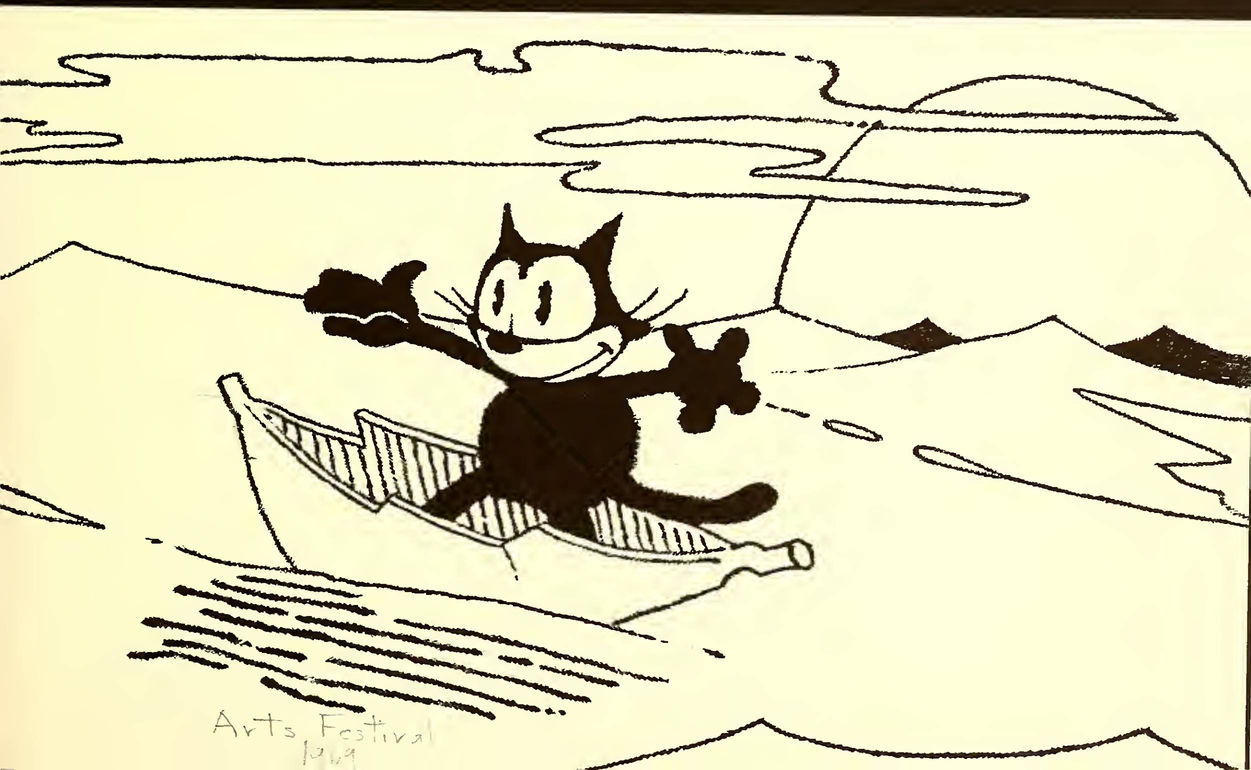

Arts Festival 1969

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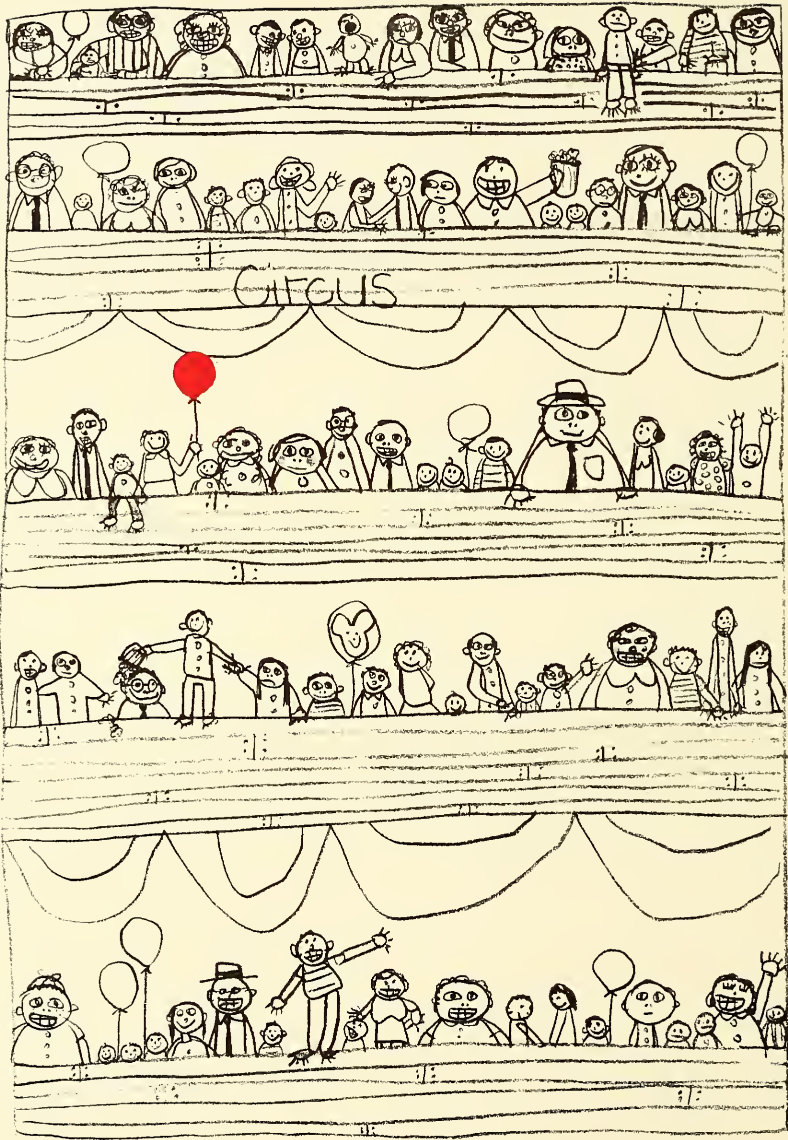
CIRCUS

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CLAUSTROPHOBIA

MARGARET HOFFMAN

A time ago, the moon maybe remembering
Trips to Vienna and Victorian parlors
And orange groves,
Stepped from the doorway
Of some side street
And in a mild flirtation
Fingered some forgotten handkerchief
Long lost and faded.
But, too wan for evenings past
Cast a whim across my path—
Here, some ancient dragon, rusty in centuries,
Fuming more smoke than an automobile's exhaust,
And there, the scent of lilacs blooming wild
One hundred years ago,
And lastly, the hoofbeats of a knight
On horseback, riding into the hour.
And for this whim I built a castle down
Among night towns of dreams.

But, darker than the darkest hell,
The moonlight's midnight madness
Had cast a hideous spell,
Of silver lamps on silver alleyways,
And silver signs on silver walls
Advertizing silver day-old films
Until a lunacy of lunar shadows
Stalked the night.
So, now in a Howard Johnson restaurant
Hallucinations of dragons lumber by.
Now, in the ten P.M.'s of October
Lilacs stifle the time.
And now, the horrifying knock
Of that knight on horseback
Beats against my castle door.
For the past closes in on us
Instead of leaving,
And mocks
The locks
We bolt for escape in
Castle walls.

CORINTHIANS I, 13:11

URSULA ALEXANDER

Fluffing at the seams
a too-stuffed bear—his popeyes
hanging loose,

a muscle man of terry cloth
a little squashed and
not quite red,

a gape-mouthed doll
cherubic face still coy but
pockmarks dotting the skull where
ringlets lay,

embrace each other on a dusty
paint curled shelf.

As if for reassurance of their
need, a furry paw rests on the
plastic face, blue vacant eyes
look over much stitched
wounds and bulging
imitation strength.

They lean against a faded
portrait of a bearded man (his eyes
though pale
still stare, a hand
with ineffective fingers
in a calming gesture, glass dulled
by grime of casual neglect)
which, hanging
on an insecurely hammered
nail,
slips a little lower as each
year goes by—
with every shift his gaze more cockeyed still.

THE RESURRECTION

PAT OUTLAW COOPER
WILSON, NORTH CAROLINA

In the morning I shall bend my fingers about your heart;
Your hands take to myself as in the days when we were wed.
I shall not sleep with memories anymore,
And you will not be dead.

So Many Foxes This Year

Jon Sykes

He told Pap not to whip the dog, told him right out to his face. He was like that, my brother Sugar, always ready to speak right out whenever and wherever he pleased. I got to admit he had more guts than me, even though I was four years older; you can bet I'd never say nothing like that to the old man. Pap could of beat the dog all he wanted to and I wouldn't of said nothing—I ain't that much of a fool. Pap wasn't much of one to be fooled around with, specially when he was hunting and specially not by me. I guess I had too much of my mama's blood, and besides, I didn't relish getting my ass busted. But Sugar was just like Pap in a lot of ways, and that was maybe why they didn't get on so good. But me, I figgered that since Pap was my daddy, and since I was seventeen and had been around him long enough to know his ways, I ought to do respect to him for that, if nothing else.

It wasn't that Sugar didn't have no right to say something to Pap about beating the dog—I guess he did have a good enough reason—I guess it was just that Pap was too tired and disgusted over the poor hunting we'd had that morning to put up with a no-good bird dog for very long. You had to be careful around Pap, see, cause he had things figgered out for hisself and nobody was about to change 'em for him. The way Pap seen it, if you paid good money for something and it was supposed to do a certain thing in a certain way ever time you used it, then it ought to act that way, and no other way, ever time you wanted it to. And if it didn't act that way, well hell, you might as well throw it away. That was just the way it was with him, see. Like once he bought this TV from Cleatus Bunker second hand. Pap figgered since he'd paid good money for the TV, even though it was a used one, that it ought to give a good picture ever time he turned it on, which it did for about six weeks. But the first couple days the tube started blinking and striping up, he got so mad he finally raised right up in his chair, ripped out the cord, and took the set in his arms and threw it over into the pasture, which caused the tube to explode, of course, and scare hell out of Salamander, our bull, who jumped the fence. Pap didn't even go after Salamander, but just come back in the house muttering about how he was gonna bust hell out of Cleatus Bunker, which he would of done if Mama hadn't of cried and talked him out of it. It sure was a strange way of doing things, I know, but that was Pap for you. I reckoned that he'd had a hard time of it in his life and if that was the way things was to him, then that was allright with me.

But I wish it could of been a little different with the dog, just for Sugar's sake. With Pap being like that, it was only natural for him to be mad over the way the dog was doing. We'd hunted a whole Satuday morning and had found three good coveys of quail, which wasn't bad, but on the first two we hadn't even got a shot, not even one, cause the dog couldn't wait when she crept up on a covey but would get jumpy and excited and run right square into the birds and scare them up. I guess she thought she could catch one. It must of looked easy to her to just walk right up to the setting birds and bite one of them and carry it off. But it wasn't that simple, and I guess it was really disappointing not to never catch even one. Anyway, it really ticked Pap off. He figgered that since the dog was a Brittany, and was supposed to have breeding papers, and was supposed to of been trained, and had cost a lot of money, then she ought to do right by a covey of birds and not run through barking and jumping and having a frolic before we could even get close enough to shoot. The old man took his hunting serious, see, and he didn't like tramping through the briars and swamps and wallowing through the creeks and weeds in cold weather for nothing. He believed that the Brittany ought to set and hold her set till we come up close enough to shoot and flush up the birds ourselves, no matter how tempting it was to run into them and grab one of them. Since she was trained to do it, then she ought to do it, see, and not dicker around.

But, training or no, she'd run right into all three coveys, yelping and snatching at the quail with her teeth and having a general frolic. I guess it was just early in the hunting season, and she didn't think we ought to be so serious about everthing. Besides, quail is a kinda bird that'll go thundering off at the slightest wrong move. And Pap knowed that, if anybody did, and he should of understood. The first time she done it, he just muttered real low under his breath, then caught her and give her a good scolding, which, if I'd of been the dog, would of been quite enough for me. But when she run them up again in the second field, over by Branscomb's, he run her down and whipped her with a maple limb, which calmed her down enough so's to make him pretty well satisfied that she was gonna do OK from there on. She should of knowed to—she had red marks on her hind legs that you could see even through the hair. She knowed she'd been vicious-whipped when Pap done it. But, all in all, it really didn't do much good when she got to hunting again. A bird-dog is a funny thing, allright.

The thing about it, when he whipped her that first time at Branscomb's, I noticed that Sugar wouldn't watch him do it, but just scrugged up his shoulders and made out like he was looking off down toward the woods. Come to think of it, he acted real quiet and strange from that time on. But I didn't think nothing peculiar of it, though, cause Sugar was mostly always like that. You had to watch him about as much as Pap, cause that kid could be fast. Sugar had a way, just something, you see—kinda surprising and sneaky I'd call it. When he was a kid he had this craving for sweets and candy, so Mama'd put a lump of brown-grain sugar in a handkerchief and purse it up on the end and he'd go around sucking on it like a new calf on its mama's bag. He done that up to a few years back, till he was old enough to be shamed of it, and everbody knowed it and thought it was pretty funny the way he'd sneak around and do it when he thought nobody seen him. Of course his teeth got all bad from it and Pap'd call him 'Sugar-Boy'—that's where we got the name—and he'd blush and get all puffed up, but that was about all. He didn't like it at first, of course—I wouldn't of neither—but he pretty soon got used to being called that—and anyhow I think he liked it better than being called 'Spenser,' which was his real name. But he sure didn't like it when somebody other than one of us kidded him about it. I remember once, just a few years back, me and Sugar and Bandy Lane was playing in the Branscomb woods. Bandy Lane, he was the local smart-ass, who we called 'Banty-Legs' behind his back. He was older than anybody else and of course he always got his way, and on that day in the Branscomb woods I remember he was just dying to play King Arthur of the Round Table or else. Me and Sugar said we'd rather play War, cause we figgered we knowed more about war than Banty-Legs did since our older brother Bob was fighting in Korea at the time and writing home to us about it, but Banty said No we ought to play King Arthur seeing as how his old man had just bought him a Genuine Walt Disney King Arthur Sword & Shield, and besides, all three of us was Americans and would want to be American Soljers, wouldn't we?, and if we was the Americans who was gonna be the Koreans? And you can't have no Korean War without no Koreans, he said, which was logical enough to me and Sugar, even though I thought about offering to be a Korean just for the hell of it. But Banty-Legs would of said that'd be unpatriotic and, besides, my eyes wasn't slanted right, so I didn't bring it up. We'd play Arthur and the Round Table, like Banty wanted. And of course he would be the King since he had all the equipment, and knowed how a king was supposed to do and all. It was all agreed. First thing he'd do, he said, would be to accolade us into the Round Table proper. Well, I figgered he was up to something, cause he'd never wanted to play King Arthur before he got the Genuine Walt Disney equipment—and like I thought, he put the plastic sword on Sugar's shoulder and said real smart-ass like: 'I, King Awther, accolade thee Sir Spenser Sugar-Teat,' and while he had his head throwed back laughing at his own joke, Sugar grabbed a chunk of oak limb in a flash and 'accoladed' ol' Banty right in the mouth three or four times. Being the first time he'd ever done it, it surprised even me—I mean, who would expect a kid to do something like that? I don't know if Banty planned that, or if it just come on him sudden to say it, but he sure was sorry he did say it. He was sore at Sugar for a long time after, cause it took quite a few stitches to patch up his mouth, which was so bad he's still got the scars that make him look like a hare-lip. He swore he'd get Sugar for it, but he never did. Banty's Pa and Pap had a long talk after it happened and Pap finally beat Sugar, but Sugar never would say he was sorry. That Sugar was sure something that time. In a way, I was kinda glad he done it—ol' Banty-Legs sure was a smart-ass.

You see, Sugar always got spite. He didn't think on it none, he just done it. You really couldn't tell when or how, either. And it might be corny and everything, but he had that look on his face after Pap beat the dog that day, that same look he had in the Branscomb woods after he busted Banty. He did have it, I swear. I should of paid more attention to it. You could see it really tore him up when Pap hit her with the maple limb like that. Sugar must of loved the dog, although I guess I wouldn't call it real love, nothing like them 'Lassie' things we used to see on TV: you know, the kind where the dog is standing on a hill beside the boy and the dog's hair is blowing around and the boy's hand is on the dog kinda brother-like and the dog's head is held up real high and all that kind of thing. It wasn't nothing like that at all. Sugar just liked the dog the same way he liked his bicycle or liked his gun or liked his shirt or something, but not like Lassie. This dog didn't even look like Lassie, of course, cause she was a Brittany, like I said. To me she looked like a natural dog, and smelled like a natural dog ought—and she didn't go around saving everbody's life like ol' Lassie used to do. She was a bird-dog, and that was all. As a matter of fact, she didn't have no tail—all Brittanys are born without one—and she was what bird-hunters call a 'liver-and-white' which just meant she was red-brown and white spotted. The only place her hair was long was at the backs of her legs and on her ears. She had a good-shaped head, I got to admit—that's how you tell a good hunting dog, by the head—and her teeth showed she did have good stock. I reckon you'd think she was really something when you see her bouncing like a rabbit through the thickets with them ears laid back, but she was still a dog all the same

to me. But Sugar must of at least thought a little different about her, even though it wasn't like in them Lassie shows.

Anyhow, when she run through the third covey after we'd crossed all the bottoms and creeks to get to Gwyn's rye field, Pap nearly blowed his top at her. It was a big covey too, maybe a dozen birds. Pap was so mad after she scared 'em up, he didn't even send me and Sugar to hunt the single birds like usual. He just told Sugar to run her down and bring her to him.

'What you gonna do?' Sugar said.

'I'm gonna put some sense in her,' Pap said, stripping down another maple limb. 'You just bring her here.'

Well, Sugar's lip quivered—that's one of the clearest things I remember. And, like I said before, he kinda straightened and said right out, 'Pap, don't whip her again. Them birds is just skittish and it ain't her fault. You know they's foxes been running them up this year. Don't beat her no more, Pap. I'm asking you.'

Well, I expected all hell would break loose when I heard that, but at least Pap didn't hit him. He just stopped stripping down the maple and narrowed up his eyes real cold-like at Sugar. 'And you mind your mouth there, boy,' he says. 'A bird-dog got to be taught.' Pap looked him down, holding the maple switch in his hand, and Sugar shut his eyes and swallered and went off to get her like he was told. It must have been hard.

Pap beat her good, too, good enough to draw blood on her legs. 'Next time,' he said when he got through, 'Next time by Ned I'll shoot her.' And I guess he meant that too, cause I'd seen him do it before. All bird hunters got to shoot their dogs once in a while just to make them mind. It wasn't unusual, and it really wasn't bad. Pap'd get way off so as not to hurt her too much, just to sting her enough with some buckshot to remind her what she was supposed to be doing. I guess it didn't hurt no more'n getting whipped. But as it turned out, he didn't mean it exactly like I took it.

After he beat her that last time, Pap put her on a leash so she wouldn't run off and we lit out on a logging road toward Cleatus Bunker's. I dreaded it, and I knowed Sugar dreaded it cause of the dog's sake. I never liked Cleatus Bunker's old cornfields in the first place cause they was nasty and dried up, just like Cleatus hisself. He was the one sold Pap the TV like I said. Once, in the summer, he caught Sugar out here trying to borrow a watermelon for me and him to eat, and Cleatus made him put it back, the bastard. Nobody liked him too much but Pap said that was where we'd go cause Cleatus's was on the way home and besides, he'd heard they was a good bunch of birds up there this year. Pap said if nothing else, if we didn't get no birds, we'd just shoot up in the air and maybe ol' Cleatus'd think we was shooting his cows or something, which would of tickled Pap, cause he was still sore at Cleatus over the TV. Pap could be full of venom sometimes.

It didn't take us long to get there. By that time of year the red-leaf and lespedeza'd already took over the field and covered up the corn stubble where the crop'd been cut down cross-wise to the ground. They was plenty of briars growing too and the whole two acres next to the creek, where we was going, was just covered over in some real tall and brown kind of dead weed which I don't know the name of. At places it was so tall it come to your shoulders and I was always afraid them little spines on the ends of it was going to accidentally trip my trigger. Pap never picked a clean, nice field to hunt in, not even once; it always had to be some awful jungle where the weeds and cockleburrs got in your crotch and armpits and little seeds floated around and got in your nose and made you want to sneeze, which you couldn't do cause you'd scare up Pap's precious birds. I'm telling you, I bet even Bob ain't seen no Koreans with as good a protection as some of them quail. But briars and weeds or no, Pap'd wade right in there like a 1st Calvary assault. Just principle, I guess.

Pap turned the Brittany loose on the lower edge of Cleatus's field. I would of give anything to of just set down and had a smoke, if Pap had of knowed I smoked, but he wasn't much for breaktaking, so we went right on in without stopping. Sugar, who didn't say nothing all the way up here, lagged close behind me, scuffing his boots in the weeds. I fanned out and got even with him so we'd form a kinda flat triangle with Pap, who was ahead of us going into that tall stuff I told about. We'd cut a big swarth across the field behind the dog, see, each of us covering about a fifty-yard section in front of us, with that much shooting range for each shotgun. Pap'd always said that was the best way to cover the most ground with the least men, and I reckon he knowed what he was talking about, cause it always worked out that there wasn't none of a field we didn't see sooner or later.

About five minutes out in the tall stuff, I found a roosting circle around some blowed-down lespedeza and called to Pap. Quails roost overnight with their butts backed up to each other, see, and their droppings are all left in a little ring. Pap said this one was fresh, allright, and he got the dog and made her smell it, which made her forget about the beating she'd just got and start to sniff around like crazy. She knowed right off by the smell that the birds hadn't moved off too far, so, like Brittanys do, she begun to hunt in close little circles going further and further off from the roost with her nose down on the ground, making time in a little half-gallop. She got on a cross-scent and crossed the whole field after it, but Pap hollered at her till she worked herself back around and got back in the roost track again. For a minute half-way out she stopped and wandered around like she'd lost it again, but Pap warned me and Sugar to keep ready, cause he figgered we was far enough out to be on 'em any minute. We walked real careful all the time behind her path, paying as good of attention as we could. Me and Sugar was going into and out of the different patches of tall stuff, and sometimes we could see and sometimes we couldn't. The air was just full of dust and seeds, and briars whipped into our legs, but we stayed ready. The dog hadn't gone ten yards more off her track when she put on the brakes and lowered down in the weeds like a cat.

'Allright!' Pap called. 'She's on 'em. Fan out now.' Me and Sugar raised our shotguns up cross our chests so's to get fast shots and got a little further apart, coming out of the tall weeds again so at least we'd be able to see what we was shooting at. The dog eyed Pap, who was about sixty yards off, and then crouched up and begun half-crawling to where she knowed the birds was. She slid on

her belly till she could probably even see them huddled up together on the ground by now, she was so close. And even though Pap was tensed up, ready to shoot, he talked her excitement down real easy and gentle, like he was talking to a kid: 'Whoa now, easy, easy, eeeeeeasyyynow, whooooooa in there now.' And she knowed what it meant, I guess, cause she moved step over step, real cautious, creeping while she was glancing at Pap. That was a pretty sight when you was there and felt all the tension work up and seen ol' Pap talk to her like that. That Pap, he could out-dog-talk any bird-hunter in the country.

He'd just turned his head to us and said that he was gonna go up now and flush them up, and me and Sugar had just begun to start creeping up ourselves like we knowed to do, when the dog yelped once and bolted straight ahead and then WHOOOOMM! up come the birds over the weeds like a cannon shot. Pap turned and screamed 'Whoa, Whoa!' to her, and then 'Shoot, shoot, SHOOT!' to us—which I did, and Sugar did, and he finally did, but we didn't hit nothing of course cause we was still too far off and the birds had plenty of time to get gone. I'd been so unnerved by them stupid birds exploding up like that I couldn't of hit nothing anyway. I never fail to get hell scared out of me when quails fly up. It's like fourteen thousand bulls all snorting at the same time. They got real short little wings, and fat bodies, and they can go like a bullet. The thing about it is you know they're coming but you don't know when they're coming, only that they are coming sooner or later, and that makes it twice as bad.

After they'd got clean out of sight and the smoke all blowed away, Pap just throwed down his gun, which was unusual. He'd a beat hell out of me or Sugar if we'd a throwed down a gun—but it was allright for him to do it, or least he was too mad to care one way or another. He put his hands on his hips, spit down in the weeds, and just said 'Son of a bitch' real nice and politely, the way he does when he's had it. Then he looks up, straight up, and says, 'She done it again, blame me for a fool, she done it again.'

And the dog knowed she'd done it again and knowed it well, cause when Pap picked up his gun and took off after her in a half-trot, she begun to run off towards the woods with her ears laid back—which I'd of done too, if I'd of seen him coming at me. She circled the whole field a couple of times with her head up keeping an eye on him, but she finally laid down in some dead honeysuckle and waited. No use running from Pap.

Sugar walked over to me and said, 'What's he gonna do?' He craned up his neck.

'Don't know,' I said, but I knowed whatever it was, it was going to be bad this time, cause when Pap caught her he dragged her by the collar way off to the edge of the field and tied her tight with the leash to a little pine sapling. Pap don't tie a dog when he whips it.

Sugar looked at me then and then called out, 'Hey Pap, what you gonna do, Pap?' But Pap didn't even act like he heard him, but just walked off a few steps from the dog and slipped the safety off the twelve-gauge.

'You ain't gonna whip her again are you?' Sugar called, and then I seen that hell no Pap wasn't gonna whip her this time, he was gonna shoot her, but not just to sting her—this time he was gonna shoot her right dead on the spot. It come over me in a second. You know: if a thing don't work, you get rid of it. The dog was no account, see, and he was gonna kill her. Just like that. And she must have knowed it was coming cause when he levelled the twelve-gauge at her she went stark raving wild trying to get away from the leash-hold, jerking and leaping just like I've seen wild deers do. That dog knowed what a pointed gun meant.

The way I remember it then, I seen her double up right in the middle of a leap before I even heard Pap's gun go off and seen the smoke. He shot her broadside without even aiming, and it seemed to me a real long time before she ever fell out of the air into the weeds and kicked a few times. Seemed like she just hung there for the longest time. And then I remember I heard Sugar say 'Son of a bitch' like he was talking to me, and before I could even begin to move to him, he throwed up his gun, levelled it on Pap, and pulled the trigger, and Pap caught his stomach and fell on his side like I've seen cowboys do in movies since then. I felt like I was in a dream when I finally did take off running toward Pap.

Well, I had to tell it all later in court just like it happened, and Judge Bolin said I did a fine job and said he knowed how hard it was on me and everthing to have to tell it, but I really didn't mind. I finally even got to tell it to the newspaper, and even ol' Banty-Legs was pretty impressed, although he didn't say so.

Sugar didn't kill Pap, of course—he was too far off to do that, leastwise not with birdshot. But Pap did get pelleted pretty bad and had to be operated on and stay in the hospital and take nothing but liquids for a long time. But it sure changed him—even Mama noticed how he just laid around muttering to hisself after he got home from the hospital.

Sugar run, but Red Holcomb, the deputy who ain't got but one good eye, caught him that same night crossing the highway toward Brunswick, but they couldn't do much with him since he was so young, so after the trial they sent him up to Anslow hospital where they can keep an eye on him. I brought the dog home and buried her in the back yard and covered the grave real neat with bricks and smoothed it over and took a picture of it to take to Sugar up there, but Mama cried and said that'd be too much for him to stand, so I didn't. I get to see him about once a month now, but he don't say too much when I go.

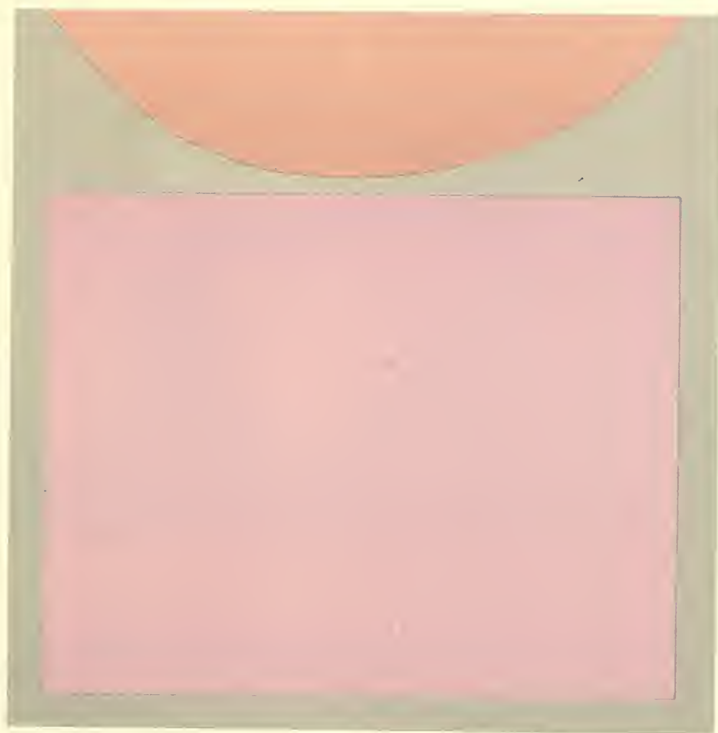
I get his gun down ever now and then when Pap ain't around and clean it to keep off the rust. It's been a long time since it happened, but I'm keeping the gun in good shape for him, cause it's a thing a brother ought to do. Sometimes when I'm cleaning it I stop and I hold it up, just lay it right up on my shoulder and sight down the barrell like I was really aiming — and even though I ain't really thinking about it, there stands Pap, see, over the bloody dog, and I draw up a sharp bead right on his belly and just hold it there, just wait with it right on his gut. You know, I often wonder how it must have felt to Sugar when he really did ease down on the trigger and really let it go. I know I shouldn't, but I think about that sometimes when I hold the gun. I really wonder how it must have felt. Someday I'll get him to tell me.

BIRTHDAY AT EVENING

WILLIAM KEENS

The last thick food is eaten.
Today's last supper eases your body
tó sleep by the garden,
in a chair
in a dream
in the yellow shade of a thorny plum
whose fruit is fallen.
My grandfather, this is the kingdom of peace.
Sleep now; now dream:
that your wish of the cake and candles is given.
She whispers, "Dalla guerra,
dalla guerra non comprende."
Your wife in a navy dress of her forties,
vein and seam stockings
touches your shoulder (the stiff shirt vanishes)
whispers behind you, "Dalla guerra . . ."

This is the measurable kingdom of peace.
And the leaves of the plum dissolve to a mist
of yellow gas upon the garden.
The garden withers, your tongue flickers, your lips bleed.
Sleep.
They are shelling the last town for the evening.
At Belleau Wood the Browning jammed
and you slept three days like a fox in hiding,
your body curled in a red ditch
with others, those like statuary.
Across your brow, a blue vein,
a slope of hair that is the forest,
a blue vein that is the path
back
to the yellow shade of a plum.
"Alberto . . . Alberto . . ."
The guns have resumed,
have found the garden,
your place in the chair.
". . . non comprende . . ."
The fire sings out your name.



A CONVERSATION WITH FAT HARRY ONE BREEZE OF A DAY

Carilee Martin

"Fat Harry, get me a beer."

Fat Harry strolled over and brought back a beer.

"Fat Harry, ya know it's a beautiful day. What a sky. We should be outside taking a ride in the country or something, ya know?"

Fat Harry nodded his head.

"Like, I feel today should be set aside as OFFICIAL KITE-FLYING DAY and everyone should make a kite and there'd be a big contest for the best lookin' and highest flyin' kite of all. Pass the pretzels.

Pretzels passed.

"Mine would be red. No, blue. Year—light blue and I'd call it 'The Cloud'—make it a box kite— and on two sides there'd be a puffy white cloud and on two sides, two of those sexy calendar girls. Yeah, I like that. What do ya think you'd think of THAT!"

Fat Harry thought of what he'd think.

"Ya know, you could make one too. I'd help—know all about kites. My Uncle Albert was a nut about kites. Use to make 'em for us kids. Boy, he made us some great kites. He even made one kite like a little blue ship with great sails and called it— ah, 'The Albertross'. But those days are gone with the wind, I guess."

Fat Harry shivered as if there was a draft from outside.

"Ya know, Fat Harry, time was when I didn't think there was anything in this world better than flyin' a big beautiful kite on a breeze of a day like this one, the wind racing along."

Fat Harry's cheeks began to tingle a little as though a wind were beating against him.

"And you could run and run and let the string out until the kite was almost gobbled up in the deep sky." Fat Harry's eyes squinted and strained.

"Fat Harry, I see that you don't eat much for such a big fella. Well, I better be gettin' back now. S long."

A door closed. Fat Harry leaned to look out the window at the big sky and he wondered.

The Mighty Men Which Were Of Old

Roberta Engleman

Mr. Peter G. West, past 70, past his work and play, and almost past life altogether, always woke at eight in the morning. He felt himself then, that early, not old and stiff (though he would be that when he tried to move) but younger. Like when he was a boy. When he was a boy he delivered papers in the morning. Tom went too.

Tom was younger and somewhat larger too. He tagged along on the coldest mornings, trying to wiggle his toes in his shoes, which were always too small. He dawdled and lingered and listened to sounds absent-mindedly. Pete never guessed then what the dreaming and dawdling was.

"Damn it, Jane," he had said to his wife many years later, "it just wasn't fair. How was it he got so much more than I did out of everything?" Pete had pushed the rough iron gates and crumbled the rust on his fingers as much as Tom, he had smelled the newsprint on the papers on the damp mornings as much as Tom, and God knows he had heard the trains go over the bridge and down to the depot as often, but it was Tom and not Pete who touched and felt the gates and newsprint and heard the trains more keenly, who let them glide into some part of his mind and then, years later, drew them out and wrote them down reincarnated for other people to touch and feel. That had made Tom different. Special.

On some mornings, before Fred moved his long legs and had to remember that they were old, he wished and nearly believed that he could be like Tom if they could start out on the paper routes again. He could taste and smell the fog as well. He had. It was just in the remembering and writing it down. That's what Tom had done and he hadn't.

"But so could I," he told the ceiling he stared at, "if I'd started young enough."

And his wife agreed. She didn't care of course. Tom was unhappy all over two continents, bleeding his heart all over—well, she forgot the rest. But Pete, bless his explosive soul, had run one very small profitable business. Happily. There was one thing about Tom and Pete, though, and that was energy. They both had been geysers, erupting with great glee and great anger, predictably and unpredictably. Tom had burned himself out in forty years, and so had all the brothers and sisters, one by one, in quick flashes or lingering smolders, until now there was only Pete, still erupting sometimes—rarely, still talking a great deal of course, but giving only erratic bursts of energy.

When he came to breakfast that cold morning, wiggling his toes and running his fingers over all the ordinary kitchen objects ("trying to find the soul in the sugar bowl," Jane thought to herself), she knew that her aging volcano was about to erupt one more time.

She waited through his coffee and eggs for some sign that he was thinking about his brother. He left his breakfast unfinished and went to his desk, shuffling all his unanswered mail. Jane waited.

"Jane—" Pete adjusted a letter at arm's length. "I'm going to drive up home. Mrs. McGee wants me to go talk about Tom."

Jane smiled and curled her toes more tightly, damning Mrs. McGee, who was the curator of Tom's house-museum. But if it hadn't been Mrs. McGee it would have been somebody else. "You were just there," she said.

"It's a nice drive."

"Couldn't I go?"

Pete put the letter down. "You don't like when you do."

"Well, this time I do." Why do I want to go? she wondered.

Pete shrugged and agreed. He didn't like her to go home. She always sat in the back of the ladies who listened to Pete make his talk and kept her hands folded, smiling uncomfortably. Pete was sure why she was so uncomfortable. She thought he wasn't happy talking to ladies and Rotary clubs and freshmen in college. She thought it made him to go grieving over Tom.

That wasn't it at all. Jane never comprehended it quite, certainly she never put it in so many words, but all she knew was that talk of Tom made her husband more like Tom, more uncomfortable to be Tom somehow, and that wasn't right. There was much that was admirable about Tom of course, but there was too much of him to fit comfortably inside his skin. And when Pete was taken with the yen to be like Tom, there wasn't enough of Pete to hold his wildness either.

Jane, still wondering just why she wanted to go, put a few things in a bag. It wasn't a long trip. She always packed her mind for these trips more carefully than her suitcase. How to talk to the president of the club. What shall I do if they ask me did I like Tom? I don't like Tom. I liked him when he was alive, all right. But now—Jane mashed hard on the bag until the latch clicked. "Now," she said, "I'm ready, Pete."

Pete had been pacing around the living room saying "Jane let's go. Godamighty, woman, when you go you take the whole—"

She hefted her bag up into his arms and followed him out. He tossed it in the back of the car, and they headed for home, Mrs. McGee, and the library club. Or the latest freshman class.

Mrs. McGee welcomed them to Tom's old house. She let down the rope barriers which kept tourists out of the dining room. She thought it would be nice if they all sat around the supper table for a change.

"For a change?" Jane asked. That meant it was the library club. Pete would like that. He knew every soul in it, and that would mean he would have to go stirring in his memory for things they had never heard before.

"The library club," Mrs. McGee said. "But there are some more people too." She had divined in the past that Jane didn't like the club. Privately she told the members that Mrs. West was a most unliterary person.

Jane shrugged. "Pete will be pleased." She glanced out in the entrance hall where Pete had just run into two lady sightseers. Mrs. McGee ran out and took their money, and Pete promised to take care of them. From in the dining room Jane could hear them. The ladies were delighted at having Pete for a guide. They could throw it up in their husbands' faces for not coming along. Pete dragged them off upstairs to show them Tom's old room.

"He made me Sam," he said while they all clomped up the steps. "He made me Sam, the one who stuttered. I never figured out why Tom said I stuttered."

"We'll take some chairs out of the kitchen," Mrs. McGee said, spoiling the sound of Pete's monologue. "So there'll be enough."

Jane nodded. While they put the chairs around the long table and Mrs. McGee went on and on about the seating arrangement, Jane thought of the dinners with the Wests. She shivered at remembering them. The Wests were combustible in one another's presence. All the men went up like kerosene fires magnificently or in agony, depending on their mood, and the in-laws and the company were always the bystanders. When Pete brought Jane home for the first time, the men had gone to arguing about politics, or maybe the War. She was learning to distinguish among them—the wildest one, the fountainhead of all the energy, was the father, and Tom, the titan, the most arrogantly sure, and Pete. He did stammer then. He was outclassed by the old man's sheer volubility and Tom's quickness. It was no wonder he stammered.

They never came to violence over the War or politics, though. The combustible element was always a small thing. That first night Tom and his father disagreed, as always, and Tom was holding the coffee pot in his hands —he could almost cover it—speaking slowly, turning the pot reflectively. The old man, finding his mind outworked by Tom, had seized the pot from him, poured out the last, and sipped it.

"It's cold!" he declaimed. He had shoved himself back from the table and flung the pot all the way across the room. Jane drew back at the memory. It had gone through a glass cabinet. The old man sat down, satisfied, and Tom shrugged. In that house, he who made the biggest noise—the grandest gesture—was the winner of the fracas. They all knew it.

Mrs. McGee was setting things on the table—a coffee grinder, a little butter churn, a pan for baking bread. "Atmosphere," she said.

Jane went into the kitchen and opened the cabinets until she found the coffee pot, dented from its trip.

"There's nothing special about that," Mrs. McGee said.

"You're right," Jane said. She was about to put it up when she heard Pete coming back down the steps with the ladies.

"Tom said about me that the damn fool worked his way through college and remembered to do everything but study!" Pete roared at himself, and the two ladies smiled automatically.

"I sold magazines. That was when there was a stand up near the square. Where the hotel is. If you go up there now you don't see a thing but one of these parking lot buildings. The name of it—"

"I know which one you mean," one of them said. "We really—"

"We parked there today," Pete continued. "Before they could build if they had to tear down—"

"We really do have to go now, Mr. West. Thank you so much."

They beat a retreat and left Pete to whirl around on Jane. "They were really pretty interested," he said. He plunked himself down and picked up the coffee pot that Jane had set down absent-mindedly. Jane watched his long old fingers. They were flat on the end, as if the life were beginning to abandon him gradually. They stretched over the empty pot gradually, nearly covering it as Tom's had. They rubbed the dent in it reflectively, and his eyes narrowed.

He's doing it, Jane thought. He's trying to be Tom again. He can't do it. He just hasn't got the— Jane never knew what he didn't have. If she had been articulate she might have known. But she was not. And Pete, who poured out words over a waterfall, neither was he. But Jane knew now why she had wanted to come. There was a crisis in the works. There always was when Pete tried to fit Tom into himself. But the life was abandoning Pete, and the rambunctious spirit entering into the old body worked more destruction every time. Jane shivered.

Pete looked up and smiled. "Cold?"

"I have a sweater." She smiled back.

The club came and sat around the supper table. Pete sat at the head, and Jane sat at his right hand. There were mostly the same old ladies, as she had been afraid, but there was one young man with sideburns and a leather briefcase. New college professor, she said to herself. He was introduced as Dr. Warren.

Pete began his talks as he always did, reaching all around the table and shaking hands with all the ladies. "I'm fine, and you? No, it wasn't flu," he was saying. "How is your sister?" And so on around. The professor stood up and shook hands with Pete. They smiled briefly at one another and sat down. Professors were Pete's natural enemies, and as much as Jane disliked the ladies, she disliked professors even more.

"You all know me," Pete said. "I'm Sam. I'll try not to stutter. I don't do really so bad." They all laughed at their private joke.

Pete and the ladies spread out in a little pool of nostalgia about the old days when the town was smaller. They had all heard his speech before, but that was not the point of his giving it. It was more a ritual and a remembering, and for those that had nothing to remember, an escape from tedium.

"Tom and me," he said, "we all had our paper routes, mostly down in Niggertown."

The professor lifted his eyebrows. The word offended him. Pete saw nothing wrong with it. That was what it was.

"He was *the* slowest boy," Pete said. "He was. I worked harder, but he was the smart one. He got more out of looking at things than we ever could in a lifetime."

Jane looked at the coffee pot.

"And people say to me—why—aren't you mad what he made you people out as? And I say no—I was pleased. Tickled. I liked every word he wrote when they showed me." Pete grinned.

The professor shifted his weight. Jane wished he would go away.

When the speech ended Pete pushed back in his chair and looked at the interloper. There were always a few of these who wanted to know if Pete had read what Intellectual X, Y, and Z had written last month, and always the nasty things, never the nice things, as common decency demanded. They were mostly ignorant and didn't know any better. Pete generally shrugged and said it made no difference to Tom and it certainly didn't to him.

"Professor Weisenblatt wrote," the professor began—

Pete stopped him. "It can't make a bit of difference to Tom, so I guess it ought not bother me."

But this professor was a zealot. He straightened up in his chair a little and said earnestly, "But your brother's been dead for thirty years. Surely *you* care what people think." He tried diligently to put it into Pete's words.

Pete said, "Tom's reputation's safe. Why, you think what kind of man Tom was and then you think about your professor whoever. What does it matter what he thinks?"

"But it does matter If he's right. And if everybody knows he's right. Your brother's reputation isn't safe just because your brother is dead."

Oh shut up, Jane thought.

Pete said, "I don't care what people think. Tom, he was good about me. He n-never wrote a bad word about me."

"Yes I know, but—"

Pete reached for the coffee pot. Jane closed her eyes. Pete sat at the head of the table now.

"It doesn't matter what people think anyway, because Tom was—" He gripped the pot. "T-Tom was—" What was Tom? Jane struggled to prompt him, but she could not find any words either. Tom was the man who could find words. Tom could find the soul in the sugar bowl—or the coffee pot—

The coffee pot flew across the table. Pete stared at it spinning on its fat little side under the nose of the professor. Pete's mouth hung open at first almost as wide as the ladies' and the professor's. Jane felt mortified for a moment, and then anxious for Pete, but as the pot spun out, she saw that he was beginning to enjoy himself. He was at the head of the table now. He had not found the soul in the pot, but he had made the biggest noise. He had won the argument. He sat back down, satisfied.

"Why I remember one time," he said, "that Tom and our daddy got in a fight, and that coffee pot flew a mile." He grinned and waited for the ladies to laugh. One or two tittered nervously. The professor looked like a statue. Pete looked puzzled, uncomprehending.

Mrs. McGee said quickly, "We all want to thank Mr. West for driving up today and talking to us. Any of you who have questions may talk to him after the meeting. Thank you very much."

The ladies all stood up in tight, nervous twos and threes and pretended that each was hopelessly absorbed by the others, and they all squeezed out the door . Pete started out after the professor, but he had finally been able to propel himself out of his chair. He had fled.

Finally there was only Jane and Pete and Mrs. McGee, who stared intently at the chairs. Her hands fluttered up and down. "Oh my goodness what a mess, Well, you—you run along and I'll just put all these—I know you must be tired." The front bell jingled and she bolted at it.

Pete slapped the coffee pot and made it spin. Jane felt as if her head were going around inside it.

Pete watched it until it spun out. He walked out into the kitchen. She heard him trying to run water from the taps, but they only creaked and made agonized noises.

"This is the kitchen, where—" Mrs. McGee must have steered the sightseers into the kitchen to avoid seeing Pete.

"And this is—" she stammered.

Jane held her breath.

"West is my name. Pete West. I'm Sam—the one who stuttered."

Jane breathed again. She felt like crying. If you lived for somebody else long enough it became habitual, like drugs, and eventually ravaging. But at least with this there was a time when the ravaging stopped. After that, if you could at least keep breathing you could go on getting up in the morning and going to bed at night and standing on your own feet in between. If you could just do that.

She wandered back into the hall, where Pete was going up the steps with some impressed girls in tow. Freshmen, she said. "I'll show you his room up here."

Jane tucked her head and tried not to cry. She noticed that the little professor had come out of his refuge in the library. He watched Pete going up with his train behind him. The little man looked sad.

"There were giants in the earth in those days," he said.

"Please go away and don't be here when they come down," she said. "He never meant to hurt you with the coffee pot."

"I didn't mean to hurt him either," he said.

"Giants in the earth," Jane repeated.

"He's not the only old man who ever—" The professor stopped. The triteness embarrassed him, not the situation.

"These last months," she said, looking up the steps, "when he gets lonely he goes and sits in his car out in the cemetery, by where Tom is. And then he talks to anybody who—"

The young man cleared his throat nervously and said he was glad to meet her. She did not watch him go.

She listened to the footsteps upstairs. Mrs. McGee came timidly out of the kitchen. "It might be better," Jane said, "and I might not mind, if it were just his past."

ON WATCH

KENT ANDERSON

Darkness and wind lapped into one substance,
Alive and thick in the senses. The look-out,
Still half drunk, dully feels our passage
Through the pounding hull.

On the bridge,
Helmsman and mate are silent.
Dull ringing of the wheel's meshing works,
The creaking deck,
A cough—.
Twin chronometers reckon time
While radar's green span sweeps the distance,
Groping its way toward dawn.

SIRMIO FROM AFAR
AFTER CATULLUS 31

MICHAEL PATRICK O'CONNOR

What is more pleasant than trouble dispelled?
Like a play when it's over and the role all
played out these moments at home round off
the drama. The words are so tired and easy
to use. Easy to drive when the climax is gone
when the outcome is clear. And we sink,
tired, from travel, into the bosom of the
blessed house gods.

Beyond the gingham curtains he'd brought her,
over the clutter of cans to be emptied
and clotheslines strung
with phantoms of the family,
above the clap-board wall
where cats perform their midnight acrobatics,
shadows leaping large into
the alley way below,
she watches
and she waits
as the sun rusts on the rooftops.

It's like a wound to her, the sun;
a cancer in the sky
that eats into the shabbiness
and warms the rats;
she would leave,
were it not for him,
the white man with his fine silk coat
and gingham curtains
and promises;
she waits
and she watches
one of the midnight cats
chasing its tail in the sun.

MARIANE GINGHER

A WALK THROUGH DARKNESS

Vickie Higgins

The place was a deep cave
dripping black water,
where light did not enter
and where I stood alone
waiting to be absorbed.

The light has never
played over these stones.
They lie together
drawing no heat
but gaining
a hint
of hearth fire
from their own
cold-touching
closeness.

A long snake curled
and hissed
inviting sounds.

Snake
with flat head
and shiny body
twist around me
slide along my back
and put your face
close to mine.

A walk through darkness
with no stars
and no slice of moon,
just footsteps
eking out night sounds
on a hard street,
cold and
unchanged
by my passing
and me,
singing softly to myself.

WALKING

JUNE MILBY

Night and cold, and the air around me is thick with dreams.
In the lamplight, it is quiet, the leafnotes are far away.
I am separated here in the open,
My feet sound, my only companions.

Yesterday, on these same bricks, snowflakes
Died glistening deaths. I know, I walked here
Then, too, and they brushed my cheeks in passing.

Stars, stark in the cold patch of black above
Like eyeglasses pointing at me.
I want to lie naked on the frozen ground
To feel my skin prickled by the dead grass.

A swirl of wind just forced the leaves to dance with
My hair and told me that I have a body
Beneath my clothes. Swisshh

I am drunk on night air.
I want to be the longest living young thing
Ever created, to fly, shouting, up mountains
Of wheat and barley.

Maybe in my next life, I can be a leaf
Multicolored and unwormeaten,
Fly golden in the sun and rot warmly
Into good black earth,
So that I can be sifted through fingers.
Maybe not. Maybe I'll learn to parachute instead.

Animal Crackers

Marie Nahikian

No one ever told me where Cleave came from. He was just sitting at the table one day at lunch. With twenty of us living in the house it was easy to miss an occasional guest. But I heard him and Randy talking about being vegetarians and that day there wasn't much else to eat.

After lunch I went upstairs to the big living room on the pretense of reading. Almost everyone had gone for the afternoon. Part of the project that summer was to devise research projects for yourself. So it seemed that most people felt like working from one until four, and felt guilty if they weren't doing something constructive.

Cleave came in. And somehow when I looked at him I knew he was the one that the coat belonged to. I mean the coat that was always hanging in the downstairs closet. It wasn't a very nice coat, in fact it was pretty ugly. It was heavy and big . . . brown, a brown kind of knit and suede. I always thought about the coat's being too heavy to have around San Francisco, it never really got that cold. But the coat had been hanging in the closet for almost a year and I can remember lending it to people, but it always got back. I guess when I looked at Cleave I knew that was his coat and maybe he'd come back to get it.

Cleave sat down. He wasn't even aware that I was in the room although I was sitting directly across from him on the other couch. I don't know why I couldn't concentrate but I kept watching Cleave. He picked up the Washington Post. It was yesterday's paper. We always got it a day late. That was the paper . . . the establishment paper . . . that all of us had decided to subscribe to from the East Coast, not being able to quite cope with the New York Times.

Cleave was sitting there and I was sitting there, kind of reading Norman Mailer when all of a sudden Bear came charging into the room. Bear was our dog and he looked like a bear. He was Labrador shepherd and if you've never seen one they look kind of like a fuzzy German shepherd, only bigger.

Bear jumped up into Cleave's lap to get away from Randy who was chasing him. Cleave yelled, I jumped up to get Bear. Just about the same time Randy tripped on the rug and fell into Cleave and Bear began to howl. Finally, I got Bear and Randy drug him out of the room.

"That was Bear," I said to Cleave, gathering up the newspaper for him.

"Yheah, so I gathered. Is he a dog?" "He's a dog, but he doesn't know it."

"I'm Cleave, and you're a Gemini, right?"

I laughed, astrology raps didn't really seem to be part of Cleave. "I'm Cindy, and you're wrong, I'm a Scorpio."

"Scorpio, wow, they're really something. That's why I missed guessing you . . . never can tell about Scorpios."

Cleave told me he had been in San Francisco about six months and that he had this job. He was a night clerk in a kind of residence hotel and they gave him his room and board in return for working there. So he didn't have much money but he had a bed and food.

Cleave talked a long time about wanting to go back to school. But he couldn't make up his mind where. That was kind of a strange thought for me. Being in Berkeley like I was for the summer, the last thing in the world I wanted to do was to go back to school.

Cleave and I were still talking when Drew came in. Drew was one of the quietest of us, he never had much to say. But I liked Drew. He was almost reassuring.

"Hey," Drew said, "why don't we stop sitting around here and do something. It's really a great day outside."

I looked toward the window, "Let's go to the zoo."

We had been planning to for a long time, but every time we started we always got hung up.

I got up and stopped when I got to the door and said to Cleave, "you want to go? I guess you've probably been before."

Cleave smiled, "Yeah, I'd like to go."

Drew, Cleave and I left and on the way out picked up Sue who was sitting on the front porch.

We hitchiked down to the busline into San Francisco, and then got the bus.

San Francisco is kind of a different city. All the people are always going some place but they never seem like they're in a hurry. Seems like somebody always has time to give you directions. I guess that's because most of the people in San Francisco are tourists anyway. They're used to all kinds of people . . . from Japanese sailors or the Haight-Asbury panhandler.

From the East Bay terminal we got the street car. The ride on the L car is a long one. It winds all through the city, finally through a tunnel and toward the North side of the Bay.

The afternoon turned out to be one of those zoo-type days. Walking down long paths that always lead somewhere. Cleave and I got very close. We talked. I remember watching the monkeys on Monkey Island.

"You know," Cleave said, "you know those monkeys really think they're happy, but they're just on that little island and they can't go anywhere else."

And I got to thinking, "How do you know they can't go anywhere? I wonder if they've ever even tried."

Cleave laughed, looked at his feet and looked back at me, "you know maybe you're right. Maybe they haven't ever tried."

We walked. I got really tired. I never got used to walking like you do in San Francisco.

We finally ended up where the seals were. We didn't have much money . . . maybe two or three dollars between us, and ended up spending half of it on fish to feed the seals.

You buy these little plastic bags and you have little pieces of fish all cut up in them. There's like a head seal of all the other seals in the zoo. As soon as he gets his share then all the other seals can come up and have some too. Kind of just a hierarch thing, or maybe its anarchy.

We fed the seals a long time. I remember seeing the elephants, and one of them had his tail cut off. It was bleeding and I couldn't understand why they cut off the elephant's tail.

It was a good day. We had brought some sandwiches with us and we bought cokes. We walked and watched . . . the people as much as anything else. All kinds of people. There was a kindergarten class and a little boy who had never seen a lion, but got very excited when he recognized it.

Late in the afternoon it was cold and the wind was blowing from the ocean. I thought about Cleave's coat and I thought he probably wishes he had it. It was time to go because mothers were gathering up children, fathers were gathering up mothers and children at the gate. Everyone was going home. But we just weren't ready to go yet.

We walked out on the boardwalk, it's down about a half a mile, I guess to the beach. We found a grocery store and a little pizza place next to it. We went in and bought hot dogs. We must have bought a lot because we had just enough money to take the streetcar home.

We decided to go down to the beach and sit and eat our hot dogs in the wind and the spray. Then we wouldn't have to go home yet.

We were sitting pretty far up on the beach. I looked out at the surf, it was really rough that afternoon. Big signs were posted everywhere. NO SWIMMING BY ORDER OF SAN FRANCISCO POLICE DEPARTMENT. I looked out and I know I saw someone. Someone was out there swimming.

I told Cleave, "Look, there's someone out in the water."

And Cleave laughed, "There's not anyone there. No one would swim here."

So we sat. Cleave had his arm around me and it was warm and comfortable even though it was cold.

All of a sudden this cop came walking up to us. I had seen his car parked in one of those under-the-road ramps from the other side of the road to the beach. He pointed out toward the water, "Is that nut out there swimming or trying to drown?"

We all jumped up to look. I couldn't see the head anymore. I had been watching it, but Cleave had distracted me and I couldn't see it anymore.

We ran down to the edge of the water. The cop found a pile of clothes . . . some moccasins, and a jacket, a girl's pocketbook.

We started looking. It couldn't have been but three or four minutes later when Cleave screamed and started running into the water. Then I saw why he was running and I followed him. We pulled a girl out of the surf.

She had just washed up, floating face down. We pulled her up on the beach. I turned her over and cleaned out her mouth and started to give her mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

The cop was there and he started calling alot of other people. There was a huge crowd of people and I was still working. I was throwing up . . . it made me sick because she was so full of water. And I guess I knew she was dead. I knew she was dead when we pulled her out of the water . . . she was too limp and the waves had been too rough. But I kept remembering stories . . . Girl saved after being underwater 15 minutes . . . so I worked, worked to see her chest heave alone just once.

I was tired and I kept saying to the cop, "Can't someone relieve me?" He kept saying, "But I don't know how to do it." I started crying and I couldn't keep the rhythm any longer. There was a woman that I remember in a yellow polka-dot dress and she kept screaming at me, "Do this, move her arm, move her leg."

And the girl. The girl was so young. About 15 I guess. She was pretty.

Finally the fire department came and took over. They started giving her oxygen. I only remember Cleave holding me and feeling warm. The lady in the yellow polka-dot dress came up and said, "Someone ought to get your name young lady for being so brave."

And I hit her, I doubled up my fist and started to hit her. Cleave grabbed my arm and said "No, don't hit her." And I didn't because he told me not to.

Then I had to talk to the policeman and give him names and where we lived. I don't even remember what the policeman looked like.

I just wanted to leave, wanted to leave and never . . . I just remember the body lying there and them taking her off on a stretcher with the blanket dragging in the sand . . . and knowing that she was dead.

We walked back up the road away from the beach. I was wet and cold and had sand in my jeans. I had lost my sandals. I thought about Cleave's coat then. It was warm and big.

We went back to the pizza place to get coffee. We sat, staring at cracked, white coffee mugs. A kid about 12 came in . . .

"Boy Mom," he said to the woman behind the counter, "you shoulda been down at the beach. A girl down there drowned."

The woman looked at the boy and said through clenched teeth, "So, that's where you been, huh. I guess you went down there 'cause you thought she wouldn't have any clothes on."

The boy looked at us embarrassed and then back to his Mother, "Gee, Mom, that's not why I was there. Besides, she had all her clothes on."

I got up to leave. I couldn't listen to anymore. Outside the early fog was beginning to move in from the water.

We got the streetcar and Cleave held my hand. About halfway, Cleave said he had to get off soon because he had to work that night.

He kissed me, squeezed my hand and said "I'll see you tomorrow afternoon."

I watched him get off the car, cross the street and then walk up Van Ness. The street lights had just come on.

We got the bus back to Berkeley and I went to sleep.

And Cleave . . . Cleave never did come the next afternoon. But his coat is still hanging in the downstairs closet.

VISITING AT THE SANITARIUM

AMANDA BULLINS

You were always sad.
Over games of tic tac toe
Your laughter had an edge
That must have pryed away the
Carpet tacks and cut your mind.

Now eyes that peer through spaces
Hang opaque and orbitless beyond me
Like fish before they flit—
So soon are you taken behind.

Sea Level

Anna Wooten

Wes loved Atlantic; it was his home. He had grown up as a boy in the small fishing village where houses whitewashed in sunlight turned wooden faces to the sea. There hadn't been much change in the place over the years. Wes was sixty-eight years old—the waves still lapped up on the sloping beach in the same soft, liquid sounds. The Post Office stood, a small white square on skinny wooden stilts, unaltered. Besides some new stone steps built by Mr. Clayton Fulcher, the grocery store was the same, too, as it had been when Wes was brought into the world. The Post Office, the grocery, the few houses scattered between dunes, and the two churches, one Baptist and one Methodist, got a new coat of paint once a year. That was about the only alteration. Except for the ferry dock. Now there was a ferry, a way of transportation over the Ocracoke Inlet. And the ferry dock was the pride of Atlantic. It brought tourists in the summer, fishermen in the winter, to the small serene village, the last spot of human habitation on the North Carolina mainland. People who rode past Atlantic ran headlong into the ocean. The pavement ended there, like an afterthought, about thirty yards from the beach.

Wes Robinson had spent sixty-eight years of his life looking at the sea. He didn't know any more about it now than he had at two. Wes knew the coast well enough, knew where all the rocks were, where the shore curved inwards and jutted out again, where the boats were docked and in which coves. He knew the feel of salt on a four-day stubble, on an embryonic beard. He knew, too, the whip of the wind, ocean-fresh and damp, against his worn leather jacket. But he didn't know the sea. In moments of fury it carved pockmarks on the faces of rocks hundreds of years old, patient and stationary—as oblivious to the water's harsh fists as to shipwrecks on shoals and piracies of past years. Those rocks had seen a lot—that was for sure. And they surpassed all that they saw, in age and in fortitude, because only they remained. Wes loved the rocks; they made him feel secure, hopeful. But the sea was a swirling question mark. It left him hanging, like a period, off the knot of the unknown. That was why he'd never been on a boat. He might die soon. He was sixty-eight now and it was hard to move anymore. Sometimes his hands swelled up, sometimes his feet too. In his little room he wasn't afraid. When he died, he wanted it to be under the multi-colored quilt his sister Nadine had made for him. Not in the sea. Wes didn't want to die in the sea. He had seen drowned men before, blue from cold and bloated, full of water yet light like sponges.

Once when he was just a boy, not yet thirteen, he had skipped down to the shore to hunt oysters. It was a cold day, grey with immovable clouds that seemed pinned against the horizon. The tide was coming in when he reached the beach. He was too late for oyster-picking, good only when the tide is out, so he sat on an old piece of driftwood and waited for dark. Supper was at eight; he had a long time yet. So he just sat there, whistling and throwing shells, the water moving closer and closer to his shoe soles, the gulls circling in towards the beach for a place to rest. And while he was sitting there, whistling the tune to "My Wild Irish Rose," his mother's favorite, the form of a man washed up on shore, about four feet from the driftwood, almost at his feet. It was getting dark and he couldn't see much but the shapeless lump gave him a start. He nearly fell off his twisted perch. He had wanted

to run at first but then that seemed silly. It was so peaceful, the beach, in a beautiful lonely sort of way and dead men don't hurt people. His mother had taught him that. The man had washed up quietly, like a piece of soap in a basin of cool water, so quietly that Wes thought at first it might be just another piece of driftwood bobbing up and down in the foam that rested always on the water's surface, the foam that reminded him very much of a meringue topping on one of his mother's chocolate pies. He saw no harm in just looking, checking to see if the man were really dead. So Wes walked toward the awesome form, circling it at a distance of about two feet. What he saw drew him closer. Wes couldn't tell what was clothing and what was skin. It was all the same. He picked the piece of driftwood off the sand, poking it at the human lump until he succeeded in getting it on its back. He was an old man now, he didn't remember much. He confused names of people he had known and, in his memory, married off old friends—all the right people but in all the wrong pairs. The dead man, though, was as clear in his memory as crystal. All the nursing homes and bedpans in the world couldn't make him forget what he saw on the beach that day. The eye sockets of the man were empty, pecked out by fish, and the crabs, filthy sea-scavengers, had taken away the major portions of the ears, the nose, and the flesh of the cheeks. The face had no recognizable features, just loose ends of flesh hanging like soaked beef off bone formations. It was dark, hard to see, and later that night in his room, after he had broken into a run and made a desperate dash across sand shapeless under his fleeing feet, Wes thought how that man would have looked in broad daylight, in the direct rays of the innocent sun, the sun that anesthetized everything in Atlantic by day, that poured through windows and glared down on church steeples and dried limp sheets, white and sagging, on wooden clotheslines. The same sun that cleansed and blanched the small village would have been as gruesome as a flashlight on the emaciated face. No, he didn't remember much but he sure remembered that. Wes didn't want to die in the sea and so he had stayed good and clear of it ever since.

Most of the men in Atlantic earned their living from the sea. Some had fisheries, some had oyster plants, and the rest were just fisherman who owned their own boats and sold their catch to nearby markets. The few exceptions were the preacher who had his pulpit, the grocer who had his store, and Wes—who had his mailbag. Every morning at six Wes met the ferry at the dock with a huge leather mailbag full of letters from Atlantic, Harker's Island, and surrounding crossroads that dotted the paved path between Beaufort and the ferry landing. That was his job—to drag the mailbag from the post office to the dock, hand it over to the captain who in turn offered him another bag of darker leather filled with Ocracoke mail. Wes pulled the Ocracoke mailbag back to the post office and handed it over to Mr. Puroy, the postmaster. Wes had never been known to miss a day at the dock. The captain and his crew members would have been more surprised at the absence of old Wes upon reaching the landing than at the absence of the shore. "Your joints are looking mighty swollen this morning, old Wes," Captain Dodge would say, on occasion, as he passed the mailbag over to the aging man who stood slumped in the middle of the platform. "Maybe you need a replacement for a while," Captain Dodge often winked. Wes would shake his head negatively, pull the thick strap over his shoulder, and shuffle slowly back towards the post office with the bag heavy behind him, trailing in the sand. Captain Dodge always watched him go, clumsy as an old turtle, until he disappeared in the early morning fog. He wondered what thoughts filled the old man's head as he retraced steps to and from the ferry dock day after day.

Wes was proud of his job. It comprised the most important part of his day. He was always punctual, up at five every morning. At five-thirty he was at the post office which was only a few houses away from where he lived, rubbing over the leather of the bag with a damp cloth, adjusting the straps to his shoulder, waiting at the window in case the ferry made a quicker trip than usual over the inlet. Mr. Puroy told Wes it didn't matter, that the ferry stayed docked for thirty minutes, that he ought to sleep an extra half-hour and take the mail down just before the ferry pulled off. Wes shook his head from his watch at the window, "No-o-sir. I'm going to be on time." Mr. Puroy shook his head, too. It was only because of Wes that he opened the post office at five-thirty instead of six. He always had the mail sorted and packed in the bag before he closed in the afternon and rushed home to dinner. Mr. Puroy would have liked an extra twenty minutes of sleep every morning but Wes was hell-bent on being at the office by five-thirty. And no one else would tote the mailbag but Wes. The young fellows were out for spending money and jobs that paid more. The grown men had families to support. The older men, the men the age of Wes, were content just to sit home in softly-padded chairs mumbling to themselves and listening to the radio if they were still able to hear it. No, Wes was the only one to do the job. He had done it for twenty years now and he would probably hang on till he was eighty-eight, just so he could do it twenty years more.

Because Wes Robinson was crazy. At least people in Atlantic said he was crazy. "Off his rocker" they used to whisper and his sister Nadine, who was burdened with the responsibility of Wes all her life, smiled knowingly in agreement. "Crazy Wes" they called him, sometimes to his face. Wes always smiled back complacently, grateful to be recognized. The smile was a half-smile, confused and surprised at the corners—a smile slightly curved with the prospect of something pleasant yet oval in shape, rounded with bewilderment. People in Atlantic knew Wes well—the familiar shuffle of unsteady feet, the drooling mouth, the loose dentures sliding up and down when he talked, the twitching hands. Wes walked everywhere. He walked up the winding lanes and through the church graveyards. He walked along the docks and followed the beach until it came to a point where wild ponies ran along the white sand. He was a part of the setting of Atlantic, free-wheeling as a gull, inconspicuous as a tree, familiar as the white lines that divided the road. He was everywhere.

Rumor had it that a fever had destroyed a large

portion of his brain cells but no one ever really knew for sure. Nadine never talked about it—she only smiled—and Wes' own mother ignored whatever people had to say about Wes while she was alive. So eventually people stopped whispering. They began to accept Wes as they would accept an antique clock that had ceased to tick.

Wes had never married. He lived with Nadine and her husband, John Willet, in a small white-shingled L-shaped house on the other side of Atlantic's main road, a tiny ribbon of tar and sea-shells. One half of the perpendicular house was allocated to Wes, the half that ran parallel with the road, the unheated drafty half, sparsely furnished. There were three rooms—a bedroom, a sort of parlor, and a small washroom. The bedroom floor was covered with dime-store linoleum, ragged at the edges, a glossy floral print of fuchsia-colored blooms on a gray background. An iron bed, rusty and ancient, stood forlornly in the middle of the room with a single quilt for a cover, flanked by two chintz-covered chairs once belonging to his mother. The flowers on the chair cushions were worn and faded, half-erased by human bottoms a century departed.

On winter mornings the linoleum seemed ice-berg-cold to Wes' feet. When he was able, when his hands didn't shake so badly, he shaved in a basin of water brought in from the pump. The blade was sharp and grated his chin; the water was not warm enough for lather. John brought the basin in at night, leaving it in the washroom where one pane in the window was chipped, where the cold air crept through. Sometimes the water was frozen and he couldn't shave at all. And he seldom bathed. It was always a torture. Wes hated the thought of standing naked before the basin in the washroom. Sometimes Nadine made him wash and he did, the goose bumps standing out on his flesh big as balloons as he dipped the starchy square of washcloth into the basin and squeezed it over his chest and back. His joints hurt unbelievably on winter afternoons but the nights were bearable. At night he wrapped the quilt around himself, sheltering his head, snuggling in its patchwork womb for solace.

Wes never seemed to mind that the other half of the house where Nadine and John lived was supplied with heat and running water. He never seemed to compare their abundance of comfort with his lack of it. He was never bitter that they slept warm in the room with the big furnace while four doors away he fought for warmth. Wes took his meals in the kitchen with Nadine and John but these were the only times he saw them unless Nadine invited him to sit in her room. Wes wasn't much trouble, scarcely ate anything. Mostly he just had a little molasses and biscuit with a bit of fish or salt pork and a glass of milk. Nadine served him cold food but always complained that she slaved in the kitchen for hours fixing up a meal for him and that it wasn't fair for him to eat at such irregular hours when she had so many other things that needed tending to. Wes hung his head meekly and took tinier bites out of the biscuit, never saying much. Nadine often cleared the dishes away and plopped them in the sink before he had finished eating the biscuit crumbs. He never really thought much about it; he was seldom aware of ugly gestures. The only gestures Wes noticed were kind ones—a gentle voice or a friendly laugh, because those were the gestures that were rare. If people didn't go out of their way to be nasty to him, he thought they were being nice. Like a quarter-moon, his world had its rim of reality, its moments of lemon-slice truth, but the greater portion of it was obscured, clouded over, unrealized.

Reality, to Wes, was what he was best at doing. And there was one thing Wes could do very well—he could play checkers. He participated in matches with the docters at Sea Level Hospital and not one had ever beaten him. Even Mr. Puroy had to admit that even though old Wes did some looney things "he was damned good at that game." So Wes had his meager share of respect in the little community. He prided himself on being the best checker-player anywhere around and he had never yet been forced to swallow his small boast. Wes loved his checker set. The black and red squares thrilled his child-like mind and sometimes at night, when the wind groaned around the corners of the house, he dreamed that the bright pink flowers on the linoleum changed magically into little squares, into checker-board beauty. But even more than his skill as checkers, Wes prided himself on his knowledge of family ancestries. There was a time when he could reel off the lineage of any family in Atlantic, when he could trace great-great-grandfathers down to their present-day relations and even name the color of their beards. When people wanted to inquire about a cousin or a great-aunt, they came to Wes. He wasn't as quick now as he used to be. Sometimes the names got all tangled up together like a mess of old necklaces thrown in one box. At these times Wes would seldom admit he had confused facts. He insisted he was right and continued to talk endlessly about the grandfathers and the fourth cousins and the sons who left for the army and the sons who remained home, all stored away and cluttered in his mind, still rattling around after many years in his tin box of memories. Mostly people just put up with his nonsense, let him have his way. If Wes said Simon Styron's grandfather was born in 1898 then everyone agreed, although most people knew Simon's grandfather lived to be ninety and was born in 1868. Everyone except Nadine.

Nadine sat in her rocker in the room with the big furnace making quilts and retorts. "Now, Wes. You know Simon Styron's grandfather didn't live a day past ninety and didn't die a day sooner. There his picture is on the bureau, eighty-eight if he's a day. James Styron gave it to me himself, two weeks after his eighty-eighth birthday. Now what do you suppose? That he died at seventy and rose from the grave just to pose for a picture? Brother, your mind's failing you."

"James Styron died at seventy, I say." Wes stood by the door staring at the man's picture, one among many photographs lined like toy soldiers against the back of the bureau. His hands twitched and a wet drool started down the side of his mouth but the blue eyes were sharp and defiant. "I I-I know it," he stuttered. Words were always hard for him to push out. "You can't foo-o-l me. I-I know it."

"Idiot. You couldn't see truth on a ten-foot pole. I suppose I will have to prove it to you, won't I? I suppose I will have to travel out in the cold to make you see truth, won't I? You just come with me, you withered old man, I'll show you." And Nadine rose from the rocker, not young herself but still able to move around easily enough, snatched her shawl from the closet, and grabbed Wes by the hand.

"God in heaven will see one of us out and it will be you, Wes Robinson, It will be you."

Nadine kept firm hold of Wes' hand all the way to the graveyard. He tried to free himself from her fingers clenched tight as a steel trap around his crippled paw. In short, breathless gasps and abbreviated stutters he told her he would go of his own accord if she would let him loose. But Nadine never listened. She kept her head bent to the wind, one hand fastened to Wes, one hand clutching the woolen shawl to her slight frame. Wes at last relented, allowing himself to be pulled along at an alarming rate like the mailbag he had so often jerked through sand. He never looked up to see the blue strip of ocean wedged between houses or the craning necks of sea-oaks bending, as if in prayer, towards the beach. He kept his head down all the way, even when they passed through the graveyard gate. Nadine guided him down grassy aisles, over freshly-dug plots, past crumbling marble markers. Finally she stopped, lifted his chin with her slender bony forefinger, and pointed at the small stone monument.

"Do tombstones lie?" Nadine yelled above the wailing wind, squinting her eyes at him, pulling the shawl tighter around her bent shoulders. "Do you want me to read it?" The wind whistled louder around them. Wes didn't answer. "James Willis Styron, born 1869, died 1958, son of Ellis Lane Styron, father of John Simon Styron." Her voice was growing hoarser. "By this earth borrowed but to heaven promised." Wes was crying now, like a baby, his hands balled up, rubbing them against his eyes, hardly making a sound. She watched him cry, frowning till the lines around her eyes were tiny forks poking in all directions. Finally she turned to go, yelling in his ear "Just so you know, old man. You were wrong. All wrong." And she left him there with the wind tearing into his leather jacket, standing in front of the grave, weeping like a boy who has been locked in a dark library. Finally he laid down on the grass, his head rested against the cold stone slab, and cried till he could no longer see. Wrong. All wrong. He had been so, so wrong.

It was after the trip to the graveyard that Wes lost his job. Mr. Puroy came by to tell him that the state was building a bridge from Harker's Island to Ocracoke. He said there would no longer be any need for a ferry. Wes sat in the middle of the iron bed and fingered his checkers. Mr. Puroy went on to tell how the bridge would greatly reduce travel time and pave the way for a big tourist boom. Mr. Puroy was excited. He kept pushing his tiny gold-rimmed spectacles up and down on his nose and waving his hands, rattling on about progress and how much faster the mail would reach Ocracoke and vice-versa, in the shiny new mailtruck that was going to be ordered. Finally Mr. Puroy sat down in the chintz-covered chair and pulled out a handkerchief. He blew his nose two, three, four times. Wes put the checkers in their box and stared out the window. "Aren't you excited?" Mr. Puroy demanded. "There will be a bridge now. You can sleep in the mornings and do all the things other men do.You're too old, Wes. You need a long vacation." Wes continued to stare out the window. Ella Barnes was hanging out her wash. The structured ends of the clothesline looked like crosses. Ella Barnes crucified her sheets every afternoon at four. Wes didn't like Ella Barnes.

Mr. Puroy left to talk to Nadine. They talked a long time. Wes could hear them mumbling together in the kitchen as he sat on the bed hardly moving at all. He didn't want to think about the shiny new mailtruck. He wanted to think about the ferry. They were going to scrap her. They were going to tear down her lopsided smokestack. What would Captain Dodge do? Where would he go? Maybe Mr. Puroy would give Wes the mailbag. If Mr. Puroy didn't give him the mailbag he would steal it. And then he would crawl inside like a conch and never come out. But Nadine would really talk about that. She would really scream at him then and it would be his fault. He would be all wrong.

Two days later Nadine told him that he was going to a nursing home where he would be taken care of. She said he would really like it. There would be lots of good food and she would see to it that he got his biscuit and molasses. Wes looked at her darkly. She didn't fool him. Nossir. He was going to be locked up. No mailbag and no beach. No room of his own. No shells, no sand, no sea-oaks.

Wes left Atlantic on a Thursday with his quilt and his checkerboard. Ella Barnes came to say goodbye and brought some cookies with her. He ate one in the car on the way but it was hard and hurt his teeth, so he threw the whole box out the car window. Mr. Puroy sat behind the steering wheel with his eyes glued to the windshield, a green wormy-looking cigar poised between his lips. Wes remained quietly in the back seat and made faces at cows that stared back at him over fences, unperturbed. As the car gained speed the cows soon became mere splotches that were pasted on the glass of the window and jerked off again. The ride in the car thrilled him; he had ridden in a car only twice before in his life, once when he went to be fitted for his dentures at Sea Level Hospital and once when John Willet took him to Beaufort for ice cream in his new Chrysler.

When Mr. Puroy pulled into the drive of the nursing home Wes' hands began to twitch uncontrollably. Mr. Puroy handed him a kleenex off the dashboard and made him wipe away the slobber trickling from his mouth to his chin. The big sign on the right of the drive said "Shady Rest Nursing Home." Wes couldn't read but he saw the cool green letters on the sign and his mind went back to the day on the beach when the dead man had washed up in front of his feet. There was the same sense of lonely

calm in the green letters and the empty yard cast in shadows by tall, rigid pine trees. The building itself was blue, very much the color of water, and was framed in scrubby little boxwoods that clung desperately to the azure-tinted cement.

The woman at the desk inside tried very hard to be friendly. Her wide, fleshy mouth was smeared over with a bright red lipstick and when she smiled her lips slid apart, quickly and smoothly, like doors on an elevator. "Hello there," she grinned with a flash of white teeth, brushing back yellow hair the color of fake jewelry which was piled on top of her head like scrambled eggs. "You must be Wes. I'm Mrs. Nettleton." She reached for Wes' twitching, discolored hand and squeezed it with her small white one. Wes only stared at her. She was the closest thing he had seen to ice cream yet. When Mr. Puroy left she took him to his room and gave him a blue nightshirt and a toothbrush with pink bristles. There were beds lined against the wall—high metal beds with neatly manicured sheets whose corners seemed to have been mysteriously filed away. Wes toyed with the bedcrank while Mrs. Nettleton placed the toothbrush and nightshirt in his locker. The mattress moved up, then down. Wes was delighted, he had never seen a bedcrank before. And the room was as warm as the one that belonged to Nadine, the one with the big furnace.

Wes spread his quilt on the bed and opened his checkerboard on top of it. Maybe some of the men played checkers here. Maybe they didn't mind getting whipped. Wes pressed his nose to the black and red squares and cradled the board in his arms. He was never wrong in checkers. Never. He should have told Nadine that at the graveyard. He should have told her he never forgot the old moves or the double jumps that brought sure success. He should have remembered he was undefeated in something the day that the wind moaned around them and the gulls screeched in the distance and the clouds hung gray like a load of dirty wash suspended in air.

CORADDI ARTS FESTIVAL

March 17 - 22, 1969

Event	Date / Time / Place
"LIGHT AND POWER" ART AND MASS MEDIA	Monday, March 17 8:00 P.M. Cone Ballroom, Elliott Hall
FILM-IN (7½ hours of films from everywhere)	Tuesday, March 18 Beginning at 3:15 P.M. Stone Auditorium
CRITICS' PANEL with Jonathan Baumbach and Gibbons Ruark; moderated by James Applewhite Members of the panel will discuss the selections in the Arts Festival **Coraddi**	Wednesday, March 19 3:30 P.M. Alexander Room, Elliott Hall
READING Jonathan Baumbach and Gibbons Ruark will read their own work	Wednesday, March 19 8:00 P.M. Cone Ballroom, Elliott Hall
LECTURE BY SENATOR MICHAEL YEATS, SON OF THE POET	Thursday, March 20 8:00 P.M. Cone Ballroom, Elliott Hall
CONCERT OF IRISH FOLK SONGS WITH MRS. MICHAEL YEATS	Friday, March 21 8:30 P.M. Cone Ballroom, Elliott Hall
PERFORMANCE OF THE HARKNESS BALLET	Saturday, March 22 8:30 P.M. Aycock Auditorium

An exhibit of student art, printed in **Coraddi** 1968-69, will be in the New Gallery of Elliott Hall March 17-22.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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