

CORADDI

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April 1978

CORADDI

April 1978

Spring Arts Issue

the university of north carolina

at greensboro

CREDITS

This issue of the *Coraddi* contains the winning works from the 1978 *Coraddi* Spring Arts Contest. Many thanks are given to Bob Watson, Fred Chappell, Julius Tobias, and Richard Lamb who acted as the judges for the four respective categories of Poetry, Fiction, Art, and Photography. Hearty congratulations are extended to the contest winners and those individuals receiving honorable mention. As this is the last issue of *Coraddi* for the '77-78 academic year all artists are encouraged to keep the magazine in mind and be prepared to submit at the beginning of next year.

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Coraddi is the fine arts magazine of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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Published by Triad Graphics
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Bowed Heads

Pamela Nately Donnel

1st place fiction

I do not like to think of feelings in the past but I was very deep into the “body” of those days at ‘the mill’. I was employed at the mill. The mill was a place of sweat-whipping exertion, cursing, dirt, ignorance, comics, feigned intelligence, and irritable bosses who treated their employees like kids; even the grown men. Then again, some of the bosses were kind; two, I think.

When I would walk into the mill, a scent of salt would immediately swarm about me, then fade. The floor was wooden and slick. I could feel the lint of the air bathe my face. Walking on through the mill I would pull off my coat and keep it pressed against my side so that the coat tails would not get caught up in a machine and snatch me into it. I’d think about how I would be embarrassed rather than think about how the snatch of the machine could kill me.

I’d walk down past the first row of hammering slubber machines which prepared the cotton for weaving. They would be twisting in a full circle with a speed which made them seem to stand still. Then a twist would go wrong or a strand of cotton would lose its control and cotton would be stroked out into the air and the first layer of wasted cotton would

pile upon my clothes and form a slope down from my sternum, down my breasts and onto my stomach with trails of the industrial snow landing on my blue jeans.

There was an intersection where the main floor joined. This passage led to the weaving rooms, the lunch room, dye house, and boss men’s offices. I’d stop at the intersection, look to the left and right to see what I could and then continue walking until I reached the “women only” door of the restroom and push the filthy door open.

The swampy filth. Thick, dusty odors. No air; air is something you need, you did not need this. Toilet seats not to be sat upon. Benches to secretly nap upon. Sanitary napkins on racks, sandwiches on racks, coats on hangers, racks on racks, lotion-soap, magazine remnants and the like. I’d hang up my coat and be sure to breathe through my nose so the air could be filtered and then leave the restroom for the mill floor.

You were required to wear a breath mask and ear plugs; ear plugs to decrease the noise pollution, of course; there was a constant noise which masked out all other sounds; human sounds.

After picking up my breath mask I’d go see an acquaintance of mine named, Estroy, so called, he

joked, because as a child he would rummage through his home and practically 'estroy everything. Estroy worked on the first shift like me. He would always kid around with me in the mornings before the whistle blew. I did not know what to think about Estroy. If I spoke about something of a serious nature to him, he'd immediately make jokes and tell me about silly things he had observed on the job that struck him funny. Also, he never touched me or even tried. I feel that strangers tend to touch you more than your friends as if reaching for a connection. Because he never touched me, I thought maybe he did not think much of himself. I thought he thought that I was above him, or, he felt strongly that we were very different from each other. He was a full time worker there, and I was part time, a college student. His manner often assured me that he wanted to be much closer to me. If I would move close to his face to speak over the noise without shouting he would almost quiver with strain to not move a breath.

Whenever I'd leave him and say "good-bye," he'd always say, "o.k.," as if he meant "I suppose you can leave now." Never would he say "good-bye." Not since the first day I spoke to him. I helped him, voluntarily, to fix a malfunctioning machine once and we began to talk.

On the "spare hand" floor,

which was located on the main floor, the extra work was assigned to the spare hands. There were long yellow rails sectioning off the main floors' passageway and bordering it. The men and I would lean up against the rail and secure our behinds on the surface and look like we were seated comfortably but even though the rails were round they caused indentions in the heavy seats of our pants.

I was the only girl there. 5' 11" and 165 pounds; I felt like one of the guys. They all looked so tired. Even the young men looked worn out. I suppose I really did feel like one of the guys except I wore clean clothes every day and there was the forty C exposure from my chest. The guys would stare at me, pass by and stare, smile, stand in front of me, make me ill, and so on. Most often they would speak. All the noise and the breath mask made me want to abstain from speaking. I did not want to feel obligated to pull the mask down, smile and speak and replace the mask, even if the mask was thin and only covered my mouth and the tip of my nose; enough to cover my nostrils. I wanted them all to leave me alone. Except, Mark Saunders. Mark Saunders was the bright coin. He was the man who looked like he had just arrived from some court of Roman Soldiers to tease and inspire without uttering a word. He always looked as if he were just born. I saw the lint in the air part and let him

through. I saw other eyes watch him walk by on the main floor. My "care" for him was stark and the aura I saw when I thought about him was a terrible red. He was an electrician and wore a yellow hard hat that had his last name, Saunders, on the back; I made up the name Mark. He wore plaid structured, deep colour, maroon-black shirts with bleach white T-shirts beneath. His hair was raven-wing cut and thick layered. His stature was like a shy-bull; head cast down. He was my height as well, but built. His complete body was bold. His arms were strong and large. His face was olive coloured. His eyes were dark, large circles. His nose was Romanesque and sharp. When first I saw him, over the summer, nine months ago, I was not attracted to him but bit by bit by lapse of time not seeing him on certain days to being jolted by suddenly seeing him, with his head bowed, seemingly shy, untouchable, biting the edge of his bottom lip as if he had the insight of a prophet, or, as if he were supposed to report back to God after one year, I increasingly wanted to see him and I became attracted to him. I never spoke to him. He would walk by and I would try to act as if he were not there. I felt embarrassed. I knew he had felt my eyes before and it hurt me to be despised by him for liking him.

One morning in particular, I remember, I had seen him coming

and I tried to prepare myself but my body tightened and my mind "made" me feel anger. When I glanced at him I saw that faint blush on his face from his bowed head. I felt him pass by and my chest heaved and the anger left.

It was a good day when I would be assigned to "run drawings;" four machines which should run constantly as much as human tolerance would allow. They should be attended to constantly in order to fill five foot cans with ropes of cotton and I'd run them hard. Many men were lunch room mongers and restroom-space renters; gone for long periods of time in the day. Sometimes I would run the machines so hard I could almost imagine hearing the men cursing behind their masks calling me a show-off, stupid, and wide-hipped.

Sometimes Estroy would watch me for a while from afar and then slowly come to me and say things like, "don't work so hard." His voice would be soft and half flighty, non-concerned and yet partially serious. Sometimes he would come over too often and I'd get irritated and once I cursed him. "Bastard," I think I called him. Estroy trailed off, head hung. I suppose I would have thought about Mark Saunders right then. Why? When I had first seen both of them, at different times and places, they both had mustaches and some time later they had both shaved

them off but why did I think of Saunders right then? I think because Mark's head is usually bowed. Estroy's head was hung as if he had just been lynched. There was such a difference there. Mark's bowed manner made him seem to be "expecting" something. I suppose I had hurt Estroy but he had always presented himself to me as if he could not feel.

As Estroy left, I felt strong, tough for stepping on him. I turned quickly from a machine I had just handled with a masculine air and looked up into the eyes of Mark Saunders. His head bowed when I looked at him and the corners of his lips turned up like a blush. I rolled my eyes past him in embarrassment which I clothed in a look of disgust. I rammed my fist into a cotton can, intentionally, in order to cloud my rationale even more. I called myself a bastard, an ugly bastard, and kept my eyes cast down to the floor as much as I could for the remainder of the day.

The next day I saw him approximately four minutes after the whistle blew. He had not put on his hard hat and his hair was fully revealed. It was important to me to see his full head exposed without anything man-made touching it. He was dressed in a blue jacket, blue jeans, and a plaid shirt which I could partially see through the unbuttoned top of his jacket. His hands were in his jacket pockets and his head was bowed. He walked

slow and as far away from me as possible. He relayed, through hardly a breath of information, that he realized that I was there watching him. But I was not watching him. I was too afraid.

For my infatuations I could have bound volumes with detailed explanations on "why." This infatuation was different. For the first time I wanted to hate the one I wanted. The more I thought on it the more I knew that I had to exclude Mark Saunders from my mind. Sometimes I would think that while he would be working on a malfunctioning electrical unit on some controlling component in the mill that he would get electrocuted and die. I'd say aloud, "I wish he would die" and then I'd think, "no, be careful, Mark."

Estroy and I had reconciled. All he had to do was say "hello," smile, and say something funny and I'd brighten up. I think I should have said . . . I'm sorry.

Estroy came up to me and asked me to have lunch with him; it was the first time he had ever invited me to anything. I began walking with him. We walked the long way around the "carding" machines. I was glad to go that way because I felt Mark Saunders would not come that way. Estroy stopped for a moment and spoke to someone who ran "drawing" machines. He, Estroy, checks the quality of the cotton. His job is sort of special and above mine; position wise. He

always remained clean. That was important to me. Saunders was always clean, too.

Estroy was Jewish and I suppose quite nice looking. I suppose I never noticed it before.

He talked to a man and never made a joke nor smiled. Maybe I had never seen him with anyone else before. He spoke to this man with an authoritative voice. His stance was half facing me and half facing the man he was talking to. His eyebrows shifted to the rhythm of his voice. At the end of his conversation he looked at me as if to say, "I'm capable of handling people."

We both decided to go to the electrician's station house and buy canned cokes rather than the ones in the lunchroom which were in paper cups. We walked outside.

"When do you go back to school?" He asked me this without looking at me.

"Next week," I answered.

"I'll miss you. I wish your spring break were longer. You make me laugh." He smiled. He lied.

There was a railroad track that led from the dye house to about 18 feet up to another section of the mill. It was foggy outside and the railroad tracks made me feel like Estroy was a lyric artist of the 1960's and that I was a strange friend he hung around with so that his publicity would be speckled with oddity and boost his popularity. This thought made me

disregard him and instead I thought about Simon and Garfunkel, and "Homeward Bound" and "Sounds of Silence." I saw factory songs written on "New York Times" pages and heard photographs of War Countries flip from page to page. I thought about Phil Ochs and . . . then I thought about Phil Ochs's protest songs and then his suicide and then about Mark Saunders. They I would think about Prophets and Protesters united. I'd follow that thought with Saunders and Estroy united. Saunders and Estroy united made no sense to me right then.

Suddenly I looked up at Estroy and said, "I'd like to call you sometime." He smiled.

We were at the electrician's station house and I opened the door for myself before Estroy could do it for me.

The station house was dim lit and cool inside. There was a large long table there with chairs and an office on the right side of us. We turned to the left toward the entrance of the room where the electrical equipment was kept, and the coke machines. Estroy had just said something funny. I was laughing and entered the room. There stood Mark Saunders alone. He was at the coke machine with an assortment of coins in his hand. He looked up at me and I, realizing that I had removed my breath mask before I left the carding room, turned my head to hide my face. I

looked at Estroy and sighed.

"What's wrong?" Estroy asked me. "Hi," was the next thing he said as he looked at Saunders.

"Hello." Saunders responded.

I could sense stark irritation in me and non-chalance in Saunders.

"You on a lunch break?" Estroy asked Saunders as he got closer to him.

"No." Mark Saunders felt my eyes. He bowed his head and a small smile appeared. His eyes moved slowly, his lips parted like caramel pulled apart by a weak child. He bit his bottom lip and squinted his eyes. His large hands stroked his hair and he chose a soda, dropped a coin in, pushed a button and bent over to get his drink. He rose and swallowed hard before he spoke with a trace of a blush left.

"I'm . . . just taking a short break."

"I heard that you and Bobby had a cable bust on you the other day."

"Yeah." Mark smiled. "It could've killed us." He stared toward me but not at me.

"Hey," Estroy put his hand on Mark's shoulder, "I can come over tomorrow night. We can see if we both can put that stereo system together."

Mark looked into my eyes and then away from me.

"O.K." He answered Estroy. He pressed his lips together as Estroy walked away from him and started

flipping through an old newspaper on a chair.

In my head I heard the silence build up to a harsh shrill. Mark's hands were shaking and he was walking towards me. Everything seemed to be in slow motion. His mouth opened and I felt his chest touch mine for a moment. He stepped back just a little. "I . . . want . . ." He began speaking but I turned from him in all my nervousness when I realized Estroy had turned his attention to us. What I wanted to hear Mark say became what I feared he might say in front of Estroy.

I turned to the coke machine and stood silently, torn between dispondence and anger. I finally turned around when Estroy touched me and asked me what was wrong.

"Nothing." I went into the adjoining room.

Estroy called out asking me what sort of soda I wanted. I reached into my pocket, felt confused and in the confusion I became calm and level-headed.

"Do you have change for a dollar?" I asked Estroy.

Just then, Saunders walked in and stood in front of me.

"No," came Estroy's reply as he studied over some electrical equipment. "Why the hell did we both come here with inadequate money?" I thought to myself. As soon as the thought left me I saw Saunders' opened hand and I

looked into his face. His lips were tight and his eyes were very large with seriousness. He stretched out his wide palm full of change. "Here," he said.

My head jerked. Advancing nearer I reached for the money and touched him in the process. I saw Estroy's face from over Saunders' large shoulders and felt that Estroy was judging my composure. I had also just realized exactly how beautiful Saunders' face was and because of this I began to lose some of that composure. I found the adequate change and frowned because Saunders' stare at me became a gaze. He may have noticed that I kept my face practically cast to the floor as if to hide my face.

I walked past him and went to get my drink.

Estroy and I started to leave and Saunders joined us. I walked slower but my self-assuredness and appreciation made me feel like talking.

"I know a little about electricity." I said.

"Oh?" Estroy spoke loudly. Saunders was silent and I made a point of walking beside Estroy and not him.

"I can recite OHM's law. I know the three different types of connectors utilized for sockets. I know the difference between three wire service, and two wire service . . ." As I spoke I looked ahead and walked faster. For a

moment I looked back at Estroy and seriously asked him what time it was. If I would have had the insight I would have seen the way he looked at me as being one of 'affection;' it was. Saunders was watching me, too. There was a look of compassion on his face. We entered into the carding room and Estroy said good-bye to Saunders before I wanted him to.

"Bye." Saunders framed the word with his lips but no sound as I looked at him and Estroy walked on ahead of me. I watched him begin to turn away. He studied me for a moment longer but I had to turn away.

As I walked on behind Estroy, I thought of Mark and an album called Watermark because of his name in the title. Then a song on the album called "What A Wonderful World."

But I do know one and one is two
And if this one could be with you
What a wonderful world this would be
The words were slow, mellow. I felt harmonious, mellow, slow motioned like Mark, and as if I were connected to Saunders by some type of thin string.

In the lunch room Estroy and I sat across from each other. He spoke and I heard nothing. I became irritated when Estroy gave me his telephone number. I accepted it and he was pleased; I could have called him a "bastard" again.

"How do you know Saunders?"

I asked him.

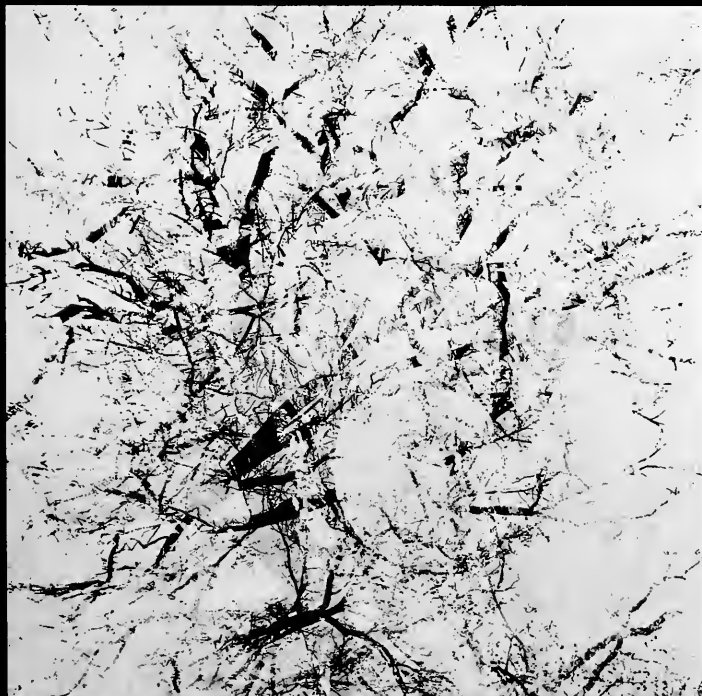
Estroy paused and stared into my eyes. "His wife is my sister."

I lost my steadiness. I smiled a little like "insane" people do; I suppose. Estroy noticed my change and touched my hand I pulled away. He seemed to realize what was wrong. He cocked his head to the side and slowly shook his head as he said, "oh."

I stood up and said, "for the first time, I feel like I belong in this hole," turned and walked out. I looked in again at Estroy and could

see that he was distraught. He had covered his mouth with the palm of his hand. I saw his head hang.

On my way back to my job I saw Mark Saunders coming my way and on that "last day of my work at the mill," that Friday, I didn't know whether or not Saunders blushed, or smiled, or walked close to me, or spoke to me within the noise, or bowed his head. I pulled my mask up and walked past him, quickly, feeling a sweep of wind, smelling and tasting wet salt with my head hung.



Wildfire

He crunched among the trees a madman,
Dryness singing to the blaze in his brain,
His pocket filled with the same sure flame,
Each in its own separate chamber;
And perfect endless lines of green geometry
Stretching on and up into a Titan's temple
Pushed on and on and reached and filled him.

Dryness singing to the blaze in his brain,
He kept his wild tune steady as all freshness
Took to black, his heart inflamed, and his tongue
Cursed Giza's distance, just too much time away,
Too much time, for the kindling was set,
The spark eager, and it was now for the spring of justice;
Just as one breath, one breath, one breath,
Upon the next must at last have some heave or sigh
To bring all meaning crashing back.

His pocket filled with the same sure flame
That broke already before his eyes like salvation,
Like some colossal creation in the hot womb of earth's forge,
Like all power: every muscle, root, and vein of ore fused
Into a force that got every dog with one kick,
Every face with one consummate snear,
He felt as if it was to stand among the statues
And watch Eiffel's bastard son plunge suddenly to
French soil, to loose itself at last and land
In one great dive among the other cripples.

Each in its own separate chamber,
His pulsing core, his mind with cells of kerosine,
His simple tools of hope,
He plunged on, his whole self a quivering bomb,
His heart spewing hot ash amidst his mind,
His mind erupting in oily color, his soul at rest
Once more to hear again his pocket click.

And perfect endless lines of green geometry
Laughed at him, pleaded, spat on his head;
He watched the rows stretch on forever,
Into what must be out of time or into then
And just to see the whole in one endless
Red storm like a hell-shot scream
Would be to have the past and the present and the future
All understand at once, all come to know the total,
All slapped awake at last.

Stretching on and up into a Titan's temple,
The pine's like columns beckoned him and
He felt his burden, his same burden, his burden
From birth, his burden of life, his endless weight,
And the needles clicked and let the sun into his face
And he walked on beneath the pressure of the sky;
And through the cracking of his steps sprang the chant of the birds,
And he moved on as the sun broke down through the pines
And thrust itself upon his face;
He stepped onward beneath the pressure of the patches of the sky
And each moment seemed to dry his mind and mellow the flame of
his core
And polish nature's chant until the tune had entered his veins and
The sun came into his eyes and the pine scent dulled the burns
And the trees smiled down on his head and his gift as he kept to the
rows that

Pushed on and on and reached and filled him
At last with pain where his purpose had been stripped
Away and his chest stung from the place where it was torn;
He was out of time or into then and kept watch
For some stream where he could soak his matches.

Amy Stapelton

Second place poetry

Strangers

I could have turned my head and answered no,
to all the pleas and offers each had bid.
I could have stopped before I did let go.
Now how can I account for what I did?

In one long night my trust is flowing out.
In mind my mind is asking "Why the cost?"
And morning brings my soul into a shout.
I feel that all I ever had is lost.

And on and on the cycle never stops.
I wander, fearful, full of shame and guilt,
Until I find another hopeful man,
To climb the careless castle that I've built.

Is love for me a paranoic "ride"?
Or will I find a LOVER by my side!

Terry Harper

The Seduction

*Pleasing you was simple then by letting
down my hair still damp and sweet— smelling
from my bath.*

*You buried your face in it, lingering at
my temples to trace cheekbones with
your lips.*

*Forgetting my parents, just upstairs, listening
for silence, you lingered at the door with
flushed cheeks and unopened books as the smell
of White Shoulders still teased your senses.*

Robin Gwyn Routh



The Ride

He rides well, mounting with the sureness
of a jockey.

Rock-hard thighs against, rippling flesh,
they bathe in each other's sweat, the rider
and the ridden, becoming one great animal
of rhythmic motion, oblivious of surroundings
and conscious only of the quickening pace
clocked by heartbeats.

Robin Gwyn Routh

The Woodcutter's Wife

The melody in his throat is gone,
And just a tuneless hum
Reminds her of their victories,
The lengths to which they'd come.

Oh was it only in her mind,
The tension racket-sprung?
Fallen oaks and elms and beech,
The wood to which she'd clung.

Fallen cedar, cypress, ash;
Fallen useless bark.
Fallen crest of family--
They never passed the mark

He had constructed out of form
And friction-laden truce.
Fallen willow, fallen birch,
Maple, gum, and spruce.

Rebecca Reagan



Martha

Barbara Presnell

Honorable Mention Fiction

Martha Rawlings had been working at the Jocane Hosiery Mill ever since her husband died in a car wreck ten years ago, and left her in debt for their house and car, as well as the funeral expenses and the price of a plot. She sold the car the first thing, and added to some money she saved in her cedar chest in the bedroom, she had enough to cover the burial. She had a son, Roy, who was nineteen at the time, and worked in a food store bagging groceries, but he was living away from home, thinking about getting married, and didn't think he could afford to pitch in a couple of dollars a week to help his mother. He did attend the funeral, and afterwards felt it was his obligation to visit his mother and pick out some of his father's possessions that he thought should rightfully go to him—a heavy woolen overcoat, a shotgun, and a gold pocketwatch that he lost a few years later at the county fair playing cards. Meanwhile, Martha, being the practical woman that she was, began searching for a job, both to fill her empty hours and to keep from having to rely on social security or welfare for her income. She had no references since she hadn't held a job in at least twenty years, and her wardrobe was plain and worn, and after about a month

and a half of hunting, she was still without a job, and was quickly running out of money. Reverend Thurman, the preacher at the Presbyterian church, where Martha was a very regular attender, contacted several laymen in the church, and finally, Mr. Everette Jones of Jocane Hosiery offered Martha a job as a seamstress. She took the job eagerly, learned to run her sewing machine very quickly, and within the next five years pulled herself out of her financial hole.

Her son was married to a local secretary shortly after her husband died. They had a small wedding, and Martha cried and cried for days afterwards to think that her son would be so happy. He had moved out of town then, about five hundred miles away, where he took a very respectable position as the assistant manager of Housewares at the five and dime store chain. She got a letter in the mail from his wife about every two months telling her that they were fine, and maybe they would stop in to see her soon. Martha knew they wouldn't come, and they didn't. Especially after the baby was born—a little boy—and she imagined that the diapering, feeding and caring for him must not leave them much time for traveling.

Martha didn't mind living alone. She enjoyed the quiet evenings when she could sit in her warm living room, listen to the wind outside her window, and relax in front of the television set. Sometimes she liked to come home from work in the afternoons, open a new bottle of gin, and drink until she felt very light, very happy and very gay. Her favorite drink was bourbon, especially when it was mixed with gingerale, but she liked to save it for special occasions. She and her husband drank bourbon on their wedding night. Her husband used to drink it straight from the bottle, but she preferred it a little less strong and burning than that. She had bourbon the night of Roy's wedding, too. The sweet taste made her even happier for him and his new wife. The last time she remembered drinking bourbon was the day she got the letter from Roy about his new son. She came home from work, read the letter, and went right back uptown to the liquor store for the special occasion.

But when she drank these days, it was most often gin. It was pretty and clear in the glass and she could sit and watch the bubbles rise to the top.

Martha read a little. Her husband collected a few books while they were married, but she never considered reading them then. They were mostly war stories, with a lot of sex and violence, and

it was only recently that she pulled one off of the dusty shelf, and without realizing the time, read almost half of it in one night.

She had a few house plants on some windowsills, but her prize greenery was the small vegetable garden that she spent many summer evenings after work hoeing and weeding, and waiting for the tiny little green beans to emerge from the blooms, and trying to guess which tomato would be the first to turn red.

But it was early winter now. Martha could look out her kitchen window to her garden and notice how the green weeds that filled her garden plot in the fall were brown and dying. As she scrambled her eggs for breakfast that morning, she happened to notice for the first time, as she looked out that window, that the trees in the small wooded land beneath her yard were almost bare. She shuddered at the thought of cold weather, and remembered how her mother used to tell her that early winters meant long, cold days of snow.

She liked her eggs hard cooked. Her husband had always liked them that way. Roy never liked them at all. As she sat down at the small kitchen table, she thought of Roy. She wondered if he was healthy, or if maybe that wife of his wasn't feeding him good. He might be bald now, she thought. His daddy was near bald at thirty. She had never seen the baby, but then, she





guessed it wasn't a baby anymore. For Christmas last year, Roy and his wife had mailed her a picture of the curly headed boy. He was squatted down on a red fire truck with a black bicycle seat on top. The boy had looked like he was determined to crash right into the eye of the camera and shatter it to pieces. On the back of the picture, in almost illegible child's writing with an olive green crayon was written, "Hi, Grandma." He must be smart, she always thought. Roy was smart, and Roy, too, always had curly blond hair and a determined look on his face.

Martha had to gulp down a cup of coffee and her eggs, and leave her dishes in the sink that morning. She was expected to punch in at Jocane's at exactly 7:00, and if she was even a few minutes late, she was afraid that Mr. Jones would lay her off of work. Laid off. All of the ladies at Jocane had been told that they may not be needed full time, but Martha only knew of a couple of the girls who had actually gotten fired. Times were hard. Times are always hard, Martha thought, but she was determined to make do and certainly not to get 'laid off' just because of a scrambled egg and bare trees.

She wasn't late. But she was out of breath from halfway running through the wind and cold, and she was still huffing when she almost crashed into Mr. Jones at the punchboard.

"Martha, where are you flying off to in such a hurry this morning?"

"No place," she said. "Trying not to be late. It's freezing cold outside this morning, though. I guess that's why I'm so out of breath."

"Looks like it might snow already this winter, my wife says."

"I don't think so. I didn't see any birds eating."

"Birds?"

"Oh, you know, Mr. Jones. When the birds eat, it means it's gonna snow. They're storing up food."

"Oh yeah," Mr. Jones chuckled. "I remember my mama used to say that."

Martha peeled off her coat and hung it over her arm.

"Gotta get to my sewing machine. See you later, Mr. Jones."

He nodded, smiled and headed down the hallway.

"Oh, Martha." He turned. "I almost forgot. There's a new girl coming in today on machines. I wonder if you might help her out. Show her around."

"Sure."

"Her name's Betsy. Watch out for her, okay?"

"Sure, Mr. Jones."

Martha entered the machine room through the double doors. If she stood outside the doors, all she could hear was a low hum, but once inside, the roar of sewing machines was almost deafening. Many of the

girls preferred to wear small wads of cotton in their ears, but Martha had gotten used to it after so many years, and liked to hear what she called the "sound of progress." She could talk to herself, sing, laugh or cry, and no one in the room would ever know.

Martha's machine was Number Five in the second row. She'd been working on the same machine now for almost six years, and she could tell every scratch and knock about it. She oiled it twice a month, and dusted the parts with a paintbrush at least once a week. As she moved down the line of ladies to her space, she passed a young, brown-haired girl at Number Seven. Betsy, she remembered. The new girl.

"Everything alright?" Martha tapped the girl on the shoulder and shouted above the roar of the machines.

The girl looked back and nodded. "Fine."

"I'm Martha."

"Betsy Cauldwell."

"I know."

The girl looked puzzled.

"Mr. Jones told me to watch after you today," Martha said. "If you got any problems there, you come to me. I'm at Number Five, right over there."

"Thanks."

Martha moved down the aisle and slipped into her chair. She had left a green stocking on her machine the afternoon before that had to be resown. One of the

operators had driven the needle straight down the center of the material. It was Martha's job to rip out the stitches and do it right. There was a pasteboard box beside her chair stuffed with the morning's work. She plowed through, matching lefts with rights, greens with greens, reds with reds, and so on, and seemed close to the edge, first once, then again. On one pair, she ran off the edge of the heel, and she had to slacken her pace, remove all the earlier stitches and redo it. Mr. Jones took a note each day of the number of articles each of the ladies got done. Martha wasn't the fastest of them, by far, but she worked steadily and carefully, and he had often complimented her on her work. She felt proud when he did. She wanted to do the best job she could, and tried hard to please him.

When the lunch bell sounded at 11:30, Martha realized that she had completely lost awareness of time, but felt her stomach growling with hunger. She eased from her seat, moved carefully down the aisle and into the Vending Room, where most of the ladies gathered for lunch. There were several green plastic tables and red chairs in the room and many of them were already taken by groups of women, and crowded with pocketbooks, lunch bags and cold sandwiches from the machines.

Martha never spent much time with the other ladies. She liked to









sit by the window, drink a cup of coffee and munch on a cheese sandwich from the vending machine. She liked to gaze out the window at the sky, the clouds, and the tops of buildings that she could see uptown. She always thought that must be what it was like to be a bird. To fly through those buildings, through the clouds, and never have to mingle with the crowded people down below on the sidewalk.

She was staring the way when she heard someone say:

“Can I sit here?”

It was Betsy, the new girl.

“I notice you got an extra chair. Mind if I sit with you?”

Martha nodded and smiled.

“How’s your morning been, honey?”

Betsy pulled out the wobbly red chair and sat down.

“Okay, I guess. I feel like I’m so slow. Martha, isn’t it? My machine is fine, but I’m afraid it’s too fast for me. I must have ripped out three dozen seams this morning.”

Martha smiled. “You’ll get used to it. We all did.”

“I sure hope so. My husband’s depending on my extra money.”

Betsy had brought a soggy peanut butter sandwich that she had covered with a paper towel and stuffed in her pocketbook. She unwrapped it, and tore it in half before she started eating. She sipped on a coca-cola in a paper cup that said, “Visit Weeki Wachi

Wonderland” along the bottom edge.

“He’s got a good job, I mean. He works over at Day Mattress company. But with the baby and all. . . .”

“You got a baby?” Martha asked.

Betsy leaned back and patted her stomach.

“One and a half months. You can’t tell it, can you?”

Martha shook her head.

“If I can work here maybe six, seven months and save all that, it sure would help.”

Martha thought about Roy’s wife, and hoped that her son had made enough money that she didn’t have to go to work before the baby.

“I got a sone about your age,” she said, after a pause.

“Oh? Is he married?”

Martha nodded. “He’s got a little boy about five years old now.”

“Yeah? Boy, I bet you’re a proud grandma.”

“Oh, I’ve got a lot to be proud of, for sure. He’s a cute little boy. And smart.”

“And I’ll bet he loves to come to Grandma’s house.”

“Why, I’ll bet he’d rather come to my house than stay in his own home,” Martha said. “He’s spoiled rotten when he comes to see me.”

“I remember my grandmother was that way.” Betsy smiled.

“They’re coming down, supposed to be tonight, and’ll

probably stay through Thanksgiving."

"You're gonna have a house full, aren't you?"

"Oh, but I'm gonna love it."

Betsy stood up and wadded her greasy napkin into a ball. "I got to see if I can catch up a little during lunch time," she said. "Say, why don't I meet you after work and let's walk home together."

"Oh, honey I can't this afternoon," Martha said, "I got to stop by the grocery store on the way and do my weekly shopping."

"Another time, then?"

"Sure. Maybe tomorrow."

Betsy nodded, and moved through the tables and out of the room.

Martha spent the remainder of lunch gazing and thinking about her son. She had invited them to come for a visit. Maybe this time they would come instead of sending her the note that said, "Sorry, we're too busy right now," or "Can't get off work," or even worse, no card at all. But on the night she expected them, she would always leave the porch light on until after midnight, before finally turning it off and going to bed. She had a good son, she knew. And he was busy with a family now, and an important job. She knew she couldn't expect him to come running home all the time.

Martha worked fast for the rest of the afternoon and at 3:00 when the shift changed, she realized that

she had emptied almost four pasteboard boxes in just over three hours. She was pleased, and told Betsy on her way out.

"And I haven't done but four all day long," she replied.

"You'll speed up. Wait 'til tomorrow."

"I hope so."

They parted at the side door, Betsy heading down towards the railroad tracks close to where she lived, and Martha, in the other direction towards town.

She found herself in a small department store at the edge of town. It was cold outside, and after walking only a few blocks, her hands were cold and red, and her nose dripping from the sting of the wind. The department store was new, and had only been open for about a year. It was a clean place, much different than anything Martha had seen in town, and much larger than the dime stores she had grown up with. She was dazzled by the variety in the store, and each time she wandered through it, she seemed to discover something new.

She strolled up and down the aisles, carefully examining the pots and pans in the housewares department. Her frying pan was getting thin on the bottom, and sometimes if she wasn't careful, she scorched the bottom of her meat from the close heat. She passed them by, though. Hers would last a little longer. In the toy department, she picked up a red fire truck with





a large black bicycle seat on top. She turned it over and tried to get all four wheels spinning at one time. One, two, three, four, one again, two again, three. . . but when she touched the whirling fourth wheel, it sprung from the axle and went flying across the counter. The other three tires slowed to a stop and Martha turned it up again, and set it unevenly on its three wheels.

Behind the toy department, she heard the chirping of birds, and saw a large wire cage filled with green and blue parakeets. To the left of them was a smaller cage, with two yellow canaries perched side by side on a small steel rod.

These are the ones I want, she thought and turned the price tag on the cage around. Two-fifty apiece. Five ninety-five for the cage. Martha walked on, keeping an eye on the yellow birds.

It was almost dark when Martha left the store at closing. She made a stop at the liquor store in the middle of town, then huddled the brown bag under her elbow, stuffed her hands in her warm coat pockets and walked slowly down the street. She had pulled the collar of her coat up close around her neck to prevent the wind from rushing down the front. Her thin scarf was tucked neatly around her collar, but one end was loose, and as the wind whipped past her shoulder, it caught the fringed edge and sent it flying across her back.

A shiny new Buick passed

through town and drove by Martha as she was wrapped and walking the way. She didn't see the driver, but the car stopped, backed up to where she was standing, and the man in the front reached over and rolled down the window on the passenger side of the car.

"Martha!" the man called out. "Need a ride anywhere?"

"Oh, it's you, Reverend Thurman." Martha held her hand over her eyes to block out the glare from the late sun.

"I'm going over your way. Do you need a ride home or anything?"

"Yessir," she answered. "It's awfully cold out here. I was just headed home myself."

Reverend Thurman reached for the handle and opened the car door as Martha walked over to the car.

"Thank you," she said as she straightened her coat underneath her. She pulled the door closed, and immediately a buzz sounded in the car.

"It's your seat belt, Martha," Reverend Thurman said. "In these new cars you always got to fasten your seat belt before that buzz quits."

He showed her the ends of the belt and helped her buckle them across the front of her coat. She held her brown bag securely in her lap.

"You been up here shopping, or something, Martha?" he said.

"Yes," she said. "I had to get some needles and thread before the

stores closed. I got a little rip in my Sunday dress.”

“It’s an awfully cold day to be walking.”

“It is, for sure.” Martha snuggled down in her seat, and was very comfortable in the warm car.

“I been meaning to tell you how much I liked last Sunday’s sermon, Reverend,” she said. “So many people these days think only of themselves, and never think about the church.”

“Thank you, Martha,” the reverend said. “I hope those people were there.”

“I always try to put at least a dollar in the plate every Sunday,” she said. “Sometimes I have to put a little less, but then I always make it up the next week.”

“That’s real good, Martha,” he said. “I wish everybody in the church was as charitable and kind as you.”

“Say, Reverend,” she said. “Did I tell you that Roy is coming home tonight?”

“Oh?” he said, calmly. “Wasn’t he here just a few weeks ago?”

“He couldn’t make it that time. But he’s coming now, for sure. I just have a feeling.”

“I hope so, Martha. I bet you can’t wait to see that baby of his.”

“You know, Roy tells me that the boy looks just like me. Well, of course, he is a boy.”

“So, what time do you expect them in?”

“Tonight. I guess they’ve been

traveling all day. I guess they’ll be tired when they get in.”

Reverend Thurman nodded his head.

“Say, Reverend, maybe you and Mrs. Thurman would like to come over for dinner tomorrow night. Visit with the family for a while?”

“Aw, we don’t want you to go to any trouble,” he said.

“No trouble. I like to cook. What about it, Reverend?”

Reverend Thurman shrugged. “I’ll have to check with Mrs. Thurman, but we’ll let you know.”

Martha beamed as the car pulled up to the curb in front of her house.

“Thank you for the ride, Reverend Thurman,” she said as she stepped out. “And I hope to see you tomorrow night.”

“Tell that boy of yours I said hello.”

The car hummed slowly down the street and turned at the corner. Martha walked through the thin grass to the porch of her small brown house. She opened the door and brought a gust of wind into the kitchen.

Better get the fire going, she thought, and laid her bag down on the kitchen table while she struck a match and held it under the stove. She unbuttoned her coat and laid it across a chair by the table. She opened the cabinet door above the sink and pulled an old jelly glass from the shelf. This one had been strawberry, she remembered. It was





Doris Miller

Part Four of "Casey at the Bat," with two verses of the poem, and a picture of a skinny, black-haired baseball player with his legs twisted around the bat. When Roy had been much younger and still living at home, Martha remembered having each glass in the set, Parts One through Five. Roy had liked to start the morning with Part One, Part Two at lunch. He always drank a glass of milk in the afternoon so he could use Part Three. He used Part Four at Supper and Five with a glass of water by his bed at night. Roy's favorite part of the poem was when the ballpark was silent and Casey was shamed from the stadium. Our hero had let us down. Roy always loved it.

Martha had only two glasses in the set now—Parts Three and Four. The other three had been broken or cracked or lost. She really couldn't remember what had happened to them. She didn't use them much, now that Roy had grown up. She'd gotten a whole new set of six from buying large boxes of laundry detergent. They were clear and beautiful, with little rivulets of gold plating around the edge.

She lowered the Part Four glass from the shelf, brought her brown bag to the counter and lifted the small pint bottle of bourbon. The label was small with red and black old-type hand printing. She broke the seal as she twisted the cap off. She held the bottle to her lips and, squeezing her eyes tightly, took a

long gulp. She smiled as she felt the warm alcohol slithering down her throat, through her body, and finally tingling her bones all the way to her fingernails.

She poured about an inch of bourbon in the bottom of the jelly glass, just touching the edge of Casey's shoe, and filled the rest of the glass with cold gingerale that she got from the refrigerator.

Sloshing the mixture together, she walked to the table and sat down easily in her chair. She swizzled her drink carefully with her index finger, then licked it and tasted the sweet bitterness.

She took a small sip and leaned her head back. She smiled peacefully and gleamed with satisfaction.

She looked out the window into the backyard and noticed that it was almost completely dark outside. She moved quickly to the front door, flipped the switch to the front light, returned to her seat at the table and thought of Betsy.



Of, And To A Girl At A University

dear Randall Jarrell,
you knew her less well,
This "object among dreams"
cum woman

and yet,
you knew her as well
as you could have; as I:
your thoughts were compelled
to her, helpless as mine

. . . studied and studying,
she slips easily in
and out of beauty,
but she must –
for it is so much her nature
as to become her duty

. . . she turns a page:
unconscious of
her being watched,
unconscious of her grace . . .

her concerns
are those of a goddess,
immediate and modest--

what to wear . . .
how her hair . . .
whome to grace
with a smile, whom to kiss

–and nothing to do
but dream as this

. . . but, she studies,
or so it seems;
she has wound us into
a goddess' dream

and presses a finger to out lips
and whispers,
"hush . . .
be silent now . . . sleep"
and we must

but she, in her sleep,
"she never dreams"

for, what might a goddess
further desire?
–for one passionate second,
one pure desire?

–come, my lady,
they are not in that book;
nor are the truths,
nor the fallacies,
nor any understanding of love

and yet,
love would be simple
for us to prove--
more simple than
your turning a page,

more simple than
the sigh you breathe,

more simple, more simply
than anything . . .

even more simply
than you move among men,
moving as the mildest wind--
stirring passions
as leaves,
and, leaving--
as you leave--

men bared of their dreams

but you cannot be cruel
for you have no intent
save to move
from point to point
through lines least resistant

and neither are you simple:
the greatest men's minds
cannot solve the riddle
that you become--
it is only more difficult
the harder they try

(despite how this seems,
I do not pretend
to know you better than them)

--ah, but your mystery
is your charm,
and your innocence,
your finest art

you,
who could have your choice
of men,
are wont to be confused
by such choices, being new,
and so, you choose none;
instead, you are content
to be chosen

--it is sad, perhaps,
that those whom you would
wish to,
ask less often
sad? that a goddess
must settle for men

. . . men--

some of those very men--
have died young--
barely young men--
consumed by their longing,
in search of you;
worse than mortal,
those men were fools:

fools for assuming a goddess
could love only gods;
but more,
fools for worshipping a goddess
from afar

--sad too, perhaps,
that men should die
with affections unbestowed,
unspoken

but then, at last,
we must admit--
we who survive
of the weaker sex--
our love
though we hesitate:

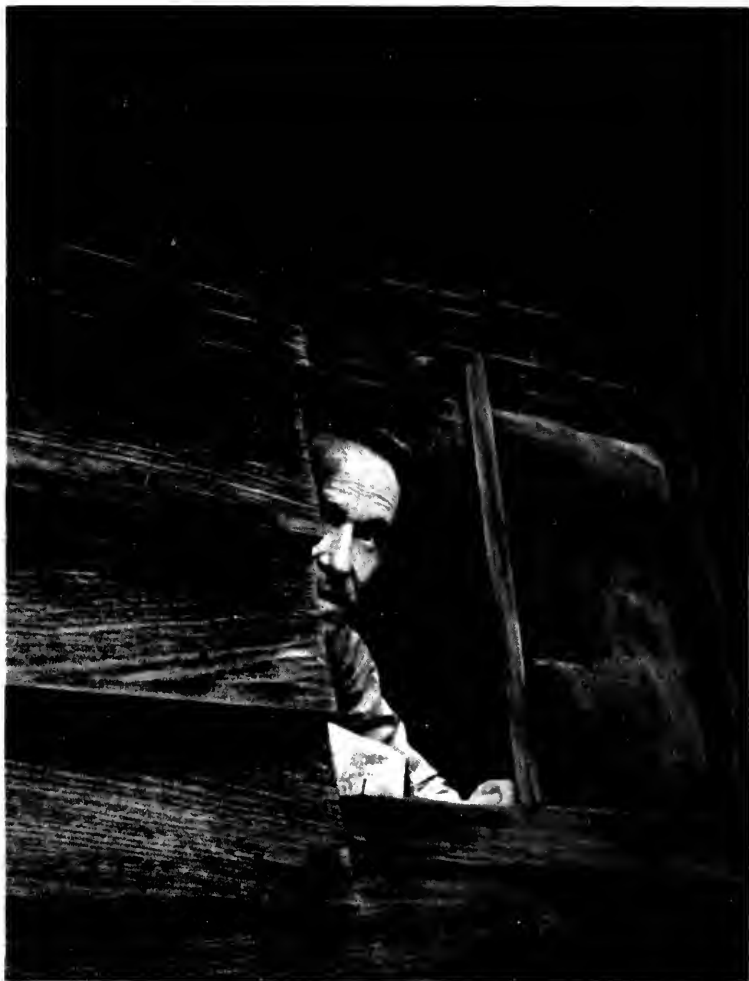
"and yet -- and yet --"

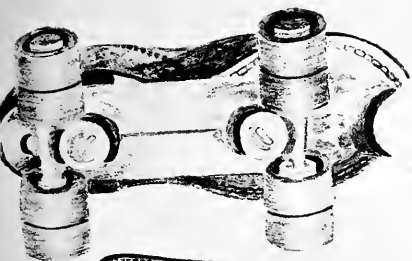
and so, I give myself over to you
(but a goddess deserves more
than a fool)

*and so, if you have naught else
to do
in a goddess' vast leisure,
come
-before you have time to
reconsider,
and, perhaps refuse;
before you grow
"old and cold and sure";
before you pass, dreamless,
into forever;
and, before you should
grow cynical
of love and men . . .
come,
and forfeit a goddess' pleasures
for those of a woman*

Robert Teakley







Lists

Barbara Presnell

2nd place fiction

Marvin K. Lowe asked Margaret Isley to marry him. He did it on his regular Wednesday night visit when they were sitting on the sofa in front of the television watching their regular Wednesday night detective show.

Marvin's arm was draped over the back of the soft red sofa. His hand fell loosely over the edge and touched the tip of Margaret's shoulder. His feet--his black sneakers--rested casually on the edge of the coffee table, and Margaret eyed them nervously, wondering if he had remembered to wipe them when he came in. She was afraid that mud was caked in the treads and would dry and drop off on the table--something she would have to wipe up with a wet paper towel as soon as he left.

It was at the very climax of the action, when the prostitute was on the floor and the lunatic stood above her with a knife, that Marvin spoke.

"You know, Margie, I've been coming over on Wednesdays for quite a while now. Almost a year."

"Yes, you have," she answered.

"And we've been going out on Saturday nights almost as long."

"That's true."

The lunatic flashed the blade and pressed it against the prostitute's throat. Margaret

swallowed.

"I was wondering," Marvin said. "I was wondering if maybe tomorrow night you might like to go out to dinner. To the Chalet. For a nice dinner, some wine and candlelight."

"Marvin, you know that Thursdays I go to my gymnastics class."

"You can miss that."

"No, I can't. I've never missed."

"Oh."

The New York Police Department had the old warehouse surrounded, and police cars were swarming the parking lot. The lunatic was nervous. He stood at the window and cleaned his fingernails with the knife blade.

"Well, I was wondering if you'd be interested in marrying me."

Just in time, Sergeant McAdams burst into the back door and grabbed the lunatic, forcing him to drop the knife on the floor. The prostitute kissed the sergeant on the cheek.

"Marry you?" Margaret repeated.

"Yes. It's been almost a year now."

"Marry you," she said.

"You don't have to answer me right now," he said. "I know it seems sudden, but I've been thinking about it for a long time

now. Saturday night we'll go to the Chalet."

Marvin left soon after the eleven o'clock news came on, and Margaret was still so stunned that she forgot to check for tracks on the coffee table. She went to bed, but she forgot to read a chapter in her book. She lay awake in the dark, listening to the clock humming and the digital numbers flipping every minute.

Like the flipping of the minutes and the eleven o'clock news, each day of Margaret's life passed exactly as it was supposed to. Every Monday morning, she made her plans for the week of things she needed to do and things she wanted to do. On Mondays, she always straightened the house from the weekend and did her grocery shopping. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, she worked as a teaching aide at the junior high school, and Fridays she visited her mother. Monday night was the book club; Thursday, gymnastics; and Friday, dinner with her mother. And then, there were the little things that she scheduled in between the regular appointments—waxing the kitchen floor, washing windows and so forth. Every night before she went to bed, she checked over her list one final time so that she could sleep soundly, knowing precisely what the day had meant. Sometimes when other people wondered where the time had gone, or forgot just

exactly what they had done, Margaret could think back and say,

"Tuesday, the fourteenth. That's the day I scrubbed the bathroom and repotted the schefflera."

Everything was in its place—the newspaper in the basket, this month's magazine on the coffee table and last month's in the cabinet under the bookshelf. The ashtray just a little left of the flower pot, the bathroom rug snug around the base of the toilet, and the white coverlet of her bed smoothed so that the pattern around the edge fell evenly on all sides.

She had no place on her list for love. Marvin was on for Wednesday and Saturday nights; the other nights were full. Sometimes even those two nights bothered her—the nights when Marvin stayed over much longer than she had planned, which kept her up later and made her sluggish the next day. Or the Saturdays that Marvin would plan something for them in the afternoons—a picnic, or a long drive somewhere—and she couldn't make him understand that her Saturday afternoons had already been arranged on the Monday before and she just couldn't rearrange her plans. And, sometime during the week, he would call her on thy phone when she was right in the middle of something important and she would lose her concentration.





Marvin himself was in such a disarray that sometimes she thought she would scream. He never made plans of any sort. When he came over on Wednesdays, he never bothered to discuss just exactly what they would be doing on Saturday, and most of the time, when Saturday night came, he still wouldn't know. Sometimes he'd already eaten dinner and sometimes he had not, and Margaret never knew whether to eat before eight or to wait for him. His shirt tails were almost always hanging over his pants, the laces to his tennis shoes were held together by knots, and he could go for two months without a haircut and never even think about it. In fact, the only reason she could think of that she kept seeing him was because she liked him, and that was such a vague and chaotic notion that she preferred not to think about it.

And now, the thought of marriage overwhelmed her sense of order. It meant breakfasts that might be later than seven o'clock, and it would mean that Marvin might sometimes get to the morning paper before she did and she wouldn't be able to read the funnies with her second cup of coffee. It would mean that she might not be able to do things the way she wanted anymore. She would have to make time—much more time—on her list for Marvin. And kids. Oh my God, she thought—how disorganized. How

chaotic it would be to have kids—bottles, diapers, playpens. She would have to work day and night picking up dolls and trucks and blocks and parts of this and that would be scattered everywhere. If she weren't careful, the plants would be turned over and broken. Worst of all, the baby would drool all over her clean clothes. This, she knew, was more than a simple decision to make.

Thursday morning when Margaret woke up, she felt as though someone had pulled the wrong thread and left her completely unraveled. Not only had she forgotten to read before going to bed, she had also forgotten to set her alarm and when she finally woke it was already after eight. On top of it all, she had neglected to brush her teeth, and the onion that she cooked with her squash for dinner Wednesday night still lingered in her mouth.

It didn't take long for her to realize that she had absolutely nothing to do in the morning before she went to school. Her list said, "Write Sue." She sent one letter a month to her cousin in Nebraska, but it was always a very structured letter, telling what she'd been doing and inquiring about Sue's activities. But, could she write a letter and casually mention the fact that she might be married soon? She decided that she couldn't. And she couldn't leave that part of it out, because it would

be another month before she wrote to Sue again. So, she put her stationery back in the desk drawer in her room and crossed that off her list.

She had intended to make a trip to the paint store this morning and choose a color for her bedroom. But, when she put on her coat and headed for the door, she realized that this too was not right. If she married Marvin, she would move out of the apartment and there would be no sense in painting the room. She would have to make a decision before she bought her paint.

It had been quite a long time since Margaret had a day with absolutely nothing to do. She had already dusted the furniture and scrubbed the bathroom on Tuesday. She watered the plants, she swept the porch, and she had even defrosted the refrigerator just last week. And, if she went ahead and cleaned the oven, then she'd have nothing to do on Friday morning before she went to her mother's.

She felt completely helpless. She read the paper a second time. She walked through each room and checked all of the plants to make sure that they weren't dry yet. She paced up and down the living room rug. She tried to watch television, but the morning movie was one she had seen at least ten times and knew by heart what happened at the end. She flipped the channel to

a game show, but she couldn't name any of the tunes, even though they were all very familiar and she knew that any other day she could have guessed them all.

Margaret finally pulled her coat from the closet and headed for the door. She wasn't good at making quick decisions. In fact, it normally took days for her to adjust to the idea of going to a movie, but she knew that something had to be done to get her life back in order. She made her decision—quickly, yes, but definitely—and she headed uptown to tell Marvin.

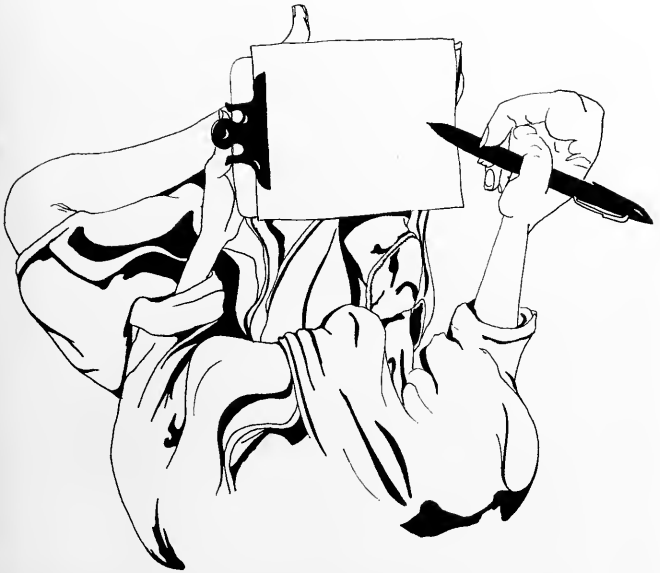
She sang right out loud as she walked down the street, and she didn't care who heard her. She waved at the man who turned and stared. She walked briskly, stepping on cracks, even though she knew she shouldn't, or at least never had before, and one time she began skipping down the street until a garbage truck passed and the boy in the front leaned out the window and whistled, causing her to lose her rhythm.

She stopped at the edge of town at Barley's Ice Cream Parlor, and treated herself to a double scoop of pistachio, then sat outside on a wall to watch the people pass.

When she finally made it to Marvin's office, she was running. She threw open the door, flung it wide, and stopped. Marvin looked up in surprise.

"Marvin," she said. "I have made my decision."





RMJ

“So soon? That’s not like you.”

“No, it’s not,” she replied. “And it’s not like me to skip school this afternoon or miss my gymnastics class tonight, but that’s what I’m going to do.”

Marvin pushed his chair away from his desk. “Does this mean yes?” he asked. “Are you going to marry me?”

“I threw away my list,” she said. “And I’m going to replace it with you.”

Marvin ran around the table and kissed her on the cheek. He pulled a chair close to his own by the desk.

“Sit down, Mrs. Lowe,” he said.

Margaret sat down. She reached inside her purse for a pen, and found a sheet of paper on the desk.

“Now,” she said. “The way I figure it, we should get married on a Saturday—how about the twenty-first of October? If we have it at two o’clock, the ceremony should be over by two-thirty, the reception by three-thirty, so we can get plane reservations for four o’clock.”

Margaret smiled. The disorder of her marriage to Marvin K. Lowe didn’t seem to bad at all. In fact, she kind of liked it.



Rib

*While we sleep,
a great rib
curved like the last slice of moon
rises for hours,
dirt spraying silently
into the black night,
inches of bone
fed from earth like a long glass tongue.*

*If we don't wake,
lovers come to us,
opulent in furs.*

Mary Parker

Blessing the Loss

He dresses for the desert,
omitting his hat; he might allow
a flat palm to break his forehead.
Like two soft birds, his hands
duck into his beard.
Single-minded,
he picks the sun from his teeth
until her face lies still.

Behind him, the woman thins
in the skyline he wanted to fill;
it's just lately he can play
his little violin of twigs.
In sand, he has measured her face
to the square inch; she grows
sharply under his hand.
His beard is clean;
he is writing the necessary songs.

1st place poetry

Mary Parker

Song of Snow

*The snow breathed a
lovely lullaby
At my window so softly
that my ear was
Part of the pane—*

*She hummed a white melody
of silent peace
And I knew my heart thought
a harmony
That coaxed it from the skies.*

*And I wondered if the trees
melted the song
As it fell to their hands
As it would if I did.*

Stephanie Kay Tingler

3rd place poetry

Letting go

In fall, when you left,
I invited a snow blond
warm as a drift before sleep.
While you slept on the road,
he crept to the house,
shaking down my red throat,
freezing the veins
before the eggs could be gathered.

The snow smooths itself
like a woman's hair against your feet.
Your body breaks tether,
a silk chute of bones to rise upward
at the last unbearable moment.

After first snow, you came home,
skin glowing from a candle
in your bones, heart cushioned
against the spectacular cold
of this winter.

Mary Parker









The Old Man, The Fine Lady, and The Little Boy in the Forest

Patti Morel

3rd place fiction

Once upon a time, a little boy stood in the fork of a long, rocky road and was lost. He cried and cried. By and by, a fine lady in feathers with jewels in her cap stopped her coach in the road and held out her hand. The little boy stared at her rings and stopped crying. The coachman fell down from his seat. The little boy laughed, having forgotten that he was lost. The coachman puffed white smoke in the air and fumbled with the latch on the door of the coach. With a flick of her lacy black fan, the fine lady and a fluffy brown cat came out from far inside the coach. The little boy stood on his toes to peer inside after her, but the window was too high, and the door was nearly shut. He fell back on his heels and blew his nose on his sleeve. This time, the coachman laughed, and the little boy jumped when the old fellow had to pat him on the head three times before lending his handkerchief. So, the little boy blew his runny nose as many times as he had breath and unshed tears, before politely returning the coachman's clean, white handkerchief.

The fine lady gathered her skirts, knelt down, and looked in his eyes.

"What is the matter?" She smiled at him and he saw that her teeth were made of pearls. He saw that her lips were as smooth and soft as cherries. He saw that her skin was as clear and white as snow, and he smiled at her. And then, he saw something glittering in her hair when she moved slightly forward. He reached for it, and she let out a cry, before she got up on her feet. She backed away. And the little boy saw that his shoes were untied.

When he raised his eyes, he was looking into the coachman's face. The old fellow was leaning over, from his waist, with a whip in his two hands. He balanced the weight on his knees. The little boy stood up straight and tall, looked at the man in his eyes, and then he said; "I am lost."

"You are lost." The old man looked for a long while at the glassy, red eyes of the little boy. He looked at the plump little cheeks, the stout little nose, the absence of a little smile. He took a short breath as the boy cocked his head to the side.

"That's right," said the little boy quietly, as he leaned from his waist to tie his shoelaces.

The coachman stood up quickly, walked towards the lady, and said

softly;

"I was right, he has the mark, there below his neck." He made a blurry gesture.

"But he is lost, and little, and all alone. He badly needs someone's help."

"Leave him to the king's concern."

The lady grew pale. "I will not have this on my conscience. If he should die, I would feel responsible."

"And you may leave that to the priest's concern."

"If I should feel responsible, then you are as well." The lady had raised her voice. "You are bound by contract, which you seem to have forgotten."

The coachman cleared his throat.

"I see that your list of public servants is short indeed, my man." The lady smiled her smile and walked away, towards the boy.

Once again, she held out her hand, and the boy stepped backward. But then, he looked once again into her eyes and down, at her hand and then took it, and held it for a long while between his palms. And the lady did not cry out. She put her arm round his shoulders and led him towards the coach.

The coachman turned his head aside and climbed up to his perch. The horses were restless also. Then, the old man sat, and grunted, shifted about and settled; taking

tobacco from his coat pocket. The lady picked up the little boy, holding him lightly at his waist, and placed him on a rung in the carriage ladder. The boy sighed.

"Now, I want very much to help you, but first you must tell me all that has happened."

The boy looked again in her eyes and said slowly;

"I have run away from home, and my father will beat me if he finds me." He looked in the direction of the coachman and his four horses.

The lady touched his hair. "But why? . . . Why did you run away from home?"

The little boy was still. He looked once more in her eyes, and she was smiling at him. He looked at her for a long while, and she still smiled.

"I ran away because I haven't a mother who is as beautiful as you."

The lady stopped smiling. "I do not understand," she said, staring at him.

"I ran away because I haven't a mother at all. I ran away because my father beats me. I ran away because I am afraid of rats." The cat ran out from under the coach. The little boy looked away quickly, and his brown hair fell in his eyes. In the same moment; he looked up at the lady, breathing little and yet very heavily, for his size.

Her eyes were filled with tears, and she was no longer beautiful to him. After a short while, she spoke

to him, loudly;

"Is there something that I can do to help you?"

"Why." The little boy stiffened, and sat up very straight.

The lady spread her hands, then put them to her face, touching her hair, and spoke fast.

"I saw you crying earlier—you were frightened—did you not tell the coachman that you were lost?"

"Yes."

"Well—then, you are lost. . . ."

"I was lost, then."

"And you are not lost now."

"No."

The lady stood on her left heel and put her hands against her skirts, gathering them forward in her fists.

"But, how is that?"

The little boy lowered his head. He fidgeted, he dangled his legs from his seat, he fingered the soiled linen that was his shirtsleeve.

The lady came suddenly towards him, grabbing his fingers.

"Listen to me," she said calmly, "I want to help you, but I need to know what has happened." The boy squirmed, looking at their hands. "Will you cease this insolence immediately—before I—," she held her tongue, and balanced herself against the carriage door. She stayed there for a long while, before releasing his hands.

"Please." She began again, smiling. "I will make you a bargain."

The boy settled back, squared his shoulders and looked up at the

lady, nodding his head in agreement. She then reached into her purse, and displayed for him four gold coins. The boy lunged forward and grabbed at her hand. The lady drew away her fist.

"But you must play by my rules." She drew her lips into a moist, red line. And the boy relaxed, looking smartly into her eyes.

"I have in my hand four gold crowns." She held her fist at her waist, securely. "They are yours, if you can earn them. I will ask four questions of you, of my own design and curiosity, and you must answer each one—truthfully—else the bargain is finished and I shall leave. Are you willing?" The boy looked on, grinning; "There are only four?"

"Yes."

"Is that enough, for you?"

The lady took a long breath and looked quickly, towards the coachman.

"I think enough, for you." A strand of hair fell to her shoulder.

"Yes'm—I like to play games—How do I win this one?"

"By answering with the truth. That is all."

But the little boy cocked his head sideways. "How will you know what is the truth, with me, and what is not?" The lady turned her head over her shoulder and looked to her horses.

"My coachman will judge." She then stepped twice backwards and

called her man by name.

The carriage swayed to and fro as the old fellow came down from his perch. He turned up beside his horses and dusted tobacco and ashes from the front of his coat. He was standing at attention, but his head was lowered and he was grumbling into his beard. The boy looked on, wrinkling his nose and forehead.

Soon, the man lifted his head and spoke carefully.

"Yes, I will help you, but it is getting dark, and there are thieves in the woods late at night." He looked strongly into the boy's eyes.

"I leave them to your concern."

She smiled again and moved closer towards the boy. He clasped his hands together, his elbows rested on his knees.

"I am ready"; he said quietly.

"Very well;" she paused for a moment, "Then; what is your name, and how old are you."

"That's two at once—is it fair?" He looked over towards the coachman.

"He who has the gold makes the rules." His fleshy face became hard, and he still held the whip.

The boy looked down at the ladder. "My name is Adam." and then he saw the coachman. "And I am eighteen years old." He turned his eyes from the whip.

The coachman steeped several times forward. But then, the lady turned quickly, looking at him, and he stopped there. "Adam," she

began, her eyes again meeting his, "How old are you?"

"Eighteen years old. Have I earned half a crown?" The lady grabbed the carriage door latch and pulled it sharply down, turning away from the boy.

Suddenly she turned on him and said at once;

"Young man, the truth of the first depends on the truth of the second. You have lost the first crown." And he saw her toss the coin to the coachman's feet, he saw the pink rise in her cheeks and found her beautiful again.

There were three crowns left. The boy spoke up clearly;

"If you had asked my name sooner, it would not have cost a cent."

She tossed apart her arms in the air. "Why do you speak as though you know so much—You cannot have more than ten years behind you—." Her forehead was very moist.

The boy lifted his chin. "My father was the servant of a merchant in the town before my mother was dead. He had a large house, and we all lived there. I was a merchant's assistant before my father found me out." He shrugged. "But I had learnt enough." He held out his palm, waiting.

The coachman rushed at the boy, waving his arms and the whip;

"Name your father—Where does he live—You cannot lie forever—What have you to hide—;"

the old man's face was fleshy and red, "You will not mock our concern for you—Why we might be robbed—killed out here—Don't you fear for your own life? You deserve a thrashing." With that, the lady screamed "Stop. Stop it please" until her face was completely red. The boy had crawled backward into the coach. He was crying again.

And then there came a silence. The coachman stood two steps behind her, with his arms at his sides, his weight resting on his toes. The boy covered on the floor in the coach. It was getting darker out, and the three of them were in certain danger there, with no protection, save four horses and a cat, against the thieves and murderers lurking out there in the forest.

"M'lady?" She turned and looked at her servant. "M'lady—begging your pardon, but it is a bloody fool who stays along the road past twilight."

"Yes. You are right, old man." She looked off into the trees and away, down the road. "But what shall we do with the boy?"

"Bring him along." The old man's eyes blazed.

"What?"; she cried hoarsely, "But he may well be a thief himself. You saw the mark, he could rob us of everything we have and before we know well what has happened, he will tell every thief in the—"

"Hold there Lady!"; there was a

pause. "This is certainly a change of heart for you, whatever has made—."

"I, too, have seen the mark."

The coach swayed back and forth. The little boy fell down the ladder and ripped his shirt.

The lady gasped and stepped back at once as the coachman ran forward to catch him. And they struggled together: old man and little boy—the old man trying to keep the boy from escaping, the boy trying to fight the old man for his freedom. But it was no use for him to writhe and kick as he did since the old man held him fast, tightly.

"Now you will answer me once and for all." He pulled back the boy's shirt. "What is this mark here?" The boy became silent and still, so he touched the mark and the lady moved and looked down, clutching her throat. They stared. And the boy wiggled and kicked out his feet at the old man's knees, only to be held tighter still round his waist.

Suddenly the lady drew back. "That isn't the prison mark at all. It is just a scar, see there?" You old fool—let him go immediately. We have no time to waste here, look around you, if you can, it is dark. We must go." And with that, she shook her skirts, stomped her feet and stepped away towards the coach.

The old man watched her, his mouth ajar for a long while, before

releasing the boy. He then picked up his whip, coughed and said quietly;

"Come along with us, we will give you food and drink and a bed to sleep in—I will even let you ride up top with me." He gestured with his whip.

The little boy pulled his shirt back up round his neck, and breathed once, deeply.

"No sir, I would not. You have called me a liar and a thief. I do not need your help. And I do not like your whip." He pushed his hair out of his eyes; his hair touched his shoulders.

"I will find my way to a convent. The sisters are kind, they do not treat me as you do," he looked at the whip once more, "—or your mistress." He looked towards the coach but he could not see her.

"She was beautiful to me; but she spoke to me as though I were a lost sheep, or dog." He shifted. "Now, she is as ugly to me as you are." He looked into the old man's eyes, glaring.

"I go now, to find the good sisters." And he turned, and he walked down the road.

The lady moved forward from inside the coach and watched him, her hand at the window. The coachman walked towards his horses, his eyes following the boy as he kicked stones along the way, in the distance.

And they all lived happily ever after.

The Moral: He who has the gold does not always make the rules.



Contest Winners

Photography

1st place	Tim Weiant.....	Page 24
2nd place	Barbara Grant.....	Page 45
3rd place	Keith Kolischak.....	Page 44

Honorable Mention

Larry Oxman.....	Page 63
David Nelson.....	Page 40
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Art

1st Place	Paula Clark.....	Page 20
2nd Place	Kathryn Taylor.....	Page 30
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Art Work

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Page 27	Glen Aumant oil on canvas
Page 30	Kathryn Taylor oil on canvas
Page 25	Bob Shepherd oil on canvas
Page 34	Bryan Presson oil on canvas
Page 35	Dorlis Miller inkwash
Page 20	Paula Clark mixed media
Page 21	Bonnie Osborne pen & ink
Page 17	Susan Hicks pen & ink
Page 41	Karen Humphrey charcoal
Page 48	Susan Hicks pen & ink
Page 49	Rhonda Jordan pen & ink



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