

Coraddi Arts Festival

1958



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Arts Festival

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The Walrus

Trilby Boerner

EEsola had gone out on the beach to meet the sun. It was a pact they had made; that every time the sun slipped up over the outside edge and cast a timid glance across the water, her feet would be at the inside edge to catch it and hold it until he was quite securely launched for the day. This morning, she had come out early carrying her brother's rod and reel. She walked down towards the point where the surf-casters held their morning vigil, meaning to try it herself.

Having watched them cast many times before, she now imitated the motion. She was surprised at the ease with which the line traced a gentle arc behind the weight as it was carried from the tip of the rod out to sea. The line had barely melted into the water when it was snapped taut by a tremendous tug which jerked her into the surf. The two closer fishermen, sensing a big one, ran into coaching positions: "Feed him more line — let him play — now draw him in a bit." EEsola held, thinking each moment that she must yield, yet holding on; when suddenly, the thrashing at the end of the line stopped. Out of the ensuing calm, a sleek black head arose revealing long white tusks, very much like a walrus.

The fishermen shook their heads in disbelief, yet it was unmistakably a walrus. "It's impossible," they muttered, but their eyes were a witness. "It's unnatural," they concluded, and EEsola began to realize that this was a highly unusual catch. The walrus gave a sudden sharp pull at the line, ripping the pole out of her hands; thus marking its antagonist, the smallest one of all, from the loose cluster of forms on the beach. This last indignity added the final line of annoyance to an already fierce expression. The fishermen who had so eagerly rushed into

a fight that they could understand, where man and beast pitted themselves against each other in a contest of strength and endurance, found themselves rather as observers at a very strange affair. They had no part and sought none in this drama. Since they were not people to intrude, each back-tracked, busied himself with rewinding his own untended line, and saw no more.

The walrus fixed EEsola with a menacing stare; she held it with a growing fear; neither moved. As if spurred to sudden action by the mounting resentment of having been caught by this mere child, the walrus started swimming with great speed directly towards her, never once relaxing or lowering his gaze. EEsola turned and ran; she knew she was running for her life. Instinctively, she headed towards her own cottage as fast as short legs and deep sand would allow. She glanced back over her shoulder to see the walrus just emerge from the water and start shuffling after her. In a wave of panic, she knew that she could never reach her house, but just ahead there was a cottage with a light on the porch. She ran up to the screen door.

At one end of the porch, there were two couples sitting around a card table, midst empty pop bottles and full ash trays, playing bridge. EEsola knocked hurriedly, then tried the door, but evidently it was hooked from the inside. Either they did not hear or did not want to be bothered. The walrus was fast gaining ground; they had to be bothered.

Seeing that face, all tusks and hate, she rattled the door hard and called into their privacy, "Let me in! Let me in, please! He's after me! Please!"

The man trying to concentrate on his cards snapped irritably, "Somebody let him in," to whit,

the dummy got up and flipped the hook. Much relieved, EEsola slipped inside and quickly latched the door, the walrus no more than a pole's length away.

"Thanks, mister," she said to his back, since he was already resuming his seat.

"Some darn kid running from a walrus," he said to the players, whose attention never wavered from the tricks in the middle of the table.

With a boldness born of desperation, EEsola crossed the porch into the house and hid behind the wall next to the door. She relaxed with a sigh, but immediately stiffened upon hearing the walrus banging at the door. She flattened against the wall, afraid that the door would give way to the relentless shaking, afraid that the bridge players would get angry and make her leave, afraid to move or even breathe. But the door held, and the bridge game continued, until finally the walrus, realizing that the prey had escaped, went back to the sea. She waited until she was quite sure that the beast was gone. She then walked quietly over towards the card table and stood for a moment before the players, waiting to be recognized in order to express her gratitude, but they were evidently much absorbed in the game. She finally said, "Thanks again, mister;" slipped noiselessly out the door, and ran home.

The family was just getting up. Mother was setting out the breakfast in the kitchen. EEsola blurted out the story first to her mother, then to her father as he came in buttoning his shirt, and again to her brother, the habitual late-arrival.

Her mother, a very practical woman, said "EEsola, for Heaven's sake, don't be absurd. Walruses! Bridge players at dawn! Obviously you dreamt the whole thing. Now sit down and eat your breakfast." But EEsola kept on with a persistence that was bound to become annoying to rational people. Her father, ordinarily a patient man, was forced to forbid any further mention of the story under pain of punishment; thus the rest of the meal was taken in silence. However, her brother, who had not quite outgrown his imagination, left the table as soon as he could with decency in order to check his fishing equipment. Having verified the missing pole, he casually invited EEsola to come out for a walk along the beach.

They walked in silence for a spell. EEsola noted that the sun had made it up all right without her. She was glad.

When they were a safe distance from the house, her brother, being both concerned about his rod and intrigued with the adventure, asked her once more to go over the whole story. EEsola, most anxious to convince him of the truth, eagerly took him to the very spot. Just a few feet down the beach they

found the pole, where it had been abandoned by the receding tide. This was convincing, but he still maintained a show of skepticism about the walrus. She picked up the pole, determined to show him exactly how it had happened. She cast and the weight had hardly hit the water when she made a strike. All of the fear of the morning welled up in her when she saw the familiar face rise up out of the sea.

Her big brother, recognizing imminent danger, assumed his full status as protector, telling his sister to run for home while he prepared to meet the onrushing beast. First, he threw shells at it trying to deflect the anger to himself, but the walrus would not be distracted. When it reached the beach, the brother jumped in its path and bodily tried to stop its progress; but one flick of a flipper sent the boy sprawling into the surf. Marking its prey well down the beach the monstrous animal lumbered off in pursuit.

EEsola, seeing what had happened to her brother, doubled her speed in spite of increasingly short breath and a sharp pain in her right side. But the faster she tried to run, the harder it was to gain traction in the dry sand. Her shoes were left in their tracks. The sand clutched mercilessly at her feet until it felled her. She lay exhausted; but goaded on by fear, she once more scrambled to her feet, shortly to fall again. She lifted her head and looked back. Seeing that black, whiskered face with the giant fangs close upon her, she collapsed in a swoon.

The momentarily vanquished protector recovered himself. Feeling no serious injury, he sprinted headlong in pursuit of the killer. With sickening heart, he saw his sister fall for the second time and the black mass hulk over her. His frenzy was gradually quelled by the scene which unfolded before him.

The walrus eased its flippers under the still body, gently lifted it from the sand, and stood holding it swaying slightly like a mother comforting her frightened babe. The ferocious face had melted into one of great compassion, but EEsola's face still bore the stamp of that last terrifying vision. Never taking its sad, dark eyes from the limp form, the walrus tenderly yielded her to the arms of the approaching brother. Without further delay the walrus turned, shuffled across the beach in its ungainly land locomotion, and swam gracefully out to sea.

The bewildered boy carried his sister home. As he approached the door he called to his mother to let them in. She seeing her children thus, one borne in the arms of the other, immediately knew the worst. With a silent acceptance of the immutable, she looked questioningly at her son. He gently laid EEsola on the couch, saying, "It really was a walrus."

THE WAKE

Bertha Harris

She went to her grandmother's funeral
to see the wreckage by carnations
and the swift black uncles.
The body must have moved in hatred
at the raucous sounds of flower-handling.
The fantasticality of salmon roses
grown in the water-emptied, dirt-filled well
behind the house was her chorale,
not this three-part braying by her
barnyard of sons.

The well, the roses . . .
on these she grew her life.

In the tall dominion of her house she sped
around her sons, their wives;
and they dared not spell her grossness
when on Christmas day she chained and locked
the ice-box filled with bone-protruding turkey
and dared the gluttonous asses to chew
its meat again that day.
She tilted the bottle the way the
old man had in the days of his
mustached youth;
and in her mountains of anger,
there would be havoc among relatives:
they would cower and grouse narrowly as
she swept the doors slamming about the house
in a magnificent progression of sound that
battered down the street past the neighbor's begonias
to the eldest uncle's ears as he carted home
his apprehensions at six p.m.

Golden and full-voiced like a trumpet she seemed,
but a full-armoured warrior wrapped in adoration
that Sunday noon she collected her powers
and pointed her fork at the
Presbyterian minister, sliding
"God-damn your ignorance of God" down
its prongs and straight between his canary eyes.

Among the well, the roses,
in a scene colored blue like the
Bachelor's buttons by a sliding memory,
she made the child's fingers move inside
the petals in the springtime flowerings.
And now,
distorted in the flesh-hung room by
the dissonance of carnations
the middle daughter-in-law called peppermint,
the clear sound of her memory
reverberates only in the grandchild's brain;
and it is dying
in the silent kitchen, the bedrooms, the garden,
filled now with alien gentleness
and the strength of withering roses.

THE BLUE STAR BABY

PATRICIA CARDEN

It was sharp in my stomach when I woke up. Mother was frying bacon in the kitchen and the good brown smell made me hungry. Daddy came and leaned over the bed but I kept my eyes closed and pretended I was asleep. Then he lifted the covers and tickled the bottoms of my feet. I sat up and said, "You woke me up."

"Happy birthday, Snooks," he said and put something under the covers. I reached under and felt of it. It was flat and slick and just the size of both my hands together. It was the pocketbook. I took it out and looked at it. It was a nice red—just the color of Daddy's handkerchief. I gave Daddy a scratchy hug and asked him if he was going to stay home from work for my birthday but he said he didn't think they could do without him at the mill.

I took the red pocketbook to show to that baby. She didn't have a pocketbook or a birthday. She just lay there looking at the ceiling with her hands all curled up like dead roses. I swung the pocketbook back and forth over the cradle so that baby could see it. She reached for it with her curled-up hands, but I swung it back and forth up high where she couldn't take it away from me. That made her cry. She made an awful noise when she cried. Mother came running into the bedroom.

"You hit the baby with that pocketbook. Give it here," she said in her mean voice.

"I didn't hit that baby."

"Don't tell stories to me. Give it here. You can have it back when you learn what it's for."

She put the pocketbook in the top drawer. Then she picked up that baby and sat down to rock it. She said, "Ohhh, mamma's little baby, ohhhh, mamma's little Starr, pretty little Starr, pretty little baby." She kept saying silly things like that to her. She said, "Penny, come see Starr's pretty birthmark," but I wouldn't go. It didn't look like a star at all. It was just a blue splotch on her hand. Then Mother said, "Ohhh, naughty Penny." But she wasn't saying it to me. She was talking to that baby.

That afternoon after Daddy came home the thunder-cloud came up. God sent it because He thought I hit the baby. I was playing in the yard when it started thundering so I came in the house and got in bed under the covers. Mother put down all the windows and pulled the shades. She got the Bible to

read while she sat and rocked that baby beside the bed. She read about God being in the thunder and in the lightning.

Daddy stood at the back door looking at the rain. That's how we knew he wasn't afraid. He stood in the open door even when the thunder was overhead.

Mother said, "Bill, for Heaven's sake close the door and come in here with us before you get struck by lightning." Daddy wouldn't come though. He wasn't afraid of that lightning.

Mother went into the kitchen to pull out the Frigidaire cord so the lightning couldn't run into the house on it. We had just bought the Frigidaire for a down payment and twenty installments. He lived in a big white box, but he was very small. Every time I looked in the box he would hide and I couldn't find him. There was so much room left over that Mother kept food in the box. The Frigidaire took care of the baby's milk. That's why we got him.

The lightning was coming in the window now right through the shades and the thunder was rolling around on the roof. I thought it was going to fall through. Mother said the Lord's prayer, but I didn't feel any better. All the thunder and lightning was because of me. It hadn't found me yet because I was under the cover, but it was still looking. Pretty soon it would come under the cover and find me.

Then there was a loud knock at the door. It was God. I made myself little so He couldn't see me and I repeated the Twenty-third Psalm.

"The Lord is my Shepherd . . . I shall not want . . ."

God was in the room now, I could feel Him sitting on the covers choking me. He knew I was there . . . He was waiting for me to come out.

Somebody said, "So that's the blue-star baby." Somebody else had come in with God. I slid just my head out from under the cover so He wouldn't see me; but He wasn't there. He was gone. There was just an old woman with white and black hair like steel wool.

"Which one is that?" she said.

"That's Penny," Mother said. "Do you remember Aunt Dora, Penny?"

I didn't remember Aunt Dora, and I didn't like her. I don't think Mother liked her either, because she didn't let her hold the baby. Aunt Dora kept leaning over looking into the kitchen at the Frigidaire.

"I see you have a new Frigidaire," she said.

"It's for my baby . . . to keep the milk from spoiling," Mother said.

"You must be getting along well."

"No, no, we had to have it for the baby. Times are bad but my baby was sick and we had to keep the milk cold."

Aunt Dora leaned over and looked at the Frigidaire again. "Why doesn't Bill come in here and talk to me," she said. "Tell him to come talk to his brother's wife."

Mother called Daddy but he didn't answer. She went back into the kitchen to talk to him. Aunt Dora stared at me, but she didn't smile or say anything. Maybe she knew I didn't like her. I wanted to go into the kitchen where Mother and Daddy were, but Aunt Dora was sitting between the bed and the door. Anyway, Mother and Daddy came in the bedroom.

Daddy said, "Hello, Dora."

"I won't beat around the bush, Bill," Aunt Dora said. "I've come to ask you a favor."

"What is it, Dora?"

"I want to know if you'll help us out until I get a job. Alvin's nerves have gone bad again."

Daddy sounded funny like someone talking into a glass of water. "I can't Dora. We're on short time. I just can't help you."

"You used to help us before you got married. You know how Alvin's nerves are. It just makes him worse knowing you won't help us."

"I've got a family to support now, Dora."

"We haven't got anything in the house but beans," Aunt Dora said. "We just got beans."

Mother looked at Aunt Dora real hard. You could tell she didn't like her. "We do without, too, Dora," she said.

Aunt Dora looked into the kitchen. "You've got a new Frigidaire," she said. "A man who can pay for a new Frigidaire can help his brother's children."

"It's for my baby," Mother said. She kept saying that. "It's for my baby . . . it's for my baby."

After a while they all got quiet so you could just hear the rain falling against the window. They were listening for God. They were afraid. There wasn't anything to be afraid of now. The thunder was far away and I had to pull back the shade to see the lightning. God wasn't going to come.

"Don't be afraid, Mother," I said, scrooching

down under the cover. "Don't be afraid." It was warm and dark under the covers and far away—warm and dark like inside of a grapefruit . . . a big yellow grapefruit. . . .

In a little bit the red pocketbook came to me out of the top drawer. I took the grapefruit out and cut it into two pieces . . . one for you and one for me . . . one for you and one for me . . . none for you and one for me . . . none for you . . . "You can't have none." The baby's hands curled up and down, up and down. She reached for the grapefruit, but I moved it away . . . and away . . . and away . . . the baby's hands curled up and down like a dead fly's feet . . . she was dead, the baby was dead. We didn't have time to bury the baby then because we were moving the furniture out of the house. Every day we moved a piece out into the back yard. When we moved all the furniture, we put the baby in an orange crate and buried her in the yard beside Skippy. Her hands were all curled up. . . .

Creeek, creeek . . . Mother was rocking in her chair . . . she was rocking the dead baby. I opened my eyes and looked at her. The baby was drinking milk and spilling it all over Mother's dress. She wasn't dead at all.

Aunt Dora wasn't there anymore. Daddy wasn't there.

"Where's Daddy?" I asked Mother.

"He's in the kitchen," she said. I wanted to go into the kitchen and get a drink of water, but I was afraid Aunt Dora was in there.

"Get me a drink of water," I said to Mother.

She said, "Get it yourself." I didn't want to go into the kitchen but my throat was dry like all-bran inside. I looked around the door. I couldn't see Aunt Dora. Daddy was sitting at the table. I pulled a chair to the sink and got a drink of water. All the little night bugs were sticking to the window and the moon was hanging in the tree. It was pretty and the thunderstorm was gone.

When I turned the water off, I could hear a funny sound out there like someone scratching their nails on the tree trunk. She was standing in the dark looking at me. I climbed down so she couldn't see me. Then she came across the yard. I could hear the grass swishing. She put her face to the window and looked in. I didn't look at the window but I knew she was there. Daddy looked at the window, but he didn't say anything. He wasn't afraid. I walked sideways so I couldn't see the window. I wanted to go to bed.

When I went by the Frigidaire, he started breathing again. He did it to scare me. I wasn't scared, though. I knew it was him.

The next morning I got up and looked at the screen. There was a smudged spot where her nose had been.

(Continued on page 26)

The Choice

William Leo Coakley

In nono valley,
everybody's odd:
nobody really
believes in god;
bows to the state;
or loves his mother—
but only himself,
and no one other.

On yesyes mountain,
everybody gaysings;
everybody samesings—
all life long.

I don't like nothing;
I don't like same—
so no one really
has a right to blame
my sitting at the juncture,
as long as I may,
singing my songs
in a maybe way.

The Red-vested Penguin

Frances Nooe

I had been walking across the quiet
snow-plain for a long time, and I had
seen a walrus and some seals and a few
grey snow-birds, silently flapping across
the sky; then I came to a big glacier and
decided I would sit and rest after
I got around it . . . but when I reached
the other side I saw the red-vested
penguin coming toward me. Someone had
sliced his throat and he made red ski
tracks as he walked across the snow.
He was staggering a little and, although
I didn't really want to speak to him, I
asked if I could help. He shook his
head slowly, then I asked who had hurt
him. His lower red lip flopped, spilling
a few drops that spotted the snow as he
tried to answer, but the only sound he
made was a deep gurgle: then, with
little jerks of pain, he slowly tracked
out the words, "You did."

The Mute Mother

Esther Broner

Negative against the window,
pale as a white moon in daylight,
the mother molds a child's rocker,
her face witness to his sight,
flexed fingers ruddering his elbow.

The voices of the bus are muffled
in acoustics of a mourner's drum.
No hired mourner, nor mute prisoner,
she is attendant to her son.
Her quiet is music's rest, held.

She tailors his shirt, a beach scene in repoussé,
to his twisting shoulders. The child points to eyes;
she lifts off white lumps of sleep,
secure that from no distant bedroom her son cries.
Her work done, she blows his back, making palm trees sway.

The bus, shiny as a beetle,
in bisected red and yellow,
nourishes the islanders in breasted stops.
Accordion doors with compressed bellows
spend random couples against green metal.

At strap level a skiing society
toasts the passengers in golden beer.
Dark against athletic hills
knitted bands of reindeer walk in stiff sobriety.

A fat hand in silent baby talk
rises clumsily, like a heavy bird,
pointing first to chested self, then five fingers erect.
he foresees her birthday song, open-mouthed, surd.
Mother depresses the thumb, kissing his diminished stalk.

"Spring oil change," a melting snowman whispers
to blue bird friends upon a barren branch.
The boy turns his mother's cheek.
Snow, fluttering birds and waters of the world's ranch
are held in the hands of his oriental dancer.

Sun blown workmen pick at shadows.
Drilled concrete mosaics the air.
Bus doors open. The boy bats his ear.
Half-rising the mother stares,
then pounds fists to transpose.

In this untalkative crowd
those two are noisy in their privacy.
The mother, in sudden pouncing thrills,
makes her fingers ticklish, lacy.
The child winging elbows, laughs aloud.

The Drawing Child

Esther Broner

Before spread fingers count to five
with piggies to market and a trip to St. Ives,
elliptic heads, the infant's crowd,
orbit his page, each amoebic cloud
a kinsman. The hexagonal pencil,
like the baby's spoon, in 4-fingered prehensile,
outlines a colorless balloon.

Once, the dark-blue stare was oblique, jejune
to the mother's metrics, an ancient rune
crooned to this slumping, neckless humanity,
frog-legged, hands fisting with intensity.
Thoughtless, he had senile wrinkles,
his peeling skin shed in lizard crinkles.
Only his itching mouth was acute.

Soon, his father's stilted legs will shoot
straight to the head, a parachute
form without body or thickened legs,
a stern, bald head resting on pegs.
Eyes are jabs of pencil tips,
slits for a nose and unparted lips,
grey-featured, monochromatic.

Eyes become moth-large, dramatic.
The belted body's movement is static.
Twig arms grow under knots of ears;
the artist trifles here with pink spheres
of cheeks and a circlet nose,
a half-mouth, thick eyebrows.
Hair is horizontal like matted fur.

As the arms attenuate to a grasshopper's
3-jointed tarsus, the child colors
the forms with bloods of orange,
red and borders of purple—to change
now to landscapes of smoking chimneys,
a thin sky, rounded trees and daisies
with green winged sprouts against a yellow stem.

The young girl scorns the crayons and hems
her ladies' bodices with iridescent gems
in colored pencil. Ribbons stiff as larch
leaves poke the fascicled hair that arches
back from profiles. The tilted nose,
an eye too thick-lashed to close
are her impassive Cinderellas.

From the skies fall inverted bomb umbrellas,
dotted machine gun fire as the twin propellers
attack the enemy. Ships blockade
on a caterpillar sea and raid
the coast with smoking cigars of cannons;
all birds and fish have disappeared, undone,
but the artist forgot and left a fringed, pale sun.

COVER EVERY TRACK

Barbara Barksdale

I was late. I should never have even gone into the antique shop except that a hand-drawn map in the window matched the half of one I had owned for years, and the chance of fitting the two together was worth a minute's delay. I was impatient. The shopkeeper, a gentle woman, refused to hurry her full-figured customer into deciding which of the ornate china vases she would buy. Either would have suited her. I fingered a rosy little clock, glancing at the dubious matron in open irritation. Then, looking back down at the counter, I picked up a dark carved hour glass and, flipping it over, I watched the sand spill steadily through its narrow neck. I held it in both hands, staring at the white sand, suddenly feeling a vague sensation and being certain of having had the same sensation before, but long ago. Yet, it was not the same, not quite the same. I had once cupped my own two hands together like this and let dry white sand slip through. In a tiny stream — steady, but as tiny as I could without stopping it. Then, there had been no glass, only the sand in my own hands. And they were smaller then, the hands of a child. It had probably happened hundreds of times during the summers, one after another, when we went to the island.

Mother always drove us down herself. But I remember her composing a sober face to listen to father's annual vexation over what people would think of two women, alone, driving with three children in an automobile all the way to the coast, even though he knew that when he finished she would stoutly say, "Oh, pooh, Father," and plunge on to some new subject with gay banter. Aunt Kate's being along was some consolation, though. She was ten years older than mother, "my sensible sister, Katherine," Mother always called her, shaking her head and laughing. "Your spinster sister, Katherine," Father countered with a scowl. On the way down, the twins would tickle each other in the back seat until they both got mad and Mother would admonish over her shoulder that Gardener should be a little gentleman and not pester his sister so, although Cissie always had him weak from her pokes in the ribs before Gard could even collect his

defense. After a few more miles they began to fret again. They couldn't even remember what the island was like, even how our house looked. Since I was three years older, and could see every part of it when I closed my eyes, I began to remind them of the things that filled the long summer days. How they had waded and played near the water all day. Whenever we went out, I usually played with them for a while, but Cissie and Gard always ended by flinging handfuls of wet sand at each other, and I would run back to sit against the dunes where the sand was dry. Scooping some of it into my hands, I made the opening smaller and smaller, then held my hands up into the wind and watched it blow the stream apart and away. The wind is one of the things I remember first about summers on the island. It blew so much of the time that I remember feeling uneasy whenever it died down for a while, being almost afraid to breathe hard until it was up again. After the wind, I remember the sound that was always there, no matter where on the island you went. Coming from the mainland, through the waterway on the ferry, you hardly heard the sound. You could see the water in the marshes, lying so far out on one side that it finally blurred together with the sky. But the water in the marshes came in and went out again quietly. All the way to the island and all along down the inland side, the water met the shore with a gentle slap, slap. But, as we rounded the end and started up the winding road that followed the line of the long beach, I could hear the sound clearly. The waves breaking, then washing far in before they were pulled back out again. And it was this sound—long and low—never ending because another wave came to begin it again before it could die—that I can hear this minute. We drove almost halfway along the island before we turned off the road into the drive that led to our house. It dipped low, then cut up and over a rise that was sandy and covered with the tall dry marsh grass. As we drove towards the rise, I always leaned out the window to hear the grass whispering in the wind just for a moment because I knew that once over the rise and onto the broader bank where our house was, all that I heard would be filled with the

sound that came from the beach. And, every year, as we topped the rise and caught sight of our house, backed against a dune that sloped far down to the water, it seemed to me that the sound was heavier and longer than before. At night sometimes, when we had just come, I lay waiting for sleep where it was so dark, waiting for the sound to stop and the stillness to come and bring me sleep. And, in my child's mind, I believed I could shut it out. From the rushing in and rushing out again, I tried to hide in the softness of my pillow, but far within, in the dimness that stretched inside me, I heard the same sound — the rushing in and rushing out again. And even in my child's mind, I remember thinking it would always be so, that I could never shut out the sound of the sea.

In the mornings, when the sand was smooth and the water dazzled calmly far out in the sun, we looked for shells and tried to catch the tiny animals darting in the clear pools before they burrowed into the sand leaving a bubbly hole behind them. Then, when the water began to come in, we jumped high over each wave as it broke — faster and higher, laughing when we missed until the waves were too high, and we ran to roll over and over in the hot dry sand, then lay still with the sun on us until the feeling ran out of us and we could have been a part of the sand on which we lay — all under the scorching white ball that held its place high above us while we slept. Then, up the dune racing through the high waving grass to the house to eat. Maybe watermelon for dessert and we would run to the upstairs porch and lean out over the railing to see who could spit the seeds further. By then the wind would be up and we would go back to the water and try to find the swells just before they broke, churning up the sand and little stones. The sky might fill with black, boiling clouds and the water break harder. Looking out, we would catch sight of a lightning flash as it shot from one swollen cloud into another, then we would see the storm — far out across the dark water and feel the wind bringing it to us. Watching until the drops fell on us, we turned in and saw that the wind had gotten to the tall grass whipping through it so that it bent crazily from one direction to the other. Then we ran towards the house and in — slamming the door behind us. But, even inside, the smell of the sea was there, and the salt clung to our cheeks and in our tangled hair. Above the sound of the rain, I could still hear the crashing of the waves on the beach where we had been, and the door fought within its hinges to be opened to the sea again.

How many summers passed that way, I have long ago lost count, but I can still remember the summer he was there and the day he came to our door out of the storm. It had begun to storm every afternoon, and this meant that before long all the

houses dotting the sandy white ribbon that outlined the edge of the island would be left alone to the battering winds of September. After one more day, we, too, would cover the furniture, and our house would be closed up and drab like the merry-go-round in the mainland carnival when it rolled out of town. Cissie and Gard scrapped noisily in the kitchen making lemonade and, in the living room where I sat with Mother and Aunt Kate, the sound of their high voices could be heard above the wind, blustering in and around the corners of the house. Mother had moved over by a window where she always sat when it stormed, and her face had the look of wonder that made Aunt Kate always declare that she sometimes looked younger than Cissie. I sat in Cissie's wicker rocker near Aunt Kate's bigger one and watched her embroider. I never tired of watching her hands. They were deft, but, more than being simply clever, whenever they moved, they looked completely under her control. I looked away from her slender fingers down at my own. They were short, but if I tried and trained them, someday, they might be like hers. And in my lap, deep in the folds of my skirt, I began to work them touching the ends together like Cissie and Gard when they sang about the spider going up the garden wall. I heard the knocking first, coming into the room from out of the driving rain. Then mother heard it too. Turning her head towards the door, she laughed that it was "hardly the weather for guests." But, Aunt Kate, without looking up, assured her that it was the wind, whipping under that loose shutter they should have replaced a month ago. But Mother sat twisted around listening, and when the rapping was too insistent to be our shutter, she rose to answer it. She had slipped back the latch and was cracking the door open to see when the wind pushed it past her finger tips and threw it banging back against the wall while a wave of rain blew inside. At the sound, Aunt Kate looked up, and we all saw him framed in the doorway for a second before he stepped in past Mother to catch the door and close it again.

"Sorry to enter so abruptly, ma'am, but you were getting a bit damp." He smiled so broadly at Mother that she almost laughed back. "Speak for yourself, young man. What can I do for you besides hang you up to dry?"

But Mother was wrong. He was not a young man, maybe fifteen years older than she was. His short curly hair had been separated in front by the rain water into bouncy sprigs. There was a white spike on either side, but the rest was a golden red that I have never seen again. At one look, I saw that he had been given the very face to match his hair. It was broad, with just enough freckles scattered across to make it jaunty even when he didn't smile. His eyes matched the big cloudy blue marble that I kept in my treasure box, instead of playing with it.

so that it would never chip. He was talking to Mother and Aunt Kate, standing in the puddle that was spreading from his feet into a dark circle on the mat rug. And, even when he moved to the chair to sit down, the spot stayed for a long time before it lightened again. Mother must have told him my name because he nodded down at me, and when he did, new little trickles ran down his face around his smile. Mother wondered where he was staying. "Not far down the shore." His r's tripped and caught on his tongue like stumbling, eager feet. He laughed. It was sudden and short. Then he said that it was his first summer in this part of the country and he ought never to have left his work but being the man that he was, he would leave anything if there was the blue sea nearby and the blowing wind had a bit of brine in it. By then, even Gard and Cissie had heard his deep voice. They shyly eyed him as he talked from behind the kitchen door jamb until he abruptly nodded his head towards them and laughed, "Boo." We heard them both giggling and running back from the door before Mother led one forth in either hand to be introduced. "So there are really four girls here and only one man. Fancy that." And he shot a look at Aunt Kate. Until then, she had listened to his talk, her head bent over the delicate cloth she was embroidering with a rich blue thread that followed her flashing silver needle in and out. But, at this, she looked up, a smile flickering across her face until she met his eyes. Then hers lowered again suddenly. He turned back to Mother and the twins at her feet and went on talking in steamy cheerfulness. The room was close now, and it seemed quieter since the rain was moving inland. The room should have been gray and dim in the quiet, but Aunt Kate reached towards the lamp beside her and turned it higher. The circle of light widened in the room. It glowed on her gold thimble and played in his hair that grew burnished as it dried. I listened to him rumbling easily, hearing my mother speak sometimes too, and in her voice was the laughter that made it rich and full-toned whenever she spoke. But my eyes were on Aunt Kate's hands, softened in the mellow light but never ceasing to smooth and hold the cloth firmly as the needle worked in and out again and again. A chair scraped and I looked up to see that he was rising, pushing back the big chair in which he had talked so long. He opened the door to leave and long bright patches of sunlight spilled across the floor. The lamplight was only a pale, faint yellow blur in the room now. The reappearing sun had drowned away its richness. He turned and thanked Mother while Gard and Cissie tagged behind her to the sunny doorway. I heard him promise to teach both of them tricks in the sand tomorrow if they would come out "bright and early." This time the r's fairly somersaulted out. "And you too, little daisy-child," he craned his neck far around the door to boom at me. "And a good

evening, Miss Katherine." He softened his voice, but it was so clear that the words seemed to hold together in the empty, airy room long after he left.

That night, lying in bed, even in the darkness all around me, I fancied I could still hear his voice and, staring harder and harder, I tried to see his face again, but it would never quite show clearly—becoming fainter and fainter. The washing of the waves was slower all the time, until I finally fell asleep and dreamed of waking up and turning into a giant daisy that ran and danced along the sand at the water's edge in the bright sunlight until a dark shadow spread out around me and I looked up to see huge hands coming down upon me. Aunt Katherine's hands—darkening everything until they began to pick off my petals one by one and I tried to cry out, to tell her that it was really me but her hands held me fast so that I couldn't move until every beautiful petal lay withering in the hot sand.

I opened my eyes the next morning when my room first filled with the early light. The house was still and I could feel the quietness just as I did its coolness. I closed my eyes again and let go of the sensations that merge sleep into waking. But a thought bounded into my brain and opened my eyes wide. Today was our last day. I listened and began to hear my sound again. I looked out and saw the tide lying politely far out from the beach while curling little breakers came discreetly in a ways, then retreated. And, on our last day, he had promised to show us tricks in the sand. I dressed, was downstairs and out looking down on the beach before I really woke up. The day was fair and would be very hot. I could tell from the white look everything had already. I walked half down the dune, then stopped, feeling suddenly that I was the only person on the earth, that every living thing had gone while I slept and now the sun looked down mocking me, that of all, I should have been the one person who had been left. But the thought was startled away before I could hold fast to it. I had glanced down where the slope fanned out to flatness and I saw him standing looking out at the water. He stood very still, both hands spread flat against his hips, thumbs tucked under his belt in back. I watched him like that for a long time, wishing I could see his face, wondering how his voice would sound now. A solitary pelican swooped down after a fish and back into the sky again. His eyes followed the precise and graceful bird. Suddenly he tore one hand from his belt and ran it through his hair. When I saw him do this, I turned and ran through the sand into the grass and up to the house before he caught sight of me. I let myself back in, feeling a rush of coolness against my face in the dim hall. Up in my room, I sat before the window on a little stool as I had the afternoon before with my hands folded, tightly-pressed between my knees. I could

see him. Sometimes he walked a few steps down the beach, then stopped to look down at his bare feet or out at the sandbar that looked like a glaring mirage under the sun up here. Once he turned his face towards our house. I knew that he must see me at the window because I felt his eyes on me although I never moved.

The twins awoke, and the stillness was sent rudely away when they saw that he was waiting for them. Clamoring to be fed and outside, they talked of nothing else but the promised tricks until they scampered out into the sunlight. I started to clear away the dishes, then set down the tottering stack I held with a clatter and ran out the door behind them. "You sleepy-heads were very nearly too late for my tricks," he called up to them, "but since you've brought your sweet sister with you, come ahead." They laughed and ran faster, but by the time they reached the water's edge where he stood, he was walking on his hands away from them, his big feet waving in the air and his pants cuffs flapping gaily. The tricks he knew were wonderful. We tried to do as he told and follow him, but we were laughing so that we sat down in the sand and watched him cavort alone. Finally, he ran to pull us up and a look of mock-seriousness clouded his face. "And, now, children, I am going to teach you the cleverest trick of all. With it, you may go any place in this whole world, but no one can ever follow or find you if you know how to walk away and cover your tracks." At this, he moved backwards one step in the sand, then lifted his foot and deftly wiped out the print he had just made. Another step away from us. "Now, you must follow me. Turn and begin." We obediently turned our backs to him and started stepping away. I brushed the sand lightly with my toes to leave no marks. The wind was blowing against my back, whipping my hair against my cheek and into my eyes. I tried to push it away and kept walking. The wind bringing his voice towards us was playing tricks, and his words reverberated all around. "Cover your tracks, children. Cover every track." I felt a prickle coming up my back and running to my neck. We were far down the beach when he shouted, "Now, halt." Looking up I saw our house, small and very drab against the whiteness that separated it from us. In front of our house the whiteness was long and sloping. Coming towards us, it merged into undulating lines, waving one above the other like frosting being poured on top of a cake. In some places the smooth curves broke into irregular mounds, topped with rusty grass. Small coves fitted between these and the deeper ones were shadowed. Only here and there did a piece of driftwood or refuse soil the whiteness that stretched before me like the splendid cape the princess wore in a story I loved to read to the twins.

I heard him shout a long and echoing "Hello," and turned my smarting eyes away from the sand to

see that he stood with the water splashing about his ankles, shielding his eyes with one hand while the other waved in broad sweeps above his head. My eyes followed his out to a bobbing white cap. Someone was drifting along. I decided it must be Mother because our neighbors had already left and Aunt Kate would hardly, well, Aunt Kate, rarely even went out to look at the water, much less go in it. She had caught a run down the beach that was sweeping her on by, but when he kept waving, she began to come in. She swam until she reached the breakers, then caught one to bring her in. She turned to look for another when a great swell lifted and carried her so far in before it broke that when it ran out again, she was floundering in a few inches of water. He went towards her, made a deep bow like a comical courtier, and began gallantly to help her up. When she threw back her head and jerked off the cap, I saw that it was not Mother, but Aunt Kate who had come in at his call. He was speaking with a rueful smile, tilting his head towards her and offering her his arms. She slipped hers through, then, looking down at herself dripping with watery sand, she began to laugh—flustered and gay. And, as they walked away in the direction we had just come, I began to think it had not been my Aunt Kate whom I saw at all. I picked up a dirty green bottle from the sand and tossed it out as hard as I could, then moved toward a shaded cove and sat down in the hint of coolness there. But the day was almost half spent, and the heat hovered all around to remind me of its passing.

We waited lunch on Aunt Kate until the twins' clamorous entreats became too shrill to be ignored. We began to eat. Their sound subsided. Mother neglected her plate, staring thoughtfully through the twins. Once she turned to me about to speak, then changed her mind and lowered her eyes in silence again. We were just finishing when thunder rumbled sharply overhead. The afternoon storm was beginning early. It swept in suddenly from the sea and broke over the island like an egg someone had cracked too fast. Usually when a downpour came up so suddenly like this, it was gone soon. The twins went upstairs to amuse themselves until it passed. Mother moved to her place by the window. Her usual awe at the storm was clouded with perplexity that strained into foreboding as the storm raged. There she sat all afternoon. Occasionally she turned to see if I still sat curled up in Aunt Kate's rocker. She said scarcely a word, but once she turned around suddenly and said, "Maybe he's returning our hospitality," with a laugh—thin and nervous—that fell quickly, as though she had tried to draw back the words. The wind pressed sheets of water against the panes with renewed gusts. I could not remember

(Continued on page 25)

Apartment House

Nancy Read Kimmel

I had never seen her face
because the hall was dark
and stairs were dark.
We only met in that short space
of passing up or passing down,
going out, or coming home from town.
Her hair once blew against my arm.
I can remember still how warm
it was and where it burned.
And then, by chance, I saw her still
and standing in the sun.
And since that day I fill the blackness there,
love her face,
breathe her hair,
going in the dark,
coming in the dark,
passing in the dark upon the stair.

As A Newborn Sees

Wanda Gatlin

As a newborn sees
so do they
who judge
but stand apart
all as one
because of fear.

And one as one
must pay twofold
for being
because
silence is sorrow and joy
never knowing
always seeking.

The Grandchildren

Nancy Read Kimmel

Father!
Take the children
out to play.
I've made them
promise
not to spit
on you today.

Children, be sweet!
Your grandfather
is an old man.

Yes, Mama,
but will you let us
kick him
when we can?

He had a stroke
and his teeth
fell out.
Mattie Lou
found him,
and she yelled and she shouted,
oh, m'am,
come quick's you can.
Somethin's happened
to the old man.

Grandma
sat in the rocker
and rocked.
We went to the door
but it was locked.

Hello, my dear!
No, not here.
I've sent him back
to Illinois.

Mama,
have you
seen
my
tinker toy?

And why does Grandma
sit so still?
Doesn't she want to go
with him?

She will?

Dear Children of the World

Nancy Hunnicutt

Dear Children of the World (who have to live with parents and piano teachers), I am writing this letter to you, even though I don't like to write letters, especially thank-you notes for presents I don't like, because we have got to stick together if we are ever going to have any Justice around this place, what with parents and piano teachers the way they are, and I thought maybe if you heard about what happened to me we might be able to do something, you know. Anyway, I am going to send this letter to the United Nations because they will want to help us, I am sure, even though they are grown-ups, of course, and probably lots of them are parents too, and maybe even some of them teach piano lessons, but they are working for peace and Justice the same as we are, so I think they will help us and make copies of this letter for all of you and maybe show us how to organize ourselves or something. And besides, I can't play outside or go anywhere or do anything except sit in my room every afternoon for two weeks, because I am being punished unjustly for my own good, so I have to do something if I don't want to go crazy, which I don't, so I am writing this letter.

Well, I guess you're dying to know what happened to me, and I'm dying to tell you about it because you will understand the whole lousy story because you are children just like me, so I will tell you all about it now. I had to take piano lessons, see, and I absolutely hated piano lessons because piano lessons meant Shame, because I hadn't practiced, Mrs. Montague, because she was my teacher and an idiot, and Drusilla Blitch, who was also an idiot and had her lesson just before me, and recitals, of course, because Mrs. Montague's pupils always had to give recitals, and they were idiotic too. Well, my lessons were on Tuesdays and Thursdays from four-to-four-thirty. Most people only had one lesson a week (except Drusilla Blitch, of course, who was a child prodigy, but an idiot anyway), but Mamma made me have two lessons a week, even though we really couldn't afford it, because she was afraid that if I had only one lesson a week I'd forget what I'd learned at one lesson by the time the next lesson came around a week later. She didn't have very much faith in my memory, which was really quite good, and this very year I memorised over twenty pieces instead of just ten and so got two boxes of Whitman's Sampler instead of one, because you had to memorise ten pieces to get one box and I had

memorised over twenty which is why I got two, but I'll tell you all about that later on, and anyway it didn't impress Mamma very much since she still made me take two lessons a week, which we couldn't afford at all, of course. Well, you know how awful music lessons are, I am sure, so you will understand that I detested them, which is why I started doing things to get out of them. I did a lot of things which were really very smart of me I thought to get out of as much music lessons as I could, and you might like to try some of them yourselves. At first, I started out by pretending I was sick, and this wasn't as easy as it probably sounds due to the fact that my mamma isn't an idiot at all. When I say I'm sick, the first thing Mamma says is let me take your temperature, and she does whether I let her or not. She caught me one time holding the thermometer to a light bulb, lit, to make it go up like I was sick, so she never would leave me alone anymore but stood and watched me all the time so that I couldn't do anything like that again. And even if I really did have a fever, she would call the doctor, and doctors are even worse than piano teachers because they think they have to do all kinds of embarrassing things to you to make you well, so I'd rather not be sick at all, even if that means going to Mrs. Montague's. And then one time I was accidentally late to a piano lesson and Mrs. Montague said that she was very sorry because she couldn't make up the time I had lost (but I bet she charged us for it on the bill). She said that after all there was another child who had a lesson after me, from four-thirty-to-five, and she couldn't take up that child's time to give me what I had missed. But I wasn't at all sorry like she was. In fact, I was very glad because my lesson only lasted ten minutes that day, due to the fact that I was twenty minutes late. So then I started being late on purpose so that Mrs. Montague wouldn't be able to give me so much time. This wasn't very hard, though I am usually a fast person, but I can be slow when I need to. What I did was to take the short cut instead of the long way, and this really isn't so confusing as it may sound due to the fact that the short cut isn't a short cut at all. It is really a very long way, but I call it the short cut because it is exciting and out-of-the-way, you know? It goes through a lot of woods and barbed wire and stuff, just like in the movies, and I got all scratched and itchy and everything and sometimes I got ticks on me, which the movie stars never do,

but it was fun and it took a lot of time so I did it anyway. And after all the woods and stuff, I came out at Mrs. Montagure's back yard fence, which I climbed over or crawled under according to whether I felt like doing one or the other. That back yard of Mrs. Montagure's wasn't very big, but it took me a long time to get across it since I always did it like the spies in the movies, which meant crawling on my stomach (I hate people who stay tummy) from bush to bush since I'd get shot if I just stood up and walked out in the broad daylight. Then when I had got across the yard and over to the house I would sneak into the shrubbery and creep around the house to the front door. (Mrs. Montagure never let anyone in the back door.) And then I would have to go inside because there wasn't anything else to do and because usually Mrs. Montagure would be standing on the front steps looking for me and so of course she saw me and dragged me inside.

Well, old Drusilla Blitch was always there when I got there, even if I was late, because she had to wait at Mrs. Montagure's until five o'clock when her mother got off work and could come pick her up in the car. Drusilla only lived three blocks away but her mother wouldn't let her walk because she was a delicate child (but she really wasn't a child at all, she was almost an adolescent, and she didn't look very delicate because she was fat as all get out, but Mamma said that she was only maturing and wouldn't always be fat, whatever maturing is). Drusilla rode the streetcar to her four o'clock lesson but she couldn't ride it back because it was dark then and her mother said that young girls shouldn't ride streetcars alone after dark, or walk, but I don't really know why she said this because I always walked around in the dark and even rode streetcars and it was fun, I tell you. So Drusilla was always there when I had my lesson and she sat on the sofa very quietly and read about the lives of the Great Composers. I didn't like her being there because Mrs. Montagure always said gushing things about what a musical genius she was right in front of her, and Drusilla always looked very modest and blushed, but you could tell that she damn well liked it. (Damn is a word I'm not allowed to use which is why I like to use it a lot.) And lots of times when I didn't play something right, which was most of the time, Mrs. Montagure would blabber away about how Drusilla had mastered that piece when she was only six (and I happen to be nine), and she'd ask Drusilla if she wouldn't play it for me, if she remembered it, so that I could hear how it ought to be played. And Drusilla always remembered (that girl was as bad as any elephant), even if it was a piece she had mastered at three (and Drusilla happens to be twelve), so she played it and I had to listen, and Mrs. Montagure always said how lovely it was, wasn't it, and I always said yes I suppose so, though

I didn't really think so, though Drusilla really played pretty well and all that. But then you mustn't forget that she was a child prodigy and that makes a very great deal of difference, and of course I wasn't.

I guess you think I played the piano very badly, but this is not at all true. Mrs. Montagure always said that I didn't have much technical facility but that I played with a great deal of feeling, which I did. I never could use the right fingering, what Mrs. Montagure said the right fingering was. She said that you should always cross under your second finger with your thumb if you were going to run out of fingers. But I never remembered to do this, instead I went ahead and ran out of fingers and then crossed under my last finger with my thumb, which worked fine for me since I have long fingers. But Mrs. Montagure said you can't do it that way, and she said Drusilla, come show her that you can't do it that way. And Drusilla came and showed me that you couldn't because *she* couldn't because her fingers were short and fat, though maybe they were only maturing and wouldn't always be so. But I did it anyway, even though Mrs. Montagure and Drusilla said that you couldn't, and Mrs. Montagure always screamed when I did it. If you really want to know the truth, I think she was just plain jealous, and Drusilla too.

Well, that was what lessons were like, but if they were bad, recitals were even worse. They were ghastly. But then there were some nice things about recitals, like having to wear an evening dress, because Mrs. Montagure always made the girls wear evening dresses. I don't guess you think I sound like the kind of person who likes to dress up, what with my sounding like a tom-boy and all, which I am, but I really do love long dresses and all that stuff. I had a blue taffeta evening dress that I wore for recitals and it was smashingly beautiful, even Mrs. Montagure could see that. I liked it because it swished when I walked, and when I walked in it I was very careful to make it swish a lot. I thought I probably looked a lot like Scarlet O'Hara in that dress, though my sister said that I looked more like Melanie Wilkes, but then she never was very keen on me, my sister I mean. Well, dressing up was nice, but the rest was horrid and I'll tell you all about that now. What was horrid was having to play in front of all those people, though they were only parents of course and so they clapped and said they liked the way you played no matter what you did. But that didn't make things any better because if I played badly I knew that I had, no matter what people said, and I was ashamed of my playing and of them too when they said how good it was when it was really awful. I worked very hard before recitals, which was the only time I really worked hard at all. I practiced my piece the whole blooming day,

and this made Daddy very furious because he got so tired of hearing the same thing over and over, and he said Emily (which is Mamma's name), can't that child play anything else, is this what we're spending all that money for? And Mamma would answer Harold (which is Daddy's name), that is her recital piece, and of course she knows other things too, but that is the one she has to practice now, so be patient. And then Daddy said Oh God, because he hates to be reminded of recitals because he hates to go to them, but of course he always went anyway.

Well, I want to tell you about this particular recital which took place last Friday night, which was my last recital because I've stopped taking lessons forever now. I have been trying for years to get Mamma to let me stop, but she never would because she said someday I would want to play the piano and I would be grateful that she had made me take lessons. She finally gave in this spring because we are moving away from here soon and she didn't particularly want to take that piano with us, since it is such a horrible piano, and why pay to have it moved? Well, I wanted very much for my last recital to be a smashing success for once, so that when all those people remembered me after I was gone, they would say how beautifully I had played the piano and it would be true. I was to play Schubert's Moment Musicale and I liked it very much because it is very hard to play and very advanced as Mrs. Montague's pupils go. I was next to the last on the program and this was a tremendously great honor because we played in the order of how advanced we were, with the little tiny children first who played lullabies with one finger, and up through John Thompson One, John Thompson Two, John Thompson Three, and finally those like Drusilla and me who don't play John Thompson at all anymore since he is too easy and really stupid also. Of course, Drusilla was the last one on the program because she was the most advanced, and I really don't remember right now what she played, but I think it was something like Rachmaninoff or Tchaikovsky which people always like and clap madly for because it sounds terribly hard and just like the music in the movies that everybody swoons over.

So the recital was on a Friday night, and that was because Mrs. Montague's recitals are always on Friday nights so that we children can sleep late the next morning, since the recital lasts so long past most of our bedtimes, especially the little children's, but then they usually go home early anyway, as soon as they have played, and don't stay to hear the advanced students play and anyway I don't suppose they are old enough to appreciate us. And I had on a fine taffeta dress with a lot of petticoats to make me stand out. And I guess I felt terribly beautiful what with all that and with my hair down around my shoulders and a black velvet ribbon, since I usu-

ally wear my hair plaited and with only rubber bands. Of course Drusilla was dressed to the teeth (and she has braces on her teeth, which I don't) in a strapless evening dress that made her look all pinched up and about to explode. But she thought she looked rather sexy she said, but I don't know what she meant by that, so maybe she did. She had all her hair, which is a very lot, piled on top of her head and she had flowers stuck in it and a big corsage on her shoulder, though I guess it wasn't her shoulder after all since she didn't have anything up there to pin it to. Drusilla's dress was lavender and she said don't you think lavender dresses are sexy, and I didn't know what to say to that. But I remembered that I had heard someone, maybe my sister, who reads a lot, say that lavender is such a decadent color, so I said yes, I really thought it was awfully decadent, and Drusilla didn't quite know how to take that but I suppose she took it as a compliment since she takes anything you say as a compliment. Well, we had to sit and listen to all the lullabies and all the John Thompsons first, and they were just horrible and it depressed me awfully. By the time my turn came I was scared stiff, but I managed to get up and walk backstage. The stage looked pretty, I suppose, but I didn't think so then. There were big baskets of flowers standing around and they made the place look like a funeral or something, I guess, but I've never been to a funeral so maybe not. And the piano was a Steinway concert grand and of course very good, and I would really have liked a Steinway like that for myself, but I didn't like this one. It looked like a big black animal crouching on three fat legs, and all its teeth (with cavities in them where the black keys were) were bared and leering at you. I didn't want to go near it but I could hear Mrs. Montague hissing go on, go on, it won't bite you, and I guess she thought that was cute or something, but I didn't think so. It sounded silly and babyish and I'm not a baby after all, and anyway that Steinway just might. But I walked out onto the stage and up to the Steinway and sat down, and I even remembered to swish my skirts, so I guess I wasn't so scared after all. I waited very still for a moment until everybody was still and listening, and then I waited a moment longer until I felt ready to begin. (You know somehow when it's time to begin, you know. I don't know how you know, but you do. And if you begin before that, everything sounds messy somehow, but at the right moment, if you wait for it, everything starts right. I don't know why, but it is so.) And then I began, and once I had begun everything seemed to be just lovely. I forgot about all those people, including my parents, and they aren't so easy to forget about, and I played away smashingly. I remembered to take all my repeats and I didn't miss any keys and my fingers worked out alright and I never ran out of

them, so I was almost happy, you might say. And eventually I got to the end and then it was all over and I dashed off the stage. I swished past Drusilla, who was waiting to go on next, and I said Ho, Drusilla, you really *do* look decadent tonight, but she just said shhh and wouldn't even look at me because she was looking at that picture of Jose Iturbi she carries around with her everywhere and trying to get inspired. So I went on and sat down and then Drusilla came out on the stage and sat down at the Steinway. Drusilla, as I have said, is a very amusing person, and she is funniest of all when she is on a stage, though that may be true for other people too. She walks very straight and takes little tiny steps because she says that that is the way to walk gracefully. But she just looks like a schmoo when she does it. So she sat down and began to play her Fire Dance or whatever it was that was so advanced, and she played pretty well except that she overdid it, if you know what I mean. And when she finished, everybody clapped like mad, just like I told you they would, and Drusilla curtsied and almost fell flat, and the recital was over.

Then there was a party in the lobby and Mrs. Montagure served grape juice out of a punch bowl that looked like a bird bath, and Mamma kept hugging me and saying how beautifully I had played, and Daddy kept patting Mamma on the shoulder and saying let's go home, for God's sake. And I was very happy, I suppose, though I don't like grape juice and I wished it were port wine instead. So then Mrs. Montagure waved her arms and said attention, parents, attention children, and everybody paid attention and Mrs. Montagure said that she was going to distribute the prizes for memory work. She explained what you had to do to get a prize and about what a great honor it was to get one and how it was such a great joy to her to reward all these industrious little people. (I didn't like that bit about little people, as though we were midgets or something, but I didn't say anything. I do have some manners.) And then she called out the names of the prizewinners, the John Thompsons first, since there weren't any little bitty children who had memorised ten pieces and anyway they had all gone home by then and were probably in bed. After that, she called for the advanced students, including Drusilla of course, but she didn't call my name. I began to get worried because I knew damn well I had memorised twenty-three pieces and she'd damn well better remember it. And then she cleared her throat and said very impressively, for her, that there was one student who had memorised not ten, but twenty-two pieces that year, and that this was most extraordinary and inspiring and all that. And she called my name and made me come and stand beside her so everybody could see me, and she presented me with two boxes of Whitman's Sampler (from her son-in-law's drug store where she got a discount) and hugged me and kissed me. I did not

like that, and I most certainly did not like her saying twenty-two when it was twenty-three, but then what can you expect? After that, Mamma hugged me some more and said how proud of me she was, and Daddy sort of patted me and said don't you want to go home now? Then Mrs. Montagure came over, blast it all, and told Mamma how proud *she* was of me and how she had enjoyed teaching me and how she hoped I would continue my piano. Mamma said that she hoped so too, but I said I am not and anyway we've already sold the piano so I can't. And Mrs. Montagure said oh how very very sorry she was about that because I really showed a lot of promise and did have a remarkable memory, even though I never could remember what time to come for lessons, and Mamma said WHAT? And I said oh Daddy, I'm so tired, let's do go home right now, so we went home.

But the next morning Mamma called Mrs. Montagure on the telephone and asked WHAT? again, and Mrs. Montagure, blast it all, went and told her exactly WHAT. Well, I tell you, Mamma was as mad as a hornet. She fussed and yelled about all that money I had wasted until I thought she'd blow the roof off. But she didn't blow the roof off, she started crying instead, and that is the most awful, horrid, ghastly trick a grownup can pull on you. Oh, she cried and cried about all the talent I had wasted and about all the hopes she had had for me, and I had gone and smashed them all. And then I started crying too, and we both cried about all my wasted talent until I got hungry and stopped crying and went and got one of the boxes of Whitman's Sampler. Well, now, while I was chewing on a caramel filbert and trying to get Mamma to stop crying and eat a marshmallow delight, it suddenly hit me. Here I was holding this box of candy and out in the living room was another box just like it, and two boxes of Whitman's Sampler equal twenty memorised pieces, and add three for the extras, that makes twenty-three pieces I had memorised that year. I had forgotten about that and obviously Mamma had too, or she wouldn't have been carrying on about wasted talent like that. So I reminded her of it, but she just cried harder, and do you know what she said? She said yes, but if you hadn't wasted all that talent you might have learned fifty pieces instead of just twenty-three. Well, can you imagine? Yes, I suppose you can, only too well. But if that was un-called for, do you know what she did next? She stopped crying and ate one of my jellied cherries and said that I ought to be punished. And then she took a crystallised ginger and said that I was *going* to be punished. And by the time she had finished all the candied almonds, she had decided exactly how I was going to be punished. You are going to stay in your room every afternoon for two weeks, she said.

(Continued on page 27)

FISH BOWL

Bertha Harris

At the bottom of the seed store,
luminescent bubbles
multiply behind the glass and
split on the surface of
the aquarium's water
where
the fish bite oxygen;

where all is green or
cadmium-lighted
in the waving algae,
the fish are swimming above the
granite chips
to and fro and violet-striped
or transparent.

Where all the walls are
underwater,
steel-reinforced,
measured to the moving gills
drinking sunless shadows,
noiselessness stampedes.

Stairs of thirty-two steps
lead up to the sale of orange-boxed
turtle food and turtles
and to sun-netted people
floating in the street.

SUGGESTION TO MARC CHAGALL

Bertha Harris

long-legged elephants
are a peculiarity
especially when birds
that are red and green-legged
sport up and down
on their wrinkled backs.

the elephant in the corner
sleeps in the fallen plaster,
but when he awakens,
the birds hang
their toes
over his eyeballs,
instigate conversation,
and annoy the absolute hell
out of him.
they try to explain that

no elephant ever had sound-proof
living conditions.

This Side of the Street

NANCY READ KIMMEL

Jerry coasted up the low sand bank that rose from this side of the street. He dragged his legs to stop the bike in front of the wooden steps and as he leaned it against them, the bread fell out of the basket.

Jenny sat on the top step, sucking on the splint-ered end of a small twig. She laughed as the bread fell. Jerry picked it up, stuffed it back in the paper sack, and climbed the steps. Jenny giggled again and stuck out dirty, skinny fingers to her brother.

"Some bread, Jerry. Some bread."

She had dimples in each cheek, up near her eyes, and they made deep little pits that Jerry liked to fit his finger in. He broke the bread loaf in the middle and handed her a piece. She held the twig between her knees as she ate the bread, cooing a little song and rubbing her left knee with the palm of her hand.

In the front room his mother was standing beside the large iron stove, poking the fire with a long piece of kindling. Water ran down her long nose and she wiped her face against her shoulder as she straightened up.

"Did you have enough for it all?" she said, brushing strands of black hair back off her forehead. "Maybe we can get the boy to take a little soup."

Jerry sat down on an orange crate. "I had just enough 'cept for Gramp's cigarettes. Gave Jenny some bread. It's a long way to Dollars Corners. Why do I have to shop out there now? Why can't I go to town anymore?"

His mother came close to him and breathed hot in his face.

"I'll tell you one more time and don't you forget it. You always know it, do you hear? We can't shop in town because they won't sell us anything in town. They won't sell us anything in town because they is scared to. They is scared to because they been told not to. You know who told them not to sell us food? You know?"

Jerry shook his head and grinned.

His mother jerked him to the door and pointed his face across the street. "They did. Them bastards and whores that live in the beautiful houses you like so much. They starve us to death and sit over there

and watch. Damn you Halls. Damn you. You ain't satisfied with owning ever building and ever piece of land in this town 'cept this. You even gotta own us. Well, we ain't gonna starve. We'll sit here and rot because we got one thing you want that you ain't gonna get, not ever. They wants this house and this land, Jerry. It ain't a pretty picture over here for them. They wants to plant a row of trees to shut off the tracks. They don't like us here. Well, we've been here a long time and we're staying, you hear? Don't you ever thing of leaving. Food or no food, we're staying." She spat down the steps at the houses across the street.

"You ever see one, you spit on him just like that, you hear?"

Jerry laughed. He liked his mother to scream. Her face got red and her black eyes shone like coal. He spat off the porch the way she had done. He laughed at the fun.

She turned down her mouth and stared at him. "You ain't got sense enough to be hungry. You don't ever forget what I told you though. You better have sense enough to remember. You don't ever forget what I told you, you idiot."

She went back in the house to look in the grocery sack.

Jerry remembered the boys at school teaching him to say that word. He would stand up in front of the class and say "My name is Jerry Way. I am a idiot." They would laugh and laugh. They all liked him. He said it all the time until his mother hit him. She never laughed at it so he didn't say it any more.

Mrs. Way dumped the bag out onto the table. "What did you break the whole loaf for? Want it to dry up?"

Jerry made a circle with his toe in the dirt on the floor. "It fell out of the basket. I gave Jenny some bread."

There were two beds in the large room. From the one in the far corner beyond the stove came whimpering little cries, like puppies' or small babies'.

Mrs. Way moved to the sounds and sat down on the bed.

"Baby Bobby. Baby Bobby. Speak to Mama. Do you want some soup? Jerry's brought some soup.

The child in the bed tossed with fever, and his dark brown hair had grown long and matted in his illness. The small chest showed with sharp ribs as he fought to breathe. She bent down close to him and laid her cheek on his forehead.

"Baby Bobby. Ain't you ever gonna speak to me again?"

Jerry stood beside her. "He looks hot, don't he? Looks real hot. Want me to get some water for him?"

His mother nodded so he went back down the front steps and filled a bucket from the large iron pump in the side yard. The water overflowed the bucket and made a dark lake in the red dust. Then the lake disappeared. Jerry pumped some more water and this time the lake grew bigger. Then it went away. He pumped some more, and then some more. His feet were getting wet and he walked around in the lake.

His mother leaned out of the window. "Jerry!"

He looked at her and then he picked up the bucket and went back up the stairs. Jenny was chewing on the twig and stretched out her dirty palm.

"Some bread, Jerry. Some bread."

"I ain't got the bread."

Jerry set the bucket down by the side of the bed. He looked around in the knotted bed clothes for a rag. He dipped it in the water and squeezed it on the boy and dipped it and squeezed it and dipped it and squeezed it until his mother told him to stop. Bobby's shirt and pants and all around him in the bed were wet. He stopped tossing and lay still.

"He stopped, Mama." Mrs. Way came close to the bed and looked at her son.

"That'll cool him some. Come eat and then I'll see if I can get him to take some soup. Get your Grandpa."

Jerry went into the next room. There wasn't any furniture in this room except a mattress that lay in the middle of the floor in front of the back door. An old man lay curled up in a ball on the mattress. His hands were tucked up under his chin and his beard stuck straight out. It was yellowed and streaked from tobacco. Jerry nudged him with his foot.

"Gramps. Gramps. Come eat."

Gramps blinked his eyes. They were very blue and very pale. He sat up and stuck his feet out.

"Time to eat, huh? Time to eat. You can tell it's summer when it's time to eat and it ain't dark yet. Yep, it's time to eat 'cause you feel it inside. Ain't that right boy?"

He leaned over on an elbow, bent his knees, leaned back on them and stood up. "Hot day so I

took a little nap." His beard wagged up and down as he talked and he flattened it to his chest as he stamped his feet on the floor and then made little hops in a circle.

"Hee, hee. It's time to eat."

Jerry walked back into the front room and sat down on the bed opposite the sick boy. His grandfather followed him and sat down beside him. He leaned over and whispered in Jerry's ear.

"Did you get my smokes, boy?"

Jerry scratched his ear because the beard tickled. "No, I didn't have enough."

The old man sat with his hands between his legs for awhile, rubbing his brown finger tips together. "Sure wish I had a smoke." He mumbled to himself, blinking his eyes. "Sure wish I had a smoke." He leaned over sideways and put his feet up on the bed behind Jerry and pulled his knees up towards his chin and closed his pale blue eyes.

Mrs. Way poured some beans out of a can onto some cracked plates. There was a fat piece of meat with each pile of beans.

"Don't go to sleep, Pa. You have to eat."

She put a piece of bread on the plate and set it down on the floor near the old man. She pinched him on the arm.

"Eat it while you got it to eat. Jerry, get Jenny in."

Jerry got up from the end of the bed and went out the door to the porch. Jenny was down in the dirt at the foot of the stairs. She had caught a cockroach and held it in her fist. She screamed with delight when she saw Jerry.

"Jerry. Jerry. Jenny caught a bug. He is a nice bug, Jerry. Look at him." She made a small crack between her fingers and the roach moved so Jerry could see his shiny back.

"Let me have it, Jenny." He put his hand around her fist and pulled her arms out with his left hand. She let the roach go in Jerry's palm. It wiggled and squirmed and Jerry caught it with two fingers and held it up so the legs wiggled free. Jenny laughed.

"I need a wire."

Jenny looked around in the dirt until she found a scrap of wire and handed it to him. He stuck it through the center of the roach and it wiggled and stopped wiggling. He gave it back to Jenny.

"He is dead. Oooooooh. He is dead." Jenny held the wire and moved the roach's legs with her fingers. "He doesn't move anymore." She waved the wire back and forth and the roach's wings flew up.

"Jerry. Bring Jenny to eat." Mrs. Way stood in the open door. She had unbuttoned the top of her dress from the heat and Jerry stared at her.

Jenny squealed as she ran up the steps. "Look, Mama, look. Jerry killed the bug. See the bug, Mama." She stuck the roach up to her mother's face.

Mrs. Way bent down and picked up the little girl. "Come in, Jerry, and eat."

Jerry walked up the steps two at a time and turned on the top one to look across the street. The sun had set and some lights had been turned on at Mr. Barclay Halls'.

"One, two, three, four, five . . ." Jerry counted the windows on the front of the house. There were fourteen windows. Six of them had lights on. One window had a pink light. Jerry liked pink. Once he had to paint a flag at school and he mixed the red and white together to make it a pink flag. In between the Hall house and the Blakely house next door was a tall row of holly bushes which made a thick wall and one couldn't see from house to house. There were twelve windows on the front of the Blakely house. Six of these had lights on. Jerry waited to see if any more would come on. They didn't, so he went in and sat on the foot of the bed next to Gramps.

"Your food is cold, Jerry." Gramps blinked his pale blue eyes and wagged his beard. He had lain down on the bed again. His empty plate was on the floor. Jerry ate his beans in four bites and stuck his fork in the piece of meat. He chewed on it. Then he put the plate under the bed. "There are six lights on across the street," he said.

His mother stopped feeding Jenny. She stood up. Her hair hung way down around her shoulders and across her eyes. It was black and thick and knotted.

Gramps moved on the bed. "Thought I might take a little trip."

"Where to, Gramps?"

"Well, Jerry, think I might take a little trip to Atlanta." He smiled and breathed deep.

Mrs. Way stared at him. "What do you mean, Atlanta? What are you talking about going to Atlanta for? You ain't got no money."

"I got a little. Been saving it for smokes. It don't take much to get to Atlanta. Lizzie went, didn't she? Lizzie went and she didn't have any money. I thought I'd go look for her. Must be a nice place or she'd be coming back."

"Mama didn't go to Atlanta, Pa. Mama died and she's buried over in the cemetery. You know that. You was here when she died. She ain't ever been to Atlanta."

"Nope, she ain't daid. I don't believe you. She ain't dead. She always did pine to go to Atlanta and I reckon that's where she's at." He smiled. "Reckon I'll go find her one of these days, even if I can't go tomorrow. Reckon I'll go the next day." He grinned and closed his eyes.

"Don't you count them windows anymore, Jerry," Mrs. Way said. "You spit at them, you hear?"

Jerry smiled and stretched out beside Gramps. He was tired but Gramps didn't smell good, so he got off the bed and sat on the floor where Jenny was playing with the cockroach.

"He is pretty, Jerry."

Bobby began to whimper again. Mrs. Way was sitting beside him on the bed. She had dampened another rag and spread it across his chest. She opened one of his eyes with her finger but he wouldn't look at her.

"Baby Bobby. Baby Bobby. Do you want some soup? Do you want me to feed you some soup?"

Jenny crawled along the floor and pulled herself up at her mother's knees.

"Jenny is the baby. Jenny is Baby Jenny. Bobby. Bobby. Baby Jenny. Bobby is asleep." She laughed and laid her head on her mother's knees.

Mrs. Way scooped her up and laid her on the bed next to Gramps. "Go to sleep, Jenny. Go to sleep." Jenny went to sleep.

Mrs. Way heated some soup in a small pan. She took a spoon and sat beside Bobby with the soup in her lap. Jerry got up from the floor and went out on the porch. He spat from the top step down onto the ground as far towards the edge of the street as he could make it go. Then he went to the second step and spat again. He did this on each step. Then he went to the top of the sand bank, and this time it went half way across the street. His mouth was getting dry and he went around to the pump and began to make lakes in the dust, but it was in the shadow from the house and he couldn't see them so well, so he sat down at the foot of the steps. He counted the windows of the two houses again.

Mrs. Way propped Bobby against her and spooned some hot soup into his mouth. It ran out the sides. She gave him some more and it ran out the side. She leaned his head farther back and filled his mouth again with soup. She closed it and held his lips shut. The boy twisted and shook in her arms and when she let him go some soup ran out on the bed. He coughed and jerked his chest and his face was red. His chest moved faster and his mouth opened wide. He coughed again but the cough stuck in his throat and made a gagging, rasping sound. He lay very still until his stomach jerked once and then he lay still again. The soup made a dark stain on the bed. His face turned grey and he began to feel cooler. The pan clattered and the soup spilled on the floor.

She sat very still and listened. She could hear Gramps snoring and the crickets outside and cars

passing, but she could not hear the boy breathing. She laid her head against his swollen chest. She could not hear his heart beating. She stared at his face and he did not move or speak to her, and she got up and went out on the front porch.

She sat down on the bottom step next to Jerry. He was counting the stars.

"Tell me about the day Bobby found the flowers." Her hair hung across her eyes and Jerry could not see them.

He closed his eyes and the picture came on as if he had turned a button.

"We went out after lunch and were playing behind the house at the top of the hill. It goes down into the gully. We didn't go down into the gully 'cause one day we did and rocks came down on us when the train went past. We were making a big pile out of the rocks we could find at the top of the hill. One day we are going to build a new house. A house like the ones across the street." He opened his eyes to look at the houses across the street and the picture went off.

"What happened then?" His mother stared at the ground.

Jerry closed his eyes. "We made a big pile and I liked it a lot. I went to get a few more and then I sat down beside it to look at the rocks. Some of them were pretty. There was one that looked even prettier. It was pink colored. Bobby wanted to sit and look at them too. He liked the pink rock. I sent him to get some more 'cause it will take a lot of rocks to build a big house. Bobby went far off 'cause he couldn't find any rocks. He crossed the street, I guess. Yes. He crossed the street. Then he came back. He had a handful of purple flowers. He gave me one, but it didn't smell and it was not as big as the pink rock. He said there were lots of purple flowers behind the house across the street. I guess he meant the Blakely house. Yes. He meant the Blakely house. He took the flowers in the house to show them to Mama. I heard Mama laugh. She put them in some water and sat them in the middle of the floor and sat down beside them and laughed and laughed. Bobby sat down beside them and laughed and when I came in I laughed too. Mama said he was a good boy and to get her some more when those died. Bobby went back but a nigger came out and said to get out or he'd hit him, so he couldn't get any more. He looked for purple flowers near the railroad tracks but he couldn't find any. One day he crossed the tracks but there weren't any there. Then he got sick. He likes purple flowers better than the rocks, I guess."

Jerry opened his eyes. "When he gets better will he get some more flowers, Mama?"

She looked at him with her glowing eyes. "I don't want any more. Not any more. He was a smart boy. He would've done good in school. You ain't done

good in school. You ain't done nothing in school but count up them horses and win that bike. Bobby was a smart boy."

Jerry smiled.

She stood up and walked to the top of the sand bank that rose from this side of the street. She spat at the houses across the street. She shouted then, and her voice was sharp in the soft summer air.

"You damn people. You damn people. What more do you want from me? You come and send my husband away when he's sick. You keep my boy from having some flowers. You keep him from eating."

Then she laughed. "Now he got away. He's so far away you can't never get him. You'll never get him now. And you'll never get this house and this land. You sit over there with your bright lights on and close your door and keep me out, but you ain't always gonna keep me out. I can't touch you now, but when I die I'm gonna come back and get you. You wait. I'll get you for taking my boy."

A car slowed down in the street, but it went on.

She laughed so hard that the tears ran down her cheeks and made streaks in the dust on her face. She ran her hands through her hair as she turned back to Jerry. He laughed because she laughed. It was funny to see her scream at those houses. She picked up a handful of dust and gave it to him.

"See that dirt. See that dirt. That's your dirt. You keep it."

Jerry put it in his pocket.

She went back up the steps and into the house. She picked the little boy up from the damp bed and carried him into the back room and laid him on the mattress. She laid him on his back and folded his arms across his chest. It was dark and she could barely see. She felt behind the door and brought out a glass with some dried flowers in it. She put them next to the mattress and put her head down on him. He felt cold and damp.

"You ain't gonna be cold," she said, as she got up and went to the stove. Taking a piece of dry kindling, she lit it and went back to the room. She lit the mattress and the flowers, and then the papers that lay on the floor near the back door. She left the wood burning near the wall and closed the door and went into the front room.

She shook her father. "Get up and take Baby Jenny outside. It is hot in here."

Gramps blinked his blue eyes as Baby Jenny was put in his arms.

"Try not to wake her up." Mrs. Way brushed a fly off the baby's face. The old man went down the front steps.

"What are you doing, Jerry?"

Cars began to stop in the street and people gathered. Jerry smiled at the people but they couldn't

see him sitting in the grass. The people all looked pretty. They looked pink, too. He couldn't look at them long because the fire was gold.

"Why don't the fire engines come?" a woman shouted.

"Reckon the Halls is burning off the land," her husband said.

"Is anyone in there?" One of the Blakely women stood on the sidewalk. Her pale blue hair looked purplish in the light from the fire. No one answered her and she moved back onto her front lawn.

The fire made wonderful snapping noises and crashes and Jerry was counting the snaps. Jenny waked up and rubbed her eyes in the glare.

"Where's Mama?"

Jerry smiled. "I guess she's inside with Bobby. He's sick."

Jenny laughed and leaned back against her grandfather.

"I'd sure like a smoke," he said. "I'd sure like to get a smoke. Let's go to town and get some smokes and come back. I'd like a smoke."

"We can't get any in town. They won't sell us anything."

"We can go out to Dollars Corners, can't we? It's not too far. I'd sure like a smoke."

"I could ride you on my bike." Jerry stood up and started toward the house and then he came back. "It's too hot. I guess I can't get it now. We can walk."

Jerry laughed. "I'm missing the windows. The lights upstairs just came on."

Jenny stirred in Gramps' arms and he settled her down in his lap. He sat still and didn't say anything.

The house burned quickly behind them. The wood was old and dry. The fire ate rapidly at the aged walls, and burned the door between the rooms as it spread to the front of the house and the street, filling the air with its golden light and pungent smells in the billowing smoke. The summer night became heavier as the flames lapped at the sky.

The old man and the young boy felt the flames at their back and moved to the edge of the street to watch. Jenny slept on.

"It's pretty," Jerry smiled. "It's pink and red and golden."

The baby grew heavy in his arms and the fire was hot, so the old man moved away and sat down in the grass off to the side of the house. Jerry followed him and sat down beside him and watched how golden the flames made his face and hair. He looked beautiful in the flames.

He helped Gramps up and they walked into the dark, away from the fire.

The fire engine came slowly, without sirens.

"Why didn't you come sooner?" Gold and yellow lights moved on Miss Blakely's face as she stood in the street.

"Sorry, Miss Blakely, but the engine just wouldn't turn over."

"The trees and grass are dry. The fire is spreading across the street. If the wind rises this whole side of the street will burn. This side, do you hear?"

"Yes, m'am, we'll stop it now." The men began to unwind the hose.

The lights at the Hall mansion were all out as Jerry walked by. He could see the gold flames reflected in the glass.

"Gramps? Where will we sleep if the fire is still on when we come back?"

Gramps smiled in the dark. "I reckon we can go to Atlanta. Lizzie went to Atlanta. I reckon we can go to Atlanta."

"It's a long way to Atlanta, isn't it?" Jerry was counting the squares in the sidewalk. There were twenty squares so far.

"I reckon we can make it." They turned the corner and the fire did not burn in these windows. Jerry put his hands in his pockets. There was dirt in one, so he dumped it out and put his hand in. He had lost count of the squares and began again.

COVER EVERY TRACK

(Continued from page 13)

such a long squall. Maybe a genie had been in the bottle this morning and I had set him free to move above the clouds blowing rain down upon us as long as he liked with his bulging eyes and puffy cheeks and ears that were pointed and long. Wherever she was with him, she would be safe. He was stronger than harm. The genie blew on — laughing at the fun he had whisked away from us like a rainbow-hued bubble we had seen but never reached.

When the afternoon was spent, it began to grow still. I opened the door and went out to see the sun set. The sand was packed hard, breaking into lumps where I walked. The sun dropped behind our house and the long shadows began to spread together until darkness covered the beach like the tide. Water and sand blended, and what they had become was all black. The whiteness was gone and tomorrow when it came again, we would be gone. A breeze fanned my hair against my face. There were voices in the breeze—Aunt Kate's mingled with his in its gentleness. I turned and saw their figures, blurred, but darker than the twilight around them. I would

watch, but my head swam suddenly and I turned away, trying to get back to the house, out of the darkness that made me stumble in haste. I tried to look ahead, but all in front of my eyes was the thing I knew I had just seen. He had been kissing Aunt Kate. I was almost to the house when I heard a sudden rush of footsteps behind me and I turned just as Gard caught me round the waist. I struggled free of his grasp and, just as he ran away, reached down, scooped up great handfuls of the wet sand and flung them hard after the horrid boy.

The next morning, when Mother woke me up to help her, it was dark. She would finish packing while Aunt Kate fixed breakfast. Then we would wake up Cissie and Gard long enough to settle them in the car and start driving while it was still cool. We worked quietly in the lightening rooms, then ate in silence. There was little left to do. Mother sent me upstairs to rouse the twins and, when I came down again, I could hear her explaining something to Aunt Kate in the assumptive tone she loved to use.

"Why, I wouldn't think of leaving without saying good-bye. He'll be here soon anyway. We're not in that much of a hurry, Kate. I'd feel awful if we just sped away now."

Aunt Kate started to say something that Mother interrupted with an exasperated, "Now, Kate." But Aunt Katherine's voice broke in clear and firm this time, "There'll be no need to wait. I'm certain that he won't come."

I went back up to the twins and, in a few moments, Mother followed to take them downstairs. Only some small things left to pack now and then we waited in the car for Mother to make her final check inside before she locked the door and gave it one last jerk for assurance. There were two things I always remembered to do as we left the island. I looked back once to tell our house goodbye, if, perhaps, I should never see it again. And I leaned my head out the car to hear the marsh grass rustling in the morning breezes that stirred in the low place just before the car pulled up and onto the black road that wound towards the mainland.

BLUE STAR BABY

(Continued from page 6)

Daddy came in and said, "Let's go, Snooks." So we went to hoe in the garden. While we were hoeing, a truck drove up to the house. I went to see what they wanted, but Daddy said he guessed he'd keep on hoeing.

The men brought the Frigidaire box out and put it in the back of the truck. Mother was standing in the door watching them.

"What are they doing?" I asked.

Mother said, "Don't ask me questions."

I didn't know what the men were going to do with the Frigidaire.

"Do you want me to tell Daddy?" I said.

"He knows all about it. He did it all himself," Mother said. She went into the house, but I stayed to watch the men. They tied the Frigidaire down with ropes so he couldn't get away. I thought they would put that baby in the box but they didn't. They left her with us. When they drove away, the Frigidaire was jumping up and down trying to get loose.

In the kitchen there was a funny spot on the floor where the Frigidaire had been. It was shiny and new. The kitchen didn't look right.

Mother was in the bedroom. She was crying. She was rocking the baby and crying.

"Do you hurt, Mother?" I said.

"Hush."

"Why are you crying, Mother?"

"Your Daddy doesn't love you," she said. "He loves little strange children better than he loves you. He doesn't love the baby either."

"He took the Frigidaire away to send money to little strange children."

But that wasn't right. I knew that Daddy loved me. He bought me a red pocketbook for my birthday. Maybe he didn't love that baby, but he loved me."

"Come fix us some dinner," I said, but she wouldn't. She didn't fix us any dinner all day. She just sat there rocking that baby. Daddy fixed dinner for me and him.

The next day Daddy went off and came back in a truck. He had a big wooden box in the back. He put it out on the back porch.

"What is it?" I asked.

"It's an icebox," he said. "It's to keep the baby's milk cold."

That big green box is sitting out on the back porch now. Everyday the ice man comes by and puts in a big chunk of ice for it to eat. It doesn't breathe at all. I think it's dead, but it keeps that baby's milk from spoiling.

Yesterday that baby had a tooth and all the neighbors came over to see it. I don't know what's so wonderful about that. I have a whole mouth full of teeth and they never look at me. Mother told them all about Aunt Dora and how they only had beans in the house. She told them I hit the baby with my pocketbook. That made me so mad I went out back and jumped off the icebox. I didn't hit that

baby. When I hit the porch, Mother and all the neighbors came running out there. Mother started crying and said I had broken my nose. All the neighbors stood around looking at me. They went to the mill and got Daddy and he got a doctor and he put this big bandage around my face.

That baby has been crying all morning, but Mother just told it to hush and she went and got some ice cream for me. She got my pocketbook out of the top drawer. I have it right here with me. I looked inside for the grapefruit, but it wasn't there. I get so tired of staying in the house. The doctor said I'd have to be careful. I think I'll have Mother come in here and read me a story.

DEAR CHILDREN

(Continued from page 19)

from after lunch until dinner time, and you aren't going to do *anything*. WHAT? I said. You aren't going to do anything at all, she said, and don't let me catch you trying to do anything. You are going to learn just how bad idleness and wasted time are. And she ate another jellied cherry and puffed out of the room.

Now I ask you, was that fair? Certainly not. In the first place, I didn't deserve it because I most certainly had not been wasting time. Look at all the pieces I memorised and just think about all the fun I had taking the short cut through the woods and wire and stuff, just like in the movies, and I got all what a very lot I learned about Nature. (I have thir-than any other girl in my Blue Bird troupe, so there.) And even if I had been guilty of all that idleness and wasted time, which I wasn't, is that any way to punish me, to make me learn better? To lock me up for five hours a day and *make* me waste time? Is that Justice? I ask you to consider all this. Children of the World (who have to live with parents and piano teachers), and I'm quite certain that you will agree that a gross injustice has been committed. We must take action, we must stick together and see to it that Justice is done, we must fight for our rights to the finish. And if we succeed, Children of the World, we shall not have fought in vain, for people will remember us and say This was their finest hour. Farewell now, remember the Cause, and let me say that if I should perish in this prison, I should have no objections to your raising a statue to me. In fact, it would be the proper thing for you to do, I really do think.

The Panelists

(Editor's note: For the fifteenth anniversary of the Arts Festival a number of people who have been associated with the Writing Program in past years have been invited to return along with several new guests. These writers and editors will participate in panel discussions of this issue during the Festival.)

CAROLINE GORDON is the wife of poet Allan Tate. The Tates are both former Woman's College faculty members. Miss Gordon is the author of *The Malefactors* and other novels.

DORIS BETTS, a former Coraddi staff member, is the author of a short story collection *The Gentle Insurrection* and a novel *Tall Houses in Winter*.

FRANCES GRAY PATTON lives in Durham, N. C. and is the author of many short stories and *Good Morning, Miss Dove*.

HENRY RAGO, poet and critic, is editor of *Poetry* magazine.

HIRAM HAYDN, a one-time Woman's College faculty member, is a critic and novelist. He is an editor for Random House and teaches at the New School for Social Research.

MURRAY NOSS, Woman's College writing teacher, is a poet whose work appeared in *Three New Poets*.

Arts Festival Calendar

- February 25 — BACK TO METHUSELAH by Bernard Shaw, with Tyrone Power, Faye Emerson, Arthur Treacher; presented by The Theatre Guild and Arnold Moss and sponsored by The Theatre of The Woman's College.
- March 6, 7, 8— THE CHERRY ORCHARD by Anton Chekhov, presented by The Theatre of The Woman's College, Aycock Auditorium, 8:00 p.m.
- March 7-23 — Student exhibition of woodcuts, Library Lecture Hall Corridor.
- March 12 — Criticism of student-acted scenes, Library Lecture Hall, 2:30 p.m.
- March 12 — Lecture, "The Modern Theatre," Library Lecture Hall, 8:00 p.m.
- March 12-
April 1 — Exhibition of contemporary American and European painting, Elliott Hall Gallery.
- March 13 — Lecture, "Trends in contemporary European and American painting," by visiting artist Frederick Thursz, Library Lecture Hall, 10:00 a.m.
- March 13 — Art exhibition tour, Elliott Hall Gallery, 2:00 p.m.
- March 13 — Criticism of student painting, studio in basement of Stone Building, 4:00 p.m.
- March 13 — Program of Music by Hindemith, Pezotti, Welton Marquis; Production-in-the-round of *Histoire du Soldat* by Igor Stravinsky; joint presentation by the departments of Drama and Dance and the School of Music, Elliott Hall Ballroom, 8:30 p.m.
- March 14 — Student choreography from Southern colleges, Coleman Gymnasium, 2:00 p.m.
- March 14 — Panel discussion of poetry in the Arts Festival Coraddi (Henry Rago, Murray Noss, Robert Watson, moderator), Library Lecture Hall, 2:00 p.m.
- March 14 — "The Far Blue Peaks of Helicon," Lecture by Caroline Gordon, Library Lecture Hall, 8:00 p.m.
- March 15 — Panel discussion of fiction in the Arts Festival Coraddi (Caroline Gordon, Frances Gray Patton, Doris Betts, and Hiram Haydn), Library Lecture Hall, 10:00 a.m.
- March 15 — Dance master class, conducted by Merce Cunningham, Coleman Gymnasium, 10:00 a.m.
- March 15 — Lecture-recital by John Cage, Elliott Hall Ballroom, 3:30 p.m.
- March 15 — Student-sponsored coffee hour, Elliott Hall Lounge, 4:30 p.m.
- March 15 — Dance concert, Cunningham and company, Aycock Auditorium, 8:00 p.m.
- March 17 — Robert Frost, Elliott Hall Ballroom, 8:00 p.m.



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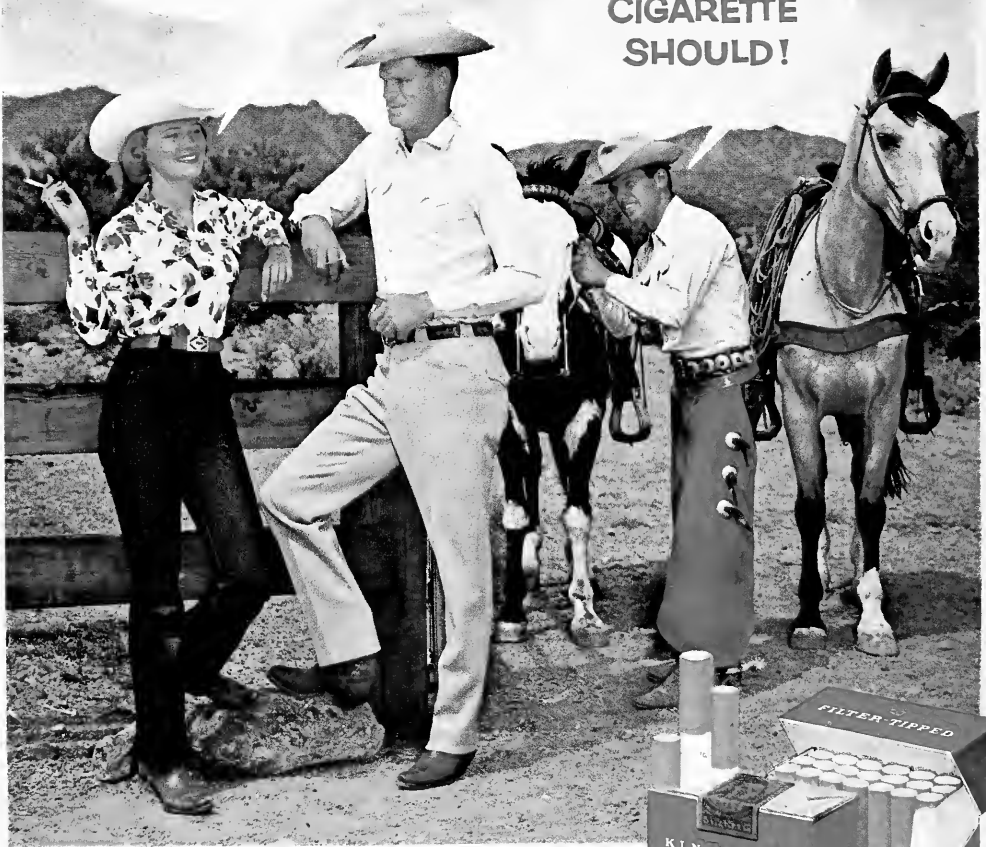
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