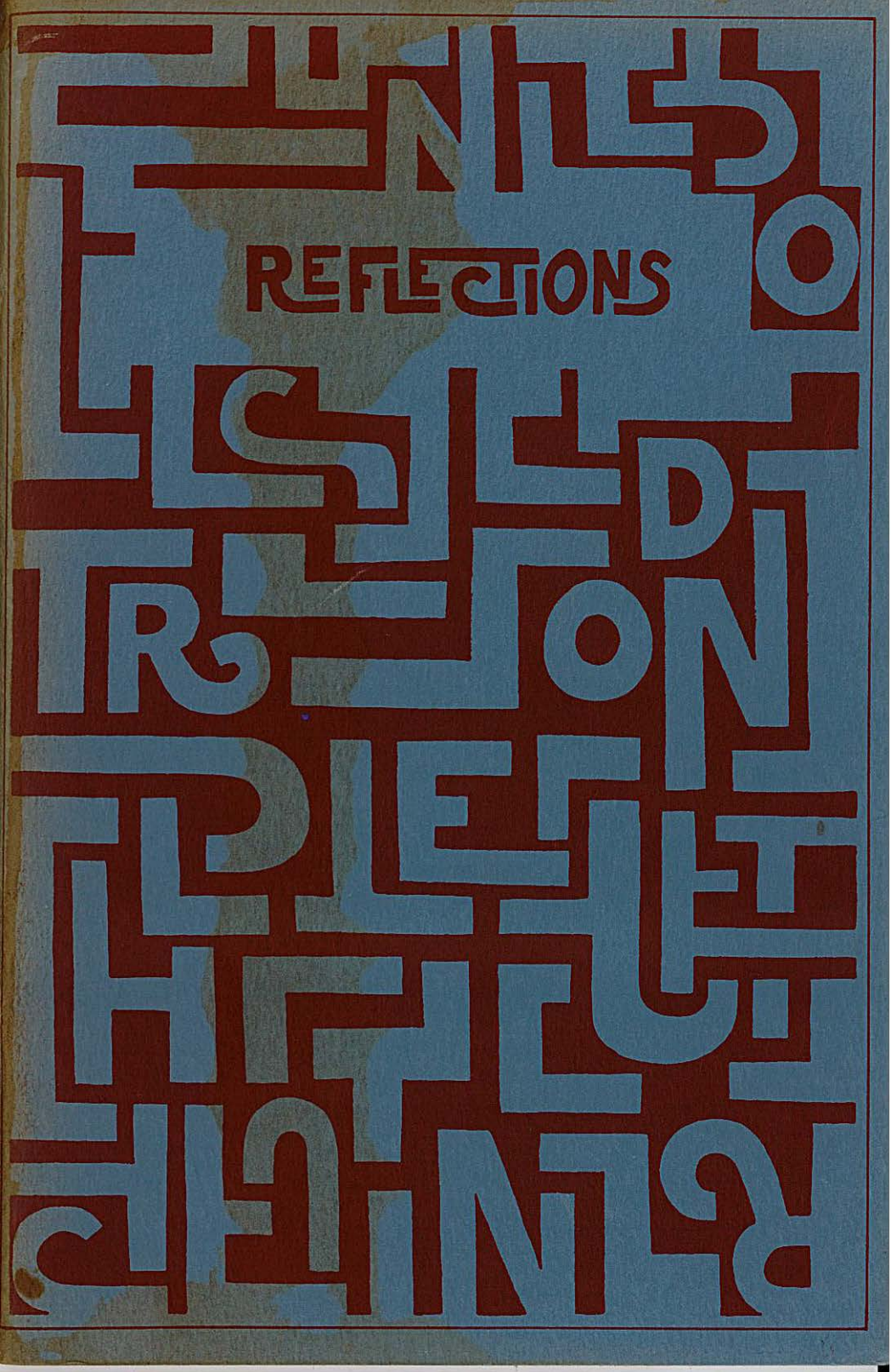


REFLECTIONS



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
O'DOLCE—David Perkins	1
"WHEN IN DESPAIR,"—Karen Durham	2
HAIKU—Sandra McRoberts, Cheryl Price, J. C. Thacker	2
MRS. G. L. FERGUSON STORM DOOR AND AIRLINE CO.—Ron Brown	3-5
TRYOUT—Annell McGowan	7-12
FOUR POEMS—Hiram Davis	13
TWELFTH AND VINE—Linda Barney	14-19
CALL OF THE AXE—Henry Bornheimer	20-24
NEWSCAST—Sandra McRoberts	25-29
SOAP SWEET—Henry Bornheimer	29
BELL . . . OH, BELLA, BELLA!—Gloria O'Rourke	30-33
THE FACE OF EAST—John C. Thacker	34-37
WINTER—Linda Barnes	37
VIETNAM, LAND OF BEAUTY AND UGLINESS—Sally Rasmussen	38-41
THE COURSE—Kip AtLee	41
IN SCARLET CLOAK—Kathy Fisher	42
AGE—Tina Mancini	42
"NO MATTER HOW TALL . . ."—Richard Lee	43-46
FREEDOM AMONG THE MILLIONS—W. K. Maxwell	47
I AM BORN AGAIN—Cheryle Powell	47
HAIKU—Karen Durham, Sandra McRoberts	47



ART WORK

GIRL'S HEAD—Sharon Koppitz	6
WASH DRAWING—Dan Kloepper	18
RECLINING FIGURE—Barbara Grosshart	28
WATER COLOR—Alan Massie	40
Technical Details	Dr. Yerbury

O' DOLCE

by David Perkins

In the Spring garden
By the river,
We married
On the white mass
A thousand dreams,
And rubbed harshly
The green stains
From our feet.
We sang to the river,
And heard in its deep moving
The Phrygian mode unbound.

In the garden,
I tore the earth,
And lifted life
To see the garden bleed.
Yet your relentless strumming
Of the soul's instrument
Brought new life
To bind the clay
And essence
Still unkneaded,
Until it closed
With the balmy moon's assent.

To the garden
By the river
Others came to sing,
And cancelled
With their separate agony
The murmuring waters.
Reft of clay,
Begetting the water song,
A leaf paused
In the shallow's eddy,
Then with new force
Drifted.

"WHEN IN DESPAIR . . ."

by Karen Durham

When in despair about my place in life,
I take a ride out to the seashore's side,
Away from office, city noise and wife,
And watch the inrush of the surging tide,
The breakers hurling themselves against the shore,
Taking revenge out on the pier, the land,
Receding to return again for more,
Reaching almost to my feet, my hand,

No resolution comes into my mind,
But sudden calmness sets me more at ease,
Till even what I look at seems more kind.
I am impelled to mutter, "Thank you, please,"
And then return with sunset to a life
That can resolve as well as proffer strife.

HAIKU

1

The clatter of pans,
a baby crying . . . Listen,
a robin singing!

—Sandra McRoberts

2

Ariverderci—
adios, and then goodbye.
Yet my love is here.

—Cheryl Price

3

A single grass blade,
bent in reverence to wind,
blows near from the hill.

—John C. Thacker

2

THE MRS. GRACE L. FERGUSON STORM DOOR
AND AIRLINE COMPANY

by Ron Brown

"I wish there was some other way. I sure hate to have to go up in one of those confounded contraptions," Jim said to himself as he finished shaving. His hand had begun to shake at the very thought of his upcoming flight, for he had a deathly fear of airplanes and everything connected with them.

He groaned as he passed the letter on the desk addressed to Private Jim Mayor. It had just arrived the day before but it had plagued him ever since, like an evil omen.

Jim had conceived the whole nonsensical scheme when he had seen an ad in the paper which read: "Take a chance. Fly the economical Mrs. Grace L. Ferguson Storm Door and Airline Company. Round trip to Hawaii, Alaska, and other paradises—cheap. We cater to service men. Reservations taken no later than 15 minutes in advance. Phone GA 6-8906." Jim had been wondering what he was going to do on the two-day pass, so had decided to take a flight to Hawaii.

"Now, what did I forget?" he muttered as he shut the door. He set his suitcase down, reentered the barracks, and stuck the envelope containing his tickets in his pocket. Then he hustled to a waiting cab and was whisked off to the airport.

At the terminal, Jim reluctantly went to the Mrs. Grace L. Ferguson Storm Door and Airline Company desk, and was informed that the flight would leave on time. He made his way to the lounge, and two packs of cigarettes later, heard his flight being announced. He picked up his luggage and followed some other passengers out the gate. When he saw the plane, he almost panicked and ran. It was a bright orange DC-3 with MGALFSDAAC written in large purple letters along the length of the fuselage.

Jim and the other passengers climbed aboard just in time to see the pilot stagger into the cockpit. With a great rumble, the ancient plane lurched into the air. About then Jim realized that the flight wasn't as bad as he thought it would be, it was worse!

Fifteen minutes later, the door to the cockpit opened and the pilot entered muttering, "Well, you're the navigator. You

3

ought to be able to figure out where we are." Then he shut the door and leaned upon it holding his head. "Boy, have you ever had one that hangs on for four or five days? I don't mind the headaches so much, but it's that double-vision! . . . Well . . . well . . ." he added, straightening himself, "I'd like to welcome you aboard the Mrs. Grace L. Ferguson Storm Door and Airline Company flight number R-29. As you know, we're a relatively new company. We've been in business now for about a week. We operate as a low-cost service and consequently have attempted to do away with what we in the airline business call frills and extras, such as radar, maintenance, and, oh, a whole lot of technical instruments up front. Now, are there questions any of you'd like to ask?"

Jim squirmed uneasily switching arms in the strap that hung from the ceiling. The pilot noticing, turned to him. "I want to apologize for your having to stand all the way. It might be a good idea for all of you to alternate arms in the strap every now and then. It can get a little uncomfortable if you don't. As for those of you who fly tourist, well, you don't have straps. Just do the best you can."

An old lady managed to wend her small way to the front of the plane and carried on a hushed conversation with the pilot. She seemed very much worried and quite insistent, but the pilot appeared to have eased her mind. He turned and said, "Let me repeat her question so everyone can hear it. 'If we should have to ditch, how long would the plane stay afloat?' Is that your question? That's hard to say. Some of them go down like a rock. And then for some reason, others stay afloat for oh, two, three minutes."

Jim sheepishly got the pilot's attention. "Will we be warned if we are going to have to ditch?"

"Oh, yes. Our co-pilot becomes hysterical. He'll start running up and down the aisles yelling, 'We're going to crash or something like that.' Actually he gets kind of panicky and it isn't always too easy to understand him. At least it hasn't been in the past. So if you see him running up and down the aisles and you can't make out what he's saying, you might slip into your life jackets to be on the safe side."

"By the way, in a few moments we are going to have a little drill by our two stewardesses, Trixie and Bubbles: I'm sorry, Miss Swanson and Miss Savage. They'll show you how to put on life jackets. There really isn't much to it, but a lot of people get them on backwards. That way you end up with your face in the water."

A man in the very back of the plane was trying vainly to ask a question, but the pilot couldn't hear. Leaning forward a little, he yelled, "Sir, could you speak up a little bit? I can't hear you over the roar of our engines. Oh, they've stopped now, sir." He opened the door and shouted to the navigator, "Harry, the engines went out again. It's the third button on the left I think. Hold it! The cabin lights are going out! Try the third button on the right. That's got them!"

Jim had had all he could take. He shoved people out of his way and ran to the back of the plane. Frantically he kicked the door open and stood staring down toward the vast ocean below. Observing him, the pilot decided it would be better not to lose any passengers, so after a few minutes he slowly moved up next to Jim, lit a cigarette, and said, "Oh, hi! Thinking about jumping? Your first time, is it?"

"Are you going to jump too?"

"Me? No, this is part of my job. I always open the door about half way through the flight. It kind of helps me unwind. I don't know though, since the first flight, jumping has really fallen off."

"Very funny."

"Sorry, I didn't mean it that way!"

"It's kind of cold with the wind in your face."

"Oh, well, wait a minute. Hey, Trixie. Two coffees, please. No, to go, Trixie, to go."

"Thank you."

"Think nothing of it. Say, I really have to get back to the cockpit now. I'd love to stay around and watch it."

"It is a long way down, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is. Kind of chickening out are you? That happens quite a bit. You have a certain responsibility to those people back there though. Some of them have been watching for a half hour or so. But it's up to you. If you don't want to, you don't have to."

"Let's get back in."

"Sure! I'll go in and you follow me, all right?" The pilot turned around, set his feet firmly on the floor, and pulled himself to safety. Jim was right behind him. Then he heard Jim mutter something under his breath. He turned around and saw nothing but an empty space where Jim had been. "That double vision," he muttered, rubbing his hand across his eyes. "But gollee I never had both images disappear . . . at the same time before. Where . . . where did that fellow go?"



TRYOUT

by Annell McGowan

"Good morning, ladies!" said the young man sitting on the counter by the cash register. "I'm Mr. Jeselle, your new buyer. We're all part of the Bingham Store family, and that means we work for the biggest, best department store in Megopolis!" He pounded the counter with the words "biggest" and "best", then leaped off the counter. "Are we all proud of the Bingham Store?"

There was an embarrassed silence.

"Come on, now ladies," he teased, his blue eyes twinkling. "Say 'yes' and let's hear it."

"Yes," said four of the five women, but the fiftyish one in the long, black, old-fashioned dress only peered at him through thick glasses.

"Are we proud of our coat department?" He leaped up on a chair. "And are we going to sell more coats in 1966 than ever before?"

"Yes!" shouted the four women in answer.

"Hey, you," barked Mr. Jeselle, jumping from his chair. "You in back there!" His piercing blue eyes slid over the woman's gray braids twisted on her head and down to her neat "comfortable shoes." "What's your name?"

"Miss Markowitz."

"Marko—what?" He examined her name tag. "Oh, yes, Marta Markowitz. Why don't you yell with the rest of us, Marta?"

"Please, Mr. Jeselle," she answered. "I've been with Bingham's for twenty-five years. I've sold plenty of coats and . . . and no one calls me Marta."

"Well, Marta," he replied, smoothing his sleek black hair. "You just stick with me. We'll get those sales up."

"But . . .," put in one of the women, who had been listening. "Miss Markowitz has the top sales record in the store. She's been temporary buyer since the old boss left."

Mr. Jeselle, who had been busy polishing his nails on his sports jacket, did not look up. "Marta, you stick with me, and

we'll get those sales up. Now, ladies, it's nine-thirty. Store's open, and we're gonna sell, sell, SELL!"

The five ladies separated, taking positions in various parts of the department as customers began to trickle in—first one by one, then in droves. Mr. Jeselle waltzed up to a wealthy-looking middle-aged customer and took her arm. His words were undistinguishable from where Miss Markowitz watched, but she could see the lady giggling. Mr. Jeselle laughed back into her eyes as he held up a coat.

"They're all alike," Miss Markowitz thought. Then her thoughts were interrupted by someone's calling her name and she became too busy demonstrating coats, answering questions, and ringing up sales to think about Mr. Jeselle.

"What kind of coat do you think I should buy?" a customer asked Miss Markowitz. "For some reason I look so plump in this one."

Miss Markowitz studied the woman's stout figure and her short neck. The short coat was definitely wrong with its huge fur collar swallowing up her head. "I know just the thing," answered Miss Markowitz. "Our Trimline Originals are made with slenderizing lines."

She was beginning to help the woman remove the coat when a voice behind her interrupted. "Stop! Don't move a thing! Such a vision of loveliness. That coat, dear lady, is the crowning touch for your lovely brown hair." Both women turned around to find Mr. Jeselle smiling at them. "Don't you think this is perfect, Marta, dear?"

"Well, I . . .," put in Miss Markowitz, but Mr. Jeselle interrupted. "Why don't you let me handle this one, Marta? You go help that lady over there."

Miss Markowitz started to open her mouth but it snapped shut. She marched over to the lady Mr. Jeselle had pointed out. Her "May I help you?" was a little strained. As she was ringing up the sale, she felt a tap on her shoulder. She turned and saw Mr. Jeselle standing behind her.

"Marta, I'd like to talk with you."

"The name," she replied icily, "is **Miss** Markowitz, and I'll be with you just as soon as I'm through with this customer." She finished wrapping the woman's package, smiled good-bye to her, then turned back to Mr. Jeselle.

"I want to know," he demanded, "why you didn't try to sell that woman the short coat. Look how many of those we have on the racks. We've got to push those, Miss Markowitz."

"Mister Jeselle," retorted Miss Markowitz, "our job is to see that every customer leaves here satisfied. If they're happy, they'll come back, and their future purchases will more than make up for losses or mistakes at the wholesaler's."

"Your job is to convince the customer she's happy with what we want her to be happy with. She'll never know the difference. I'm the buyer here, Marta, and you'll do as I say."

The following morning, Bingham's coat department swung into its usual routine. Customers tried on coats, sales clerks hurried back and forth, busy with selling, money changed hands, customers came and went, burdened with purchases. But the gray-haired sales woman in black sniffed and looked away every time she came near the efficient-looking young man, and the young man always turned his back on her and put extra charm into his sales pitch. The rack of poorly-made, fur-collared coats did show many gone.

"There she is!" came a voice from behind her. Miss Markowitz turned from looking at the coat rack to see the plump customer from yesterday hurrying towards her. "Aren't you the woman who was helping me yesterday before that man took over?"

Miss Markowitz nodded, "Yes."

"Well," continued the woman, "when I got home last night, my husband just didn't like this coat. He's so fussy, you know. I thought maybe you could take this one back and help me find something else."

"But wouldn't you rather have Mr. Jeselle?" put in Miss Markowitz.

"No, I'd rather have you. You seemed to know what you were doing. I know you're busy and all, but . . ."

"Miss Markowitz!" came another voice, and she turned to see another saleswoman with a customer in tow. "This lady wants to return a coat Mr. Jeselle sold her. I asked her if she wouldn't like to see him, but she wanted to see you."

"Well, I'll be with you in just a moment, as soon as I've finished with this other customer," Miss Markowitz said to

this second woman. "Why don't you start looking around to see if you can't find something you'd like better?"

"Miss Markowitz?" came still another voice. She looked up to see a third woman holding a fur-collared coat that she wanted to return.

Within half an hour, Miss Markowitz was so surrounded by women with fur-collared coats that she had to persuade some of them to let other saleswomen help them. Each customer had only one demand—that Mr. Jeselle should **not** be the one to help her.

Into the midst of the confusion, there walked another customer, an expensively dressed older woman, whose haughty pride showed in her erect carriage, in her stately gait, even in the angle of the feather arching from her expensive-looking hat. Miss Markowitz, frantic with making exchanges, could only glance up as Mr. Jeselle waltzed up to the woman. But she listened as she went on with her work.

"Ah, the fairest of her sex!" burred Mr. Jeselle. "And what can I do for you, dear lady?"

"Puh-lease, I wish to see Miss Mah-kowitz," the lady replied.

"Miss Markowitz is busy right now," he said, "but I'm sure I can find something that will be lovely with your beautiful silver hair."

"But Miss Mah-kowitz always helps me. She was recommended to me by . . . Do you really think my hair is beautiful?"

"It glows like shining silver," he replied, "and over there we have a coat with a shining silver mink collar."

Miss Markowitz's eyes widened as she saw Mr. Jeselle lead her old customer towards the rack of cheap coats.

"Please, I'm in a hurry," said the customer, whose return slip she was writing up.

"Oh, I'm sorry," answered Miss Markowitz. "I'll have this taken care of in just a minute," and resumed her frantic writing.

Three exchanges later, Miss Markowitz heard a commotion over by the cash register. "Simulated fur?" someone was

shouting. "Young man, this label says simulated fur. You told me this collah was mink!" Whirling to find her old customer shouting at Mr. Jeselle with none of her usual dignity, Miss Markowitz rushed over to see what was the matter.

"Oh, theah you are, Miss Mah-kowitz. Just look what this nasty young man has done. He sold me this coat with an imitation fur collah, and he told me it was mink. I'm going to see Joseph about this!" With that, she marched off toward the escalator, carrying the coat with her.

Mr. Jeselle polished his fingernails nervously. "Who's Joseph, Miss Markowitz?"

"Joseph is Mr. Bingham himself. He's a personal friend of that woman's," she snapped. "Now you've got Mrs. Van Dyke—of all people—mad!"

"Can I help it if that old buyer goofed?" Mr. Jeselle cut in. "Can I help it if he left us with all those lousy coats to get rid of?"

"We can much better afford to lose a little money on those coats than to lose our customers."

"I'm the buyer here, Miss Markowitz, and I'll decide things like that."

"All right, you decide. Did those coats stay sold?" Before Mr. Jeselle could answer, the telephone rang, and Miss Markowitz answered it. She listened for a moment, then turned to Mr. Jeselle. "You and I are wanted in Mr. Bingham's office."

Mr. Jeselle's face turned a ghastly pale as they turned toward the escalator. "Miss Markowitz," he said, following her, "you've got to help me."

"Why should I?" she snapped. There was a long pause.

"Miss Markowitz, all I wanted to do was make a good impression."

Miss Markowitz didn't seem to hear, but stepped off the escalator and walked toward the closed door that proclaimed, "JOSEPH L. BINGHAM, PRESIDENT," in gold letters. She turned the door handle and they were in the outside office.

Mr. Bingham's secretary looked up and nodded to them. "Go on in. He's waiting for you."

They opened the door to the inside office and found themselves facing a furious Mrs. Van Dyke in the chair nearest the desk, and behind the desk, the pudgy face of Mr. Bingham, now crimson with rage from quivering jowls to the shiny bald crown of his round head. "Shut that door and sit down," he ordered. "Now, Jeselle, what is the meaning of this?" he shouted, indicating the coat still clutched by Mrs. Van Dyke. "You've insulted one of our best customers, misrepresented merchandise, and make a total riot of that department downstairs. What do you have to say for yourself?"

"Well, I . . .," stammered Mr. Jeselle.

"Oh, be quiet! I don't want a word out of you. Miss Markowitz, I called you up here because I want your opinion. You saw the whole thing. What's been going on down there?"

"Well, Mr. Bingham," she answered, "all that happened was that a new employe made a few mistakes. Why don't you give him one more chance?"

"Hmm!" grunted Mr. Bingham. "What do you say, Mrs. Van Dyke?"

"Well, Joseph," she replied, "he suh-tainly did make me angry. Still, if Miss Markowitz thinks he should have one more chance, perhaps that would be fair."

Mr. Bingham sat deep in thought for awhile. All that could be heard was the ticking of the antique clock on the wall. At last he spoke. "All right, Jeselle. I won't fire you this time. But from now on, you're assistant buyer. Miss Markowitz, how would you like to be head buyer in the coat department?"

"Oh, Mr. Bingham!" exclaimed Miss Markowitz. "I never expected anything like this!"

"And, Jeselle," continued Mr. Bingham, "do you think you could work under Miss Markowitz?"

"I think so, sir," he answered, his self-assurance slowly returning. "After all, she's quite a woman."

FOUR POEMS

by Hiram Davis

1

I have often wanted to reach a setting sun,
feeling an urge to run and find its end,
to wash myself in its fading light.
Often I have wanted to rise above,
to achieve a feeling of freedom.
But all my oftens have become
nothing more than passing thoughts.
Now I have reached another point in time.
I have died many deaths only to rise each time
to meet a far greater one.

2

Footsteps in the sands
leading to tomorrow—
extractions of forgotten memories
caught in a flash,
and in a mere sweep of timeless winds
blown out of reach of all
thought.

3

The broken images of night were passed over
as figments of the imagination.
In the light of day, we cry out,
as we walk past the transformations
of the night.

4

A silent candle
burns in its own illumination,
casting reflections on quiet faces,
seeking refuge from
the outer world.

A silent candle with its flame,
striving to become free
as it dances and burns—
but soon going out—
darkens
sensitivity of life.

TWELFTH AND VINE

by Linda Barney

"Twelfth and Vine seems kind of slow this morning, huh, Jan? Sure hope we don't encounter the usual stares and comments."

The street was cluttered with discarded newspapers and candy wrappers. An occasional beer can floated among other debris in the stream of slosh in the gutter six inches from the two girls. Jean shrugged and avoided Jan's eye. A neat-looking, five-foot-four blonde, she caught any man's eye and usually basked in attention. Jean was a serious-looking, five-foot-seven brunette, who was neatly dressed and detested men's attentions. Jean, unlike Jan, loved the early morning challenge presented with each day's work.

"Could you expect any street to be alive at 7:45? It's quiet today, but I'm not complaining. I just wish we didn't have to climb out of bed and meet this darn bus every morning. Kansas City is beautiful, but this early is for the birds."

The barber shop directly behind the bus stop was without identity. Cardboards nailed to windows to keep the sun and breezes seemed to stifle the small, now empty shop. In days past, an occasional Negro could be seen entering the shop, but this morning all was quiet and the streets were empty except for a scantily-clad child skipping through the nearby alley. The odor from the Town-Shop Bakery was nauseous. Shouts could be heard above the din of jazz in the beer joint down 12th Street. Apparently nightly hangovers had not worn off.

Jan seemed to rejoice in such shouts and brawls, while Jean shivered at the thought of what went on.

"Just listen to those men," said Jan. "Must've been one hell of a night. Some time I'm going to walk down here just to see what goes on after dark."

"You're stupid!" Jean threw back at her. "Don't you know anything can happen? At least that old colored sea captain across the street sitting on his rickety porch seems to like us. His only desire seems to be to wave good morning."

Except for the sea captain, there was a disconnection between the inhabitants of 12th Street and the two twenty-year-old white girls, who waited for the bus at 12th and Vine. The

Negroes remained aloof, though the girls had seen many of the same faces daily during their summer months in Kansas City. Or maybe the girls were aloof. Jan was wearing a close-fitting skirt with low-necked blouse. How many times had Jean asked her not to wear such provocative clothes? Jan stood eyeing each young Negro man who passed, but if one made the mistake of looking her way or looking her up and down, she quickly thrust her nose high in the air.

"Jan!" Jean reprimanded, catching her slyly watching a guy of about twenty who had just stepped out of the noisy bar and was staggering down the brick sidewalk towards them. "Must you stare? It's a wonder someone doesn't come along and slug you just to wipe that grin off your face. See! He's not so drunk he's not aware you're staring at him. Why don't you just watch for the bus?"

"Why don't you? I've got better things to do. You'd get some attention too if you'd wear tighter skirts and comb your hair back. Jeanie, I think you're afraid of men. One thing about these Negroes: they don't forget who they are and don't step out of line."

"You mean haven't yet. He's coming closer. Would you for once be decent and just look at the sky or something?"

Within twenty feet of them now, the young man, stumbling worse and worse, reached out and grabbed a post as a man would grab for his wife before leaving for work in the morning. Resting long enough to catch his balance, the Negro eyed the girls. He straightened, set his left foot forward, then his right. But the next step threw him off balance and he thrust his body forward to keep from falling.

"Jan," whispered Jean, "what will we do if he comes up to us? Do you think he's carrying a knife? Remember what we were reading last night in the **Star** about a girl who was assaulted? He had a knife, and after molesting her, sliced her face pretty badly and left her half dead in some alley. What if he comes right up to us and demands we go with him?"

"Don't get carried away." Jan retored calmly. "He can demand anything he wants, but the way he's stumbling he couldn't harm us."

From the doorway of the barber shop directly behind them stepped another Negro—about thirty. He was neat, with thick beard, tan sports coat and slacks, shoes radiantly reflecting the sunshine, and hat cocked at an angle. With one glance,

he took in the situation, seemingly knowing the drunk's intent as well as the girls' fright. Motionless, he stood while the drunk struggled for what seemed like hours. Then the stranger strode toward the drunk, caught the unsteady arm to give support, and the couple, standing placid now, scorched the girls silently.

Jan backed against the bus stop sign, looking for a possible escape route. Down the street lay the noisy bar, and with the barber shop to the left, there was only one open exit—the alley across the street. Leaning against the alley-side of the crumbling, red-brick building was a Negro who apparently had taken everything in and who now was lazily awaiting the outcome.

Faces distorted by sneers, the drunk and his supporter stepped in front of the girls. Jan pressed Jean's hand till her nails dug into the flesh. "The bus!" shouted Jean.

They dashed toward the bus before it had come to a full stop. The door slowly opened; the girls clambered on almost simultaneously, not daring to look back until they were safe. "Whew!" both girls gasped. "You sure were scared!" Jan chided. "I don't suppose you were," Jean retorted.

The girls settled themselves on a seat about midway to the rear of the bus, engaging in cold rebuttals before glancing about. Jean was the first to investigate. "Jan! T-h-a-t man, the drunk, the one on 12th Street! He followed us onto the bus. Don't turn around. Just look in the driver's mirror. Do you see him?"

"Jean!" Jan exclaimed. "He's watching us in the mirror. What if he gets off when we do? Out on 23rd Street, the bus stop is in front of that slot car store. It won't be open this early in the morning. Do you remember any other stores along that street where we could run for help?"

Jean pondered. "I can't think of any other stores that would be open. I'd be afraid to run to a house this early in the morning. But maybe he'll get off before we do. Twenty-third Street is a long way yet."

"What about the driver? I wonder if he'd protect us?" Jan queried.

The drunk had risen from his seat and was making his way toward the front of the bus. Stumbling and bracing himself by holding to each seat, he progressed, inching his way nearer to the girls.

"Jan, he's right behind us!"

Jan jerked her head around and her eyes met the deep-seated, filmy red eyes of the drunk. He paused, looked at the girls, but continued toward the front. The old lady in drab apparel sitting four seats across the aisle had not noticed him yet. The drunk stopped and said something inaudible to her. She chuckled. He sat down next to her, seemingly unaware that she was a white woman.

"Jean, how can she possibly laugh?"

"Maybe it's just a cover-up, Jan. Look! She's leaning toward him."

The drunk and woman had engaged in close conversation and then the woman let out a shriek and jumped from her seat. The drunk, startled, sprang from her path to allow her to run from the halted bus.

"What did he do to her?" was all Jan could manage.

Before the girls could react, the drunk had gained the aisle. Instead of going toward the girls, however, he headed for the front of the bus. Upon reaching the front, he slowly descended the steps and ambled off down the worn brick sidewalk without even a backward glance.

The bus once again resumed its routine route. The girls sat in shocked relief, not realizing that the bus driver viewed them critically through his mirror. A white man of about thirty-five years, with harsh blue eyes and thick eyebrows, he found it difficult to maintain control of the bus. Jan and Jean had looked at him once when they thought they needed help, but now had forgotten him.

"I'm still shaking, Jan. But it feels great just to be alive this early in the morning."

"Guess 23rd Street is the next stop, Jean. But my legs are too weak to carry me off."

The girls slowly rose and wove toward the front seat where they sat down. "Hey, we want off, driver!" Jan blurted out. "We want off!"

The driver ignored them and drove on as though the bus were empty.

"Stop! Driver, we want off!" Jean shouted.

The driver turned with a grin which showed two missing front teeth. "Don't worry, ladies," came his harsh bass voice. "Don't you want to ride with me now that that drunk got off?" A deep-throated chuckle rang out in the stillness. "Two pretty girls like you. I wouldn't have let that man bother you. You can



bet on that. You know, driving the bus eight hours a day, I see a lot of people. But you two are different. Gets kinda lonely just sitting and driving. You wouldn't mind giving me a little time, huh?"

Jan and Jean exchanged glances. "We must be at work by 8:30," Jan returned to the driver. "Please let us off, or we'll lose our jobs."

"I'm not married, either," continued the driver. "How would you like going home to an empty apartment every night? Say, how would you like to see my apartment? It's not far from here. You can get to work on time after you see my apartment." The harsh blue eyes had taken on a melancholy appeal.

The girls eyed him. "Now what," whispered Jan. "He seems harmless enough, but I sure won't go into his apartment."

Noticing the girls were whispering, he said, "Now you will see my apartment, won't you? It's not far now. And you can stay a while if you want." He had become so preoccupied, he had not seen the girls talking. "There!" he said. "That's my apartment. It's on the second floor of that house with the green shutters. I'll park the bus in the back. We can go up the back stairs and not disturb anyone."

The bus had come to a stop and the girls were preparing to get off when the driver picked up a knife. Seeing it, the girls shrank back from the man. Not noticing their fear, he simply explained, "I had to take this away from one of the boys on the bus last night." Pocketing the knife, he caught Jan and Jean by the arms and escorted them off the bus and toward the back stairs of the apartment house.

As they reached the stairs, the girls glanced around, noticing that the streets were lined with houses. The office where they worked must be six to eight blocks away. To break his hold and run that distance without his overtaking them would be difficult. Jan searched Jean's face for a signal. Jean hesitated; the moment had not appeared as they neared the steps. Then, just as Jean placed her foot on the first step, the man released her arm. "Run!" Jean shouted, already ten feet from the man.

Jan had anticipated her and had already broken away from his hold. Running as fast as they could, they slowed within three doors of the office, panting and shaken.

"He's not following us. But let's run the rest of the way," Jan said.

Once on the office steps, they slowed and Jean at last commented. "What a morning!"

CALL OF THE AXE

by Henry Bornheimer

Chad Reeve shouldered open the back door, not bothering to ease its swing-back. It smacked behind him, interrupting the murmur of the breeze as darkness settled. The lights from the house cast his tall, wiry figure and unruly hair into distorted shadow. The moon glow was a hazy scum obscuring the path. Chad's eyes adjusted as he walked towards his father's still figure.

He approached the wheel chair and laid his hands on Judd's shoulders. The old man's paralysis kept them from responding. "Many folks at the water hole tonight, dad?" he asked, his fingers gently massaging his father's neck.

"A few." Judd stopped filing and lifted his eyes from the glint on the axe edge to the land below the bluff. Darkness covered the fields now, but he could see pale grass and brush eating away all his fertile soil.

Chad reached over his father's shoulder and lifted the axe from Judd's lap. With a flip of his wrist, he buried it deep into a tree stump. The razor-sharp head burrowed into the wood. "You've got yourself quite a weapon there, dad."

"It's gotta be ready," he answered. "When I get out of this damn contraption, it's going to get a work out."

Chad turned the wheel chair around and headed slowly towards the house. "No sense bringing the cows in tonight. It won't rain," he said.

"Sure," Judd answered. Chad could not recall his father ever objecting to his methods. Still he knew Judd would run the farm differently. At first he had tried to copy the old man's ways, but now the farm was becoming a ghost of its former self. He could feel the deterioration others only saw. He opened the door and pulled his father in backwards. His movement was swift. His father's bigger size did not seem to exhaust him.

In the bedroom, Chad lifted Judd from the wheelchair. He went to the window and closed the shutters, cutting off the drift of cool air. He grabbed a clean rag and doused it into a bowl of cold water set on the bureau, squeezed it between his fingers, then walked over to his father, rubbing the moist cloth across Judd's face and neck, now wrinkled from age. Chad worked it

across shoulders and back, slumped from inactivity. He picked up his father's arm, first left then right, and rinsed off each hand, cracked from disuse.

Chad stripped the clothes from the old man and laid him lengthwise on the bed, covered him, and headed for the door. "See you tomorrow, dad. Another big day. OK?" He closed the door halfway, not waiting for an answer he did not expect. He started to unbuckle his belt, then stopped. He decided to go outside.

Reaching the woodpile, he gazed at the clouds. His expression was waxen, but the breeze made him sigh. "What a relaxing place," he reflected. "No wonder dad likes it here so much."

He could hear a horse and buggy approaching the water hole. He squinted his eyes to see it. A cowboy and a woman were barely visible until the buggy stopped. "Just waterin' the horse," he mumbled to himself. A feeling of guilt crept into his mind. The water hole had once been a busy place. The river, fashioning itself into a creek a short distance from the house, opened up into this water hole, then streamlined itself across the land. Travelers used to find it ideal for horses to drink and wade. They also had paused in amazement at the many acres of corn, wheat, and barley and the never-shrinking herd of cattle feeding on an abundance of grazing land.

Now, few folks found the extra delay worthwhile. Chad felt this. Suddenly the woodpile became Gethsemane. He grabbed the axe and laid a thick log in front of him. He swung and cursed; swung and cursed. His motion was rapid. "They'll be BACK." The wood splintered as he forced the blade deep. "Everyone of 'em." The axe arched over his shoulder. "And they'll stay." The swinging blade became oblivious of air. "They've GOTTA . . . for his sake." The words gushed out of his mouth, then he groaned aloud and let the blade stay fixed in the timber. His hands dropped to his knees to support his body. He breathed deep, then spit. His body was sweaty and mosquitoes were buzzing around it. He swatted one, then another. "Gotta get out of here," he said. His arms swung at the swirling buzzes like a blind man defending himself. He half ran into the house, stripped to his briefs, dumped them in a pile and plopped down on his cot.

The morning chill woke Chad, and he crawled slowly out of bed and dressed. Then he cooked breakfast and set it out on the table to cool while he got his father up. They ate mostly

in silence. Chad occasionally interrupted. "The rain's a blessing. Should perk up the corn." He glanced at his father, but his stare was not returned. Judd's eyes remained downcast, his expression unchanged.

Chad gulped the last of his coffee and took his plate and utensils to the sink to drop them into a pan. Then he wheeled the old man over by the fireplace to get warmer, and laid a farm journal on his lap. "It's still too chilly to sit outside, dad," Chad said as he put on his boots and jacket to leave. "You stay here by the fire while I get things going outside. I'll come get you when the sun comes out." Chad opened the door and quickly zipped his jacket to his throat. Thrusting his hands deep into his jacket pockets, he walked, head down, towards the barn. Suddenly, he caught sight of a figure on horseback turning in his direction. Chad stared hard at the approaching rider like someone not expecting a meeting.

"Howdy, Chad," the rider shouted, as he climbed off his horse and Chad returned his greeting.

"Wha cha doing in these parts, Clete?" Chad asked. The men shook hands. "Business can't be so bad you've come lookin' for it," Chad laughed as he spoke, his spirits lifted by the appearance of his old boss.

"No. Just thought I'd look ya up and see how you were makin' it," the man answered. "Y'er lookin' okay. How's your old man?"

Chad shrugged. "Give him time, Clete. He's a fighter."

The men stood silent looking into the stretches of land for their next statement. "Remember Mary, old lady Myer's daughter?" Clete asked. Chad nodded. "She had a baby."

"No kidding," Chad answered. "That's great."

"Yea. Now she's lookin' for a husband." Clete chuckled and stepped back from Chad's fist aimed at his shoulder in jest. "Can't expect people to change that much in a year's time," he added, laughing. "Come back with me, Chad." His tone became serious. "I'm losing business without you."

Chad's head dropped and he gazed at the moist dirt his

boots uncovered. "You've got John still," he said. "You're used to havin' just him to help."

Clete persisted. "He can't shoe a horse half as good or fast as you." He grabbed Chad's shoulder. "Come on! I want that extra business back. I'll make it worth your while. How about a percentage?"

Chad looked at Clete. "Always with the money," he smiled. "Must be a catch."

"There will be," Clete continued, "but give me time to think of one." Both men laughed at each other like poker players joking over each other's trickery.

"Can't," Chad said. "You know I can't now." Clete did not answer as their laughter changed to hesitant smiles. Clete nodded sheepishly and looked away.

"Gotta roll," Clete said, lifting his foot to the stirrup with an accompanying grunt. "This horse is getting too tall for my belly," he joked as he whirled onto the horse's back. Clete grabbed the reins, ready to jerk the horse away. "I'll get things ready for you," he said above the horse's snorts. "Even tell Mary you're coming back." He laughed, then spurred the horse. His hand waved like an invitation, as Chad watched him leave.

Chad strolled to the house. He stopped at the well and got a full bucket of water after refreshing himself. He found his father asleep in his chair. He geared his movement so as not to waken Judd. Too concerned with being silent, he became clumsy. The water bucket staggered a kitchen chair. The noise woke Judd. "What time is it?" he asked. The old man's body quivered as he yawned. "What did Clete have to say?"

"Nothin' much. Mostly gossip and some laughs," Chad answered. "I've come to get you outside."

"No hurry."

Chad walked out on the porch and grabbed his boots, banging them together till the half-dried mud broke off. He came back in and pulled the old man's blanket from a chair and tucked it around him. He held the door open with his toe and pushed his father out. They moved toward the woodpile.

"Can't beat the air after a rain, 'specially in summer,'" Chad said. "Cleans the air out. Picks ya up, hey, dad?"
The old man did not answer.

Chad stopped by the piled logs. He kicked a loose branch snug behind the back wheels. He grabbed the axe and laid it in the old man's lap. The file was stuck in the ground. Chad picked it up and slipped it into Judd's loose grip. "See you later," he said, as he turned towards the house.

"Chad." The old man's voice stopped him. He looked around. "Take me back," the old man muttered.

Chad's lips parted. He stood there silent and weighed his father's attitude. "Wha da you mean? Here . . . get the axe sharp." He reached down and placed his hands over his father's to start the filing. "Come on. I may need it tomorrow."

"I don't want to come here any more, Chad. Take me back."

Chad quizzed Judd's face before releasing his hands. They stayed limp. "Could be a lot of folk stoppin' by the hole today, dad," Chad chid him. "They'd be disappointed not seeing you up here." He bent again and started Judd's hands moving. "Now you . . ."

"Take me back!" Judd demanded. Chad could feel his father trying to keep him from moving his hands. "They must have other things to do," the old man snapped. "They can find their laughs somewhere else." He let his head drop like a small boy scorned.

Chad ran his fingers through his hair to the back of his neck. He let his arms drop loosely to his side. He took the file from Judd's hand and stuck it into the ground. He lifted the axe and stepped behind Judd to flip it into the stump. He ran his hand across the smooth handle, studying it. Suddenly, he slipped his hand together and took a short grip, as his back and arm muscles flexed. He lifted the axe and the blade came down quick and buried itself in Judd's skull. The old man dropped forward. The blade stayed fast like a tailored wedge, allowing only a trickle of blood to escape.

Chad looked down at the slumped figure before him. "I knew all along you didn't want to go in," he said. "Y'er strength is here." Calmly, he turned and went back to the house.

NEWSCAST

by Sandra McRoberts

"Keith, are you asleep?" Sally asked, running her hand over his bare chest, and then reaching toward the bamboo pole lamp. The light cast shadows across the brown walls and floor of the basement den, reflecting from a few of the shiniest books on the crowded shelves at the end of the room. The shadows grazed the walnut gun case close to the book shelves and cast a distorted image of the mounted buck's head across the bar stools opposite the day bed.

"No," he said, kissing her on the forehead. "Just thinking. This time tomorrow night, you'll be Mrs. Keith Wane. Sally! Your ring!" he said lifting the diamond from the dark brown pillow up to the light.

"My god! It must have slipped off my finger." She sat up, reaching out an expectant hand, then laid her head on his chest as she sighed. "I just can't believe it. Tomorrow!" Glancing at her watch, she sat up quickly. "My god, honey, it's almost here!" Sally swung her trim legs agilely over the side of the day bed.

"Excited?" Keith asked, rolling over on his side.

"Can't you tell?" Sally asked as her bare feet hit the fuzzy throw rug on the den floor. "Everything's going to be just perfect." She turned her green eyes, sparkling. "Want to catch the late news?" she asked, walking toward the television wedged into the wall between the bookcases.

"I suppose," Keith said as he swung his feet to the floor from his half raised position on the day bed. "Turn it on." He smoothed his short dark hair down on his forehead and listened.

"And now to the local scene," the news commentator read. "All people living in this area are warned to be on the alert for a man about forty years old, driving a 1962 Impala Chevrolet. This man is believed to be heading northwest along the river. He attacks lone drivers, especially women in rural areas and along deserted country roads. Most of his victims have been assaulted at night. So far he has attacked only such drivers, but we caution you. This man is armed and dangerous. He's wanted for murder, rape, and robbery in Tennessee, Illinois,

and now in Missouri. All information regarding this country killer should be given . . ."

"Turn it off!" Sally yelled. "It scares me to death."

"It's okay, dear. Forget it. You know nothing like that ever happens in this community."

Sally smiled and picked up her jacket. "I must get home."

Keith put his arm around her and they left the den, walking through Keith's basement recreation room and up the stairs into the kitchen. "Sorry I can't go with you. Gotta work. Anyway, you're taking my car, you know. It's fast, and if anyone gets too close, you can out run them."

Sally clung to him for a few moments, then walked toward the new convertible parked in the driveway. She backed the car out and turned onto the dark road.

In the rearview mirror she watched the lights of the town grow smaller. Approaching a bend where the highway curved sharply along the steep bluff, Sally frowned to see a car parked beside the road. She realized the car was not completely off the slab. But it was a very unusual and dangerous place to stop. Not slowing down, she pulled the convertible into the middle of the highway and zoomed past the parked car.

Peering into her rearview mirror, she tried to see what kind of car it was. A Chevy! It was a Chevy! But what model? It was . . . It was a 1962 model. But there was no one in it. Or was there? Sally tried to calm her nerves by humming a bit of a popular tune. Then she turned a knob on the radio panel in front of her.

". . . ATTACKS AT NIGHT, ESPECIALLY WOMEN TRAVELING ALONE. WE CAUTION YOU . . ."

Sally gasped and turned the radio off, at the same time gripping the wheel tighter and stepping down on the accelerator. She feared the deserted road she would have to travel after turning toward the river bottom.

Suddenly there were car lights behind her and Sally gripped the wheel even tighter as she swerved onto the blacktop which went down the hill into the bottom where she lived. Sally sighed and slowed down a bit when she saw that the lights were no longer behind her. She remembered that Keith had said nothing like that ever happened in this community. Anyway, there was no one behind her now . . . But what was that

ahead of her? Her body became tense as she peered into the darkness. Then two deer leaped gracefully across the ditch and disappeared into the timber at the side of the road. She laughed and relaxed a bit. They were such beautiful wild creatures.

Car lights again appeared behind her. Where did they come from so quickly? The deserted lake road? Whoever it was had probably been parked there and had seen her as she drove past. He couldn't help but see her. She was alone . . . and on a deserted road. What was she going to do?

Sally tried to reason, telling herself she had to settle down. Who would be behind her this late at night? She sped faster toward the graveled road. If the lights followed her then . . . then she would know, because no one else lived down the graveled road . . . no one except the Hiltons. And they never went anywhere at night.

The red convertible hit the graveled road, sending dust and gravel flying onto the blacktop which curved to the right. But the headlights still reflected in the rearview mirror. With a scream, Sally tromped the accelerator to the floor. For a split moment, she forgot impending danger as she felt the powerful car surge forward. Glancing into her rearview mirror, she was again seized with panic. The lights drew closer—faster, faster. The needle on the dashboard moved farther to the right . . . farther . . . farther . . . Her forehead was damp with perspiration; her hands were slick as she clutched the wheel. The lights were gaining, gaining. She must go faster, faster. But Sally had forgotten the ninety-degree curve ahead of her. She would have to slow down, yet the car was gaining. She could almost see evil eyes . . . the curve . . . this terrific speed . . .

She yanked the wheel, but the loose gravel was in control and the red convertible spun and swayed refusing to hold the flat curve. The car seemed balanced on the two left wheels, then suddenly crashed into a telephone pole at the side of the curve. It reared in the air, fell backwards, then came to rest on its right side. Both doors open, the top torn to pieces, the wheels still turning, the car began to burn . . .

Behind the rapidly burning Pontiac, a little sports car screeched to a halt, throwing gravel everywhere. A young man leaped from the car and ran toward the demolished convertible.

"Sally! Sally!" he cried, nearing the flaming car. There



Barbara
Crossart

was no answer. Through the light from the burning car, he saw a crumpled figure. He ran toward the body, just as a blue patrol car stopped beside the wreck. Unaware, Keith stood over the motionless body, his right fist clutching what seemed to lock it.

"She somebody you knew?" The officer asked, standing as quiet as Keith. The boy remained motionless, his fist still clenched. "I followed you," the officer continued. "You wanted to reach her?"

"Yes," Keith gasped. "She's . . ."

The night seemed to become darker and quieter. The burning car was the only sound. Then Keith said hollowly, "She was my fiancee." Unloosening his sweaty fingers, he pushed the ring on his palm toward the officer.

"What's this?" asked the officer. Then, reaching out a restraining hand, he added. "Put it away, son." Then, eyes on the ground, he almost shouted. "Wha . . .?"

"I should never have let her hear that newscast," Keith moaned, as the officer reached his hand to the slumping shoulders.

"You mean," began the officer, "you mean that killer?" Then, lowering his eyes to the crushed body, he gasped out, "He was captured right after the 12:30 newscast."

SOAP SWEET

by Henry Bornheimer

As soot ground under my hurrying shoes, the street came alive. I side stepped drunks, cursed sale carts, and ignored the sun where shadows came to meet me. I quickened my pace, leaving shouts of "hot tarts." Grimy apartments spouted children. Black boys drifted beside me, grinned, then turned to stray to games. I was relieved to see them chase after toys, broken and cheap, yet enough to make them gay. I sniffed changing smells and began to imagine apple blossoms, curtains and white sheets I would stick to and never abandon again in order to grapple too much with these ghettos, conditions and the sick. The sun on the road where I live reflects the heat, true and clean warmth. I find it a soap-smelling sweet.

BELL . . . OH, BELLA, BELLA!

by Gloria O'Rourke

From his table in the corner of Boar's Head Tavern, Silas could hear the church bells going bong . . . bong . . . bong . . . His body did not react, but hung limply over the table. He had forgotten he was Fair Bend's only grave digger and he had a job to do. He had forgotten his wife was dead and must be buried this morning.

"Hey, Silas, ya got that grave dug yet?" questioned ol' man Rugby, leaning his grey head across the bare table. "It's nine o'clock." Silas didn't answer but slowly moved his yellowish, dried hand over to the mug of ale, lifting it to his mouth. "She's dead. Sittin' there drowning your sorrow ain't gonna bring her back."

What a typical person Rugby was, Silas thought, how very typical. In fact, all the townspeople were typical. They thought you should be happy at weddings and sad at deaths. But Silas wasn't sad. He was happy . . . even if his wife was dead. He was happy and he didn't want to pretend he was sad.

"Poor Silas, he sure is down tonight. Too bad someone else in Fair Bend doesn't know how to dig graves. Poor thing! He has to dig his own wife's grave."

"Oh, hush," Silas said, half aloud, after trying to listen silently. "I don't need sympathy. I don't want it. I'm not sad." He fidgeted with the mug and finally decided he couldn't take it any longer. As he slowly pushed the chair back, he felt many pairs of eyes on him.

"Look! He's getting up . . .," said one in the corner, craning his neck.

"Do you think . . .?" asked his partner, nodding near.

"Poor Silas," came the chorus.

"Aw, shut up," he half muttered, "all of you. I don't need your pity." All of them had been sorrowful and had mourned more than he. Except for the town gossip, that is, squatting there with her red head above a brandy. She didn't mourn . . . No one believed her when she said Silas Humber was glad to be rid of Isabella. No one listened to her.

Silas staggered out of the tavern into the misty street. As he bent to pick up his shovel, the cold wind chilled him, causing his body to shiver. He hated that cold wind, because when he dug graves it blew dirt back into the hole. It also reminded him of death and he feared death. The shovel scraped along the gravel on the street walk as Silas struggled along. His dirty plaid work shirt hung loose on his body under the baggy blue overalls. The air was heavy and thick almost suffocating him. He wasn't drunk. He always knew when to stop drinking, but it had been a busy week and he was tired and sick of it. He dragged his slight skelton-like frame up to the top of the hill where the graveyard was. "Oh, God, whatta night to have to dig Isabella's grave. Why couldn't she have died in spring when the weather is nice, and the biting wind doesn't blow."

The moon was full and glaring enough for him to find his way scarily around the tombstones, but he couldn't remember where he was, so he just wandered around until he found a spot. There were others close by, so here Isabella would have plenty to talk to and plenty to nag. "God help you, Isabella." She had always found something to gripe about . . . always something. It was, "Silas, you forgot to chop the wood," or "Silas, you going to fix that board in the kitchen floor? You said you'd do it last week." "Did you pick up that calico I ordered?" Silas this, and Silas that. Never a peaceful moment. She made him tired and the more he thought about her nagging, the more tired he got. He dropped to the ground and lay in a heap under the old tree.

But he had her fooled. "Silas, if you didn't stay at that cemetery so much, you'd get some things done around here. And look at your clothes. Filthy! Your hands are calloused, and you look horrible. Why don't you have a decent job?" Night after night, it was the same thing, but Silas always had an answer. "Somebody has to do it. There's something about digging graves that . . . well, that I like."

"There's something about digging graves that you like?" she quipped. "You've said that for the past 36 years. It gives me the creeps to think about a dark, horrifying place like a graveyard. You must like death. You probably wish I were dead."

Little did she know. He did like to dig graves, because there was something about the graveyard that he liked. He could get away from Isabella and her nagging, because she never came

up there. The townspeople stayed away from the graveyard, too, so he could escape from their problems. Oh, blissful solitude!

It hadn't been that way for their entire marriage. He really had loved Isabella in the beginning and he still did, but they didn't understand each other. Over the years, they had grown farther and farther apart, and their differences were more numerous than they had been in the beginning. Oh, well! It was all over now. Whatta rat race the past week had been . . . the hunter bringing the body in from the marshes, and then the coroner's inquest. Going through all that questioning . . . "where was she going? . . . what was she doing . . . why . . . why . . . and so on . . ." Silas didn't know and didn't care.

"Isabella left to visit her sister two days ago," Silas had stated. "And I didn't see her until they brought the body in." And then he added, "I knew she was coming home, but she never arrived. Oh, God, please! Please help!"

The village gossip had been spreading around that she had seen Silas go into the swamp with Isabella. Then the hunter had been suggesting that Isabella had taken a short cut through the marshes on the way to her sister's house. Oh, clumsy Isabella! Stumbling on something and striking her head. Sounds just like her!

At a loss for a better explanation and not wanting to go into a lengthy investigation, everyone had agreed with the hunter, and officially Isabella's death had been recorded as accidental. No one wanted poor Silas to go through the miseries of a prolonged inquest. They knew it would be hard on him. Little did they know. Miseries . . . hah! He was never happier.

The church bells bonged again, so Silas knew he'd better get busy. He got up and started forward . . . he wanted this grave to be a good one. It had to be the right size and the right depth. Nothing could be wrong. Absolutely nothing!

The wind wailed again, whistling about him. He pulled his body together and picked up the shovel. As he tried to go forward, he realized his nerves had become dulled.

"Oh, God, why do I have to dig this grave? Why couldn't I dig it some other time."

That was two hours ago, now, by the church bells that rang out the hour of twelve. He stopped digging and looked up from

inside the grave. Some eight to nine feet above his head was the edge of the hole. "My God, what have I done?" In all his years of digging, he had never dug a grave too deep. Never.

He tried to jump for the side, but it was beyond his reach. Bracing himself on the walls of the grave, and reaching did not help. He was tired and his body was like rubber. That wind, that ungodly wind! It blew harder and longer. Dirt clogged his nostrils and he spit it from his mouth. He cried out in desperation. "My God. Won't somebody please help me? Help!" Yet he knew it was hopeless.

"If I rest for a moment, maybe I can make one last attempt. Oh God." Silas fell back and lay on the cold, damp soil. He was rid . . . of Isabella . . . He was rid of Isabella . . . He was . . . rid . . . of . . . Isabella . . .

All of a sudden, the wind blew hard and the dirt around the grave piled in on top of him. "If the wind blows enough dirt in, I'll be able to get out," he muttered. "For once, I like the ill wind. It's going to help me. I'm rid of Isabella. Thank you . . . thank you . . . thank you . . ."

The wind blew harder and harder and the dirt piled up thicker and thicker, and Silas didn't have the strength to move a muscle. He lay there and began to gasp for air. But it was too late. "That evil wind . . . I'm rid of Isabella . . . I know I won't die . . . I can't . . . I'm rid of Isabella . . ." Tears billowed into his eyes. "I'm cold . . . It's cold out here. God, don't let me die. No please. I'm sorry. No . . . please . . . nooo." The wind just kept on blowing.

". . . ashes to ashes and dust to dust . . ."

"Poor old Silas. I guess he just couldn't face his own wife's funeral. Probably out crying somewhere."

"I can't blame him."

"He loved her so much. But his job was so demanding."

"He's gonna be awfully lonesome now. Too bad they'll never be together again. Ya know, I can remember in 1732 when . . ."

THE FACE OF EAST

by John C. Thacker

It had been a particularly bad night for flying. The winds had been of high velocity and the torrential rains of the monsoon season in Malaya had kept visibility to a bare minimum. A cold numbness swept Rick Mason as he hurriedly walked across the field. It had been his fourth straight night on the job since Earle Litton, owner of Litton Transports, Ltd., had given him the job. He had a slight sensation of nausea as he approached the airlines office. After he had filled out the customary flight report, he swung his leg wearily up into the Jeep and drove off.

As he drove along and watched the raindrops head up and race down the windshield he felt as if he were aging much quicker than time would dictate. An ironic thought if he had ever heard one. What was his age? He didn't even know. He had no home except a small orphanage in Illinois that had cared for him after a nameless woman had left him to fate and providence. Even his name had been chosen at random. He had often asked himself why had he chosen Malaya to work in. Experience? Well, perhaps, but at this time of night with no one to feel for or to feel for him, he found no logical explanation. Perhaps the only thing that would relieve his loneliness and pent up emotions was to get slightly drunk.

The only bar open was a little place called the Reef. In a few short weeks that Rick had been in Malaya, he had spent many evenings there staring into his customary drink. The bartender was a good listener and had an especially jovial face which Rick had found spirit-lifting.

As he walked into the small bar, the bored bartender came alive, raising an eyebrow in lazy recognition. As Rick ordered, he wiped remnants of rain from his face with the palms of his hands. He leaned back against the booth and pulled the flight cap down over his eyes. Mentally, emotionally, and physically he was dead to the world.

He had almost dozed off when the bartender woke him. As he slowly sat up to receive his drink, he saw her walk in. Immediately he sat up as if confronted by an apparition. The tall girl walked past Rick, not seeming to notice him. His eyes followed her as she chose a table in the rear of the bar. A hint of perfume hung in the air, caressing Rick's nostrils. Jasmine? He wasn't sure.

She looked to be about twenty-six and had honey-brown hair that framed her shoulders. The dim light in the Reef gave her animation. Her small mouth was set in a thoughtful pout and her brown eyes were cast downward to a cup of steaming coffee. She seemed to be either reminiscing or considering an important decision. He noticed she wore fashionable clothes that complemented her body. She seemed very cool in this steamy climate and he sat transfixed.

He sipped his drink and mulled over the incidents of the last few moments. This was the first American girl he had seen in Malaya since he had been there. He breathed deeply and made his decision. He picked up his drink and walked somewhat hesitantly toward the girl's table.

"Buy you a drink?"

With a slight nod of her head the girl replied, "I guess that would be all right."

"This monsoon season takes a lot of getting used to," said Rick breaking the moments of silence.

"Yes, it is unpleasant," replied the girl.

"How long have you been in Malaya?" asked Rick.

"Just a few days. I've been on vacation and this is my last stop," answered Linda.

"Where are you from?" asked Rick.

"Bridgeport, Connecticut, was my home until the fire took the house and my family away from me," responded the girl solemnly.

"I'm sorry to hear that," replied Rick trying to sound consoling, "How did it happen?"

"I was at choir practice when it happened and was the one who discovered the fire. But it was too late to do anything about it," related the girl. "I'd rather not talk about it any more," she said as a tear slowly stained her cheek.

"If you're not doing anything tomorrow night, may I take you to dinner and then sight-seeing?" asked Rick.

"No, I don't think that would be possible; I have a very important appointment tomorrow evening," answered the girl. "Thank you very much anyway for asking me."

I didn't know anything could be that important," he muttered and caught the light in her eyes as he made the admission.

From the shadowed doorway, a sinister looking man emerged and took up a place in the shadows. He was short, very dark, and his unpleasant face branched an irregular scar which gave his mouth a mock-smile. He was dressed in the soiled white suit characteristic of the tropics. His eyes searched the dim light of the Reef until they fell upon a man sitting in the far corner. The man he was watching was still wet from the rain. He was extremely large and had an almost featureless doughy face, accentuated by a dark shock of wet hair that hung over his left eye. He was sipping a brandy and wasn't aware of the little man observing him. The small man stepped into a doorway and extracted a crumpled newspaper clipping from his pocket. He scanned the photo closely, then shifted his gaze to the fat man, turned to look at the big clock over the door and then at his own wrist watch. The small man felt a nervous chill and then smiled to himself. He looked carefully around to assure himself that he was not being watched. From his pocket he took an object wrapped carefully in a handkerchief. Slowly he unwrapped it and inspected it until he was satisfied. Then he stepped into the doorway, pulled the pin, and tossed the hand grenade toward the man at the bar.

The sound of the explosion had been the last conscious thing Rick Mason had remembered until he awoke in the hospital eight days later. All he could learn of the girl was that she had helped to nurse the injured long into the night.

It had been eighteen months since he had left that hospital. Always when he was in a crowd or sitting alone in a small bar he would sub-consciously look for her face. Since the first time he had regained consciousness, the girl had never returned. No one could remember where she had said she was going or produce any other useful information Rick would need in order to find this girl, Linda East. He had gone back to his flying duties with the airline and always suppressed as best he could the inclination to spend every moment thinking of her or attempting to look for her.

Rick took a deep breath and straightened his shoulders. No more would he hate life because he would leave this life he hated. He got up, walked out to the door of the quonset hut office of Litton Transports and stepped inside. The pressures within Rick Mason had pushed him to leave Malaya, and leave he must. He was tired of marking time in a backward hell-hole of humanity and soon it would be over.

The night when he emerged to it again was clear and

warm. The wind was from the south and was leisurely engulfing him in a bath of tropic scents. He leaned against a hangar and pulled out a cigarette. He knew he had to leave and when he heard the distant rumble of his airliner, he felt his time had come. He discarded the spent cigarette and grabbed his flight bag in restless anticipation of the trip. As the airliner taxied up near the hangar, Rick had a distinct feeling of regret. Now it was over. Malaya would soon be a memory and the numbing pain of emotional set-backs was already beginning to subside. He took his last lungfull of tropic air and boarded the plane.

The warmly lighted fuselage was in harsh contrast to the blackness of the night. His eyes ached for a second and then started to focus. Rick Mason began walking up the aisle savoring the feeling that the rich red carpet gave his feet. He chose the only unoccupied seat in the plane. He wondered whether a person would refuse to sit next to a nun because of nervousness, or for prejudice against a particular religion. He smiled to himself at the emotional inadequacies of today. He was very tired and mentally spent. He was looking toward a long, long rest.

As Rick seated himself next to the nun, she turned her face toward him. It had been previously hidden by the starched prison of her habit. In shrieked surprise the nun placed her hand over her mouth and her brown eyes began to scream with emotion. Rick Mason's heart leapt, then died as he returned her stare. At last he had found the face of East.

The airliner gathered its strength and slowly climbed into the night-time sky, leaving Malaya far behind.

WINTER

by Linda Barney

The rain against the window panes
Washes residues of your nearness
From my vision or view.
I only hear shutters in the wind,
And watch the fire's dulling glow,
And wonder
As day passes like your presence,
And fear penetrates
Dusk.

Are you with her tonight?
How far have you gone
And will you return?
Hope is the lingering light on a globule of rain,
And dawn will return with an older sun
As night grows colder.

VIETNAM, LAND OF BEAUTY AND UGLINESS

by Sally Rasmussen

Great towering mountains and vast lowland plains; verdant jungle and brown barren dunes; fields of waving rice paddy and almost impenetrable forest; a people so charming, so courteous, so exquisite, so delicate, yet so cruel, so vulgar, so coarse, so merciless—these are impressions which Vietnam presents to the western world. It is a land of beauty alongside of ugliness, of virtue wedded to vice.

Vietnam is a nation divided, cut in two geographically by the 17th parallel, cut in two spiritually by the doctrines of communism and freedom, cut in two mentally by the finest blend of the cultures of India, China, France, and America in stark outline against the most primitive of aboriginal villagers and mountagnards.

Brother fights against brother, father against son, family against family, north against south, east against west. It is enough to make a god weep. Love is so strong that children are a joy, yet indifference is so great that one can pass by and do nothing to ease suffering; and hate is so powerful that the killing and maiming of bystanders, and innocent people is a daily occurrence.

There are beautiful villas on broad, tree-lined streets, carefully nurtured gardens, lovely vistas of beach, pond, and countryside, while nearby is almost indescribable filth and squalor in chaotic jerry-built shacks and on crooked muddy lanes with garbage everywhere.

Odors? In Vietnam, they can be the most exotic in the world, deliciously fragrant, clean and fresh, from flower and forest, yet the stench of drainage canals, of "moc man" decayed fish sauce, of excrement and garbage is nauseating. A fetid smell of biological wastes pervades the air of downtown Saigon.

The climate, hot and hotter, is enough to sweep the American off his feet. He copes with his inconvenience by a well air-conditioned house supplied to him by the government but the Vietnamese are used to the overwhelming heat and the frequent ten minute rainfalls. An everyday "siesta" period between twelve and two p.m., makes life bearable for the Vietnamese

townsmen as they close up shop and curl up or sprawl out upon sidewalks and streets for an afternoon nap.

Visualize the sights and sounds of the Orient! Lovely girls and women wear the Ao-dai, the traditional Vietnamese dress, of white lustrous trousers topped by a colorful sheer shirt that has two panels, one front and one back, hanging almost to the ground. These billow and flutter in the slightest breeze. Dainty feet are enclosed in gorgeous lacquered sandals. Often parasols of blue or rose filter a colored light upon towering hair buns. If the Vietnamese woman is a young girl, her black lustrous tresses fall about her shoulders. She is petite, slim, narrow-waisted, with a small bustline. Vietnamese girls appear to be dressed either for a party or for bed. Some wear pajamas as daylight attire. The peasants wear black.

Vietnamese men wear western business clothes in the city, or peasant black pajamas in the country. The soldiers in combat wear mottled, green and yellow, camouflaged uniforms which blend with the jungles of the hamlets. The high school boys affect long hair, peg-trousers and fast motorbikes. The Vietnamese man is slight in stature, wiry and tough. Some of the boys are handsome, but others have round, flat noses, bad complexions, broad lips, and squint eyes.

Women run the household and order their docile men about. On the other hand, the men are allowed considerable license for pleasure. Marital vows are given a liberal interpretation.

The humble Vietnamese housemaid treats the large American like a king. She tediously cleans house by polishing and dusting, leaving each room in an immaculate condition. She cooks extravagant meals and uses many French recipes, spices, and seasoning. She gives the "monsieur" a good massage, relaxing his muscles after a hard day's work. She irons and starches his shirts, presses his pants and polishes his shoes. After a long day, she retires to her dilapidated home to care for a houseful of children.

The Vietnamese drink little alcohol. They do use drugs of which betel nut chewing is popular. This nut makes the mouth red and acts as a mild depressant. Some of the older women have their teeth lacquered black. When they chew red betel nuts, their mouths look like the red-black entrance to Dante's Seventh Circle of Hell.

Vietnamese is a tonal language, highly sing-song, and



monosyllabic. It is very difficult for westerners to pronounce, because the slightest change of inflection changes the word, and the meaning. Yet it is an expressive language, and the only Oriental language that has been cast in a western alphabet.

The majority of the Vietnamese are Buddhist. This means that by renouncing the passions of life, they can achieve serenity. It is a fatalistic philosophy that results in indifference to the sufferings of others. A minority of the Vietnamese are Roman Catholic. They are fervent and progressive, dogmatic and strict. Almost all Vietnamese go back fundamentally to ancestor worship. A small altar or shrine in the living room venerates a departed father or mother. The spirits are real to them.

If the reader is confused by this conflicting account, he has finally begun to understand the Vietnamese, just as I began vaguely to understand them after spending the summer of 1964 in Saigon.

THE COURSE

by Kip AtLee

Softly the moon drifts on its accustomed path
Through the heavens.

Soothing summer air carefully enfolds me
In its mystery

Gently swelling waters flow about my feet
Sifting the silent sands.

Cardinal flames surround salted driftwood
With joy, arch skyward
And kindle the stars.

The expiring moon crawls on its belly
Across the gangrenous sky.

The putrid air insinuates its sickening breath
Into my tired nostrils.

The sullent water emits a venomous hiss
As it sucks the sand from beneath
my feet.

The anemic ashes throw out a faint flicker,
Smolder,
And are dead.

Time cuts its callous course
Through dreams and hopes,
Leaving a bitter burden of remorse
And mocking memories.

IN SCARLET CLOAK

by Kathy Fisher

The world in scarlet cloak of hate
defiles itself and shames the face
of God, if such a power exists,
who carved mankind in bitterness.
Men created from the dust

cry, "Hang him, burn him,"—righteousness,
Brothers all, in word not deed,
scream, "Follow us, FREEDOM, our creed."

Freedom how, for whom, for what?
me not you, mine not yours, but
tolerance and control, we demand you display.
Equality is yours, tomorrow not today.

Such is mankind, how proud we must be
of what we've become, "humanity."
People so proud, so kind, so just
in dispensing cruelty, fed by lust.

AGE

by Tina Mancini

At what moment
Did the moss first begin its creep
Up from among the dampened stones?
The rotting shutters creak, conscious
Of even the weight of green velvet
As it envelops the rusty hinges
Hanging threadlike to the rain-softened framework.
Sunlight streams forth
Through straw trees.
They gulp the warming light and swallow,
Soaking in rays from the spring of life
Which never reach the house,
Bared by the hand of time.
The wind with a desperate sob
Hides within woven grass.
To rain-rotten beams and stick trees,
To wooden bones,
We fasten our eyes to what was.
On paneless windows,
Powdery with splinter dust,
Tiny raindrops fall and burst.
With each explosion, times shows its face.

". . . NO MATTER HOW TALL . . ."

by Richard Lee

Barry Donovan sat in the locker room very much alone. It had been almost two months since the nineteen-year-old had inked his name on a contract to play the 1966 baseball season with the Kansas City Athletics. Barry's father, "Big Mike" Donovan, the Hall of Fame outfielder of the St. Louis Cardinals, had always wanted Barry to be a ballplayer. Barry liked the idea but now that the die was cast, he was scared. His father had been one of the greatest players in the history of the game. "Big Mike" still held many hitting records, especially in the home-run category. The only thing Barry could think about was keeping the Donovan name the big one in baseball.

The locker room door opened. The chunk figure walking through the shadows was that of Don Blake, the A's veteran catcher. "Hi ya, kid! You're kinda early, ain't you?"

"Yeah, Mr. Blake, I was a little nervous about the game."

"Don't worry, kid. The first game of the season is no different from the rest."

Barry knew that Don Blake could speak with authority. Don had been catching the first game for the Athletics for the last thirteen years. He wasn't a great ball player but was dependable and smart when it came to handling pitchers. When Barry thought that Don had once played against Barry's father, his thoughts returned to the problem at hand. Then he thought of his mother. All she had wanted was Barry's happiness.

A commotion at the back of the locker room interrupted Barry's thoughts. The boisterous blustering voice was that of Ed Richert, baseball's most talented and most disliked pitcher. Ed was a perennial twenty-game winner and a perennial fifty-friend loser. He was brash and conceited. He knew he was indispensable in the A's plans and he let everybody know it. What was even worse, he didn't like Barry. "Hi, Fatso!"

"Hi, Ed," said Don half-heartedly.

"You're gonna have to lose some weight, Fatso, if you want to catch my fast balls." Finding himself ignored, Ed turned his remarks to Barry just as Don finished tying his shoes and headed for the field. Barry had to face Ed by himself. "Hey, Greenhorn, don't you know how to put on a uniform? Maybe you're afraid someone will see your diapers. Is that it, Greenhorn?"

"No sir, Mr. Richert. I just . . ."

"Oh well," interrupted Ed, "it doesn't make any difference. The only reason you're here is because you're Mke Donovan's kid."

Barry winced. His fears were confirmed. That was the only reason the A's wanted him. He couldn't play now. He couldn't let his father down. There was only one thing to do, Barry thought. "I've got to call Dad and tell him I can't go through with it." As he walked to the phone, his mind whirled. His beloved game of baseball was nothing but a big business. They had paid him twenty-thousand dollars and all they wanted was his name.

When he reached the phone, he dialed hurriedly. "Mom," he gasped, "this is Barry. I've got to talk to Dad."

"Okay, Barry. Wait a second."

Barry knew what his dad would say. Maybe that was what he needed—a good old fashioned chewing out.

"Dad, they don't want me," Barry explained, as soon as he heard his father's voice. "They just want your name, your reputation and your crowd appeal. They got me to represent you and Dad, I'm not Hall of Fame material."

"You've been talking to Richert, haven't you, son?"

"Yes, Dad. But I knew the truth before Mr. Richert told me."

"Barry, Richert doesn't know the truth and neither do you. The A's bought a ball player—not a name. It wasn't my name that led the International League in home runs last year. That was you. Now you get out there and play ball and don't expect me to come down there and pamper you either. I'll talk to you after the game. Good bye."

The phone went dead in Barry's hand. He had been chewed out just as he expected, but he felt better. Maybe, just maybe Ed Richert was wrong. At any rate, Barry felt that he was ready to play now. As a matter of fact, he felt good enough to finally talk to the newspaper men. After all, his hometown paper should know how he felt.

Barry walked across the locker room to the pressroom.

Much to his disappointment, there was only one reporter there. Barry recognized his old friend, Steve Sears, the ageless sports reporter of the **St. Joseph Gazette**. Barry also recognized the man Steve was talking to. It was Allen Knight, the A's field manager. Barry listened to the interview.

"So, Mr. Knight, you don't plan to start Donovan today?"

"Not in the first game of the season, Steve. Maybe he will break in later on but today, I want experience on the field."

"Will Donovan play at all today?"

"If we get a good lead he may see a little action. The fans would get a kick out of seeing Mike Donovan's kid."

Barry turned and walked away. He had heard enough. It had started all over again. However, it was too late to call home this time. The game was due to start in five minutes. Barry wiped his eyes and headed up the runway. As he walked, his fears grew with the roar of the crowd. When he was almost to the top of the runway, he could see the right field stands. Not a seat was empty. Barry decided there must be at least 25,000 people out there. To him, each of those 25,000 represented an executioner and they were all after him. Barry stepped onto the field. A decided murmur ran through the crowd. Behind him, Barry heard the voice of a father explaining to his son, "Look Johnnie, that's Mike Donovan's son."

Barry winced again. "So that's the way it's going to be," he thought. "Well I guess I'll have to live with it." Barry walked to the dugout and took a place on the farthest left end of the bench. Soon he was lost in self-centered pity. Barry hardly noticed the game unfolding in front of him.

The A's had taken an early lead when Don Blake doubled with a man on second making the score one to nothing. A pitcher's duel evolved between Ed Richert of the A's and Jim Peters of the Tigers. In the seventh inning Ed Richert gave up a two-run homer to Jerry Pace. With the score two to one in favor of the Tigers, the A's were in trouble and no one was more aware of the fact than Allen Knight. Knight had already decided to send a pinch hitter in for Richert in the A's half of the ninth inning. However, the great manager couldn't decide who the pinch hitter should be. When the ninth inning came, the lead-off batter was Don Blake. The chunky catcher brought the A's fans to their feet when he slammed a double off the left field wall. The next batter, Billy Reynolds, went down on strikes. That brought Ed Richert to the plate. Quickly, Allen

Knight scanned his bench for a pinch hitter. Down at the end, he spotted Barry. The decision was made.

"Donavan, grab a bat and get up there for Richert!"

Barry fairly flew off the bench. He tripped over a batting helmet and fell up against the batrack. "B . . . but Mr. Knight. I . . . I . . ."

"Here is the situation, kid. We're down one run. If Blake scores, it's a tie game with the top of our order coming up. Just get on and bring Don around if you can."

Barry hitched his belt and grabbed a helmet and a bat. He stepped out of the dugout swinging a regular bat and two weighted fungo bats. He was scared. Not just scared, but panic-stricken. The fans began a rhythmic staccato clapping. They were hungry for a rally and an A's victory. Barry knew if he struck out it would be all over for him in baseball. It would make fools out of the A's front office and manager Knight. He had to come through. He had to live up to the Donavan name and hopefully make a name for himself.

Barry stood outside the batter's box. He picked up some dirt and sifted it through his fingers. Nervously, he tossed the fungo bats away and stepped into the box, tapping the dirt from his spikes. He took his stance, swung the bat a couple of times and gazed out at the pitcher. Peters looked in for the sign. He picked it up and went into his motion. The pitch split the plate but Barry didn't even budge.

"Strike one!" bellowed the umpire.

Barry took another practice swing and dug in to wait for the next pitch. Peters wound up and fired the ball plateward. Barry stepped back as the umpire indicated a second strike. Suddenly, Barry was back in the International League. These were his fans and his park. He was playing baseball. Full of confidence, he stepped back in the box. Peters' pitch came in high and hard. Barry swung and connected. He met the ball well and smiled his approval. The ball soared majestically toward the center field seats. Slowly, it began to drop. Finally it disappeared behind the bleachers 480 feet away for a home run.

Barry's big hit won the game for the A's. As he trotted around the bases, he watched the fans yell and scream and cheer. The cheers were for him and not his name. He was an individual now. Barry looked into the A's dugout.

All the players were on their feet cheering, but Barry only saw two faces. Allen Knight and Ed Richert were laughing and cheering for Barry Donavan, whose father used to play ball too.

FREEDOM AMONG THE MILLIONS

by W. K. Maxwell

Shrouded in its consecrated mist,
The tutelary deity stands suspended.
Suspended from the life that revolts
Below, neglect of its duties, as if
It were dead.
Though warm and copious its veins
Do flow, the god is untouched by
The plight of its charge.
Yet yielding with its disconcert the
Right to learn, to love, to feel
Untouched by its cacophony of raving
Thoughts within.

I AM BORN AGAIN

by Cheryle Powell

I am born again:
Out of the depths of despair,
From the hands of evil and sin,
To the quiet celestial expanses.
My mind knows no reason:
And weariness hangs over
The vast opaque chamber
While a fervent rapture embodies my being.
Hark! What rides the yardage
Towards my form?
The scourage of mankind descends the hill
Seeking his rakish puppet.

HAIKU

1

Rock, string, bird egg, knife;
he lays them on the sod . . . his
treasures of the earth.
—Karen Durham

2

Crowding and pushing,
narrow sidewalks—from above,
myriad snowflakes fall.
—Sandra McRoberts

