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# THE CRUCIBLE

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Life being all inclusion and confusion,  
 and art being all discrimination and  
 selection, the latter, in search of the  
 hard latent VALUE with which it alone  
 is concerned, sniffs round the mass as  
 instinctively and unerringly as a dog  
 suspicious of some buried bone.

**PREFACES**

. . . Henry James

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## The Seven-Year-Old Itch

. . . . LARRY NYCE

The trouble with being a parent is not that you wind up having children of your own. That is to be expected. It is the children you wind up with who are not your own who make parenthood so difficult. I am referring in particular to that categorical specimen known as The Sleep-Over.

The Sleep-Over usually spends the night at your house because your child once spent the night at his house. Unless you want your child to get the reputation in the neighborhood of being a deadbeat, you must play along with this unfair-trade agreement. What's unfair about it is that you, as host parent, are never given sufficient advance warning. If, for example, you knew on Monday that your child was thinking of having a house guest on the coming Friday, you could probably ward the whole thing off by announcing that you were planning to have the inside of the house painted that week-end (particularly the children's rooms). But these Sleep-Overs are generally the result of such haphazard planning that the unwary parent is taken completely off guard and trapped into submission just as easily as I was a few Friday afternoons ago.

I had just arrived home from work and was looking forward to a relaxing week-end when Jeff, our seven-year-old, accosted me in the front hall.

"Can Dick Lewis sleep-over tonight?" he asked.

"I don't know. I'll have to talk it over with your mother."

"I already have talked to her," he announced. "She told me that it's all right with her if it's all right with you."

"Well, if she says so, then I guess it's okay." (What are you going to do—

start a complex in him, have him hate you and love her?)

Then began the frantic telephoning between houses.

First Jeff phoned Dick and said, "Can you sleep-over tonight?"

Dick accepted the implied invitation immediately, then asked, "Who is this?"

After he'd hung up, Dick's mother telephoned my wife Sandy and inquired if the invitation had parental approval.

"Oh, we'd love to have him," lied Sandy.

Thirty seconds later Jeff phoned Dick to ask him why he hadn't come over yet.

This call was followed by a call to Jeff from Dick, who demanded to know what we were going to have for dinner.

"If he has to know what we're going to have for dinner before he can accept, he can stay home!" I shouted as near to the phone as I could get.

"They won't say," Jeff told Dick.

Dick decided to chance it, and five minutes later I happened to look out the window just in time to see a small boy with a large suitcase being thrown onto our front lawn from a passing station wagon.

"It's about time you got here," Jeff said as he greeted his guest at the door.

"I got here as soon as I could," apologized Dick, banging his suitcases against the wall of our entry hall and knocking a small chunk of plaster onto the floor.

"I think you'd better let me carry this for you," I said, grabbing Dick's suitcase.

This ounce of prevention proved to be a mistake, because it left him with his hands free to put dirty fingerprints all over the walls on the way to Jeff's room.

It takes a great deal of  
history to produce a little  
literature.

### HAWTHORNE

. . . Henry James

"I guess someone didn't take a bath before he came over," Sandy said to Dick, with what was supposed to be a forgiving smile. "You'd better take a bath when Jeff does."

Advising him to bathe was another blunder, as I found out when I stepped into my own shower a little later and turned on the hot water. I stepped out right away. The water was like liquid ice.

Wrapping a towel around me, I strode into Jeff's room. There I found Jeff and Dick, stark naked and still unwashed, sitting on the floor watching television—with the shower in the adjoining bathroom going full blast.

"We're not wasting it," explained Dick in answer to my shouts. "We're just waiting for it to get hot."

"I have news for you," I said. "It got hot, and now it's cold again."

"We have two water heaters at our house," replied Dick. "I'm allowed to use as much hot water as I want."

Unfortunately, one of the unwritten rules of infant-exchange is that it's not considered sporting to flog another person's child.

Dinnertime found us sitting down to a roast leg of lamb, which I was supposed to carve.

"Mother does the carving at our house," announced our little guest.

"Very interesting," I said.

"Daddy says that he works hard all day and that when he comes home he's tired and expects mother to wait on him," he continued, looking rather disdainfully at the way I was chopping up the roast. I shoved his plate toward him.

"What is this?" he asked.

"Roast lamb," replied my wife.

"I don't like roast lamb. What's this green stuff?"

"Mint jelly," I said. "It's good."

"I don't like mint jelly," said Dick.

He didn't like green peas, mashed potatoes, salad, or milk, either. In fact, the

only foods he said he liked were hot dogs and cotton candy.

"Well, I'm afraid you're not going to get any hot dogs or cotton candy around here," I pointed out. "You'll just go hungry if you don't eat your dinner."

"I will not," he said, pulling a large Hershey bar out of his pocket. "I'll just eat this." The candy bar made it difficult for Jeff to stir up any interest in roast lamb and green peas. But by threatening to take away his TV privileges until he was out of college, we finally persuaded him to sample a few bites.

Bedtime turned out to be another period of turmoil. At eight-thirty, Dick stopped watching television long enough to throw out what was supposed to be his chest and announce loudly, "At my house, I don't have to go to bed until ten o'clock on Friday nights."

"Eight-thirty's curfew time around here," said Sandy.

"But I'll miss Frankenstein's Children!"

"You certainly will," retorted my wife.

Dick began tossing his belongings into his suitcase. "I'm going home," he said in a practiced ugly tone.

I hadn't had such a good offer in years, but Jeff started to cry, and Sandy whispered in my ear that she thought it would be inhospitable for us to send Dick home before morning. So we relented and said they could stay up until nine.

"That's more like it," said Dick, starting to unpack again.

Nine may have been more like it, but by the time I had answered all the requests for bed-tucking-in, glasses of water, and goodnights, it was nearly ten o'clock.

Finally the boys ran out of requests and Jeff fell asleep.

But our little house guest didn't. He started to sneeze, sniffle, and cough.

"Maybe I'd better close the window," said Sandy, hurrying into the bedroom.

"That won't help," said Dick reassuringly. "I'm just allergic."

"To what, dear?"

To just about everything, it turned out: down pillows, woolen blanket, the quilted comforter, the mattress, the linen sheets, the denim curtains, and the material from which Jeff's pajamas were made.

"What do you sleep in at home—a sealed chamber?" I asked.

He explained that at home he had a special pillow, a foam-rubber mattress, a nylon blanket, special sheets imported from Siam, and spun-glass curtains.

"Well, I don't know what we're going to do with you," I said.

"I know," said Dick. "I'll just stay up all night and look at television."

By now we were ready to accept any deal the young man had to offer. While Sandy and I tried to read, he sat up until two, monitoring all the late-late-late shows. Finally exhaustion set in and he dropped off to sleep in an overstuffed arm chair. It was stuffed with the same kind of down as Jeff's pillows, but I didn't feel it was the time to annoy him with this information. Rather than tempt fate, I decided to let him remain just as he was and Sandy and I quietly tip-toed off to bed.

We were allowed to sleep undisturbed until five A.M., when I awoke to a tremendous racket and found Jeff and Dick having a wrestling match on the floor in their bedroom, several chairs and tables overturned, and a small transistor radio (which Dick had brought from home) spewing out rock-and-roll.

I said, "It's pretty early in the morning for music, isn't it, boys?"

"Oh no," said Dick. "I always listen to music when I get up in the morning."

I impounded the radio, which didn't make things much quieter. It only made it easier for Sandy and me to hear the children's voices. During the next hour

my vocal chords and nerves were worn thin as I tried vainly to restore and maintain a modicum of peace and quiet.

Evidently it pays to be tough with children, because finally they got the idea and played quietly until breakfast was ready—so quietly you wouldn't have known they were in the house. And they weren't, as a matter of fact. They were outside on the front lawn, in a rather heavy early-morning fog, wetting each other down with the garden hose.

Once breakfast was over and the sun came out bright and warm, however, Dick and Jeff moved their activities back inside the house.

They were still playing inside after lunch when I sat down to look at the "Game of the Week" on television. Not only were they in the house, they were right in my chair, crawling around and asking me a number of questions about baseball, such as "Why does the man only get three strikes?" and "Why don't the cops get him when he steals a base?"

"Because those are the rules," I shouted.

I kept telling myself that pretty soon Dick's parents would have to come by and pick him up. After all, there is a law against abandoning children.

However, I did become a little concerned when Dick started inquiring about what we intended to have for dinner. I figured I'd better crush this movement before it went any farther.

"We're having a new dish," I told him. "It's cold lamb, cold peas, cold mashed potatoes, and cold mint jelly, all mixed together in a big bowl of hot milk."

"Sounds delicious," said Dick, smacking his lips. "Maybe I should ask my mother if I can stay overnight."

Apparently they have mastered the art of telepathy in his family, because the phone rang just as he finished speaking.

"Say, I wonder if you'd do Charlie and me a favor," Dick's mother said,

after I had made the mistake of answering the phone. "We just got an invitation to a party tonight, and we can't get a baby sitter. Would you mind keeping Dick until tomorrow?"

"I don't think it's a good idea," I said. "Dick's allergic to just about everything over here. He was up all night sneezing."

"Oh, yes, I forgot to tell you about that. Well, don't let it worry you. I'll bring over his own blankets and pillows."

"He's also allergic to our mattresses," I said nervously. "I'll bring over his foam-rubber mattress, too," she said. "I'm sure I can squeeze it into our station wagon."

It was at this point that I decided I'd have to be firm with her. Otherwise she might want to leave Dick with us forever.

"Oh no! Don't bring over his foam-rubber mattress!" I shouted in a hysterical tone. "Jeff's allergic to foam rubber."

"That's a strange thing to be allergic to," said Dick's mother. "Are you sure?"

"Positive. We just got the report today," I replied. "Not only that, but it runs in our whole family. Sandy and I and the dog—we're all allergic to foam rubber."

She rushed right over and picked up Dick.

Dick differs from other Sleep-Overs in some details. Not everybody, for example, can have an allergy. But every Sleep-Over will generally turn up with something to make your week-end a memorable one—even if it's only a live garter snake in his suitcase or a good contagious disease nicely on its way. Nothing dangerous, of course. Just one of those ridiculous children's diseases, like mumps or chicken pox, that nobody in your family, including yourself, has ever had before.

About the only bright note in the entire picture is that sometimes you are privileged to send your child to someone else's home. But this is no solution. It isn't even revenge. Because your child is always a perfect little gentleman when he goes visiting. No trouble at all to his hosts. They always say so.

## Pax Aquae

. . . SANDRA WOOLEVER

The churning wind scatters the withered leaves.

As bronze as ash from braziers blown, upon

The pond where quietly they wait for sleep:

A sail-boat sleep, a floating halcyon.

## Comment

. . . PAUL MORRIS

I saw my friend  
Flying through the dark midnight,  
Trying to spread his six-two frame  
    across our mighty continent,  
Burning through wheat-fraught Kansas,  
Yearning to write a million words,  
Feeling time beating on his brow,  
Searching the cosmos for a beatific vision,  
Damning a sect and filling manuscripts  
    with a million angry words.

Swinging through Jersey with his people.  
Learning life and searching his bottomless soul  
    for the omniscient answer,

Contemplating colleges to find some truth,  
Shouting out at God for some recompense,  
Running a million moonlit midnights  
    searching for an atom,

Staring into a million eyes, watching humanity,  
Drinking deeply, smoking, finding ideas,

Searching for "the idea," "the truth," "the worth."  
Hitting a million typewriter keys,  
Pounding, striking,  
    only to find dawn come sneaking  
    to send him to another day.

God, it is a mess, but here we are in futility—  
But I heard a sparrow sing in the rain,  
And he said it was good.

## What Happened To The Trees?

### THREE DIALOGUES

. . . RICHARD LIPEZ

#### I

"What happened to the trees?"  
 "To what?"  
 "The trees. Where are they?"  
 "I don't know what you mean."  
 "They were tall and brown, with a lot of  
 green things all over the top."  
 "Oh, those things are in storage."  
 "What did they do that for?"  
 ". . . Could I see your card please?"  
 "Never mind. Forget about it."  
 "You'd better not come around here any more."  
 "Don't worry, I won't."

#### II

"Pray no prayers, sing no songs,  
 The world belongs to the Huey Longs."  
 "That's very musical,  
 but not very accurate."  
 "How would you know?"  
 "I live there."  
 "In the world?"  
 "Yes."  
 "What's your address?"  
 "I can't tell you."  
 "I thought so."  
 "You're just mad  
 because they cancelled spring this year."  
 "Aren't you?"  
 "Spring's a lie, anyway."  
 "But it's a good thought,  
 and that's important."  
 "They may have it next year."  
 "If they don't have it this year,  
 they'll never have it again.  
 It's too much of a bother.  
 They'll just forget about it."  
 "It was a lie anyway."  
 "But it was nicer than some of  
 the other lies we had."

#### III

"The world is sitting around  
 watching Perry Como.  
 I can't accept that."  
 "That's the way it is. You just have to adjust."  
 "You mean, life is rotten because life  
 is rotten because life is rotten?  
 That doesn't make sense."  
 "It's not supposed to make sense."  
 "Why is it like that, though?"  
 "Like what?"  
 "The way life is—senseless, I mean."  
 "Original sin."  
 "I'm serious."  
 "A lot of people don't feel the way you do."  
 "They don't know any better."  
 "Some of them are pretty smart—  
 smarter than you."  
 "They just rationalize so they can be happy."  
 "Don't you want to be happy?"  
 "Not at such a great expense."  
 "You'll change your mind."  
 "I suppose so."

## Who Can Pen A Happy Poem?

. . . THOMAS MARTIN

Who can pen a happy poem?  
 I can't.  
 I could muse forever,  
 And think only bleak thoughts . . .

If I could tread the canyon of dead men  
 I would find poets sitting on rocks—  
 Scribbling their sad thoughts  
 And then exchanging them  
 To get new glimpses of sorrow.

Thus, I conclude, to be a poet  
 One must live with a broken dream,  
 Or see a futile future.

## Planes At Dusk

. . . DONNA BROWN

A child stops with quick reflexes, stares up at the wavy white trails of an unseen jet, and shouts, "Mommy, what's that written in the sky!"

Miles away, floating lazily in Long Island Sound, a young writer sees jet streaks in the sky. Reflectively, he wonders about Fitzgerald's Jay Gatsby and Daisy of the speculating twenties. He belongs with the "sad young men" of another generation. Because today he is sad and in love . . .

Somewhere in Kansas, a group of children on their way home from school, look up to see a TWA twinkling silently in the sun. They argue which would be more exciting—to blow away like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* or to fly in a jet.

Somewhere in Tennessee a gray-haired

lady stands as if entranced. She slowly drops her clothespins and fresh laundry to the basket. Listening to the plane, she remembers an eighteen-year-old son, a war, and a gold star in the living room window.

Neighborhood children, postponing bedtime, hear the plane. One shouts, "I have a good idea; let's play war!"

An old-timer, at a veterans' hospital in Virginia, looks up from his wheel chair. He shades his eyes with a salute-like gesture against the setting sun.

And so they stop and reflect. Some with misty eyes, some with young eyes, and all with curious eyes.

But high above, the planes continue, unaware of their effect below. From dusk to dawn, from dawn to dusk, they drone on.

## Time Is Not Motionless

. . . PAUL MORRIS

Time is not motionless and I am not blind.

I view it winging past—

Through dark glasses,

On TV screens,

On an old man's face, his snowy beard, his outdated suit.

Time is not mute, and I am not deaf.

I hear time in an ancient car motor, the Klaxon horn,

The leather seat that's torn.

I hear time in the countdown,

Ten seconds, nine, eight, etc.

Fizzle . . .

Ten years lost.

## Test Of Love

Romance—you are cheating  
My soul this ghastly year;  
Your melancholy powers defeating—  
Turning to love, I fear.  
But may I be sure  
That I have love today?  
Will only the test of time endure  
To guide the lover's way?  
Ah! But one has right  
To ponder over emotion,  
With each parting good-night  
Pledging endless devotion.  
Is this my love so rare—  
Or will I find others to compare?

. . . DAVID R. DORSETT

## Hollywood

City of Love—

Stimulant to a race

Of understimulated monkeys

Waiting to be touched

With the tenderness of beauty;

Waiting to be told

With the frankness of love

To ape the style—to dream;

To excite themselves and love

In theatres, in parks,

In alleys, on benches,

On roofs, and in cars—

To love the cheap-loose-

Cold-exciting nothingness

Of Hollywood.

. . . DAVID R. DORSETT



## War To Begin On Monday Says Nostradamus

... THOMAS CLARKE

"President Eisenhower announced today that work has begun on the construction of a huge radio-telescope six hundred feet in diameter. This instrument will enable us to probe thirty million light-years into space. In addition to observing physical aspects of more distant stars, we shall try, said Mr. Eisenhower, to establish communications with the peoples on these stars, should any of the stars prove to be inhabited."

This item appeared in today's Lock Haven Express. That last sentence in particular caused me to chuckle. The earth-people have no conception of the multitudes of inhabited planets, and they will never have any such conception, for it is too late.

The people on my star have not been sitting idle while the earth-people made their "great" advances in science. As a matter of fact, centuries ago, as the earth-people compute time, we were using a telescope similar to the one which Dwight Eisenhower announced so hope-

fully this morning, and we have been particularly successful in our program of universal conquest. I can clearly recall my grandfather's telling me of the big flood that almost annihilated the earth people. That flood was our doing, but because of a technical failure that rain lasted only forty days of earth-time. That was about fifty years ago by our standards. Since then we have been able to make it rain or snow over extended periods and on numerous occasions, but never for a long enough period to complete our purpose.

Now I have been instructed to leave for home—at once. My observation assignment is completed here. My people have finally perfected our inter-planetary rain-making weapon. Yesterday saw the death by drowning of the last inhabitant of the star Exol. The beginning of the end of the earth begins tomorrow.

There was another item in today's Express: "The weather forecast for Monday is rain." I thought that was rather amusing too.

## Debit

... SANDRA WOOLEVER

Splash the  
Shrill staccatoes  
Of tin rain drops on glass  
And I will pay the tinner a—  
Just price

## I Am Paul Morris Standing Here

... PAUL MORRIS

I am Paul Morris. Do not fear me,  
Walt Whitman, standing there  
Rejoicing in the sensation of the air  
On your naked naked frame;  
I will not hurt, I will not maim  
Your positive philosophy.  
For I would rather go to see  
That tortured tortured Emily.

Isolated, self-ostracized Emily,  
Entombed by garden walls,  
Could she say (as Thoreau might  
Have said had he been she, poor sprite),  
"I have traveled far within these walls"?

She saw Sam Sewall's ghost  
Hovering over a burning stake  
And spit upon by a Salem host  
Of wild witches and Hawthorne's ghost,

A sinister ghost veiled in black  
And raving how he doubted man's  
Innate goodness, the goodness of  
The future man unlearning love.

What would you think of love, Lanier,  
The love at Buchenwald,  
The love of Basil Two, the damned  
Bulgar slayer,  
The love that flew over Hiroshima  
And dropped  
A blazing bomb?

## November Fourteenth

. . . RICHARD LIPEZ

In between

Autumn's crunchy cut-up tumble-down  
 Marigold moments of cider-barrel brown  
 On sun-scattered blue, and

Winter's lie-there-and-sting-me-all-over  
 Uncompromising incompatible black and white  
 Chin-chapping chill-blamed chilblained  
 Razzle-dazzle thud,

Floats a foamy time, temporary-forever time,  
 Suspended in gray space at knot-eyed not I'd  
 White ankles  
 (Peering at me-neithered and bony-faced  
 black-brown tree trunks),

A sallow shadowed sightless rat of a  
 Pennsylvania time, of Altoona and Shickshinny,  
 Nanticoke, North-side Scranton, and Charleroi-Monessen  
 Weeping and wishing

To fly South

With the wrens and Mrs. Rothstein,  
 A time of dim, certain days  
 Of cruelly, carefully copious gray—  
 A cold steel roof  
 Descending  
 To shut out the world from the world  
 That couldn't care less,  
 Couldn't care less.

## Quick Sketch

. . . SANDRA WOOLEVER

Softly  
 The snow came flying,  
 Softly hushing the town.

All night it fell,  
 Hiding in angles and crevices,  
 Softly  
 Drifting and sailing.

When the city awoke, it saw a white fantasia.

Eyes marveled at the dazzling whiteness.  
 Ears listened to the stillness of the solemn air.

Boys on their way to school  
 Gathered up the snow to melt on tasting tongues,  
 Or they sailed snowballs in orbit,  
 Or they rioted in drifts piled beside the walks.

Trees labored to raise their snow-laden branches to the gray sky.  
 Girls peered under the white-moss branches;  
 "Oh, look at the trees! Look at the castles!" they cried.

The snow still fell,  
 Lazily and incessantly floating down.  
 Morning shoppers lowered their eyes and walked in the new city.

# Shelter

. . . PAUL MORRIS

I looked into the long glass of time  
And saw nothing. Nothing standing naked,  
In all his ugliness, bare and burnt,  
And searching his being for the why.  
Nothing stood there, his eyes warning me,  
Because I had not known.

Mortal, this is the body of the bomb,  
Take, eat this, which is given for you,  
In the air of destruction.

Mortal, this is the blood of the bomb,  
Take, drink this, which is given for you,  
Of the blood of mankind.

And I ate of the destruction,  
I swallowed destruction in hard gulps,  
And I drank deeply of the blood of mankind.

I saw mankind naked,  
Gazing into the blazing brightness of white light,  
And crying out for grace from heaven,  
But heaven had been destroyed.

I saw man hungry,  
Searching on the barren-mother earth for a crumb,  
Or for a grub, or for a drop of dew,  
But sustenance had been destroyed.

And the children of Israel cried out  
For manna from heaven. But all they received  
Was a pillar of fire by night  
That led them nowhere.

All was nowhere. All was Sahara,  
Burning in the million-heating  
Sun of radiation. And man walked  
The weary road to far-off nowhere.

And the children of Israel cried out  
For a cloud to lead them by day,  
And they received a mushroom cloud  
That led them nowhere.

And mankind cried out to the cloud  
For a drop of rain, for a drop of rain on the tongue;  
And the cloud rained for forty days and forty nights,  
Rained radiation for forty days and forty nights on the tongue.

And the children of Israel cried out  
For a little child to lead them,  
Or for another Moses to take them to a promised land  
Running rich with milk and honey.

And on a street corner somewhere in nowhere,  
A little child wailed.

And on a street corner somewhere in nowhere,  
A white-bearded man cursed the ten commandments.

And the children of Israel cried out  
For the first coming, or for the second,  
Whichever it was they cared no longer,  
For there was no dogma but existence.

And on a street corner somewhere in nowhere,  
A baby lay dying in an improvised manger.

And on a street corner somewhere in nowhere,  
A bearded man of thirty-three hanged himself.

## II

And mankind searched the earth for a  
Volcano, to cool himself in its fires.  
And Ponce de Leon discovered in Florida  
A bomb crater and a dehydrated drop of dew.

And on a street corner somewhere in nowhere,  
A mother cried out at the skeleton  
Of a television set for a lost baby's love,  
And could not find the channel,

And mankind searched the barren earth  
For a rose or for a cactus or for a blade of grass.  
And mankind found the rubble of Washington,  
And mankind found the earth demolished.

And the children of Israel cried out  
For some balm from the land of Gilead,  
Or for the land of Gilead, or for Germany,  
Or for Buchenwald, but there was only nowhere.

And on a street corner somewhere in nowhere,  
A small boy rubbed ashes on his rotting flesh.

And somewhere on a street corner in nowhere  
A young man with a beard spit on a swastika.

And the children of Israel cried out  
For the patience of their ancient Job,  
Or for an angel with which to wrestle,  
Or for Joseph's granaries in Egypt land.

And on a street corner somewhere in nowhere  
An ancient bearded philosopher became a mental case.

And somewhere on a street corner in nowhere  
A white mob lynched a Negro clergyman.

And mankind searched the earth  
For a germ of wheat, or a kernel of corn, or bread,  
And in a subterranean shelter they found  
A tooth pick and a mouse's skeleton.

And on a street corner somewhere in nowhere  
A high-fidelity tape recorder played the hydrogen sound.

### III

And the children of Israel cried out  
For a staff to beat against a desert rock,  
Or for a sponge of vinegar, or for water  
To turn into wine, or for a widow's barrel.

And mankind searched the earth and found  
A divining rod, a sponge, a World War III canteen,  
And an empty gasoline drum.

And the children of Israel cried out against Cain,  
For now they felt the pangs of Abel.  
And the children of Israel cried out against Eve,  
For they too had tasted of the apple.

And mankind searched the earth  
For an apple, and found an apple seed,  
But could find no inch of fertile ground  
In which to entomb that shining morsel.

And somewhere on a street corner in nowhere  
A man with a pot upon his head stood frustrated.

And on a street corner somewhere in nowhere  
A man preached out that he was Christ risen,  
And they asked him to turn stones into bread,  
And he would not do it and was hanged.

And a young woman cried for her lover  
And was raped, because there was no love.  
And a young mother gave birth  
Into the land of the living dead.

Then in desolation a clock struck one  
And somebody smashed it, for there was no time.  
And someone had an appointment at two,  
But it did not matter, for death knew the time.

And on a street corner somewhere in nowhere,  
A mob of Negroes lynched a white man.

And in the dust of an ancient temple,  
A young man with a beard wrote "bomber."  
And the children of Israel cried out,  
"Crucify him," and he was crucified.

And a poem blew across the burning sands of nowhere,  
And no mortal read it. And somewhere  
Puck cried out "Lord, what fools!"  
And no fool mortal cared.

### IV

And on a road leading to nowhere  
Humanity stumbled into a ditch and lay there  
Asking for a cesspool to cool themselves in  
And they received a vacation in the desert.

And someone saw an ant and cried a warning,  
For the ant had not heard of the bomb.  
And someone found an ant hill and dug it up  
Searching for an ant egg, but found none.

And somewhere a man let out an oath,  
And mankind made him a saint.  
And a robin searching for spring  
Shook his weary head and forgot to fly south.

And somewhere a man dying of radiation burns  
Bragged about how clean our bomb is.  
And someone toppled the tombstone of Einstein,  
And Von Braun denounced his launching pads.

And someone from North Beach had a party  
Because they knew it all along. And someone  
Laughed and threw his shoe into an ash can  
And someone tried to find the salt mines.

And somewhere some people found a bomb,  
 And they fell down and worshipped it,  
 Because it was all that was left that meant anything,  
 And it went off.

And someone found a shoe in an ash can and laughed.  
 And someone found a grain of salt and cried.  
 And someone saw someone find a shoe,  
 So he killed him and laughed.

And someone saw a man and killed him  
 Because the bomb had not. And sixty-five men tried  
 To huddle in the shade from a bean pole,  
 And the bean pole fell, so they laughed or cried.

And somewhere someone stepped outside  
 And there wasn't any. And someone somewhere  
 Tried to die, but he could not find death.

And someone saw an oasis and ran toward it  
 And it was a mirage. And someone dug a grave  
 And waited in it. And Hitler came back and  
 Apologized to the Jews, but they could not help him.

And the children of Israel cried out,  
 And mankind searched the earth,  
 And on a street corner somewhere in nowhere  
 Someone found a poem, and he read it and cried.

# E. E. Cummings Is Fun To Read

. . . RICHARD LIPEZ and ANN BLACKBURN

E. e. CUmmIngS  
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 TYPESETTERS,

## American Literature

. . . PAUL MORRIS

The minds of men have often said,  
That on midnight's dull bell-toned hour  
The dead entombed derive some power  
To leave the dampness of their beds,  
And gather at Usher's dank tarn,  
To lament the vampiress Madeline,  
Who from her cold and coppered barn,  
Escaped the place that she'd been in,  
Only to sink entombed and doomed again,  
Into that lurid tarn ——— Darn!

Well, Israfel can go to Hell,  
Swell if he can sing so wildly well  
"The Farmer in the Dell,"

And I'll be the catcher in the rye,  
And I'll get by,  
For I'll go down to Walden pond,  
And wallow in the mud,  
Cock my ear to nature's call,  
and thus commence the flood,  
Set in motion Maelstrom,  
And I'll swim the Mare Tenebarum,  
To mimic Christopher, yes sir.

I'll fly Ben Franklin on his kite,  
To show old Edward's sermon-might.  
"Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,"  
"Waterfowl" on the path of God,  
"Thanatopsis"—trust, not God,

Is this Theology?  
Might be.  
Next test,  
Covers 600 pages.  
Do your best, sages.

## The Warm Rain

. . . RICHARD LIPEZ

It was foggy and drizzly driving up to Heimie's, but it was warm and we had all the windows open. It was the kind of night that you always feel sort of happy and passionate and disgusted all at the same time. It's really weird. You feel so great because you're with people and because your heart is beating and your head is full of colors and sounds and the air is so good and wet, but you want to cry, right out loud like a little kid. It's a feeling that's hard to explain, but I get it quite a bit in the spring and summer, especially around the first weeks in May, and that's when this happened.

I hadn't been to Heimie's since right after Christmas vacation, and I don't suppose I would have gone back until around the end of the semester, after exams, because my grades were pretty good and I was getting interested in some of the work, but I had just finished working on a term paper about the bladderwort, an essentially uninteresting subject, so when a couple of guys said, "Let's just go up for a while and have two beers," I said OK.

Driving up, the guys were talking about major league baseball, which is not very interesting to me, so I just leaned back and smelled the rain and thought about the rain and how it comes down and then flows to the ocean and then evaporates back up and then comes over the land and comes down again. That's an amazing process. I tried to figure out how long it would take one raindrop to go down the river to the ocean and evaporate and come back to the same place. Probably about a week, I thought. I kept looking at the rain and thinking about it and letting it hit the side of my face, and then I thought of how many times

a warm rain had hit me in the face before, and I tried to count the exact times, going backward in time. I remembered a couple times from that same spring, once when I was walking to class in the afternoon and a shower started and I just kept on walking, and once when a girl and I came out of a movie and we had to run to the parking lot because it was raining pretty hard. I thought of about five specific times in the last couple of years, but the earliest one I could remember was when I was at camp and was twelve years old (except I told everybody I was thirteen) and we went on an overnight hike and built a lean-to out of pine branches, and there was a big thunderstorm and the roof of the lean-to caved in and the rain came in and this damned fat kid from Wellsboro hit me on the neck with his flashlight and said it was an accident, but I knew he did it on purpose because that kid never liked me and I never liked him. I hadn't seen that kid for about nine years, and I wondered what he was doing that night. I wondered if he was still fat. He probably lost a lot of weight and was studying to be a physicist or was out making out with some girl somewhere. I wondered if it was raining in Wellsboro.

When we were almost up to Heimie's, I didn't even feel like going in, I felt so funny. All of a sudden, the rain just seemed stupid. It seemed like the rain had a lot of guts coming down so damned nonchalantly out of that black sky. It seemed like far away there was something really important going on, but the rain was just dripping down about two miles an hour, ignorant of the whole world and missing a very important

point. Sitting there feeling the rain made me feel stupid, too, and helpless, as if I was a part of it. All at once I felt like I was just drifting down a big black hole about two miles an hour with the rain all around me, and I could stop if I really wanted to, but the rain felt so warm and good on my face that I just kept drifting and floating right on down, and I knew I was missing something important too.

We got to Heimie's and went in out of the rain, and right away that heavy outhouse kind of beer smell hit me in the forehead. It made me a little dizzy at first. We went over to the bar and sat down. The place was fairly crowded for a week night, and there were quite a few stag girls there, which ordinarily I would have been glad to see, but that night for some reason I didn't even think about them, at least at first. After about ten minutes I was forced to think about them, in a way, because Sandra Fletcher, a girl I had dated a couple times during the fall semester, started to come over toward us. I decided that I would be very nice to her, even though I wasn't too crazy about her. Sandra sat down on the stool beside me and said in a very whiney tone, "I'm depressed." That made me mad. I was what you might call depressed too, but I wasn't going around making a public issue of it. Of course I know a lot of guys that really eat that stuff up, because then they can get this "Oh I know what it's like—It's all so useless—I'm in it too" look on their faces and they can go into this spiel they have about how stupid organized religion is and how difficult it is for the individual to live in America. I used to go in for that a little bit myself, but I quit when I was about eighteen. I suppose I still do it a little, unconsciously, but when I see somebody else do it, I really get disgusted. Of course, I know a lot of guys that wouldn't ever say anything like it in the first place. It's the same way with girls like Sandra. A

lot of them never get depressed, I mean really down in the dumps over something important, but that is because they just don't know any better. I figure there are three levels of thinking. The first one is made up of most people, who just don't bother to find out about anything that might depress them. There are a lot of really "nice" people in this group, but even though they're nice, they're mostly pretty dull and not very interesting to be around for a long period of time. The second group is the second largest and is made up of people who have some idea that there are both things to be depressed about and things to be happy about, but they don't really understand many of these things and they often get them confused. They usually make everything a lot simpler than it really is. A lot of college students are in this group, including Sandra Fletcher, and I suppose I am too. But I'm trying to get out of it—no kidding, I am. I've been trying for a couple of years now, but it's no damned breeze, I can guarantee that. One thing I've found out is that you can't talk your way out of it; you have to do something much harder than that. I'm not sure what it is, but I think it has something to do with honesty and selflessness. But then selfless people are often secretly the most vain people and I know that this could happen to me, so in the end my whole effort may be shot to hell. I may never get to group three, which is made up of people who know about both the depressing things and the other things and understand them pretty well and can reconcile them and face up to them both and appreciate them and still remain humble—not just pretend to be humble, but really BE humble. I've read about people like this in books and I've met about seventy-five or a hundred of them, and they're important people to the world. I'm just wondering whether, if one of these people in group three reads this and recognizes himself, it will auto-

matically shove him back to group two. It's a touchy situation. It's not easy to be a group three-er, and if I'd ever make it, I don't know whether I could handle the job or not. It requires a kind of intellectual innocence that I lost somewhere along the way.

Well, anyway, Sandra was sitting there expecting an answer and I had to say something to her, and I didn't want to insult her, because that wouldn't actually do any good. So I told her that there is really only one thing in the world which is important, and that is sex. She asked me if I really meant it, and I said yes. We kicked the subject around for a while and decided that, yes, sex is the most important thing, but neither one of us was serious, though. It was a kind of mock seriousness. We were making fun of people in group two, especially ourselves, only I think she was more serious than I was, because when I said, "Let's go out to the car and listen to the radio and smell the rain," she kind of heaved a little sigh and said all right and didn't even hesitate.

When we got outside and into the car, I remembered how I had felt before and how stupid the rain had seemed, only it didn't seem that way anymore. Girls, no matter how dopey they are, can usually take your mind off things that require deep thought. This is probably a dangerous situation, but at the time I didn't mind, and the rain looked and sounded and felt very good. We talked for almost an hour, mostly about things in category two. I kept trying to maneuver our thinking into group three, but everything I said Sandra construed into something in group two. I could see she was hopeless.

I was almost ready to give up when I decided to do something that I had never done before. I decided that I would come right out and explain my categories of thinking and people to Sandra and try to get her to understand what

I was talking about. It took me about twenty minutes. I told her about all the many people in group one and how many of them are pleasant and harmless and nice, but that they are dense and not really very understanding of the world. I told her about group two, which has some vague idea of the world, but distorts it and doesn't really understand it. I told her about the people in group three who are perceptive and productive and often even humble. I said that we were in group two and we should try to be in group three and that I was trying. That was when I found something out. Sandra looked very thoughtful and said, "Yes, that's EXACTLY how it is, EXACTLY! I know EXACTLY what you mean!" She kept nodding and agreed with everything I said, and I knew right away that the system wasn't any good. I knew that anybody that would even make up a system like that was trapped in group two, if it existed at all. Sandra was just so damned sure that that's the way it was that there wasn't any doubt in my mind that nothing is as simple as I had tried to make it, and only somebody in group two would try to make anything that simple. Actually, I suppose that all people have some of all the groups in them, but I still believe that some people are mostly group three, and being in group three is something to work for.

We necked a little, and I kissed her about twelve times, and then we went back in. The other guys were ready to go then, so we left. When we were driving back, it was still raining a little and I was relaxed, but I kept having the feeling that something should have happened that didn't and that it was happening somewhere very far away, but the damned old rain just kept dripping down out of that black sky about two miles an hour. I concentrated and tried very hard to think of what it was that should have happened, what it was I should have found out about. It seems like I think of it about once a year, but

it always goes away before I can write it down or think it over or do something about it. I'd thought of it maybe six or eight times since I was about seventeen, but even though I tried as hard as I could, I couldn't think of it that night. All of a sudden I had this

terrible fear that I might not ever think of it again. I could feel goose bumps on my arms. I leaned back and closed my eyes and put my head over along the window where the rain was blowing by and let it hit me in the face. It still felt good.

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## It's High There

. . . PAUL MORRIS

It's high there, way up,  
higher than TV aerials  
on slum apartment houses.

It's higher than milady's bust,  
no lower than her neckline.

It was almost unattainable,  
the summit, the apex,  
but there we sat like—

Like alley cats on chromium ash cans,  
like King Farouk on his fat-ass-can,  
like a Low-Country king on—

On a two-legged throne,  
toppling, teetering  
on rubber legs.

## Where Is My Christmas Spirit?

. . . THOMAS MARTIN

Where is my Christmas spirit?  
Have my senses deserted me  
That I do not hear the message of the carols,  
The joy in tinkling bells—  
In children's laughter?

I cannot see gaiety  
In multi-colored lights.

Have I grown so old  
That I feel no happy anticipation?  
I care not if the snow falls.  
What has died in me?

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## With Nothing

. . . THOMAS MARTIN

With nothing  
But the night,  
The hemlocks,  
And the moon,  
I sit alone.

Being alone isn't so bad.  
These hemlocks are alone  
With their shadows;  
And they are content.

The woods at night  
Are always lonely.  
They instill their loneliness  
Into my soul.

And I stare at the fire.



## Uncle Ralph's Proverbs, Aphorisms, and Other Old Hamsterisms

. . . RICHARD LIPEZ

"You can fool some of the people all of the time,  
and you can fool all of the people some of the time,  
but you can always fool all of the people who watch  
daytime television all of the time."

"The bigger they are, the harder they hit."

"Always let a sleeping dog lie unless a flood is coming."

"A fool and his money can make it pretty rough."

"Two heads are more than one."

"You can't have your cake, so shut up."

"A bird in the hand is liable to peck your wrist."

## Ode To A Cigarette

. . . DAVID R. DORSETT

Ah! What comfort  
This life's bequests—  
Relaxation and joy  
Derived from cigarettes.

I sit here and watch  
My "Live-modern" in the tray—  
The tiny thing smoking  
And burning its life away.

Then I pick it up  
And put it to my lips  
Inhaling subtle smoke  
Through manly filter-tips.

Come then, sweet tobacco,  
With odious smell—  
Reach unsuspecting lungs  
And the recalcitrant cell.

That cigarette resembles—  
In uncounted ways—  
A lifetime wasting on  
With numbered days.

## Pooh On Tom

.....RICHARD LIPEZ

Pooh on T. S. Eliot!  
Pooh, I say!  
Poohey to whiney half-truths  
Protruding from old double-crostics!  
He does it well, I'll say that;  
But a couple of years ago  
I saw an old man on the Ted Mack Amateur Hour  
Play Humoresque on a mouth organ;  
Strum Swanee River on a banjo;  
And execute a tricky Irish-step-dance—  
SIMULTANEOUSLY!  
He did that well too—  
I'll bet, better than anyone else in the world.  
In fact he was perfect at it, flawless.  
Poohey on him too!

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## One Love

. . . THOMAS MARTIN

One love  
Is not enough;  
With two loves, twice the joy.  
Fool! I should know—sorrow would be  
Twofold.

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