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.

January Thaw

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, Steam, 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 bully 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 head, 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 test in its watch pocket
Of pine. Watch the fire vanish
Into dawn. The Saco River tips
Its sky of constellations into nebulas
You step across. Say hot damn
While sun sprays Chocorua’s chin
In a simmer ofumeric. Ain’t nothing
Like a valley, Morning waves through telescopes
Of waxing sunsets. Words leap, needle
To mouth, their wings glittering
Code. Feel the world breathe underfoot
The way a wall of celeryphone moves
In transparent frame. Ride the northern water
While afternoon gathers in slate
Strains of twilight. Pine needles crack like nits
Of hummingbird spine.
The odor a pyramid might squash
And distill over centuries
Horses close to them.
On its frame the last flags
Tendron sheds. In plain sight
You disappear.

David Reisinger
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, ironhoofed 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. I close my eyes, trying to squash the pavement.

"Hey!" Foam flecks flying, feet rearing and prancing, black hides glinting, riders viciously reining. "Whoa theah, Devil!" "Whoa theah, Satan!"

I comply. "Har, bar, locdy 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?"


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

Heads yanked up, but already I am 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 me instantly. Instinctively I cover with my hands.

Clint roars. "Har-dee-har-har, now don’t you 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 showing 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.
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 plains 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

Beech Leaves

It's hard to ignore them. The winter woods, Niguraudly as a modernist painting, Ateb 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 refusing the devil's elderdown snores.

Their delicacy surprises. How is it they've gotten away With being indifferent to all social 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 rustle in the breeze.

I thrust amid reverse's false depths Until a raven commences to raw. A follower and reminder of the base facts, I must agree with it that there are laws,

That it's only January that lends these leaves A mantle of invisibility. 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

Nonsmegogow

From Here to Yucca Flat (continued)

"Drink, yoo ahsthol," says Clint. He blows his truth 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 hometown. 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," he mumbles. I detect a slight slur­ring of his speech: I watch him rub the spur gouges in the table with his thumb.

"Oh, losky," cries Babe, draining her glass and pointing out the window. "The horseways are playing with the goats."

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 pretty, Sonny. I'll patch those up for you.


She moves gracefully, if a little drunkenly, to the oven and fits an apron over her holster. 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 —

helders. 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.

Babe watches him closely, then slip away to the barn.

"Nice horse," says Clint, draining her glass and pointing out the window. "The horseways are playing with the goats."

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bean sprouts, lentils, brown rice and tofu. We eat hungrily.

"Mmm," says Babe. "Good enough for two 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."

"Sure thing, boss. Notin' 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 neccherchief and

Hans A. Kirschen

Barley
**Love, Your Magic Spell**

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 leisurely 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 hard- sided, 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 many years ago. Her house had been sold, and she and Charles were moving into a brown shingled cottage on the outskirts of Portland. After an evening at Elks Hall, they'd been called for dinner. His tirades always upset her mood. He'd been climbing hills for hours.

“Something’s burning,” he warned. Alice rescued the bacon and served it with the usual — bacon, oatmeal and beans with fishcakes every Saturday. “Something in Charles’ plan abruptly reminded her of Madame Olga — dear Madame, plump and skinned, stepping into her black hair spread in disorder over her dark blue satin robe.

She had decided that 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 pullout 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 was hidden by evergreens.

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. She didn’t want to do 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 racy clouds, so tangible she could touch it.

She drove home, 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," she whispered. "I was so tense. Getting colder out. I’ve sold the back field. Now I can really retire, have a permanent vacation."

Alice replied, "You’re doing it right, as she made his drink. Charles had never pushed himself. Money had come easily to him. Anyway, it would be nice to have neighbors. She sadness lifted a little. Her love, after all, would see her through.

"Love is all," she heard again Madame intoning sternly, "Though 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 his voice. "Tell even the shopping for you. You’ll be like a queen." She sat down at the kitchen table.
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. Adri's 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 driftily while the beat swings listlessly.

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

Ruth Evans
Portland

Love, Your Magic Spell (continued)

Had anyone else ever loved him, she wondered. Do? Really? The children had rebelled at an early age, had ignored him most of the time. Hadn't 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 burglar and rapists. And Charles needed her.

In the morning, after breakfast, Alice cleaned the living room, carefully navigating through the furniture-crowded rooms and shaved ashes from the fireplace. As she carried the pull 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, motimiless, 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. 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 showed 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 aly observing her. She was bored 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 crumpled about yet seemed pinned up. Suddenly, she saw him with washed-out eyes; his body twitched convulsively. But not until the clock hands had turned, she 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 stomped on them?"

Alice run 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 pattern?"

Virginia Liscomb
Gray

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

Six men
in an old, lethargic Torino
come 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
clattered,
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's worth fifty bucks!"
He headed for the door,
opened it a crack,
threw over his shoulder:
"Outta here for our huntin' trip!
I locked gates with washed-out eyes;
A draft of chill morning air sweeps between us.

Jan Johnston
Augusta
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 googodown, seeking the curve in the lip of Mother’s uncascellated battlement, sleep and vista. Powerline Frankenstein’s stilt and/or stagger on through the valley. It is hardly night, what with cascades of snowcaps aloft in the east like a natural Egypt, and beside him, restless with sunburn, his wife. Well, well, well, Jonah and the whale, Muholland 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.

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. Sugarbea, 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, asweat in an angst intense, but this latest limpness labor by levity uninspired, asweat through the downstairs shoemaker’s, on whose table the dwarfs who hammer your vocabulaire tiptoe s toward enema chestnut, her racehorse toss of hair. I think of a puppet in her wake, a donkey-boy in Nineveh at my feet. Sugarbabe, ambassador.

We tempt Death. She enters with a roar of blue water. Safe to savor Mostro’s mucous and sea flavor near the glacial chandelier, in a blossom of membrane dark. Through Geppetto’s plateglass pane, in the hurry of her altib design — her “I can’t be there. I’m too busy, dear” — I see her chestnuts, her racehorse tons 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 obsceneities on your door.

You called him The Great Scratcher and wouldn’t let him in.

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 pawned 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.

Kits 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 sacrifice 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 harpy, dazed, alone in her terrible circling.

Kathleen Lignell
Stockton Springs

G. M. Clark
Bowdoin College

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Kathleen Lignell
Stockton Springs

G. M. Clark
Bowdoin College
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 grew, she was able 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 homemade cover, is filled with 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 the spelling and punctuation and leaving in full what was 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 them a describing.”

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 doctors, lawyers, or teachers, the 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 the long ago mother’s children.

The young father begin to thinking about to give his children a good education. The boys which they suppose to become doctors, lawyers, or teachers.

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 thing were free, even the education. She 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 usually circumstance change. 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 shall sacrifice, she should sacrifice, her children have something else.

In the same time she was very attractive.

Sarah would say, “She is very attractive.”

Her mind and soul been very young.

Sarah was very young.

She shall sacrifice, she should sacrifice, she has no life, no life, whole the persons from the city went to see them. A Jewish little girl was a orphan, a little girl was in her born city in her born house to her dear father. She call her grandfather. How young she was but she was 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 hearing, it dreamt of the paradise.

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
"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 idea."

"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 pulling on the cloth restraints.

in the rotunda, a can on a table sparkles in the night. Silent night. The angel needs a friend. I climb into the lion's den. Don't worry, it's not that she's afraid of something from me. It's that she has left me. I remember now, we think it comes from the Latin alva, 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.

"That evening I draw back the curtains slowly. The room becomes blue from the snow. is brilliant. The snow is melting in my socks. I am ready to embark on my mission."

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

Sarah is fine, her obligatry 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 Cole has spilled onto the table. With my handkerchief I wipe up the liquid and throw the can into the wastebasket.

"No," I say to the moonlight. John's eyes open. "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.

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 Cole has spilled onto the table. With my handkerchief I wipe up the liquid and throw the can into the wastebasket. Announce my presence with a sniffle. The firedoor doesn't turn. I pad silently across the room. Announce my presence with a sniffle. I close my eyes, bathing her in the sun for a meditative moment, then awaken, open a black notebook and write rapidly. She closes her eyes, bathing her lids in the sun for a meditative moment, then awakening, opens a black notebook and writes rapidly. She closes her eyes, bathing her lids in the sun for a meditative moment, then awakening, opens a black notebook and writes rapidly. She closes her eyes, bathing her lids in the sun for a meditative moment, then awakening, opens a black notebook and writes rapidly.
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, bowing on it gently and wincing, "I can feel the cold. It's been through the snow 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 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 fluffs as if she is going to cry but she composes herself and sits up properly. "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."

"It'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)
**Angels in the Snow**

You m ea n, how y, and manipulated by her. The few days. I have given in, and I feel angry, 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 hanger and remove it from the bed, fur up in the sun. I tie 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 gray 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."

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**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

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**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 best to adjust her sandal strap
her hair slipped forward so 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.
Walking on Popham Beach

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 would return to his office. For two hours his patients would open the rustly 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 as I watched them from the balcony. They would disappear into the office and come out half an hour later, having found in one corner of the office, their veils clenched tightly between their teeth.

Next to the office was a shower room, where Papa installed a Western flush toilet. 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 crouching on the dirt floor, blushing brazier coils and shaking pots. She made sour plums, strawberries, grapes, 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 boilled on egg for me in the top of the samovar, upstairs in the dining room, next to the teapot. Papa believed that an egg and a pint of cows 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 lost my appetite. Food made me nauseous. Pasha 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 visited the Bazaar, the Evin, the Taj Mahal, the Ancient Persians in the Ten Commandments in Persia. We saw Japanese monster films and Indian romances, starring Raj Kiopoor, "Gidget Goes Hawaiian", "A Hundred and One Dalmatians" and "Francis Joins the Navy", with Francine Ford.

"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 blue sky; a portrait of the Royal Family at the Summer Palace; mosques and minarets bled blue, like water, or the desert sky. The images never changed. The sky was always blue, always white, always red. It was the movies Ma-ma-da-la-diye or Iranian-American Society for hamburgers, or up into the cool hills of Shenman to play mini-golf at the Hotel Vanak.

Pashazade 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-la-diye had to stop the old red English Ford in traffic, he would make the boys stick 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 fault I was not grabbing at my closing fingers. Mama kept my skin, I looked as if I had dreamed, but had lines at the corners and furrows, like old men. The Candy Boys slipt under newspapers outside our walled garden. I dreamed about them and them up sweating, feeling my hands.

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 on wheeled carts and on crutches. Girls in Indian or Persian clothes made the best beggars. 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 me Alah sometimes, but those beggars are — how do you say it — 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 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 far that he fell on the sidewalk and skinned both knees. My Iranian sister be- gan to teach me Persian. She talked about Mohammed, said her father was 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-la-diye" in Persian. I stared at the words for a long time, then copied them down. She read one of my notebook that his handicap was "that he can't understand English", after Mohammed, the Prophet, and his son-in-law, Ali, made me look at him as a human being for the first time.

I went to Teheran as a foreign exchange student and spent the summer of 1965 there. It was seventeen. The Ponderosa Ranch. The Iran. I "saw" the tour guide "Mohammed" and his wife, 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 unrealistically, it was cheaper than the first one, and the little girl who made it hadn't had to work so hard.

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.

Sometime 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 afternoons, too. We visited two of the Shah's palaces, inspected a domed mosque and the royal gilded bathroom; I called it the Peacock Throne, I think.

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 Gum. She was wearing a sleeveless dress. Such a thing would never happen in Teheran, Mama told me — Gum 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-enclosed 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 $5.00 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, 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 unrealistically, it was cheaper than the first one, and the little girl who made it hadn't had to work so hard.

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."

"Fucking, 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."

I brush my hands over the gray slicked hair, scrutinize and feel the dusty head, "Mark the extent of Harry's hematoma."

It's a waste of time watching TV in the morning. I've got to get this fucking paper out. It's been a busy week. I got kids at home and a definitely dilated left eye.

"I think we are trying to resurrect a ghost," sputters Fregusi.

"Dr. Foster wears high ties, high-water pants, auricular socks and hush-puppies. His department is perpetually being renovated. Wires hang from ceilings and piping flanks the wall Jones. 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 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 cloaked mess. So, we are left with pressure, sandbagging the wound. Every day I mark the extent of Harry's hemotoma. It is like keeping track of flood waters. He creates when his hemotoma exceeds 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 stands up at me.

"Do you know where you are?"

"Are you..." I'm at the V.A.

"Right, right. That's good. Is this the administration building, hospital, 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, the jokes 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, arteries corrected and wounds healing.

"What do you think of the fourth floor, Harry?"

He pauses, grins, "I'll tell ya, Doc, changes around 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 green 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 Texas
Belgrade Lakes

Elementary

He has put a raisin in his nose while watching TV in the morning with breakfasters, 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 panic visions of trips to the hospital, but with a quick sneeze, I get it out, snelly, snotty and wrinkled thing, and toss it in the garbage.

"Death March" 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 panic visions of trips to the hospital, but with a quick sneeze, I get it out, snelly, snotty and wrinkled thing, and toss it in the garbage.

Eric E. Goranson, M.D.
Portland

On the No Vote

1.

The proud and reasonable people of Pompell 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 as 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 entails 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, wintry 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 of characters of "Bert" and 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, through humor, Dodge creates art strictly for purposes of enabling us to transform the question asked beyond the hypotheses and explanations which commented on 'Mr. Dooley', or with a romanticized past or an unrealizable future because resolutions to the threshold of empathy, awe and universality. However, art is more of a unconscious manifestation of individual isolation and an acceptance of.

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 imitable to many modern modes of thought and to some social conditions now facing Maine. It is often viewed as "quantitative" or "romantic", a throwback to the "social physiologist" 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 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.

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 defines a pre-conceived concept. Best. 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.

I recall discussing a recent review by Sanford Phippen reprinted in MAINE LIFE, which commented on "Dodge's stereotypes" and the general lack of contemporary meaningful social truth in Maine fiction. Leaking 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 obtuse description of Maine by Helen Yglesias, a racy, journalistic marriage of a morose rendering of hallucinated statistics and a sarcasmo 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 bacnicol peace and soaring mental health statistics."

I responded, "Do you want to be so depressed by this description you see Maine as a "social melodrama," or would you prefer to lighten things up just a little with Dodge 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 community, 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 so-called "social science" 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 have a piece of his mind, as one lawyer, banker, priest, factory worker, artisan, storeowner, or housewife. Young people migrating to Maine, cleverly experimenting with their lives according to the age's prevailing scientific anthropological, philosophical, scientific, or philosophical, political, or economic, or social obsessions, such as Tounbee'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, but has, to a lesser extent, 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 strongest 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 the preconceived vision of reality, people who can't "write 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 life. 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 geographic and meteorological data that than the average joe, and run the concept back to its roots in the pre-Penobscot Maine community when one age sucked another with a gnawed wood bone and the skull of the second age 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 fisherman 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 going up, he can see what Dodge is doing, 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 scarf of white, Eastward, black was brusting into night, A brilliance bleeding west in the lake's white bowl, Your eyes were charged with that red emberlight Your back, ...
The Golden Rule

The first time Jessica ever consciously practiced the Golden Rule was on Belinda de Soto's. 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 Tuesday for the last bell to ring, tense with excitement. And as soon as her time passed through the school doors she started to run. There Mother was, waiting for her in the Studебaker 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 splatters 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 splatters 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 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 it? Please say yes, say yes!"

"Can you, what, dear?"

"You know, I told you, go skating with Anne Marie at her house. Please, Mother!"

Jessica grabbed her crutch 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. Jessica had a different kind of wrought iron fence and different kinds of flowering shrubs making it so that a passerby that ran around the corner of the house with Belinda de Soto's. It was a huge, two stories high and set inside a fence of concrete and wrought iron. Jessica had a different kind of wrought iron fence and different kinds of flowering shrubs making it so that a passerby that ran around the corner of the house with Belinda de Soto's. Jessica's garden was a cold, black, cold circle of disappointment and hurt.

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

"Oh, you're late!" Jessica gestured vaguely. "Think of it?" She laughed so hard she doubled over with her laughter.

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 she opened the door. The gate was high, high as the stone wall. Jessica's chest fires of love and hate bloomed. Belinda stood in the doorway with her hands on her hips and her eyes on Jessica. Belinda's eyes were red and her lips were brown. Jessica had gone with her to Anne Marie's house just Jessica's size.

"Whoo, that you've got with you, Belinda?" Jessica didn't like the lady's voice. It was too sharp. Belinda didn't answer her. She just shrugged her shoulders.

"Well, Belinda, answer me! Who are you?"

"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 had been squeezed in in the same way. She had said it herself. It's true, she could tell that had annoyed Belinda, and 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 she had done. Everything that happened before 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 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.

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"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 see 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. "Well!" Jessica called. "I'll put my skates on there."

And so she followed after Belinda and Anne Marie walking, skat0s 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.

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 whirled 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!"
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 seems simple and serenely fearful, through the haunted eyes of camels no ambivalence, you see.

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

it’s Allah as they lie mosque-ward, in this affliction of exotica there are no shades of gray.

and whisper hotly of honor, prayers martyrs are filling the courtyards.

Blood dries too soon in the desert.

Better to flood the embassies downtown. We’ll watch T.V., the news, the webbing mobs that cross it. 

We’ll muffle the glaze off their white, white sun.

~ Myrna Bouchey

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 tipping 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? We’ll have our grog on each other and go our separate ways. We’ll watch T.V., the news, the webbing mobs that cross it.

~ Deborah Ward

An Evening With Albert Einstein

Albert comes to my door Small and dark and tentative. He is amazed by me. He smiles hesitates to me. He is electrified. His hair turns white. He is large and soft and intricate. In ways he cannot know I think of light on water E = mc². I whisper in his ear. He is his Sybil now. He is more He is electrified. His hair turns white. He stands out like halos in the dark.

He is more. He wants chapter and verse. But no. I won’t let all my secrets out. Poor Albert cries. Then clutching his noses and formulae goes back into the night to die. Or worse live on. Perpetually bemused by the crosstarmiverse.

~ Edith Coatsman

KENNEBEC: A Portfolio of Maine Writing

This is Kennebec’s fifth year of publication. Our format and newprint make possible a selected distribution of 5,000 copies, thus providing Maine writers one 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 Editor

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Deborah Ward
Portland