to live the good mother. But only which they will never forget, that is her children. The young father begin to thinking about to give his children a other mother, a true mother, but certainly it can't never been. He was thinking that he get for them, the true mother. It was like it is written in the Bible, when two mothers gone to King Solomon. The new mother has children, but when any thing used to happen, suppose like children fighting, or anything of course, it was the long ago mother's children. So, so was their childhood lives and years.

The father was unable to send the girl to school. Certainly he was very anxious, his only wishes from God nothing else, only he should been able to satisfied his children, they should be educated. He was far far away to be a rich man. She begin very early to learn by the teacher, was only six year old then, but surely for her was not enough. She was not satisfied. When she was sure the house was quiet and the people are in a deep sleep she lying in her bed and reading and writing, but soon when her father was awoken, and see the little lamp burned he used to say Child my, it is enough. Then later when everything and everybody used to been quiet and peace, for her was shining, the heaven and the stars. Her mind and soul been away very very far near to the heaven. Then she was sleeping and dreaming.

When she was eight year old, she went to a dressmaker learn a trade. For three long years, without wages during the three year. She used to work from seven in the morning until nine in the night. Surely it was necessary.

In the same time, she was a teacher too. She used to teaching a few big girls, one was engaged, and the groom was in a difference city. Surely she supposed write to him then, certainly she the eight year old working girl was a author. She used to write very nice love letters of course, in her name, she was paid her for the letters and for taught her. Even she was her own boss. It used to been when all her girl friends was talking about We shall buy something sweet, maybe candy but surely not her, she used to say, I will spend money for true things, a needle or a thimble, cotton. She used to be very anxious, to buy sweet things, but for her was only bitter things, not for her was sun shine.

Three long year then when she was already twelve year old then she make up her mind. She thought I am old enough, and it is for me necessary to leave my home my born house my born city, and going far far away in the big world. Where she did not know. The reason while, she did not like to live in an atmosphere where you did not have your best friend. Her childhood heart was dreaming for something better. It was a summer day when children in her age was playing, but she thought, I am big enough, to know the big world.

Then was she saying to her father, I would like to go in the city, Bialystok, which her father's father was living there. He was looking at her with his holy eyes. Then when he heard what she was saying his face been white like from a death person. He was not able to talk for a very few minute, then he was saying to her, Child my, you only twelve year old. You shall think about such awful things, my little baby. Then he say to her, My dear, you know all young life behind me. I suppose my dear child, you understand plenty, it impossible, the reason, while you are so young and little you shall not thinking about such awful things. Certainly with perhaps a few years more when you are grown up then will wee, you should look for your future.

But she was series. She refused her dear father the wise man, then he was very disappointed from her answer. She can't stop to controlled her self about thinking and dreaming about such a big city like Bialystok. She thought, There is all the world, then she say, Nowhere else can't be so good like there, then she make up her mind she must to go. Her father was saying to her, My kind child, I try for you everything only you should be happy, and full of praise and

satisfied your young life, even your mother is death. She tell her father, Perhaps it is true but I can't help in me was guest I can't been in the same house, in the home where the dearest friend is in the other world.

When after all her excitement, she came in the big city Bialystok, then she was satisfied she had her wishes but still in the same minute she was very sorry. She was thinking, I am on the ground from the big deep ocean by myself, by my old grandfather. How young she was but full of courage.

How difference can be then in the same time. A short time later when she came the Russian Czar come, the holy William. Hundreds, thousands of people, from the whole city any child was not home any baby in the crib was out home whole the persons from the city went to see them. A Jewish shall like to have such opportunity, can you imagine, he shall see how it looks, a Russian William. With no question, you can be killed, it was very series, anyhow, everybody was standing hundreds of miles but who cares. It was impossible for her not to go. The Cossack with their club don't frighten her. Her grandfather will punish her, say good for her she should eat cold kipper, but anyhow she had plenty nerve to take bad things. She thought My grandfather is old and never in his life he saw such things which I saw today.

In that big city Bialystok, she find a new world, rich and poor, people full of pride and full of happiness, people full of worried and tragedies. She begin to thought about her future. She get a job. Her wages was, one dollar a week, plenty money, then a few month later, one dollar and a half, then until three dollar a week it was her regular wages.

Until she was fifteen year old, she worked and make her living. She was by her old grandfather, eat and sleep by him, she had a chance to save her wages which the dressmaker paid her. When a few years flies away then she get very much improved, certainly a regular person. It did not was any more, the little girl. People used to say she is very attractive.

Then she came back in her born city in her born house to her dear father. Before she was eighteen year old she was married. After her married gradually, she was rich not poor, but not only that was in her young dreams. It did not was the atmosphere in which she was raised. She was thinking about a life full of peace and to be happy and satisfied from each other. Only in her dreams she had all the wishes.

In the year 1905 she came to America to her husband. She was then twenty four year old. She brought with her three little children. When she come to America she saw that all the schools are free, everybody young old all of them, can enter school and learn the English language, and have a little education. She thought to herself, Such good things I can get, it is never too late, but under any circumstances it was impossible. When you are a mother from children you can not give away your free time to get education. Perhaps your free time is necessary for your children. It was for her a big tragedy. Whole her life was that only her wishes, she should have sometime the opportunity, to be able to get a little education. Then when her wishes can be trued, then it was entirely impossible. She think over with her self, which things shall she sacrifice, her children's good time or her own wishes. But she is sure whole the mothers, they suppose to sacrifice their ideals or pleasure for their children's good. So was her ideals. She give up everything. She make up her mind maybe she is not exist either, then she begin to try to forget.

She dream about education. She begin to wish for her children, she shall be able and they should get it then she going to be satisfied. What else can a mother's wishes been from God about her children it is enough for her the pleasure from her children. She think perhaps if her life would been, very lucky, then maybe would not been left for them. She suppose her dreams from her young time, the holy dreams, it is easy to forget. But by her self she feels very sorry while her young years flies away.

Then when old age come, is like the winter, come but summer never come back. Her mind begin and her eyes to look about the other, perhaps the better world. Unable to work she begin to miss her childhood years, even her young life did not been so much of luck and happy, but she her self was young strong attractive full of life.

It reminds her from her childhood which it is very long ago. She remember like it would been yesterday. It was a summer day it was in month May, all the flowers all the grass the trees all the birds, the persons every thing was alive then. Then her father was taking her and her sisters and her one brother he take all of them for the hand and he says, Come my little orphan, I will take you in such a place where is your best friend. He takes them to the cemetery where a big stone was stood and with big words was writing Here is in peace the holy soul from our mother. They all was stood by the big cold stone. She can't say a word. Her heart was wounded. Her mind was like she did not exist. She came and awaits to see her mother and she saw a big stone with her mother's name. She call her by name but she did not heard a answer.

Later she know the dreams from a girl when she is young, to be marriage and to have a friend in her life, who will respect her who will thinking about her happy life. It is young dreams, young fantasies, but she refuse to say it was not truth.

She is dreaming. She is the same little girl from the years which they past away, when she used to go in her father's where he was teaching. He standing in the middle of the synagogue and all the scholars by the big tables with the big books, and her father explaining God's Torah, and she a little girl was stood behind the door for long long hours, seeing and heard, dreaming it is the paradise.

In the old house so quiet and everywhere, so darkness. The children are flies away. Nobody home. The quiet from the night makes more quiet, and sadness. It is very long when in her little city in her father's house in the dark nights she used to read and write for the shine.

—Adapted by Lee Sharkey
From the ms. of Sarah Kurland

Angels in the Snow

"Mr. Cooper?" A tap on my shoulder tugs me out of the T.V. "A friend is here to see you," Mary K., the afternoon nurse, announces.

"Who is it?"

"I don't know, she didn't say."

I turn back to the hospital scene on television. A woman is pleading with a handsome doctor. He is thinking with his hand on his chin.

"Mr. Cooper, why don't you come see who it is? She's waiting in the rotunda for you. I said you'd be right down."

"I don't want to see anyone."

"It might make you feel good. Why don't you go talk to her for a minute."

The T.V. woman walks out of the doctor's office. "O.K., O.K., I'll go!"

"That's a good boy."

"I'm not a boy. I'm twenty-seven."

"Have a good visit, Mr. Cooper," she says, smiling. She walks toward the nurses' station and disappears behind the glass, all starch-white uniform and powerful tits. As I pad down the corridor, I make the brilliant observation that she is the one who's crazy in this looney bin, not me. I feel comforted.

In the rotunda Sarah, my ex-whatever-she-is, or -was, appears small, young, like Alice in Wonderland. Alice in *Strickland!* Danny in *Strickland*. "Hi, Alice."

She is frightened but she controls herself. "How are you doing, Danny?" she asks.

We sit down, I on a plastic sofa, she on an armchair — a distance between us. Insanity is a communicable disease. "Fine, fine." I smile, because she wants to see me smile. A sign of my improvement.

"Good, I'm glad to hear it." She fidgets with the clasp on her key-ring. "And how's your roommate?"

I think of Joh, who hasn't said a word since I arrived seven days ago. Or was it eight. He hasn't gotten up except to go to the bathroom. "A laugh a minute."

Sarah laughs nervously. "Well, I'm glad you get along. It could be worse, you know."

The rotunda is bright with sunlight. Residents of all ages are sitting, some alone, some with visitors. I look at Sarah, separate. It's not that she's afraid of catching something from me. It's that she has left me. I remember now, we used to be lovers. We used to be close. Now her thick winter coat protects her like armor.

There is a taint of urine in the air. Sarah sniffs in anxiety, but says nothing. "Do you ever come down here? It seems like a nice room, sunny, lots of space. Peaceful." She smiles and stretches her feet into a patch of sunlight. "It's cold outside, you know."

"Is it?"

"Yes, but at least the sun is shining."

I wanted to marry this woman. We lived together for two years, slept together for five. And now it is over and she has found someone else. Simple.

We talk of the weather. Maybe the road to being normal is to forget dealing with someone intimately and talk of the weather.

"The sun is nice. It's warm and soothing," I smile.

Sarah turns to me, pleased with my comment. It is the first time I have made sense today. Yes, I am learning. Lesson one, complete.

Sarah is gone, her obligatory visit completed. It will probably be her last, now that she knows I've survived the split. Bruises heal. I sit alone on the couch now, watching visitors come and go. Residents totter about aimlessly. In the middle of the rotunda a can on a table sparkles in the sunlight. I walk over to the table and pick it up, noticing Cola has spilled onto the table. With my handkerchief I wipe up the liquid and throw the can into the wastebasket.

"Dan?" Nurse Mary K. She is smiling.

"What?" Bitch.

"Dan, you don't have to bark at me. I just want to thank you for wiping up that mess. It was thoughtful of you."

"That's O.K. I saw some visitor leave it. Pig!"

"No one can afford to be a pig, Dan. We're all people."

"But visitors are on the outside. They're making it."

"Maybe some aren't making it, did you ever think of that? And besides, this can be the outside if you want it to be." I am impressed with her words. Her attention feels like warm strokes and I am a cat on her lap in the sun. "I'll tell you what. Why don't you and I make this hospital our outside. You do it for you and I'll do it for me. We'll work on it together. How does that sound?"

Sure, let's make a game out of it. You do this, and I'll do that, clap our hands, tra-la, tra-la. "I'll think about it, Mary K."

"Good," she says. "By the way, my last name's Kenyon. You let me know."

The outside, this is the outside, my reality. O.K., I'll try, try to forget the world out there for now, forget about Sarah. She's gone away. Walked out on me for someone else. That's O.K., fine with me. I'll concentrate on this world here, the walls and rooms and corridors of Strickland, the medication, the nurses, Dr. Su. That's what Mary Kenyon, R.N., said to do. Become secure here, then worry about the others. There are people here. Life. The rotunda is the world. The world is rotund. Round. The T.V. is loud in the corner. Some resi-

dents are captured by the reality of hero-cops arresting drug addicts. A young woman resident in a burgundy sweater is sitting on the sofa reading a book. I have seen her at lunch. She always smiles pleasantly, but she never joins the other residents.

I look at her as I walk across the room. Her face is soft and pale. She appears tired. Brown hair tied back in a tight ponytail as if to pull back on her eyelids to keep them open.

"Hi," I say. We are surprised when our eyes meet.

"Hello," she says softly, and her dark brown eyes return to her book.

I shuffle toward the corridor and from the reception area look back. She has returned to her book.

I am sitting in the rotunda. I am bored. I sit and watch "Mama" walk arm-in-arm with a young retarded woman down the corridor. A nurse whisks by quickly, preoccupied. An old man, Frank, slouches in his wheelchair, drooling, pulling on the cloth restraints.

The young woman in the burgundy sweater eclipses him and enters without seeing me. She hesitates before one chair, then decides on the one in the sun next to it. She closes her eyes, bathing her lids in the sun for a meditative moment, then awakens, opens a black notebook and writes rapidly. She closes the book gently at the end of the thought and looks out the window in peaceful yet almost sad reflection.

I pad silently across the room. Announce my presence with a sniffle. She doesn't turn. "I noticed you were writing. Is it a poem?"

She continues to look out the window. "No, not really. I keep a journal. A diary. Someday I think I'll publish it under the title 'Diary of a Madwoman!'" She smiles. "I'm mad, you know."

"Aren't we all? Do you mind if I sit down?"

"If you want."

I feel accepted. "My name's Dan."

"Sylvia."

"Sylvia. That's pretty. Sylvia."

"I think it comes from the Latin *silva*. Forest, woods, deep dark woods."

"With cool wind rushing through the pines."

"How poetic." She looks at me. "Daniel. It comes from the Bible. Do you know the Book of Daniel?"

"I guess I used to in Sunday School, but it's been a while."

"The lion's den. Don't worry, you'll survive it." She smiles and looks out the window again.

The snow is brilliant. "Isn't the snow pure and clean? No one's touched it yet. It would be perfect for making angels in the snow."

"Angels?" She frowns.

"You know, just your average angels. Harp players and wing flappers." I fan my arms in quick short strokes, hovering near her.

She turns to me. "Do you make angels in the snow?"

"When I was a kid. I can't remember when the last time was."

She hesitates. "I made one last winter. It was beautiful." I can feel her recede into memory, looking out the window at a spot in the snow. She becomes still like marble.

"You know," I offer, "I wish I were an artist so I could paint your portrait right now and capture your look next to the window in the late afternoon light. With the snow outside."

"I would be happier if you would make me an angel."

That evening I draw back the curtains slowly. The room becomes blue from the moonlight. John's eyes open. "It's O.K., John, I'm going to step out for a few minutes and make some angels in the snow." His eyebrows tense. "No, I'm not crazy. It's a present for someone. It'll be O.K., but if they ask you where I am, mum's the word. I know I can trust you, buddy. Mum's the word." I pat him on the shoulder, ready to embark on my mission. "Take care."

The hall is dim and deserted. I walk quietly along the wall, toward the back staircase which leads to the basement. The firedoor comes closer and closer. Please don't see me, Mrs. Nightnurse. Don't hear the door squeak. The firedoor gives and I am in the cool stairway, descending slowly. At the bottom I take the hall to the left past a dark arts and crafts room. Ahead a square of blue-white light. The basement exit door. I survey the parking lot. A few cars of the night nurses. I prop the door with a piece of ice. The air bites at my skin. I crouch low next to the building and sit, then lie back, spreading my arms and legs out, I fan them gently, moving them slowly, beating my wings. Gently, slowly, to get the right arc. The snow is cold on my head. Some is melting in my socks. I smile broadly watching my arms, lifting my head to observe my legs. It will be a beautiful angel. I stand up, carefully, and brush myself off, then squat under her window, hoping the nearness of the building will warm me, protect me from the wind. I am shaking, but I love my angel, glistening in the arc light, sparkling in the night. Silent night. The angel needs a friend. I climb into the snow next to the angel, my fingers touching the angel's and gently move my arms and legs, small arcs growing to flight. I look up. The stars are bright, small and intense like diamonds on black velvet. My legs and arms stop. It is quiet and peaceful and all I can hear is the wind in the branches. For the first

time I realize that I smell the snow, its dampness and coldness. I eat some, letting it dissolve and trickle down my neck. My senses are alive for the first time in weeks.

I ease the basement door shut behind me. The building seems very warm, and I stand at the bottom of the stairs, thawing for a minute, listening. Snow is melting from my clothes. I take off my shoes and carry them under my arm as I ascend the stairs.

The corridor is clear. I open my door and strangely a shoe, as if someone has knocked it from under my arm, falls in slow motion and crashes, splashing melting snow on the shiny waxed floor. I scramble for the shoe, run into my room and shut the door, undress in one sweep, clothes flying under my bed, and pull the covers over me. I shiver and I am afraid. They will see the snow. They will punish me. They will never let me go. Never.

Nurse's shoes squeak in the hall, louder. They stop outside the door, continue toward the stairway, become louder again and hesitate outside my door. I hold my breath. The squeaking becomes fainter, dissolving into the night.

"Good morning, Sylvia, how's the novel coming?"

She looks up from her journal. "Oh, hello, Dan, sit down. I have something to show you." I sit on the sofa. "Don't look yet," she says, holding the page away from me. She holds her tongue to the side as she writes. Her hand motions are large and I realize she is drawing. She smiles, looks up impishly, then says, "O.K." She hands me the journal. Two angels together, like twin butterflies pinned on velvet in a collection.

I grin. "Flying angels."

"But what kind of flying angels?"

I try to sustain her enthusiasm. Her cheeks are pink with energy. She is eager and more alive than I have ever seen her before. "Uhhh . . . let's see. . ."

"Come on."

"Uhh . . . they must be friends, because they're flying together holding hands."

She grabs the books and scribbles quickly and pushes the book back. The names Daniel and Sylvia are written below the angels. I feel my smile and I am pleased.

"Do you like it?" she asks.

"It's the nicest drawing anyone has ever made for me."



She smiles and removes the page from the book, handing it to me. "For your wall." Our eyes meet. Her eagerness cools as if she has remembered something. She says nervously, "I have to be going now."

She rises with her journal and crosses the rotunda without greeting anyone, disappearing around the corner. I look at the drawing. On the back there is a journal entry. It talks of the night before. Strange noises outside her window. Stepping quietly to the curtain in the dark. Peeping through the slit, watching Daniel. A dervish in the winter wind, beating his wings in the snow, conjuring up angels to dance at midnight in the cold, clear light of the moon.

Sylvia lifts a spoonful of soup to her mouth, blowing on it gently and wincing, as she eats it. "So how did your meeting with Dr. Su go this morning?"

"Oh, all right."

"No, it didn't, I can tell. What did she say? Are you hopelessly insane? Raving mad, a lunatic for life?"

I smile. "No." Somehow I have the feeling Sylvia knows what I am about to say, as if she's been through the scene a million times before. "She said if all goes well I will be free to go at the end of next week." Sylvia eats her soup without looking up. "I mean I'll have to continue meeting with her once a week at her office in Boston. But she said I could go out now and go from here and start to reshape my life. I'll still be on some medication. But she'll cut back slowly." I laugh. "Sort of like a drug addict." Sylvia sips her soup. "So what do you think?" I ask.

"I think it's great, Dan. I mean eventually you're going to have to make a go of it, and probably the sooner the better."

"Do you mean that?"

"Sure I do." She pushes her soup bowl aside and looks out the window. "The sun is beautiful on the snow."

"But I don't want to leave you. Leave here."

She smiles at me. "Spring is coming, Dan. The snow will be gone. The grass will grow again. We've gone through the winter together. You've helped me do that. And five weeks ago I didn't even know you. Five weeks from now, you won't know me anymore."

"That's a stupid thing to say, really stupid. If I do leave, I'll still come to visit you. And who knows, we might get to know each other better and when you feel you can leave here, maybe things will work out."

"Leave here?"

"You do want to leave here, don't you?"

"Yes, I guess so. I haven't thought much about it."

"Anyway, there's no reason we can't go on seeing each other. Is there?"

"Dan, you won't visit me."

"Sure I will. Or don't you want me to?"

She plays with her spoon. "Please, Dan, just promise me one thing."

"Anything."

"No, seriously. Just one favor of you when you leave here."

"If I leave."

"When you leave. What I want you to do is this. Next winter, when there's fresh snow on the ground, and you think I'll least expect it, come over here at night, when I'm asleep, and make two beautiful angels in the snow. Will you do that for me?"

"It would be nice if you would help me make them."

"Will you do that for me?"

"Yes, I promise."

"Thank you, Dan, thank you very much."

"Hello, Mother," I say, getting up to greet her. She has sad eyes but smiles, glancing beyond me around the rotunda.

"Oh, Dan, how are you feeling?" She hugs me. That familiar smell, I have known longer than any other smell — her skin. And her fur coat. I can feel its warmth and softness through my clothes.

"All right." We sit.

"Are you sleeping well?"

"Yes." I want to tell her about the angels in the snow. If I tell her this, maybe she will let me stay at Strickland longer. I want to tell her of Sylvia, but then she would know.

"Well, Dr. Su and I have been talking. That's why I'm a few minutes late. She feels that you are strong enough to come home now."

"Home?"

"Well, what I mean is we both thought that apartment of yours would be too depressing for you. Sarah's moved her things out. And your father's moved all your things back into our house. For now. We thought it would be best if you came home to me and Dad for a week or two until you went to work again. and could find your own place."

I reach out and touch her brown fur coat, the one that used to excite me when I was young. Sunlight sparkles on the hairs, flowing over it like tinsel. I remember as a child how I used to spread the coat out on their wide bed in the warm afternoon sun and stroke my cheeks against the warm fur. "I don't know if I'm ready to leave."

She examines the other residents. "Maybe you and I can't know when the right time is for you to leave. But Dr. Su feels that you've collected . . ."

I watch her mouth move. Dr. Su feels, Dr. Su feels, Dr. Su . . . "Mother, I don't give a damn what Dr. Su feels!"

Her face puffs as if she is going to cry, but she composes herself and sits up straight. She inspects an older man, as he walks by talking, shaking his head, unaware of us. "Well, personally I think you'd be better off with us at home. It's a much healthier atmosphere than here. Don't get me wrong, Dan. Thank God they were here to take you in, in your condition, Lord knows I couldn't do anything and your father . . . And Sarah wasn't about to . . ." She stops talking, holding back the tears.

"I don't know about work."

"It's O.K., honey. I've called Mr. Simms at the print shop already. He said when you're ready, you can give him a call."

"That's great," I say sarcastically and look out at a passing car.

"I think it is. He has no obligation to hold your job for you. I think it's pretty decent of the man."

"I suppose so."

"He even said what a good person you were and that's why he's holding your job for you. He's helping you, Dan, don't you see that? You need help. Dan, let some people help you."

She is looking at me with big eyes, pleading. Her coat glistens in the sun, so soft and warm. She knows that her pleading eyes overpower me. That I love that coat. It's almost a trap. She leans forward and wipes her nose on a handkerchief. Her coat ripples like brown silk. "O.K. I'd like to think about it a little."

"Fine, fine." She smiles.

"We can talk about it Friday when you come."

"Fine, Dan. That will be good."

She embraces me. I hug her in her coat, taking in a deep breath, remembering that winter afternoon, the smell of the warm fur. "I always loved that coat, you know," I say.

(continued on page 10)

She smiles. "I know. I know. It makes me happy to hear you say that. I feel as if I have my Danny back, the Danny I knew years ago." She puts on her gloves and we walk silently to the front door.

"See you Friday," I say.

"Same time?"

I nod and she goes out the glass doors into the sunlight. As she walks down the front walk toward her car, I know that I will be moving in with them in a few days. I have given in, and I feel anger, because I know she, too, knows I have given in. I think I detect a triumphant gesture in her walk, as she crosses the parking lot. I am angry because I have always let myself be overpowered and manipulated by her.

I turn, my eyes meet Sylvia's and she turns quickly back to the T.V. which she pretends to be watching. She has been watching us talk. She understands. Our conspiracy against her and Strickland.

I have been living with my parents two weeks. Nothing has happened. I have seen Dr. Su once. I almost asked her how Sylvia was doing. As the T.V. flickers in front of me, I wonder if Sylvia is sitting in the rotunda at this moment, writing, looking out the window.

I have not visited her. I think of her in bed at night, as I lie alone. But I have not visited her. I wonder what embracing her would be like, Sylvia, deep dark woods, with cool wind rushing through the pines. . .

I ascend the front hall stairs. Mother is vacuuming my bedroom, where I have always slept. I enter her and my father's bedroom. The afternoon sun is streaming in on the bed. I go to the closet, fold back the accordion door. The silky fur coat is hanging there. I've never understood why she keeps this coat in their bedroom and not in the front hall downstairs. I remove it from the hanger and spread it out on the bed, fur up in the sun. I lie back on it, smiling, smelling my childhood, my fantasies.

"Mother?" I call. The vacuum whirs. Then it stops and I call, "Mother," again.

"Yes, Danny, what is it?" and she walks down the hall and appears in the doorway. She looks at me strangely. "What are you doing, Danny?"

"Come here, Mother."

She steps into the bedroom but stops. "What is it, Danny?" She is struggling to remain calm.

"Mother, I just thought of how nice it would be if I could fulfill a fantasy of mine. And maybe one of yours."

She swallows and pulls her graying hair away from her forehead. "What do you mean, honey, I don't understand." She looks strangely at my hand, as I trace circles in the fur of her coat.

I smile mischievously at her. She smiles uncomfortably. I wink and unhook my belt buckle. "Mother, let's make love. On your warm fur coat. In the sun."

Many residents at Strickland remember me. I have a new roommate who is sixty and talks incessantly about his estranged wife. My first afternoon back I meet Sylvia in the rotunda. As I approach her, she smiles. "I never thought you would come to visit me, Dan. But you did. It makes me happy."

"I'm back to stay for a while. Room forty-seven, east wing."

Sylvia smiles gently and shakes her head. She turns and looks out the window. "It's all so crazy, you know?" She watches a bird land on the sapling and opens her journal and begins writing. I follow as she writes, "Hey, friend, there's fresh snow out there. Do you feel up to making some angels in the snow tonight?" Then she signs it "Love, Sylvia."

I take her hand. She hesitates at first, then lets her hand rest in mine timidly. She looks around nervously, then our eyes meet, and she grins shyly. I squeeze her hand. "It's a date."

My new roommate talks incessantly by day and snores soundly by night. The room is dark and his snoring muffles the sounds of my dressing. I open the door, the hall is empty. In ten minutes, twelve midnight, I am to meet Sylvia in the basement as agreed. I creep along the wall. A lamp is burning at the front desk which separates my wing from Sylvia's. She will descend the stairway on her wing, identical to the stairway on mine. We will meet in the basement one floor below where the wings meet, below the night nurse's desk. I retrace the steps I made five weeks earlier. January. Now it is the end of February. Danny, back at Strickland. Sylvia, still at Strickland. Now together at Strickland. Three, two, one, the fire door gives, the hollow metal stairs, the darkness, the empty arts and crafts room. I see the square of blue light at the end of the hall. I turn right, following the wall to where the wings intersect and wait against the wall. My watch says five minutes of twelve.

It is quiet in the basement at night. Cool. The halls are all lighted dimly. A refrigerator whirs in the canteen. Somewhere water runs through a pipe, then stops. A machine hums behind a closed door marked — *custodian*.

A squeak to the right. I drop back around the corner, out of sight, flattening myself against the wall. Slowly I peek around the corner. A thin figure appears in the fire door at the end of the hall. It hesitates then walks toward me. The shoes squeak like a nurse's, but as the figure comes closer I see they are not nurse's shoes. They are crepe-soled boots. It is Sylvia.

I step out into the light of the hall. She stops, surprised. "Hi, it's me, Danny," I say.

"Oh." She is relieved. "You scared me." Then she is laughing as we walk up to each other and stop. She is wearing a knitted hat, and her collar is turned up. "I couldn't find my gloves in the dark."

"That's O.K. Warm your hands in mine." And I take her hands. She looks at her hands in mine. I kiss her hands, then I kiss them again. Suddenly in the dim light our cheeks are rubbing. Then we kiss lightly. She pulls away smiling.

"I'm glad I'm back, Sylvia, with you," I say. "Mother's fur. It was awful."

She seals my lips with her finger. "Shhh. Let's just go outside now and dance with the angels in the light of the moon."

David Reichenbacher
Bangor

Flight

*You could not spell
your teeth protruded
but you had red hair,
exciting ideas. You
held my hand when
John Kennedy died.
Once, you briefly
touched my breast,
quivered more than I.
You talked about your
someday PhD in sociology,
an easy field for fame.*

*When I saw your picture in Time
I knew you had made it,
at Harvard, no less.
You must have found that girl
willing to put you through grad. school.
I wonder more about her
than about you.*

JoAnne Zywna Kerr
Rumford

Manifesto

*hell, let's set it up right here
there's no more white marble anyway*

*this waitress will do for a virgin
when she bent to adjust her sandal strap
her hair slipped forward to her cheeks
her back was the curve of centuries*

*though she is young and
forgets the salad
she shall not go unrewarded*

*as I say
let's set it up right here
any place will do for the temple*

Sylvester Pollet
E. Holden

Patriot's Day at the Baker's Table

*The braided woman rubs her knee
an absent minded gesture
while the man unfurls
blueprints and explains*

*She had the day off so
she planted peas on two sides
of a fish net fence.
The architect was locked out.*

*He didn't mind
until the trumpets stopped
and he found the library closed too.
Now she tells him she is pregnant.*

*Some fathers open secret bank accounts
Some fathers eat the placenta.
I know one who kept it in the freezer
for a year, until he lost interest.*

*The man rubs his temples
rolls up the drawings, mentions bread.
That's right. It's Monday. She rises,
looks like a mermaid stepping out of paint.*

Allison Deming
South Portland

Walking on Popham Beach

*looking back along the arc of sand
the tide has left to dry
brown above its blue reaches,
i see our tracks as the tracks of frail birds.
the ideagraph of distance is a curve
we walked to be alone here*

*before these summer places,
the clapboard and gull-white dreams
still unoccupied. back on the rocks with you
i waited through the morning
while the sun struck each facet of the sea.
beaches are epochal it seems*

*the gravity of something happening here
is greater where the land and ocean
trade their old sighs among the broken
kelp and empty shells.
i think if you will just turn
so that those diamonds find your eyes,*

*i won't have to tell you what is clotted
on my tongue like salt
but i want to tell you
there is one more joy to make of this —
the day, the air, the sun, the waves.
you clutch your breath a little*

*and your face warms to some horizon
where a star, sleeping, has broken.*

David Adams
Waterville

Brass Bed

*When we saw
the antique brass bed
in the shop,
I said
oh, god, I'm in love.
Criticism
jammed against your teeth
like pulpwood.
It's a piece of junk
you said.
Later on
you bought me
a can of Brasso.*

Ardeana Hamlin Knowles
Hampden Highlands

Candy Gum English

In the summer of 1965 I went to Teheran as a foreign exchange student and lived with an Iranian family. I was seventeen. It was hot that summer — Teheran, on the edge of the desert, is always hot in the summer — dry, dusty, and over 110 degrees by noon. Our days took their rhythm from the heat and my American presence. If we wanted to play tennis — the Embassy had beautiful red clay courts — we got up at 5:00. If we decided to go shopping, we left the house at 9:30 and came home by 11:00.

Sometimes I borrowed my Iranian sister's old one-piece bathing suit and we went swimming at a large public pool. Only Americans at the Teheran Hilton wore bikinis. The public pool was open to women from 9:00 to 12:00; men had it the rest of the day. We went sightseeing in the mornings, too. We visited two of the Shah's palaces, inspected a domed mosque and the royal jewels, locked in the air-conditioned basement vault at the Bank of Iran. "This is our Fort Knox," the tour guide smiled, flashing a gold front tooth.

When I told my Iranian mother that I wanted to buy a Persian rug, she took me to the Bazaar. Although it was nearly 105 degrees on the street, I wore a long-sleeved blouse; Mama said an Englishwoman had once been stoned at the Bazaar in Qum. She was wearing a sleeveless dress. Such a thing would never happen in Teheran, Mama told me — Qum was a "backward Holy City" — but she didn't want me to take any chances.

Mama's brother-in-law's first cousin was a rug merchant. He led us down glass-covered alleyways in the Bazaar, through four-story warehouses where carpets were stacked from floor to ceiling, waiting for shipment to Europe, the United States, and the Arab World. I picked out a 5x7 foot prayer rug, from a pile of rugs with cream-colored backgrounds. Mama's brother-in-law's first cousin assured me that a little girl had spent at least a year of her life making my rug, maybe longer. He flipped it over and showed me the back. The more knots per square inch, the finer the carpet. Little girls made the best rugs — they had tiny fingers and learned to tie knots quickly and didn't mind working 12 to 15 hours a day, he said — but by the time they reached eight or nine their fingers were too big, and their younger sisters replaced them.

Mama's brother-in-law's first cousin was surprised I chose a rug with a pale background. Most Americans wanted the dark maroons, greens, and blues. He showed me small square rugs with portraits of President Kennedy knotted in, or the Shah, and the Empress, Farah-Diba. I ended up buying a smaller, paler carpet than the one I'd first picked out. It cost me \$25.00, haggled down from \$45.00 because Mama was a relative, a clever bargainer, and I was her American daughter. The rug merchant shook his head as he rolled up my rug. It had only about thirty knots per inch. But, I told myself uneasily, it was cheaper than the first one, and the little girl who made it hadn't had to work so hard.

The father of my Iranian family was a semi-retired doctor and a colonel in the Iranian Army. At 5:00 PM every day, after we had tea, watermelon, and pistachio nuts and watched "Bonanza" with Persian dubbed in, he went downstairs to his office. For two hours his patients would open the rusty metal door leading from the street and walk through the garden; old women clutching veils of sprigged cotton around their hips as they passed the fountain where carp swam in circles, splashing water on the blue tiled path. The women never looked up at me watching them from the balcony. They would disappear into the office and come out half an hour later, a medicine bottle in one hand, a scrap of paper in the other, their veils clenched tightly between their teeth.

Next to the office was a shower room, where Papa installed a Western flush toilet for me. On the other side of the office there was a room so dark, after the glare of the street, that I walked past it for two weeks without ever seeing the cook crouching on the dirt floor, blowing brazier coals and shaking pots. She made shish-kebobs, stews with lamb, chicken, and split peas, and huge platters of rice we stirred raw egg into upstairs at the table. It was long-grained white rice, grown in the half-mile wide strip of fields by the Caspian Sea, separated from Teheran and the desert by a mountain range. Moist, aromatic rice, rich with saffron and golden pan drippings that looked like caramel glazing.

Every morning Mama boiled an egg for me in the top of the samovar, upstairs in the dining room, next to the TV set. Papa believed that an egg and a pint of cow's milk for breakfast would keep me healthy. They did. I was sick only once when I ate ice cream from a street vendor. Violent cramping, vomiting, and diarrhea. Two days in the shower room. Afterwards I felt fine, but I'd lost my appetite. Food made me nauseous. Papa was upset. Mama worried. The cook thought it was her fault, then decided that all Americans were fools. The American Girl wouldn't eat; she didn't like lamb; she didn't like rice, good, Iranian rice. I was an embarrassment and reproach.

My Iranian sister loved Frank Sinatra, the French singer Dalida, and movies. We went to one at least four times a week. We saw Charlton Heston deliver the Ten Commandments in Persian. We saw Japanese monster films and Indian romances, starring Raj Kapoor, "Gidget Goes Hawaiian", "A Hundred and One Dalmatians" and "Francis Joins the Navy", with Francis the Talking Mule.

Before the movie started, everyone stood up for the National Anthem. Music blared from loudspeakers under our seats; images flashed on the screen — close-ups of the Shah in his Army uniform; gashes of white smoke as the Iranian Air Force, flying American fighter bombers, streaked through a brilliant blue sky; a portrait of the Royal Family at the Summer Palace; mosques and minarets tiled blue, like water, or the desert sky. The images never changed. The sky was always blue, and after the movies Ma-ma-da-lay drove us to the Iran-American Society for hamburgers, or up into the cool hills of Shemran to play mini-golf at the Hotel Vanak.

Ma-ma-da-lay was the houseboy, gardener, and chauffeur. He had a shaved head and a wide, mindless grin. He was slow in the house and garden — Mama was always yelling at him to hurry up — but he loved to drive. Whenever Ma-ma-da-lay had to stop the old red English Ford in traffic, little boys stuck their fists through the open window and tried to sell me candy, gum, or lottery tickets. "Candy Gum English! Candy Gum English!" they cried, as if it were my name, grabbing at my clothes, pulling my skin, leaving marks. Their eyes gleamed, but had lines at the corners and furrows, like old men's. The Candy Boys slept under newspapers outside our walled garden. I dreamed about them and woke up sweating, feeling their fingers pinching my hand.

Beggars came at me from all over the city; my blue eyes drew them like magnets. Fragments of humanity. Men with amputated legs or hands chopped off. Cripples in wheeled carts and on crutches. Old women with empty eye sockets. But most of them were very young children. "Don't give them anything, they're all liars," my Iranian sister said.

I didn't know what to do. The children overwhelmed me. I was embarrassed when they asked me for money; I didn't know whether to give them a coin or not; if they really needed it; if they were making a fool of me, or both. "Mama gives to please Allah sometime, but those beggars are — how you call? — pretend. That boy — he straps his leg behind to look like one-leg. It's a lie."

We didn't have beggars in Princeton, New Jersey. Nobody slept outside my bedroom window under a newspaper and drank out of the gutter. I had never seen poor people up close; I had never seen suffering like this; it had never thrown itself in my face and demanded a reaction.

My Iranian sister once pushed one of the Candy Boys away from the car so hard that he fell on the sidewalk and skinned both knees. My Iranian sister began to teach me Persian. She talked about Mohammed, said her father was called a Haggi, because he had been on a pilgrimage to Mecca, and showed me miniature paintings of walled gardens in Paradise, filled with exotic birds and trees, flowing with rivers and cool fountains. Once I asked her to write "Ma-ma-da-lay" in Persian. I stared at the words for a long time, then copied them down the side of my notebook. Knowing that his name was in fact "Mohammed-Ali", after Mohammed, the Prophet, and his son-in-law, Ali, made me look at him as a human being for the first time.

I loved Iran; I hated it. Moses speaking Persian. Tiny fingers knotting rugs. Mini-golf at the Hotel Vanak. Fort Knox stored in the Peacock Throne. I didn't understand anything that summer. The images still don't fit. Maybe it was the language, the heat, being seventeen. The Ponderosa Ranch. The Shah smiling at American jets. Fanta orange soda and bottles of watered-down yogurt on the dinner table. Faces pressing up against the windows outside Customs at midnight when I landed at the Teheran airport. People everywhere, crushing me with four bouquets of coral-colored irises. Pointing. Pinching. Calling out. Pushing licorice and Chiclets gum in my face. I tried not to look the Candy Boys in the eye, but I couldn't get away. I still can't. They had a name for me. *Candy Gum English.*

Kate Kennedy
Portland

The Veteran

I'm waking up. The room unfamiliar. The phone rings. I scramble over the bed to get to it.

"Yes?"
"Stratton, here, Doc. They're bringing up a veteran for you to see."
"Great, what's his complaint?"
"Well, his sons say he's been drinking. They found him at his house unconscious and brought him in."
Fuck, I react. It's not worth it. If he wants to drink himself to death, who am I to stop him. His choice.

At 4 a.m. my body complains as it gets dressed. I feel rheumatic, old, hung over. Out in the hall the lights are a freezing white, the silence thunderous. Hurrying along, I review the causes of unconsciousness.
In the examining room an unshaven, yellow man lies unconscious in a dirty sleeping bag on a stretcher, blood stained vomitus ringing his mouth — *Harry Foster*. I check. He's breathing and has a pulse.

"So what's the story?" Abruptly, because I'm tired.
"Some of his friends told us we'd better check on him." In flannel shirts, soiled pants and battered steel shank boots the two sons stand by like they just delivered a load of cord wood.
"When was his last drink? When was he last awake?"
"Maybe two days. No one really knows."
The rule of thumb — the farther out in the woods, the more whiskey and cigarettes.

They leave one thought more.
"He lives alone. Drinks. He's not so bad. He raised us all."
I brush my hands over the gray slicked hair, scrutinize and feel the dusty neck. His lungs need suctioning. His coma is profound.

In the Intensive Care Unit we connect him to the usual monitoring apparatus — intravenous lines, nasogastric tubes, urinary catheters. By 8 a.m. I know Mr. Foster has hepatic coma, a coagulation disease due to liver damage, anemia. But no active bleeding. At 10 a.m., just before the consulting physician to the residents makes his rounds, a last check reveals one thing more.
Rounds today are with Dr. Lewis Mencken, a thorough physician and gentleman.

"This is Harry Foster." I present his case.
"Well, I think that dilated left pupil makes us all wonder if he hasn't suddenly bled into his head," says Mencken.
I drag the harried radiologist to the intensive care unit to see Harry. Our patient lies in bed — several days of whiskers, yellow nails, cadaverous limbs and a definitely dilated left eye.

"I think we are trying to resurrect a ghost," snarls Fregusi.
Dr. Fregusi wears bow ties, high-water pants, acetate socks and hush-puppies. His department is perpetually being renovated. Wires hang from ceilings and piping flanks the wall joists. Patients read magazines, stretcher traffic jams the hall. Harry has to be done first.

We put Harry on the X-Ray table under the roentgen ray tube. I can barely feel his head through my lead gloves. Fregusi enters gowned and gloved, places a catheter in Harry's groin to inject dye to be photographed as it passes through Harry's cranial vessels.

The automatic dye injector and frame changer for the X-Ray machine start together. Each frame produces the noise equivalent of a dumpster being emptied into a garbage truck, 20 frames in 15 seconds. Machine out of position.
"Shit," says Fregusi.
The dye injector is repositioned for visualization of the second side. It proves difficult. Dr. Fregusi advances and retracts the catheter. The redness of his face outlines the V-shaped front of his crew cut. We hold our breath and wait.
Thirty minutes later the catheter flips in, the 20 films ram through.
"Normal study," says Dr. Fregusi.
"Good for Mr. Foster. No surgery for bleeding brains, rescued from under the knife."

"He's all yours, Dr. Simpson."
Over the next seven days Harry's right groin develops a huge blood pocket, bleeding brought on by his coagulation disease more than the catheterization in X-Ray. The surgeons are unwilling to attempt a correction which would require another incision into the clotted mess. So, we are left with pressure, sandbagging the wound. Every day I mark the extent of Harry's hematoma. It is like keeping track of flood waters. He crests when his hematoma extends almost from knee to armpit.

Finally Harry awakes one day to find himself secure in bed with sandbags over his groin. Wonders of modern medicine. Since consciousness does not equal comprehension I decide to test orientation.
"Mr. Foster, I need to find out if you know where you are. Can you tell me?"
He stares up at me.
"Do you know where you are?"
No response.
"Are you. . . ."
"I'm at the V.A."

"Right, right. That's good. Is this the administration building, hospital, or cafeteria?"

"Well, it couldn't be the hospital or else I'd feel better." He grins sarcastically. V.A. medicine, I think. Anyway, sounds like Harry's synapses still have some snap.

Checking in on Harry becomes a rewarding part of my daily routine. I asked him how he puts aside his troubles so well. He says it's a problem of mind over matter. "If you don't mind, it don't matter."
It helped his orientation to watch the staff. He asks if I was around or sleeping. "Is Dr. Simpson sleeping around?" He lies back, laughing, awaiting whatever information this might bring.

Harry gets better. When I finally move him from the Intensive Care Unit to the regular floor I feel that this hospital has accomplished something. The recovery of Harry's cheerful spirit proves it. He gets down to the ward, still flat on his back, sand bags on his groin, but thinking clearly, anemia corrected and wounds healing.
"What do you think of the fourth floor, Harry?"
He pauses, grins, "I'll tell ya, Doc, ceilings about the same."
His smiling eyes take in his new roommates and I know things are a lot better.

Harry begins walking after a week. An extraordinary recovery. Visiting the beds and gatherings of other patients, he and the other old soldiers swap stories about their campaigns. His sons tell me he'd been imprisoned by the Japanese, had done the "Death March" from Corregidor to Luzon. Said his spirit in the face of death kept him alive.
"Doc, it's about time I was allowed to go outside."
"You're weak Mr. Foster. You're still healing."
"Sure Doc, but I'll heal faster with a little activity."

So we let Harry out on the V.A. grounds. The old buildings were once a resort hotel built by a granite magnate to attract wealthy vacationers. The pools and grounds glow in the late summer evenings. Harry insures himself time outside each night by bringing rags to polish the cannon. Everyone thinks this a touching expression of patriotism until a bottle of whiskey was found in the muzzle.
"Harry?"
"I just want to see the geese come into Merrymeeting Bay one more year, Doc. I don't want to hang on forever."
"It's a waste of life."

"I ain't proud of the drinking, Doc, but if I'd known I was going to live this long I would have started sooner. I give you no bullshit about quitting."
I discharged Harry three weeks from his arrival. He will be back, a swallow to Capistrano, hard hit but holding on, the eternal soldier. I hope I won't be there for the end

Michael Szela
Belgrade Lakes

Elementary

*He has put a raisin in his nose
while watching TV in the morning
with breakfast, unseen by us,
and as we're getting ready to leave,
he gets up and says
"I've got to get this
raisin out of my nose!"
I sweat with panicky visions
of trips to the hospital,
but with a quick tweeze, I get it out,
smelly, snotty and wrinkled thing,
and toss it in the garbage.
He screams with anger,
and stamps, crying, out of the room.
And from under thirty years of crap,
a voice within me cries too,
speaking his words for him:
"God DAMMIT!
Holes are to put things in!"*

Eric E. Goranson, M.D.
Portland

On the No Vote

1.
*The proud and reasonable people
of Pompeii
believed in their priests
and stayed,
only to hear
the laughter
of their children
die
beneath the boiling dust
of a mountain
gone berserk*

2.
*Two thousand years
have not taught us much
we who would give up
children laughing
for the promises
of our own priests
drunk as they are
on visions
conjured up
from the entrails
of traumatized atoms*

Doug Rawlings
Mt. Vernon

In Defense of Marshall "Dodge-ism"

(For F. G.)

As Marshall Dodge's performing artistry becomes art for me, the "reality" of Maine life assumes a metaphorical cast and hue. In his "Bert and I" stories, Dodge, like Robert Frost, creates from traditionally flinty, wintery Downeast Yankee realism a social metaphor of light humor which is very human and descriptively incisive. Through humor, Dodge's characters project both a kind of unconscious manifestation of individual isolation and an acceptance of community by Mainers.

Most characters of "Bert and I" I perceive as window dressing, attempts to enliven this basic metaphor of individuals accepting their communities by referring beyond them, to nature.

Many critics see Dodge's monologues as "stereo-typing" Maine people. But Dodge and his partner, Reverend Bob Bryan, are working, like Mark Twain or Finley Peter Dunne in "Mr. Dooley", squarely within a valid vein of American humor.

Philosophically speaking, the Dodge-Frost metaphorical creation is generally Aristotelian, an empirical breakdown and categorization of life and nature's parts, of their substance and accidents. This has led in Dodge's case to the creation of a "person", often called "Bert", whose actions, responses and solutions imitate Maine reality.

As if they actually were the Maine persons and communities they represent, Dodge and "Bert's" underlying metaphor is that resolutions and explanations are produced naturally, so to speak, from within the communities and episodes and stories.

This kind of naturalism is inimical to many modern modes of thought and to some social conditions now facing Maine. It is often viewed as "quaint" or "romantic", a throwback to the "social physics" of Isaac Newton in a twentieth century age of high technology and abstraction. And as social science analyzes and "opens up" Maine communities, intangible community methods of dealing with good and evil and love and hate seem to disappear. The gulf between ideals and feelings become apparently unbridgeable. The result is often yearnings for a romanticized past or an unrealizable future because resolutions to the questions asked are beyond the hypothetical capabilities of social science.

Some people legitimately resent a "natural" solution to social problems. But this is no reason for Marshall Dodge to abandon naturalism in folk art. If one creates art strictly for purposes of "proving" a point, policy or study, one generally ends up with whatever one started with or were originally looking for. The same is true of the audience or perceiver of art, which essentially defies a preconceived conceptual mindset. True, good art engenders belief, brings one to the threshold of empathy, awe and universality. However, art is more of a capturing and sharing of meaning *within a form* than a general transmitting and communicating of knowledge as reality. Dodge's art form is humor.

I recall discussing a recent review by Sanford Phippen re-printed in MAINE LIFE, which commented on "Dodge's stereotypes" and the general lack of contemporarily meaningful social truth in Maine fiction. Leaving aside publishing and marketing considerations, a writer-friend observed to me, "Phippen's right. Dodge and Maine fiction do mask social reality!"

My reply was that masking is an essential, legitimate tool for theatre and performing artists like Dodge. And my friend pointed to a particularly obstreperous description of Maine by Helen Yglesias, a racy, journalistic marriage of a morose rendering of hallucinated statistics and a sacrosanct theory about primates:

"...A subterranean, unreported life of intense social melodrama exists — alcoholism, incest, illicit love, illegitimacy, homosexuality, madness, a high incidence of feeble-mindedness; violent and lasting family ruptures; couple switching; drugs, vandalism and rebelliousness among adolescents — in a setting where the ratio of living space to human beings should insure a bucolic

peace and soaring mental health statistics."

I responded, "Do you want to be so depressed by this description you see Maine life as 'social melodrama', or would you prefer to lighten things up just a little with Dodge's humor?"

The drawback to Dodge, as most Maine social critics aptly observe, is their inability to accept his image of "Bert" as reality, as Maine. But one has to accept this image in some respect in order to criticize. Thus, Dodge's art form undergoes personal transformations in the eyes of perceivers, from made-up stories to actual fact, from allegories to logical analogies, from metaphor to concept, and perhaps, ending up as an adjunct of some sort to striving for that elusive and purportedly exclusively individual commodity, personal identity.

If as idealists we see Dodge's characterizations solely as literally truthful, flickering representations on the cavernous walls of our Maine hearts, as personal images of reality, we easily miss the metaphorical meaning and humorous pleasure of his artistry. Worse, we could plunge into the escape-to-nature mentality of some summer visitors, or into the concept-minded maze of feelings of some well-intentioned critics of Maine social reality.

If we personally identify too heavily with "Bert" or some of the "parts" put into his creation, we tend to counter with another unexperienced or partially experienced reality. Because we are not Marshall Dodge, the artist creating characters and monologues, in a sense we can become characters ourselves in search of an author, almost unconsciously performing seriously what Dodge offers through "Bert" in jest.

"Bert" does not perceive abstractions. Data from the social sciences mean next to nothing in his hornet's nest of family, friends, enemies and assorted kin living in small communities, isolated or fragmented enough to lack rigid social and economic stratification. "Bert" knows Maine as the place where one can give a piece of his mind to anyone, lawyer, banker, clergyman, factory worker, artisan, storeowner, or housewife. Young people migrating to Maine, cleverly experimenting with their lives according to the age's prevailing scientific methodology of proving selfhood (while everybody else knows what they're doing), do not bother "Bert". Presumably, "They don't know nothin'!" Which is often the case.

My choice of the best description of Maine public-policy social reality was penned by Allen G. Pease, a tempered idealist with a long and distinguished career in state government and with deep personal roots in Maine:

"I instinctively bristle at outsider's observations, such as Toynbee's that 'New England is a finished piece', or with a gloomy preoccupation with poverty or backwardness in Maine. Seems to me Maine is relatively free from divisive social problems of race, bigotry, political corruption and organized crime. Maine people stand high in their average level of education, our minimum wage for state government employees is good by national comparison. Maine's so-called reticent people have established some of the strictest environmental control laws in the nation... and our relatively low per capita income is in large measure a function of population statistics. Maine has a rather large percentage of retired workers and youthful dependents for our labor force to support, but this will change."

Contrary to the above description, the 'natural predators' of "Bert" are people who can't relate their pragmatism to a community that does not fit into their preconceived vision of reality, people who can't "fit" without thinking up something to fit into, whose tools are conceptual or highly romantic, perhaps compatible with high technology, but not wholly meaningful to their experience of Maine. It is a view of nature having been conquered versus one where nature still retains great mystery.

For example, any number of people could obtain computerized geophysical and meteorological data that there's enough space and air to breathe in Maine, and run the concept back to its roots in the pre-Penobscot Maine community when one ape socked another with a gnawed moose leg bone and the skull of the second ape got dug up thousands of years later to prove this very fact. Naturally, "Bert" would agree with this logical progression. It is impeccable proof of the "territorial imperative" by which native lobster fishermen operate.

So why climb on old "Bert's" back? He has control over his own technology. He understands his tools, which produce the results he wants. He knows if he's nasty, petty, selfish, and venial in his "town" somebody will be nasty, petty, selfish and venial right back to him — probably a close relation, too.

In communities where the existence of good and evil is more or less accepted as natural because control is almost unconsciously achieved through traditional values and social structures and limited economic options, lives are lived in close quarters and character armament or expressions of affection become relatively common knowledge. Dodge draws on this public social legacy for characterization, the key ingredient in his yarns. In "Bert and I" the author is not writing and performing comedy with plots, story lines or a "statement". Dodge does not compose drama or tragedy, but humor.

With "Bert and I" the state at least has an icon which is identifiable and pleasing to outsiders, offering them a remote possibility that things could turn out good "naturally". And Dodge's humor is funny, even tolerable to less self-conscious Mainers.

The late author of the Great Society, President Johnson, remarked about his small Texas community, of which he was Emperor, "They know when you're sick. They care when you die." By some quirk of national character, Americans are supposed to achieve success alone, and then die in communal repose, depending upon, as "Bert" might say, "how much you have to leave them". In Maine, for better or worse, we still live and die in a community.

Now, as far as "Bert" is concerned this article probably won't generate bookings enough to get out of Maine for the winter. But his humor has, and if he does get warm, he can come home.

On the Granite Crest

*We sat on the granite crest of a glacial knoll
Over a hemlock-tattered scape of white.
Eastward, black was bruising into night,
A brilliance bleeding west in the lake's white bowl.
Your eyes were charged with that red emberlight
But wind at our backs leaned steadily and cold
While, in the woodslope, footless, sure and old,
A climbing panic kept just out of sight.
You said love dares the envy of the gods.
Tenderness might then have spanned and fenced us
Weatherfast, but my hand had frozen stuck
On some steel scruple. The inhuman odds
Of change and winter silence ranged against us
And had their will. A man has his bad luck.*

Richard Sewell
Waterville

Patrick Flynn
Rockwood/Salem, MA

The Golden Rule

The first time Jessica ever consciously practised the Golden Rule was on Belinda de Soto. It was a lovely Saturday afternoon. She had gone with her skates to Anne Marie's house according to a plan made during school recess on Friday morning. Jessica had begun only recently to order her own social calendar and it still seemed, each time she made an arrangement, that it required great skill and courage to bring it to a successful conclusion. She waited on Friday for the last bell to ring, tense with excitement. As soon as her line passed through the school doors she started to run. There Mother was, waiting for her in the Studebaker behind the big yellow buses that took the Canal Zone kids home. Jessica, her hands full of that week's work, paintings and crayon drawings and five graded sheets of word exercises, clambered into the front seat. She was hot with her news and her fears and her desires.

"Mother, guess what Anne Marie and I decided we would go roller skating tomorrow over at her house because the sidewalk's better there is it O.K. can I go?"

"Let me see your papers, dear." Her mother took the bundle from Jessica's hand. The painting with the large purple splotches slipped to the floor. "What is this, Jessica?" The one paper with no gold star pasted at the top and two angry red slashes on the side of the page. But Jessica was down on the floor of the car rescuing her painting from under Mother's feet.

"Watch out, Mother! You'll ruin my painting!" Jessica sat back up. Her face was red.

"Look, Mother! Do you like it?" She thrust the picture over the papers. Small splotches of purple muddled a large area of watery green. What looked like balloons on strings lined the bottom of the sheet.

"Oh. Yes, dear," Mother said hesitantly. "I'm not sure I know what it is."

"You know! It's that big jacaranda tree over at the Hotel Washington. And this is the class looking up at it. Miss Whitman took us over there today. It's so beautiful. Mother, can I? Please say yes. Say yes!"

"Can you what, dear?"

"You know, I told you, go skating with Anne Marie at *her* house. Please, Mother, can I?" Jessica grabbed her crotch with both hands and bounced up and down on the seat.

"Do you have to go to the toilet, Jessica?" Mother said.

* * * * *

Jessica started off to Anne Marie's house right after her nap on Saturday afternoon. She wouldn't have been more excited to be flying around the world. She hadn't been allowed to walk alone to Anne Marie's very often.

It was only three blocks away, through the small court of houses where Jessica lived, across the tree-lined boulevard, past the convent and church with its high, high wall of flowering hibiscus and then down 9th Street a block. 9th Street divided New Cristobal from Colon. Anne Marie's house, in Colon, was huge, two stories high and set inside a fence of concrete and wrought iron that ran around half the block. Jessica rang the bell at the gate and waited. She heard the sound of children laughing and then Anne Marie came skating around the corner of the house with Belinda de Soto. Inside Jessica's chest fires of jealousy and anger burst into flame. By the time the two little girls reached the gate Jessica's heart was a cold, black cinder of disappointment and hurt.

"Hi, Jessica!" Belinda screamed and laughed. "Hi! You're late!"

The most hateful sound in the world to Jessica was Belinda de Soto's laugh. So full of scorn it was. So hateful.

The first time she had heard Belinda's laugh was not very long ago. She was coming home alone from her cousin Penelope's. Penelope lived in New Cristobal. Jessica was walking along the boulevard on the Colon side, it was so much prettier there. There were only two or three houses to a block. They each had a different kind of wrought iron fence and different kinds of flowering shrubs making it so that a passerby could only glimpse the mysteries of garden and house within. There were purple blossomed jacaranda trees and tall Pride of Barbados with orange cock-shaped blooms. There were purple, pink and magenta bougainvillea, and coral vines delicately twined the open grill of hidden verandahs. The air at each iron gateway blew up cool and smelling sweet of flowers from the soft green grass. The air of each enticing garden was a froth of soft sweet smells and sounds. Bird song floated like bubbled, breaking iridescent bubbles of sound, and the jewel colors of birds flickered from flowering bush to tree. Jessica thought that paradise must be to float through gardens such as these. At one gate stood a little girl in an organdy dress with a big blue ribbon in her hair.

"Hi! I'm Belinda. Who are you?" she said.

"I'm Jessica."

"I don't know you. Where do you live?"

"Down there," Jessica gestured vaguely.

"By Anne Marie?"

"No. Further. Do you know Anne Marie?"

"Course I do. Do you?"

"Yes. She's in my class."

"Oh. You go to the American school. Do you want to come in and play?"

Jessica did, desperately. There was a fountain she could see in the corner of the garden. A laughing cupid with a bow and a quiver of arrows slung across his shoulders spurted water from his mouth — a golden spray splashing off the round surface of his tummy and tinkling to a basin of water where scarlet and yellow birds were bathing.

"Oh, yes. Can I?" said Jessica.

"Come on in."

Belinda stepped off the gate and unlatched it. Jessica ran to the fountain. The birds, fluttering into the air, chattered indignantly at her.

"Look now what you've done! You've frightened the birds!" Belinda said crossly.

"I'm sorry!" Jessica clapped her hands, too enchanted still to be dismayed.

The front garden was like a picture from a fairy story book. There were flowers everywhere and to one side, nestled in velvet-leafed violets, lay a dark mossy pond. Great gold fish floated soundless and serene in the clear brown water. Water trickled over moss covered stones and fell into the pond with a cool silver sound. A child's tree, leaves small and feathery with cascades of golden blossoms, hung motionless above the cool dark water. "Ooooh!" Jessica sighed.

"Come on! Let's go play in my new play house," Belinda said and pulled the reluctant Jessica along by the hand.

In back, Jessica saw, it wasn't nearly so fancy, just grass and frangipani and firecracker bushes. Along the wall, which was made of stone and very high, bamboo grew tall and delicate. Against the bamboo, as if within a grove, stood a tiny house just Jessica's size. It looked like a little gingerbread house with a door in front and two windows on either side and sweet little dormers up above. Belinda went in first. The door was a perfect height. She didn't even have to duck her head. Inside was just one big room. A hooked rug lay on the floor and on it stood a mahogany tea table and four small straight back chairs with leather cushions in the seats. The table, laid for tea, was set with china of a blue willow pattern.

Belinda turned to Jessica and said in a mincy sort of voice, "Would you prefer lemon or milk?"

Jessica stared at her blankly. Belinda whispered savagely, "What do you like in your tea, milk or lemon?"

Jessica said, "I don't drink tea."

Belinda threw her hands above her head and rolled back her eyes the way mothers do sometimes and Jessica began to feel uncomfortable. Just then shadow filled the room. Jessica looked toward the window. A beautiful lady with curly gold hair was crouched at the window blocking it. Her golden hair stood about her head and shoulders the way Shirley Temple's did. Her lips were bright red.

"Who's that you've got with you, Belinda?"

Jessica did not like the lady's voice. It was too sharp. Belinda didn't answer her. She just shrugged her shoulders.

"Well, Belinda, answer me! Who is it?"

"I'm Jessica," Jessica said. The house seemed suddenly to be too small, to be squeezing in on her the way the house squeezed in on Alice after she ate the cake and got too big. Jessica felt that she could hardly breathe. The lady paid no attention to her at all. She said again, "Belinda, who..."

"She knows Anne Marie."

"I go to school with Anne Marie. We're in the same class together."

The lady still didn't look at Jessica, not once. She said to Belinda, "Belinda, how many times do I have to tell you! Show her out."

"She goes to the American school, Mother!"

One of the lady's eyebrows, a thin black line, rose in a high pointed arch over her eye. But she didn't say one word more.

"Come on, Jessica. You've got to go now," Belinda said abruptly and she opened the door of the little house. Outside in the bamboo grove the lady was gone.

The gate to the alleyway in back was high, high as the stone wall. It was covered with sheets of green painted metal. Belinda held the gate wide for Jessica to pass through.

Jessica felt dreadful, the way she felt when she had done something so terrible that her mother wouldn't even speak to her. But now it was worse because she couldn't imagine what it was she had done. Everything that happened kept running through her head. All she had said was, "I don't drink tea." It's true, she could tell that had annoyed Belinda, and she *had* frightened the birds. But surely she hadn't been *bad*. And now Belinda was tapping her toe on the ground, holding wide the gate, waiting impatiently for Jessica to leave. Jessica started to run. A strip of metal embedded in concrete formed the jamb for the gate. Jessica stumbled over it and fell headlong onto the pavement of the alleyway.

Her dress tore. Her hands were rosy with blood. Blood welled thick and black from her knee where an old scab had torn off. She rolled over and sat up. Tears streamed down her face mixing with grit and blood. Belinda stood in the gateway laughing. She laughed so hard she doubled over with her laughter.

"Help me!" Jessica whimpered. But Belinda only laughed. She stepped back into her garden and slammed shut the gate. It made a great metallic crash.

Ten minutes later, wailing loudly, Jessica limped through the gateway of the drive of the court where she lived. She saw, through her tears, Clementine, their black maid, rushing toward her. Clementine caught Jessica up in her arms.

"Oh, Jessica! Jessica! look at you all over blood. Chile, wha' happen to my Jessica? My pore baby!"

Jessica, cradled and soothed, began to sob more contentedly. Mother met them at the door and for half an hour both she and Clementine ministered to all of Jessica's needs, spiritual as well as physical. Then, as a special treat, Clementine carried her in and laid her, against a mound of pillows, on Mother's bed and Mother lay down with her for a while. Jessica settled her cheek on Mother's breast and Mother began to stroke Jessica's hair with her long, soothing fingers.

"I know what I'm going to do," Jessica said after a while. Mother continued to comb her fingers through Jessica's hair. "I'll get Anne Marie and we won't ever play with the Belinda again. We'll get everyone not to play with her ever. Then see how much she likes her stupid old fountain and her stupid old house."

Mother never stopped stroking Jessica's hair. She said to her in a gentle voice, "When I was a little girl, Grandmother once said, whenever you get very angry with someone a little drop of poison comes into you and that poison is very bad for you. It makes you sick. So that if you keep on being angry, why then the poison keeps dripping in and you slowly get sicker and sicker. Not the person you're angry with. That poison doesn't hurt them at all. Just you."

Mother kept on stroking Jessica. And then after a little while she said, "I want to tell you about the Golden Rule. It's a very important rule, because if you follow it, why then it will help you not to be angry with people even if they do bad things to you. The Golden Rule will help stop that poison from coming into you so it can't make you sick."

"The Golden Rule, Jessica, is very simple. It's this: 'Do unto others, always, as you would have others do unto you.' Do you understand that, dear? Can you say it?"

Jessica looked up at her mother sleepily and nodded. "Yes," she said. "I understand. It says, 'Do unto others...as...'" Her eyes closed and then she opened them again. "...as other do...unto...as you...as..." But by then she was fast asleep.

* * * * *

Now it was five days since her encounter with Belinda de Soto. She hadn't seen her since. Jessica had told Anne Marie the story of all her grievances against Belinda and said it would serve Belinda right if no one ever played with her again. But she refrained from suggesting an outright boycott. Now, hearing Belinda's scornful laugh again, she bitterly regretted her restraint.

"You're late! You're late! You're late!" Belinda chanted, skating in circles around her.

Jessica ignored Belinda. She couldn't remember anyone saying an exact time. She sat right down there on the pavement to put on her skates. But they didn't seem to fit. She couldn't seem to get her shoe between the brackets at the toe. Her fingers felt all thick and clumsy and her head felt hot. Anne Marie crouched down beside her. She said, "It's the wrong foot."

"The wrong foot! The wrong foot!" Belinda crowed, standing over them. "Oh, Jessica! You're talking all day! Come on, Anne Marie, let's go. Slow poke can follow when she's ready, whenever that is."

"Where're you going?" cried Jessica, alarmed.

"We're going to skate down by the Bay because the sidewalk's better there. It's O.K. Mama said we could."

Belinda was already out the gate and Anne Marie was skating after her. "Wait!" Jessica called. "I'll put my skates on there."

And so she followed after Belinda and Anne Marie walking, skates in hand. The two of them sailed away ahead of her, like two birds they flew along. It made Jessica feel stiff and ugly to see them skimming along so easily together. And once at the Bay, once she had her skates on, somehow she still seemed unable to catch up with them, to join them. And they were having such a good time without her. Especially Belinda. Belinda was always laughing and whispering things in Anne Marie's ear that she wouldn't tell to Jessica even when Jessica asked.

"What? What did you say? What did she tell you, Anne Marie?" Jessica called, skating toward them where they stood catching their breath by a fire hydrant and giggling.

"Oh, it's nothing. It's nothing important. Come on, Anne Marie. I'll race you to the corner!" Belinda said and off the two of them went leaving Jessica behind again.

After a little while Anne Marie had to go home to use the toilet. She wanted someone to go with her but Belinda said, "Jessica and I haven't raced yet. You go on along. It shouldn't take you but a minute. Come on, Jessica! Race you to the corner and back!"

Belinda had a good headstart so it wasn't really fair. But Jessica was so excited to be included that she hardly thought about winning. When Belinda whizzed by on her way back she screamed at Jessica, "I could beat you skating backwards I bet, slow poke!"

Resentment, hot and thick, welled up in Jessica's breast. "It's not fair!" she shouted. "You had a headstart!" She reached the corner and made her turn — a little too fast. She almost fell. Then the whole stretch of block opened before her. Belinda's lead was not so great as it had been. She wasn't quite a quarter of the way down. Jessica knew she could beat her. Knew she could. And she might have, by a hair, only Belinda stumbled and fell. Jessica whizzed right past her without even slowing down.

"Help me!" Belinda started to cry. "Oh, help me somebody, please!"

Jessica reached the corner. She still felt as strong, as quick, as clever and as good as Gene Autry or the Count of Monte Cristo. She skated slowly back to the weeping Belinda.

"I cut myself," Belinda wept. She had. There was a bloody gash on her knee.

Jessica started to laugh. It wasn't easy to laugh she discovered; it wasn't easy with Belinda crying and bleeding on the sidewalk like that. But she did. "Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!" she laughed. It was a funny sounding laugh, like the sound fat men in the movies make laughing. "Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!" She pointed her finger at Belinda and bent over laughing. "Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"Why are you laughing? Help me! Please. Help me up," Belinda wept.

But Jessica just laughed some more. Then suddenly she grew very serious. She squatted down beside Belinda and said, each word making a small explosion in the air between them, "That's the Golden Rule," she hissed. "Do unto others as others do unto you!"

Karen Saum
Rockport

I Thought I Heard a Chicken Scream

*group of mongoloids gardening
behind the state employment building*

*one guy standing near the sidewalk
with his face mashed into the cyclone fence
watching me walk by*

*the rest pretending to watch a normal
showing them how to use a hoe,
but they was all grinning
at yours truly:*

*the guy at the fence
giving me the escape plan
with his eyes.*

John Gillespie
Camden

In an Abandoned Family Graveyard

*The Abnakis who once lived on this hill would not
Have allowed this. For them veneration was a river;
And a life, even in the noon sun, was shadowed
By other lives.*

*Savages, they murdered the grandparents of
These untended dead and were murdered in turn.
The white men were restless; the soil was thin.
This hill belongs to a bank in a nearby city.
A few of the children's stones (for they are smaller)
Lean forward precariously. "It's the frost,"
A neighbor claims, "not Jesus who raises the dead."
An hour gone, I must turn back but after a few steps
Pause, feel the need of some formal leavetaking.
Forgive me then these curious footprints, these remarks
That lack the grip only adhering love can provide.*

Baron Wormser
Ak

Useless

*Windpants tucked in boots,
collar up, I face the salted spray
and call Odysseus. Come here.
Come to this northern shore.
Let me sign your name in my poet's voice.*

*The wind returns my words,
whips my poet's voice down streets
Odysseus never walked, shreds it on sounds
Odysseus never heard:
Exxon, Burgerking, Champion Autoparts.*

*Against these odds, Odysseus,
what godly use are you?*

Wendy Kindred
Fort Kent

All Those Moslems

*All Those Moslems.
The sleeves in their bodies
so different from ours.*

*One hole leads to a loop
and it tightens.*

*Overhere, the loopholes
snag and stretch
on satin backs of Glen-plaid vests,*

*yet how the parched, white cotton
of these heads
seems simple and serenely fearful,*

*through the haunted eyes of camels
no ambivalence, you see.*

*Even in rainbows of oil,
sands sliding like rhinestone,
a dictatorship of sun—*

*it's Allah as they lie mosque-ward,
entrenched in the old traditions,*

*an eye for a wrist,
an ear for an ankle,*

*in this affliction of exotica
there are no shades of gray.*

*

*We sit home and burn oil.
We hold onto our side of the globe
and whisper hotly of honor,*

*while behind shanty kiosk and market stall
martyrs are filling the courtyards.*

*Prayers hover above the square
like sinewy pigeons of culture.
They gawk and they poke at the crowd.*

*Neurotic questions won't rupture the will.
What the world wants doesn't matter.
It's simple.
They die for it or they don't.*

*Blood dries too soon in the desert.
Better to flood the embassies downtown.
And if belief is blood,
we're not so sorry if we've lost it.*

*We'll watch T.V., the news,
the webbing mobs that cross it,*

*until blinded by small stains,
caked like specks of paraffin,
tomato soup or rancid wine.*

*we'll muffle the glaze
off their white, white sun.*

Deborah Ward
Portland

Saying Goodbye to a Voyager

*A late moon wanes over the cove,
its light weakly spreads to the edge
of darkness. To walk on this light,
this water to the edge, you must
become a shadow, relinquish shape
and size, go weightless on tip toe.*

*There is no promise at the end.
You will have to go as if for nothing,
a long way, without an audience,
without applause. Not even I
will be watching you or caring
if you learn to walk, or touch
the last glint of light before the
darkness presses against the back
of your neck and you kneel, hopeless
and lost. I will be sitting at home
before the fire reading a good book;
my mind won't be on you at all.
As I read I will be sipping sherry
until I grow drowsy. Nor will I dream
of you as you begin across
the water, walking on light.*

*My advice is that you skip
the whole thing, eat a good dinner
and talk with friends. No?
You insist? Well. What can I say?
Bon voyage. When you return, if you do,
look me up. We'll eat at Herbert's
and take in a play, where I'll watch
those you walk through to see if they
make way as if you were on fire
or laden with the unspeakable stench
of rotting seaweed and disemboweled fish.
I will be curious to see
if you bring back light or darkness,
and if you leave wet footprints
on the carpet. I am a scientist;
these details interest me, mildly.*

Myrna Bouchey
Machias

An Evening With Albert Einstein

*Albert comes to my door
Small and dark and tentative*

*He is amazed by me
Drawn in
As light to a black hole*

*I smile at him
He fumbles hesitates
Excuses himself
Washes all the floors*

*I on the other hand sit still
For I am sure*

*Later Albert lies down on me
I am large and soft and intricate
In ways he cannot know*

*I think of light on water
 $E = mc^2$ I whisper in his ear
I am his Sybil now*

*He is electrified
His hair turns white
Stands out like halos in the dark*

*Albert wants more
Wants chapter and verse
But no
I won't let all my secrets out*

*Poor Albert cries
Then clutching his notes and formulae
Goes back into the night to die
Or worse live on
Perpetually bemused by the crotched universe.*

Edith Cheitman
Kents Hill

KENNEBEC: A Portfolio of Maine Writing

This is Kennebec's fifth year of publication. Our format and newsprint make possible a selected distribution of 5,000 copies, thus providing Maine writers with an audience no "little" magazine can offer. We publish as many new writers each year as possible, while trying not to neglect the established ones. In this endeavor to bring Maine writers to the attention of the public we are supported by the University of Maine at Augusta, Forum A, and an increasing number of writers whose submissions enable us to present Maine writing that is worth reading.

The Editors

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