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THE CRUCIBLE

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MEETING CHARLIE DOLL

Richard Lipez

I met Charlie Doll at a going-away party shortly after Christmas. I'm not quite sure who was going away, or if he's back yet, or if he ever went. But I do remember Charlie. I wondered at the time if his name was D-a-h-l or D-o-l-l. I know now that it is D-o-l-l, pronounced "Dahl," as in "fall" and "crawl."

When Ruth introduced us that night, I remembered having seen Charlie around campus a few times—I didn't know exactly where. I supposed it was in the library or at the snack bar or at a football game. It didn't matter.

I shook hands with Charlie and asked him something about why he hadn't gone home for Christmas vacation. He was about to answer when Ruth's sister swooped down on us and carried me off to the den to listen to what she called "absolutely the wildest record that has ever been made." Charlie wandered off to the kitchen with a girl from Ohio State; and we did not speak with each other again. Not that night.

Charlie's moon face did not reappear in my world until a few weeks later, the first day of the spring semester. This time we met on the concourse that stretches across campus from the steps of the library to Grupe Hall, my destination for a ten o'clock psychology class. We grinned and nodded.

"Hi, Charlie. How's everything going?"

"O. K. And you?"

"O. K."

Sometimes, when I lie awake staring at the dark, I think about Charlie and wonder if maybe things might not have turned out the way they did if only we hadn't started off so badly that first day.

The next day, we met again. It was 9:53.

"Hi, Charlie, How's it going?"

"O. K. And you?"

"O. K."

I don't see how it could have happened any other way. I didn't really know Charlie. He was just a face, arms, legs, a body. I didn't know where he had come from or where he was going. I had absolutely no idea what sort of ideas went through his head.

What can you say when you run into a guy like this? What can you talk about in such a short space in time? Huxley's predictions? Recognition of Red China? The cabbage in the dining halls? Of course not. I doubt that Charlie wanted to talk about anything of the sort.

I suppose that we must have had something in common that we could have talked about. Maybe Charlie liked Thurber or tennis or Ella Fitzgerald. But, you see, I didn't know. He had never told me. Remember?—I went to the den; Charlie went to the kitchen. Anyhow, as we passed on the concourse, we had only a few seconds. And so, the inevitable:

"Hi, Charlie. How's everything?"

"O. K. And you?"

"O. K."

Probably, rather than grind through this insipid dialogue, I could have ignored him. When I saw him coming at me from across the concourse, I could have fixed my sight on the tower of Old Main and stared very intently, with a puzzled expression, at the clock, as if it had suddenly turned into a giant pumpkin.

But Charlie would have been onto me in no time. He would have known that there wasn't a pumpkin where the clock had been. He would have known that there wasn't anything wrong with the clock at all and that I was just trying to trick him. I was trapped.

The third day passed.

"Hi, Charlie. How are yah?"

"O. K. You?"

"O. K."

The fourth day passed.

"Hi, Charlie."

"Hi."

And the fifth.

"Hi, ya."

"Hi."

At long last, the week ended. The fates were allowing me two entire days respite to think, to plan, to find an escape.

I thought seriously about sneaking out the back door of the library, running around to the side, and then hiding in the shrubbery until I saw Charlie enter the front door. But then I might have been late for my ten o'clock class.

There was always the possibility of wearing dark glasses and smoking a black cigar. Charlie had never seen me with dark glasses and a black cigar and he might not have recognized me. There existed the likelihood that I would meet my faculty adviser, Dr. Grinning. I am sure that he would have recognized me, and I doubt that he would have understood.

Monday dawned, and I had yet to conceive of a workable method of escape.

At 9:53 I saw Charlie across the concourse. I thought that I noticed him hesitate for a moment, but I must have been mis-

taken, for within a few seconds, he was almost upon me. "The insensitive clod!" I thought. "How much longer is he going to keep this up?"

I wanted to drop my books and run, but it was too late.

"Humh," I grunted, my head bowed slightly.

"Umph," was the return.

I broke into a medium gallop. I did not look back.

The difficult days became difficult weeks. Each day, Charlie and I met on the concourse and grunted nervously, the remnants of a fading smile reappearing now and then.

After nine weeks of inarticulate grunts and nervous half-smiles, I knew what I had to do, and I carefully considered dozens of possible plans for escape before reaching my decision.

I weighed the possibility of roping myself each day to some old inner tubes and drifting under the concourse in the storm sewer. I thought about wearing a miner's cap with a very bright light that I could shine in Charlie's eyes, momentarily blinding him while I passed. I seriously considered buying a large mad dog that would race out of the bushes and attack Charlie each time I blew a high-frequency whistle. While Charlie struggled with the dog, I would run past unnoticed.

I had not, however, severed my last binding cord with reality, and I was soon aware of the lunacy and impracticability of these schemes. I knew what I must do: I would transfer to the University of Southern California.

On the day that I was scheduled to see the Dean to arrange my transfer, Charlie Doll did not appear. I waited on the concourse until almost 10:15, but—no Charlie.

My excitement was exceeded only by my anxiety. I feared that Charlie wasn't feeling well or had decided to sleep late and would probably return the next day. But he did not. Nor did he ever return.

I did not transfer to U. S. C. and somehow was able to complete the semester with slightly less than a "B" average. My world began to rotate at a friendly pace again, as it had before Charlie.

Early last summer, I saw Ruth again at someone's coming-home party. Struggling to appear matter-of-fact, I casually asked, "Say, Ruth, whatever happened to that Charlie Doll you used to know?"

"Oh, that nut! He was dropped from the University. Someone found him one morning floating on an old inner tube in the storm sewer under the concourse. What an idiot!"

SPRING NIGHTS

Richard Lipetz

Spring nights are the best nights.
They're the best for reading, for sleeping,
for loving—and for dying, I suppose.
But best of all, a spring night is for the talkers.
No night is quite so friendly, quite so tender,
for a talker like me (and you, I hope).
On the side of a meadow hill,
under Ceres and Taurus,
pressing elbows on the grass,
we talkers live again.
We talk of our spring night,
of the breeze, and of youth.
We ponder the situation—in China
and in Atlanta and all over.
We speak of God. What he is—
where he is (or isn't) — and why
he is (and sometimes apparently isn't).
We analyze each other's neuroses
and mention Freud's name now and then
to make it all sound legitimate.
Then we laugh at ourselves and at Freud
and at the moon.
It's a good feeling.

We speak of poets and musicians.
(Dylan Thomas is fine, despite all
that hair — the M. J. Q. is great—
Monk is too far out).
We speak of teachers and labor unions
and Kennedy. (Teachers should start
at eighty-five hundred; labor unions
are really run by William Bendix;
We will have a Catholic president by 1970 —
and the Pope will not move into the White House.
He will keep in close touch by telephone, however.)
We talk and talk until the black becomes the gray,
the gray the blue.
Then we hide and watch.

"BOCCI"

Gloria Finno

My childhood memories cover many joys, among the best of which were the happy hours spent in DePaulos' backyard watching the varied and interesting activities that took place there every Sunday afternoon. After dinner, Papa, in his stiff white collar, with his corn cob pipe and stiff straw hat, would take me by the hand, and off we would go to our neighbor's backyard, where an "international group" would meet to play their favorite game, "Bocci." Now Bocci is somewhat similar to bowling, with a few exceptions. It is played outdoors and large leaden balls are the only equipment. The object of the game is to score the greatest number of contacts between the large balls and one small ball. The game, however, was incidental to me, serving merely as an accompaniment to many dramatic, eruptive moments and scenes which delighted my childish heart. Straddling the chopping-horse, I would muse beneath the bright sun and survey the scene before me: the gleam of white shirts, the shine of black balls on the patchy green turf, the rows of beaten and worn fences surrounding us. Against the side of the clapboard house was a keg of home-brew to soothe and smooth angry throats which erupted from time to time in argument against real or imagined infringement of rules or personal rights.

Arguments arose galore in this veritable "United Nations." I remember one incident that threatened the whole future of that prized golden-brown liquid with the fluffy white stuff on top. Mr. Duffy had lazily leaned against the porch posts that Mr. DePaulos had painted black. The result was a black-and-white-striped shirt set off by the glowing brick-red of Duffy's face. The expose of DePaulos's "still," as Duffy called it, seemed inevitable. DePaulos, shrewd proprietor of the Sunday-afternoon outings, wishing to protect his vested interest (he sold the stuff for 5c a glass), smoothly taked Duffy out of his suicidal intention by expounding on the happy and blessed times shared by the group in the past. At times like this, Papa, "my knight in shining armor," always helped smooth damaged feelings, and the game would go on. Another afternoon found Stien skulking behind the backyard fence while his wife quizzed the entire backyard delegation. A united front had formed with a spontaneity I would have believed impossible. Then there was the time when Pokski's chickens broke loose and a hunting party was formed to guide the chickens back to their coop. But the bedlam that resulted was mild compared with the resumption of the game afterwards. Johnson was accused of moving the placed balls while the search

was in progress.

Gripping the rough wood with clenched hands, I would gleefully titter and giggle at such fast-moving events. Sunday was my special day, a day of all days, when my normally restless spirit would luxuriate in gratifications until the sun would turn to a fiery red and a chorus of sopranos would join in calling us all to evening meals.

Today, a bed of flowers is planted in DePaulos's backyard. The DePauloses are gone, the fences have been replaced by neat rows of hedges, the clapboard is aluminum, and the chopping-horse is no more. But I have my memories.

POPULATION: 200,000

R. J. Luce

Hidden in the half-light, in the midst of man-houses,
The steel-ribbed animal lies on his concrete stomach... waiting

The jungle grunts, stretches, and awakes.

In coffee-clouded man-houses, toothless gums suckle at naked
breasts,
Calloused stomachs are filled with chicken eggs,
And age-clouded eyes look at the animal and die.

In the morning light, his eyes shining, the animal lies on his
concrete stomach,
Roars once... and waits.

Ant-streams pour from the man-houses.

The animal opens his jaws and devours two thousand men.

INTERRUPTION

Linda Mensch

A tarnished tin cup,
Hanging placidly on its rusty nail,
Hung and hung by the pump
Until one hot summer day
A hand with grimy fingers
Shook off the cobwebs
And drank from it.

"MAY I HELP YOU?"

Barbara Underwood

I was once a clerk in a women's clothing store—one of those individuals whose day is spent in trying to sell people clothes they don't want for money they haven't got. Like all clerks, I met all kinds of people. And no matter who they were or how much my feet hurt, I smiled sweetly and asked politely "May I help you?" when what I really wanted to ask was "May I knock your teeth down your throat?"

There were the Problem Customers who came charging in asking for improbable things like blue denim coveralls or men's socks. They seemed hurt and puzzled when we informed them that "we were sorry, but we didn't carry those." There was the portly gentleman who wandered back past twenty-four racks of dresses and asked me, "Don't you sell furniture here?" I told him kindly, "I'm sorry, we're all out of furniture right now." "Oh," he said, disappointed, and wandered back out.

And there were the Men Shoppers, most frequently at Christmas time, who ventured in, looking vague and out-of-place. The last one I waited on I extracted from among the skirt racks. "May I help you?" "Well, I want some stockings for my wife..." "What size does she wear?" I asked. "Nine-and-a-half medium," he responded brightly. "That's fine," I encouraged. "Now, does she wear seamless hose or ones with seams?" He looked at me blankly. "Well, I don't know — I didn't know there was any difference." "Well, does she usually have black lines running up the backs of her legs?" He frowned and meditated. "Yes, yes, I believe she does. Yes, I'm sure she does!" Well, now, that's just fine." I gift-wrapped three pairs for him, and he departed happily with the package under his arm, cheerfully crushing my carefully curled ribbon bows.

Then there was My Favorite Customer, who came bustling in with that I've just found the dress I've been looking for gleam in her eye. "What size is that little black sheath in the window?" she wanted to know. I shuddered and decided that the Customer was about a size eleven, the same size as the dress in question. "Nine," I lied. "Just my size," she said, pulling her stomach in. "I'd like to try it, if you don't mind." I did mind, but that was beside the point, and I grimly removed my shoes and stepped into the brightly-lit window. I hoped frantically that no one I knew would be passing by, because it was certainly senseless to hope that anyone would think I was part of the scenery. Seven mannequins arranged in ridiculous poses throughout the three-by-ten window made a cozy crowd for me to penetrate. I tried

valiantly to slither among the maze of outstretched arms without inflicting any casualties and finally reached the particular model which I was to disrobe. She was bent dangerously forward from the waist at a forty-five degree angle, facing due north, with head cocked demurely and impossibly in a southeasterly direction. She greeted me with outstretched arms. "Look, Gertrude, I don't like this strip-tease any better than you do, so let's not be difficult," I muttered as she clutched at me with cold fingers. I decided to eliminate this source of trouble at once, so I removed her hands and laid them carefully on the floor, palms up. As I unbent I banged my head on one of her handless arms, throwing her off balance. She lurched forward at me and I clutched her frantically around the waist just in time to prevent her from putting her head through the plate glass. During this little encounter I got hit in the eye with a left wrist. It hurt. I set Gertrude carefully on her feet again and tried to ignore the two high-school boys who were standing on the sidewalk, obviously enjoying the performance. It was when I tried to remove her arms that I discovered that her joints needed oiling, and it was only after a bitter struggle that I finally placed the arms gruesomely on the floor beside the hands. This little "still life" arrangement was greatly enhanced by the blonde wig, the next item to hit the floor. In removing the dress, I nearly knocked the poor girl over three times. The dress was, of course, a sheath which fit like the proverbial paper, although what it fitted didn't exactly look like a wall. If it had, the whole thing would have been much easier. And the fact that I stood five feet-three in my stocking feet, which I was in, while Gertrude towered fully six inches over my head didn't help any, either. The sleeves kept getting caught around her neck. I stood on tiptoe, trying desperately to get the thing untangled. Just as I felt ready to expire from pure embarrassment and the high school boys were at the peak of their enjoyment, the dress slipped off and I fled with it. It's a darn good thing that the Customer took that dress!

But of all the dangerous species of Customers that stampeded around the Store at various intervals, the Sale Customers were by far the deadliest. On Sale Days we clerks arrived for work twenty minutes early, in order to be able to get into the building before the door was blocked by the battalions of bargain-hunters. Then, in our sturdiest dresses, with bracelets and earrings removed, we took our positions with apprehension. It was at this time that I, coward that I am, usually ducked under a counter until the first onslaught had subsided. At least I did so until the day, on hands and knees, I came face to face with a Customer in identical position. "May I help you?" I inquired sweetly.

"Just looking, thank you," she replied. On Sale Days, the vicious Customers gleefully flung caution and merchandise to the winds, and the winds were usually of hurricane force. As a matter of fact, it was the day after a Sale Customer bought my own dress right off my back that I quit my job at the Store and took up baby-sitting.

HE JUST PLODS AROUND AND IGNORES US

Richard Lipez

Our cat is certainly an animal of resignation.

He seems to have given up.

He knows something, but can't tell us.

That is because cats can't talk.

Maybe he knows that the Chinese are going to attack us in a few months.

Or maybe he knows that the Polar Ice Cap is going to break off and slide down on top of us next August.

We'll never know, though.

Cats can't talk.

It must have eaten his heart out when he first found out about it.

But now he has resigned himself to the situation.

The poor bastard.

"WINTER IN THE COUNTRY"

Kathryn Dietrich

It was the kind of view one sees in a Currier and Ives' picture and thinks could never have existed.

My brother and I were out early to sled ride that morning. The snow which had fallen a day or two before lay six inches deep in the fields, and our first task was to walk back and forth and up and down tramping the snow into a packed path. It took time as we worked side by side. Every once in a while one of us would pull a sled to the top of the hill and coast down the grade to see where any rough spots were or where the path wasn't wide enough for the sled to get through easily or where a curve was too sharp for the sled; and it was nearly noon when we had reached our set goal, a tree at the base of the sloping field. Then we trudged back up the completed path. There at the top I let my brother go down first, and I stood gazing after him as he wound down the path, his body leaning with each curve, easing the sled

into the position needed to make it. I watched him till he rolled off the sled at the bottom. Then I lifted my eyes from the winding path below to the hills, valleys, roads, and sky surrounding me. This was the Currier and Ives' picture. I was in a vast country of snow unbroken save by the trail lying before me. Dark shadows were moving over the hills and valleys as high above in the sky the sun floated among miniature clouds. The snow glittered where the shadows had been or were yet to come. The few farm houses dotted over the landscape, including ours, were off to my left. I saw our collie dog leaving the backyard to labor towards my brother. Somewhere behind me I could hear the snow plow opening the drifted road to our house.

I picked up my sled, ran a few steps, and threw myself down to glide to my brother below. I would reach him before the dog would.

ALL OF HER: NANCY

Carol Chase

It used to be all of her:
Nancy.
She kept what she needed,
Which was most of it.
But as she grew older,
It rubbed off on things
And each new touch of life
Left her with less.

Rain took part of it—
Snow and sun and bonfires
Took more of it.
And there was music
And there were purple grapes
And violets
And soft dew
And lilacs
And laughter,

And there was so much to give to
That now there is little left of it;
And all that is left
She has given to you,
All of her:
Nancy.

EARLY MARCH

Carol Chase

I have captured snowflakes
In my heart,
Enough to fill a year,
And gazed too long
On icy lakes
And been too mindful
Of each new dawn
Crisper than the one before.
I have smiled
While others shivered,
And laughed at faces
Cold in mirrors.
Happily I've let the air
Frost my breath
And numb my hands
And gazed in wonder
As snowflakes stained
The cold cement.
But I am tired of all this now.
I have had enough of winter.

TRITELY THE CLOCK

Roberta Robbins

Tritely the clock spins away the minutes,
Hours, days, weeks, years.

I will not force myself
Upon your thoughts.
I will not dare to intrude
Upon your life.
Never will I offer myself
For your rejection
Or pity.

The clock spins away the minutes,
Hours, days, weeks, years,

And still we toast marshmallows before the fire,
Dance to mellow music,
Linger in the night's shadows.
For memories never die in the heart
that rekindles them.

And time spins away.

BRIGHTVILLE

Linda Mensch

I'll never forget that dark bus terminal at Brightville. BRIGHTville — that place was as dark and gloomy as any murder mystery book I've ever read. Besides it had an odd smell. Don't get me wrong, I don't go around condemning places, but this wasn't exactly my idea of a vacation spot or even a decent place to wait for a bus.

I had been out to Patterson for two days to look over the plans for a road and line up a cost estimation so the boss could submit a bid. I would have driven, but I had been big-hearted the week before and had loaned by Ford to my sister and her husband for a little trip. He had a week off from work so they went to the shore for two days. Then on Tuesday Shirley called and said they had decided to go on down and see Ken's sister. Did I mind? No, I didn't mind. What I felt like telling her was to enjoy themselves because it sure as shootin' was going to be the last vacation they were taking in my car if they were going to use it to cover four states.

So I took the train to Patterson on Thursday. On Saturday I finished at noon, and the train schedule being what it is, I found I had no way home. I didn't care for the idea of staying in Patterson until Monday, especially since I hadn't come prepared with clothes to last that long. Besides, I had a standing appointment to play pinochle every Sunday night with the landlord and his boys and it had become quite a habit with me.

I went to the bus terminal in Patterson and picked up a schedule. It stated I would have to change buses in Brightville, but that didn't bother me. I had never heard of Brightville, but that didn't mean there wasn't such a place. Anyway, it sounded cheery.

Well, it happened that I was in Brightville for two hours and twelve minutes, to be exact. And those two hours and twelve minutes seemed like six hours and ninety-nine minutes to me.

First of all, I got off the bus and looked around for a place to get a cup of coffee. At that early hour of eleven everything was locked up tighter than a jail. The only sound I heard at first was the sound of the bus shifting gears in the distance. That sound was soon replaced by a dog's howl. As I stood and listened to that dog, I knew what breed he was—a mongrel, the long-legged, thin-backed kind.

I turned and sauntered into the waiting room. It was a square room, badly in need of more windows and a screen on the one it already had so that it could be opened. The room was

empty. I heard a dry cough from the room with a sign "Tickets" on the door, and I figured there was life in there.

I chose a chair, which wasn't a difficult task since they were all alike. Carrying it over near the door, I sat down, using my bag for a hassock. I was sitting there quite a while, still longing for a cup of good hot coffee, when I heard a shuffling of feet on the platform. I pulled my hat lower and watched the people as they passed me and found chairs opposite to mine. There were three—a man and two women, one quite old.

With my hat partly covering my eyes, I was sure they didn't notice that I was watching them. I doubted that they would even care. I looked them over. Their clothes were clean, but badly frayed. The old woman was soon dozing, spittle dripping slowly down her chin.

I concentrated on the younger woman. She seemed to have a frightened look about her. Her clothes were more ill-fitting than those of the other two. She sat upright in her chair and nervously fingered the knot her kerchief made beneath her chin.

I sat there mentally drawing the conclusion that they would be going on my bus. I glanced at my watch and drew a tired sigh. I had been here exactly fifty-five minutes. I reached into my shirt pocket for my Winstons. There were only three in the pack. What a place to run out of cigarettes!

Time dragged on. I leaned the chair back against the wall. I walked out on the porch. I came in. I wished I were out of this one-horse town. I repeated these time-killing procedures until the bus was nearly due.

The old woman shifted in her sleep and murmured something in a foreign tongue. I was startled when the silence was broken by the man saying, "For Christ's sake, Mae, can't you see the quicker we get rid of that old woman, the sooner we can get out of here? We can get out where there's something to get. Maybe we can even take the next bus."

The younger woman began to cry softly. "I can't... I just can't."

"All right, we'll have to sit here until you decide we can. We've no place else to go."

My bus horned outside.

THE NUTHATCH IN HER HIGH NEST
HEARS THE PINE TREE

Lynne Copestick

pit
pit
pat pit
pat
pit
pat the dead
pine needles fall
pit
pat
pit
tapping the twigs and the branches
slipping smoothly through the thin air
pit
pat
pit
down to the earth beneath to the floor
of the pine grove the brown and resinous floor
pit
pat
pit
pat
pit
pat pit
that yields softly even under the light foot of a nuthatch

EARLY MORNING

Roberta Robbins

Today will be a day like any other day:
Sewing ivory buttons on an ivory skirt

And typing minutes for the members
Who will twist bracelets and scrutinize my skirt
As I read.

Or I will polish and pamper fingernails
And wind pincurls before a mirror
Which reflects a face —

"A face to meet the faces that you meet."
I might devote today to hollowing out pumpkins, or
If I were intrepid, I might remain in bed.

THE LOST AND THE FOUND

R. J. Luce

The two brothers walked up the winter-tinged street toward the family's third floor apartment. Each counted silently the number of steps taken since leaving the grocery store on Main Street. The taller and older of the two carried a brown paperbag which held the family's food for the coming week. Occasionally he glanced at his younger brother, trying to lip-read the number which formed at each step. The smaller of the two wasn't aware of the glances. His wind-reddened face was bent toward the sidewalk as he concentrated on lengthening his stride to keep it exactly even with that of his taller brother.

"A thousand," said the older brother, stopping. "Now it's your turn."

"You're lyin'!" the younger yelled up at him. "It's nine-hundred-thirty!"

"It's a thousand, you little bastard, and you're going to carry the bag." With this, the older shoved the bag of groceries at the chest of his younger brother, knocking him against the steep bank which paralleled the sidewalk.

Tears welled in George's eyes as he stared up into the angry face of his older brother. "It ain't, he bawled. "It ain't half-way. It's only nine-hundred-thirty."

"I'll kick ya if you don't, and Mom'll whip ya too," Joe screamed back at him.

"She won't spank me if I tell her you didn't carry 'em half-way," George blurted as he got to his feet, leaving the bag of groceries lying in the snow beside the imprint of his small doby.

"I'll beat ya if you don't pick that bag up," Joe said as he moved closer. "Pick it up!"

George, sensing the threat in Joe's movement, quickly scrambled up the bank. Reaching the top he turned and faced his brother. His words tumbled out in a breathless, frightened manner, "You're an old poop! Ya big cheater!"

"You gonna carry 'em?" Joe's voice was quieter now.

"You gotta carry 'em to a thousand," George replied.

"Well," Joe said in a smug voice, "guess I'll go home and tell Mom then." Saying this, he turned and walked up the side walk.

George remained on the bank looking first at the bag of groceries and then at his brother's retreating figure. "I ain't gonna carry 'em!" he half-shouted, half-sobbed.

The two brothers walked toward home, the older on the sidewalk, the younger behind and above on the bank.

As they neared the house, George waited until Joe had climbed the three flights of weather-beaten stairs which clung awkwardly to the outside of the house. Then he started up the steps. He was on the last flight when the door opened above him and his brother appeared on the landing, closely followed by his mother.

"Where are those groceries?" his mother shouted down at him, pulling her coffee-stained housecoat tightly around her waist.

"Back there," George said in a frightened voice. "Joe didn't carry 'em half-way."

"You're a little liar!" Joe screamed.

"You get back there and get them groceries, and if you don't hurry I'm going to whip your smart-alecky little ass," yelled the mother.

George turned and started back down the stairs.

He retraced his steps, scuffing his feet in the snow. Arriving at the spot where the groceries had fallen, he could not believe his eyes. The bag of groceries was gone. He hurriedly looked into the ditch between the pavement and the sidewalk. Not seeing the bag there, he searched frantically all along the walk; he could not believe that the groceries were gone.

He finally returned to the spot where he could still see the imprint of his body in the snow. He stood staring down, sobbing convulsively. In the snow he saw the footprint of a man.

George turned and started back toward the apartment where he knew his mother was waiting.

Ten years later an airplane plunged into the winter-tinged water of the North Atlantic. There were no flames, no explosions. The aircraft remained afloat for only a short time.

Search crews combed the area for six days. On the evening of the sixth day a surface vessel picked up an uninflated life raft. No other trace of the missing plane was found.

Two thousand miles from the scene of the crash, a woman stood on the third floor landing outside her apartment. She looked down at the dimly lit street through steadily falling snow. She clutched her faded housecoat tighter against her slender body. As she did so a telegram slipped from her hand and fell softly onto the snow-covered landing.

A BOY AND HIS DOG

R. S. Luce

It wasn't a pretty sight. What had once been an animal form was now a whimpering mass of bloody hair, barely recognizable. Yet, somehow, life was still present. The almost imperceptible movement of the eyes, a slight pulsating of the chest — these were the things that the child noticed as he knelt beside the dog. It would be all right now. The animal lived. The car hadn't killed him. Surely the doctor who had administered the distemper shots and who had told the boy what a fine pet he had could make the animal well again.

Engrossed with these thoughts, the boy did not notice the man who appeared beside him. Only when the man reached down and wrapped a cloth around the bleeding dog did he become aware of his presence. Here was help, he thought, as the man lifted the animal and carried it to the grassy slope adjoining the macadam — the slope that the dog had come down, chasing the ball.

The boy, quite unaware of the tears which streamed down his face, watched as the man deposited his bloody burden gently on the ground. . . His boyish lungs managed to scream one choked "Don't!" before the jack handle crashed down onto the dog's skull.

"STAR-CROSS'D"

TO JULIET

Julia Grimes

At the open window bending,
Softly to the lamplight lending
Beauty, is fair Juliet.

Her heart pounds, a message sending
To her love, of trust unending,
Faith in gentle Romeo.

As she watches him descending,
Sees him with the shadows blending,
Turning round, she cries aloud.

Ah, Juliet! In your green unknowing,
Did you sense, your heart bestowing,
This could only end in woeing?

A COWBOY ISN'T A COWBOY ANYMORE

R. S. Luce

A cowboy isn't a cowboy anymore. Or at least he isn't a cowboy in the strict sense of the word. That is, a cowboy should take care of cows—or bulls or steers or whatever those animals were that the beef people were always stampeding through the front room of some poor sheep-farmer's home or through the barbed-wire fences of a dirt farmer who just happened to pick the only good water hole in the country as a site around which to build his farm. But the horrible truth is that the cowboy doesn't give a moo about cows anymore.

Some rabid T. V. fans will tell you that a cowboy doesn't punch cattle anymore because probably the S. P. C. A. heard about and forbade such an inhuman practice. Nothing could be further from the truth. A modern T. V. Westerner (I prefer "Westerner" to "cowboy", since a modern Westerner is not a cowboy) does not punch cattle for the simple reason that there isn't enough money in punching cattle to make it interesting.

Why should a man spend hours a day sitting on a horse and singing "Git Along Little Dogies" to a bunch of ill-tempered calves fresh from their broken homes (and ready to stampede at the flick of a cigarette paper) for thirty dollars a month and a cot in the bunkhouse when he could as easily be marshal of Dodge City or sheriff of Tombstone at \$150 per half hour of studio time?

Then, too, one must consider the fatality rate among cowboys. Cowboys (the old-fashioned kind) were expendable! Indians were always lurking behind nearby clumps of sagebrush and terrifying the poor cowhand with their coyote howls and bird calls. Later, when the Indians were deposited on reservations, rustlers came in their stead, and woe be it to the poor herdsman who attempted to thwart the theft of the Bar X-Z cattle which he had just finished branding. If the bowlegged centaur survived stampedes, Indians, and rustlers, he was certain not to survive his monthly-weekend-spree-in-Dodge City. Once he hitched his nag to the rail in front of the Silver Cafe, he was a dead dude.

Card sharks, professional gunfighters, bounty hunters, and lawmen all used the cowboy for their own special brand of target practice, to the enrichment of the Dodge City undertakers. And now that I'm mentioning undertakers, I might as well add that they too have all but disappeared from the Western scene — a curious situation in view of the fact that hundreds of fatal shootings occur every year in the T. V. studios. Any day, any hour, you can see smiling Datt Millon gun down five unworthies

and then walk straight to the bar and order a beer without so much as reloading his six-shooter!

But getting back to our cowboys, I am quite concerned over their demise, so concerned that I have been thinking of forming an S. P. C. C. League (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Cowboys). Something must be done, and done quickly, if we are to escape history's factual finger pointing out our own generation as the generation that annihilated the cowboy.

One very logical step in bringing back the cowboys, if anybody else wants them back, would be to bring back the cows. Once that is accomplished, we could put the Indians in government housing projects, hang the card sharks, bounty hunters, gunfighters, and lawmen, turn the Silver Cafe into The Trailing Arbutus Tearoom, and provide the cowhand with a jeep instead of a bony-backed horse.

My blood tingles at the thought of watching ten thousand cows stampeding into Dead Gulch Canyon via my living room; my pulse rate soars as I think of a mere handful of cowboys riding hard in surplus army jeeps to save the stragglers from destruction at the rim-rock. But what's the use of dreaming? Cowboys just ain't cowboys anymore! Probably Equity has had something to do with it.

MARKED

Eugene Beaver

As stone she lies beneath the Gothic throne
Where rose ill white becomes the atmosphere.
Without, chill rain soft-echoes organ-tone;
And raven robes ascend the pulpit here.

Defiant grief, I sit alone to mourn
Where silent whispers come to gossip lies;
A child of sin from womb unjustly born
Evasive eyes pretend to justify.

Though I lament in bleeding heart unseen,
Untoward actions hold me in contempt,
And time exposes me as one unclean,
With head erect and proud I walk—unkept.

Will carping words mouthed to the rolling wind
Persuade the world of nature's lawless sin.

LOVE IN THE AFTERNOON

Linda Mensch

It had been a long time now that Rosie had been hurrying home from work each evening to twist the worn radio knob and to throw herself on the couch. She never needed to adjust the dial, for she never listened to the radio except for those fifteen glorious minutes each day. Skeet yelled at her whenever he was at home and lately he had threatened to slap her if she listened to that program when he was in the room.

Rosie liked the program. She wouldn't miss it for anything. No, but she hated the times when Skeet was at home because he always tried to make her miss it. He never would understand why she had to listen to that particular program. All he could say at that hour was "Come on, get me some supper, then you can listen till breakfast for all I care." When she would not stir from the couch, he would yell, "Come on, damn you, move. I want to get out of here."

But Skeet could starve when that program was on and Rosie would never notice. As far as she was concerned, he could starve anyway, or better still, he could go jump in the river. She liked the times when he was gone with the road gang. Today he would be coming home. He had been out in Ohio somewhere, she thought. He had sent her the rent money last week. That's about all he was to her anymore. Just the rent money with a Christmas gift thrown in some years. Some years he forgot. Well, anyhow, she was glad when he wasn't around. Not that Rosie did anything she was ashamed of when Skeet was gone. No, each day was the same. She got up in the morning and brushed her teeth and went to work in the bra factory and came home in the evening and listened to her program.

Other women could listen to "John's Other Woman" or "As the Earth Turns"; she listened to "Love in the Afternoon" with J. Thomas Stewart as her hero. Oh, those romantic moods into which he carried her! No, he wasn't what put her in a trance, it was his heavenly voice. Something about his voice made Rosie imagine him to be dark and dashing. She liked that word 'dashing'. She had heard a girl in the factory say it about one of her boy friends. Rosie pictured herself living with such a man in a beautiful apartment—not the hole-in-the-wall that ruined her dream each time she opened her eyes.

It must have been about a year ago on the program that Stewart had married the model who had gone to school with his brother's wife. It was then that Rosie had hated him, really hated him. She had been so hurt that she had not listened to the

program for a week. Rosie felt jilted and no matter how hard she tried, she could not pretend that she was the model who was Stewart's wife. It just wouldn't work. Not with Rosie.

She was listening to the program again. It was all right, now. Stewart wasn't living with the model anymore. She tripped and almost fell up the stairs in her haste. Skeet would be home now, probably asleep in the bedroom. She'd listen to the program and then she'd better get Skeet's supper. She didn't think she could bear his cursing tonight.

On her way across the room, she noticed that Skeet's miniature bronze horse was missing from the stand. Had she misplaced it? Skeet was always dragging home junk that he had won at carnivals for pitching balls at bottles or picking up ducks or making the gong ring. She always threw away his prizes, but she had liked the horse and had kept it. Now she looked under the stand, but it had not fallen to the floor. She went into the bedroom to see if Skeet might have taken it in there with him; he often picked it up and handled it and seemed to like it. The closet door stood open. Skeet's clothes were gone. Suddenly a pleasant thought brought a warmth to Rosie's heart. She yanked open his bureau drawers. They were all empty. She ran to the refrigerator. Even the three bottles of beer that had been in it in the morning were gone. Rosie was elated. She had everything to herself—the couch, her time, and her dream. She hurried to the radio and twisted the worn brown knob.

YOUNG LOVE

Joanna Van Horn

I fell in love one clear December night

When all the world around was deep in snow
And stars were close to earth and shining bright.

I fell in love, but very well I know
That those who claim maturity their own

Will smile and gently mock me for a fool
And tell me not to love until I'm grown—

That soon enough my fire of love will cool.
But I will tell them once and once again

I love him more than pen or tongue can tell.
My world becomes all bright and golden when

My eyes meet his—with look we know so well.
I love as none has ever loved before

And with the years I will but love the more.

A FEW LINES OF FREE VERSE ON A SITUATION
THAT HAS BEEN BOTHERING ME FOR THE PAST
FEW WEEKS—WRITTEN A LOT AS “ULYSSES”
WOULD HAVE BEEN WRITTEN IF JOYCE HAD
WRITTEN IT AT THE AGE OF SEVEN, ONLY WITH-
OUT DIRTY WORDS (I AM A PRESBYTERIAN).

Richard Lipez

What has happened to truth?
Where is it hiding?
Has its 13-weeks run out?
Has the agency dropped its option?
Some think that truth will make a comeback.
I doubt it though.
Someone in Washing^ton must have
called it a radical and subpoenaed it.
Truth is on its way out.
Distortion is big these days.
Truth slipped and fell in the barnyard
And can't get up
(You know how barnyards are).

Distortion has a Trendex of 43.
It's fantabulous.
Truth went on C. B. S. and got a Trendex of 7.
There is something significant there.

Come to think of it, truth never was
very big even before Trendex and
C. B. S. and Reader's Digest and Governors
of Southern States and Dorothy Kigallen.

(Sneering at Reader's Digest is very big
this year.

TRUTH IS A WATCHBIRD, WATCHING YOU
(From its horizontal position in the barnyard).

THE TIME BEFORE

Carol Chase

Oh, I am glad
For time before you.
I am glad for springs
That bloomed and broke
And glad laughter
That we did not share
And mornings
When I woke
And rose
To brush my teeth
And comb my hair
Without a thought of you.
I am glad for times I walked alone
Into the early field
And smiled to see
Fierce winter yield
To gentle spring.
I am glad for nights
I knelt to pray
Without a mention
Of your name
And glad for young
Sweet words I heard
Believing that
I felt the same.
Yes, I am glad
For all these things.
Glad I walked alone,
Glad that I can give you
Something of my own —
Now that I am
So much a part of you.

NOTE FROM AN ENGLISH MAJOR

Kathryn Dietrich

Jane is going to have a baby.

The Jane for whom I saved a seat on the school bus every morning, who entered the bus door buttoning the last button on her blouse — with toothpaste on her mouth and an untidy pile of books and papers stacked in one arm.

The Jane whose desk could never hold all the newspaper information, yearbook advertisements, bookkeeping papers, and English themes she tried to cram into it.

The Jane who shared a seat with me in Physics class and questioned me as to which weight to use.

The Jane who taught me to jitterbug and polka and who introduced me to her cousin at a square dance because I thought he was cute.

The Jane who took me as seriously as I took her, talking and listening as we hiked home from school on a spring afternoon.

The Jane with whom I double-dated: On the eve of my sixteenth birthday we went square dancing; from our Senior Prom we rode four in the front seat; once we tried unsuccessfully to trade dates.

The Jane who couldn't get her hem in straight the night before our 4-H projects were to be judged.

The Jane who taught a class in Bible School and smiled at the children quarreling over who would hold her hands on the way to the playground.

The Jane who started working and never made it to college to become the teacher she had planned to be but fell in love and married happily.

Best wishes, Jane.

COMPREHENDING CONTAINERS

Barbara Underwood

Whenever I am faced with a bottle, jar, or can which must be opened by any method more complicated than that of simply unscrewing a lid, I feel as nonplused as if I were asked to explain how an I. B. M. machine extracts cube roots.

Take, for example, a glass of grape jelly. The top reads "Pry HERE," and is sprinkled with little arrows all around the rim. I assume that I am expected to pry the lid at each of the little arrows, and I do so; whereupon I have a beautifully scalloped lid, still firmly attached to the jar. I go around again, this time prying between the arrows—more scallops. I decide to sprinkle sugar on my buttered and cooling toast. And there is the problem of the Coke bottle. There seem to be two main techniques, both of which I have tried on numerous occasions with no luck, much on the order of the method suggested on the grape-jelly jar; this method, for me, results in approximately nothing. Or the lid may be jerked off with one quick movement; this method, for me, results in widely distributed Coke. Personally, I find an ice pick indispensable, but the Coke is often a little flat by the time I shake out a glassful.

And then there is the tin can, and, inevitably, the can opener. It was my father who decided that we needed a replacement for our old can opener. Not that he ever had to much occasion to use it, but it looked a bit descapid and did have an alarming tendency to jump out of my mother's hand and shrink back against the wall while she was trying to turn it. It also had an extensive repertoire of noisome squeaks and groans. And there was the problem of digging out the dusty lid from among the peaches, once it was severed from the can; we used a paring knife, basing our activities on the first-class lever principle. After years of experience my mother and I had thoroughly mastered the entire technique, but my father's arguments were convincing. My mother finally gave in and traded two and three-quarter books of Green Stamps for a streamlined, chrome-plated mechanism accompanied by a fifteen-page instruction booklet and guaranteed to open anything from a can of mushroom soup to a Brinks armored truck. It was hung by my father, who stepped back and regarded it as a work of art.

Came the fateful day when I advanced upon the new con-

venience, prepared to do battle with a monstrous can of fruit juice. My mother always brought the "large economy size" of everything; thus, the can opener and I faced each other (I with some trepidation) over a full quart of Del Monte's Pineapple-Grapefruit Juice. The can opener looked so smugly efficient that I half expected it to reach down and pluck the can out of my hand. I grasped the handle and gingerly pushed the rim of the can into what I fondly hoped was the business end of the machine. Then followed the logical procedure of turning the handle — except that this particular handle did not seem to be for turning. "Now, look here," I said, frowning and addressing my remark to the can opener, "this whole operation is supposed to be practically automatic." It responded by refusing to budge. I retaliated by throwing all my weight against the handle, and succeeded in loosening the boards of the cupboard to which the opener was attached. The handle turned—it had to—and the machine grasped the can in its jaws with a resentful crunch. I stood back with hands on hips and glared at it; then I charged forward to complete the operation. With grim determination I started grinding. The side of the cupboard creaked and splintered, but the lid was finally separated from the can. I stepped back, admiring my accomplishment, and about that time the can was released and plunked heavily onto the counter, splashing fruit juice over a six-foot radius which included the window, the curtains, the dishes in the drainer, me, and the open silverware drawer. "That," I said fiercely, "is the positive end," and mopped pineapple flavored tears of frustration from my eyes. That chrome-plated monstrosity, victorious in the end, was still holding aloft the mutilated lid of the ill-fated can, like a Boy Scout waving a banner. I said a nasty word and tackled the problem of removing the lid from the little suction cup to which it was neatly—and firmly—attached. These modern appliances have all the little conveniences, you know. I finally accomplished the removal of the lid and some skin from my finger. Strangely enough, I had lost all appetite for fruit juice and poured the remainder of the can down the sink.

Now, do not assume that I admitted defeat at this point. No doubt this would have been the intelligent thing to do, considering my obvious lack of ability to cope with things mechanical. But I tried again, valiantly, and at various intervals had the kitchen decorated with chicken soup, tomato sauce, and dog food. At the present, my mother uses the new can opener, and my sister uses the new can opener. I use wirecutters.

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