

A publication of the
English Department
and the
English Club

Notes on contest winners

The first prize in prose fiction was awarded to Richard Eldridge for "Jeremy" and the second prize to David Metz for "Gallagher."

The first prize in poetry went to Richard Eldridge for "The Last Thanksgiving" and second prize to Valerie Elbow for "Love Song."

Judges in prose were Professors Ralph Bellas and Duane Edwards, and judges in poetry were Professors George Canning and Stephen Kagle.

Triangle editor: Professor Scott Eatherly

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First Prize—Prose

JEREMY

The sun cut the day in half. I kept to the dark part and ventured into the glare only to switch shades. This was the kind of day to look at leaves from the bottom, when the dim veins darkened the underbellies and some leaves glowed light green as in spring.

Three weeks ago, just before Uncle George went to the hospital, I figured out that each person has three lives. One life is spent awake; that's real. Another life is spent sleeping; that also is real. When things get unbearable while we're awake, we get into our other life by going asleep. My father is like that. If he finds a conversation unbearable, he falls asleep. Uncle George said that when Aunt Emma was alive and she asked him to decide something, he'd fall asleep to avoid deciding. When I'm asleep, though, and a giant with a slit mouth and nothing in the hollows comes after me, my legs aching and running slow motion nowhere, I tumble from my sleeping life because I can't stand it any longer. Uncle George said that people don't die in their dreams, and I believe him, because if they did die in their dreams they'd be really dead.

The third life is a little different, because we're neither asleep nor awake: we're just daydreaming. That's what I was doing under the trees. It was so hot that sweat budded in the folds of my stomach, but I would have been just as miserable asleep as awake, so I fell into my third life to escape the other two. I daydreamed.

I stretched myself flat to unroll my stomach and unhitched the three bottom shirt buttons for some air. My back immediately stifled itself, but I kept my shirt on because I get grass rash. Who could even daydream in such heat?

My father has it figured out that a parent should treat his child with possessive indifference. When things are going smoothly, he will be bored; when things are a bit rocky, he will be indulgent; when I finally get under his skin he will become insipidly sentimental and act hurt, as though I did him genetic harm by my own deficiencies. My mother's one great attribute is that she can get irritable over the most inconsequential things, and I usually enter into her life's

concerns as an irritant. She gets along with my father remarkably well because their faults complement each other perfectly and they have me as a common problem to discuss. I have discovered through the years that my primary function in our household is a conversation piece. Probably they were discussing me now, in the parade of cars with the headlights on, telling each other how embarrassed they were when they couldn't explain to everyone why I wasn't with them. No doubt this was more on their minds than Uncle George.

The first day that Uncle George visited us was two weeks after I had finished my exams at Brant School for Boys and three weeks after Aunt Emma's heart paused for a permanent rest while she had been chasing down a bus. My mother told me to wear clean clothes for supper.

"You mean," I suggested, "I don't usually wear clean clothes for supper?" I have found that calmness is usually interpreted as sarcasm.

"I mean that your clothes as they are *tonight* are unsuitable for a guest." When she gets annoyed, her nerves rub against her vocal cords and make them jump.

"That's a good boy," my father said behind me. I looked back at him and saw the *Montgomery Press*, two pants legs, two shoeless feet, and one hand. He hid behind the paper each late afternoon, propping with one hand the paper between himself and others who might be around. With his other hand he sipped a drink—usually a Scotch and water—and ate his usual hors d'oeuvres of salami or kippered herring. Then he would pick his teeth with a fingernail, gouging out the remains of his hors d'oeuvres like a rudimentary shovel.

"Are you saying that I'm a good boy for being capable of wearing clean clothes every night, or are you saying that I'm a good boy because I've been coerced into putting on my Ivory best to impress our uncle?"

"Yes," said a fingernail wedged between two molars. It is a habit that disgusts me more than his indifference.

I stayed in my room by the window until it was time to go downstairs. I stared out into the street to count cars going by and placed bets with myself on which direction more cars would go within a time limit of forty seconds, just like what I do at night when I trace the headlights across my ceiling—the headlights that sneak through the sides of my windowshade. Between bets, I pondered why parents still call

fifteen-year-olds "boy." It's a habit, I guess, even though my father occasionally musters up enough courage to try one of his ineffectual "man to man" talks with me. A "boy" is called a "man" only when some adult decides to condescend to the level of his son.

I had never met Uncle George because he was really my great uncle on my father's side, and my father's father broke relations with Uncle George when their eraser company went bankrupt. Deaths somehow bring the family together again, though, and at the funeral of Aunt Emma my father asked Uncle George to visit us in Lester sometime. Uncle George apparently didn't get the hint because he set up a time to visit us practically on the last amen. My father had only been trying to be polite and nice to a lonely man who happened to be a relation. Anyone should know that "sometime," when translated in an invitation, means "please don't hurry about it."

"Hello," said Uncle George when I entered the living room.

"Jerry," Mother sang, "this is your Uncle George."

"Oh, really?" Most information in formal social situations is self-evident.

"Hello," tried Uncle George again.

"You must . . . yes, you must be Uncle George."

Uncle George swiveled his head back and forth and up and down like a wavering top, a certain lack of control which he later attributed to old age. "Oh, yes, yes," he said, looking pleased that we both got through to each other. "Yes, I'm your, yes, I'm your Uncle George."

"Oh, that's interesting."

My father had put on shoes for the occasion. He sat uncomfortably alert and had his fingers joined. The wedding band was swallowed by his fingers; I had inherited my fatness from him. "Jerry, you know, did quite well in school, Uncle George. He got all A's and was at the top of his class."

My mother liked the way the conversation was going, since she put on an unusually bright smile. She is beautiful only when serious.

"Fortunately sports are not graded," I said. "I was a lousy football player, which I attribute to shortness of breath."

Uncle George unfolded his thick lids over his eyes once or twice to think of an appropriate comment. "Yes," he said, "but it's your mind that counts."

"Unfortunately," I countered, "I had been planning on getting a football scholarship for college. Now all is lost."

"Oh, don't be ridiculous," my mother said, losing her smile.

Uncle George still held on with a disengaged social grin and aimed his eyes into the imitation Persian rug. We all waited for someone to make noise so the rest could comment on it.

"How many girl friends do you have, Jerry?"

Now the subject of girl friends is never, never broached in my family. It is as taboo as murder.

"Oh, at least ten at the moment."

Uncle George smiled approvingly and my mother and father waited without courage.

"How many girl friends do you have, Uncle George?"

All during supper, it seemed, I could hear them from my room apologizing to Uncle George. The words were indefinite, but I could tell by the tone of voices what they were saying. It is a cliché that an only child is spoiled; my parents do their best to perpetuate it. My mother was at once condemning me for being such a problem and mourning her disability to cope with me. My father, by the sound of his curving voice, was making half-hearted apologies for my behavior. As usual, I suppose, he was making a virtue out of a vice—the bit about how parents throw too much love at a single child and the excess affection metamorphoses a potentially lovable kid into a brat. And he was probably putting me on a pedestal and then kicking it from under me, like saying I was so smart but it was too bad it made me snotty. Uncle George, by his whuffing laughter, was obviously trying to patch things over. I was hungry and couldn't really hear them. It was times like this that staying awake and sleeping both would have been unbearable, so I daydreamed. What marvelous relief, to daydream!

The difference between sleeping and being awake is the way a person touches himself. In that heat of summer, even under the maples in our back yard where the grass turns to cornsilk and the dirt is saddled between the roots, each part of my body touched another part. It was impossible to sleep. The skin prickled and begged to be scratched, bones seered together, the hair rankled the scalp like flannel. In order to sleep, the parts of my body had to be free of each other, so free they would float together like leaves on a pond—together but not touching.

Uncle George slept in my room for the next month, so I moved onto a portable cot but refused to move from my room. It took a while to get used to his habits, since we were to be roommates, at least until my mother and father could find a discreet method of thanking Uncle George for coming, asking him to come back soon, and carting him away for shipment home.

Old people have habits that are so much a part of their routine it becomes less a habit than an essential fabric of their existence. Uncle George was fascinating to watch. He would lift the pillow with his left hand, pull his neatly folded pajamas from under the pillowslip, drape his pajamas over his arm, and swallow the moisture in his mouth. Then he would walk with tidy steps to the bathroom and return between seven and eight minutes later, his pajama tops tucked into his bottoms and the strings tied in a bow above the slack in his stomach.

One blow into his handkerchief cleared all his systems for the night. He invariably folded it back along the ironed creases and placed it in his pajama-top pocket so carefully you would think he was to attend a dinner party. He would hold his breath as he was getting into bed, and once his head furrowed the pillow he would sigh and say, "Goodnight, Jerry," in a tone of deferential appeasement for usurping my bedroom. I never feigned recognition of him while he was in my bedroom, but just stared right through him as he hung a limp smile on his face like a soggy clothesline, then turned over toward the wall to snore.

It's much more difficult to pass from one life into another when it is from wakefulness to sleep. Sometimes I try to touch my fingertips from inside my body. I struggle through some venous route until I almost get there, but I never do quite get to touch my fingertips because by then I'm asleep. Or sometimes I bundle—but not touch—my limbs together by some viscous membrane and hang like a pendant in a sea of half-thoughts until I float to sleep. At other times my mind makes me take gargantuan leaps which, when I am still awake, are earth-bound, but when I have passed the threshold to sleep, vault me into a hiatus where gravity and inertia cancel each other out, and I can float at will like some Jesus who gave in to the Temptation.

It was hard getting to sleep with the snoring in my room, so I was generally uncivil to Uncle George during the day as

repayment. One day, after he had been at our house for about a week, he said, "Jerry, you've had very little to say to me, and I have said very little to you. But there is one thing that I'd like to say to you."

"Say it, and I promise I won't say anything back, because I have very little to say to you."

"You're a conceited ass," he said and smiled benignly.

"I can't help it; it runs in the family. We're all brilliant and conceited, at least on my mother's side," I said, and broke my promise.

No adult had ever told me I was conceited before, even though they had dropped hints clandestinely in school reports and my parents talked about me at night with perfunctory despair. It's hard to be a conceited ass and know it, but it's even harder to know it and not be told about it. I decided to befriend Uncle George.

"You're one of the few friends I've ever had," I said to Uncle George a few days later, after I had befriended him.

"That's too bad," said Uncle George. He had a remarkable ability to say things the wrong way.

I forgave him immediately. "I *should* have more friends," I said, trying to cover up for him, "but I can't stand those who want to like me, and those who hate me I can't stand."

Uncle George reached up with his ring finger to rub a minute mole beneath his eye. He fondled the excrescence whenever he was constructing something profound—or at least noncommittal—to say. It annoyed me beyond rational comprehension. "It's hard to be friends with people you can't stand, I suppose," he said at last.

"I can't stand to be friends with people I can't stand," I said, and ended the conversation by getting up to sit under another tree.

I am an extremely lazy person. In school I am the most brilliant member of my class with a minimum of effort, which is another reason why I am so disliked. Actually, I am disliked more by the instructors than by the students, because the instructors get annoyed that I do whatever they want with utmost simplicity, and I tell them how easy it is. There is one, the biology instructor, who grows into a torrential rage because I do vastly more work than he assigns and he can't handle people who do more than he expects, since he doesn't know anything more than he assigns. I always do more for him to make him angrier. In most classes

I devise ways by which I can get to sleep without looking as though I'm asleep, and experiment most of the period. During the summer months, which I long for desperately, I perfect more ways of getting to sleep, since I have a hard time getting to sleep. That is one reason why I am so lazy.

I had nothing in common with Uncle George except that he, too, was extremely lazy, and that suited me fine, because we would sit out beneath the trees in our yard and disclose our differences by the hour. In truth I would disclose our differences and he would nod his head languidly, focusing his myopic eyes, unblinking, on some vague wavelet of grass.

"Why do you nod your head like that, Uncle George? It's annoying."

"It's due to old age. I can't help it."

"Are there any other symptoms of old age that you have?" I asked, curious to know whether he could treat senility with objectivity.

"I have cancer," he said.

I was stunned and furious. I began to cry, for the first time in four years. "Why didn't you tell anybody?" I excoriated him, not only for his cancer but also for my tears.

"Aunt Emma knew," he said in even tones. "But it wasn't worth it to tell anyone here, because I'm happy here and it would be unpleasant for them to know, and it would make my stay unpleasant."

"Then why did you tell me?" I sobbed.

"Because I had to tell someone."

"I hate you," I said, and ran behind the garage to vomit before supper. All I could think of was a palpitating fungus, throbbing with pale green growth as it devoured some other flaccid, dying organ.

I visited Uncle George in the hospital to celebrate his second month's anniversary of staying with us. The one thing I find more detestable than excessive dirtiness is excessive cleanliness, and so I felt sorry for him lying helplessly in his putrescent room as if they had swaddled the walls, ceiling, and floor with gauze insulation. I had visited him each day since the doctor had put him into the hospital. My mother had insisted that he go to the doctor because he looked terrible, and the doctor discovered that Uncle George had cancer. They were treating it with morphine; it was too late for anything else. He lay in bed and got thinner, all except his

stomach area, which blossomed under the linen.

"Jerry, tell me everything you know," Uncle George said on his second month's anniversary. It is gratifying for a conceited person to be asked to tell everything he knows. I immediately began telling him everything I knew. I talked incessantly about marine biology, about the microscopic organisms that outdid Greek mythology for bizarre forms and terrifying countenances, about pleistocene counterparts to our present-day sea creatures, about new disclosures of animal life that had been constantly discovered from ocean depths. I quoted Masfield's love of the sea, and broke into a tangent on Keats, Cummings, and Shapiro, then Flaubert, Hugo, Sartre, and Camus. I described French art from the windows of Chartres Cathedral through Vuillard, discussed Constable's steps toward impressionism, and traced the lineage of British kings from the Norman Conquest to Elizabeth II. Gauguin's interest in Japanese wood-blocks led me into Buddhism and its bi-partite influence on Asian history. I described Jesus the man and Paul's Christ, the influence of the Catholic Church in medieval Europe, the Arabic influence in Spain and in mathematics. I talked about the universe as we know it through observations from Aristotle to Einstein. When I finished that portion of what I knew for the day, Uncle George was dead.

I have no idea at what point in my talk he died, but when I said, "I think I'll continue tomorrow," Uncle George did not smile or nod his head. His mouth was drooped and his eyes were half closed, and he looked as though he had been trying to ward off a final moment's grimace. I slipped off the bed and ran into my parents coming through the door to visit. I shook my head violently at them and tried to push them back into the hall, but when they tried to hold me down I bolted through them and stayed in the woods overnight on the limb of an oak a half mile from our house. I cried all night and hugged the limb as if we were in some grotesque act of love making, but it was only to stay aloft and because I had never felt so miserable in all my life.

"Jeremy, I'm so ashamed of you," my father blathered in my face when I refused to go to the funeral. "I can't believe that you'd be so insensitive. Have you no respect for Uncle George at all?" His last question was couched in a tone of voice which indicated, "You have no respect for Uncle George at all," so I figured it was futile for me to protest. I

walked out the door and sat beneath the trees in the shade and imagined my parents getting ready. My father had just one black suit, which he used only on somber occasions. It fitted him perfectly for occasions such as this, since he looked funereal in it no matter what he was doing. It was wool and I knew he would suffer. My mother would be putting on subdued lipstick, perhaps crying a little because of both Uncle George and me. A while later they pumped and circumstanced down the front walk to the car at the curb. They did not cast a glance toward where I was lying, and I was disappointed, for I must have looked composed from a distance.

At last they had got Uncle George out of the house, and they left me to daydream and devise ways to get to sleep that night. I hated them, for they also left me without a thing to say to them, and I could never tell them why. He was the only friend I ever had; I just couldn't go to his funeral.

Richard Eldridge

THE LAST THANKSGIVING

Early Thursday morning hives
Began to rise along my arms
Like prickly trumpets heralding days
Of cornucopia and pain.
"Apple juice," my mother said,
And squirted gravy down the bumps
Of turkey skin. She basted sores
Behind my knees with lotion, sat
And shared concern before the first
Of Father's family arrived.

Car by car the turnips, cakes,
Pies, and relishes drove up,
The food with makers' families
So yearly matched that offspring grew
With like identity from womb
And oven. Twenty pounds of bird
And I awaited smiles and teeth
And exclamations of our size.
(But no one mentioned twenty pounds
Was less than average. No one
Dared to say the turkey shrank
by seven pounds like Aunty Lil.)

The last of eleven children, Lil
Had lived with Grandma forty years
Beyond a weekend visit—Lil,
Who prattled wisdom, carried dice,
And sent me comic strips by mail.
She was a child, whom children loved
Till growing up they saw the child
And laughed. "Go play with Aunty Lil,"
They said to their own children. Play.
But once at play I saw her cry
In Ring Around the Rosie—white
And bent and eighty, skipping high
With legs like straws and dropping tears,

But not enough to let them know.
(At Grandma's funeral she smiled
With grief and toward the casket leaned
And waited. "Sister hasn't looked
So nice in years," she said, and like
An angel kissed her waxen cheek.)

Grandma always waved her hand
And handkerchief from her back door
When we arrived; her furniture
Would launch the dust when we sat down
And tumble spots along the rays
Of sunset strained below the shades:
The parlor smelled of ninety years.

Visit day was necktie day:
I sat up straight, yawned, and hoped
For supper, mints, and Aunty Lil.
"In all, you're happy?" Grandma asked,
Then blackened to her memories,
For value lay in talk by son
And grandson; words alone were good,
Why listen for their meaning? Love
Found love in noise of favorite sons.
(My father had to turn his head
And twist his focus, paling blank,
While Mother kneeled and placed the shoes
On Grandma's puffed, gangrenous feet.
Gethsemane was there. To touch
Was near miraculous. She held
Her breath and pulled the slippers on,
Then rose to offer Grandma's robe,
Too cheerfully: "We're ready now."
They shuffled past the roommate's chair;
"She died like Earl two days ago,"
My grandma said. "A blessing, too."
She wet her bed and couldn't talk."
My father stayed until they met
The corridor and disappeared.)

With granite pride my grandpa sat
As straight as a single-minded will

And tapped his thoughts with cane-tip brass.
At ninety-five his hair had turned
To baby-silk, his creasing lines
Were lightly pressed in softened folds.
"Sarah, go call Lil," he'd say
In twenty minutes. Grandma sang
The same command each time: "Oh, Lil!"
Aunty Lil would squeek her door
And trotting frailly down the steps
Would act surprised that we were there—
Though I could see her curtains move
When on the walk we waved our hands
At Grandma. (Wilma planned their move
Like baggage: "Dad's so old and stiff
He can't get up the stairs at night,
And Mother's diabetes hurts.
Best they leave and sell the house.
Lil can stay with one of us."
One day she packed them in her car
And drove them to a nursing home
For care and storage. But they knew.
They knew where former tenants lay.
So both were dead within a year.)

Aunt Wilma said, "Give me a kiss,"
And kissed me. "My, how tall you've grown!"
She laughed, and measured me in air.
Uncle Martin, dressed in fishing pants
And slippers, carried pumpkin pies.

My cousins with their children came
Soon after, bearing food and toys
And Aunty Lil, whom George had brought
From Mary Deegan's Aged Home.

The turkey flew from room to room
By wings of scent and chased each child
To hunger. Father filled his glass
With beer and toasted his carving knife.
(Last year, too, he toasted once,
But then to Grandpa, sipping wine
Within the kitchen's sanctity,

While Grandma watched the children play
And never knew her husband sinned.)

Aunty Lil became the first
To fold her hands like an oaken knot
And lower spider-webbing curls
Before her plate. A signal scowl
From Wilma silenced Martin's belch,
And cousins hushed their children's cries—
Except for three who knew to plead
But not to pray. We waited hard
And took a pose like photographs.

My father said a prayer but once
A year. It was sincere and short,
Like crackers and cheese before the meal:
He served his words as on a tray:
"Remember those who from this day
Are absent, Lord, and thank you for
The bounty of this food. Amen."
(Early winter struck him down
When he was young, with such a rage
They celebrated Christmas fast
In late November. Gifts prevailed.
The season died before it killed.
My father never lost his love
Or health again. One day we climbed
The attic ladder to the roof
And sat between two gables like
A memory. The harbor lay
Beyond the wooded hill, and roofs
And chimneys perched above the trees.
"I used to watch the boats from here,"
He said, "and see the bridges rise
Like arms to let them through. I used
To sit for hours until the sun
Or Grandma urged me down to bed."
That afternoon he sold the house.)

We argued, sang, and joked
Around the table—hollow sounds,
Like shouting in a room devoid

Of furniture: on one there
Absorbed our talk and laughter. No
One lived to see us live as one.
The binding of the day was gone.

Uncle Martin curled his snores
Around the couch; the women rid
The day of waste by cleaning plates;
The menfolk stood outside the house
And canceled football. Jim was fat
This year and Burt had hurt his foot:
The veterans honored sleeker days.
Too old to play with Aunty Lil,
I put the football back and watched
With envy the children playing tag.

The day unraveled at three o'clock.
We formed a ring and said farewells,
With next year left unsaid. We paused,
Till Aunty Lil had kissed each child
Upon the forehead, smoothed her coat
As black as closets, quaked, "G'bye!"
And scurried to the car. (When I
Was eight I said to Grandma, "Boys
Don't kiss their grandmas now." She laughed
And made a joke each time we met:
"Do boys still kiss at all?" We hurt
Each other with embarrassment.)

My mother waved goodbye and sighed
Relief; my father turned his back
And said, "Another gone"; and like
My hives Thanksgiving disappeared.

Richard Eldridge

Second Prize—Prose

GALLAGHER

Gallagher was so queer. He was really squirrely. He was a scrawny kid. His body was all boney. His arms dangled at his sides and his face was flat the same way the back of his head was, so that his whole head was shaped kind of like a square. And he wore glasses. All in all, he was ugly.

It wasn't his being ugly that made me dislike him so much. I could have taken that. But he acted so stupid. He was always trying to be buddy-buddy, like he was one of my best friends. He'd come around at recess or after school and ask some really dumb question in his squeaky voice, like: "What did you think of the test today?" or more often, "What did you get on the test today?" And before I could answer he'd tell me what he thought of it or that he got a hundred. And he'd always want to know what I was doing. He was going to do his homework, he'd tell me, and then he'd complain about it. But I really think he liked it because he was forever doing it. It was pretty obvious to me that he was complaining because he thought that I would agree. I always nodded or mumbled yes. I really didn't like to talk to him. Whenever he spoke he would wrinkle his ugly face and talk in this high-pitched voice. If he told me about a grade he got, he would always say it like I was supposed to be impressed. The worst thing, though, was his acting like he was your friend—"one of the guys." That irritated me the most. And I wasn't the only one he irritated. Nobody liked him.

I remember one thing he did that always bothered me. At school—St. Joseph's—we would say the rosary during October and May. These months were special for the rosary, the month of Mary and the month of the rosary, so we always said it after the noon recess. We would say a decade a day and each Hail Mary a different kid would lead the rest of the class. I always thought it was pretty stupid and I got tired of standing all that time, especially after recess. About four others who sat near me felt the same as I did and so whenever it was turn for one of us to lead, the other four would try and make him laugh. We'd whisper his name or make some noise and every time, the one who was leading would begin to snicker. It was bad whenever you happened to be the leader because Sister Elizabeth would really get mad. Her face

turned all red and she'd glare at you like you had committed a sacrilege. It got to the point where we all knew the others were going to try to make us laugh, so before we were even started we were snickering. And old Sister Elizabeth stood up in front having a fit.

Anyway, old Gallagher would always act real pious during the rosary. His boney hands folded perfectly even, head bowed and eyes closed, he stood there looking so holy I thought he was going to be transfigured. Whenever it was his turn to lead, he would pronounce every word slowly and solemnly, like he was a priest or something, and Sister Elizabeth would give him a look of approval. He pretended he didn't see her look, but I know he did. It was enough to make me sick.

One time we were sitting at lunch—Harris, Jones and I—and old Gallagher walks up with his milk carton and sack lunch. We tried to ignore him, but that was impossible. He just sat down like he was one of us and strated talking.

"What did you get on the arithmetic test, Danny?" He was talking to me.

"Ninety." I answered without looking up from my sandwich.

"I got a hundred." He didn't have to tell us; Sister Elizabeth had singled him out that morning as the only one in the class who had gotten a perfect score.

"Big deal," I said.

"Yeah, I'm really impressed," Harris added.

He was momentarily silenced by this and began to open his lunch bag. When he had gotten a sandwich out he stopped, crossed himself, and began to say grace silently. I looked at Harris and started to laugh. Harris was trying to control his own laughter, but when I looked at him, he couldn't. Then Jones started laughing with us.

"Say it out loud for all of us," Harris said. "We forgot." At this I laughed harder and louder than before and Gallagher looked up. His face was red.

"I don't think that's funny," he said, looking around at us, but especially me. From behind his glasses his eyes grew wide. This was his expression of anger: a ridiculous, red-faced glare. It had the effect of making me laugh and feel guilty simultaneously. Its utter absurdity demanded at least momentary respect. I was silent for that moment before I laughed.

"Really, Pat, you're so good at it, why don't you say it out loud?"

My sarcasm deepened the red in his face. "You're not funny, Lewis!" In his anger he called me by my last name. It was, I guess, his form of insult.

"You are!" I shot back at him. "Old pious Patty! Always trying to show everyone what a religious person you are. Always showin' off. You think anyone is impressed?"

"I DON'T CARE! I DON'T CARE, LEWIS!"

"Sure, Patty. Sure you don't." I continued to taunt him, angered myself at his stubbornness. He cared and everyone knew it. I knew it.

"I DON'T!" he persisted.

"I guess that's why you're always hangin' around us, 'cause you don't care. That it?"

"That must be it, Danny," Harris joined in. "Doesn't make much sense, does it?" We all laughed.

Gallagher was silent, looking at all of us and regaining control of himself. The redness slowly left his cheeks and tears formed in his eyes.

"You're all so stupid. I don't need any of you, not any of you!" He got up from the table. We watched him as he moved across the cafeteria to a table, where he sat down by himself and finished eating his lunch.

That afternoon we had music. I hated music. It was so stupid. Sister Elizabeth got out her little pitch pipe and music book and taught us some dumb song. The songs were always about some little bird or a flower, or else some saint. Sometimes we practiced for a special mass. That was boring, too.

Today we were learning a song about a bluebird. It was sappy. Sister Elizabeth was getting upset with us. We were not getting the proper rhythm. She sang it through for us, punctuating the beat with her voice and hand. We tried again and failed. Now she went to the board and sang it along with us. To stress the rhythm, she pounded the blackboard with her free hand. The crack of her hand against the board amused me. Standing in the back of the room I watched her, my urge to laugh increasing with every beat.

It was one of those remarks that pops into you head and before you have time to think about it, it pops out. I said, in a voice that could be clearly heard, but not distinguished:

"Don't take it out on the blackboard."

The room went silent.

"Who said that?" Sister Elizabeth demanded in a cross tone.

I stared ahead, innocently. In my mind I pictured the expressions on Harris' and Jones' faces when I told them after school that I had been the one. We'd have a good laugh. In the midst of this contemplation I heard Gallagher's squeaky voice.

"Danny Lewis said it, Sister, I saw him."

I wheeled around and found Gallagher's face and skinny body in the front of the room. How did he know? He couldn't.

"I was looking at him for a minute and I saw him," the squeaky voice continued.

"You liar!" I yelled at him.

"Did you do it, Danny?" Sister asked me.

"He can't prove it, Sister," I pleaded, looking right at her.

"But did you do it?" She had me. She knew I was a troublemaker anyway, and her eyewitness was the biggest brownie in the class.

"Yes," I said.

"Why?" she asked, still staring at me.

"I dunno, just for fun."

"I see. Well, just for fun, you may write 'I must not talk in class' one hundred times and hand it in tomorrow. Is that clear?"

"Yes, Sister." You old bag, I added to myself. Gallagher has had it. As we took our seats I looked at Harris and Jones.

To get to Gallagher's house from school, you have to travel down a gravel road and then across a small foot bridge over a narrow creek. That was where we waited for him.

"Maybe he's scared and went another way," Harris said as we sat on the narrow embankment. We had taken a short cut through the woods to get there ten minutes after school was out. Gallagher had stayed after to talk to Sister and help clean the boards.

"He'll come," I said, picking up a pebble and tossing it in the shallow water. I watched it ker-plop and the tiny circles that followed. "He knows I'm gonna get him, sooner or later, why should he put it off?"

"If he's scared he might try." Jones rested his head in the matted growth of weeds and grass.

"And you know he's scared," Harris added.

"He'll come; he's stupid enough." I continued to watch the water. It was muddy. Shallow as the creek was, you couldn't see the bottom.

"I hope so," Harris said. "I want to see you throw him in the creek. The little rat, tellin' on you like that."

"He is such a squirrel." Jones lifted his body around to face the path. There was no sight of Gallagher. We sat silently for a few minutes, tossing rocks into the creek. Waiting made me nervous, though I told myself he'd come. It hadn't been that long since school let out and he could stay for half an hour or so. But still I felt edgy. I wanted to get him and have it over.

"He's comin'," Jones whispered, breaking the silence. We crouched down out of sight and watched the solitary, slender figure of Patrick Gallagher move toward us.

I felt my heart race as he approached. The palms of my hands were damp and my throat dry. I felt the pulse in my neck pound. He reached the bridge and stopped. We stood up.

"Hello, Patricia." I looked straight at him, gauging his reaction. He remained frozen, his face expressionless.

"What do you want?" he finally said. Fear was creeping into him. His face grew red and he began to move slowly across the bridge.

"Where you goin'?" I demanded, seeing him move.

"Home." His movement was steady, his voice higher pitched, fearful.

"But we've been waiting for you; you aren't going to leave so soon?" I started moving myself, up the embankment. Watching his face, the fear written over it, and seeing his frail body trembling, I hesitated. Then he bolted across the bridge and I was after him. He crossed and began running up the slight hill on the other side. In his frantic effort he had dropped his book bag to help him move faster, but it was in vain. Before he reached the summit of the hill I was on him. Leaping, I grabbed him by the shoulders and around the neck, collapsing us both to the ground. I pinned his arms behind his back with one hand and pinched the back of his neck with the other. I felt the full height of my anger raging as I pushed and then dragged him down the hill. Bent over,

shaking and sobbing, he submitted. Hearing his sobs and the taunts of Harris and Jones excited me uncontrollably. As we reached the bottom, I gripped his arm and neck and heaved him into the water. Amidst the cruel laughter of my comrades, I watched him turn in the water, his body soaked, brown drips streaking his face. His glasses were down to the tip of his nose. He adjusted them and focused on me. His face is one I'll never forget: streaked with tears and mudwater, twisted with an anguish I had never before seen, his lips quivering, unable to form any words. I stared at him, studied his expression. Jones and Harris, still chuckling, gathered their books and began to leave.

"C'mon, Danny," Harris called. "Leave little Patty alone. He deserved it."

"Yeah, c'mon. I'll buy you a snow cone. C'mon."

I heard them, but said nothing. I was still looking at Gallagher.

"Go on, get your snow cone," he said, choking the words out. I stared still. "GO ON! LEAVE ME ALONE!" he screamed through muddied tears.

Harris and Jones were at the top of the hill when I turned. I started, stumbling, up the hill. But all the way up I kept turning and watching Gallagher. All I could picture in my mind was his face when I first threw him in. I don't know why it stuck with me; I had always hated the kid.

David Metz

Second Prize—Poetry

LOVE SONG

Over the Skirtled River
past the mountains of Korvale,
where the clouds hang low and lower
echoes ring from hill and dale.
Take my hand and I will lead you
to the land where strange moons shine,
and a brown mist fills the valleys
and the streams are dark as wine.
We will walk through craggy forests
where no'leaves from branches hang;
we will pick our way through muddy bogs
where spirits one time sang.
I will pluck a blossom red as death
and lose it in your hair;
I will sit you down beside me
in the silence, if you dare.
I will dance with you in meadows wide
beneath the threatened stars,
and we'll hear the wind a-northing
as an owl calls from afar.
You will drink a draught of claret wine
from an ancient, polished shell
as the distant bell chimes slowly
in the Tower of Malell.
And you'll be with me forever
in this once upon a time,
and I'll comfort you with teardrops
in this kingdom of my mind.

Valerie Elbow

NOTIONS

“ROBERT? TIME FOR LUNCH, HONEY. C’MON UPSTAIRS NOW.”

The door was almost open wide enough for me to get through. Beyond it there was nothing but black. I took a step forward; part of the darkness covered my foot. Now another step; then another and the light was behind me. I stood looking, afraid to move. Black and cold; I felt a chill. I moved further into the dark, stepping cautiously, fearing I would disturb something. A ghost. The devil. Another step. I was trembling, but I wanted to go on. Please, God, protect me. Please. The devil’s gonna appear. He’s gonna stand in front of me and talk. No God, please. He’s in here. Devil’s in here. He’s gonna appear and talk to me; tempt me.

Something moved.

“Robert?”

“HUH!” I whirled around terrified.

It was grandma. I ran to her.

“I thought it was the devil, grandma. I thought he was gonna get me.” She held me as I told her, her big arms wrapped around me. She patted my back and I could hear her chuckling softly. I liked to hear her chuckle; it was a warm sound and she shook gently when she made it. It was warm, just as her holding me was. Warm and safe. I wasn’t so frightened now.

“Nonsense, child. The devil isn’t in here. You’re just scaring yourself going into dark rooms. You shouldn’t do that, it’ll give you bad dreams.” She squeezed me, and ran her hand through my hair.

“But I think I saw him, just for a second. Right before you came. Something moved.” I looked at her face.

She smiled down at me. “You saw my shadow was all. I fixed your lunch, c’mon upstairs now.” She took my hand and we climbed the basement stairs to the kitchen.

For lunch we had cheese sandwiches, chicken noodle soup, milk, and chocolate ice cream. Grandma was out of breath from climbing the stairs, so I helped her put the plates on the large round table in the middle of the old kitchen. She watched me as I ate, asking me if I wanted more milk when I finished a glass. I drank three glasses. She told me I oughten to go scaring myself like I had; it wasn’t good for me. It was

no game for a boy to be playing, thinking the devil would appear. Not at all.

“Where is the devil, Grandma?” I asked her.

“What kind of a question is that?”

“He’s in hell, isn’t he?”

“Yes. But you shouldn’t think of such things, Robert.”

“I wonder where hell is.”

“Now Robert. I don’t want anymore talk of the devil and such. It’s no talk for a boy.”

“We talk about it in school. Sister Margaret told us about it in religion class.”

“Well, I don’t approve of that. Tellin’ youngsters of such things. The nuns have some pretty strange notions.”

“Like what?”

“Never you mind. Finish your milk.”

“Sister said hell is for bad people. They go there when they die on account of their sins.”

“That’s enough, Robert. I want no more talk of such things.”

I finished my milk. Then I went upstairs to take a nap. The bed was bigger than mine at home. It was softer, too. Grandma tucked me in and then pulled the curtains shut. She kissed me and smiled. Her face was large and round and she wore brown-rimmed glasses. She kissed me and told me to sleep well. I could have some ice cream when I got up, and watch the cartoons on T.V. She smiled again and left, closing the door. I lay for awhile. I thought about Grandma. How big she was. She was fat, but I didn’t care. It didn’t bother me. It seemed right that she was. All grandmas should be. I wondered what strange notions she thought the sisters had. I didn’t think they had any. How could they? I would ask Grandma. I wondered what was wrong about hell. I guess Grandma was upset because I got scared. But I did think I saw the devil. He does appear to people and try to tempt them, so he could appear to me. Sister Margaret had told us about that. Was that a strange notion? I’d ask Grandma.

Finally I slept.

“Robert, wake up, dear.”

Grandma’s hand was on my shoulder. She was sitting on the bed looking at me. I smiled at her.

“It’s time to get up,” she said.

“Okay.”

I got up and dressed myself. Then I went downstairs.

Grandma was on the front porch in her rocking chair. I went out and sat on the stool next to her.

"Did you have a good nap?"

"Yes."

"Would you like some chocolate ice cream?"

"No, thank you. I'm not too hungry." I waited a moment. She was reading the paper and rocking gently. "Grandma?"

"Yes?" She looked at me.

"What strange notions do the Sisters have?"

She stopped rocking and looked at me for a moment. Then she smiled and chuckled her warm chuckle. "Robert, you're always thinkin' of questions to ask your grandma." She shook her head. "Now, never you mind about that." She started rocking again and reading her newspaper. A breeze blew through the screens of the porch. "Oh, feel that nice air," she said, without looking up. I sat still by her side. She stopped rocking again and looked at me. "Still thinkin'," she chuckled. "Heaven's sakes, child, just never mind what Grandma said. Don't go gettin' any strange notions yourself. You mother'll be comin' to get you soon, you'd better get your toys picked up, hear?"

"Okay."

Sister Margaret's big like Grandma. She wasn't as fat, but almost. She even had brown-rimmed glasses like Grandma. Sometimes when somebody said something funny, she would chuckle like Grandma, warm and with her body shaking slightly. I liked her a lot. If she wasn't a Sister, she would be a good grandma.

"Children, look at your catechism, question number twenty-three on page eight. I'll be back in a minute and I am going to ask you to recite the answer for me. I don't want to hear any talking." She spoke in a sweet voice and smiled. Then she left the room and stood a little outside the door talking to Father Smith. I watched them but I couldn't hear what they were talking about—strange notions. I didn't think Sister was bad, but sometimes I heard the big kids say something about her and Father Smith and then they would laugh like it was bad. I didn't understand what they said, but I knew their laugh meant something. And then what Grandma said. Maybe Sister was bad. She was laughing in the hall now and came back into the room. She was smiling but it seemed different. Her face was redder.

"All right, children. Why did God make us? Who can tell me? Robert?"

But Sister couldn't be bad. How could she be? If she were bad she could go to hell. No one wanted to go to hell. It was all fire and it lasted forever. It never ever stopped. People there just burned and burned and it never stopped. No one would want to go there. Sister knew about it and she wouldn't want to go there, so why would she be bad? But the big kids did laugh, and Grandma said . . .

"Robert Maywood! Are you sleeping?"

I looked up and Sister Margaret was looking right at me.

"I asked you a question, Robert. Did you hear me?"

"Yes, Sister." I was going to get in trouble.

"Then why didn't you answer?"

"I don't know, Sister."

"Were you paying attention?"

"No, Sister. I'm sorry."

"I didn't think you were." She looked at me for a minute, just staring. I was scared and I looked back at her. "Why did God make us, Robert? That was the question."

"God made us . . ."

"Stand up when you answer, Robert."

I stood up. "God made us to know . . ." I couldn't remember. I knew it last night when Mom asked me, but I couldn't remember now. I stood silently, hoping someone else would raise their hand and answer. Sister was staring at me. When she spoke her voice was sharp.

"Did you study your catechism, Robert?"

"Yes, Sister."

"You had better study it some more."

"Yes, Sister."

"You may sit down, Robert."

"Thank you, Sister." I sat.

The rest of the day she didn't call on me. She would look at me to make sure I was paying attention. I could tell she was mad at me. When school was over she called me up to her desk. The rest of the kids were gone. I stood by the desk and waited for her to speak.

"Robert, was something bothering you today?"

"No, Sister."

"You're a good student, Robert. It isn't normal for you to behave as you did today. Are you sure something wasn't bothering you? I am not angry, Robert; I just want to know. Perhaps I was wrong to be upset earlier. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Sister."

"Are you sure nothing is wrong?"

"Yes, Sister."

She looked at me. She knew I wasn't telling the truth, but I couldn't tell her what I had been thinking.

"Robert, you know that God wants us to tell the truth?"

"Yes, Sister."

"Remember that, Robert."

"Yes, Sister."

She looked at me a moment longer. "You may go."

"Thank you, Sister." I left quickly.

That night I laid in bed for a long time not sleeping. I had lied. "God wants us to tell the truth, Robert." I saw Sister's face, her brown eyes behind brown-rimmed glasses staring at me. "God wants us to tell the truth." I had lied. Lying was a sin. I could go to hell. I had sinned. I could go to hell. Please, God, I'm sorry. Please, God. Sister wasn't bad. She wasn't. If she was she could go to hell, too. Sister wasn't bad. But Grandma said . . . I had lied . . . Please, God. If Sister wasn't bad then Grandma lied. Grandma lied. I lied. Grandma could go to hell, too. Like me. Please, God. I had lied. Grandma lied. Sister wasn't bad. "God wants us to tell the truth." She looked like Grandma. Like Grandma. Grandma lied. I lied. Hell would last forever. Never end. Please, God . . . please, God . . . please . . .

I slept.

"Grandma died last night." Mother said the words and she was crying. I sat up in bed. Mother was crying. My sister was crying. I didn't cry. I didn't understand. Death was for other people. Not for Grandma. But Mother said the words and she was crying. I didn't cry.

I had never been to a funeral. People crying. My father held my hand. People crying. So sudden. So sudden. People crying. I didn't cry. I didn't see Grandma. People passed where she laid; I sat with my father. I didn't look. I thought about forever. About heaven. About hell. I didn't understand. I didn't look. I didn't cry.

At night I slept. Grandma came. In the room in her basement. Where the devil was. She called to me and squeezed me. Her chuckle was warm like always. She was warm. She squeezed me and her laugh was different. She was warmer. Now she was hot. Hotter. Her laugh was different.

Like the big kids laughing about Sister Margaret. It was bad. It got hotter as she squeezed me. The room was dark. Black. Then there was fire around and we were moving; floating. We were in hell. Grandma was taking me to hell. Please, Grandma. Please. Her laugh was louder. "God wants us to tell the truth." Sister's voice. I had lied. Please, Grandma. Please. Her laugh was like the devil's. Please, Grandma. It was hotter and hotter. We were burning. Forever. Never ending. Ever. We were burning. Please, Grandma. I was crying. Please . . .

My mother woke me. I was crying. She held me.

"I had a dream about Grandma. I dreamt she came to get me . . ." I was crying and she held me. She patted my back and held me close to her. It was safe.

"You had a bad dream, honey. You had a bad dream, there, there, now it's all right." She held me for a long time. It was safe.

"I lied, Mommy, I lied to Sister."

Her voice was gentle. "When, Dear?"

"At school. She asked me if something was bothering me after school and I said no. But there was something. I was thinking about what Grandma told me about the Sisters and strange notions. I didn't want to tell Sister and so I lied." Tears came to my eyes again.

"There, now, it's okay, honey. You didn't do anything wrong. You did the best you could. Don't you worry." She held me closer.

"Mommy, why would Grandma say the Sisters had strange notions? The Sisters aren't bad, are they?"

"Of course not. I'm sure Grandma didn't mean that. You probably didn't understand her."

We were quiet for a moment. I was glad I had told her. She held me and rocked me gently in her arms.

"Mommy?" I said.

"Yes, honey?"

"Mommy, God isn't mad at me, is He?"

"No, dear. He isn't mad at you. Don't worry at all about that. God loves His little children."

"Is He mad at Grandma?"

"No, dear. I'm sure He loves Grandma, too. I don't think you should worry about that. You just had a bad dream."

"Then Grandma is in heaven?"

"Yes, honey, I'm sure of that. Grandma is in heaven."

David Metz

SECONDS (MACON, GEORGIA)

When man first stood on ice,
And changed the stones to halls,
And gave the blind a dime,
And fought temptation twice,
He must have thought, "God calls,
We've reached that point in time."

He who offered his son,
Or found a burning bush,
Or carried crossbeams up
A hill was not the one
To start the priests to push
Anointment by the cup.

Oh no, my friend, His grace
Had trickled down below
The biggest names; the oil
And grease could touch a face
Reluctant for a show,
But creased and awed by soil.

Comfort from His rod
Sustains the worst in us,
For best is rare in mass;
And anywhere that God
Can sit inside the bus,
He still goes second class.

Richard Eldridge

FOUR PRECIOUS JEWELS

God took a pile of diamonds cold
and ground it into shining grains.
He took white clouds which gently rolled
above the earth and sent spring rains.
He mixed the dust with liquid gold,
and platinum, and silver bright,
He poured all in a perfect mold
and made a man—the man was white.

God took the essence of the night,
the velvet black which drifts and flows.
He took black pearls with luster bright,
and onyx, polished and aglow.
These three he blended into one.
He breathed on it, and he could see
He'd made a man when this was done,
a man whose skin was ebony.

God took a bar of gleaming gold,
and yellow leaves from autumn trees,
A full moon with its saffron glow
and daisies swaying in the breeze,
and golden sunshine bright and warm,
the rosy glow of firelight mellow.
These things he bent and shaped and formed
a man, whose skin was tinted yellow.

God took the beauty of a rose—
a scarlet rose with drops of dew;
The glory of a sun that glows
blood-red against a sky of blue.
He took the power of a flame,
its crimson tongue, its ruby head.
All these he mixed, throughout the same,
and made a man whose skin was red.

God held these men up to the light—
like precious gems they were to him.
Red, yellow, ebony and white,
the colors he chose as a whim.
He held them closely in his hand
and God was pleased—he'd done his best.
Each was precious to him and
he loved not one above the rest.

Valerie Elbow

ON A SNOWY STREET IN CAMBRIDGE

The curtains brushed before her face
Like cobwebs. Never had I looked
At that dark opening of lace
Until one stormy day I brooked
A glance beyond my car entombed,
In hopes some magic would appear
And make a track where snow still loomed.
The shadowed figure grew so clear
I felt her stare before I found
The window, on the second floor—
The oldest, darkest house around.
I thought of dust, a hallway door,
Tassels on the blackout shades,
A nephew's photo (seldom calls),
A shock of hair from childhood braids,
Browning roses on the walls.
Flowers, colored leaves, and snow,
And sometimes neighbors, just like I,
Would through the seasons come and go,
And knowing nothing, pass her by.
I have no doubt she knew me well,
Though in return I knew a blur
of face. Yet by some magic spell
I, shoveling, performed for her.

Richard Eldridge

VALDORA

Oceanics of Valdora on a dark highway
Memory down King Edwin once upon a time
After Prince John died heart-rending luckless
Split-minded cannons rumbled in the valley
Elaine brushed the crystal drops from my grease
The dust god loomed over the mountain of snakes
Sweet Geneva put Clyde's saddle outside the hogan door.

Dark daughter cells invaded the mother tube
Genius arose brain poisoned to the cutting room floor
Whorls of puppy love puddled in the parlor
Infected strings and strands crippled my soul
Reality was changed to Fantasy
Fantasy was turned to reality
While Valdora danced a shadowed minuet in the main hall

Too quickly I lost the outline of her form
Raced back up my future to the green shack
Found flush breasted puppy dog strains somewhat like her
All coiled canines purged lost by the night
Image of Valdora sucking south wind in the parking lot
Lunar shafts touch the velvet of her truth
Soft slate eyes telling me nothing.

Now, ever so longingly, the parking lot is empty
I must go up the line from this place
For her southern going is no longer a part of me
Life is just a big northern road
Rain ripping me I know not when to where
As now Valdora dances no more.

Dan Bialas

THE WIND BLOWS

The Wind blows.
Stopped not by earth-bound gods
Nor mountains built against the forbidding sky.
It blows to destroy what was tried
By the walls that somehow turn to sand.
Vain hands against the wind.
The wind breathes its no on gods
And continues on.

Jeff Deutsch

EASILY PLACE HER DOWN

Easily place her down.
She's full with winter.
Tell her no more of your eager
Discoveries. She's brittle
And anxious to close these days
Without tears from you.
The wind has marred her seeds
Planted so carefully.
Nurtured they grew bent
Against the sun and
Yellowed already from water
That drowned their growth.
Place her seed gently
In the ground and wait
For the spring that might happen
Next year.

Jeff Deutsch

THE QUIET NOISE

Around me the noises are ringed
I'm isolated in my awareness
An awareness that includes only you.
Within my sphere of quietness
Are the quiet sounds of our love
The low and high notes resound and echo
They carry their message willingly
For within the sphere they're never sour or brassy
As the noise from outside.

Martha Price

TO THE BLACK WOMAN IN REVOLUTION

Yo' black Main mus' fite,
Yo' black Boy mus' fite;
But You, black You, cain't fite.

But what part can You do?

You can luv a black Main,
You can bear a black Boy,
You can be a black woman!

Julia Visor

YESTERDAY

i knew not where i was going.
i knew not where i had been.
i didn't know what god was.
i didn't know truth from sin!

Today, GOD came to meet me.
He showed me where to go.
I learned where I had been,
And truth is all I know!

Judith Fassino

LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL

Life is beautiful.
Yes, life is grand.
If only I could take it
in my hand

and roll it around
like a small lump of clay
and mold my tomorrows
from my dreams of today.

Judith Fassino

IMPROBABILITY

Originality is simplicity made complex.
It is complexness made simple.
It's the birth of life without sex.
Originality is simplicity made complex.
It's rebuilding ships that are total wrecks.
It's curing the face of a prominent dimple.
Originality is simplicity made complex.
It is complexness made simple.

Margie Skelly

WAR

Intrepid before the day,
We monitored shells and groans
Through sutures dreamt in stones
Until the calm of the surreal May
Gutted and split from the cicada screams
Of our cacophony that rose
From the sinking of the silence;
And the morning froze.

Thomas Dalton

THE SAME OLD STORY

I used to go with this girl named Eloise. It was sort of a neat tie-in cuz she couldn't hear or talk—some kind of childhood sickness or somethin'. At least she was different.

The way I met her is pretty interesting. I would go to a park near where I lived just to sit around after work. It was a crummy neighborhood and lots of times crummy girls would come around and look for crummy guys—me for one I suppose. Once in awhile one of these broads would show, and well, it was better than nothin'. We like to keep busy. Just in case nothin' was happenin' there, I'd always pick up little stones and pebbles between my house and the park, and stuff 'em in my coat pockets. I must've picked that street clean. If no one was at the park, I'd sit on the back of one of the benches and flip a fistful of stones at the little birds that used to hang around the place—sparrows or little pigeons, I'm not sure. Everytime I threw they took off—the whole bunch—and about a minute later they'd come back. It was great, not the best fun, and we all enjoyed it, I think. Me and the birds that is. It was just a game and they weren't at all sore about having to fly every coupla seconds. They always came back.

Well, one afternoon I was playing with the birds—not thinkin' about much I guess—when just as I'm about to toss a load they all take off. I look around but don't see anything. A few minutes later the same thing happens. It was getting curious then. When it happens a third time, I quietly hop off the bench and walk out of the park—just pretending to leave you see. Circling around on Dodd Avenue to a different gate, I catch a glimpse of a girl standing behind a tree lookin' all over the place. She's got a handful of rocks I see. She had a pretty nice rear-end, not fat—I really can't hack fat broads—sort of lethargic till you get 'em goin' and then you really have to watch out. They'll tear you to pieces. But this girl is slim, more controllable looking. So slippin' behind a tree I start wingin' stones at her. I hit her a coupla times and she turns but can't find me. She must've known it was me though.

Finally, I'm gettin' tired of playin' this game, so I sneak up behind her and say, "Watcha think you're doin'?" She doesn't even flinch. I ask her again. Nothin'. Then I tap her on the shoulder, thinkin' she's pretty stupid, and she spins

around so fast that I jump back about two feet. She starts laughin, sort of eerie cuz she doesn't make a sound while she's doin' it.

"Watcha think you're doin'?" I ask again. This time she points with the finger to her mouth and ear, shakin' her head. I understand. I'm not stupid. Besides I remember seein' somebody do it in a flick once. She looks at my mouth and points to her eyes so I figure she reads lips. While I'm talkin' to her I keep forgettin' that she's deaf and I forget to face her. She has to keep tapping me on my hand. She had a nice soft touch.

I found out all the common stuff. She wrote it all out in the dirt with a stick. Then I tell her that my name's Abel, that I'm twenty—she's nineteen—that I live by myself about six blocks from the park and that I work in a factory takin' things off a conveyor belt. She lives with her older brother—her folks are dead—and she works a punch press in a housewares factory in the neighborhood. Her brother's name is France, sort of a queer name it strikes me. Well he was in the service then, on one of those six month deals and I gather she's not too unhappy about that.

After about an hour it starts gettin' a little dark and she makes out that she has to go home. I felt kinda sorry she had to leave. But I take the stick and write the word tomorrow with a question mark. Sort of a Studly thing I thought. She nods and smiles and then walks out of the park. I watched her as she left. She had on a pair of pretty tight pants with flowers on 'em and a plain white shirt. All of a sudden it occured to me that I didn't even know if she was built or not. That's somethin' I usually don't miss.

That night I thought about her a lot. I felt sorry that she couldn't hear or talk but it didn't seem to bother her too much. I didn't exactly remember what her face looked like but I remember she didn't have on any make-up; she was naturally nice lookin'. Most of the bitches around my place would put the stuff on with a shovel. Orange and white lipstick together—it was like kissin' a pile of mud. One time I took a girl to a party and someone spilled a Coke on her hair and it dripped onto her face. God was she a mess, I almost heaved from the smell.

The next day I was pretty anxious for work to end. The last four hours were a worse drag than usual. I burned myself twice on those damned hot metal discs when I flipped 'em

over. I took off pretty quick as soon as I punched out. A half hour later I was sittin' throwing stones at the birds. Eloise never showed. I really felt bad.

The day after that she was there sittin' on my bench and I snuck up behind her. "Fuck you Eloise." She didn't move. "Fuck you Eloise." For the next five minutes I stood there sayin' every dirty thing I could think up. It was sorta neat, her not hearin' any of it and me being able to say anything I wanted. She just sat there. When she finally noticed me, I was in hysterics. She started laughin', in her own quiet way, but I was makin' enough noise for both of us. She took me home that night and fed me spaghetti. It was a hell of a lot better than I could've made. Her apartment was on the second floor of an old run-down walk-up but her place was really clean. When ya walk in, it's like a garden, all sorts of potted plants. She had an avocado plant that was nearly up to the ceiling. She gave me one of her plants a coupla weeks later. I took it just to be courteous. But I watered it and it kept growing pretty good. After supper we went to a French movie with English written underneath. I saw more foreign films and read more while I knew Eloise than I ever did in my whole life.

While Eloise's brother was gone we really had a ball. After we saw each other a few times we gave up writing things. Pretty soon I nearly stopped talking. It just didn't seem that important to say too much.

Sometimes she'd come over to my place and we'd play music on the radio. She had a pretty good idea what music was. Lots of times I'd just tap the beat with my fingers on her leg and then after a few minutes she'd start tappin' her foot to keep time. She even remembered some of the songs when I gave her the starting beat.

We didn't go to the park much after the first month. It started gettin' cold. Eloise really liked goin' downtown on the subway. She'd smile the whole way. We used to spend lots of time lookin' at all the crap in the windows, dresses and stuff. Pretty soon I could tell exactly what she would like best. I even bought her a sweater with flowers on it. She was crazy about flowers. It was the wrong size, too big, but she wore it anyway.

I guess Eloise changed me quite a bit. I mean she didn't make me change. I just did. Like before I met her, I thought of myself as a pretty sexy guy. I was getting my share, even

more than the married guys down at work. Ya hear those guys talk and you'll never wanta be married. Course it wasn't much to get it around my neighborhood. Everyone just went around wantin' it and if you were in the right spot at the right time—Bang!

But Eloise and I didn't fuck. **WE HAD INTERCOURSE!** One night I went over there with nothin' on my mind in the way of sex. It was probably in the back of my mind though like it is with most guys. I was different with other girls. I really used to get a kick out of those girls who'd always make you take 'em out before you get anything. It's like they had to prove somethin' to themselves first. There was one named Winnie who always made ya say that ya loved her. "Ya, Ya. I love ya Winnie." Well, when I got to Eloise's she looked worried sort of. She showed me a postcard from her brother.

Eloise:

Will be home in a month.

France.

That night things went real natural. I mean I wasn't really tryin'—maybe just a little—but I know it was important to her that I did it. It was fine! I guess I'd never had nice clean sex before. After that we only did it when we really felt like it at the same time. There was really somethin' there, between us, a feelin' I guess. It didn't have to be talked about or understood or anything. It got to be like that with everything. She and I had the loudest silence I ever heard.

I don't really understand why I liked or loved Eloise so much. It wasn't that I felt sorry for her. I'm nobody's savior! It wasn't that I liked her touch so much. I've been touched before. Maybe it was the way she looked at me. Oh shit, I can't explain it.

I didn't know what it was with her brother that bothered her and I never asked. But I found out. I went over there, to her place one afternoon after work. The door was open and I went into the parlor. Thinking she was in the bedroom I just laid there on the couch, hoping she's sneak up, like she liked to do, and give me a kiss on the forehead. Well, I'm lying there with my eyes closed and then all of a sudden I seem to be lying under a shadow. Suddenly I'm afraid to open my eyes. I didn't open 'em at first even when I hear some guy say "What the hell do you think you're doin'?" Here's this moose standing there lookin' down at me and I about crapped right there.

"I, I came to see Eloise," I says. He didn't look too impressed.

"Eloise doesn't have anyone come to see her." He's got a really deep voice. "Now get the hell out a here before I kill you." I think he meant it. I bugged out fast. He certainly struck me as a very prejudiced person.

I saw Eloise in the park on my way home. There's snow on the ground and she looks pretty cold. She hands me a piece of paper.

Dear Abel,

France is back. He won't let us be together. I'm sure he won't. He says he's got a job in Kansas City and we're moving. I love you Abel.

This is the kind of stuff you see in the movies but who really ever believes it? I didn't. Here's a guy who means nothin' at all to me and he's goin' to really screw things up for some reason that's beyond me. I didn't know what to tell Eloise. I had to think. I just told her I'd find her.

I went back to my place and after about two hours of sitting and staring at my new plant I made up my mind that France wasn't goin' to mess us up. But when I went to find her I couldn't. She had quit work and every night for a week I sat and froze in the park. No show. I knew France wasn't lettin' her out. I wanted to kill him. The whole thing ate at me. I thought about her all the time.

Finally after about two weeks I had to do something. I went over there at night, not knowing what I was really doin'. All of a sudden I was screamin' at the door. "I'm gonna kill you France. I want Eloise." Well he came out and beat the hell out of me. The last thing I remember before the cops took me to jail was him kickin' me. I think I was sterile for a month afterward. When I got out of the hospital they were gone.

Well this was all about two months ago. Sometimes I can hardly believe it. Me and Eloise were somethin'. I really thought there was nothin' I could do. That's why I said that I used to go with Eloise. But just the other night I was lying on my bed holding my potted plant on my stomach, just looking at it and then the phone rings.

"Hello," I said. There was no answer.

"Hello." Still no answer.

Then it finally occurs to me who it is. Just by holding the

phone I know it's Eloise. I can hear her breathing. Well I started crying and shaking—no shit. I couldn't help it. For ten minutes I held that phone to my ear and I'll tell you it was the best conversation I ever had.

Well, I've been thinkin' about goin' to Kansas City. They must have factories out there too. I mean, what's to hold me back? I'm free.

L. Terrence Rosen

WHEN I WAS LITTLE

when I was little,
willie terry and
me,
we used to sit on the floor
of his warm wood shack
out beyond the fields at estes farm,
and we,
we traded comic books all day long
till I left
with the ones I came with.

Thomas Dalton

WHAT IS LOST IN

What is lost in
one moment of life denied;
In reverie
too long sustained?
Is the cry of the present
No less urgent
than that of the past?
Is the killing of today
No less tragic
Than the death of
your yesterday?

Mid Melvin

COUNTDOWN: APOLLO XII LIFTOFF

This is summer
streaked heat
hot blacktop curse
the sun sleepy dog
summer
 hot tin
fry an egg on this street heat
Overcome
with the heat
with the thought we shall
We were there that day
waiting for the Earthrise
watching the
countdown blastoff
of that giant finger
pointing to the moon
the green green
have you seen
the smiling moon?
a curious cadence rung
and was sung
sprung from
the non-violent chapter
of spectators
 some were carrying flowers
with their eyes
 roses & lillies
and non-violent violets
 some scattered seeds
of a new revolution
Evolution
 to grow from the launchbed
and perhaps reach the moon?
 some came daisyeyed
with a mouthful of verses
and a handful of petals
 that they peddle for peace
 some came hungryeyed
i fed them newspapers
 some

feeling out the ocean
with a tear
fell in accidentally
people who
cry when a baby's born
and can watch this history
better if they were at home
on that worn couch
with a transistor of the
ballgame in one ear and
a newspaper over their face
pushing the buttons of their
TV space control
"is this stuff on every channel?"
While at that time
a button
for light and knowledge and understanding
is being considered

threetwoone—pushed

And there were three
having eaten butterflies
the night before
awoke now to dine
on glorious green delicacies
with foreign sounding names
imported from where?

It was hot that day
the sunlight melted wet
& dribbled through the trees
the rocket shone
like a fish's back
shelacked
ready to dive into
the Black Sea
Unknown
sky

Eternal & Infinite
Space?

the ship was stocked

with everything they'd need
like petrified fruit
wax bananas
clean socks
toothpaste
crossward puzzles
mom's apple pie
(a touch of home)
and some other things
Planned & Inspected &
Sterilized
and after that columbus discovers
how it feels
to be standing a million million
million miles from where
he lost his first tooth
he'll say something
Planned & Inspected &
Sterilized
like:
hi mom
having a wonderful time
wish you were here
this is a nice place to visit
but i wouldn't want to . . .

but he would want to
because he's thinking
what's a nice kid like me
doing on this stupid
hell of a rock
and when will they come
and install the plumbing

Diana Dube

WAYWARD ANGELS WHISPER UNEVEN

Wayward angels whisper uneven
doubts concerning north's legitimacy
Especially after last night's recrimination
by the accused stars.

If they had only answered
in kind—a forceful stabbing light
would have been sufficient
to melt the dizzy fears
of earth, which would not have had
to call upon the seraphs after all.

A man protests that we really
are indeed misunderstood;
Our intent was not to question
God's appointed compass but
to ask, "Where are we?"

Ruth Elston

THE CAVE

In this glade there is a silence
as the darkness beckons you,
and the shadows fade to blackness
as blue-greenly shines the moon.
The twisted path is lined with scattered
gnarled and withered trees,
and at its end, the cave you'll find,
a creature guards with ease.
Ten steps inside, and ten beyond
around a curving bend,
there lies a stagnant, murky pond
the awesome creature tends.
The brackish waters hide his lair
within the dripping walls,
and grey moss hangs like ancient hair
as lonely spirits call.
The slippery stones upon the floor
are treacherous to tread;
all strewn about around the door
with white bones of the dead.
The air is moist, and always reeks
with odors of decay,
and in the darkness spiders seek
their unsuspecting prey.
And fungus, black and rotting
covers ceilings dank and cold,
as the creature lies still, plotting
how to lure you to his hold.
If you walk too near the water's edge
you'll set its surface swirl.
You may step upon a narrow ledge
and watch the sweeping whirls.
You will see a scaly brownish hand
creep up onto the shore,
and as it claws the mucky sand
it searches round for more.

in the distance. As he bit his lips in wonder, a funny smell in the air made him rub his eyes. Soon he fell asleep.

He did not know how long he had slept, but when he finally opened his eyes, it was very quiet outside. He got up and carefully made his way up the basement stairs. He found the door hard to open. After a few minutes of tugging, several buckled logs gave way, and he found a small opening through which he could crawl outside. He looked around him. He could feel his heart beating faster. The place where the house and the barn had once stood were now only a heap of smoking wood. What had happened to everything?

With a grubby hand Jamie had pushed aside the tears he couldn't fight back. He looked for the farm house that had once stood so tall and sturdy. He looked for the field of sun-yellow grain and green alfalfa. But all he saw was dark ashes everywhere. He began calling for his mother but heard no answer. As far as he looked he saw no people around.

Suddenly the thought had struck him. Suppose he was all alone with no one to talk to? He remembered a movie he saw on television where a man lived in a town where there were no other people. Jamie became frightened as he wondered if the story on television really could happen to him. It sure seemed like he was all alone. How often he had planned out all the things he would like to do if there was no one around to watch him. First, he would go to the country store and eat all the ice cream he could possibly hold. Next, he would gather up all-day suckers, and bubble gum and mints, and just stuff his pockets with candy until they couldn't hold any more. He thought of all the toys he would like to have. A green cash register would be nice to have, and so would a blue tricycle and a toy wooden soldier . . .

His stomach gave another groan, which brought his thoughts back to his hunger. His back had become tired from leaning against the steps for so long. He got up, yawned, and stretched his arms and looked around. Not even a dog barked. He missed the singing of the birds. He decided he didn't like it this quiet for so long.

He went back into the store and searched again for something to eat. His eyes immediately fell upon a juicy, rosy-red apple on the counter. It looked so good. He moved toward it as his hand went to his overall pocket and pulled out the only money he had and laid it on the counter to trade for the apple. He looked sadly at his last seven coins

laying on the counter. What would he do if he got hungry later?

He walked outside with the apple in his hand. The air hurt his eyes and made them water. He rubbed them a few times and then walked over to a weeping willow to find a soft cool spot to sit down. He allowed the leaves to brush against his cheek as he wondered what to do next.

He looked at his apple again and knew he would enjoy eating it. It was the prettiest, ripest apple he had ever seen! He could almost feel the juice running down his chin already. He grinned a little as he opened his mouth wide and took a large bite—but, to his surprise, he bit into something very hard and waxy. The apple was not real!! Jamie felt he had been cheated. Why couldn't he find anything good to eat? And where was his mother? Could he be dreaming all this? Would he soon wake up and find home as he left it?

Oh, how he wished he could find things as they used to be. He felt a twinge of loneliness inside him. He began to feel very small and alone. Oh, if he could only go back to the life he had known before, he would even be willing to give up all those toys he had wanted. What good were toys now if he couldn't find friends to play with. He didn't want to play *all alone*. Just to be at home again in his own bed, and to have his parents with him was all he wanted.

His throat felt very dry. He coughed once or twice. A cold wind blew over him as the darkness folded around him. He curled up closer to the tree, shivering and hoping that he would soon fall asleep.

Violet Schindler

She thought of how the
mice were scarping at the walls,
How her "No" came soft as fur
and he pressed her thighs
against the cracked linoleum.
Below the sign
EMPLOYEES MUST WASH THEIR HANDS
she threw the deadly mixture
into the sink,
and squeezing at her belly
she cursed the face
fading into neon in the glass,
and saw the tears
be born within the hollows
of her eyes.
The shame was in the floor.
Linoleum, her mother smiling
toothless through his moans,
violated.
What soulless child
Would spill unloved and angry
Through her legs to curse the God
she shamed?

(The gaze of a serpent is dry like skin and quivers cold. It
promises the occult with a smile as swift as a skull's.)

"I must be interesting,"
Janice thought.
"I still must be appealing."
She touched her breasts and hoped
she was alone. The thrill
of touching lingered from her youth
and kept her young:
forbidden things were best
when thought as new.
If only Mick could love like that
(he and Arno were playing golf:
both had known the secrets
of her skin, but only Mick

would boast of it
to others: but Mick
had lost the hidden whisper
long ago; his talk revealed
the sense but not the skin)
and make her tremble for his touch
(Arno dressed in the other room. Arno
never scratched in bed).
To feel the stir of spring
again was worth another child.
She'd laugh and say, "A forty-year-old
error," and slip it into life as Mick's.
Who could tell the difference?

(The sin is that whatever they know they know too little.
That's the part of the apple the snake sneaks into their
mouths and turns to chromosomes to feed their children.)

And how was Mickey Jr. to know,
dressed in an Afghan goatskin coat
and Indian deerskin leggings,
that when he said, "Hey brother,
what's new?" the black bastard
(Amy's kid—but how was he to know?)
would feed the knife into Mickey's gut
because he hated God
but could only kill a man?

Richard Eldridge

THE LOST DOG

She came in from the garden slowly,
toward the same house.

"Trees may provide shade and comfort for many, even though
. . ."

But was there any man who could understand the loneliness
of woman on such a farm? Flatness, all and all, flatness.

She always enjoyed these after-supper talks with her husband.
He was, after all, her husband. And a kind man, so very
gentle.

"Do you remember that couple by the river with the big dog?
I loved that dog; it could jump a fence as high as a man.
And then it vanished one day in the timber . . .
But he had to keep working in the fields, and she had
her kitchen.
It could have been caught in a river trap somewhere,
waiting for them.

"They had no childred to find that dog.
Do I know you love me?
Of course, Dear. You promised that long ago."

Judy Rockwell Stein

WHO CARES?

Who cares? Much scorn I have
for him who gapes at June in
January, his logic prostrate before
chance's seeming lack of reason!

But—let me not exist in heedlessness
of those with measured mind
who crave the balm of nonrequisite laughter
yet weep for poverty of thought;

Such pedantism as may challenge those
in spring is swiftly killed by frost
impromptu as a kiss, or
carefree as a clown's curse.

Ruth Elston

A CHILD'S LULLABY

(the children sing)

for it is only fair and wise
to wait and watch the moon arise
that awesome yellow country kite
an old man holds with all his might.

(and the mothers sing)
all right.

So yes, the little children win their way
And an hour of sleep becomes evening play
For feet to run down unlit streets unknown
Or hands to stay nearby and gather stones
Till blackness wanders through the yard in swells,
And mothers draw the blinds of day with bells.

Thomas Dalton

TEETER-TOTTER

Oh yes we had our ideals
As everyone does when they're young.
Life was popcorn and cotton candy,
But we forgot the realities which were to come.
And so we slipped by for awhile
I grew to love her
 and she loved me.
We played on swings and teeter-totters.
I was her Prince Charming
 and she my Cinderella,
And away we would ride on my imaginary steed.
But dreams were not meant to last forever.
Soon the world caught up with us
And took her by the hand.
I wouldn't let her down
And so she cried
 and then stepped off.

Richard Dick