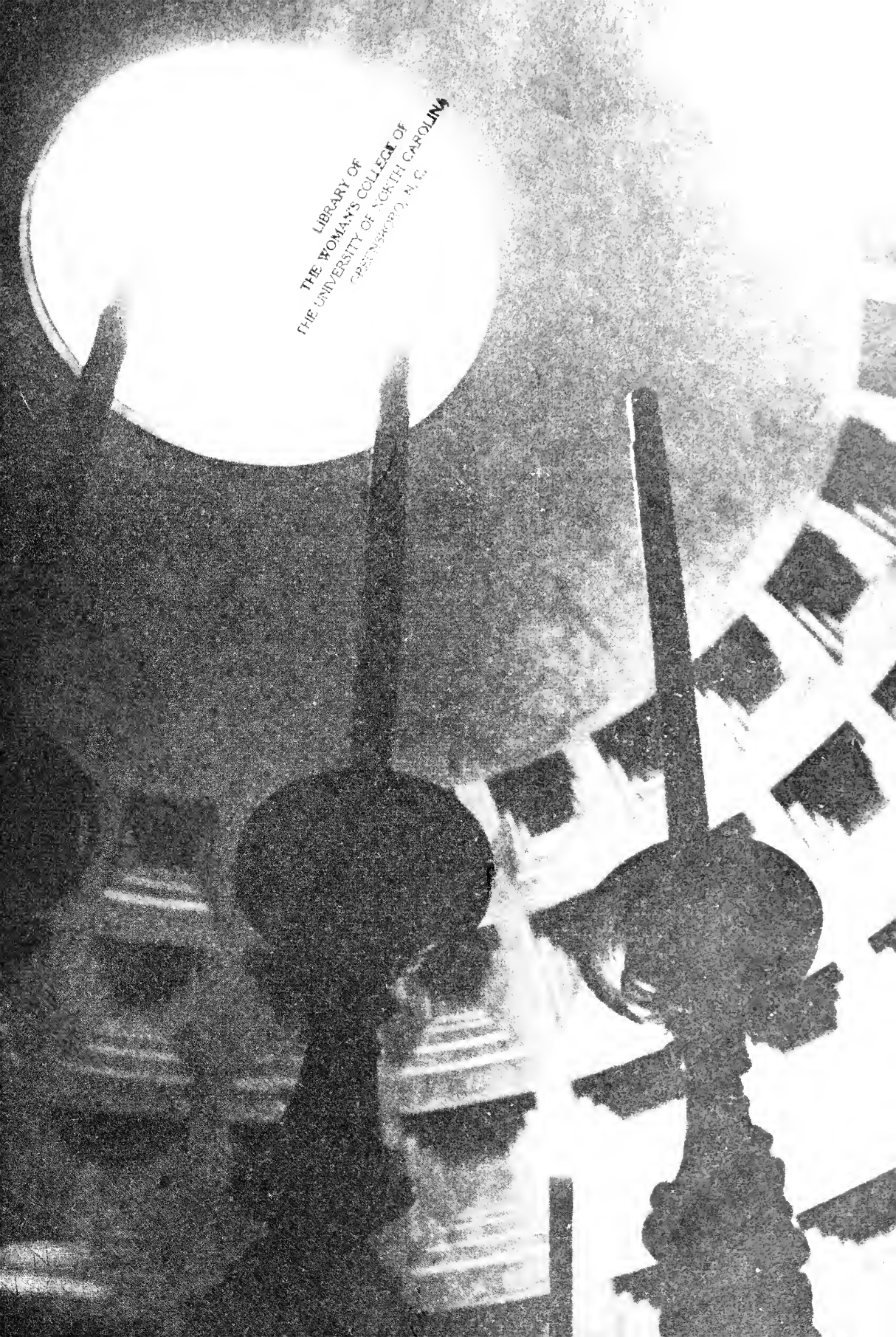


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CORADDI
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

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EDITOR: Tina Hillquist

ART EDITOR: Lealan Nunn

LITERARY STAFF: Beth Cazal, Sue Craven, Elizabeth Devereux, Sylvia Eidam, Alison Greenwald, Kaye Grossman, Janet Hamer,
Leigh Hibbard, Diane Oliver, Martha Prothro

ART STAFF: Betty Birke, Alison Greenwald, Karen Ann Hancock, Caroline Horton, Susan Mosteller, Kathy Peak

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FOR FROST'S "TO EARTHWARD"
WOODCUT
MARGIE WEST

When the Apples Are Ripe

BY DIANE OLIVER

Mrs. Gilley lived in the second gray house from the corner. When the Anderson children were playing in their backyard, they could see the house, stuck between piles of red dirt left by the construction crew enlarging the road. Sometimes old Mrs. Gilley would come out on the porch, inspect her three gardenia bushes, and go back in again. The children saw the top of Mrs. Gilley's house more often than they saw Mrs. Gilley. She was sick a lot and their mother didn't want them bothering her. Jonnie-Boy and the girls were forbidden to play in Mrs. Gilley's yard unless she asked them. So Jonnie would climb up into the swing and Angie and Carrie would push him from behind until he was almost as high as the green hedge separating the Anderson's yard from the Forney's.

When Jonnie-Boy was swinging as high as the swing would go, he could see Mrs. Gilley's yard with the apples from the big apple tree rotting all over the ground. If the wind was right, the pungent apple smell carried over into their backyard. Sometimes the two brown dogs would be on the porch. And from up high, the dogs looked like a part of the window shades that always were pulled down.

Lots of times when Jonnie, Carrie, and Angie didn't eat dessert because their mother hadn't baked anything, they would be given a nickel and sent to the neighborhood store. Almost every trip they would meet Mrs. Gilley with a brown paper bag in one hand and some meat scraps wrapped in newspaper in the other. They knew the bag held meat bones because once Mr. Potter, who kept the small neighborhood store, told Mother he saved the bones and scraps for Mrs. Gilley's dogs. She carried home the bones every evening that she came to the store for her medicine. Since they lived so far out from the drug store, Mr. Potter had Mrs. Gilley's prescriptions filled.

The children always spoke very politely to Mrs. Gilley but when Jonnie-Boy was by himself and saw her coming, if he couldn't duck he would walk up quickly, speak, and get it over with. He was not chicken as Angie misstated. But anybody speaking to Mrs. Gilley always had the idea she was looking at something straight past him. And sometimes Jonnie-Boy wanted to turn around and look too.

Mrs. Gilley was partially bald. The few strands of hair still growing on her head were a reddish brown and mixed gray. When he was smaller, Jonnie always thought she'd been scalped. He knew better now, but she was the only grandmother he'd ever seen with such a little bit of hair. So they always spoke to Mrs. Gilley and any of the other older people in the neighborhood, although Mrs. Gilley never told them stories about the second World War as Mr. Jefferson did.

Jonnie-Boy's mother felt sorry for Mrs. Gilley. He heard her telling his father quite often that she'd like to do something for the woman. "I'm afraid she's not going to last very long," his mother would say, lifting the spoon from the mixing bowl and watching the liquid drops fall into the batter. Sometimes when they had something especially good for dinner or something easy to chew, his mother would fix a plate for Mrs. Gilley and Jonnie would carry over the supper, running because the vegetables might get cold.

They ate dinner around six-thirty, so in the fall everything was almost dark before Jonnie could get up to Mrs. Gilley's with the plate. The street light glinting at the corner was not bright enough to light all of Mrs. Gilley's yard. He walked fast until he got to the front of her house, and then dodging the shadows from the trees, he ran until

he found the walkway. The stones that used to be arranged neatly in a criss-cross pattern had long since been rearranged by too many feet. Here and there a stone was missing or split into chunks with strands of grass growing between the pieces.

Whenever he carried a plate, his mother warned him not to walk on the walkway because he might trip and fall. Last year when she was making a canvass for the United Appeal, her pump got stuck in a crack and she broke the heel on a pair of brand new shoes. This time he had to walk on the ground, lifting the plate high in the air, because there was no telling when one of those dogs would come out and start barking. Once the biggest dog, whom Mrs. Gilley called President Lincoln, snapped at him and made him drop the plate. Since the dinner landed right side up, he just brushed the grass from the lamb chop and knocked on Mrs. Gilley's door.

Tonight the dogs weren't even in sight. The President had been surprised when a car he was chasing rolled in reverse and hit him. It was a wonder he didn't get killed, but Mrs. Gilley bandaged him up and kept rubbing on ointment that Mr. Potter ordered from the drug store. He had been limping around for three days now and couldn't bother any of the kids who had to pass Mrs. Gilley's house to walk to school.

Sometimes Jonnie-Boy didn't mind carrying Mrs. Gilley's dinner, but when the apples were ripe and scattered all over the ground, he hated to walk in the yard. Mrs. Gilley didn't have a porch light and trying not to drop the plate he couldn't see his feet to avoid stepping on soft apples. The apple juice always spurted on his ankle making him itch and he couldn't scratch and hold the dinner too. Tonight he walked slowly, feeling around for any stray apples with the toe of his tennis shoe. Stepping over the snail lying wetly on the board of the second step, he reached the porch and knocked on the door.

Mrs. Gilley who was hard of hearing always took a long time to answer. When she finally unlatched the screen door, she grabbed his head and pushed him toward the corner of the porch nearest the street light. Satisfied that he wasn't one of the boys who broke off her purple Iris and threw the blossoms into the street, she invited him in the house to exchange the new plate for last week's plate.

Mrs. Gilley's living room spilled out on the front porch. And if her lot hadn't been so small, she probably could have decorated the front yard. The mahogany rocker and foot stool near the porch banister matched the other dark furniture in the living room. The faded tapestry sofa backed up against the window blocked what little light came through the yellowing window shade.

"Have a seat young man," Mrs. Gilley whispered. Jonnie-Boy sat on a hassock near the fire place and looked up at the pictures on top of the big brown piano. Mrs. Gilley had placed the pictures in three rows, but there seemed to be lines and lines of men in soldier suits and ladies with babies and long hair straining into space. Jonnie guessed she'd run out of piano top because pictures were tacked all over the walls. On one wall there was a photograph of two little boys wearing funny pants puffed out at the knee.

After a while he got tired of looking at the pictures and began playing games with the figures in the carpet. The green diamonds would turn four different ways or he could look another way and play with the red diamonds,

depending on how he stretched his neck. He was just about to count the squares when Mrs. Gilley came from the other room and saw him gazing at the floor.

"See a mouse?" she said, bringing the clean plate down to his level. "They come out sometimes when the room is quiet like this." He held out his arms and she carefully placed the plate on his hands. "Tell your mother I thank her," she said and guided him out of the door. Mrs. Gilley stood behind the screen door until he was past the apple tree and out in the street light, carrying the blue plate in front of him.

Tomorrow was Saturday. A whole day to do whatever he wanted until his mother was ready to wash windows. They did things by years at his house and last year there hadn't been enough of him to help get the windows clean. Instead they made him help his daddy transfer the potted Christmas cactus to the place in the front yard where the yellow rose bush died. He still missed that old rose bush but summer before last when his father found white spots on the leaves, and the blossoms began turning brown on the edges, they had chopped down the bush. They had another yellow rose bush now and yesterday, just for practice he tried to touch the top panes in the kitchen windows. And unless he stood on the cabinet counter he still couldn't reach the top. At this rate, his year to wash windows never would come.

Maybe Mrs. Gilley could make him grow. He stopped and turned around. Only a faint outline of Mrs. Gilley's porch showed through the shadows. Angie said that Mrs. Gilley's dogs caught rabbits for her to eat and she herself caught the mice that replaced the chicken in mice and rice soup. Jonnie-Boy shivered happily. Nobody would ever catch him trying to take a rabbit from one of Mrs. Gilley's dogs. But just to make sure her dog didn't follow him, he crept to the side of the road, picked up a stick, and walked through the red dirt.

On Saturday mornings after breakfast, everybody got assigned a job. While Angie and Carrie scrubbed venetian blinds, he went around the house collecting waste paper baskets. His mother insisted on tying an apron around his middle which he hid in the linen closet when she left the room. This time of morning nobody else in the neighborhood was up, and Jonnie-Boy had the garbage cans all to himself. He had just mashed all of the paper down to the middle of the trash can when his mother came to the back door and told him to hurry up. They were out of Spic 'n' Span and he had to go to Mr. Potter's store.

Jonnie-Boy's mother made him pin the dollar bill inside of his shirt pocket. "Spic 'n' Span comes in a can," he sang to no one in particular.

"Hold still," she said.

The things on the list made a little song. He liked to make up songs but today they didn't have time. His mother made him repeat the list two times, anchored the dollar bill farther down inside his pocket, and sent him out of the front door.

On the front porch steps, he reached up to the mailbox and took his hat from the magazine holder. Jonnie-Boy put on the cap, bent down and began thumping every other blue flower growing along the walkway. He was about to walk up the street when he suddenly remembered the watch. That was funny, he'd forgotten he ever had a watch. But it was buried somewhere around here, right under the blue marigold on the end. Quietly he tiptoed to the other end of the walk and dug around in the dirt. His stick touched a root and he pushed a little to the side. The farther down his hand went, the wetter the dirt was. Just right for the worms. Jonnie-Boy wiggled his fingers in the reddish brown dirt until he touched something hard. His face looked disappointed. It was still there, no

matter how hard he prayed, that Cinderella watch wouldn't go away.

All last month Jonnie-Boy practiced extra hard learning to tell time. When he finally could tell the time and read the hands on the left side of the clock, he'd asked his father for a watch. They'd given him one all right—one Angie had outgrown. A stupid Cinderella watch with a pink strap. They'd even put it back in the plastic glass slipper to pretend that it was new. He knew if he showed up at the Center with Cinderella strapped to his arm, the big boys wouldn't ever let him play on the team. So, he just buried the watch along the walk way and when his mother asked, he told her it was "somewhere."

Jonnie-Boy fished the watch out of the dirt and began brushing it off on his pants' legs. The pink band had turned a funny color and poor Cinderella's face was now a strange bluish-green. Satisfied that the watch was almost beyond recognition, he re-buried it in the same hole. A little bit deeper than before because his mother liked to putter around in the flower beds. And would he get spanked if she ever found Cinderella. Jonnie smoothed over the dirt, pulled some grass to stick on top, and ran down the driveway and up the street to Mr. Potter's store.

Jonnie-Boy walked a block, stopped, and sniffed the air. He still couldn't smell the rain coming like Mrs. Gilley. He guessed his mother was right. "Rain," she said, "is in older people's bones." He was almost up to her yard now and not a thing was moving. The other dog was draped across the old rocking chair on the porch. Jonnie picked up a clump of dirt, and just as quickly let it fall. He couldn't run too fast carrying groceries.

He was about to walk another few feet when he noticed a clock standing on Mrs. Gilley's porch. The clock, the color of mashed peanuts, was mounted on a low table with four wheels, like a roller skate. Two little knobs looked like they were attached to a drawer, and the long glass front sparkled, out of place on the front porch. Jonnie-Boy wasn't sure but he thought that was a dish-towel dangling from the top. He went to the edge of the yard for a closer look, and then hurried up the street to the store. He'd never seen such a big clock on anybody's front porch.

Ten minutes later he was on his way home, carrying two brown paper bags. Mr. Potter asked him to deliver yesterday's bones to Mrs. Gilley because she hadn't come after them herself. Now, over the top of the bags, Jonnie-Boy could see Mrs. Gilley standing on the side of the porch nearest the apple tree, and looking straight down at something. She didn't seem to notice him until she heard his feet squashing apples near the porch.

Mrs. Gilley was wearing a navy blue house-dress. The blue was lighter under the sleeves and around the bottom where it looked like the hem had been let out. His mother used to have a dress like that. But the last time the Methodist Church truck came around, she'd given it away with some of his baby clothes. Jonnie-Boy looked at Mrs. Gilley trying to think of something to say when she spoke:

"Good morning young man," she said. Her voice was harsh like she hadn't gargled yet with her mouthwash.

"Morning, Mrs. Gilley," Jonnie-Boy answered. "Mr. Potter sent you yesterday's bones for the President and that other dog. He said he hadn't been able to get away to the drug store yet."

"Thank you, young man, put them on the rocking chair."

He plopped the bones on the chair and stopped to look at the clock. The wood, smooth and freshly polished, was cut into swirls which rushed up and curved at the top like dragon's heads. It was such a big clock. He was about

to reach out and touch the surface when Mrs. Gilley spoke again.

"While you're here, Jonathan, I have a chore for you to perform. My garden scissors fell through the floor boards, and I want you to crawl under the front porch and retrieve them."

Jonnie-Boy hesitated, looking around to see if the dogs were still in the yard.

"My dogs are out walking," Mrs. Gilley said, as if reading his mind. "You may enter right over there." She pointed to a narrow opening on the side of the house. "I was trimming my gardenia bushes when they slipped from my hand, and I do not bend except when necessary. Too much exercise injures the heart."

Mrs. Gilley walked down the steps and guided Jonnie-Boy to the side opening, leading under the house. While she walked back around to the front, Jonnie took a deep breath and started to crawl under the porch. He stopped, took another breath, and closed his eyes. He would be under the house by the time he opened them again. Jonnie didn't like to close his eyes for long. Once, when his Uncle Frederick had died, he asked Angie how dead people felt. She told him to shut his eyes real tight and stick his fingers in his ears and when he did he couldn't feel anything but darkness. That was being dead.

There was more light underneath the gray house than Jonnie had imagined. The air was damp though and smelled like clothes that were rained on and stored in the attic for a long time. Jonnie-Boy was afraid to stand up, his head almost grazed the top. Slowly, he crawled toward the front of the house. Above him light from the cracks in Mrs. Gilley's porch filtered down, making a criss-cross pattern on the red dirt. He could even see Mrs. Gilley's feet, and a few inches in front of them were her scissors. He stopped to examine Mrs. Gilley's shoes. They were just like Carrie's winter oxfords except that they passed her ankle and disappeared underneath the navy blue skirt.

Now that his eyes were accustomed to the strange light, Jonnie-Boy looked around. Stacked neatly, on each side of the house were piles and piles of old magazines. They were arranged like a little fence, ziz-zagging in and out. There must have been rows and rows of them, making a clear space in the middle. He crawled over to the nearest stack and found a group of *Life* weeklies, dated 1941. Right beside them was a stack of *Ladies' Home Journals*, for the same year. *Life* went in and the *Ladies' Home Journal* stuck out a few inches, all the way around that side of the house.

Jonnie-Boy began to wonder about Mrs. Gilley. Nobody he knew collected old magazines that way. His mother always made his daddy sell their old papers to the waste collection plant. Jonnie touched the top magazine. Some of the pages stuck together and when he tried to pull them loose, little pieces crumbled in his hand. The slick magazine paper felt cold and he didn't like to touch it. He picked up the scissors and crawled toward the underground door.

Jonnie-Boy was out in the yard, rubbing his eyes when all of a sudden he figured out why Mrs. Gilley kept her old magazines. Mrs. Gilley was rich and didn't want anybody to know. If she sold all of those magazines down there, she'd probably be a millionaire. Mrs. Gilley was going to be just like the good witch in his story book who died and left the village the money to build the dam. Well, if she didn't want to tell anybody, he wouldn't either. But she sure must trust him to let him go under her house.

Mrs. Gilley was standing on the porch waiting for him. "Thank you," she said, taking the scissors from his hand. Jonnie-Boy turned to pick up the groceries.

"Wait one minute, young man, and I'll send your mother some fresh fall leaves. I find that stercoring the flowers insures me of a certain quantity of fresh air."

Jonnie started to say "no, thank you." He knew if there was anything his mother did not want it was a handful of leaves. But Mrs. Gilley bent over and began clipping leaves from the gardenia bushes. She had a hard time trying to find enough green leaves. Of the bunches of leaves, some had begun to wither and turn brown. When she had a fistfull, she reached back and wrapped them in the dish-towel hanging on the clock. So it was a dish-towel. Jonnie-Boy stared at the clock, his eyes following the swinging pendulum. Mrs. Gilley polished the leaves one-by-one and handed the bouquet to him.

"Do you like my clock?" she asked, fondly patting the wood. "It's my third clock you know. I have one in my bedroom, one on the back porch and one in the kitchen. Just before he died, my father gave this one to me when Mr. Gilley and I were married. This is the kitchen clock," she said. "I try to air it out once a year."

"Father was fascinated by clocks." Mrs. Gilley was looking over his shoulders at the vacant lot across the street. "I kept only one of his tin watches, all of the others are buried with him." Mrs. Gilley began pulling the knobs of the clock drawer. "Of course until it was sold I kept the big gold watch in the safety deposit vault at the bank. But this one went all through the war with my father. He never did believe in letting those foreigners get close enough to touch his watch." The drawer glided all the way out and she pointed to a small grayish white box.

"Young man do you have your country's flag?" Jonnie-Boy shook his head. "My father used to say," Mrs. Gilley said, resting his hand on the porch banister, "every man ought to have a confederate flag before he owns a horse or a watch." She motioned for him to lift the top from the box.

Jonnie-Boy's hands wiggled with excitement. He was almost afraid to touch the box, but suddenly the top was off and there was the watch. He couldn't help smiling, there was exactly the kind of watch he'd always wanted. The kind that was in those pioneer stories. The watch was round and shiny silver with a long silver chain, and there was the clasp thing to pin it inside of his pocket. He wanted to run his finger over the case and around the big silver numbers, but with Mrs. Gilley standing there he hesitated to pick up the watch.

"Don't you have a watch?" Mrs. Gilley asked, looking down at his wrist. Again he shook his head.

"I thought all young men had watches these days." Then without warning she closed up the gray top and shut the clock drawer.

"Thank you, tell your mother I send my regards." Jonnie-Boy picked up the groceries and Mrs. Gilley stuck the gardenia leaves on top. Until he turned the corner, she stood alert on her porch, waiting to see if a leaf slipped to the ground.

Jonnie-Boy's mother wondered where he had been, but she knew he wasn't far enough from home to get lost. She said how nice it was of Mrs. Gilley to send the leaves and promptly stuck them in an empty mayonnaise jar. After all of the change had been accounted for and some of the dirt brushed off his pants' bottom, his mother fixed him a picnic lunch to eat out of doors and out of the way. Jonnie-Boy didn't see Mrs. Gilley the rest of the afternoon because his mother decided to wash before the sun went down and he dragged a laundry bag from room to room to collect dirty clothes.

Angie and Carrie took the damp clothes out of the washing machine and carried the basket to the backyard clothes line. Jonnie-Boy stood on the side and shook the

wrinkles from each piece. Then one of the girls hung it on the line. When he picked up Mrs. Gilley's dish-towel, he was afraid to shake too hard. The green and white towel looked just like a worn out dusting rag. Carrie and Angie brought in the clothes right after supper, but Jonnie was responsible for folding and putting away Mrs. Gilley's towel.

Everybody went to bed early that night and when Jonnie-Boy awoke he could smell cinnamon buns baking in the kitchen. His mother made a plain loaf for Mrs. Gilley, cut off the crust, and wrapped the soft bread in the clean dish-towel. Jonnie-Boy was to deliver the loaf before church. Everything was so clean and fresh today that he sniffed all the way up to Mrs. Gilley's house without smelling a single drop of rain. He couldn't even smell the apples until he was up real close to the yard.

Mrs. Gilley was sitting straight up in her rocker on the porch when he reached the walkway, which was odd. Mrs. Gilley never sat on her porch in the day time. She looked as if she was waiting for something. Jonnie-Boy stepped over the loose stones and right on a big apple. As he raised his leg to scrape his foot, Mrs. Gilley looked up.

"Good morning, young man, I've been waiting for you."

Jonnie stood still. "My mother sent you some bread," he said, trying to remember what he could have done wrong.

Mrs. Gilley met him on the steps and placed the bread plate on the banister. "My father would have liked for you to have this." She placed in his hand a small box,

carefully wrapped in brown grocery bag paper. "Take care with it."

While Jonnie-Boy untied the string, Mrs. Gilley gathered the bread and walked into the house. He pulled off the paper and there was the same fading white box that had been in the clock drawer. Quickly he lifted the top. He must be seeing things, but no, he shut his eyes and looked again—It was still there. Mrs. Gilley had given him her father's watch.

Jonnie-Boy clipped the watch to his pocket and let the chain dangle, almost down to his knees. He turned around to thank Mrs. Gilley but nobody was there. He supposed she had gone back in to take her medicine because the bread plate was still on the banister. The door was shut, the window shades were down, and the dogs were lying out of the sun, under the apple tree.

Jonnie-Boy ran all the way home, around the front yard, straight to the back yard swing. He didn't want to show anybody his new watch yet. He wanted to rub the silvery metal, and wind the knob to see the second hand swoosh around. Jonnie steadied himself in the swing and with a big push he was up in the air looking over the whole neighborhood.

He held out his hand with the chain encircling his wrist and the watch swung with him, making silver arcs in the air. From the swing Mrs. Gilley's house looked like it always did. The dogs were lying still in the cleared off spot under the tree. Although the clock was gone from her porch, in its place was the mahogany foot stool. He could even see Mrs. Gilley sitting in her rocker, with her head touching her knees.

ITALIAN GIRL
WOODCUT
GERT WU



A Dialogue

I.

TREE TO EARLY MARCH

Too late the summer comes for you.
An ice patch shriveling there,
Your field of fulfillment?
I await the tongues of May, to blister,
But my lips are blown bloodless
With your loud depraving whisper.
All my children choke my mouth
Unbeing, and offended so;
For you speak but denials of their birth
And shame my trust of April.
Now, my tree-house is frail and warping.
And you have pushed the limbs erotic.

II.

EARLY MARCH TO TREE

You cry with a voice of blind sand.
Your earliest winter hope, becoming,
And you apply me as a crime.
My tears run cold while my bowels are burning,
Yet I cast but barren children
Upon sadness of wandering
As you are drawn fat for glory.
Intimidations from December's obscure marrow
My boundary bars determine,
And you and spring accuse me as antichrist;
Still my passion inclines its neck
Toward green waters.

SYLVIA EIDAM

Old Woman In The Rain

I do not fear to ride the branches
in the wind
with the children of the trees;
And I have
run barefoot through the rain,
puddles breaking clear.
My foes rub against the sky
and my fingers spread sud clouds
in a nodding path;
Tears of an antiquated passion
wink as the gutter trickle
against striking pebbles,
melting my winter wrinkled face;
But I no longer seek drowned worms
or follow a snail's frosted track:
This waterway of a child's sleep
will in a night dry itself,
and I am not young
to hope for a morning shower.

SYLVIA EIDAM



PHOTOGRAPH
JANE WELLES

Roommates

By TINA HILLQUIST

The sun, shy after its long winter retirement, dappled the March chartrouse of the Bentmore campus and gnawed at the edges of a few obstinate snow spots. It glittered pinkly on fat old President Alfred's head as he nodded at the bright girls on the sidewalk. The girls had discarded their wool scarves under the tentative touch of the fresh sun that studded rich brown and blonde and black and red hair with golden sparks.

The old red slate roofs seemed to be wakening and blushing, and stones of the library looked suspiciously silver. Everything gleamed. Everything except one girl. Melvina Kuch carried a shadow with her, and the sun made no attempt to caress her mud-colored hair as she stomped down the library steps, her unclasped arctics clumping and jangling. Her caterpillar eyebrows crawled together as she slit her eyes against the gentle sun and lowered her head as if to choose which of the young grass clumps to stomp on on her way to the dorm.

Someone had opened the window at each end of the hall to let Spring into the dorm, and Melvina's walk from the stairs to her room made the lazy dust motes bob furiously in their sun streak. Melvina stopped in front of 203 and pushed the door open on the whirr of the hair dryer and whine of the radio.

She clomped to the neat desk and dropped her dusty library books on it. Kathy looked up from under the puffed dryer hood to say, "Hi, Melvie," and bent back to her careful toenail painting. Melvina sat on the edge of her bed to pull off the heavy rubber boots and then placed them side-by-side in a corner of her closet, hung her olive-green car coat squarely on a hanger, and shut the closet door. She took a white tissue from the box that was the only thing on one half of the wide dresser and began to rub the dust caressingly from the books she had put on her desk. She rubbed the tissue from binding to edge along the tops of the books, holding them away from the desk and over Kathy's half of the floor. Melvina rubbed her hand across the bold black title on a faded orange book and almost smiled as she looked at the fascinating word: VOODOO.

She glanced at Kathy, and her almost smile disappeared into a normal scowl. Her roommate sat on her bed, in a jumble of bedclothes, books, and clothes, blowing on her pink toenails, and the sun filtered through the window screen to encase the girl's silhouette, hair dryer, toenails, and all, in spring gold.

The sun came through the screen: The window was open. Melvina pulled her sweater sleeves to the tops of her thumbs and coughed. Kathy touched her right little toenail with her right little finger, lightly and then firmly, and stopped blowing on her toes. Melvina coughed again, and Kathy began to inspect her fingernails for chips.

"S cold in here," Melvina finally muttered toward her gilded roommate, who patted the fat dryer hood and said, "Louder."

Melvina shook her head, sat down, and lowered her eyebrows over the orange book. Kathy clicked the dryer off and detached the collapsed hood from the mass of rollers on her head.

"Now, what were you saying, Melvie? I really couldn't hear a word." She pulled the clip off one curler and unwound a live lemon-yellow curl that bounced out full in the sun. "Hm, I do believe it's dry—Now, what did you say?"

"It's cold," Melvina answered, turning the first page and squinting down at it.

"Oh, but don't you feel the Spring, Melvie! It's great! I have a psych test tomorrow, but who can study—Are you studying?"

"Reading," Melvina mumbled.

"Oh well—Anyway, that's just what Johnny said, 'Who can study?' He called a little while ago, and he has a test too, but he's coming up tonight." Kathy had swung her legs over the edge of the bed and was wiggling her feet into her bedroom slippers and raking the curlers from her hair as she talked. She looked at Melvina who had her straight hair pulled behind her ears and her jaw propped between her clenched fists while she read.

Kathy decided to hum with the radio, rather than talk. The last wire curler loosened and bounced from Kathy's bed to the floor. The sun plunged into her free hair and made a volatile gold halo around her pretty face.

Kathy went to the crowded side of the dresser, found her hairbrush, and began to brush and pat her hair into place, watching the happy sparks the sun gave each strand. She was too attentive to her reflection to see Melvina look up from her book and smile.

Kathy dropped the brush back into the clutter on the dresser and went out, patting the back of her hair. She left the door half open. Melvina scraped her chair back from the desk, walked to the door and closed it; to the window and closed that. She lowered the blinds all the way, held the cord for a minute; then raised them again, half-way. She went to the messy side of the dresser, inspected Kathy's hairbrush, and returned to her desk, where she turned the gooseneck lamp down to her book and read again.

Twenty pages later, Kathy came back with a lavender wool skirt over her arm and a can of hair spray. She draped the skirt over the foot of her bed and started tossing sweaters from a drawer to the bed, studying each with a speculative "Hm" as it landed near the skirt. She chose a violet mohair and stopped "humming" and resumed humming. Melvina hunched farther over her book.

Kathy wiggled into the skirt and sweater, adjusted them a few times in front of the mirror, and opened the right-hand closet. Nylon underwear slid from the shabby laundry heap into the room when Kathy opened the door. She kicked a pink slip absently back toward the heap, dislodging a pair of red panties and a black knee sock without noticing, while she deliberated over the rows of shoe boxes on the shelf. She stood on tiptoe, balancing herself with one hand on the shelf, to slide a blue striped box from the middle of the end stack. Melvina moved her fists from beneath her jaws to beneath her chin to tilt her head up while her roommate pulled the box out. The boxes above it teetered, but none fell on Kathy's blonde head, and Melvina looked back at the page under the lamp.

Kathy pulled a pair of black shell flats from the box and dropped it on the laundry stack. She looked critically at the shoes, blew on them, sending a few dust specks dancing in the air, and inspected them again. Melvina slit her muddy eyes toward Kathy, and the corners of her mouth turned down as she watched Kathy pick up the stray knee sock and rub it quickly over the toes and sides of the flimsy shoes, which she then dropped to the floor and stepped into, letting the sock fall in the direction of the laundry pile.

Melvina placed her feet more firmly on the floor and turned another page, as Kathy clicked from the closet to the dresser, lavender pleats swinging. Melvina scowled while Kathy shook the little bottle of liquid make-up that went "squig, squig, squig" very lightly.

Liquid make-up, eyeshadow, lipstick, powder, mascara, one more hair-brushing, and hair spray. Melvina could not concentrate very well with all those little clicks and hisses, but she smiled again at the hair-brushing.

Kathy dodged out of the cloud of hair spray, coughed, and waved her hands in front of her face a few times. She patted her glowing hair gingerly, ran her hands down the tops of her skirt pleats, and revolved on tiptoe in front of the dresser mirror, tilting her head at different angles to watch her curls with the sun behind them. The sun was beginning to weaken. Kathy turned the ceiling light on and watched her hair reflect bands of white gold under it.

"Hate to disturb you, Melv, but is my slip showing?" Melvina looked, shook her head, and returned to the book. Kathy pulled a sleeve that was sticking out from among the bedclothes, and her raincoat materialized. She swung the coat over her shoulder, stuck a lipstick in her pocket-book, and said, "I'm going to wait for Johnny down in Gwen's room. See you later."

She left the door completely open this time. Melvina went over and swung it slowly back and forth on its hinges to push some of the floating hair spray into the hall. Before she closed the door, she looked up and down the hall. It was empty, and the breeze through the end windows was turning into a wind, now that the sun was gone.

Kathy's hairbrush was dark wood with thick natural bristles. The curved handle was comfortable and silky smooth, and sometimes Kathy would run her thumb along the smooth little indentation where the handle met the head of the brush while she read or talked and brushed her hair.

Melvina balanced the slender brush in her square hand. She rubbed her thumb around the handle, and the corners of her mouth turned up instead of down. She cradled the brush in both hands and held it to the light. Long lemon hairs gleamed in an intricate filigree around the dull bristles. Melvina grasped the handle in her left hand and was reaching her fingers in around the base of the bristles.

The door swung open. Melvina dropped the brush.

Kathy saw her drop it. "Oh, did I put my brush on your side?" Melvina moved away, and Kathy put her brush back on the dresser.

"Yeah, on my side," Melvina muttered and dropped back into her desk chair.

Gwen, who had come with Kathy as far as the threshold, leaned against the doorway blowing smoke rings and casually not noticing Melvina. Kathy pulled a little pink and gold box from another box in the back of her top drawer and waved it under her nose, inhaling. "Umm," she breathed with her eyes closed and her eyebrows and nostrils raised appreciatively. "Joy." She took a velvet-encased vial from the box and unscrewed the stopper.

"Since Just Spring comes but once a year, I'll wear it tonight." She breathed ecstatically again. "I'll let you smell, Gwen," she said, holding the tempting bottle toward the other girl.

Gwen glanced at Melvina. The heavy girl was bent over a page of diagrams in the lighted spot on her desk. Gwen tapped her cigarette ash onto the hall floor and walked to Kathy at the dresser. Kathy held out the little bottle, and Gwen rotated her nose over it. "Umm, poor Johnny'll go crazy," she said, watching Kathy tilt the bottle and apply sparing dabs behind each ear, on each wrist, and at the base of her throat.

A tiny odor sifted around the room, and Melvina pushed her nose closer to the brown-edged, diagram-covered page. Kathy replaced the gold top, snapped the pink velvet case back around the vial, and put it back into boxes and drawer. Gwen went out before her, and Kathy remembered to close the door.

This time when Melvina got up the first thing she did was cut off the radio. Now she could hear in the hall. She stood listening at the door until the tin voice of the intercom announced: "Kathy Martin, 203, company." Melvina listened to the little black flats click down the hall to the stairs and down the stairs to the turn at the first landing.

She opened the door and waved the perfume out, clicked the lock, and went to the dresser. She opened her top drawer, took out a white towel, and spread it over her half of the dresser, putting the box of tissues temporarily, but neatly, on the floor. She took a fat candle and a flat piece of tin from the drawer and closed it. Melvina placed the candle on the tin on the towel and picked the hairbrush from the other side of the dresser. She could hear a record playing down the hall and water moving in the pipes, but otherwise, the dorm was quiet. She pressed the silent switch, and the ceiling light was off. The lamp bent over her book made a small circle of light on her dark desk.

She held the brush in her left hand and coaxed the hair from between the bristles. Melvina's shadow fell over the brush, and the hair did not gleam, but it was fine hair and felt like silk threads. Removing all the strands she could with her heavy-tipped fingers, Melvina put the brush back on Kathy's side.

She divided her little nest of yellow hair in two, rolling one half into a ball that she placed in the center of the square of tin. She turned to Kathy's unmade bed. A large ash tray sat beside the hair dryer. Melvina looked into the ash tray and smiled. That was one thing Kathy was consistent and neat about: Whenever she cut her toenails she put the parings in that ash tray. Melvina scraped the curling white scraps onto a tissue with a pencil end. She held the corners of the tissue firmly and shook it to get the ash deposit off the toenails. She went back to the dresser where she sprinkled pinches of toenail over the hair ball on the tin, being careful that all the little scraps caught in the hair.

Melvina stepped back to look at the spun gold ball studded with toenail flecks. The dim mirror over the dresser reflected her steady mud eyes and clay-colored lips, but Melvina did not notice.

After a glance at the book open under her desk lamp, Melvina picked an open pack of matches from Kathy's side and lit the candle. Hair sputtered and toenails curled and blackened as Melvina bent the candle flame to the little ball. The flames reached high enough to be seen in the bottom of the mirror once and died.

Melvina watched the ashes cool; then swept half of them into her left palm and ground them with her right index finger. She ground the ones left on the tin too. The toenail ashes ground into larger lumps than the hair ashes. A bad chemistry lab odor rose from them into the smell from the candle smoking on a corner of the tin.

Melvina was a large shadow as she moved to the head of Kathy's bed in the edge of the candle light and the small glow of the lamp lowered to the book. She knelt at the head of the bed and rubbed her right index finger in the ash again. She began to draw with it on the headboard, making a very small design. She rubbed the last traces from her hands onto Kathy's pink-flowered pillow case.

A few strands of candle smoke floated between the gooseneck lamp and the book.

The remaining nest of hair Melvina separated and laid, piece by piece, as straight as she could, on a tissue. The candle flame was high, and wax dripped down the slick white sides and solidified on the tin. Melvina glanced at it while she separated the hair, but none of the wax crept as far as the remaining ashes.

She finished the hair and loosened the candle from the tin. All its wax came up with it, and Melvina smiled. She pushed her right sweater sleeve above her elbow, flicked a hank of hair back behind her ear, and slanted the candle over the thin layer of ashes left on the tin. Wax dripped over the black specks. Melvina mixed with her finger.

The wax stuck to her fingers at first, but soon began to collect in a soft mass. Melvina melted and mixed until the candle had burned almost to her fingers. Then she put the candle carefully back on its corner and molded the wax quickly into a crude doll. The short arms and legs dried quickly. Melvina passed the top of the head through the candle flame, pinched the long strands of hair in the middle, careful to get them all, and pressed them firmly into the top of the doll's head.

A few of the hairs curled and bounced on the round head: Others drooped lower than the ends of the stubby legs. Melvina moved the figure back and forth and huffed on the top of the head, watching the wax whiten over the hair. The candle flame shot up once and died. Melvina leaned her doll on the back of the dresser and went in the dark bathroom to brush her teeth.

She took her flannel pajamas off the hook by the bathroom door and put them on, buttoning the jacket tightly at her neck and pulling the sleeves over her wristbones. She hung her sweater, shirt, and skirt in the correct spaces in her closet and put her socks in the brown laundry bag.

The blank doll stood on the dresser, and Melvina went to it. She felt the top of its head. It was smooth and firm.

Melvina lifted the doll gently and looked around the dim room. Her eyes stopped at Kathy's open closet door and the shadowy, scattered laundry heap. The black knee sock showed against the light-colored underwear.

Still holding the doll, Melvina leaned into the shadowy closet and picked up the sock. She laid the doll on the dresser while she rolled down the top of the sock and held it open. The doll fitted nicely into the foot. Melvina unrolled the top and knotted it.

She put the black package on the dresser and opened the drawer. She put the tin with the remains of the candle

clinging to it in the back of the drawer. She shook the white towel once, wrapped the knee-socked doll in it, put that in the drawer, and closed it. She placed the tissue box back on the empty side.

Next, Melvina went to her desk and closed the orange-book, which she stood in line with the other book on back of the desk. Until she clicked it off, the weak lamp had nothing to light but a circle of desk and a low layer of smelly smoke.

Kathy came into the dark room at eleven, took one breath, and ran to the window. She pulled up the blind and raised the window before she turned the light on. The street lamp outside showed Melvina lying on her stomach, with only her head above the even covers, eyes closed and breathing regularly.

Kathy removed the hard objects from her bed, undressed, washed, turned the light off, and fell into bed. Her light curls bounced and glowed on the pink-flowered pillow. Soon, she too was breathing regularly, with her mouth a little open and the street lamp gleaming on her teeth, as well as her hair.

Melvina opened one eye and looked at Kathy. She opened the other eye too and took her arm from under the covers to look at her watch. It was only eleven-thirty. She lay still until two of twelve; then she put her feet on the cold tiles and walked to the dresser.

She opened the drawer and unwrapped the doll. Kathy slept. One of twelve. She held the doll in her left hand and stared at the watch face on back of that wrist. She grasped six strands of hair between thumb and index finger. Twelve: She pulled.

Kathy was smiling as if she were having nice dreams. Melvina rewrapped the doll and smiled too. Her feet were cold when she got back in bed, but she went right to sleep.

Melvina had been up, lowered the blinds, and left for class by the time Kathy woke up. She sat up and pulled the blind cord. The blinds whirred to the top of the window and clicked into place. Kathy stretched in the spring morning sun that seeped into the tumbled hair on her head. The sun filled her bed and washed the thin gold lace of hair left on her pillow.

Kathy slid her feet into the little blue slippers and padded, yawning, to the dresser and mirror. She picked up her brush and began pulling it through her hair. She was too busy watching her morning halo to notice how very many lemon strands came away with her brush or just fell to the floor.

BYZANTINE BOYS
PEN DRAWING
LEALAN NUNN



For Jocelyn's Bastard Son: Born Dead

All night I'm under a silken sheet
And drinking green-leaf tea,
Awake because I cannot weep
For my son who weeps for me.
And splashing like-warm water,
And speaking rather low,
And never waking my lover,
And never letting him know,
I rise before his morning
And carry my cotton dress,
And wander through my yesterday things,
And play with my colored, un-diamond rings,
And looking long from this window,
The same window, sipping my tea . . .

Oh bend, oh bend to my boy whose sin
Was daring, desiring to be.

For a song, a song from my blood-born boy,
While the wails of the dawn begin,
Limbs and leaves in their half-belief
In the wind begin to bend.
Oh, bend to my own boy now.
I presume to pay for his sin,
For the sake of his unformed, unborn face,
From out of the saddest, weariest place . . .

Oh, bend, oh bend to my boy whose sin
Was daring, desiring to be.

MARTHA PROTHRO

A Bedside Clock Before A Sleepless Dream

Alone—the word has gummed the works:
The red hand circulates your face so slow.
I find my fingers in my mouth again,
My tiny tendernesses, like a child's small gifts,
Not understood, but Thank you, (just the same), dear.
I took them chicken salad when the old man died.
I took them heavy cakes at Christmastime.
I gave their children cookies when they cried,
And let them smell my cats,
And put their sticky fingers on my polished woods.
And last night, with my cane and linen dress,
I passed their house on my last legs.
I'll close my doors and bar them and turn my oven off.
I'll call my cats and kill them and take my linen off.
So soft the words repeat themselves in whispers,
With expectations subtly grown to sleep.
I turn my pillow fluffy,
Press my palsied hands against this wall.

MARTHA PROTHRO



WOODCUT
JEAN ELLEN JONES

"Father?"
"Yes, Son?"
"When is it coming?"
"Soon, Son, soon."

Twelve ninety-nine for an everyday hat. The old one would have lasted for another three or four years. He adjusted it again on his almost bald head. It scratched behind the ears. The newest, they said; it was green. They had taken him to the store and pointed to it in the shining-clean glass. The hat had been tilted on a toothy head with brown, wet-brown hair. The mannequin's pasted smile and rosy lips smirked. That's what they wear, Pop, they had stated, and today he had been ordered to the store to get it. The salesman had been slick and smiling, and the old man stumbled in his questioning of the tax. Wear it tilted, mister, clean it every month and if it rains, DON'T LET IT GET WET, hurried the salesman through hurried lips and shifting eyes.

The old man felt very hot and before he knew it he was out in front of the store clutching his old brown hat in sweaty palms and feeling self-conscious in the new. On the side of the greenish hat stood something that looked like a shaving brush. He wondered at length about it, but knew that he would never ask anyone. The tips of the bristles were white and stood quite erect.

Twelve ninety-nine had been enough money to spend in a day, so the old man decided to walk all the way to his apartment. It was quite dark for the late April afternoon and people moved quickly, hailing cabs and contemplating rain. The old man created a brownish mass, head down, brown hat held in hands, as he slowly dragged himself through the crowds. Many rushing men and women bumped into him and once a young man snapped a quick "pardon me." This startled the weary walker.

The last smells of winter quickened the crowds, and afternoon turned its April face toward evening. The rain started slowly. The old man remembered the salesman's words, DON'T LET IT GET WET, DON'T LET IT GET WET, but he did not move to remove it. He did not know quite what to do. He only walked slow and old and brown downtown. His feet dragged and his new hat scratched behind the ears. He did take the old brown hat from between his damp palms and bundle it up, putting it under his overcoat. The rain was strangely warm, as the old man felt it get heavier and more insistent.

Now the rain was very heavy and straight, wetting the neck and seeping to the bottom of the shoes. Squishing. Hey man, don't you know enough to get in out of the rain? The voice was gone and the old man stopped. He removed the hat from his head and examined it. It sagged a little and was a darker greenish. The old man was frightened, as he stood quite still on the sidewalk, passers-by dodging him. Don't let it get wet, the shaving brush mocked, still erect.

The rain fell straight and hard and warm. The old man smiled. A wide smile. Near him a drainpipe reached out over the puddled-sidewalk. Rain slop-slopped down with tremendous force. Through the drainpipe, plopping it with strength upon the sidewalk. Smiling through grey teeth, the old man walked a step, centering himself directly under the drainpipe, and the strength hit him with vigor.

In a constant rushing stream it hit the top of the hat, pushing it further down on his head. The warm-wet sprayed over his shoulders and chest and down across his face. His left hand clutched the warm, dry, brown hat, safe

inside of his coat. It was a wonderful rain.

"Father?"
"Yes, Son?"
"When is it coming?"
"Soon, Son, soon."

The room was dingy and smelled of grey-looking flowered wall paper. The couple upstairs laughed immorally, almost shrieking, and she shuddered. Sitting at the old desk, piled high with papers, she looked out of the window, and all she saw was the Brooklyn Bridge, ridged in steel-grey and covered by night. It looked more like an old photograph, and just hung, the lights of the cruising cars slipping through the grey.

She glanced down at the papers and saw many years of the same piles, written in ball-point pens and all misspelling the word "surprise."

Outside the storm grew and the wind banged against the pane. She glanced at the paper on top, but decided that her T.V. dinner must be moist, and its choice pieces of chicken, brown. She ate in silence, listening to the storm and the noises upstairs. The wind demandingly harassed the glass and the pane moaned. She touched her hair mechanically after throwing away the remainder of the dinner. Her hair was still quite soft and black, piled neatly atop her head. Some of the weariness of the day hurt her forehead in its classroom sounds and children's sweat and chalk smells. She was sorry now that she'd given the test, for they impatiently waited, neatly piled and ready.

The telephone rang. It was her younger brother who matter-of-factly told her of her niece's birthday. He thanked her for the check and only then asked how she felt.

"Fine, thank-you, a little tired."

"How's school?" he yawned.

"The same. I may take the assistant-principal's test in June."

"Good," he droned, and the rest of what he said was drowned out by the wind against the window, its laughter.

"Spring's certainly coming in like a lion," she commented, and hung up. She realized that she hadn't asked about his wife. This annoyed her, after all these years. The clock hopped past eight, and the waiting papers called. Red pen in hand her eyes moved toward the window. How the wind laughed. How it moaned and sighed. The bridge shook a little, its power seduced by the wind. The room felt very warm and the air pressed against her pained forehead. The wall paper smelled of dead pink flowers.

A breath of air, just one, just one, and she opened the window a little at the bottom. Her hand ached with the pressure of the window, for it had been down all of the long winter.

In rushed, ran, swirled, whirled the wind over her face and forehead, sending some of the pinned hair against her forehead. Swish went some of the papers from the pile.

She smiled. She laughed out loud and let it swirl into her mouth. It cooled her throat and eyes, and tasted sweet and new. It sang in her ears.

She opened the window wide with little effort now and laughed hard and wickedly, mouth very wide.

Surprise, surprise, SURPRISE, she laughed.

The wind blew all the papers around, around the desk, sliding its breath upon them until they hit the floor and

walls. Swirling and laughing, her hair fell completely free, wrapping itself around her chest and mouth.

SURPRISE, SURPRISE. The papers flapped and flew. SURPRISE. She could not see the bridge, the wind was in her eyes.

"Father?"

"Yes, Son?"

"When is it coming?"

"Soon, Son, quite soon."

The storm, fierce now, tumbles rain and drowns the sidewalk. It puddles corners and slows the taxis. The lights tilt-a-whirl into the puddles and the rain smashes them into a million drops and spots of red, green, blue. Colors and lights upon reflected sidewalks, elongated upon taxi tops and windows. Dancing. Wipers sending the water slopping down upon checkered hoods.

Theater marquees seem but a dull background flashing on-off-on, too weak to pierce the rain, too yellow to compete with car lights and reds and blues from bars and signs.

Sounds of horns are dulled by the storm and form but a constant beating background to the wind and tumbling rains. Cabs and limousines pile up in front of theaters. Honking. Shoving.

"Move, buddy, think you own the street or somethin'?"

"Go to hell."

The final bars of the orchestra rise and reach a climax of drums and cymbals, sneaking out of the theater behind doorman's backs, cutting the night's rhythm. A thunder of applause rises against the closed theater doors, as the doorman move mechanically from door to door, opening them wide, allowing the thunder out. It too becomes dull upon meeting the storm.

People begin to flow out of the theaters, creating a mob of mink and black hats. Pushing down the street toward Broadway. Rushing against the rain with Playbills and newspapers over their heads.

Doormen hurry men and women to their limousines, where chauffeurs hold doors open and push them inside.

One man strides straight out onto the sidewalk and is caught by the doorman, who stretches to place the black umbrella over the gentleman's head and jogs comically to keep up with his stride.

The gentleman gracefully slips into the back seat and closes the door against the pelting rain.

"Good evening, sir. How was the show?"

"Hmmm."

"Where to?"

"Just drive . . ."

"The storm, jammed cross-town streets . . ."

". . . JUST drive."

He leans back upon the increased leather seats and watches the lights playing with the streaming windows.

Where to, ha, where to sit straight and be charming. Where to be sophisticated and drink with the smart young social set. Where . . . alone . . . in April.

Outside the storm slows and the flip-flap of the window-wipers stops. The chauffeur mechanically stops, starts, slows through traffic.

Where to . . . April, with a sport jacket, drinking a cocktail on the thirteenth floor.

"Storm's stopped . . ."

"Hmmm."

". . . said, it ain't raining anymore. Looks like the last winter storm is over and from now on it'll be Spring."

"Spring . . . hmmm . . . take off your pants."

"What?"

"Just be nonchalant and take off your pants, and then your jacket."

"SIR! !"

"Do as I say."

"Yes, sir, but it's rather difficult. Can I wait for a red light?"

"Yes. How does one draw up a sweat?"

"What, sir?"

"How does one become sweated and . . . smell?"

"Um . . . by running, I guess. Here are the pants, sir; they're dirty and creased. Are you all right, sir?"

"Certainly I am. Now stop the car."

"But sir . . ."

"STOP THE CAR. Thanks. I'll see you later."

"Sir, I'm naked . . ."

He does not hear, he is gone, running and putting on the jacket as he runs. Fast. Down Fifth Avenue. Long strides through puddles. Jumping over curbs. Sweating. Sprinting downtown. The limousine rides slowly to the right of the street, always behind the runner.

"Look at that man. Must be crazy."

"You know how those domestics are."

The arch appears far down Fifth. The runner speeds up, and, breathing jerkily, runs diagonally into the street, almost being hit by a cab. He slows as he enters the park.

The night has become a soft breeze. Silent and warm. Far-away stars have broken through the fading mist. The limousine parks at the entrance to the park and becomes just a big black blob, set down at the corner of Fifth and Waverly.

"Hey, ya got a match?"

"Sure."

"Hey, ya got a cigarette too? I'll trade you a drink for a cigarette."

"Sure."

"Boy, do you stink. That boss o' yours must be a damned slave driver."

"Yes, he is. Rich bastard though."

"Yeah, I know the type. Good night, huh? The boys and I were just noticin' that spring's just about here. Guess winter's over and we'll be able to drink by the fountain again."

"Guess so. It's been a long winter."

They each take long drinks in silence.

"Father?"

"Yes, Son?"

"When is it coming?"

"Soon, Son, soon. In fact, it's just about here."

"Father . . ."

"Yes, Son."

"I love you."

"Go back to bed."

He bounces out of the thickly carpeted bedroom. Sleeping breath follows him out. To the window he jumps, lowering its glass. Night hangs upon the trees and new leaves of Central Park. Silence holds the night softly by its hand, and dawn blows its breath upon the lightening horizon. He calls down to the floor below.

"Hey stupid—hey stupid . . ."

"Shhh."

"Shhh yourself. IT'S almost here."

"I know, I know."

He stretches his shaggy head out of the window and looks down at the street far below. Down. Down. A sidewalk covered by something that makes it almost non-existent, street lights but yellow circles through the grey-black. A springtime smell swims into the room and his eyes sparkle.

"Hey stupid . . ."

"Shhh."

"Let's go down to the Park and be there when it happens."

Silence.

"Please come, huh, stupid? We'll just sit down by the lake and wait."

Silence and then a meek, "Okay."

"Good, I'll meet you in the elevator."

Barefoot he runs to the door and down the corridor. A cold wet silence greets him and he hops from foot to foot as he waits for the elevator to climb to the top floor.

The door swooshes open and he sees that she has got on already. She stands barefoot upon the cold floor.

"You look funny."

The elevator moves abruptly down and they giggle. On the floor lies an empty pint bottle of whiskey. An umbrella stands in the corner.

"That certainly was a funny storm last night."

"I watched it."

"Me too."

"It made the park into a jungle, do you know what I mean?"

"I think so, sort of magic. The wind. The rain all swirling around. It was real late when I woke up and heard the last of the storm, sort of like sobs. And then it just went away, as though somebody old and angry had just died. It got very peaceful then, and I guess I went back to sleep."

The elevator door opens and they quietly walk into the lobby. The red carpets silence their steps, and slowly they make their way to the large, clean, glass door. The door-

man sleeps in a red leather chair, his cap in his lap, his snore the only sound in the lobby.

Outside the darkness is scattering itself thinly over the sidewalk and a cab slips quickly back uptown.

"Hurry, hurry."

They run across the street and down into the park. He slows his step to wait for her and together they scamper onto the grass. The grass is wet and tickles their feet. Sleeping against a tree a derelict breathes heavily with mouth wide and black-stubble moving. Against his leg lies an old wooden guitar. Scratched. Battered. Warped. The derelict's hand tightly grips the bridge. Several feet away the lake lies, misty and grey-blue. Silence holds the mist still and soft. Night has become but the grey.

"Let's swim."

"Our clothes . . ."

"Just take them off."

"Okay."

Quickly they undress, leaving their clothes in a pile on the shore. Yelping he jumps into the water.

"It's cold."

She follows and for several laughing minutes they splatter and splash through the mist and break the water into circles and spots. Behind the April trees the light seeps.

"Quick! Here it comes."

Pulling her by the hand, they run to the tree and climb quickly to a branch. Below, the derelict has awakened and with one hand scratches his face, with the other, touches the strings on the guitar. He begins to pick a tune. The sound is tinny.

"Look, IT'S here. IT'S finally here."

The sun breaks through the lowest trees, lighting the green and clearing the surface of the water. Sparkling spots appear upon the blue. A breeze sighs through the tree.

"It's springtime. Finally. I've been waiting so long for it, about a million years."

"Me too."

They are hidden in the tree as the sun rises higher and the city begins to awaken. Beyond the trees the merry-ground stands. It is still and silent. Soon it will begin to circle and sing.

Late August in a New England Park

There comes a time each summer
When the geese fly away
To some southern swamp
To some place where grasses wind around
The marshes in the depth of winter.
There comes a time when the wind
Blows a different smell from the sea
While gulls clamor with the old knowledge
Of change.
And so, in this sad season,
We meet on hills
To lie on the grass with our blankets
Under us, to blow tunes on reed whistles,
To listen to the last park concert.
And we move as mourners
As we watch the eternal flight of the geese
From such seasons.

ANNE EDDY DAUGHTRIDGE

Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep

Before as it was in the beginning
Now as it seems to end
And after for ever and ever
They will walk into the rooms
Assume the pose on white canvas sheets
And tell one another, "Most of all."
All are rare to the night's pleasure.

He will walk from the room
Down the vaguely lighted streets
And it will be as the other mornings.
Avoiding cracks by half steps
The sidewalks will follow him
Into the morning's almost completeness.
The night had provided little distinction.

She has slept away the harshness of early
And has not looked upon the dresser
For what she knows is crumpled lying there.
There, more or less, remains the night.
The nights have provided her well
Less now, but well. Give her this day
Loaves to spread indifferently with honey.

They will come together again into the room
To find, unmoved, the bed in a different place.
She will find another chair, the same chair
And refold and replace her coat upon it.
He will walk into yesterday's morning tomorrow
Unconcerned that he could not remember
How to pray his soul to keep.

JANET HAMER

Night Of No Light

When I become a black leopard,
No one can hear me walk,
And I press my feet to grass
That bends to the ground in dark.

Far from lights of man I move,
Where a mist slides under the stars,
Nothing but my cold golden eyes
And the quicksilver of my claws.

I am a solid cloud fallen
Down to the ground in night,
A shadow with no maker, I can be
Only in these nights of no light.

TINA HILLQUIST

Wrong Bird

On the apple tree at the bottom of the yard,
I can hear and see
A woodpecker leaving his mark
In the circle of marks
Woodpeckers have left for eternity.

TINA HILLQUIST



SHOES BY JARMAN

STANDING ON OUR OWN THREE FEET

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