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Contents

Jon Dallas

When the Weather Turned Around

He ate only things that flew—woodcock, pheasant,
quail (never crow), partridge, dove, rail, mallard, pigeon—

& he always stewed them through, tarring the meat
with rose petals. He would chew slowly through the tiny

sinews & leave only the bones for the wind
to take from a windowsill high above his house.

He would feel himself losing the edges of his ribs,
as if he were stepping into a body the birds had made

for him, with a light crate for a skeleton & muscles
thin as wires. The small meat would eat slowly through him:

pin feathers sprouting from behind his ears before his sight
zipped shut in the soft barbs. The woman

he lived with was already a bird, with not a straight
hollow bone in her body & she took the wind

with the shape rather than the tempo of wings. & when
it snowed, he felt the earth swag away from beneath him

& the house above his head became their home. At night,
she dreamed of where they were; he still had much to learn.

The People He Used to Know

Tending grace to their long bodies, he, this coppery guy
who eats fallen bark and grubs—anything dirty & prophetic
he can scrounge up—takes their what-pass-for-hands
as if afraid they will leave him with what he sees

through them: leaves, sky, the warm thud of himself
inside his own skin again, like a ghost for a while unsure
where to haunt, having had so many homes. At first he had
been able to fly, you know, before the wings in his ankles broke

like glass on stone & it was just as well: his heart & guts
trying to keep time with the manic feathers holding his frame
up & the fine wires, taller even than the clouds & cutting.

He will live a long time now, his mouth taking the fallen
snow like the smallest & most fragile of lovers & always
the hands, almost weaving their clear, bright fingers into his.

Madeline Marcotte

Blessed, and Brake, and Gave

Notice this cold bedroom.
Cold to make the lovers huddle closer together.
It smells of cat litter and burnt coffee.
He tells her about two women
he saw through a store window
and how he would have them,
the two of them together.
He starts to tell her only this, to affirm his faithfulness
—*I did nothing*—
though his talking leads him to uncertain edges,
a triangle emerging for a tail,
a loopy oval now for a body,
pressed out as if in blue crayon by a child working
from something misty, something just taking shape.
He says, *I'd like to see other women*, to see what it—the idea—
looks like swimming above the bed.
His mind feeding off what had not
been there all along.
Maybe many other women, maybe
one fish becomes another...

She tells him about a man who longs for her,
how he said, *I know I can make you happy.*
Though she doesn't mention he did her dishes
or that his legs trembled as he stood on her fire escape
trying to see her the day after they made love.
Certainly not that.
She reveals only enough to make the one with her now
pull her closer, ask, *Well, did anything happen?*
What then, can lead us back to just the room
and its rank smells? Or back before the beginning,
the first lovemaking in the park under the slide?
No, she says. *Nothing.*
She pulls details one
by one as if from an empty basket,
the cat, he's allergic, he tries too hard,
he couldn't stay, the way Jesus fed five thousand men,
evening settling into the long grasses,
the multitudes
drawn like endless blue circles,
like fish eggs, diminishing into dot, dot, dot ....
With her eyes looking in his, their bodies now lying one on one,
definite, finite, 2,2,2...*because I wouldn't have been able*
to look you in the eyes if I had, if we had.
And he comes back to her like those initiates
lured by miracles
to a place the Disciples called a lonely place.

Robert Lee

Marc Chagall, To Russia, with Asses and Others, *1911*

Father, who simply must be
there in the fainter etchings of night,
I fly to you, forgive me — me
with my patch-coat and clattering pail,
clattering full of its animal emptiness. *See…*
they'll say, *see how she flies and offers Him*
nothing! But it is no offer…. It is what comes
from Redda, my heifer, the one who bellows
from our roof in the moonlight. Bellowing! Empty!
My son and his pale lamb suckle her noisily. They kneel
for their fill of her vapor and crust. Maybe you've heard
their terrible smacking? That drove them out—
our kin and our townsfolk. Bootless streets, echoless
houses…. May their children now sleep in their best
country linen! I cannot blame them, I cannot
forgive them. *Where there's hunger, there's thirst,*
and thirst finds honey in the yellowest bone.
Who was it said that? Mother? Mari? One hears
many things, but never believes them. *Only*
need brings wisdom. Your head flutters off
like its own little girl.

Mary Kuryla

Disrooted

There's Mother's living son spitting out trees. There he is flying by witchesbroom. There, he's burst the scrub of lilac blooms. There things go skittering down branches and balling in tunneled logs, but nothing's getting out from under the wheels of his flattening machine. There and there and there—Mother's living son's disrooting roads.

"Trees is all I got in any large decency," Mother says.

"Now it is roads you got," I say.

There go splints of chickenwire wood fencing the patch of peachtrees Mother put in herself. Not even Mother's peachtrees will her son spare.

"What do you see?" Mother says. Mother and I are at her kitchensink window watching peaches tumble by the hundreds.

What I see is peach wine, but I'm careful not to say.

Mother is sliding down from the kitchensink to the floor. This is demolish even she can't look at. Even she who lets her large decency of trees go freely flattened can't look at this particular flattening of peachtrees.

"My trees grow up," she says, "why not my children?"

I take a container and go outdoors for tumbled peaches. Money's to be made on peaches made into wine. Money is what I need to put many more roads between Mother and me than her living son will ever disroot.

Mother calls out from the kitchensink window, "Don't you two scheme against me."

Mother's living son is high up there in the cab of his flattening machine. He looks at the container I'm carrying and says, "That another thing I did wrong in there, doll?"

I shake my head no—can't call that scheming—and take the lid off the container and slant it to tumbled peaches twigged through with crossed branches. Here and there my hand gets tangled between holes of felled trees as I reach for more. What schemes are there to make?

Mother's living son is disrooting roads, the fallen trees stacked high at the edges. I am saving for my going. But neither of these things we do has any hope in it — at least the kind that will bring back our mother's love. Hope is the deepest held root of any scheme.

Going and going and going — that motor's always going in Mother's living son's flattening machine. He climbs down off the chair, motor still going, and goes himself into a squat on the ground. His hand he swipes across what is not a standing patch of peachtrees anymore and he says, "Though I saw a road through this our mother's orchard from the go, I took my machine around it, roading this way and roading that." He shows this with his hand making half o's around his kneecap that is now the standin for Mother's peachtrees. "But the road I wanted was always on through it."

I squat down next to him, using his knee for balance. Mother's living son is my age again older than me. I see it in his knee beneath my hand, there where the lines make roads in the tight skin. There is my hand on his skin. In the color and in how the bone won't round out with fat, we are of the same skin.

What skin's between is Mother's not-living son.

That's how I'd come to think of Mother's sons, with dead and live being the littlest thing to separate them. That was before Mother stopped loving this son for living.

"Those peaches in your container for making wine?" he says.

"You weren't worrying about them when they were hanging," I say. "Why worry now they're down."

He says, "Does Mother know?"

"I give you answers," I say, "it might sound like scheming."

"I'm asking for a drink," he says.

"Look what drinking's done already."

Peach wine starts with peeling peachskin from the meat just as it roads up with lines. I'm stuffing the peachmeat in a round barrel, fisting it in, when Mother comes in the shed with her bucket of soil. She picks up a peachskin, and says this, "You make one bottle, and I'll ask you to go."

"Even a going needs to be financed," I say.

Money's something I've been supplying to myself without letting a penny loose. When I do let loose, it will not be something I intend to supply easy. Peach wine is just another thing to make money on. Show me the harm in that.

Mother picks up more peachskins from the floor, taking up peachskin sack by peachskin sack, and drops them in her bucket of soil. The soil smokes with the rich thick of itself. This is the soil that Mother uses to coat over the earthmound set upon her not-living son. One tree grows on that earthmound there, budding up every month of the year under such affectionate soil.

They say what Mother wants is to be dead with her son. Her heart is dead already. Leave her be. What they don't say is that something lives still in Mother, and it is growing. Mother's affection for her not-living son grows steady as the budding tree on his earthmound, grows taller, roots deeper, branching out. With each day's sunset on his not living, it grows.

Mother's dragging her soil sunk with peachskins to the outdoors a foot at a drag, a foot at a drag, when her living son comes into the darkness of this shed. Far off behind him is the motor-always-going sound of his flattening machine.

"I'm sorry about your peach trees," he says to Mother, "but they were covering a road."

Mother drags her soil around him and the sound of the dragging makes up the entirety of what she will say to him. He reaches out a hand to delay her and she stops still, not touching, before it.

"Now that I'm there," he says, "I can't say it's the road I want." Mother's living son's skin tightens on him so that what he wears of Mother's not-living son's shirt and clothes seems to go seeably looser. "Let me have it," he says.

Mother looks down at the soil steadied at her knees. A peachskin rises stiff in ferment only to go down weak into the thick. Mother is not letting this son have anything, not even her non-affection, what she has in some supply. She continues dragging her soil to the door. Her living son hurries to open it for her to an outdoors where once very little light had gone through all the trees, but now it is an outdoors gone light with roads. He is in such a hurry he mistakenly kicks her bucket over. Mother rights it so fast it cannot spill.

"Don't you," she says to her living son, "make a road where your brother lies."

She drags her soil out around the corner out of view.

* * * *

End of August they sell what they got. Canned and jammed jellies. Guesses at what the fat dog weighs. Buy a chance to hit baby-take-aim. There's even tickets for kissing the goodest girl, the girl who's never let loose. The newly-married man's here with a man's wife. He's buying jellies and guessed rightly about the fat dog. Even he took a chance at baby-take-aim. There, there, there — newly-married man's buying up all they got.

Maybe he'd like to try kissing the goodest girl, but this year I'm selling Mother's peach wine. He asks for a taste. I get the taster shiny on my skirthem but the newly-married man doesn't taste. He gives the taster to a man's wife, who rolls it along her lips, feeling for peach wine with her tongue. None of this he sees. He's studying what bottles I have left of Mother's peach wine.

"I heard from a friend," he says, "that you bottle the best."

"Who's your friend?"

"I believe a brother of yours."

"I didn't know my brother still had any friends," I say.

"The trouble with the dead," he says, "is they've got too many."

I sell him two-for-one bottles because I know better than to bring any back. Peach wine blanches what remains of sense in what remains of the men in my family. What wine I don't sell I stack across baskets of jellies turned tart.

Peaches split down to pits have rolled out to the edge of the newest road over there. Mother's living son's flattening machine has nearly completed the making of a land otherwise decent with trees basking light from limb to limb into something stumped and roaded. Only one tree still stands. This is the tree budding up every month in the earthmound of affectionate soil placed by Mother over her not-living son.

"A fruiting tree's got lots of takers," Mother's living son says, "but that budding tree has got repute."

"Repute's worth waiting for," I say.

"I've waited enough," he says.

"What's enough is roads."

Mother's living son is living off killing trees. "Just kill his grave," I say. "It's what you're heading for."

"Graves don't die," he says. "but that tree can go."

"You won't," I say.

"Give me a drink of peach wine," he says.

"I will not scheme against her."

* * * *

The newly-married man comes on with night, under his arm one of the bottles of peach wine, uncorked. The other bottle is in him, and this is how he's walking.

Mother and I are at the kitchensink window watching him walk his way up a disrooted road. A smell of something sweet, sugar burned, comes on through the door and then there he is, standing on the other side of the screen.

"Is it the air that won't cool or the availability of roads that takes a man out walking on a summer night?" he says to Mother.

"You lost?" Mother says.

"Is this your land, then?" he says. "If I may say so, if I may say it so, there *is* an abundance of roads."

Right about then comes the sound of the motor always going on the flattening machine. Mother looks out beyond this man. "Trees," Mother says, "was all that was any good about this land."

"The knack is finding the good in what's left behind," he says, pushing the screen door open and, with the next hush, Mother has it shut so all that gets in of the newly-married man is the neck of the bottle of peach wine.

"It's no good," he says, "this wine's not worth the price I paid for it."

"Take it back where it came from," Mother says.

His eyes chase along the neck of the bottle into where I stand. Mother doesn't turn her head to look at me. "You want to talk to this man."

"It's the peaches," I say to him, "they went bad."

"Bad ones fall off a tree," Mother says. "Mine never had a chance to fall." Mother lets the door go freely open now to get me out of her house. As I step outside, she says to me, "You're not welcome back."

The newly-married man and I walk a road forking into the road that used to be Mother's orchard of peachtrees. Around us light goes random without tree or branch to shadow.

"If I may say it," he says, "I wouldn't be so content with such loss of affection."

I keep us on the road.

"Look at that," I say. I have brought us to the flattened orchard. The newly-married man stays at the rim, stepping up onto the wooden slats of the fence now flush to the earth. I pat my hand under branches until I find a tumbled peach. It's still plump with meat but couldn't hardly hold a shape.

"It's bruised," I say.

"Doesn't mean it's bad," he says. The newly-married man takes the peach from my hand but he doesn't bite. He raises up his arm and pitches it away. The sound of it hitting a road is as far off as the sound of the motor always going. He says this, "The road I took up here left me out longer in all this moonlight than I'd of liked."

"You can see," he says, "I have lost my wife's affection."

They say what I have is worth waiting for. They wait and wait and wait because what I have won't let loose easy. They say this makes me someone over there. That's at the edges. I have waited for someone to make me his center. The newly-married man tilts the corked bottle of peach wine on a tree stump aiming away. "You have something that can't be waited for," he says, stretching his arms out to me.

I had him on earth fruited with peachskins. What they say is he had me. What they don't say is how nuded branches cradled our heads. There were no roads, in or out. There was a patch of trees that began with me and ended with me and this is where he found himself.

Under him — this is where they say I found myself.

This man is newly married but what could be newer than what he's done with me. In the morning I keep my eyes shut to a sun no trees are left to claim and I am listening to the sound of the motor always going. "That's Mother's living son," I say.

"Are you referring to your brother?"

"I'm referring to what he's become."

The newly-married man is getting on his shoes. He says, "They say the wine killed your other brother. Now I've had a taste, I can see it killing me."

The sun's a circle bright in my eyes, a thing to hold onto until the black comes across to cover it. This is blackness to hold onto.

The newly-married man goes, taking with him what I had that couldn't be waited for. What he doesn't take but what is now uncorked and making a clank-shiney racket in the cab of the flattening machine is that other bottle of peach wine, the uncorked one, empty now.

Mother screams, "Don't you make a road where your brother lies," but it is barely louder than the sound of the motor always going.

There's Mother's living son flattening the last tree still standing, the one budding under the affection of Mother's soil. Buds are shaking off the tree and catching on Mother's hair.

There goes the tree, the last of them, disrooted.

Mother stands herself scarecrow across the earthmound, hair still catching the buds still falling from the tree that fell so fast beneath the flattening machine.

Mother's living son is drunkintended on making a road where his brother lies and her standing across it only makes him see a greater struggle in the road.

There goes Mother under his flattening machine.

She goes sunk under into soil, the flattening machine spitting out the topmost layers of what skin lies open to it.

There goes the flattening machine, wheeling off her and away.

In the emptiness of her body print in what was once an earthmound, Mother sits up, the skin left on her face rubbed up to a shine of something newly born.

"There, there, Mother," I say and I promise to stay now because what is there in going when there's little left to leave.

What is still going is the motor in the flattening machine.

They say there are only enough roads to disroot on your mother's land before all the roads become one road again and that one road is flat to an emptiness, and in this they are not wrong. But there is also in this newly-made land of Mother's the best proof of the emptiness it may have always been, and her living son has not turned off the motor of his flattening machine for just this reason.

He'll quit when he's flattened it down to his brother's bones, they say.

Mother's living son's flattening machine has not quit at bones. The wheels have sleaked at the earth enough so now what was stacked in crosses of thickest ceiling has thinned to gone way and widened to holes. These are not holes made by any flattening machine. These are earth's darkest holes come into the light of what was once Mother's land gone light with roads but is now lighter still. And still even this light gone so badly bright will never slant past one edge of holes this black.

Rynn Williams

Stump

Problem is, the stump gets cold.

Sure, you lose your thumb in the sawmill—
jam the log too hard even though
the foreman warns you and in a minute

everything's blazing red and
you're blinking stupidly at a joint:
neat and severed in the sawdust.

Sure, you learn to grasp again—

the hand functions, feels
as before—even a bit more sharply
perhaps—cup, ball, breast
and doorknob all the same but then

there's the quiet, the chill,
day shuts down like a factory
and you're left holding the cold
stump, trying to warm it, cupping

the short, blunt truth in your palm.

John Rybicki

Poem on the Back of an Envelope

I'm up late grabbing sky lip
and sky lip and I'm rocking
the damn boat: all this grass,
and rot, and brick; swamp water
and vowels floating up in the tank;
my belly hole full of stars and mud.
I'm rocking skyscrapers up one side
of the sky bowl and down again.
I'm rocking the damn boat.

Helena's Hair

I have a switch blade Christ
can't even feel. I carve one drop

out of his eye
and he's one drop lighter.

Julie says, "You and Pete
are anarchists; you get the same spark
out of breaking rules."

I night climbed your elm once,
until the trunk split,

and I had one foot
on either side of the wish.

The branches became wooden ropes,
then bicycle chains,
then Helena's hair.

Her bright hand in a window
is opening and closing,

as the houses welded to this world
gallop in a circle around her.

Robin Strickler

sinatra in blue

I
There is nothing but the way
The words
Tear laugh at me
A little swing a little sorrow
Never tell my heart (arranged as it is now)
It can never forever

II
Throw me out
I don't care
The gold linen and the razzmatazz smile
And each time I see the tip of your tongue answer my trumpet
I think my kind of guy
And...
He has all that jazz
The best I see is here, wined and dined
And muffled in sex
Fine and taut taught dry
And you're gonna, you know,
Fly cry sigh Thrill my song
To serenade you I adore.

III
Genius of the stagger
Sexy fleshed out to a riddle
A code and monroe against the frigidaire
The curve in my hips swings his way targets
Rhythm and rage into roll-of-the-dice blue
That cool cats handkerchief seals pandoras box from castro

Basie and basic and base
Later still—
My deprecating self
And sinatra in blue.

Sabrina Rord

Home

The smell of red beans and rice
Coming from the front door of poor.
My grandmother's yard hung tightly with the smell
Of cleaned diapers and fresh chickens running in the back yard.
Our mothers off at work in the factories
Making that ham for the shotz company.
We greet them at the door in single file;
They hug us all and breathe deep the air
Of clean hands as they roam away from the smoke of that shotz ham.
And on the table in each designated spot
Is the smell from that red bean pot—

Men here, they ain't a one.

Jim Meirose

Boy and the Mother Machine

The bed stood in line with the window so the sun streamed through the room onto Boy. He sat on the edge of the bed gently turning the spindle projecting from the top of the machine set on the small table before him. The machine was a mass of rods and sticks tied together into a tall loose structure with a shaft coming down the center of it. At the top of the shaft sat the cone-shaped spindletop; that was what Boy called it when they asked him what was that at the top of the pile of sticks rods and strips and straps and scraps of thrown-together metal.

The spindletop, he told them, his thin hair hanging down. His bald spot caught the light. This is the part you spin, he said.

The spindletop.

He leaned toward the machine. The bed edge creaked. Boy's thin cotton pants stretched over his bony knees. He spun the spindletop with his thin fingers. The shaft smoothly turned. He kept it spinning and as it spun he leaned to the side with his eyes closed listening to some unseen person sitting beside him. Slowly his fingers twirled the spindletop and he lightly swayed to the gentle sound of it, the shaft of light from the sunny day out the window washing across him, highlighting his face. Boy listened. They called him Boy, though he had to be forty, because he had the machine he could use any time he wanted to make his Mother come sit by him and talk to him and tell him what to do.

Mother—

Griff sat on the bed across the room wringing his hands together watching Boy.

You think you're smart now with that machine, said Griff, his black beard bristling. But wait until the money's all gone. Then you'll find out what's what.

Boy paid no attention, just kept twirling the spindletop. Griff ran a finger down the side of his face where a long wide white scar kept the beard from growing.

That's right wait until the money's gone, Griff thought. *Just wait long enough and it'll all be gone mark my words, then you'll all find out what's the worst that can happen all the rest is nonsense and temporary—*

The spindletop spun. Boy swayed slightly and Griff sat running his finger up the scar. The sun washed over them. Birds chirped out past the glass. The wide wood door of the room opened and a man came in with a long horse-like, clean-shaven face. He wore black pants and a white shirt. He pulled a mop and bucket in after him and part of the water in the bucket sloshed out over the edge and onto the floor. The cracks in the dingy dark parquet soaked up the water.

Okay boys, I'm here to mop, said Sherm, same as he always did, bending over after closing the door behind him and squeezing the water out of the mop with the long handle attached to the bucket. All the edges and corners and cracks between the boards of the brown floor were caked with dirt. Slowly Sherm bent and mopped his way along the edge of the room. Griff and Boy sat on the edge of their beds. Sherm's dark hair hung over his forehead.

Got to be dyed, thought Griff, nodding to himself. He took his hand down from the scar in his face and laid it on his lap.

How you doing Sherm? he said.

Not too bad, answered Sherm. He brought the mop to the bucket to wring out. *Always a mess in here this floor, what can you do, what do you do—when everything's always a mess.* Sherm chewed his lip.

What do you do to get this place so filthy? said Sherm, swinging the mop back out over the floor.

Griff's eyes narrowed.

We don't do nothing but sit here, he said. What do you mean, it doesn't even need mopping.

Oh that's why I need to do it every day then, I suppose, said Sherm, pushing a hand back through his hair. The sun from the window slanted across his chest. Boy let go of the spindletop and it slowly spun to a halt. He sat upright on the edge of his bed and examined the backs of his hands. Sherm pulled the mop the other way past the small table holding the loosely made machine.

Mother have anything new to say to you today, Boy? asked Sherm, nodding toward the machine.

No, said Boy. Nothing new. He shifted his legs under the small table and tapped his fingers on the wood by the machine. His blonde hair hung.

Sherm scowled, mopping past, and pictured Boy getting up and walking down a hall past rows and rows of doors with the machine carefully balanced in his hands. Sherm squeezed the mop handle and pictured himself pushing his foot out one of the doors and tripping Boy forward onto his face. *That's what someone as stupid as him needs.* And he'd fall, flinging the machine out before him, and it would slide, coming apart, rolling and bouncing and sliding sticks and bolts and metal and the spindletop rolling, bouncing off against the wall. *The damned loony these damned loonies that's what they need—*

What's so funny, Sherm? said Griff. Sherm turned from Boy sitting quietly by the spindletop machine and pushed the mop out and the strings of the mop wrapped around and slapped around the legs of Boy's bed as he answered.

Nothing, said Sherm. He brought the mop up to wring again. Griff scratched a long fingernail down his scar. Sherm looked away, shaking his head slightly.

And that one with that scar damn what could have made such a scar and he tried to grow a beard to cover it but nothing can cover it stupid loony. Sherm pushed down the wringer handle and the bucket wheels loosely rattled and he looked again at Griff's scar.

What kind of slice dice snip slash Lord God what could have made such a scar, whatever did it had to hurt like hell.

Where'd you get that awful scar? Sherm had asked once or twice or more times before.

Griff had pulled his spread fingers down through his beard.

It makes no difference, the scar's nothing. Nothing will be nothing when the money's finally gone, all gone—

That was all Griff said if Sherm mentioned the scar so Sherm watched the scar as he mopped across the room and Griff sat with one hand clutching his knee and the other one with fingers spread running over and over down through his beard as though something awful had to be combed out of it. Griff looked out the window, through the sun, past the sun.

And when the money's all gone there's nothing left not a penny to buy anything there's nothing you need that you don't need money to buy, what is there you need that no money can buy, where can you find something money can't buy, you can't you just can't and when the money's all gone there's nothing left not a penny—

Griff took out a cigarette and rolled it in his fingers. Though he'd quit long ago, he still carried them. Griff stared out the window as Sherm swept the mop out in an arc between the beds. Boy reached out and fingered the spindletop with his head slightly tilted.

Loonies, thought Sherm. *Two loonies.*

Say Boy, said Sherm, nodding his head.

What?

Why don't you let me and Griff try that machine? Our Mothers are both gone, we'd like to hear from our two Mothers too—wouldn't we Griff?

Griff glanced up from his lap and brought his hand down from his beard.

What? said Griff.

I said Boy ought to change his mind about letting us try the machine. I know I'd love to hear from my Mother. She's gone now twenty years at least.

Boy clenched his lips before speaking in a thin voice.

I've told you before it won't work for you. She told me there's no use letting anybody else try it, said Boy, edging out from behind the table and sitting straight with both hands on his knees. His blonde hair hung down and his bald spot shone.

Ahh—that's what you always say, said Sherm, lifting the mop into the bucket and pushing it up and down in the water before wringing it out again hard. A cloud moved in the sky outside the window. The sun shone brighter over them.

You know what you ought to do? said Sherm.

What? said Boy.

You ought to at least let Griff here try it.

Sherm swung the mop out under the head of Griff's bed across a beam of sunlight lying on the dingy parquet. Boy and Sherm both looked at Griff. Sherm would ask it again now; Sherm always asked it. Sherm lowered his gaze onto the machine; a pile of tied together sticks and rods and metal.

How about it Griff? You want to try the machine?

No, said Griff. I don't want to try the machine.

Sherm watched and listened and glanced from Griff to Boy and back again. Griff went on.

Boy doesn't want me to try it anyway—

That's not true, said Boy, raising a hand. Mother's the one says no one should bother trying it—

Sherm grinned watching them go back and forth.

Okay, whatever, said Griff, looking down and picking at the skin of his left hand.

Plus it's crazy, crazy things work for everyone else, they're always too crazy to work for me but not crazy enough to not work for someone else, crazy things happen to other people, nothing's too crazy to come true for somebody else but not no never for me because everything's too crazy but the money yes when the money's gone it'll be gone for everybody sooner or later—

Sherm loudly pushed down the wringer.

Well you don't have to look so crushed Griff, he said. Especially since you say you don't want to try it anyway.

The sun dimmed slightly. The sky showed blue through the branches of a tree moving slightly in a light breeze. Griff glanced at Sherm then looked out the window.

Don't go any further don't think about it it's too crazy crazy enough to be true like when the money's all gone oh you just wait until the money's all gone—

Boy spun the spindletop. He'd slid back behind the machine and leaned now, listening. Sherm rattled the bucket toward the corner of the room. The dirt was heavy there with many layers of old wax trapping the jet black grime. The shaft spun and Boy listened and Griff sat scratching at his scar.

Sherm pushed the mop sloppily into the corner.

What on earth could have caused that scar slash zip slit, if it wasn't from some kind of accident somebody must have hated Griff really really hated him ripped straight down with a big straight razor, loonies damn loonies they belong in here the loonies.

Sherm quietly finished mopping the room and let himself out without a word, as always. Griff and Boy sat there.

When the money's gone when it's all gone, what's what money can't buy what is it—

The door tapped shut behind Sherm and the sun kept on through the window.

* * * *

My Mother called that a tornado sky, said Boy, leaning on the sill.

Griff chewed his beard.

Oh. Really.

Sure, really, said Boy. See — it's so black up there, it looks like lumps of coal laying there across the tops of the clouds and it's all ready to come pushing out and falling down and spinning and blowing into a tornado and smashing everything down flat — that's what she said —

The door opened and Sherm came in pushing his bucket.

Okay boys, I'm here to mop, said Sherm. Boy and Griff stepped away from the window and sat on the edge of their beds. Boy lightly spun the spindletop and closed his eyes and swayed. Griff scratched his scar. Gray came through the window. Sherm thought the floor looked filthy. He gripped the mop handle, his eye on Boy.

Yes trip him down the hall with the machine breaking up and all the parts flying sliding yes—

You know, I got to say it again, said Sherm. I haven't said it in a while, but I got to.

What? said Griff, looking up. Boy leaned without hearing. The leaves of the tree outside hung motionless catching the shadows from above.

That machine there. It's got to be a fake.

Still turning the spindletop, Boy looked up and turned his head toward Sherm, frowning.

He hears her though, said Griff.

No, snapped Sherm. It's stupid and can't possibly be true. He might be hearing something but he isn't hearing her. Who ever heard of such a thing — a mother machine. There can't be such a thing. It's stupid.

He swept the mop out across the floor and the strings spun around the legs of Griff's bed.

It's not stupid, said Boy.

It's worse than stupid, said Sherm. It's crazy. Such a thing just can't be. What do you think Griff? Think such a thing can be?

Griff pulled out a cigarette and rolled it in his fingers.

I really don't know.

What do you mean you don't know? said Sherm, shaking the mop. You sit here every day and watch him use it. You've got no opinion at all?

Griff put the cigarette in his mouth and chewed it, thinking.

It's probably true for him because it's so crazy but it can't be true for me because it's too crazy, it's not simple nothing's that simple—

It's not crazy, Boy told Sherm, running a hand back through his thin hair. Just because you can't understand how such a thing could work doesn't make it crazy.

Griff gnawed the cigarette harder.

He says it's not crazy but what if it's not crazy—

Griff pushed a hand out toward Sherm.

Anyway Sherm, why ask us that, you always ask that. You always ask the same old things. Why do you ask when you know the answer?

Sherm smiled dimly and wrung out the mop.

I don't know, he said. Because I just got to.

Sherm looked down into the swirling water in the bucket.

Damned loonies they belong here, got to stay sane some way in this goddamn job, talk to the loonies.

Sherm mopped his way out toward the window. The whites of Boy's eyes shone, watching him. The mop swirled and slopped across the floor. The black sky hung low. The machine stood loosely on the table before Boy. Griff rolled the cigarette in his fingers watching the mop roll wet across the corners, thinking.

If Mother were here though something about Mother Mother and child sweet smells perfume dark wet—

The mop pulled up and into the bucket and under the foaming water. The handle squeezed. The dark sky pressed down. A shadow came across the room.

Dark deep wet warm—

The tree leaves gently moved. Griff rolled the cigarette in his fingers and tiny shreds of tobacco fell to the floor.

The warm liquid the breezes soft warm liquid soft breezes—

Well I know it's true and that's what matters, said Boy. Because I hear her.

The mop pushed warm against the deeply stained corner.

Thrill, thought Griff, closing his eyes—*goosebumps the hot water in the tub, Mother what do you have to say—*

Sherm snapped his fingers in front of Griff's face.

What's the matter Griff? he said loudly. Are you falling asleep—don't fall asleep—it's rude!

You damned loony.

Startled, Griff dropped his cigarette to the floor and it rolled across. Sherm bent and picked it up and held it out.

So anyway. What do you think, Griff?

Griff took the cigarette and stuffed it back down in the half crushed pack in his pocket. The sky out the window was darker. The tree leaves were turned over like a shower was coming up. Griff fingered his scar.

I was thinking something—

Well, Griff?

I think that when the money's gone, that'll be it, said Griff, looking up quickly. That'll really be it. That's what's really important—

Oh shit, said Sherm, rattling the mop.

Griff jumped.

What? he said, scratching quickly at his scar.

You're always talking about the money being gone, Griff! But you'll always be here, you'll never need money. Either you or Boy. They'll always keep you here. When's the last time you even had money in your hand, Griff? What do you or Boy need money for?

Griff sat open-mouthed.

What I was thinking, that wasn't what I was thinking—

Sherm pushed the mop back and forth under the head of Boy's bed.

Well you don't have to look so crushed, he said to Griff. But really. What do you need money for?

They could kick us out of here, said Griff, folding his arms. Then we'd need money.

See there that's true.

Right, said Boy, his hand on the spindletop. They could kick us out of here.

Sherm put the mop in the bucket and leaned on it.

Shit, he said, chewing his lip. You two will always be here. I'm the one could get kicked out of here. I could come in tomorrow and they could say you're out of a job.

Who would mop then? said Griff.

You could, said Sherm. You two could mop and clean up and dump the garbage and do all your own chores around here. Do you two good to work for a living.

Griff looked away toward the window. The tree swayed in a gathering wind. Rain would come later.

That won't be, said Boy.

Sherm grunted and lifted the mop into the bucket. Boy leaned into his Mother beside him as again he spun the spindletop. Sherm wrung the mop out in the bucket. The darkness flowed in the window over them. The bottoms of the clouds were black and the wind blew. Sherm opened the door and pushed the bucket from the room. It rattled loudly over the threshold and he closed the door behind himself without a goodbye, as always. The boy let go the spindletop and leaned back on the bed supporting himself by his arms.

Why do you talk so much about the money being all gone? he asked Griff. Is that all you think about?

No, said Griff.

Griff chewed his lip.

Nodding, the boy looked away toward the wall. The darkness out the window lifted slightly.

* * * *

Rain pounded heavily against the window and the water sheeted down over the panes. The tree was still out there but they couldn't see it. The sky was still out there but they couldn't see it. Boy and Griff sat watching the water sheet down over the panes and listened to it pounding heavily on the glass. The door opened and Sherm came in again, with his mop and bucket.

Okay boys, I'm here to mop, said Sherm, his dark hair swinging over his eyes. He pushed the mop out toward the dark wet window. Water trickled down the wall from a corner of the sill.

Hell of a day isn't it? Look at that, he said. Leaky window. Must really be raining. Don't see leaks like that unless its really raining.

He turned around pushing the mop. Griff sat on the edge of his bed looking across at the wall. Boy quickly let go the spindletop and looked at Sherm.

Can you fix that leak? The water will soak down in the floor and ruin the ceiling below.

Oh yeah, sure, what do you know about it? said Sherm. Just take care of your machine there and I'll take care of the place. That leak's nothing.

If the ceiling below gets ruined it'll take money to fix it, said Boy.

Griff looked up.

Yes money, and where will the money come from, if it all gets wasted it'll just be gone that much quicker—

The rain pounded on the glass.

You don't have to worry about things like that, Sherm told Boy. Let me worry about the leaks and all that. Let Griff there worry about the money and all that. I mean—you won't let anybody try your machine, you shouldn't be poking into other people's business.

Sherm picked up the mop and slapped it down in the bucket and noisily pushed down the handle and let it snap back up with a crack. Boy jumped slightly. Sherm swung out the mop under Boy's bed.

Trip him down the hall send him flying crashing—

You know, Boy, I just plain don't believe that machine works. That's why you won't let anybody else try it.

That's not true, said Boy, calmly.

Sherm turned and motioned toward Griff.

Then let one of us try it. Let Griff over there try it. Like I been asking.

Griff looked up straight-faced.

I told you I don't want to try it, said Griff.

And Mother said it would only work for me, said Boy.

Sherm narrowed his eyes and looked from one to the other.

Damn loonies.

Why are you so sure your Mother told the truth? he asked. Boy gripped the edge of the table.

Because my mother doesn't lie.

Well—there's one way we can prove that—hey Griff, what about if you try the machine. No harm'll be done. It won't work anyway.

Griff ran his finger down his scar and silently shook his head.

No it can't work for me it's too crazy to work for me he says it won't work for me I'll just be disappointed—

But Mother's never wrong, said Boy, gripping a handful of his sheets.

Are you sure about that? Sherm asked Boy. The rain beat harder against the glass. Griff chewed his tongue.

Something about sweet smells perfume dark wet—

Yes I'm sure.

The water ran down, the puddle under the window grew.

Dark deep wet warm—

Then let him use it.

Griff stood up suddenly and pushed out a hand.

I want to try it.

Sherm leaned on the mop and rolled his eyes.

Wait a minute. You just said not two minutes ago that you didn't want to try it.

The floors walls and ceiling surrounded them in the dry warm space inside the sheets of rain.

Well. I changed my mind.

Boy put his hand on the spindletop.

But Mother said no one should try it but me. It won't work for anybody but me, and don't try it on anybody else. That's what she said. I got to do what she said.

Sherm leaned the mop handle against the wall, took a step forward, leaned at Boy, and spoke.

Well guess what. I don't believe you. And I don't believe her. Do you love your Mother, Boy?

Boy placed a hand on the side of the machine.

Yes I do, he said, lip shaking.

Then you'll want to prove her right. That is, Sherm lightly coughed into his hand before continuing. If you really love her.

Griff stood with his mouth clenched hard, watching them.

Boy sat biting his lip staring ahead. Sherm rattled the mop and growled at Boy.

Well — will you let him? Or you just going to let me bad mouth your Mother?

Boy rose from the bed and stepped aside.

He can try it, he said.

Well now! That's the spirit! said Sherm. He pushed the mop and bucket aside and motioned for Griff to come over.

Okay Griff. Come on.

Griff stepped lightly over and sat on the edge of Boy's bed in front of the small table holding the mother machine.

What do I do? he asked.

Spin the top, said Boy.

Right. Spin the top.

The window behind them was black with running water and the rain pounding filled the spaces between them. Griff grasped the spindletop and slowly turned it. It turned smoothly and the weight of the shaft and wheel inside the machine almost kept it turning all by itself. He leaned; he listened.

What do you hear? said Sherm, grinning.

Boy stood there. Griff said nothing, just spun the spindletop and it made a light tapping sound blending flowing with the hiss of the rain.

Griff lightly started to laugh.

What? said Sherm.

Griff laughed louder. The rain pounded. The shaft spun.

What?

I hear her, said Griff.

What? said Boy.

I hear her.

No, you don't.

Sherm bit his lip. *No you don't.*

Boy leaned back against the door frame, put his hand on his face, and softly began to laugh. And Griff kept on laughing; swaying, leaning, listening, laughing.

What's so funny? said Sherm.

Griff and Boy laughed together and the laughter went out over the floor like the water rushing at the window and flowed up and through and into Sherm. Sherm stood there shaking his head, reaching for his mop. He found it and hung on in the laughing and the swaying and the rain.

What's so damned funny? said Sherm.

Boy's laughter rose and fell deep back in his throat; his hands came up clenched together at his neck; and Griff just swayed, grinning, chuckling evenly, eyes half closed.

Richard Kenefic

Poem Beginning with a Line from Yannis Ritsos

He heard them calling his name over the water, heard a hand
caress a face, the pages of a book flipping backwards and a glass
raised in laughter. The moon is new above the plaza and all
the waiters are returning full trays to the kitchen. All the cooks
are busy returning plaki to ovens, emptying ovens of their fillet,
assembling fish for the marketplace. The men pedal backwards,
throw fish in holds. The fish jump into their net and return
to the water. He was a fish, now he is a ray turning inside
loops under the iron water. *It is always like this, at the table*

there is a bottle, a glass, the remains of a meal. Beside them lie
a pen, blank pages, a letter to myself. The mice are rummaging,
they told me not to turn, so I obey. Soon, all the pages are empty,
the crumbs gone, and I am less massive. They bring me
food, water, blank pages and ink for the pen. I pace, watch
the water break against the shore, the clouds scull by. Soon
I eat and drink—shit and piss. They take everything away.

Last night she lay naked beside him and he knew her, although
he had forgotten her face. He knew she would stay if he didn't
move. Inside his eye is a mist, a voice throwing stones
at the water, light borrowed from the wings of a sparrow,
and some seeds hidden beneath last year's leaves. He is forgetting
the word for fish, the name of a friend, the shape of
her mouth, while he watches the high flush of the sun setting
on the cheek of the ocean. *Every year the cold digs further*
into my bones. Tonight I am a ray hidden on the bottom
while the net comes scraping by. This time it misses me,
but later I look up and see the bycatch floating down—turning,
turning, and the blanket is covered with eyes, mouths and
the morning sound of the sun climbing over those hills.

Elegy for Whatever We Lost in the Distance

for Erin

I sit in the haze of what is left from
that summer, while, on the telephone,
my sister speaks to me again
of the daughter she will soon give up.
My sister, looking, her eye pressed
to the glass, can't see past the cosmic
dust of her demolished present.
The years slide out of each other.

I look back. My sister sits,
talking to me. Her daughter then, a small
and intricate detail, taken beyond our field
of view, has stepped fully grown into
the present. She wants to know everything.
She speaks to me now for the first time
at her end of the telephone, both of us
alone here, looking back at her mother
from the large end of it.

The Verb in the Vending Machine

You might stick another nickel in
to see what happens (go ahead).
Nickels are fungible, but otherwise
useless, as any numismatist
will testify, they're mostly
copper; numerous and nick
resistant (unlike you). They're fun
to flatten on the tracks. They buy
8 minutes on a meter, not much
after they're flat but more than
a qintar (before or after). One of
the smallest Balkan monetary units,
one of the few Q words without
a U. (No you in the vendor), but you,
the nicked vendee without another
nickel, you're ready for a vendetta,
ready to break it up into smaller
and smaller hostile parts.

Robert Hendrickson

Extra Innings in the Helldome

You got to let me correct the story the *Inquirer* had on me stealing the arm. People should know it was an *unknown* arm I took. It was loose, laying around Bellevue Morgue. Owned by no one. Headed up the East River for Potters Field. They ought to give me that arm 'cause there was trees full of arms in the war. My arm and brother arms hanging loose in trees and barbed wire like weird red ripe fruit that could pick itself.

The story also said "formerly called Lefty." Lefty still remains my name. I've been Lefty since the old man never let me throw the arm out when I was a kid. "Stick with the old fast ball, little Lefty, you're a natural," things like that he'd tell me. He figured I'd need the big curves later, so don't throw the arm out young, and he was right, you do need the curves. And now I got nothing at all, since I'm up on the hill, so maybe I should say something about what happened.

Floating. Sometimes in here it's roaring like a grand slam two outs last of the ninth, but sometimes a euphus floating big, fat and lazy as a cloud taking all the time in the world getting down to the plate. Or me up on the mound, my infield calming me *humma humma humma, humma humma humma*, and then I can think of the hill, not the hill I pitched on but the real-life hill where they and me threw the arm away.

The hill never had a name like the war wasn't sure it was a War or whatever. It was Hill 47. Maybe it was War 4777 of the twentieth century. I'm up it first, I remember that part all right, we're the road team that first night and I'm on point. Howitzers cranking off rounds behind the C.P. and every thirty seconds or so they land on Hill 47. Actually it was 28.6 seconds (check it out in the record book). You had all the time in the world to time things exact and they insisted on that. From the colonel on down the brass is all there listening and watching. Not that Joe D., or the Splendid Splinter himself with those fabulous eyes, could have seen much surveying the dark through their field glasses; it was a non-illuminated raid and the moon didn't show up like planned.

So we crawl out and the machine guns open up, the mortar fire gets thick. The other side is dug in deep and we got no artillery support so we can't get in close enough for demolition charges. Slaughter. Before the lieutenant fires his flare and we're back at the rallying point, the score is 15 dead, more wounded. But that don't end it. The colonel has a hot thing about that hill. Don't ask why. He's one of those guys they maybe invented cursing for to describe. "Mac, you have to get going on this 47 deal," he tells the C.O. in the dugout. "I want it hit tomorrow night again. Can we beat these gooks, Old Mac?"

"Sir," Mac says, "I think we learned tonight that Marines who have training and follow the book are as good or better night fighters than any laundrymen. Give us support, we can beat these gooks at their own game." When I hear that I know spring training is over. Early the next night we are back up the hill. But we don't show much that inning either. Our artillery's going for us and our sixty millimeters are doing good counter battery stuff, putting their mortars out of commission. Still, the best we can get is a tie score. They have 30 dead. Us too. Rough body count. Approximately.

The game plan is to go up the hill as many times as it takes, but at least I don't get point no more. The other side is dug in deep all over so that nothing we got can reach them. Those tunnels go about fifty feet down, with caves below the fighting holes, which they live in, and a big bright Helldome down there in the guts of the earth where they play ball, I tell you. You couldn't hit them much. By the time that following night's over, we're only ahead a nose. The score is like 90 dead for them, 80 for us. These aren't exactly great numbers. By now there are about 250 dead bodies on the hill.

So the next morning it's a day game, when the Colonel decides he'll send a company up the hill to take it in broad daylight. "Marines awake!" they shout at us, coming on strong. Some laundrymen! Some guys break and run. But others get in those holes hand to hand. It goes on morning to night till it looks by the end of the week like both sides up at once. We lose count of the score, which is piled so deep you can't see what team they belong on. But the manager has another play up his

sleeve. He calls for napalm, which comes in on seven or eight planes. The flak is heavy, but they get through with it. They dump the tanks, which break apart, and the white gobs of goop spread, without the fuses igniting at first, dripping into the holes. Then *bwoof, bwoof* and all at once those screams and the reek of burning flesh right behind them.

So on the eighth day the hill caves are mostly visible, the camouflage gone, and you can see no life in the holes in the ground. Just the flies know how many bodies are up there. We're not happy except at least it's over. So we think. We're slugging up to claim our trophy when the other team attacks. We quick know they have called in their bench from reserve. They turn loose their players wearing sneakers in a charge down the hill at us. Gooney birds beating overhead with bodies wrapped in sopping red dripping blankets. The other team racing downhill stabbing with bayonets, slashing with kitchen knives, clubbing with rifle butts, rounding the bases, grenades exploding, our own artillery coming in. Arms then, pitching arms in fatigues sticking up all over. I'm hit so big I feel no pain, all I remember is promising young pitching arms reaching up from bodies pleading or hanging loose like orchards of bloody ripe fruit that could pick itself.

I wished later I could have crawled back after my arm in there loose among them. I'm sorry I couldn't so I could have picked it up and gone to bat one-handed on both damn leagues. When I found out in the 25th Evac that the arm was gone, I felt like Graves Registration might as well have stuck the notched end of my dogtag in my teeth, clamped my jaw shut and stuffed me in one of the rubber sacks like all the others. Because what could I do good without my arm which my old man never let me throw out? I was in Triple A, coming up, just a step away. When I was a kid I had a mattress painted with a bullseye I pitched at. Batting averages, hell, I could tell you *pitching* averages, *fielding* averages, stolen bases, double plays—stats of the whole damn major leagues and lots of the minors, they called me Captain Baseball—

Yeah, the hill. They finally called the ballgame. In the ninth day, or maybe after in extra innings, who's counting anymore, they decided the hill's "strategic importance is outweighed by the health hazards it presents to the personnel." Check it out in the record book. There was so much decaying arms and bodies on it wedged deep in the caves that the medics marked the hill 'Unsafe for Human Habitation' and we withdrew to our old position.

Some of us. What was left. Parts. First I used to think I could dig up my arm, fly it home, give it a proper burial like the Unknown Soldier, call it the Arm Known Soldier or something. During many years of searching I thought of that. But it's under a gambling casino over there now. Check it out like I did. They bulldozed the hill after the war and built on it. So that's why I stole the arm from the morgue on the anniversary of my loss and tried to bury it under the mound at Shea. Separate. Like Shoeless Joe Jackson's. Or was that Stonewall Jackson's? Anyway, that's when they arrested this one-armed man digging for his other in the moonlight.

But like I tell them here my real arm's still over there under the hill playing in the Helldome. Pitching to Satan, to giant plague rats and blood-sucking Draculas and you'd be surprised who else.

My arm's all alone down there without me, a long nightmare game. That league don't never go on strike, don't doubt it a minute.

Satan's up.

Bases loaded with pols.

Two outs, last of the ninth, that's what it comes down to. The Babe and the rest of the team are behind my arm, we're ahead by one: there's the Iron Man, the Splendid Splinter, Joe D., the Yankee Clipper, gliding around center, but we're also a team of the mutilated.

My wife has long since left me.

I hope my kid loves me.

He sent a card here Father's Day he made himself which said: "I no you say bad words but I don't care if you say bad words. Love, Andy."

How could I blame him if he didn't care about nothing anymore?

What happens to kids when people crack who are the foundation of their worlds?

My lonely arm winds up.

Satan takes the first one down the middle for a called strike, he's testing it.

My arm rears back, Satan swings and misses at smoke he hardly sees.

Satan digs in.

My arm goes into the windup.

Now Satan's riding us: "All we need is a Scratch hit!"

He steps out of the batter's box, sharpens his spikes.

He points his finger like the Babe, legendarily, but far down, toward the bleacher seats in hell, curses like you never heard.

He mimics me perfectly, cries over and over in my own voice: "Lefty! Lefty! Lefty!"

He takes a drink from his flask, points to all the amputated players, the helmeted skulls that are the bases. "To absent friends!" he toasts. "A ballgame of the mutilés!"

He's laughing himself to tears.

He digs in so deep his feet are on fire.

My arm goes into the windup again.

All by itself without me in the big game, my arm dervishing around and around, incomplete and bone alone as me.

I'm hoping the next one will be the winning curve, the big one, the one my old man always taught little Lefty to save.

Cecile Corona

Spinning

If I had known Frankie had been neurologically damaged, I would have never forced him to go to the fireworks on the Fourth, or sit directly in front of the speakers while I played rock music full blast on my stereo, or do any number of the other things I knew he hated to do, just to get him to break up with me. But I was only fourteen then. And I didn't think about inner ear damage. I didn't think about any kind of damage that couldn't be fixed in a day or less. I was "fired up," as Frankie's dad used to say about me, and when there was something I wanted to do, I usually did it, without thinking much at all.

Frankie says now, when I run into him at my local bar in the city, "All those doctors I went to as a kid and none of them found anything wrong with me. All those years. It made me feel so crazy, not knowing like that. I used to get dizzy — get these panic attacks all the time. You know. I was around you when I first started getting them. Certain things would set it off."

"Loud noises," I say.

"Yeah, that's right. And they put me in that horrible mental ward with these real crazies. You know, the crazies that shuffle through the halls giving you that glazed look — that look like they can't look, at least not out. Like everything they see's inside their own head." He points to his head, and I look at mine. I have a good view of it in the bar mirror. He says, "Everybody thought I was crazy, too."

I say something sympathetic. "That must've been so hard," or just, "Wow, that's awful." But in truth I can't stop thinking about myself right then. For the last three weeks I haven't been looking out, either.

"What're the books for?"

There's a bag of books slumped at my feet. One of the books has slid out and Frankie picks it up for me. He pulls back when he reads the German title.

"They're not mine," I tell him. "Somebody left them in my apartment and I'm trying to give them back." Frankie nods; it sounds

reasonable, and it would be, too, if it weren't that I knew that Peter, the man I'm trying to return them to, won't show up. This is the third time I've tried to get him to meet me.

"You look great, Isabel," Frankie says, handing me the glass of red wine he ordered for me. "Like you stepped right out of high school." This makes *me* pull back. I've been staring in the mirror, studying the bar, studying the old man I know from my block who drinks every afternoon at the far end of it. He keeps staring into his glass and taking a sip, then looking across the length of the bar, through the window, out to the street; he does this over and over as if he's hoping something in the world will look a little clearer in the end. But the more he drinks, the duller his eyes get. There's nothing clear in his look, and it's been a long time since there's been anything clear in mine.

"The only thing that looks different to me is your hair," Frankie says. "It's darker. Your hair wasn't this dark before, was it?"

"*I'm* darker," I tell Frankie. "The hair's the same."

Frankie raises his eyebrows and gives me that "yeah, right" look, the one he gave me all those years back whenever he didn't quite get what I was saying.

I knock back half of the bad house wine in my glass and say with a grin, "You look like high school, too." He really does. His eyes have that same gentle way of touching things, that same way of touching and then, now and then, closing tight, as if he's placing whatever he's seen somewhere inside himself.

"So I used to torture you, didn't I?" I say. "The rock concerts, the school dances—You know."

He shakes his head: "I liked being with you. I went where you went."

"The beach. You hated the beach. You used to burn to a crisp before noon. And then there was that guy who'd put his amp out on the boardwalk, and play his electric guitar with the knobs all the way up. It was everything you hated right there, right in one place."

"Yeah, I guess you're right," Frankie says, like he's just realizing this, and he laughs, too. He looks away where I'm looking, at the old man who's pushed aside his empty glass, then back at me: "You almost sound sorry. I never knew you to be sorry."

"I'm trying to grow up," I say, "I'm sorry for a lot of things."

Frankie and I sit back and drink. When I first met Peter, we used to meet in this bar on Saturday nights and drink shots of tequila. Then one night I brought him home with me; that's one of the many things I'm feeling sorry about. My man is sitting very still in his spot, trying to decide whether he should go home or order another. When my glass is empty I don't have to decide. I buy the next round of drinks.

"Just line his up," I tell the bartender, since Frankie's drink isn't empty; he's about one and a half drinks behind me.

My man at the end of the bar holds up his full glass and nods at me. In his eyes, the same dull look.

"You know," Frankie says, "you weren't as bad a girlfriend as you're thinking."

"I wasn't?"

"No."

"How do you know what I'm thinking?" I hold up my wine and try to look at Frankie through it. I say, "All right. Right now, what am I thinking?"

"I mean," he says, "you were always into something, but you were classy, too, the way nobody else in our high school was."

"Classy?"

"Sure you were," he says with a shrug. "I used to go with you to the woods to meet your friends, do you remember that?"

"You mean the woods behind the junior high?"

"Yeah. And you'd drink and drink with them—you'd out-drink all the girls—and then you'd throw up. Every weekend night."

"Oh. That sounds classy all right," I say, taking my wine from my lips.

Frankie laughs hard, a laugh I remember well, a kind of "Ha, Ha" with a wheeze at the end. "But you were! The way you'd walk, the way you'd say things."

"Am I saying them that way now?"

"What way?"

"Classy."

"Um, well, sure—" He takes a sip of his wine then. I take a sip of mine and grin a slow grin.

"Do you want me to hold them for you, Isabel?" Frankie's nodding at the books that've slipped out of the bag again. He bends down and picks them up for me, clutching them in his arms against his chest.

"You want to walk me to my next class, too?"

He laughs, narrowing his eyes on me. "You were probably one of the few people in your crowd who actually went to class. You were smart."

"It wasn't because I was smart," I say sounding certain, even though I can't say what the "because" was. "I was restless a lot of the time. Yeah, more restless out of class than in."

Frankie says, "That's what I mean by smart." I watch the bartender take my glass away and Frankie orders me another. He says, "When's your friend coming?"

"What friend?"

"The friend who reads German books." Frankie puts the books down on the bar between us.

"Oh." I run my finger along one title, reading aloud: "*Schwangerschaft, Geburt und die Seit danach* . . . What, what a horrible sound." I shove the books down the bar, away from Frankie and me. "Tell me, why? Why would anyone speak German?"

"I don't know," says Frankie, looking away and shrugging, laughing with his eyes at the bartender, who's laughing with his.

"I'm not drunk, you know," I say because I'm not feeling drunk at all. "I'm not drunk. I'm . . . I'm classless."

"Sorry?"

"Classless. That's what you meant before. You know, instead of classy. I am kind of classless. Not up or down or in the middle. Just, just sort of all over the place." I throw up both my hands here for emphasis; Frankie jerks back, then grabs the bar so he doesn't fall off his seat. I say, "He reads German books because he is German. And he's probably not coming. I left messages where he works but he never seems to get them."

"Where's he work?"

"City University."

"You could bring them to the university yourself, couldn't you?"

"No." Frankie's leaning forward, waiting for me to explain. I don't. I taste more of my wine, a taste I'm liking better and better. The detective was clear about that when I went down to the precinct: I can't put myself in an isolated place with him, like his lab in the science building, like my own bedroom. Only how do I keep him out of my room when he keeps finding ways to break in?

I can feel Frankie smiling, watching me, following my finger as it swirls some spilt wine on the bar top.

"Do you remember our first date?"

"What?" My finger stops and I watch the wine bead up, the swirls break.

"In the cafeteria," he says. "I got your friends to tell me when you'd be there, and I took a seat next to you at your table. You remember that?"

"No. No, I don't remember." Swirls become big zig-zags, and then I mop the wine with my palm, rub it in.

"You were so shy you wouldn't even speak to me. You wouldn't even look at me. You were playing with the crumbs on the table, pushing them around with your finger, like you were pushing that wine just then." Frankie takes his own finger and traces over the spirals I've wiped away. "You were always doing these cute, creative things like that when you thought nobody was looking."

I pick up my glass. I have an urge to fling what's left on Frankie. But I'm checking my urges now. Unlike when I stayed out three nights in a row, then came home and packed all of Peter's things in boxes. 'Where've you been?' he asked coming home from work at night. Then pointing at the boxes: 'What's that?' And I told him, 'That's you. You're all packed up. You're ready to go. Any minute.' Yeah, that was an urge, too. Unchecked.

When I look down the bar I see my own dull look staring back. My man's slowly rubbing his chin, the stubble on his chin, like people do when they might be thinking. Only I know he's not thinking anything; that's why he's still here. I take a deep breath. Then finish off the wine that's left.

Frankie's nodding his head, smiling at his lap, like he's got happy pictures of high school spread out on it. He says, drawing an invisible

grid between us with his finger, "We played tic-tac-toe. That was our first date. Tic-tac-toes with crumbs."

"Tic tac toes." I nod. "That *is* cute."

"Yeah," he says, smiling at me.

"You're cute, Frankie."

"You think so?"

"Sure I do." He brings his eyes close to mine. I taste the white wine on his tongue before I pull away.

"You live dangerously," I tell him and he grins, as if I'm simply flirting with him.

I say, "You could get hurt."

"I've been hurt before." Frankie just shrugs.

"Not like this."

It was something like that: "You live dangerously," or "You're a danger to yourself." That's what he'd said after he'd found I'd thrown out his clothes. He pulled me off the bed that morning, and I fell on my back to the floor. He was looking down, his foot on my throat. I could have tried grabbing his leg, pushing him off, but I might not have reached him in time before his weight, 160 pounds of it, came down and crushed the air I had coming in, which, at the time, wasn't much. That was the start. The start of the game. Who got what first.

I look at Frankie: "Tic-tac-toe."

Frankie closes his eyes tight and opens them, giving me another grin.

"Do I look all right to you?" I ask him. I can feel myself swaying, like the drinks are hitting me all at once. I get up and turn around so he can check my back, too.

Frankie grabs my hand and pulls me back to the bar stool. "I told you. You look great, Isabel."

"Is that right?"

"Of course it is."

"Well, then that's great then," I say, taking my seat. I pick up the new drink that's in front of me, either from my man who's got a fresh one of his own, or from Frankie, and I toast to myself looking back at me from the other side of the bar.

"You know," Frankie says. "I fell for you the moment I saw you on the high school steps."

I nod back. "Before you knew about the throwing up part," I say. Then I ask him: "So how did they figure out your problem?"

"Problem? What problem?"

"Your inner ear. How did these doctors—"

"Oh. Oh right. They're really good. They did a whole series of tests on me. But there was a real simple one. They had me sit in a swivel chair and close my eyes. Then the doctor spun it around and told me to tell him when it stopped. It never stopped. Finally he told me to open my eyes and I realized I'd been sitting still; I just couldn't feel it."

"Wow, how weird," I say, and then I laugh because that's just the sort of thing I'd say in high school.

"Yeah, but what was really weird was how I couldn't stop crying when I found out. I mean, that was the first time they showed me that those panic attacks weren't just in my head, that there was a physical reason for them. You'd think I would've been happy, and there I was, driving my car home with tears streaming down my face."

I touch his face, feeling the tears that had been on it. "No, Frankie," I say, "you should cry. I would, too."

"Yeah, maybe," he says.

"There's no maybe. Maybe is definitely not." I can hear my voice louder than I'd meant it, and this time Frankie's eyes laugh along with the bartender's for a reason. "I mean, look. You've lived with yourself a certain way. Who, who really wants to find out something new after all that time?"

Frankie raises his brows, the 'yeah, right' look, and says, "I guess." Then he taps me on the knee and asks, "Is that the guy you're waiting for?"

"The guy?"

"For the German books."

At once I feel the pulsing shoot through my chest, my arms, over the bar, into walls, too. Like the room's been charged. I've been charged only I am not able to move. I cannot lower my hand that's holding up my drink. Or turn around to look at Peter. Frankie takes my glass from me. And I sit still, on the outside still, inside pulsing. I close my eyes

and imagine Peter standing there, hands stuck deep in his pockets, the blood soaking through. There are scratches around his neck, dark stains on his collar. When he pulls out his right hand, one of the fingers snaps off at the knuckle before he holds his hand up, toward me, letting the other fingers hang loose.

Frankie puts his hands over my own, the one that's still raised, no glass in it. "Isabel, are you all right?"

When his hands drop I lower mine. I look at him. Then I turn around and look at the door. There's a guy there, but it's not Peter. He's taller, thinner, relaxed. His thumbs are hooked in his pockets, his fingers firm. He's staring at the bar, not at me. I turn back to Frankie and take a few deep breaths.

"You must be wondering," I say, closing my eyes again. "I mean, what's this with the books? I must have a hard time giving back books. No. That's not it."

When I open my eyes I find Frankie squinting into them, but he doesn't know how to get in. I smile at him. "This isn't about books."

"I know that."

"It's about games. It's about turns." I take a slow sip from my wine glass. My man at the bar is watching me now, either because my voice has gotten loud or because what I'm saying here interests him. Frankie is raising his eyebrows, just waiting. I say, "It's his turn. All I have left in my apartment that's his are those books. And he said he's going to get them. 'When I least want him to,' he said. Yeah, that's what he said. And he can break in, too. He knows how. He's broken in two times when I wasn't there and left notes so I'd know. See, it's his turn. His move. Tic-tac. Tic." I move my finger like a pendulum: "Yeah, tic-tic-tic."

"Are you saying this guy might hurt you?"

"Oh, well. But anybody can hurt anyone."

Frankie keeps squinting, shaking his head, like he can't figure me at all, like he's just noticing that time's passed. Sure, a lot of time has passed. A lot of things can happen in a lot of time. I say, "You know that, right?"

Frankie shrugs. "I don't know."

I say, "You do. You know."

"Yeah," Frankie says, "right."

"Not that I'd meant to," I'm telling him, "but they put a metal door on the entrance to my apartment. It's not wood. So when I slammed it you could hear it all the way down to the first floor. That's what my neighbor said yesterday morning. I mean, it was the screaming he heard. He was screaming and screaming. Only then I couldn't let him in, and if I'd opened the door, he would've gotten me. I saw his finger tips. There's like this space in the door jamb where his fingers fit, but real tight as it is. Then I put in the police lock and I could hear it, the bones cracking."

"What's that?" Frankie's face is scrunched up, and he's put his hand where his heart is.

I say, "The fingers, the bones in them cracked." I hold up my fingers to show him. "Even through the screams. I heard them, and you could see blood dripping down to the floor. You know police locks? These metal bars that fit in the floor and wedge in under the door knob, so the door presses real tight. I use it when I'm inside, and now I use it when I go, even though he still gets in. Yeah, he had to get each finger set by some doctor."

Frankie stares at me while he finishes off his last drink. Then he says, "So what do you think he's going to do to get back at you? Will he try to do the same thing?"

"The same? No, no, he wouldn't do that. That would be . . . that would be like us both having circles; I mean, he's got to have a different mark, right? And, well, yeah, and he's too creative to do that, too. He told me he's come up with a lot of different things."

Frankie moans. "Oh, great."

"Yeah. There was something he said about ripping me out. About sticking something inside of me and ripping it." I'm trying my best to remember, but I hadn't been listening that well because I'm sure he mentioned two or three possibilities. "I wonder if a doctor'll be able to fix *me* in the end."

Frankie covers his face, his hands up over his face, just as he used to do when the music got too loud in my living room.

I shrug, shake my head and look away from him. "Here we are talking about doctors again." My man at the end still has his eyes on

me, and now his index finger is tapping the bar. Tap-tap-tap. Tic. Like he could go off any moment.

"You know, I think we're spinning," I say. I'm saying this to everyone in the bar, really, but Frankie thinks I'm just talking to him. "No, I *know* we're spinning."

"Yeah. That's right." Maybe Frankie says this or maybe it's my man. Maybe I say it, too.

I say, "We only think we're standing still." And I think how it's been that way all along, all these years and I never knew. That there I was spinning, spinning and spinning, and I thought I was right here, sitting still.

Jennifer Understahl

Crossing

As we paddle beneath the covered bridge,
my sister turns and says — it gets shallow up ahead.

Rain about an hour off.
Lush forest on either side.

I remember standing in the middle of an empty street
clutching a wooden bowl, thinking—
I have lost my parents now.

And then you put your hand in mine,
led me past alley cats and weeping willows—

too much to bear alone.
The river thin with drought.

My own childhood in black and white, haunted
by both honorable and weak spirits.

Riding my bike fast that night over railroad tracks,
past the laundry and the burned-down tavern—
I have never been so close to leaving my body.

You think I am not ready
to find my way out of this humidity,
Indiana July, but I have seen what's next.

It is a circle of vultures coming down,
and a long shore of burning pebbles.

Jo McDougall

In the Office of a Leading Oncologist

The potpourri can't overcome
the dread smell rising in this room.
Here the spunky, inseparable twins,
diagnosis and prognosis grin
to escort the hapless to their graves.
From a wheelchair, one waves
absently. Some sleep. One,
bald as a cricket, squints in the sun.

As if a book opened, chapter
and verse, I see: Here is the abyss,
here the angel with knives in her wings.
What else can there be left to fear?

Hosannas of light! Praise Zion, a sign!
Rose of Sharon, I am counted in.

Bernd Sauermann

The Seeing

The eye is the first circle.
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

I nevermind the world
as my turned eye circles
slower than the first second,
and my arms reach out,
gather at the girl's waist.
Her belly is slowly curved
as the scene folds in upon itself
but always returns to the eyes.
These are the unheard things:
I come home better to this other woman,
and without thinking of words
to tell the one I no longer love,
I celebrate unearthly orbits
set back in the skull, I do,
and I celebrate my hands,
their ten yearning pupils, receptors
of the cobalt blue Cleveland night.

Denise Jordan

Carpiar, 1989

Greeney's foot catches on an exposed tree root descending the steep riverbank throwing him into a tired gallop. He grabs the last sapling between himself and the Okaw, swings wide around the trunk, manages to keep hold of his pole and bucket, drops the tackle box, keeps himself from falling into the water like the last time he set bank poles. No depth perception, he thinks, and drops the bait bucket beside him with a clank.

Greeney survived losing his left eye and his girl while fighting in the Pacific theater. Fifty years later, every time he fishes, he wishes he had both eyes. He could have been a policeman like Leroy instead of a deputy sheriff. He doesn't much regret the girl, not that particular one anyway. She'd turned into her mother, but a wife like Georgia, Leroy's wife, now there was a woman. He could have had a family like Leroy's. He pulls the strap of his cooler, heavy with ice, over his head and places it beside the bait bucket.

He mops at his face with a stained bandanna jerked from the back pocket of shiny jeans, cleans the rheum from his glass eye with a crusted corner and shoves the handkerchief back into the pocket. Them's good eatin'. He continues the argument begun earlier this morning when he went for coffee in the back of the store and pulls the line of his first bank pole from the water. He'll sort tackle later, can't wait to see if he's caught any fish. City food, he thinks, hawks and spits when he discovers the second pole robbed of its bait. They got theirselves hooked on city food. Afraid to look a cow in the eye. They ever got turned loose in the woods here, die in three days.

A box turtle writhes on its back between the first and second poles, must have flipped climbing the low piece of driftwood just out of reach of its undulating legs. Greeney places the toe of his boot next to the turtle, allows it to right itself, watches a turtle's dash toward the sheltering undergrowth.

The line of the third pole tethers a large carp. Eight pounds if she's an ounce, he thinks to himself, then corrects himself in his thoughts—if *it's* an ounce. Leroy's daughter, Annie, has attempted to break Greeney of the habit of referring to animals, various farm implements, vehicles and other objects with the pronoun "she." Greeney gives her dozens of home-canned jars of carp to show his appreciation for her many efforts to improve him, her offers to clean his house, her homemade cookies, but mostly for allowing him to spend time with her daughter, Marly.

Greeney pretends he, not Leroy, is Marly's grandfather, buys her toys. In the wood shop behind his house, he made her a doll house and a table to hold it. He wishes Annie was his daughter, that he was the one sleeping with Georgia, imagines lying curved behind her in bed, cupped like two spoons in a drawer, warming her, these cool spring nights. He doesn't allow himself to imagine any more than that. They're both in flannel pajamas.

He's fishing alone this spring since Marly started school in the fall, frowns when she comes to mind. Little thing don't get home till four by the time she rides the school bus for an hour. Use to be kindergarten was a half day. Fool teachers wanting babies to stay in school all day. Still needs naps for crying out loud. Last summer, he and Marly fished in the mornings to make sure she napped.

Once a week, he'd take Marly and her brother Pete out to eat at the Mennonite place in Arthur, let them order whatever they wanted. Last time, eight-year-old Pete ordered coffee, choked it down with five tablespoons of sugar and two containers of cream. Marly ordered french fries, potatoes and gravy and cottage cheese, ate the whole mess with ketchup. Annie laughed, said she didn't mind long as it's only once a week.

Greeney guts the carp, a female full of eggs, saves the eggs in a butter dish brought for the purpose. Carpiar's just like that expensive stuff them Russians eat. He knows Georgia won't touch the stuff, will laugh at him, but for that moment while he offers her the carpiar, he'll have her full attention. She'll look at him.

Seven fish on a dozen bank poles, two catfish, the rest carp. He throws one of the carp back, too small. Three of the carp are egg-filled

females. He finishes cleaning the fish, drops carp into one plastic bag, catfish into the other, places the bags in the cooler. The butter dish is full of carp eggs when he snaps on the lid. A few eggs spill, slide down the sides. He drops it in the cooler and closes the lid. Me and Pete and Marly, we'll have some carpiar on saltines.

Greeney scoops up a finger of homemade cheese bait and balls it around the empty hook, lets the line drop back into muddy water. He's down river from the path by the time he baits the last hook.

Nobody wants carp. I want it. Why you think I make this special bait? Ain't nothin' better. Could sell this on TV for twenty-nine ninety-five a bucket. Take this fish home and can it. Them bones is good for you. Just like a vitamin pill. Seen calcium at the store for seven dollars. This here's free calcium.

Dizzy, Greeney gives his head a shake, leans over to pick up the bait bucket. He steps sideways to keep himself from falling, grabs at a hickory sapling. Always wanting to pay for stuff you can get free, even them farmers. Greeney clears his throat. Can it on my stove this afternoon. He removes his hat and wipes at sudden beads of sweat.

The bottom of his pressure pan warped the last time he canned carp. He forgot it while he fed the quail he raises in an old chicken coop beside the shop. He blew fish onto the kitchen ceiling through the safety valve. Once it dried, he painted over it with white paint. Told Marly it looked like that textured paint that cost so much.

Georgia dropped in to see the mess.

His grip slides down the sapling. The bait bucket drops from his other hand. No one knows my fishing place, but Marly and Pete. He falls heavily onto his right side before losing consciousness.

* * * *

When he opens his eyes, the sun is dipping into the water, half submerged. He shivers, can't feel the drool dripping from the slack left side of his mouth. His right foot aches with cold. The left feels nothing. Not until he tries to scratch an itchy nose with his left hand does he realize something has gone wrong. His hand flops up and hits him in the forehead, hard, again. He slaps himself in the face three times before he grabs his left with his right to protect himself, lies exhausted after twenty minutes of wrestling his rogue arm.

The hand is at rest and Greeney doesn't understand why he continues to breathe hard, why the earth shakes beneath him. It doesn't feel like an earthquake. He can't feel his left foot dance, just feels it shake his body, rattle his teeth.

With immense effort, he lifts his head an inch, maybe two from the cracked mud, sees his foot jigging in a clogging motion, watches until it quits. Greeney lies still until his breathing slows to a normal rate.

The leaves above him are tiny, bright green in the dimming light. The weatherman predicted a hard frost for tonight. Channel 3 interviewed a couple of worried peach growers in southern Illinois and an apple grower in central. Those leaves above me could shrivel up and die in the night.

This can't be a stroke. An arm and leg jumping like that don't make sense.

He reaches toward the sapling with his right hand, careful to avoid attempted movement with his left. Arm over head, he pulls himself onto his side and toward the small hickory. His numb left arm begins to jump beneath him, pushes into his side, grinds itself raw on the crusted mud, but Greeney feels no pain, no discomfort.

He remains on his side, rests his head on an exposed root, speaks to reassure himself. Marly won't know what's happened. Promised her a surprise, are the words Greeney thinks as he speaks, but his ears don't recognize the gibberish of words issuing from his loosened mouth. He stops, frightened now. The last time he felt this helpless, he lost his eye. Last time I ended up like this, I was wishing I was somebody else.

A tiny rim of the sun is visible above the placid Okaw. The water in the dusky light looks smooth, almost solid, the reflections of tree and sky solid enough to walk on. Rings radiate out from mosquitoes landing on the surface of the water, walking on tension. The sun submerges, dives beneath the surface. The temperature of the air drops ten degrees in as many minutes.

If he can reach enough twigs and bark, he can start a small fire with the lighter in his pocket. Greeney begins feeling with his good

arm, reaches around himself, over his head, behind him, out front, scrapes the ground, pulls leaves and small sticks toward himself.

He spots two logs and some driftwood three feet on the other side of the hickory. Greeney pushes the small pile of leaves and twigs over his head to the tree's base, grabs and pulls at its trunk, forgetting his numb limbs. His arm and leg begin their rhythmic jerking but Greeney continues hauling himself along. His head creeps even with the tree and he stops, waits for his limbs to halt their motions.

Bert, given name Bertha, married his 4F best friend Lawrence a month before Greeney got shelled landing on Iwo Jima. He'd gotten her letter the day before. When that shell exploded in Greeney's face, he'd been wishing he was Lawrence, envied him his heart murmur.

The first time Greeney saw Bert after he shipped home, she couldn't look him in the face. Wasn't ashamed of hurting him. He disgusted her by his missing eye, his imperfection. He decided right then she wasn't worth the sleep he'd already lost over her, didn't lose any more, slept like a baby after that, quit worrying that bone. Georgia would never have done him that way.

Careful this time not to stimulate his left side, Greeney swings his right leg forward, anchors his heel on a tree root, pulls with his leg. He levers his body forward and around, still clinging to the trunk of the hickory sapling, the fulcrum to his pendulum. After another twenty minutes, Greeney has moved his body a forty-five degree angle. He lies panting, sweating in the rapidly chilling spring air.

His head lies among the leaves and twigs he has collected. He gathers and shoves the pile an arm's length nearer his goal. His kindling collects more debris along the way. Using the trunk at his head for leverage, Greeney attempts to roll himself toward the logs. His body turns over once. He is again lying on his left side. He collects his stash once more and shoves it another arm's length toward the logs. This time he has nothing, no sapling to grasp, to launch his roll. He stretches his good arm behind him, throws it forward, hopes the impetus will propel him completely over.

Greeney lands on his back, unable to move. Careful not to excite his damaged left side, he reaches around himself, feeling for roots, trees, rocks, something to push, pull, prod himself into a different position. He rests his arm and begins the search with his leg, still nothing.

In unison now, the arm and leg undulate slowly. Just above his head, the large root of an oak tree protrudes, broken free of the soil in the shape of a large dark boot. Greeney missed it the first time. His hand now skims the toe in his slow search. In his concentration, he forgets to keep his left side still. The left arm and leg begin their jerky movements again. Greeney lies staring into the darkening treetops, breathing deeply, willing his limbs to rest. To calm himself, Greeney imagines what Leroy's family might be doing right now, imagines the supper Georgia might have fixed: string beans with potatoes and ham, a pineapple upside-down cake, maybe a Swiss steak with oven roasted potatoes, not mashed. Leroy doesn't like mashed potatoes.

When the involuntary movement ceases, Greeney reaches up and grasps the toe of the boot and flips himself again. He can touch the logs now. He reaches behind and pulls his small stock of kindling forward and pushes it next to the logs. With his good arm, he manages to lever the logs to a better position and pushes the kindling beneath them.

He reaches into his pocket for the lighter. The leaves light immediately. The dry twigs ignite. I'll be too close to the fire once the logs catch and burn.

The fire drives the chill from the air around Greeney. Only the right side of his body registers the heat. Patiently, he works his body further from the fire. The logs are dry. His fire won't last long. He lifts his head slightly to look for more fuel, forms his hand into a rake and drags it over the ground within reach, in front, behind, above his head. He gathers some twigs and leaves, a couple of branches and one decent log with his right hand. A smooth branch, straight, no bark, four and a half feet long, a fork at one end, perfect, lies near his right foot. He hooks the toe of his boot beneath it and works the branch up by slow inches until he can grab it by a projecting twig and carefully pull it up beside him. Gonna be cold by morning. He drowses in the warmth, exhausted by effort expended lighting the fire. If he can rest a few minutes, he'll look for more firewood. He thinks of Marly. If no one else will, Marly'll taste his carpiar.

* * * *

The cold wakes Greeney. The lid over his glass eye remains shut, the left side of his body still asleep. Nobody knows I'm not home. Two or three embers glow in the thick darkness. He places leaves from his small stock on the coals, one at a time. They glow and curl until he blows gently at them and small flames kindle upward. He grins lopsidedly in the chill air. I'm still here. I'm alive. Once I'm warm, I'll climb the hill. Greeney adds more leaves and twigs, the two branches, decides against the log. Shouldn't leave a fire burning. He grasps the long branch beside him. His stomach rumbles. It's the middle of the night, but he's hungry for eggs and toast, bacon, or some French toast and sausage. A slight headache reminds him he missed his afternoon coffee. He can't feel the left side. Half a headache, this might not be so bad. Maybe I just need half a cup of coffee. Funny the things I think about when I should be figurin' how to get myself home. He looks around for some willow bark to chew for his aches and pains. Once he's up on his crutch branch, he'll get some.

He boiled some willow bark for one of Georgia's headaches once. She said it tasted nasty but she drank it and her headache left. She has a lot of headaches. Leroy puts up with her aches and pains pretty well. Don't know if I'd put up with her as well.

With the crutch in his right hand, and the tree at his back, Greeney manages to struggle to an upright position. He waits to test his body's reaction. His left arm and leg remain still. Maybe the jerking is temporary. He glances up the wooded hill. He might be able to work his way up tree to tree. The undergrowth is so thick and there's no moon tonight. No way to know but start.

He tentatively hops away from his leaning tree toward the next sapling toward home. He's filthy from dragging himself along the river bottom. Georgia doesn't have much patience with dirt, always yelling at folks to take their shoes off. Makes me want to keep them on and walk straight across her clean floors. Greeney grabs the sapling. His left leg drags. Can't feel it, so it don't matter much if it gets skinned up and twisted some. He makes it to the next tree, the bark feels like an oak, from there to redbud. He can feel the clusters of small blossoms along the tips of its branches.

Might come back and get this one for Marly, he thinks as he looses the redbud and reaches for the next trunk. A shagbark hickory, easily identifiable in this dark woods, the Indians used to make dye from boiling the bark, a deep brown color. Might try boiling some t-shirts with Marly. Georgia'll fuss over the boiling water. I'll get around her nagging. We'll do it in Mammy's old wash pot, out over an open fire. Me and Marly, we'll just show Georgia the finished shirt. If she gets mad, she'll get over it. Come to think of it, Georgia gets mad a lot. Leroy's got a lot of patience with her.

Greeney almost loses his balance moving to the next hickory but he catches himself, makes it to the tree. He's moving in a zig-zag pattern up the dark hill. Too steep to try a straight line, even if it is the shortest way. Georgia could try a man's patience if a person lived with her. Greeney knows he's concentrating on Georgia to keep from thinking about what might be happening to him.

He's through the small hickory grove now. What feels like a sugar maple holds him upright. He decides to try his voice. "Mar-ee," comes out in a low guttural tone. Better. Somebody might understand me.

Georgia wouldn't understand. She gets impatient if somebody with an accent, any kind of accent is in the news, says she can't understand what they're saying. Strangest thing how she acts about foreigners, almost like she's afraid of them. Leroy doesn't seem to mind.

Beech, this'uns a beech, he thinks as he grabs the next trunk and feels the smooth bark in the darkness. Between the last two trees, he thinks he may have dropped one knee in a patch of poison ivy, too dark to see for sure. Maybe his jeans will protect him from the oils. He doesn't think he touched it with his hands. Had to be careful when Marly was with him. Swells like a fish bladder with the stuff, has to have shots every spring. Georgia wasn't sympathetic enough to Marly's whining the last time the kid got poison ivy. Georgia isn't much of a nurse.

Greeney rests by leaning on an old oak when he reaches the crest of the hill. He hears a hootie owl somewhere in the river bottom, knows the ground beneath the oak is littered by owl pellets, though he can't see them. Brought Marly and Pete here once to show them, let them pick the pellets apart with their bare hands and pull out the bones. Pete

made a whole mouse skeleton from his, took it to school to show his friends. Georgia said they should have boiled it first, all those germs, when Pete showed her. Sometimes, Georgia was too hard on kids, like she'd never been one. Leroy was like a big kid sometimes, not with Georgia.

Greeney sees the dark outline of Leroy and Georgia's house now. When the leaves were off the trees in the winter, they could see the river from that sliding glass door off the kitchen. He'd drink coffee with them in the morning sometimes. Leroy was always glad to see him, seemed like Georgia didn't like company near as much. She always wanted to be cleaning and putting away.

Greeney wonders what Leroy's family is dreaming inside the house. He tries and can't picture himself among them, realizes he doesn't want to. He tries to picture himself and Georgia sleeping cupped together. It seems uncomfortable now. How can anybody sleep like that? He reaches for the next tree on his journey to Leroy's house, pulls his crutch forward again and wedges it firmly into his bruised armpit.

I'm old and I'm tired. All I want is for Leroy to drive me home so I can sleep in my own bed. Greeney doesn't want Georgia, doesn't want anything he doesn't already have.

José María Mantero

ii

She of the death from typhus
wrote a history of lilacs

from her bed, classifying
shades and strength of shaft in

a steady wind, relenting
to the violence of language.

We compensate for loss
by muting the old things: by taping

photos into frames or pressing
a leaf between unread pages.

I originate experience,
create and transcribe

the life of a sales receipt,
and I refuse to wither

beneath the wings of names
even when a particular patch

of white dianthus catches
my eye one fighting morning.

P. Tatarunis

Lune Rangoon

La lune ne garde aucune rancune.
— T. S. Eliot, "Rhapsody on a Windy Night"

No one's urgent flashlight, just the moon,
the hunter's moon, woke me at 4, brilliant
through the blinds. *It drives a silver nail*
through the eyelid into sleep. Too cold
to get up and write that down. I twist
away. A night's worth of knots. That's better.
The cold hand of moonlight on her back.
Oh. Wee hours and pathetic fallacy—
How I loved that line about *la lune.*
It was the epigraph of every poem I wrote
from 19 to 25. You might say
I was obsessed with that unbegrudging,
that benevolent, that forgiving moon.
You might also say I missed the point.

Moonlight swamps the brise-lune, *inundates.*
Swell play on *brise-soleil,* but who'll get it?
A silver nail, a cold hand, a flood—what next,
a kitchen sink? High, white, porcelain
heaped with dinner plates? Forget the nails.
Go with the nautical. The moon could be
a searchlight, Morse slats stuck open à la Munch,
screaming semaphore on the starboard bow.
And I could *blink back, baffled by moonlight,*
remembering how, in 1972,

I wrote a villanelle called VILLANELLE
in which the closing couplet bathed the moon
in a less-than-mercy-granting light:

The moon hounds me across my bed's white plain.
I gather lunar saxifrage in vain.
And just in case the reader missed the point
of saxifrage, I'd strung broad clues— *a rain*
of chalky stone, moon-wracking purple rush,
lunacy's rock breaker, hint, hint, hint—
between the two refrains, well, Williams had
his *flower that splits / the rocks.* What thing did that
idea crawl out from under? A lover
blond, ambiguous, a little more than
lane-jarring footsteps, and *a yellow strand*
on the morning pillow, left the reader
wondering, is she half in love with lunacy?
We all were back then. My husband snores.
The cat snores. I would like to snore. *La lune*
ne ronfle pas, so brightly I can't sleep.
Don't tell me it doesn't bear a grudge.

Donald Friedman

Japanese Lanterns

As my father told it, he had gone to a party with my Grandpa Shmuel. He remembered bouncing over cobblestone roads in Shmuel's truck, a Model "T" pickup. The party was an annual affair in the Weequahic, the Jewish section of Newark, given to introduce newly-arrived immigrants to the local community. My father recalled that the night was dark, and that the back yard was strung with Japanese lanterns. The host brought a new arrival out to meet my grandfather. They chatted for a bit as the boy, my father, looked on. The stranger put a cigarette in his mouth and began fumbling for a light. My grandfather took out a match and struck it.

"The flare of the match lit up their faces," my father told me. "The stranger grasped your Grandpa Shmuel's wrist and, forcing his hand and the flame up to his face, addressed him in Russian, by a name I had never heard before.

"'So, Mikhail Alexandrovich!' the stranger said, as I stared at both of them. 'Again you have the match!'"

As he recalled that summer evening from his boyhood, my father paused in his telling, his eyes fixing on some distant point.

"What did he mean?" my father asked me. "I'll tell you. This man and your grandfather had been in the same forced labor camp in Siberia twenty years before. Each week the prisoners were allotted a few matches. What the man referred to was your grandfather's practice of splitting his matches the long way — making one match into four — so that when others ran out he still had a light to offer."

I was still a child when my father gave me this small, unlikely story as a memento. He handed it over like an heirloom with a special reverence for the terrible history it conveyed and for the unique glimpse it afforded into our hidden past. I pressed him then and after for details about his father's family, but he had no more to give.

So, like many of my generation of Jews, I only know my lineage back to immigrant grandparents. Behind them is shadow, perhaps the dimmest outline of a great-grandfather, nameless, alluded to indirectly, concealed deliberately by his taciturn son. Before my grandparents I have no known antecedents except those ancient desert wanderers, the venerated progenitors of our faith. My heritage leaps backward from Grandpa Shmuel, housepainter of Newark (formerly of Hrodno-Gabernya, which, depending on the conversation of the moment, was either located in Russia, Poland or Lithuania) to Jacob, the patriarch. From my reading I know there is also the possibility that we European Jews are actually descendants of barbarian Khazars, the Tatars who converted to Judaism as a political act only thirteen centuries ago. I can find evidence of them in the high cheekbones and broad foreheads of my father and brother. History compels me to acknowledge that I may also descend from the illegitimate offspring of some Polish lord who exercised his medieval "first rights" with my forebear on her wedding night.

My mother's father died before my birth; her mother shortly after. When I was six months old my mother and I moved in with my father's parents while he went off to war. We lived then on the poorly lit second floor of a three-family house in Weequahic, Newark. We stayed there until a strange and distant man on crutches came back from the war to live with us, and while he healed and worked to save the money to move us to the suburbs.

While we waited I spent as much time as I could with my housepainter grandfather. I watched him clean brushes, repair ladders and melt large blocks of lead in an open flame as a base for paints. Then we would go indoors. After a brief argument in Yiddish my grandmother would bring us two Kruger beers which we would sip while sitting at a chipped white enamel kitchen table. He gave me lead ingots — wondrously heavy — to carry to my grade school manual training class where we were taught to cast fishing weights and door stops in sand molds.

The war just over, trucks were in short supply; but, in Newark, Jews were on the rising side of Fortune's wheel. Thanks to the efforts of my white collar father, through the good offices of Newark's first Jewish mayor, my grandfather's truck was an enclosed Dodge, then a very difficult commodity to come by. Grandpa Shmuel no longer had to

load and unload the cans and brushes and tarps from the back of the pickup every morning and night. Inside his truck were shelves and drawers — it was like a little house — and it was heated. Outside hung gigantic ladders that could be extended to the very tops of roofs; underneath the ladders, in elegant letters, were my grandfather's name and the words "Painting and Decorating."

Shmuel was a confirmed atheist who, to the family's horror, openly denounced God. Shmuel railed against Him for His failures with him and his people, and he would not even go to shul on Yom Kippur. He drank rye whiskey neat.

When not with my grandfather I adventured with the boy next door. We were Tarzan or the U.S. Marines after every Saturday matinee; and we watched Howdy Doody and the Buster Brown show on a television screen so small that it was viewed through a large magnifying glass on a stand placed before it. But my grandfather's world — as familiar and strong-smelling and palpable as were ladders, lead paint and whiskey — held for me the same phantasmagorical allure as TV or movies.

It was not then clear to me exactly how God had let my grandfather down. True to the immigrant tradition he had imparted little to his American sons about his life in his (Russian? Polish? Lithuanian?) shtetl. They had been left to pick up what they could of their history from overheard snatches of conversation in Yiddish, eavesdropping at family gatherings or at meetings of the Workmen's Circle.

After the war, my father completed college on the G.I. Bill, then studied accountancy at night while working first in the mailroom, then in the sales department of a lace manufacturer. By the time he passed his C.P.A. exams, he was the company controller, and not long after that, executive vice president and finally president. He was always a busy man, a numbers man, uncomfortable with disorder and the imprecisions of family life. I do not remember ever hugging or kissing him, nor him me, although I do have some imprinted sensation of his beard stubble against my lips, the childhood memory of "good nights" before bed.

As I grew older, I seemed generally to disappoint my father, who seldom spoke to me except to pass along critical judgments. Occasionally, though, with an object lesson in mind, he made idealized, anecdotal references to the struggle and courage of his father's emigration and to his own rise to success.

"Your grandfather," he would say in a bitterly sardonic tone, "was imprisoned by the Czar when he was barely thirteen — a thirteen-year-old socialist. He survived years of forced labor until he and two others overcame their guards, and he alone escaped."

He had made his way, my Grandpa Shmuel, on foot, on horseback and camelback, through the Siberian lowlands, across the Volga and Asia Minor, between the Black and Caspian Seas (swimming across part of the Black), through Europe and, finally, in steerage, to America.

My father told me the story over and over. And once — when I had reached an age when factual assurances were appropriate — my father told me that he and Grandpa Shmuel had actually traced his entire route on a globe.

I didn't really need additional proof of my grandfather's powers. I had watched him make paint from lead, felt the hard knots of his muscles, seen him climb the extension ladders. But when my father told me about the remarkable encounter between my grandfather and the other immigrant under the Japanese lanterns — a story from my father's own obscure childhood — I felt a wonderful corroboration. The first time he told me the story was immediately after my grandfather's death. It was after the last of several strokes, at the end of my grandfather's final struggle, when he was unable to speak and sat in a chair, night after night, fending off the soul-capturing spirits with the still-remaining half of him, until they left at dawn and he could sleep.

After that my father told me the story many times. But, oddly, what I remember is the telling: the way my father didn't look at me but focused his eyes on a far away point behind me, as if he had another audience, or was made shy by the intimacy of the sharing. I recall the reverential sound of his voice, a rare and gentle voice, and a warm and softening feeling inside me.

Also, I recall feeling some youthful skepticism. As much as I adored suspending disbelief — in my continuous reading, and at every

Saturday matinee — there was a part of me that banged annoyingly at the exit door of my mental theater, reminding me of the blinding Platonic daylight outside.

Once, after I had become a student of science, and had begun welcoming a harsh light on life, I stood, still curious about my hidden past, in a motley line of equally curious Jews at the Museum of the Diaspora in Tel Aviv. My heart fluttered in anticipation of a very brief turn at a computer that would tell us something of our family names and what our grandparents would not about the places they had left. The interior of the museum, while modern, was dark as a theater. Scenes of savagery, and documented descriptions of inhumanity, were illuminated in dioramas within the walls.

As I hurried to the computer through the dark halls, past the centuries of sorrow, something about the uneven pattern of light that registered from the panels made me think of the paper lanterns of my father's story. I could not understand the polyglot babble of the Jews on each side of me and I wondered whether the machine was programmed, like a deity, to hear all entreaties.

It was not; but multilingual guides translated, took the money and helped us push the keys. I learned that Hrodno-Gabernya was, in fact, at various times, part of Russia, and of Poland, and of Lithuania; and that, when patronymic naming was outlawed, my family, like the rest, took a name associated with their trade — according to the printout, that of spice merchants. I learned little more than that.

Then, on a balmy, star-filled June night, five years to the day after I had fathered a son of my own, I stood with my wife under Japanese lanterns she had strung for the occasion in the yard of our first home. We had had a separate party for the adults after the magician and the goody bags had vanished, after every present had been played with, after some attention had been garnered from all the grown-ups; when the boy had finally crashed with fatigue after the sugar rush and been carried comatose from the den floor to his bed.

We were cleaning up. My mother went into the house to store leftovers with my wife. I filled several large plastic bags with paper plates of cake and melted ice cream, and torn and crumpled birthday wrap. I piled some hefty rocks on the garbage lids to keep the raccoons out. Then, I joined my father who rocked alone on the lawn in a redwood chair, in and out of shadow, under the unsteady light of the breeze-blown lanterns.

As I sat beside him he started the stream of words he always used to fill the space between us — talk of business, his grandson's cleverness, the weather, his golf game. And I began my usual mental review of the little I really knew about him. I knew that he waited at red lights in the early morning with clear roads in all directions; that nothing I did ever pleased him until I made a grandchild; that he didn't hold with psychology, didn't believe in motives that weren't apparent, didn't see a world that wasn't palpable to his touch. When he had something to say he told a story and always left the feeling parts out.

Soon, his constant talk brought to my mind a hidden housepainter in him. The flow of his words seemed to conceal the message the way one paints over the brush's line, and then the edges left by the next covering stroke, and the next. I thought then that I knew less about him than he knew of his reticent, foreign-tongued father.

We sat in the ethereal light and watched the colorful, fragile lanterns swing in the wind. My father said he was reminded of that story from his childhood, of his father's encounter with his past. He began the story again.

Suddenly, I imagined our earliest cave dwelling precursors, sitting in the shadow and warm light of the first fires, creating and transmitting their myths. They learned that, because they had a past, they had a future — if not in their own form, then in their children's: that life and its possibilities belonged to the survivors.

As I watched my father rock and speak, I realized that the message was not in his story, but in the gentle timbre of his voice and my softening heart, as I saw his eyes once again look fixedly down the dimly illumined path toward his past, and mine. Love — what I wanted to believe was love — had passed between us. Transported across thousands of miles and as many years; it was, at last, a factual piece of my history.

Michael Hudson

The Peeping Tom's Unsuccessful Evening

Nothing yet, in the mustard yellow parallelogram of a second-story
bedroom window: two white ceramic knobs

on a dresser drawer, the moth-like blur of a ceiling fan, the odd
tilted corner of an empty mirror.

Above, the moon glints like a nail head affixing the shabby black
and green tarpaulin of the sky.

My tongue fattens in my lower jaw, like a veal calf in its pen

while someone's front porch American flag stiffens in the breeze,
striped, spangled and blue—

A Local Movie Star and the Cottonwood Trees

How the earliest little cosmonauts of them have
already stuck to the rough

brick of Carole Lombard's birthplace (currently
under renovation) while others descend

like the flannel heads of xylophone mallets,
like suicide paratroopers trying

to save her from time's macrophage, from
the eaten-organism aspects of early summer
and of all our hometown

beauties (even the ones who managed to get away).

Timothy Young

Walking After Breakfast

Sometimes between the cardinal's first whistle
and the bee's morning hum
a man hears the answer to a question
he forgot to ask.

The wet trunks of cedar trees
cross before me, like a bird's giant footprint.
Those lines are the map I saw
in the old branch library
where as a boy I read of herons
and swans and great geese going north.

Whistling and humming at the same time
creates a third thing between my teeth
and I become a cricket singing
of spruce trees and nearby flies.
I taste both a cigar and coffee
and the question is—
how do I get on in life?

I Love the Single Deer Path

I love the single deer path
winding into wet, tangly night woods
where nocturnal squirrels
and whip-poor-wills
usually fly tree to tree.

The Hunter walks from the known
to the not-known,
and water drops from leaf to leaf.
The humus grows moist,
still and feminine.

Karl Harshbarger

The Hawkman

I am sitting at my desk with Dan Wexler in front of me and Leslie Crepeau and George Vandertuin on either side. All three of them, and in fact all the rest of the boys in the classroom, are working away at a math problem Mr. Rotrosen has given us. The problem, which I can see in front of me on a piece of paper, is about Jamie and his family who drove to see his grandmother in a town 120 miles away. They drove sixty miles per hour on the way to Grandmother's, spent six hours with her, and then drove 40 miles per hour on the way home. How long were they away from home?

But I have stopped paying attention. Again I'm out on the open prairie riding my horse towards the town I know will soon come into view over the horizon. The sun climbs in the morning sky, the heat of the day builds up, patches of sagebrush look like dots across the hills, hawks circle in the sky, and the sway of my horse beneath me presses the weight of the six-shooters against my legs. I ride slowly because I already know what will happen. When the town comes into view the men loafing in front of the saloon on the dusty main street turn and look up the pass and see me. They run back and forth, shouting to the women and children. By the time I swing off my horse in front of the saloon, the dusty street is deserted. "That-a-boy," I say to my horse, and tie him up at the railing. A sign says, "No guns allowed." But I push open the swinging doors and go up to the bar. I pound on the top of it. My fist makes the glasses jump. "Anybody here?" I call out.

"Perhaps Casey would be good enough to supply us with his solution to this problem," says Mr. Rotrosen standing near the window at the front of the classroom.

The rest of the boys turn in their desks and stare at me.

"So, if you would be kind enough, Casey," says Mr. Rotrosen.

I look down at the piece of paper on my desk.

"I'm sorry," I say, "but I haven't quite finished."

Snickers from different parts of the room.

"Well, Casey," says Mr. Rotrosen, "I believe I gave everybody enough time. A rather simple problem, it seems to me. What's your solution, young man?"

In front of me, Dan Wexler holds out a piece of paper. It says, "7 and 1/2 minutes."

"Seven and one-half minutes," I say.

"Seven and a half minutes?" says Mr. Rotrosen. "Well, that's a most interesting answer, Casey. How did you derive that? Boys, be quiet, now."

"I don't know," I say.

"You don't know?"

"No," I say.

After the bell rings and all the other boys run for the doorway, Mr. Rotrosen calls me up to his desk.

"Casey, I don't think you're a bad boy, but wouldn't it be a good idea if you and I went down and had a little talk with Mr. Diskant?"

Mr. Diskant is the principal of this school for boys my mother has sent me to.

I don't say anything.

"Yes, I rather think it would be a good idea," says Mr. Rotrosen. "Come along, Casey."

I follow Mr. Rotrosen down the hall past the other classrooms and see all the other boys, some bigger, some smaller, looking at me.

Inside the main office the secretary says to Mr. Rotrosen, "Just go on in, he's expecting you." Mr. Rotrosen opens the door and motions for me to go in before him.

* * * *

After school, and after all the other boys have gone off to wherever they go, I walk down the streets with houses on each side to the courthouse square and the Sears Roebuck catalogue store at the corner. It's not a real Sears Roebuck store, not like the kinds in bigger cities where you walk in and buy all those things. This store's got a counter and maybe five or six big fat catalogues. A woman named Mrs. Brown sits behind the counter.

"And how are we today?" says Mrs. Brown.

"Fine," I say.

"And how was school today? What did we learn?"

"Things," I say.

I climb up on the stool and kneel on it and turn the catalogue open to page 872. That's where I always open it. The supplies for horses section. The saddles start right at page 872. I don't mean English saddles. I mean western saddles. Real saddles. Pages 872, 873 and 874 all show three saddles, top, middle and bottom. The one at the top is listed as "good," the one in the middle as "better," and the one at the bottom as "best." Ever since I started that boys' school, I've chosen the saddle at the bottom of page 872. See, it's not one of those parade saddles or even a cutting saddle. It's a serious roping saddle for someone like me out on the open range. That means that it's over 40 pounds with a flank cinch and oxbow stirrups and first class pommel and side jockey and fender and cantle and front rigging dee and skirt and all the rest. I could have gotten a lighter cutting saddle. I thought a lot about that. But then I figured my horse was an especially strong horse, and he could carry the weight. And anyway, you can only ride into town with the very best saddle. That's how it is out west.

The phone rings.

"Casey," says Mrs. Brown, "it's your mother."

"Yes?" I say into the phone on the wall.

"Casey, I want you home right away. Right now."

I don't say anything.

"Are you coming?"

"Yes," I say.

* * * *

I go home the usual way, taking the Number Three bus that goes out to the grain elevators, then walking along the gravel road past the big dairy farm, the one with the trucks parked out in front of it, then turning on the dirt road and walking past the Evans farm, the Richardson farm, and then finally the Coloney farm. I see Mr. Coloney out in the field riding on his tractor.

"Hello!" I shout, but, of course, because of the noise of the tractor, he doesn't hear me. Once, last year, he gave me a ride.

As I walk up our lane, I see my mother waiting for me at the gate to the back yard. She's wearing that funny dress that goes all the way to the ground.

"Well, Casey, the school called. What have you got to say about that?"

"Nothing," I say.

I try to get past her, but she reaches over and gets me by the back of the neck.

"Nothing?" she says. "Is that what I'm to tell your father?

"I don't know," I say.

"You don't know? You don't know? Do I tell him you don't know?"

"Please," I say. I try to get away from her.

"That his son doesn't pay attention to anything? That he's too lazy? That Mr. Diskant may have to expel his son? Is that what I tell him?"

By now my mother is crying.

"Just go to your room," she says.

My room is down in the basement. It isn't a real room, but something my father once built when he was home, and it's only got one small window. Still, by standing on top of my table and squeezing this way and that, I manage to get out. I go around the other side of the house where my mother can't see me and run down to the far gate which opens into the pasture.

The sun's slanting in from the western sky. Normally when I ride into town, the sun's high in the sky beating down, the hawks circling. But now, no getting around it, the sun's low in the sky and about an hour from setting. So I'll ride into town with the sun setting behind me.

But, first I need to refresh myself. So I swing off my horse at the stream and drop the reins. (He's a well-trained horse and will stand right there, his head drooping and one front leg cocked up). I sit cross-legged, Indian style. The town lies in wait for me just over the horizon. In the town, on the dusty main street, the men in front of the saloon are not yet aware of the single man riding down from the pass, his six-shooters glinting in the late afternoon sun.

I lean back and look up at the sky. Two hawks pass over me, slowly wheeling and turning. I watch them. When they slip one way, they slide through the air quickly. But when they turn into the breeze, they barely move forward. One of the hawks passes slowly right over me and I can see the full spread of the wings, the feathers on the trailing edges spread out, the body underneath hanging motionless, but the head tipping from side to side, the eyes searching.

See, the reason this hawk's come right over me like this is that it's looking for me. People think these are ordinary hawks. People like Mr. Coloney. But they aren't. They're special hawks. Magical hawks. Like in the fairy tales. They've been sent especially for me, from Hawk Land. To help me. To watch over me. To protect me. Because I'm not like other boys. I'm special. That's why Mr. Diskant told me that I may have to leave the school.

The hawk above me slips sideways and wheels away again.

The one side of the sky reddens, and the sun touches the earth. First it's one-quarter gone, then half-gone, then three-quarters gone, then just the tip of it, then all of it.

"Goodbye, sun," I say.

The first stars come out.

"Hello, stars."

I look and can't see the hawks any more. Well, that's all right. I know where they've gone. Back to Hawk Land. To tell the others what they've seen.

I stand and see the lights from our house shining up into the trees. I know my mother will most likely be sitting at the kitchen table, and probably she will have all her catalogues on chicken farming spread out because that's what she does in the weeks when my father is traveling. When he's not traveling, which is about half the year, they both sit in the living room with him reading a newspaper and her reading a book.

I take the reins of my horse, rub him behind the ears, tell him he has been a good horse, and lead him (I don't ride him — it is too dangerous to ride in the dark) back towards the house. But not directly. I go over towards the chicken coops. I want to see if my mother's caught any foxes yet. Ever since my mother started her chicken business when we moved here two years ago from the East, she's been afraid that the foxes will get into the coop. But when I get close enough to hear the clucking sounds of the chickens and the peeping sounds of the chicks and drop the reins of my horse and go over and look at the traps, it's like I thought. There aren't any foxes.

"Your traps are empty," I say to my mother when I come in the house. I don't even pretend I have come up from my room in the basement.

"Where have you been?" she says.

"To the pasture."

"Didn't I send you to your room?"

"Yes," I say.

As I guessed, she is sitting at the kitchen table and has all those catalogues about chickens and chicken supplies laid out in front of her.

"You left your room without asking?"

"I wanted to check on the foxes," I say.

"Your dinner's in the oven," she says.

"I think I'll go to my room."

I'm part way down the stairs when I hear her voice.

"Casey? Are you sure you don't want anything to eat? It's meat loaf."

"I'm not hungry," I say.

* * * *

In the middle of the night I wake up with a sour taste on my tongue. I can't get back to sleep, and begin to think of the town over the horizon and the men in front of the saloon just passing the afternoon away. I find myself watching the hawks above me, how they soar, and especially the one hawk hanging above me, its wings outspread. Then I think of Mr. Diskant. In Hawk Land they know all about him. But maybe Mr. Diskant knows about the hawks, too, something I don't know, and that's why he wants me out of school.

Suddenly my stomach starts to come through my throat and I run for the laundry room at the other end of the basement and vomit into one of the basins. I vomit until there's nothing left, until it feels like the lining in my stomach is almost coming out.

I stand there for a while until I know I won't vomit any more, then wash the awful looking stuff down the basin and go back to my room and lie back down. The taste in my mouth is still sour, but my stomach is not turning over, so the hawks start soaring above me again. I'm riding down the pass towards the town. The men are out in front of the saloon. But this time the hawks aren't way up in the air but close above my head, sweeping this way and that. The men are startled. "The Hawkman," they whisper. And the women and children cry, "The Hawkman."

* * * *

In the morning I tell my mother about vomiting during the night. She sits me down and feels my forehead and then shakes out a thermometer and puts it under my tongue.

After three minutes she looks at it. "Maybe just a touch high."

"I don't want to go to school today."

"Well, no. Not if you're a little bit sick," she says. "No, no, you shouldn't go to school."

My mother hums as she makes me my oatmeal. She's wearing that same dress. I push aside some of the chicken catalogues at the kitchen table to make space.

"Anyway, school is dumb," I say.

"No, no," she says, still humming, "not dumb."

"I think so."

"No, no. You mustn't think that."

She brings me my oatmeal, and then sits down at the other end of the table and starts writing something on a piece of paper.

"What's that?" I say.

"This? Well, 'this' is a new order, that's what it is. For Orpingtons. I think there's going to be a market for them in the future."

"What's Orpingtons?" I say.

"Well, they're not Rhode Island Reds," she says. "Now you just eat your oatmeal."

My mother makes the final marks on the paper, and then I see her making the swinging movements of her signature, then the whole business of folding the paper up and stuffing it in the envelope and addressing the envelope and putting the stamp on.

"Done!" she says, pushing the envelope out in front of her.

"Done!" I say, pushing my oatmeal bowl out in front of me.

"Young man," she says smiling at me, "would you be good enough to accompany your mother up to the mail box?"

We walk slowly up the lane and all the time I'm looking out for the hawks. But I don't see them. At the end of the lane my mother looks in the mailbox, puts in the letter, then closes the lid and raises the red flag.

"That certainly ought to do it," she says.

We start back down the lane and my mother is humming.

"Spring's a-moving along," she almost sings.

I slide under the fence at a special place I know.

"Casey," she says.

I just keep going.

"You know, you're not a bad boy," she calls after me.

But I still haven't seen the hawks. Of course, they're still in Hawk Land and it's a long way away.

I swing up onto my horse and ride along the stream.

Then I see them. Or I think I see them. Two specks over Mr. Coloney's farm.

"That-a-boy," I tell my horse as I slide off and let the reins drop.

I watch the specks. They move up and down, sometimes closer to each other and sometimes further apart. Then the specks get bigger and turn into hawks. Soon I can see the wingspans and the way the hawks brace their tails this way and that. They circle closer and closer, and when they are almost on top of me they break into a kind of half-flying like crows do, flapping their wings, and settle into the branches of a tree not fifty feet from me.

Of course, I'm really quiet. I don't move a finger. And I tell my horse not to move, too.

Then I see it. A nest. A big one. Made out of piles of sticks, looking something like a squirrel's nest, only larger. One of the hawks hops into the nest, and the other remains perched on one of the branches of the tree. The one hawk, the one now in the nest, moves around, ducking its head.

I'm sure there are babies in there, hawk chicks, and the bird that's ducking its head is the mother feeding the babies.

"Shhhhh," I tell my horse.

I watch this hawk ducking around for about five minutes, and once I think I see the head of a chick, although I'm not sure. It might have been only feathers. The other hawk out on the branch begins to preen itself, bending back over itself and tweaking it's tail feathers. The hawk in the nest hops out, and they fly off again, first flapping their wings like crows until they are up above the tops of the trees, then extending their wings and slipping sideways with the wind.

As soon as they are gone, I go over to the bottom of the tree with the nest and look up. It's hard to see too much of anything because of the other branches in the tree and also the nest being made up of all those sticks. But I walk around the tree and then walk around again.

And I think I hear the peeping of chicks. I'm not sure, but I'm pretty sure.

Hawk chicks!

"Hello," I say to the nest.

Then I call a little louder, "Hello up there."

I keep listening but don't hear any peeps answering me. Maybe the parents have told the chicks to be very quiet when a cowboy comes through. Probably that's the way it is. A cowboy with six shooters.

I take the reins of my horse, swing up onto the saddle and look up at the nest again.

"Goodbye," I whisper.

As I let myself rock back and forth in the saddle heading for home, this idea comes to me: It's going to be all right. Things will work out. This business of Mr. Diskant and the school. See, he won't expel me after all. Because I'll start to do better. I may even graduate at the top of my class. Then I'll go on to the university and be a doctor — which is what my mother wants.

I'm riding along up by the chicken coops when I see something funny in the grass. Feathers scattered around. Half-eaten bodies of chickens.

Foxes!

I run all the way to the gate and then up the sidewalk and in the back door.

"Foxes!" I yell at my mother.

She's still sitting at the kitchen table with the catalogues out in front of her.

"They got into the chickens!"

"Oh, dear," she says. "Oh, my goodness. Oh, my goodness gracious."

"Come on!" I yell.

She catches up with me and bends over the half-bodies of the chickens on the ground.

"Oh, my darlings," she says.

"I'll get Mr. Coloney," I say.

And I'm running down our lane towards the mailbox. But then I stop running. The way I figure it, cowboys don't run. They never run. Even when they are going to get the federal marshal. Still, I walk quickly. Cowboys are allowed to do that.

When I get to the Coloney farm all the dogs come out to meet me, barking. I just keep walking because I've been here before and know that none of the dogs bite. Besides, cowboys never worry about dogs.

"Shush," says Mrs. Coloney to the dogs, coming out of her back door.

"Hush, now. Go away."

She's a large woman wearing a dress and an apron. She holds the gate to the back yard open for me.

"Land's sake," she says, "you'd think those dogs would know a neighbor. Hush. Shush, now."

She closes the gate behind the dogs. One or two of them jump over the fence anyway.

"Well, now, Casey," she says.

I follow her to the small barn next to the big barn. Inside, Mr. Coloney's legs are sticking out from under a tractor.

"George," says Mrs. Coloney, "Mrs. Nuys' son is here and he's got something to tell you."

"That so?" says Mr. Coloney pulling himself out from under the tractor. He's wearing overalls, a T-shirt and his red John Deere cap.

I explain about the foxes in among our chickens.

"Foxes, is it?"

"For sure," I say.

"Well, we'll just see about that."

I follow Mr. Coloney back to his pickup truck where it's parked under the fuel tank.

"You wait right here, son."

When Mr. Coloney comes out of the house he's got a rifle with a telescopic sight. He gets in the pickup truck and I get in on the passenger side.

"Casey," says Mrs. Coloney coming over to the window of the truck, "you tell your mother she's welcome over here. Sunday's best. Well, not in the morning, of course, that's church going. But in the afternoons. You tell her that, Casey."

The truck bounces out of farm lane and onto the dirt road. Mr. Coloney gets his pipe out and even as the truck lurches this way and that, he lights it.

"What kind of rifle is that?" I say looking at where he's put it behind us in the jump seat.

"Thirty-thirty."

I want to ask more, but with Mr. Coloney puffing on his pipe and steering, somehow I don't think I should. He turns into our lane and we cross our little bridge and stop at our house. My mother's standing out there to meet us. I can see she's been crying.

"I just can't believe this. I just can't believe this at all."

"Now, now, Mrs. Nuys, we'll have ourselves a look."

When the three of us get to the coops Mr. Coloney bends over and looks at the scattered feathers and half-bodies of the chickens on the ground.

"Here's your culprit, Mrs. Nuys." He holds up a long feather. "Hawks. Red-tailed hawks."

"Hawks?" says my mother. "I thought it was foxes."

"It's hawks, Mom," I say. "And, Mr. Coloney, I know right where their nest is."

"Do you? Well, then, you show me, son."

I follow Mr. Coloney to the pick-up truck where he lifts the rifle out of the jump seat.

"I just want you men to be careful," says my mother at the gate.

"This way," I say to Mr. Coloney.

About 150 feet away from the tree I stop and point to all the sticks in the top of the tree.

"Well, look at that," says Mr. Coloney.

He finds a place on the grass to sit and I sit beside him.

He says, "We'll just have a look."

I watch him aim through that telescopic sight.

"Luck," he says.

Holding the rifle away from him, he slides from a sitting to a lying position and props the rifle up on one of his elbows. I also change my position and prop my head up with my hands.

"I think we can do her," he says.

I hear a tiny click coming from the rifle, then a ringing in my ears, and I see a black thing lurching and then falling from the tree, one of the hawks, and the other hawk flapping away from the tree.

"That's one," says Mr. Coloney. "Dead center."

I can hear the dogs over at Mr. Coloney's farm barking, and see the other hawk circling higher in the sky.

"Now I think we'll just have ourselves a little wait," says Mr. Coloney, putting down the rifle and taking out his pipe.

"Can I go see?" I say.

"We'll just wait here."

Sure enough, in five minutes the other hawk circles lower and lower, then breaks into those flaps, and lands on the tree.

Another sudden stinging in my ears and that hawk falls like a bag of rocks.

"Dead center," says Mr. Coloney, picking up his pipe.

* * * *

I follow Mr. Coloney up the pasture towards the gate. He's carrying one hawk in each hand. They droop down, the wings outspread and touching the ground.

"Well, now, Mrs. Nuys," Mr. Coloney says at the gate where my mother is waiting for us, "that boy of yours is a real hunter."

She sees me carrying the rifle.

"Casey, you be careful with that thing."

"See, Mom, it was hawks."

"Casey, Mr. Coloney wants his rifle back."

Mr. Coloney throws the hawks in the back of his pickup.

"I just don't know how to thank you enough," says my mother to Mr. Coloney.

"Now, Mrs. Nuys, that's what neighbors are for."

We watch him drive down the lane. One of the wings of the hawks hangs over the side.

"Mom," I say, "I'm going to be a doctor when I grow up."

"Are you?" she says, and walks back towards the house.

Of course, I go to the pasture again. First I find my horse. He's wandered away and I have to look for him. But I find him munching some green-looking grass. I throw the saddle on, tightening the front girth and the back girth and adjusting the tie straps. I figure the horse knows the way, so throw the reins around the pommel and cluck my tongue. The horse moves off.

The sun is high in the sky. That's the way it should be, the shadows beaten down into the ground. I ride between patches of sagebrush. I ride toward the pass. The men are loafing out in front of the saloon.

Except the sour taste comes back to my mouth and my stomach starts to come through my throat. I don't even get off my horse, because there isn't any horse, and I vomit and vomit and vomit.

Ava Leavell Haymon

The Heads of Old Dolls

Everybody knows the heads outlast the bodies
Everybody knows the eyes lose their parallel glass-blue gaze
Everybody knows the king is in chains
Everybody knows cross purposes
Everybody knows roosters up in the air
Everybody knows the cross
Everybody knows a symbol of uncertain fate
Everybody knows black pig's blood incites uprising
Everybody knows glass beads tied around a gourd
Everybody knows spells drawn in cornmeal and coffee grounds
Everybody knows many things bound with chain, string or rope
Everybody knows designs in the dirt in front of a tomb
Everybody knows Jesus went to Africa
Everybody knows one pale eye sunk back in its socket
Everybody knows he came here in a slave ship
Everybody knows you lose your mind in a white dress
Everybody knows that's the *only* way he came

Edward Locke

Shut In

Is this the metaphor we wreak, the mind
As a steel trap?
Have hinges such appeal
Because loose clips
Hold no amour, just slack, no crushing straddle—
That argument of an excluded middle
Where terror draws a bead: a gila's bind,
Lockjaw, a zap
With clinching arguments, with poisoned sips?

All arteries in embryos search far
For thigh, for lung,
For implicated thoughts to pulse,
Distend, shape;
Then love and magic (*Logic*'s outer bounds)
Fail childhood where alluring wildness ends
As, snagged, restrained by a deceptive bar,
Even the young
Gnaw through their blood-sweet forelegs to escape.

Books

Helen Yglesias. *The Girls*, New York: Delphinium Books. 1999.
Elinor Lipman. *The Ladies' Man,* New York: Random House. 1999.

Sisters. They fight when they are young, lose touch with each other during their marriages, and seek each other out when they are getting older. Possibly, it is the memory of shared childhood experiences that draw sisters closer as they age; perhaps it is just familiarity and a sense that someone else is more like them than the other people in the world. Whatever the cause, the experience of sisterhood is one that offers certainties along with a good many surprises. Two writers, Helen Yglesias and Elinor Lipman have tackled the secrets of sisterhood in their two new novels, *The Girls* and *The Ladies' Man,* novels that are as much social as family chronicles.

Both titles surprise in their own way. Yglesias's book certainly isn't about girls; rather, it is about four sisters who range in age from eighty to ninety-five. Nor is Lipman's book, despite the man who tries to take center stage, about him. It is about the three Dobbin sisters, Boston spinsters who find the certainties of their lives upset in ways they thought they were beyond and who come to reevaluate and value sisterhood in ways they hadn't thought possible.

The Girls, Yglesias's fifth novel, brings readers into the lives of Jenny Wickowsky, the eighty-year-old central character, and her sisters. Eva, Naomi, and Flora. The three older sisters have retired to Miami, called "Theirami" by their children, nieces, and nephews. Jenny is happy not to live in Theirami, but she arrives from New England to help her older siblings as they approach their deaths.

The novel, however, is not so much about death as it is about the way life keeps repeating itself, how sisters fall back into the same relationships they had years ago as children, and it is, as all of Yglesias's books are, about America, about the way we live, the way we think, and the way we behave towards each other.

From the beginning, it is clear that Jenny is the one who will have to be the caregiver. Flora, the next youngest, is busy entertaining on the senior citizen circuit and falling into terrible relationships. Naomi, dying of cancer at age ninety, is too ill to manage her own affairs, and Eva, the matriarch of the clan, has deteriorated so much that Jenny almost doesn't recognize her when she first sees her.

Yglesias is a sharp-eyed chronicler of American culture, with its fear of dying and its horror of losing the bloom of youth. In *The Girls* she manages to give an insightful account of life after retirement while never losing touch with the sisters themselves nor forgetting that it isn't only aging and the old that Americans fear.

Race is another political anxiety that Americans have trouble confronting honestly, and *The Girls* develops an incisive analysis of how we deal with those who are different from ourselves. The sisters' own Jewish heritage and the conflict between the old Miami residents and the newer Cuban population remind Jenny of the need for family in a culture that makes everyone, in some way, an outsider. A bus scene perfectly captures all the tensions and prejudices that trouble most Americans, but which Jenny has tried all her life to overcome.

"What I can't stand about them [Cubans] is how noisy they are... and they never discipline their kids," announces Flora loudly to the entire bus as she and Jenny are on their way to visit Eva. Despite Jenny's attempts to silence her, Flora, assuming the Cubans on the bus don't speak English, continues to discuss them *sotto voce*. Her statement prompts an older Hispanic woman to make some pointed anti-Semitic remarks. Flora has no idea that she has become the object of the other woman's contempt, but Jenny understands Spanish, and her awareness of the hostility felt on the bus for her and her sister makes her doubly protective. She is horrified by Flora's prejudice and knows that she is seen through the same lens as her sister, but sisters they are, so, despite Flora's intolerant attitudes, Jenny knows she must stand by her sibling.

Sexual politics also lasts well into the octogenarian years, and Flora, determined to remain young, dyes her hair, acts the vamp, dresses provocatively, and invites men to her apartment for geriatric sex. These and other indignities of aging unfold in the lives of the sisters, and Yglesias contextualizes growing old in a way that reveals America's fears

and prejudices in the lives of four older women who have tried to live independently and with dignity.

The final indignity, however, isn't death; it is not being able to get out of the bathtub. Jenny, bathing before going to the hospital to be with Naomi during her cancer operation, finds she cannot get out of the tub. "She slipped and slid, hurting her back. She tried other positions, straining every muscle. Nothing worked. She would die in Miami after all, trapped in a bubble bath." What was once Theirami, a place she has always rejected, is suddenly hers. She is trapped, as her sisters are, in a world she can no longer control.

Jenny asks herself what is left to life as her two oldest sisters are being driven to a nursing home where they will die. "What could she do to protect them from this unspeakable reality." She tries to envision her "sisters' shared, searching, stumbling steps into a triumphant escape from the real horrors to come," but she knows that they are all headed to the same destination.

If Yglesias's novel is a personal and political tragedy, Elinor Lipman's *The Ladies' Man* is a comedy of manners — a sex farce — that reveals much about the way sisters live with each other when they are also competing for the same man. Adele, Lois, and Kathleen Dobbin live in Brookline, Massachusetts. Adele has a good job raising money for Public Television, Lois works for the Department of Employment Services, and Kathleen owns a lingerie shop in an upscale apartment building. There is also a brother, Richard, who is a process server for the Sheriff's department. It is, however, the relationship among the sisters, often seen through the eyes of the men in their lives, that drives the novel and that illustrates Lipman's sense of the comic in situations that have an essentially unhappy cast.

Adele, having been jilted at her engagement party thirty years before, is not ready to welcome the returning fiancé, Nash Harvey. (He was actually Harvey Nash when he ran away, but California changed his notions of himself.) Three decades have changed the expectations of the women as well. While Nash contemplates with fascination "the collective virginity of the Dobbin sisters," the women themselves are catapulted into new and more complex relationships, and those new alliances threaten the sisters' solidarity.

Lois, the middle sister, feels the strain of sibling rivalry the most, and in that respect she is much like Yglesias's Flora, a woman struggling to remain young and to find an identity separate from the trio. She dyes her hair blond and moves out of the communal apartment. When her brother points out that people dye their hair to get her natural color, Lois is shaken but replies: "We're not three redheaded sisters rolled into one. I'm sick to death of that. I want people to be able to distinguish between us."

Not being one of the Dobbin sisters is as important as being one, and Lipman is sympathetic in her analysis of sisterly tensions and jealousies. She gracefully depicts the dilemma of sisters who are on the point of falling in love with the same man. She is also a sympathetic chronicler of the ways in which women try to escape from the sometimes comforting, but often demanding role of sister. Lois moves into a Bed and Breakfast in hopes of finding privacy and possibly a man. Kathleen takes up with Lorenz, the charming doorman at the apartment building which houses her shop, and Adele begins to flirt openly with the Station Manager at WGBH. It almost seems as if the sisters are trying to belie Nash Harvey's description of them as, "three great women who never found the right man." Throughout much of the novel, they seem determined to find him before it is too late.

The Dobbin sisters live in the world of the fifties, a world in which daughters in Boston lived at home until they were married. If they didn't marry, they kept their parents' furniture and recreated the home of their childhood. *The Ladies' Man*, acutely attuned to the manners and mores of that world, chronicles the three sisters' attempts to move into the nineties, if not with a man, at least with some sense of what it means to live with the internet and cell phones.

Yglesias writes boldly and with concrete details. In the tradition of Theodore Dreiser, Frank Norris, and William Dean Howells she turns an eye to the larger cultural imperatives that drive personal behavior. *The Girls* never loses sight of the ways in which the Wickowsky sisters' lives are determined by their heritage and by the confusing end-of-the-century world in which they find themselves still, amazingly, alive. The scenes of Miami, the streets, the expensive hotels, the rundown

neighborhoods, the polyglot mix of races and ethnic groups, constitute a vivid graph of the times as much as of the sisters.

The Ladies' Man, on the other hand, is a modern day *Sense and Sensibility.* Ever mindful that the political starts with the personal, and that relationships are at the center of culture, Lipman orchestrates the Dobbin sisters' personal choices to reveal the hidden individual motives behind events. Richard Dobbin, the only brother, understands those motives most clearly. Watching his sisters, at a time in their lives when affairs of the heart should be settled, venturing forth once again on the long painful quest for love, he can only hope that they will not be hurt again. Speaking to Nash, as he takes him to the airport to return to California and yet another woman he has deserted, he reminds him, "you're going to have to repair the damage." Repairing damage is often what life is all about, and Lipman not only describes the wounds with sympathy, but offers a smile to heal them.

Reviewed by Mary McCay.

Contributors

Cecile Corona has written for art publications, including *Artworkers News* and *American Artist.* She wrote short stories while waiting tables and earning her Masters in literature at New York University. She also worked on fiction in the Creative Writing Masters Program at City College and in the Masters program at Brooklyn College. She teaches writing and literature ar Baruch College in New York City. Her new novel is entitled, *Wrong Way to Berlin.*

Jon Dallas lives in the northern Adirondacks of New York, where he runs and teaches writing and music. He has poems published or forthcoming in many magazines and anthologies, including *Rooted in Rock: An Anthology of New Adirondack Writers, Blueline, Green Mountain Review, Plainsongs,* and others.

Nancy Dawes is a visual artist and an art teacher with Arts Connection, a comprehensive arts program in the New Orleans public schools. She received her MFA from Tulane University in 1987.

Donald Friedman writes and practices law in New Jersey. His award-winning first novel, *The Hand Before the Eye,* the story of a driven New York lawyer and how he comes to gain enlightenment, will be available at the end of this year.

Karl Harshbarger lives in Germany with his wife where he writes, plays squash and teaches English as a foreign language. His stories have appeared or are forthcoming in many magazines including *The Atlantic Monthly, Prairie Schooner, High Plains Literary Review, The Journal* and *Northwest Review.*

Ava Leavell Haymon writes poems and plays, conducts private workshops in poetry writing, and teaches poetry in the schools through the Arts Council of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Her poems have been published in *The Southern Review, Northwest Review, Calapooya,* and

The Sun, and in a recent chapbook, *Why the Groundhog Fears Her Shadow,* from March Street Press.

Robert Hendrickson's latest book is *The Road To Appomattox* (1998). His stories and poems have been published in many magazines, including *New Orleans Review* (Winter 1998), in which his story "Dirty Dreams" appeared. "Extra Innings in the Helldome" is part of his work-in-progress, *Wars of the Twentieth Century.*

Michael Hudson lives in Fort Wayne, Indiana, where he works as a sales coordinator in an aerial device (a.k.a "cherry picker") manufacturing company. His poems have appeared in, among other journals, *Green Mountain Review, Poetry East, Sulfur* and *New Orleans Review.*

Denise Jordan recently received her MFA. from Vermont College. "Carpiar" is her second published story.

Richard Kenefic works for a small electronics company in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. His poems have recently been published in *Plainsongs* and *RE:AL.* Others will soon be published in *Yankee.*

Mary Kuryla's stories have appeared in *The Greensboro Review, Quarter After Eight* and other journals. Her story, "Mis-sayings," was included in *The Pushcart Prize XXIII.* Currently, she is adapting a Gordon Lish novel to screen for Granada Films. *Freak Weather,* Kuryla's first feature-length film, will premiere this fall at the Toronto International Film Festival.

Robert Lee has most recently published poems in *Field, Hunger,* and *Florida Review.* He earned his MFA as a James A. Michener fellow at University of Texas, Austin, where he currently resides. Like hordes of other Austinites, Robert Lee aspires to make a day job as a singer/songwriter.

Edward Locke is a retired librarian who has worked in public libraries in the eastern U.S. His work has appeared in numerous journals, including *Poetry, Georgia Review, Yale Review and The Partisan Review,* and in many anthologies including *The Red Candle Treasury: An Anthology of Poems from the Period 1948-1998* (Red Candle Press, England), and *And What Rough Beast: Poems at the End of the Century* (Ashlan Poetry Press, 1999).

José María Mantero was born in Madrid, Spain, and moved to the United States in 1969. He received his Ph.D. in Romance Languages from the University of Georgia. He has published short stories in the United States and Spain, has had poetry accepted for publication by the *Great Midwestern Review* and *Oxford Magazine,* and is the author of a book on the Argentine writer Marta Traba. He currently lives in Cincinnati, where he is Assistant Professor of Spanish at Xavier University.

Madeline Marcotte teaches English at West Chester University, in Pennsylvania. She received an MFA from the University of Alabama and has work published or forthcoming in *Black Warrior Review, Colorado Review, Southern Humanities,* and other journals.

Mary McCay is chair of the Department of English at Loyola University.

Jo McDougall has twice been a fellow at the MacDowell Colony. Her latest book of poetry, *From Darkening Porches,* was published by the University of Arkansas Press. She has taught at various universities and was for ten years the director of the Distinguished Visiting Writers Series at Pittsburgh State University, Pittsburgh, Kansas. A native of Arkansas, she lives in Little Rock.

Jim Meirose lives in Somerville, N.J. His short work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Fiddlehead, Xavier Review, Oxford Magazine, South Carolina Review, Whisky Island Magazine,* and a number of other

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Leslie Parr is an assistant professor at Loyola University, where she heads the Communications Department's photojournalism sequence.

Sabrina Rord (born Sabrina Robin) was born and reared in New Orleans. She will receive her BA this spring from the University of New Orleans. She is enjoying her first publication.

John Rybicki's first book of poems, *Traveling at High Speeds,* is out with New Issues Poetry Press. His stories and poems have appeared in *North American Review, Field, The Quarterly, Quarterly West, Yankee,* and others journals. He currently teaches Creative Writing at Kalamazoo College, Interlochen Center for the Arts, and out of his own living room. And he rolls around in the dirt doing carpentry whenever he can.

Bernd Sauermann teaches composition and literature at Hopkinsville Community College in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. He holds an MA and an MFA from McNeese State University in Lake Charles, Louisiana, and has had poetry published in *Nimrod, The Kansas Quarterly Review of Literature, Poet Lore,* and other journals. He lives in Cadiz, Kentucky, with his wife, Amanda, his daughter, Annaliesa, and a plethora of animals. They are all awaiting the arrival of twin boys.

Robin Strickler lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico with four cats and a temperamental ficus tree named Elvis. She works in the radio business as the Creative Services Director for six radio stations. She has published pieces in a variety of journals and anthologies, including *Mail Call Journal* and *Conceptions Southwest.*

P. Tatarunis lives in Waltham, Massachusetts. Her work has appeared in *Western Humanities Review, Exquisite Corpse, The Formalist, Press, Quarterly West, Massachusetts Review, Rattle, Poetry* and other journals. In her other life, she is an internist; to paraphrase Molière, "a doctor in spite of herself."

Jennifer Understahl is pursuing an MFA at Arizona State University. Others of her poems have appeared in *Faultlines, Mid-American Review,* and *Evansville Review.*

Rynn Williams has lived in New York City his whole life, with the exception of one year spent in an Ecuadorian cloud forest, where he lived without electricity or indoor plumbing, one hour's walk from the nearest road. He received his MA in creative writing from New York University, and he has published poems in *The Nation, Greensboro Review, Spoon River Quarterly,* and *Prairie Schooner,* among other journals.

Timothy Young is a poet and essayist. His collection of poems, *Building in Deeper Water,* will soon be published by Holy Cow! Press. One of his poems was selected to be in Scribner's *The Best American Poetry of 1999.* He works with juvenile offenders in the Minnesota Correctional Facility Red Wing and lives with his wife and son in rural Wisconsin.

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