

SUMMER

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

1946



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Miss Sarah Morris, senior art major, takes time out from sunbathing to model a printed bathing suit and striped beach coat from our latest summer playclothes. Photo by Bennie Lowe.

MONTALDO'S

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—Peggy Finley

FROM THE EDITOR . . .

CORADDI, by virtue of its fifty years, is the oldest student publication. Its name was derived from the names of three of the societies—*Cornelian*, *Adelphian*, and *Dikean*—at one time literary organizations. Whatever the past function of CORADDI may have been, we feel, with its future in our hands, that its primary function is to give publication to creative effort.

The handbook terms CORADDI “the campus literary magazine.” Such a limitation we refuse to accept. From Arts Forum we learned that creative expression takes many forms. We regret for our use that the Dance, Music, and Drama Production, in that they are performances, cannot be reduced to the printed page. But we are interested in interpretations and criticisms from these fields.

If we were looking for the best campus creative effort, we would turn to the faculty, but we are concerned with student effort. That CORADDI will include unfinished attempts at “works of art” we are sure. To us, the attempt is important. Nor are we interested only in the work of a small group of juniors and seniors or a group of any kind. We are very proud that the cover for this issue was designed by Betty Leonard, a primary education major in a 101 art course. CORADDI, we hope, will encourage and stimulate creative effort.

A glance through this issue reveals a preoccupation with death, injustice, and compromise. Why this is true we are uncertain. Perhaps it is the sociology course, the history course, or the world tragedy course. Perhaps it is the first disillusionment of “the Young.” In Mildred Rodgers’ poem we find a reaction against the world of adults and reality—a wish “to stay a child forever”—a desire for “hope untainted by fulfillment.” There seems to be no middle ground, no acceptance of life as containing both comedy and tragedy.

Most of us, however, do not wear perennial scowls; our living does not stop with death and injustice and compromise. But there seems to be a tendency when “creating” to depict life as all *real* and all *earnest*, a feeling that “art” must be profound.

CORADDI can only select from what material is offered. We hope that next year we will be given the opportunity to select some humor.



—Martyvonne Dehoney

THE AFTERDAYS

By BARBARA BARRETT

Now, after seven years she was back, standing at the window of her three-room apartment, staring down at the street which she had traveled countless times as a student at the Conservatory. She looked down at her hands and felt, in staring at the thin blue vein along the top, an overwhelming sense of regret, almost of betrayal. So long ago her hands had seemed a separate entity from the rest of herself—strong, willing things that fashioned her concretely from what she was to

BARBARA BARRETT, sophomore writing major, presents a first story. Barbara, who uses the stream of consciousness form for *The Afterdays*, authored the "The Disenchanted," which was included in the Arts Forum writing booklet.

all that she wished to be. So many times when she had wanted to run away from the green room, so that she would not have to go on the stage, her hands had remained calm and unflinching, to assure her that she need only put the cool hard feel of ivory and ebony under them. She felt an unreasoning tenderness, as one feels toward another whom he has wronged without explanation, without cause. She called to memory all she had once felt when they were lithe and powerful—brown mastery against the keys . . . they were good hands . . . such a strange feeling to have for hands . . . has anyone ever wept to look at long well-groomed nails like these, remembering how beautiful they were when cut too short to be polished? . . .

In the street below, clusters of Conservatory students walked to the three dormitories . . . saddle shoes briefcases armfuls of harmony . . .

they don't know . . . none of them know that one day they will see how time began and ended for them here on this street . . . they will all go home with their personal ignominies to become angry frustrated audiences wishing to be on the stage . . . they will leave the little concerts in their little towns saying the violins were flat in the first movement and know they couldn't have done it and go back to their kitchens and their offices next day wondering why . . .

When she was eighteen she had spent one year on that street, and it was as if all her life had been pointing toward the day when she would first walk down the street to the drugstore thinking, "It's true; I'm really here!" And after she had left, the street became a symbol to which she was inexorably drawn in all her thoughts.

The girl in apartment 6C was singing Rachmaninoff again: "The ancient passion wakes, and in the darkness glimmering" . . . it was the beginning and the end of a cycle; Marion Windon sang that when she was here before. She looked out on the street and felt tightness in her stomach and tears behind her eyes. A misty aura from the streetlights diffused over the damp pavement, over the young maples shivering in the wind. Seven years ago she had walked down the street on the same kind of night with Paul.

She watched a dark-haired girl in a trenchcoat hurrying toward Haddon Hall, where she had lived that year with Janice. She smiled: that night—a night just like this one, she had stood with Paul under her window in the little alley leading to the Fenway, calling softly to Jan to let her in. It was an hour past closing time, and Jan had sneaked past Mrs. Benton's room to snap the nightlock. As she undressed a few minutes later, Jan had sat in bed slowly pulling a brush through her hair: "Cathy, are you having an affair with Paul?"

She thought that only a freshman roommate would ask that, and smiled as she answered easily, "Well, it's not involved enough to be an affair, really. 'Affair' always sounds so sordid or gaudy or something—but what you mean, yes."

Jan had paused, her brush tangled at the end of one twist of hair: "Cathy! Gosh, Cathy, what if something happens—Cathy," in a child's pleading tone, "Tell me about it."

She remembered that she had pulled off her slip, feeling superior in so many ways to her eighteen-year-old roommate who could not know. "Well," she had said, "it's not like Freud and it's not like *Children of Adam* and it wouldn't be the

same for you as it is for me—I can't tell you, Jan; I just feel as if I could do anything in the world better than anyone else."

Jan had stared at her then, and she had wondered if she looked different; if her arms and legs were like they had always been; if people could look at her tomorrow and know; if during Mr. Katzin's English lecture he would glance at her and then stare, knowing. "I know it's wrong, maybe, Jan, but I can't help myself."

. . . it's true, I couldn't, Paul . . . with you there was no more harmony tomorrow or being in by eleven or "the body is the temple of the soul" . . .

In her memory that spring had no rainy days, no homework, no sewing on buttons or writing newsy letters home; it was all like the first day in September when she had looked up the broad marble stairs at the Conservatory, and had thought that that moment was the beginning of all things. It was like that only more beautiful, filled with poignant unbelief. And if there were times, late at night, when doubt and pulsating fear had come at her out of the darkness, those doubts had been dispelled in the morning when she went into Room 146, Solfege, to see Paul's easy smile which said, "I know and you know and together we know what no one else ever will." Her memory of it was herself and Paul in a booth at Marden's, laughing at Kurt Slagh's theories on free love—how strange that they listened so objectively; it was the first time Paul kissed her, on the footbridge in the Fenway, as if he had been waiting all his life for that exact moment which once gone he could never recapture, but once taken he might suspend forever; it was herself sitting with Jan in the darkened mezzanine at concert hall, her palms itching at the lovely discord of an orchestra tuning; it was Paul standing to the right of the podium and it was the unreasoning jealousy of her desire to be on the stage.

. . . oh, Paul, it was all so dramatic and ethereal and unreal . . . we were too young to be honest or even to realize that it was only sex, only rebellion against convention . . . we made believe we were students at the Sorbonne . . . if I could have gone with you to Germany we might have made it, but how can a music critic like me . . . oh, Paul, why didn't I turn out to be a musician? . . . why must I always be in the audience looking on surrounded by bosomy dowagers and sterile Boston lawyers? . . .

Now after seven years, she realized how trite the situation had been, and marveled at her naivete in once believing it to be unique. Hers,

after all, had only the fundamental ingredients of every life: love, the tear-shattered smiles with which people remember the other years, the grasping of impossible ambitions, the inescapable compromises . . . oh, I suppose part of it was real enough . . . Paul, do you remember the bookstore in that basement on Hunter Avenue? . . . do you remember how the funny old man in the tight suit smiled at me? . . . do you still have the copy of Theodore Dreiser that you bought? . . . do you remember, ever, the night we sat on the grass by the lake at the Fenway and you told me about the *Great American Tragedy* and said you wanted to marry me in June and we could go to your father's lodge in the White Mountains? . . . do you remember the afternoon we went to a rummage sale at Mechanics Hall and had dinner at the Hotel Statler at night? . . . do you remember Miss Brown's Home Cooking—Up One Flight And To The Right where the waitress was a French major at Radcliffe and talked French to the med. students and gave us extra brownies? . . .

She went to the painted bookcase and took out a worn copy of *Anna Karenina*. It was six o'clock; in half an hour Dave would come to take her to Amalfi's for ravioli before the Saturday concert. The symphony was playing the Szostakovich *Seventh*, and Dave would sit beside her in the refinement of cultured incomprehension.

She watched the girl toying with her salad fork at the next table, and thought how strange it was that every person—the girl with the fork, the fat bald waiter—each of them was wrapped in his own life, enveloped beyond touch in silent thoughts made up of strange imagery . . . I am only one among these with so small a life so short a time . . . why is this so important that I have any doubts about Dave? . . . I should marry Dave because Paul is gone too far from me and life is too brief to snatch at branches along the banks which slip through our fingers as we are swept along . . . no one should ever look back or return to the old places . . .

"Cathy."

"Yes?"

"Did I tell you I'm taking a two weeks vacation the end of next month?"

"No—are you going away?"

"Well, I'm going to the Mayo clinic to work with Dr. Stanton the beginning of October; that's why the vacation. Go with me, Cathy. Marry me next month and I'll take you to see the Golden Gate Bridge and the Sierras and New Orleans.

Cathy, some day you'll marry me—let it be next month!"

"Dave," she hesitated. "I suppose I will marry you some day, but marriage is a long thing and I want to be awfully sure, not just for me—for you, too; I want you to be happy, Dave."

"Tell me one way or the other, Cathy. Don't keep me waiting like this any longer. Tell me, and if it's 'no, not next month' we'll just forget the whole thing because, hell, Cath, this is no way to go along; we're not kids any more."

"Dave," she paused, describing a circle in the tiny beads of water on her wine glass; "I'll let you know Friday." . . . so after all these months, Friday I have to push my life one way or the other . . . no extreme event that I wait for can decide this now . . . I'll have to do this alone . . .

"Cathy," he spoke gently, "when will you grow out of this? You weren't in love with Paul. Whenever you've talked about that year you've always been so dewy-eyed about it—you only remember the good things. Cath, I know I could make you happy. No one has ever loved anyone the way I love you; come with me, Cathy."

"I want to, Dave; I wish you knew how much I want to. It's not that I don't love you—I do, but I have to have everything clear in my mind or marriage to anyone would be a farce."

(Continued on Page 17)



Martha Wells

PARANOIA

By MILDRED RODGERS

Name? Age? Place of Birth? Occupation? Education (Indicate schools, degrees, nature of work done)? Experience? Apparent nature of illness? He watched his brother as his brother answered the nurse's questions about him which only he really understood. Did she suppose his mind was so far gone that he could not answer simple questions for himself? But . . .

Name. Ah, name, name, name. John Anthony Clinton. A label, as good and as bad as any other label. But he was to have made that label burn in a million minds. Nothing so inadequate as a man for his dreams. But he *had* had faith in his label; his wife had said to him often faith, faith in your name and your work; faith so bright that my own faith burns a wan flame beside, burning mine out to add to yours. And had come to hate and scorn.

Age. 37. No more, no less. Oh, perhaps a few months or a few thousand years, no matter. Age. Not young, quite old, for the burning faith was lost. Lost lost faith. Lost when his gentle, sweet, delicate wife had turned to him with hatred, turned to him with a mocking pity, with the faith burned out in her eyes and only cold loathing there. The two of them had built a fire of faith in him—her first mild deprecation couldn't cool. But the growing of it, the intolerable inexorable mounting of it breeding the briefest first thought, irrevocable thought of her death. Perhaps, her weakness, she would die, her heart, the doctor said.

Birthplace. Don't remember, perhaps he wasn't there. Ha, ha. If they should hear him laughing—a confirmation for their claims. The mad declared their sanity, sanity denied by the sane—but the sane claiming insanity for the sane, and no cure for it, no remedy for this bit of insanity of the sane. No place for jokes.

Occupation. Murderer. Yes, yes. Murderer. But they never believe. All right, music—the writing and playing of music. But murderer, his chief and most successful. The music had never been successful. No successful music, but one whole complete perfect murder—one success. For long the thought lay quietly, a hope that she would die—die—for having killed his faith. His faith so bright and strong swallowing hers and choking it off at the source, might have lived still

bright and strong had scorn not come to replace hers.

Education and Experience. Enough of both, perhaps too much. But no education fitted him for the great experience—now they would not accept his success. Only the hate and the wish for her death gave him the answer to the opportunity. Opportunity strikes but once. Strikes boldly, fights to be known and realized, his opportunity walked as bold as a prostitute. And costing him nothing, giving him her death he desired so much. Returning, perhaps, his faith, as success in one thing will do. She had sent him out to have a prescription filled, sent him coldly and impersonally, as an errand boy—this loathsome frigidity a product of her hate. One pill she always took for a spell, had to take, the doctor said, could not do without. And to substitute an aspirin with the lettering carefully smoothed and scraped was nothing. Eventually she would need a pill, in one of her frantic spells, depending so on one pill to survive, and take that one.

Nature of illness. Insanity, said the police, said even the experts. That his smartest move, his wisest fashioning of success. Three weeks ago, before her death, police listened to desperate self-accusation. He had killed his wife, beat her head with a small hammer and buried her in the cellar. They laughed, she was safe at home cooking dinner; she worried. But laughter left them and thought of unbalanced mind came to them when next day he said he had put poison in her food and left her at home on her bed, quite dead. She worried more, his insistence on the idea of killing her, might prove fatal, might be dangerous, investigated private institutions, asked

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MILDRED RODGERS, generally known for her poetry, produces for this issue her second CORADDI story, written according to Mildred, "for my Daddy, who is addicted to murder mysteries." The title is not Mildred's.



Margaret Mills

RIVER MOON

By NANCY SUTTON

Characters

Grandma: A well-preserved woman of about sixty-five, the grandmother of Sadie and Nellie.

Nellie: Sister of Sadie. She is about twenty years old and not particularly pretty. She wears her hair in a knot on the back of her head and speaks with a calm, slow voice.

Sadie: Wife of Tom and mother of the baby. She is near the age of Nellie, but is in contrast to her in both movement and voice.

Scene: A small room in a mountain cabin. There is a sturdy table with an oil lamp on it at right stage; a stone fireplace at left stage. A door leads into the room at right upstage. A rough cradle is in front of the fire.

Time: 1900. Evening in early spring.

Grandma is sitting in the one rocking chair. She is dressed in a plain gingham dress and is rocking and singing softly to herself. Occasionally she glances toward the cradle.

Grandma:

"And it was in the month of May,
The green buds they were a swellin',
Sweet William on his death bed lay
For the love of Barbara Allen."

(The door opens and a young woman of about twenty comes in. She is dressed in a long cotton dress and is carrying an armful of wood which she puts down on the hearth.)

Nellie: (looking in the cradle) Any change yet?

Grandma: What's that?

Nellie: Any change yet?

Grandma: No, I ain't heard a thing. He ain't moved since you went out to git the wood.

Nellie: Is Tom and the preacher come yet?

Grandma: No.

Nellie: I wish he'd hurry. Timmy's awful white lookin'. He don't kick and holler like he used to. *(She leaves the cradle and goes to the fire where she starts stirring something in a pot.)* Where's Sadie gone to? I passed her on my way down the trail, and she was a runnin' like a black racer up toward the crag.

Grandma: I don't know. She kept sayin' somethin' about Timmy ain't never seen no mountain laurel, and she wanted him to see some

before— Is there enough moon tonight fer Tom to see to git up the trail?

Nellie: *(Going over to the window and looking out.)* Yes, I reckon so. There's a ring around it. *(To herself)* There's a ring around it like the night my Danny died. 'N she was a laughin' that night. I hope Sadie don't have to hear her.

Grandma: Sadie ain't actin' right about all this. Lots of folks loses their first baby, and Tom, he's doin' like he should. Goin' out to git the preacher so as Timmy can be baptized. But Sadie, she says to me before she went out the door, "I don't care if'in he ain't baptized." And that ain't right. Worryin' more about mountain laurel than about whether Timmy gits baptized.

Nellie: *(Still looking out the window.)* Hush, she's comin' now.

(Sadie comes in the door. She would be pretty except for a tired look around her eyes. She seems very nervous as she puts the large bunch of mountain laurel on the table. Then she goes over to the cradle.)

Sadie: He ain't moved since I left. *(She speaks in a tired voice. She seems to have trouble keeping it under control.)* He ain't cried, has he, sis? *(Turning back to the cradle.)* Do you want anything Timmy? You feel too warm. I'll move you away from the fire.

Grandma: You hadn't oughta move him. Near the fire is the best place fer him. I raised ten children, and I always kept them near the fire when they was sick.

Sadie: *(Still looking in the cradle.)* You'll be a big boy soon. I want you to grow up big and strong like your Pa.

Nellie: *(Stirring the pot on the stove.)* Can't you leave him alone, Sadie? He's sick. 'N even if'in he is your baby, you oughta leave him alone.

Sadie: *(Rocking the cradle.)* He ain't sick. He's just sleepin'. You ain't sick, Timmy. *(She rocks the cradle harder.)* Cry fer them so as they'll know you ain't sick. *(There is no sound, and gradually Sadie stops rocking.)* When's Tom comin' home? He ought to hurry.

Nellie: He'll git home soon as he finds the preacher. It's a long way to town, 'n the preacher might not even be there.

Sadie: Timmy don't need no preacher. He don't need to be baptized; he ain't done nothin' wrong. He's too little.

Nellie: It don't matter if'in he ain't done nothin' wrong. You know what the preacher says 'bout people that die without bein' baptized. Their souls wander the earth 'til the judgment. You heard him yourself.

Sadie: But Timmy ain't sick. He ain't gonna die. *(She gets up and goes to the table where she picks up a small piece of mountain laurel.)*

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NANCY SUTTON, whose satire was published last year in CORADDI, has adopted a new medium for *River Moon*. Nancy's play was produced in April with three other experimental works.

TRIO

By NINA VAN DAM

Out of one of the train wagons Mil swung down the iron steps. He saw Eve and ran smoothly up to her. His grip on her arm was strong.

His words were casual, well-spaced as he told her about an amusing fellow-traveler from New York. Then he complimented her on her blue-gray suit.

Eve hugged her purse close to her slender body.

He went on. "I'm glad you came. Never anything to do in a town like this. There must be millions . . . Ah, here's a taxi. Driver, the Fairmont Hotel, please."

"Ain't no sech thing, mister. You mean the Jefferson Inn. Biggest in the county."

"The Jefferson then. Aren't you coming, Eve? You better not. How about dinner at six. He slammed the door and leaned back against the bumpy seat, still smiling at her. For only a second he saw her face, lineless and intense.

. . . Fairmont's main street . . . boring as hell . . . a pity she's taller than me . . . well, I don't care either . . . one needs good company in holes like these . . . Montgomery Ward, the five-and-ten, Rexall's . . . all my old cronies . . . old taxicab . . . millions of brothers, old and lumpy . . . all over the state . . . damn this town . . . Eve's the only clean thing in it . . . wish she weren't so quiet sometimes . . . much better than Susan . . . what a wild-cat, that Sue.

He chuckled and lit a cigarette. Reminded him of this time last year when he had decided he wanted this job. He thought it would be pretty easy to advance in the wholesale textile business. Fought, worked, sweated for it. It was exciting. Now he'd landed his job it was as hellish as this dull town. Even the way the taxi driver's cap slanted forward on his sandy hair . . .

"Here y'are, mister." The cabby clicked the meter, and held out his hand.

"Keep the change."

Agilely, he slipped onto the sidewalk and entered the dark lobby of the Jefferson. Old lamps

were erect over overstuffed couches. An elderly man sat in the window to get better light on his newspaper. The only other person in the gloom was the clerk, towering darkly over the desk. The clerk eyed him impatiently, black eyebrows impertinently raised.

"What can I do for you, sir?"

"A room, second floor, if possible." He pulled the register towards him and signed: Mil F. Smith, Baltimore, Md.

The clerk turned his heavy back towards the customer. "Hey, Charlie, show Mr. Smith to 212. Are you sure it's Smith?" he smirked.

Mil gave him a look that made him somehow taller than the clerk. "Why should you care? And I'm sure."

He followed Charlie across the darkly flowered carpet towards the elevator. "Let's go up the stairs. Hate those slow elevators."

Charlie nodded and turned towards the great brown staircase. The two men silently, and in step, arrived on the gloomy landing.

"208, 210, 212. Here y'are, sir."

Cabbies and bellboys were so dull! Always said the same old things. Mil threw Charlie a coin and closed the door after him. The room was dim and close. He opened the window wide, then his suitcase. In half an hour he was on the bed, reading the *Baltimore Oriole*. He satisfied himself with the sports news, then the financial page. It was getting too dark to read.

Mil leaned his head back and gazed at the high ceiling.

. . . Old building, this . . . always a stopover for Lee or Grant . . . why is everything so unexciting . . . must be horrible for other salesmen like him, out alone, nowhere to go . . . except some dingy bar or a Western. If it weren't for people like Eve . . . Oh, Lord, he'd forgotten.

Mil jumped off the bed and dressed without hurry. Despite his low, broad frame he did things smoothly. He remembered Sue remarking that she had never seen anyone so unexpectedly fast in her life. He still wasn't quite sure how she'd meant that. Well, that was Sue. Again, he smiled.

Mil was annoyed. It was twenty after six. He did not want to drink too much before dinner, but Eve had not yet come. What else was there to do? He turned the glass in his square-nailed

NINA VAN DAM, new CORADDI member, is author of a poem which appeared in the spring issue. Formerly from the Netherlands, Nina has been speaking the English language for only six years.

fingers, each time getting the light to settle differently on it.

A small, tight-skinned hand was placed on the dampish bar top. "Whiskey straight."

Mil looked up at his neighbor. He was a soldier, short also, but, unlike Mil's, his body was exceedingly narrow. He swung his shoulders impatiently and his fingernails were irritating on the dark-red. When the whiskey had come to a stop in front of him, he scooped it up and drank it in one coordinated gesture. There was no expression in his bloodless face. His eyes looked transparent.

"Mac, another whiskey." Again the tiny glass slid down the gleaming wood. Silently, Mil watched his neighbor. He was used to speaking to soldiers, but this soldier was different.

Mil was very conscious of the soldier's height. He always noticed a man's height first. Long ago, at high school dances he had learned to estimate the height of any girl sitting it out. Too often was he embarrassed when his partner had risen, and he found himself looking up at her and reaching for her waist with uncomfortable arms. Years of social unpleasantness of this sort had made him expert. This time the two men's shoulders were at almost the exact level. But the stranger seemed to have no flesh, no muscles—only thin nerves that held his slight body together. His uniform looked awkward, as though it were clothing the wrong man. Now he coughed hoarsely and sharply. He swayed a little over his glass, swirled his stool around and pointed a feminine finger at Mil.

"What are you staring at? Why aren't you drinking like all regular fellows? See," triumphantly he raised the shiny glass and waved it in front of Mil, "see, I'm a regular fellow. And I could drink fifty more. Just as regular as anybody else. Just as . . . Mac, fill 'er up." The soldier clumped the glass on the hard wood and pushed it toward the bartender.

"Name's Carmichael. Remember, Carmichael," the bartender grumbled.

"Okay, okay, my name's Dumpendick, and I want another whiskey. C'mon, be a regular fellow. Gimme a whiskey."

The soldier turned his stool around again. "Drink with me," he said solemnly.

Mil smiled at the command. "Make it a Southern Comfort for me, Mac."

"Comin' up."

Morosely, the soldier drank his refilled glass. He stroked his little chest, as if to calm the running fire.

"What're you drinking?"

"Southern Comfort."

"Why are you drinking?"

Mil lit a cigarette and watched the smoke with twinkling eyes. "I want to be a regular fellow, too."

The soldier's face leaned dangerously forward. All at once his voice was deep. "How did you know that I was a regular fellow? Who told you?" Fright darkened his face. His eyes came very close to Mil's.

"Mil!" Eve's voice sparkled coldly. She stood between the two men, straight legs a little apart.

"Oh, Eve. Come, sit down. I like your dress." Mil turned his back to the soldier, who kept scowling at it.

"What'll you have before we go in to dinner?" Mil softened his voice. Eve was not in a good mood tonight.

"A Southern Comfort, then."

Mil smiled. "I'm glad we agree."

"Do we?"

Not a good mood at all.

Mil offered her a cigarette and they smoked, not looking at each other.

. . . Eve is so strange sometimes . . . maybe that's what's so exciting . . . hate those long silences . . . so deadly . . . why did she pick tonight . . . in this hellish town . . . wish I could be in Baltimore . . . Mom should see me with a drink . . . why does Eve make me blue . . . and always in public places . . .

The silence became too loud. "Eve . . ." his voice rang in his ears, although the bar was crowded and laughter-filled.

Eve jumped and looked surprised at him. He knew she'd been somewhere else. He could tell (Continued on Page 19)



STORE BOUYED

By PINKY MCLEOD

George Robert Roberts shut the front door, leaving his wife's blue-aproned amplexness and the bacon-scented rooms behind him as he hurried out into the morning.

Going to be a fine day, he thought. Ought to be plenty of people in town today. Plenty of customers.

Slung on his shoulders George Robert carried a big white flour sack which he shifted to a more secure position with a little juggle of his whole frame. The contents of the sack stuck out at oblique, rather grotesque angles. George Robert squinted over at the sack, patted it, and smiled, if the emotional facial contortions could be called a smile.

He walked past the dinosaured green and white of the Sinclair station, and crossed to the left side of the street where the entire business section of town lay. The seven o'clock Queen City bus from Bristol was pulling up in front of the drugstore, twenty minutes late. Doc stood yawning in the door, the morning's first coke in his hand.

"Morning, George Robert. What you selling today? Teddy bears? Sure looks like it."

"Nope, but I got a couple up in the shop if you wanted some."

Doc laughed, making short, fat, wheezing sounds.

"No, I don't want no Teddy bear. But I would like to have some of what you got in that sack."

George Robert turned and grinned, barely enough to show the edges of his stained teeth.

"You come over some time and maybe I'll sell you some of what I got."

He stopped before a tiny door, wedged in between the Post Office and the City Cafe, and bent over the padlock. A sign over the door said "Variety Shop," and in the diminutive window lay dusty book marks and paperweights, a box of graying chocolates, a doll in a sleazy yellow dress, ash trays, a 25c book of jokes, corn cob souvenirs of "Wonderful Western North Carolina," a pair of pink panties, faded crepe paper, a tired Easter bunny, and a few flies who had decided to breathe their last in the cup of a blue flowered tea set. A yellow card, propped up in the doll's lap, stated "You name it we got it."

PINKY MCLEOD turns from the phantasy of *Playhouse* to a realistic treatment in *Store Bouyed*, winner of Quill Club's short story contest. Pinky's other work has appeared in CORADDI and the Arts Forum writing booklet.

Most of these articles, with some others, had lain there in the window for over a year. Inside the tiny shop a litter of articles lay on, under, and behind the two narrow counters. Waste baskets, a bird cage, plow handles, white cardboard, and a reproduction of "Blue Boy" were stacked along the high little shelves at the rear of George Robert's establishment. In the glass showcase were a pen and pencil set which George Robert had been trying to sell for two years, high school pennants, garters, erasers, chewing gum, stationery, candy, ear rings.

At a glance, the shop seemed overstuffed, over-running with the dusty accumulation of years. George Robert Roberts considered himself a business man who knew a bargain when he saw one. Folks said he went into Asheville and bought up lots of stuff cheap, even did a bit of shop lifting on the side, and then came back to fill his shelves and sell high to the folks in town and those that came into town on Saturday. He sold Kleenex and chocolate bars and cigarettes and elastic when nobody else in town had any. Of course he sold double the price, and people talked about George Robert's being a gyp joint, but they bought just the same.

This morning George Robert walked through the thin path of sunshine on the oiled floor and deposited his white flour sack on the chair behind the cash register.

His sharp features were bent over the contents of the bag when he heard footsteps in the doorway and a baby voice singing "Corn lik-ker, corn lik-ker, how bad I do feel. The voice stopped, and presently, "George Robert," it called.

"Here I am, Albert," he answered patiently from behind the counter.

The little boy walked around to George Robert, sliding his hand across the glass of the case with an unpleasant squeaky noise, eyeing meanwhile the choc-cow suckers within. He stopped in front of George Robert.

"Lordy, what you got all them big red chunks of meat for? Huh?"

"Nice, aren't they?" He was stacking large pieces of bright raw meat onto a piece of paper spread under the counter.

"Golly mosess." Albert's voice had a shrill piping note, which was all the while faintly suggestive of some future deeper croak. "That don't look like no meat my Ma ever had. Where'd you get it?"

"This is good meat, Albert. Maybe your Ma will want some of it."

"Whatcha going to do with it?"

"Sell it, of course. Yessir, it'll be all sold pretty soon, too, I guess. There's not been any real good meat in this town all week."

Continued

Albert had lost interest in raw flesh and was again eying the more palatable merchandise above the counter.

"I sure am hungry," he informed his host. He thought about it some more. George Robert went on stacking the bloody meat.

"Yessir, I sure am hungry," he said again.

"Albert, Ma said you come on back home," came a young voice, as hurrauchas creaked before the door and a young girl came in carrying a switch.

"Hello, Barby," said George Robert genially. He stood up and leaned across the counter.

"Hello. Ma said Albert wasn't to eat no candy. We ain't had breakfast yet." She motioned toward her brother with the switch. "Come on, Albert."

"I said I was coming." Albert dragged toward the door.

"George Robert, you heard Albert sing 'Corn Likker'? The boys taught it to him last week."

"Yeah, I heard. Sure is cute."

"Ain't it a scream? Let's go, Albert." And the young vocalist was urged up the street by his sister, who stopped periodically to pull on one of her sandals.

"George Robert's got some meat," Albert said as he trotted to keep up with his sister and away from the switch.

"Meat! Why that ain't no grocery store. It's the Variety Shop, Albert."

"I don't care. George Robert's got lots of meat. Back under the counter."

"Aw, go on. Ain't no store in town got meat lately."

"Well, he has, I say."

A few minutes later George Robert looked up from the box of pencils he was counting to see Doc standing in the door.

"I just heard them kids say you had meat."

"Well?"

"Well, do you?"

"Why?"

"Now look here, George Robert, we been buddies for a long time. We both of us run stores on this side of the street. I know a good business man when I see one. And what's more, my wife's out of red points and we ain't been able to find no meat all week."

"Well, come on in, Doc. I got half a ham I can sell you."

"No red points?"

"No red points."

"Where'd you get it?"

"That's all right where I got it."

Then "It's good clean meat," he added quickly.

"Well, George Robert, I'm wanting to get it. But after all my wife would like to know where it came—"

"Well, all right, Doc. But I'm just telling *you*, hear? I killed one of my hogs the other day."

"Oh, well, wrap her up and I'll come by later and pick it up." Doc turned to go.

"Say," he stopped, "you don't have no freezer. How you keeping that meat?"

"Oh, it's cool under the counter. It'll be O.K. till tonight."

"Planning to have it all sold by evening?"

"Sure. Did you want to get some more?"

"Well, no, I think half a ham will do us. I wouldn't risk no more than that."

"Oh, it's good meat all right, Doc."

"Yeah, sure."

"O. K., Doc." George Robert was all business behind the little counter. He was rearranging the meat on the shelf under the counter, pushing back a large cookie jar containing one cookie and two cockroaches to make room for the meat.

A wiry little colored woman padded swiftly into the shop.

"Morning, Mister George Robert. Just wanted to get a little licorice and a box of matches."

"Aunt Hattie," he stood and looked carefully at her, "do you want some meat?"

The old Negro started, then looked at him closely.

"Sure do. We ain't had nothing but collards and corn bread all spring. But I done lost my ration book."

"Oh, you don't need that." George Robert laughed. "All you got to do is buy it."

"What kind?"

"Hog. Killed just lately."

"Well, I got my big ol' family to feed — how much can I get?"

Aunt Hattie bought the meat.

"Mighty pretty price to give for meat," she said.

"Mighty pretty meat."

She hugged her package out into the street.

At dinner, George Robert's wife said, "How'd it sell?"

"Real good. Most gone. Doc bought a ham, and the Judge wanted a rib roast."

"Who else?"

"A lot others. Aunt Hattie came in and I sold her some."

"George Robert, I wish you'd sell all the rest just to niggers. I'm afraid of the meat."

"Well, I might. We'll see. But I'll bet you I've made more already off the one old hog—"

Late in the afternoon Albert came in the shop.

"George Robert," he said. "I bet I know something you don't know. It's gonna happen. And you don't know, goodie."

George Robert didn't bother to look at his visitor. He was counting money in a little tin box. "All right, youngun'," he said.

"But you'll know pretty soon, so I'll tell you who's it about. It's about the sheriff and that nigger man in your yard working."

The telephone burred and George Robert reached over to the wall for the receiver.

"George Robert," came his wife's shrill voice, "you've got to do something quick. James and Aunt Hattie are in the back yard talking and . . ."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean James has told the sheriff about that old hog you've sold. I heard him say so."

Continued

"What?" A sickening yellow spread over George Robert's face. "Oh, what does that black boy know?"

"Know? Know?" The receiver bounced in George Robert's hand. "Why he was here the afternoon that pig died, don't you remember? He saw it take that fit, too."

"Goddamn black boy," said George Robert with fervor. Albert, leaning over the candy display, looked up at him with interest. "Why in hell I ever hired him . . ."

"You better do something quick I said now."

"What?" yelled George Robert into the mouth-piece.

"I don't know but . . ."

George Robert fumbled the receiver back on its hook. He stood staring at a red flowered vase.

"I'm gonna kill me a nigger," he suddenly threatened the vase. "Yes sir." He glanced at Albert. "Come on, boy, you better go home. I'm fixing to lock up."

"Oh, it ain't supper time yet, is it?"

"I said it was time to go, didn't I?" Albert looked at the usually polite George Robert.

"O. K.," he decided.

George Robert bent over the cash register, quickly removing money and putting it in a leather bag. Suddenly he heard voices, irate voices, coming closer.

"Whee, listen to all them men." Albert ran to the front of the shop. "Where they coming?"

George Robert swiftly closed the cash register.

The door was jerked open and three men led by the Sheriff poured into the shop.

"George Robert Roberts, you're under arrest."

The Sheriff loomed towards George Robert, one hand clutching his stick, the other fingering the silver badge on his round chest.

"What do you mean?" George Robert cowed behind the counter.

"All right, son. You're not so dumb as all that. Come on out from behind there."

The voices of the men behind the Sheriff began to grow loud. "What for you hiding, George Robert?" "Where's that meat?" "Yea, where you keeping all that rotten meat?"

"Come on, let's get this over with," ordered the Sheriff, impatient to prove the rights allotted him by his badge. "Your nigger man has told us about that sick hog you been selling."

George Robert straightened behind the counter. "Why that black lying scum. What do you mean?"

"Now, George Robert . . ."

"Honest, Sheriff, I ain't had no hog around. This here's a dry goods establishment."

"Listen, son, I been talking to James just now. Come on, where's that sick hog."

"Sheriff, I can sell you anything else you want here, but I ain't never had no meat. Word of honor."

"George Robert," threatened the Sheriff, "I said we'll have none of your lies."

"Lies? Lies? It's not me telling lies, Sheriff. It's him."

One of the men moved up to stand beside the Sheriff. "And why would James be wanting to tell lies on you?"

"Yea, what you done to him?" said another.

"Why? I'll tell you why." George Robert looked from one gray face to another. "He was mad with me when I wouldn't lend him some money yesterday. He was mad, that's why."

"Oh, come off that. Your nigger said you been selling bad meat, and I'm here to investigate. Let's have it now."

"Sheriff, I swear to you, there ain't been no meat around this shop. Anybody'll tell you that."

"Yea? Who?"

"Sure, give us some proof," leered one of the men.

"Proof? All right, I'll give you proof. Wait a minute." And he pushed through the men to the door and called down the street. "Doc, hey Doc. Come up here a minute." He turned to the men. "You'll see now who's lying and who isn't. Doc was in a couple of times today. He'll tell you."

Panting up to the door, Doc stared querulously around at the men. His eyes rested on the Sheriff. "Matter?" he asked.

"Doc, we want the truth. James says there's been meat sold in this shop today. Bad meat. Was there?"

Doc gazed at George Robert, swallowing.

"Why, no. I haven't heard of no meat being around, Sheriff. Have you, George Robert?"

"What'd I tell you, Sheriff?" George Robert beamed.

"Well, I . . ." the Sheriff wavered.

"Like I say, them niggers 'ull tell you anything just to get you het up."

"Sure, trying to disturb the peace and quiet," said Doc weakly, still looking at George Robert.

"That black nigger! Trifling with the Law, and a poor honest business man like me, Sheriff."

The Law had stood looking from George Robert back to Doc. Suddenly he burst out. "Why that filthy coon. I'll lock him up for this."

"Let's go find him," said one of the men. "That nigger ought to be horse whipped."

"Sure, he'd oughta. And I aim to be the one to do it." The Sheriff turned toward the group, looking at their dark excited faces. "Ready to go, boys?" he grinned.

Over his shoulder he said, "You coming too, aren't you, George Robert? You got a personal score to settle here."

"I sure am." George Robert reached for his hat.

Eagerly the men thinned out of the shop. Albert came from out of the corner where he had been pushed and trailed out on the street behind them.

"Kill me a nigger, kill me a nigger," he sang happily.

George Robert turned at the door and went back behind the counter. Stooping he picked up the last bit of meat. There was an ugly yellow streak through its center. He held the meat to his nose and grimaced.

"You coming, George Robert?" a voice called from outside.

"Right with you," he answered, glancing hurriedly around the shop. He hurried over to a small, dusty window at the rear of the shop, and opening it, dropped the meat to the ground outside. He heard a dog bark over it.

"Damn," he muttered. "Might have brought four dollars from somebody, I bet."

"Come on, George Robert," the voice from outside insisted.

George Robert pulled a wide leather razor strap from off its hook in a corner, and hurried toward the door.

"Coming," he called.

RIVER MOON

(Continued from Page 9)

He ain't never seen no mountain laurel. I was gonna take him up the crag this week and show it to him. And then he got sick. *(She walks from the table back to the cradle.)* You'll go up to the crag with me next week, Timmy. *(There is no sound except that of Nellie setting the table.)* It's nice up there now. There's moss that you can lie on, and it's softer than a bed. And there's big bushes of mountain laurel, Timmy. It's all bright and purple like this here. *(Her voice becomes more excited.)* And you ain't never seen the spring. There's jack-in-the-pulpits a growin' all around it. 'N in the fall there's galax—big patches of it all up the trail. *(Her voice becomes softer and takes on the tone of a mother scolding her child.)* You ain't got no business a gettin' sick like this. You know that, don't you? He's still a sleepin', Granny. I'll show it to him when he wakes up.

Nellie: You'd better come eat somethin', Sadie. The stew's gettin' cold.

Sadie: I ain't hungry.

Nellie: Sure you are.

Grandma: *(Getting up from her chair with much effort.)* It's like I always say. When you're tired, then's the time you need food.

Sadie: But I ain't tired. Honest I ain't.

Nellie: *(Going over to the cradle where Sadie is still kneeling. She puts her hands on Sadie's shoulders.)* Come on n' eat somethin'. Please. Just fer me. *(Sadie gets up. On her way over to the table, she looks out the window.)*

Sadie: It's a river moon tonight. There's a ring around it, Nellie. Ain't you noticed it?

Nellie: It don't mean nothin', Sadie.

Sadie: Yes it does. I know it does. Remember what Ma useta say.

When the moon has a ring,

The angels'll sing.

Nellie: That ain't true. *(She pauses, then continues hurriedly.)* Or maybe she meant they'd sing 'cause they was happy.

Sadie: They ain't happy tonight. Not when the wind's a blowin' the trees like that. The pines are bendin' like they was cryin'. It's the devil's own night, it is.

Nellie: *(Gently pulling her away from the window.)* Come on 'n eat, Sadie. You said you would.

Sadie: *(Pulling away sharply.)* No, I didn't. You can't make me eat. Can't nobody make me eat. Not if'n I don't want to. Can't nobody.

Nellie: I don't want to make you do nothin', Sadie. But you ain't had a thing to eat all day.

Sadie: *(Turning abruptly from the window.)* Maybe you're right, Nellie. You always was. Even when we was littler than Timmy, you was right.

Nellie: Don't say that. You know it ain't so.

Sadie: It is so. You know it's so. You was always the good one so Ma loved you bettern she loved me.

Nellie: Quit it, Sadie. You don't know what you're sayin'.

Sadie: Yes I do. You was the one Ma wanted to marry Tom. You know you was.

Nellie: Hush up, Sadie. It ain't so.

Sadie: It is so too. But I got Timmy, 'n you can't do nothin' about that. Can't you er Ma er Tom er nobody do nothin' about that.

Nellie: *(Sharply.)* Stop it. You don't know what you're sayin'.

Sadie: *(She sounds very tired.)* No, I don't know what I'm sayin'.

Grandma: The stew ain't gettin' no hotter you know.

Nellie: She's right, Sadie.

(Sadie turns and walks rapidly to the table. Nellie follows her, and they both sit down. Grandma is at the head of the table; Sadie and Nellie are at either side. Sadie begins to serve her plate.)

Grandma: *(sharply)* Ain't you fergot somethin'?

(Almost automatically, Sadie and Nellie bow their heads.)

Grandma: Fer these we are about to receive, make us thankful. Amen. *(They begin eating.)*

Sadie: I heard a queer thing when I was comin' down from the crag. It was a woman's voice, I think.

Grandma: *(Surprised.)* What'd it say?

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Sadie: It sounded sorta like laughin', but it could of been the wind.

Nellie: *(As if it had slipped out.)* That's what I heard the night Danny died.

Grandma: It's Annie. She's come back. She don't never leave us alone. I know her. She laughed like all the winds of the valley when your ma died. She hates us.

Sadie: But what's she laughin' at now? Ain't nobody gonna die now. *(Her voice becomes louder.)* Wouldn't it be funny if'n she was wrong? *(She starts laughing.)* Wouldn't it be funny?

Nellie: *(Trying to calm her.)* You better be quiet, Sadie. You'll wake up Timmy.

Sadie: *(Still in a loud voice.)* I want to wake him up. He ain't had no supper.

Nellie: But he don't want no stew.

Sadie: Sure he does. *(She carries her own plate over to the cradle.)* Sure he wants supper. *(She kneels down by the cradle.)* Here's some stew fer you, Timmy. Nellie done fixed it fer you. *(She fills a spoon.)* Don't you want none? It's awful good. Honest it is. *(She looks up at the other two at the table.)* Maybe he ain't hungry. Maybe he don't want none cause he's sleepin'.

Nellie: Sure he don't. Can't no baby eat 'n sleep all at the same time.

Grandma: *(Sharply.)* Sadie, you'd best go 'n light the lantern so as Tom can see to git up the trail.

Sadie: Do you think I oughta leave Timmy?

Nellie: I'll watch after him.

(Sadie starts out the door.)

Sadie: If'n he cries, Nellie, give him somethin' to eat. 'N if'n he cries a whole lot, rock him a little 'n tell him I'll be back soon.

(She leaves.)

Grandma: We'd best clean a bit before the preacher gits here.

(Grandma cleans off the table. Nellie sweeps around the hearth with a straw broom.)

Nellie: Grandma, why is it Annie hates us so?

Grandma: I don't know.

Nellie: Yes you do. 'N you ain't tellin' me.

Grandma: Well, sit down over here, 'n if'n you're bound to know, I'll tell you.

(Grandma takes the rocking chair, and Nellie takes one of the straight chairs.)

Grandma: *(Rocking as she talks.)* When your Ma 'n your Aunt Annie was about your age, they was gonna marry two brothers.

Nellie: That was Daddy, but I don't recollect that Annie ever married.

Grandma: No, she didn't. One night your Daddy came a running down from the crag, 'n he wanted Annie to go with him. His brother was sick.

Nellie: 'N did she go?

Grandma: No, she didn't go. I wouldn't let her.

Nellie: Why?

Grandma: I couldn't let her go all that long ways with nobody but your Daddy. 'N when her

man died that night, she swore she'd laugh ever time one of us died.

Nellie: 'N you've heard her before?

Grandma: Yes, I've heard her before. Seven times, 'n you'll hear her laughin' the loudest of all the night I die. You'll hear her a laughin' three times. Once before I die. Then while I'm a dyin'. 'N once right after I die. That's the way she always does.

Nellie: I'm scared. *(She goes and looks out the window.)* I don't think Tom's a gonna git back with the preacher in time.

Grandma: Not if'n she's already laughed once. It won't be long now.

Nellie: I'm gonna baptize him myself 'fore Sadie gits back.

Grandma: It won't do no good. It's gotta be a preacher that baptizes him.

Nellie: No, it don't. I ain't never heard that. *(She goes over to the table and fills a glass with water.)*

Grandma: I'll not have nothin' to do with it. It ain't right.

Nellie: *(She goes over to the cradle and kneels down.)* I baptize you Timmy, Timmy Steward.

Nellie: Grandma, he's opening his eyes. He's gonna get well. Look at him. *(She picks him up and carries him over to the rocker.)* You rock him, Grandma. He's better. The water musta woken him up.

Grandma: We've fooled her. We've fooled Annie. He's gonna git well.

Nellie: Won't Sadie be surprised when she gits home?

Grandma: 'N won't Tom be glad too.

Nellie: I knew he'd git all right, but it was awful hard gettin' Sadie to think so.

(Just then Sadie runs in. She leaves the door open, and the wind blows the light out, leaving the room in comparative darkness except near the fire.)

Sadie: I heard her laughin' agin!

Nellie: What?

Sadie: I heard her laughin' agin—real loud 'n wild like. *(She goes to the cradle.)* Where's Timmy?

Nellie: Grandma's got him.

(Sadie goes and kneels down in front of Grandma and the baby.)

Sadie: Don't listen to her, Timmy. She don't mean nothin' by her laughin'. Honest she don't. Timmy, listen to me. She don't mean nothin' by her laughin'.

Nellie: I hear somebody comin'. You reckon it's Tom?

Grandma: You don't hear Tom a comin'. You don't hear nobody comin'. It's somebody a goin' that you hear.

Sadie: *(Loudly.)* No, it ain't. It can't be. Timmy, don't go. Don't listen to her. *(She pauses for a moment, then continues in a broken voice.)* 'N you ain't seen no mountain laurel yet.

(There is silence for a moment, then the horrible cackle of a woman.) Curtain.

THE AFTERDAYS

(Continued from Page 7)

After the concert they sat for a long time in the Circus Room. "I don't know what the matter is with me, Dave. I'm sure I'm not in love with Paul. I don't think I'd want to marry him at all if I saw him again. I want to marry you, now; I love you, but I'm afraid."

"Cathy, how can you be such an idealist? You want to hold out for something that will be like a first love, but there won't be anything like it again. Hell, I had a first love; I guess everybody does, but I know that this that we have will last, that it's right." His voice was demanding, urgent, "Oh, Cathy, how can I make you see?"

"I do see, really, Dave. I can picture just how it would be for us; I can see the house and you coming home at night and raking leaves and going for long walks in the woods. I know it would be wonderful and that you'd be awfully good to me."

They talked; and she thought how familiar he had become, his cropped light hair, his warm voice, his way of humming tunelessly when he was nervous or annoyed.

Thursday night she came home to the apartment and sat long over ham and eggs and coffee . . . the morning we drove to Paterson we stopped at that diner . . . what was the name of it? . . . and had ham and eggs . . . I could always talk to Dave about everything but what could I talk about with Paul? . . . Paul is a musician and nothing else . . . Dave lights my cigarettes and will eat hamburgers with me at a diner in Paterson and ask the counter man how is business as if he cared . . . Dave would take me to concerts and would build a fire in the fireplace . . . he would love children . . . Paul is too wrapped up in himself and would be away all the time too detached to miss me or want to be home when he sits in the footlights at Topeka and Los Angeles . . . what is marriage with sex as the common denominator? . . . with Dave the days are as exciting as the nights, and isn't that the way things should be? . . . I want the quiet kind of marriage with a husband in the den at night smoking his pipe . . . the kind of marriage that goes to school plays and brags about Junior's report card and vacations at Saganac Lake in the summer . . . Dave would give me all that . . . I would answer the phone and say "the doctor is out on call may I take a message?" and be a contented doctor's wife. . . . I would get tired of a marriage of black dinner gowns and black and white programs . . . I could not stand to spend a marriage in green rooms or playing bridge with other symphony wives while Paul was on tour . . . one week with Dave would prove to me that Paul is never what I want . . . wouldn't it? . . .

She cleared the table, scraped a soggy scrap of ham into the green enamel garbage can and stared for a moment at the small pile of dirty

dishes. She felt oppressed by the silence . . . the Rachmaninoff girl must be out . . . perhaps she has a Paul as I had . . . where will she be in seven years? . . . other people always know exactly where they stand, so will she—why can't I know, too? . . .

At that moment she wanted, so much, to see Dave, to hear his voice saying, again, "I hope you never get tired of hearing me tell you I love you, because I'll never get tired of saying it." She dried her hands and was halfway to the telephone . . . no, I can't do that . . . I have to work this out myself . . . it wouldn't be fair . . . to Paul . . . but why should I be fair to Paul? . . . only be fair to myself . . . Paul wouldn't care . . . he'd be amused to see me now deciding whether I want something I can't have . . . Dave, come to see me tonight . . . Dave, if you love me come over now in ten minutes and let me make coffee for us and talk about the Golden Gate Bridge and that morning in Paterson and what kind of a car you'll buy next year . . . if you come tonight I would marry you tomorrow . . . Dave, why haven't I realized before how right you are for me? . . .

A car stopped under the window. She ran to look. A boy and girl got out. The girl's head was bowed, and the boy led her slowly up the steps. They kissed, and the girl burrowed her head on the boy's shoulder, weeping. Cathy saw herself saying goodbye to Paul on the steps at Haddon Hall seven Junes ago . . . "It doesn't matter that we won't be back, Cathy. I'll come to get you some day. I'll write to you." And she had only wept harder, because she had known it wasn't true; she had known then that she might never see him again, that he would go off to his own life and that their two courses had met only for a moment, after which they must inevitably diverge.

. . . no love is ever the same as a first love, but where else is there a Dave who would understand, who may even understand it all better than I do? . . . Dave would always be tolerant, would never demand more than I could give. . . he could support me . . . he is gregarious . . . no, Paul, it would have worn off . . . I could not have spent a hundred nights in a *La Boheme* sitting, listening to you talk about atonality or reading me *Sonnets from the Portuguese* . . . and you would not have liked my friends . . . you would never fit into any of the comfortable niches of life which catalogue my kind of marriage . . . you are too much a French novel character and life is not lived in the whispers of a closed carriage . . .

This time she went to the phone. Dave's voice was very "medical," very alert when he answered; his "Hello" said, "Don't worry; everything will be all right—I'll come right away."

"Dave, can you come up for a little while?"

"Tonight?"

"Yes, right away."

"What's the matter, Cathy?"

"Nothing, I just miss you. I haven't seen you for three days, you know."

"I can't tonight, kid—at least not until awfully late. Can't it wait until tomorrow?"

"I guess so. Dave, have you been at the hospital? You sound so tired."

"Yeah, operated on a kid two hours ago and I have to go back in a few minutes. I'll call you tomorrow afternoon sometime. Hey Cathy?"

"Uh-huh?"

"Goodnight, Cathy."

She hung up, feeling trapped in the atmosphere of silent loneliness . . . "I love thee to the level of each day's most quiet need" . . .

The house was filled with static silence, after the bustle of the past three days. In a few hours she would be married. Mrs. David Cullen. She rolled the sound of it in her mind. Her dress hung from a hook on the inside of the open closet door. She stroked the length of its brocade bodice with the tips of her fingers . . . it's so beautiful to wear only two hours or so . . . like what I've always pictured . . . white brocade and tulle and fragile veils and the scent of calla lilies . . .

Her room always reminded her, whenever she came back to it, of high school proms and the climactic sensation of standing in front of the full length mirror in a long dress with gardenias carefully pinned at the shoulder. Today the flowers were three white orchids banked in gardenias, and she would not come down to breakfast in the morning to hear her father say, "Well, good morning—and what time did you come in with stars in your eyes and your shoes in your hands?" She looked about the room hungrily, as if she would never see it again, as if her next departure would close the door not only to the room, but to everything that had gone before, as if in picking up the new, her mind would shut itself forever to all the familiar symbols and tokens that had been the secret keepers of her thoughts, diffused through every moment of her life.

She had never thought of the future as a day or an hour to be faced; it had always been "the future is not tomorrow or next week . . . I shall never catch up with the future . . ." but now, paradoxically, the future was catching up with her, was something to be met and touched, so soon . . . what stuff is the future made of? . . . maple trees in the night, secret talking . . . a fire in the night with the radio . . . Paul Chandler guest artist . . . how will it be then . . . will I remember this hour? . . . laugh or cry? . . . if Paul had come last night I would not have cared . . . why today? . . . never thought of life's shortness before . . . did I think it would go on forever? . . . no, only not about how much was gone already . . .

Her mother came into her room.

"Do you want to give me those green slacks that you said needed the buttons moved over?"

"They're in that brown box on the bureau. What time do you think I should start getting ready?"

"There's no hurry, dear. Why don't you lie down and relax for an hour? Oh, I meant to tell you that your Aunt Helen called from Stockley this morning to say . . ."

The words trailed off before they reached her mind . . . drive through Stockley when Dave proposed . . . on the car radio *Stardust* . . . fog on the windshield fog on the streetlamps fog on the trees fog on the stars . . . "fog comes on little catfeet" . . . love to see headlights cutting fog reminds me of Palmgren *May Night* . . .

Her mother's voice insisted itself upon her, ". . . and she just raved over the silver tray the Milton Club sent."

. . . God, I hope Dave won't want me to join any clubs . . . doctors' wives always belong to clubs . . . the doctor is out on call may I take a message . . . Mayo Rochester hospital teas . . .

"Before your bridesmaids start coming, why don't you come downstairs and we'll have a cup of coffee?" Her mother rustled off with the green slacks.

Cathy picked up two rolls of film and tucked them into the side pocket of one suitcase.

Outside a child's voice shrieked, "Leggo! It's my turn—how'd ya' like a kick in the teeth?"

She took off her shoes and lay down on the bed . . . Dave, if only we could take a walk this afternoon instead of my sitting here staring at myself . . . here I am to where I've been coming all my life and it will be all over and I'll be just like everyone else in Paris Rome England China . . . life is all the same for all of them . . . they wait for tomorrow and wonder why life is so short and feel like they're going down the very last road and try to grab something that isn't there . . . grey sparrows will be running on a crusty glinted snowfield some morning and Dave and I will be having breakfast at seven-thirty . . . all the years we never notice until we see a pine tree in the rain and remember how long it's been . . . gardens in the rain . . . *Jardins sous la Pluie* . . . Debussy . . . Paul and Debussy and slanting rain on the Esplanade when we were in Boston together . . . now it will be roast beef on Sunday and children going through the leaves to autumn school in crisp pink dresses . . . fresh cookies on a flower plate and anchovy paste for teas . . . isn't that what I want? and one morning a dead leaf scraping past my window will wake me up . . . recipes for baked chicken grocery stores walks to town on Thursdays linen closets rearranged trips to Saganac in August in the car and the pink sky and trees and road . . . a thousand trips to Saganac . . .

"Cathy, can you come down now, dear, and have some coffee and a piece of cake?"

"Be right there, Mom."

She opened her eyes and saw the clear white pattern of apple blossoms against the sky outside her window. She locked the smaller suitcase and before she went downstairs, paused a moment to trace, with long, well-groomed nails, the pattern of brocade on the bodice of her wedding gown.

TRIO

(Continued from Page 11)

because her eyes were very deep and very grey. He couldn't help being intrigued.

"Shall we go to a movie tonight?" He really wanted to walk, but he felt more at home sitting down with someone as tall as Eve.

"We can discuss that later." Eve finished her drink.

Mil motioned with his head towards the little soldier. "He's out to forget. Says he's a regular fellow."

"Been here long?"

"We only talked a few minutes."

"I meant you. Let's go," Eve said sharply. She stood up and crumpled her cigarette into an ash tray. Mil paid and followed her out of the bar. Near the door he caught up with her. He took her arm gently, but she was really leading him.

They took one of the sidetables towards the back.

"Shall I order for both of us?"

Eve smiled . . . at last! He was surer of himself now.

"How's Billy?" he asked.

"Oh, he's still trying hard to get into the big league. We can't separate him from his baseball bat. It's nice to have a kid like that around." Her eyes changed into granite. "Mother gets annoyed with him. He gets dirty so fast. Did you get dirty, too?"

"Mm, yes. Everyone commented when my clothes were clean; it was so rare. Used to use those trousers as towel, paint rag, anything."

"Have you painted anything recently? We haven't seen each other for four months and . . ." Her voice went lame.

"And what?"

"Nothing. Have you?"

"What?"

"Painted anything."

"Just another little watercolor. I enjoy not getting what I want. I'll try again tomorrow."

"Has your friend accepted any of them?"

"No. He said they weren't good enough technically—for sale. He wants me to try oils. He says my brush is much too dry for watercolor. I need a thicker medium. He was glad to see work that wasn't just *charming*."

"Then he does think you're getting somewhere?"

"The trouble with me, he says, is that I don't

take paints seriously enough. Even then, it would be a fifty-fifty chance. It's better to keep it a hobby. Imagine art becoming as routine as my job."

"I'm sorry."

"Why?"

"About your job."

"That was silly of me. I didn't mean to complain. It's such a contrast to you."

"Oh?"

"You're not boring, Eve. You intrigue me, in fact. But I've told you that before."

"Yes."

"You said that so sadly."

"I didn't. I'm glad your watercolors are getting along. It's wonderful relaxation."

"Why don't you do something like it?"

"What's the use?"

"You've seen the pleasure it gives me."

"I wouldn't be satisfied."

"All or nothing at all, hmm?" Mil smiled.

"Let's eat."

Queer how she could change a subject—not



Evans

even subtly, but so directly there was no way out of it. And he was always caught by surprise.

Silently, they ate.

The waiter served the after-dinner brandy. "Funny how a drink can lead to thought," said Mil.

"That's why I smoke."

"Have one."

"Thank you."

"Eve!"

"What?"

"You're wearing fingernail polish!" And when he saw her embarrassment, "It's a lovely color."

"It's Blushing Rose. I'm glad you like it."

"I don't think the name suits you." Mil laughed. "I've never seen you blush except . . ." Mil took out a cigarette and lit it quickly, concentrating on the flame of the match.

He looked at the smoke and remembered their first meeting. He had first been impressed by her brooding eyebrows and grey, dream-filled eyes. Though the party was gay and everyone felt at ease, she seemed to be far off. Mil had never cared about girls like that. He had come to this Hampton party with Susan and was enjoying himself, but the lonely girl's expression disturbed him. It reminded him too much of the way he himself used to be. He felt she needed sympathy, and he was self-confident enough to give it.

When he had introduced himself to Eve, her eyebrows relaxed, but she didn't smile. He took her over to the table to drink punch. Her poise, her clear talk, amazed him. She wasn't shy! She didn't need help. Mil was intrigued enough to take her to another party the next week end. Sue was there, too—a necessary ingredient to make a Hampton party gayer. It was hot in the house, and Mil had excused himself to take a short walk on the verandah. He wanted to go alone because he wanted to think about Eve even more than be with her. After a few minutes, refreshed, Mil turned towards one of the French windows where Sue and Eve were chatting. They did not see him, but he could hear.

". . . you have against me?" Sue was saying in a high-pitched, excited voice.

Eve almost drawled. "Nothing."

"Then why do you act so coldly towards me?"

"I don't mean to. I always act that way."

"You don't seem to with Mil . . . as though you were in love with him or something."

Eve hardened. "Are *you*?"

"We're too good friends," Sue laughed. "Forget my question. It was not very tactful of me, was

it? I better get some more punch for the rest of the crowd." And Sue hurried off to mingle among the guests, who eagerly took on some of her sparkle.

Eve leaned elegantly against the French window. All of a sudden, she blushed a deep red. The serenity in her face was lost, and she looked homely.

And now Sue's question was more perplexing than ever. True, Eve was cold to everyone, as Sue had said, but she was not too different with him. She had never paid him a compliment, nor received one graciously. She had never shown any sign of being capable of feeling, and yet he knew that she could feel intensely. How intensely she felt about him he could not tell.

"What are you thinking?" her voice cut through the smoke.

"I was thinking of the first time we met."

"Not very unusual, was it?"

"The circumstances might not have been, but that doesn't matter."

"I'm glad you look at things as they really are."

Mil was willing to have the subject changed. "Why?"

"So many people are afraid."

"It's hard to know things as they really are, and harder to look at them when one does. I'm



sorry for the people you described, because they might be shocked and caught defenseless."

Eve and Mil walked down main street arm in arm. The movie had not been too good. They had gone to enjoy each other's company really. Now they watched the insect-like activity of the street. They went into a drugstore whose large windows had been opened to let the evening put its cool fingers on the bottles and cosmetics. But the atmosphere of the drugstore remained hard and lusterless; the lights were too merciless and the jukebox music too grotesque. Mil and Eve listened to the music and drank their coffee.

"I've got an extra nickel," Mil said. "Want me to play anything?"

"Anything fast."

"All right, Eve."

Mil put a nickel in the slot and they listened, smoking their cigarettes. A comfortable silence was between them, neither thinking of anything in particular, just watching the smoke merge with the strong light.

"Let's go for a walk." Mil rebuttoned his double-breasted suit, then helped Eve off the stool.

"I'd rather not, Mil. I've got something to tell you."

"It must be pretty important if you have to tell me sitting down." Mil tried to be nonchalant, but he knew Eve's seriousness. She always meant what she said. "Let's go to a bar then."

"Which one?"

"You know the town as little as I do."

She sighed, "The Jefferson, then."

Mil and Eve walked down Main street arm in arm. This time the silence between them was

tense. Eve's arm tightened around his for a moment then she withdrew it altogether.

When they had reached the bar the soldier's thin shoulders were thrown across the dark-red, his head asleep upon his arms.

"Looks like a child, poor kid. Wants to be a regular fellow."

"We all do," Eve said.

"I think after one admits one is not like others, half the battle is won."

"Did you ever have a problem of that sort?"

"Yes. But it wasn't a serious one." Mil was very conscious of his height.

"I think I grew up when I compromised for the first time."

"How?"

"By resigning myself to what I was."

"You mean by not bothering to be like others."

"Yes. I was hampered on both sides."

She answered Mil's unspoken question. "From the outside and from the inside."

The bartender who was not called Mac had brought their orders, looking at the soldier laconically for a moment, and returned to his corner at the end of the bar to read a racing form.

"I'm amazed the bartender hasn't thrown our friend out yet."

"Don't bother to make conversation." Eve took a deep breath. "I can't see you alone any more."

Mil turned his head slowly and looked at Eve. His strong hand went mechanically through the gray streak in back of his ear.

"Why?"

He lit a cigarette to fill the moment.

"I hope you won't be hurt. My mother won't let me leave the town after this."

this would I choose
like Wendy's wish
to stay a child forever
in the land of forgotten elves

but still without nostalgia
for a future self-renounced
filled with winter dawns of knowing bitter bright mortality
and frantic nights of searching
all the long historic scope of man's awareness
and hope untainted by fulfillment

I would discover motionless daisies in the sun
and gather them all
their wilting unremembered

—MILDRED RODGERS.

Mil knew that a small town like Hampton would be eagerly gossiping about Eve's monthly absences. It was especially sinister since she would stay home whenever Mil came to Hampton on his regular business tour.

"My mother wants to meet you." Eve said it as though she'd practiced that sentence for a play. Mil was puzzled. "I'd be glad to meet her, and Billy, too. I like brats."

For the first time Eve seemed lost for words. "Rumors are the worst things I know. They are even worse than a straight black lie."

"You didn't strike me as the kind of woman who is impressed by what other people think."

"I'm not. But my mother is. After all, she has to live with the people who are pulling down her daughter's reputation."

"Why does she want to meet me then?"

"She insists on it."

Mil wondered whether her mother was a gossip, too, and just wanted to see what kind of man her daughter's friend was. And yet that couldn't be true, because his visit would be more tobacco to chew on for the neighbors.

"She didn't tell you the reason?"

"No."

"But you know it?"

Eve hesitated for a moment. "No. Maybe she wants to apologize."

Though he could not detect it in her words Mil sensed that she had lost her poise.

He, too, felt as though the stool he sat on was very high and he would fall off any moment. To lose Eve! Just for a few goodnight kisses and stroking her dull brown hair! It made him desperate to think that she would be gone before he had explained her to himself. He hated uncompleted tasks; he hated half-understandings. Especially now, after hearing her say things like "I hope you won't be hurt." Staring into the little glass he realized that Eve, despite her superficial coldness and their infrequent meetings, was his best friend . . . more, that her absence would not be easily forgotten.

He did not dare look at Eve. The bartender's big frame was leaning casually over his racing sheet. The body of the little soldier had not moved once. He was beyond caring what happened to other people. Mil felt that neither would lift a finger or even notice if someone were killed right in front of the bar. Nervously, his hand traveled through the gray streak again. He had forgotten what it was like to lose confidence, hope.

"There's no way out then." His voice was

lower than usual. "Except . . ." He started, then forced his cigarette stub into the ash tray. "Except if you will stay with me."

"Stay with me" rang in his ears. He was as surprised as Eve.

She turned towards him slowly; her eyes did not know where to focus. She almost choked on her words. "I couldn't . . . not like that."

"Then marry me."

"Mil!" A deep red spread over her high-boned cheeks and high forehead. Her features had taken on the nakedness Mil had never suspected. She was very homely . . . and, even sitting, awkwardly tall.

He grabbed his glass like a lifeline and emptied it. What was he saying! How could he ever think of marrying a woman so tall, so terribly tall . . . and so homely. Mil was surprised that he didn't know himself better than that. He knew he couldn't live with her intimately. Her unashamed features struck his heart cold. She loved him graspingly, physically, too intensely. It could never be sweet.

Her underlying commonness, her strange intriguing actions were now so easily understood.

"Eve . . ."

"Yes," she whispered eagerly bringing her hot face near his profile.

"I can't marry you, it wouldn't work." Feelings of sympathy and repulsion fought within him. His stare anchored on the glass. "I'm sorry."

"That's all right."

Mil looked at her. Eve had straightened on the stool. Her skin was tight over her cheeks, eyes expressionless. "You better go."

He looked at her for another moment, unbelievably. Her hand made a dismissing motion, a careless and elegant gesture. Her colored fingernails glittered.

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"After the compromises come the losses," she said.

Mil slipped from the stool, threw a dollar on the bartop. Gracefully as ever he walked towards the exit. He turned around before opening the door to the dark street. Eve had not moved.

The night air, now quiet and heavy on the pavements, soothed him. He knew he could not forget Eve tonight. In his mind her straight back rose above the bent soldier's. He admired her. At least she had fought. . . .

Four walls, oblivious to love,
 Picture-wise and curtained,
 Concealing from the public view
 Two cigarettes forgotten-grey,
 As I disregard Manet with you.

—MARGIE MUNRO.

PARANOIA

(Continued from Page 8)

his brother's help. Within a week he rested quietly, eating, sleeping, reading a little, listening to music under careful observation. And his wife worrying over his claims on her life, having three spells in less than two weeks. Her dying last week they called from worrying over him. And still he went to the doctor, the nurses, his brother each day with a new story of murder. Yesterday the true one and they would not believe. Would not believe. Would never believe. Would never credit his success, would never free him from the thought of murder. Would never let him live again. Would drive him mad.

Ask no more questions. Here is the murderer, the murderer, she is dead, they know now the truth. But would never accept it. Never feed his flame of faith with belief in his success.

Morning Train

Before the day has swung us roughly over
 Loosing our hold upon the candy world,
 The trainyards lengthening in tracks
 Provide postponement for the siren-song of noon.
 Planed shadows and the sunlight strips imbedded
 In slag as sterile as our bitterness
 Trace endlessly the miles in criss-cross ties,
 And trace our sadness through the timeless hour.

The city piling at the river's curving back
 Adjusts to tiled mosaic size and we
 Note jagged roof-line with superior poise—
 Not, as in noonday glare, when terror-flung
 We gore our flesh upon the saw-toothed crest
 And shout our accusations uselessly.

Now there is comfort in the neat-hemmed lawns,
 The blackened marsh-grass inaccessible.
 Strung cars, coal-heaped and donkey-docile weave
 In awkward caravans across the light
 And draw not loathing but dispassionate stare.
 Rails ringing shrilly kill the ceaseless hum
 Of wires spun in webs above the track,
 And seven o'clock is midnight or the end
 Of minutes as the towns change names, go nameless by.

O we have need of space, design and time
 At seven when we are fierce with sleep
 And could howl apelike . . . shake the wires down,
 And twist the tracks red-hot around a hill . . .
 Except for neat-hemmed lawns and railroad yards and shade.

—NANCY JANE SIFF.

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