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The Crucible

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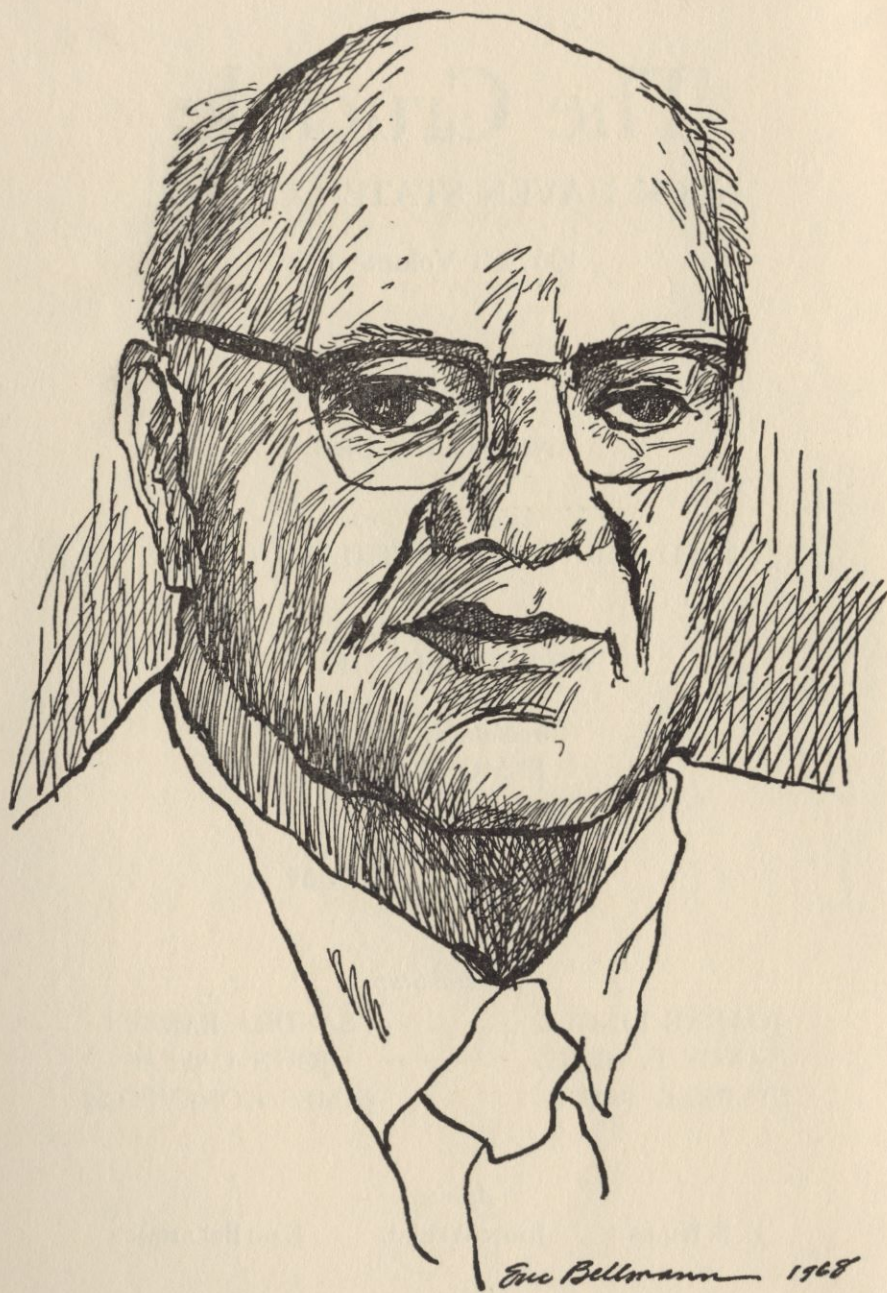
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The Master Watches

Coming out of clumsiness
into lean vibrant boldness,
the occurrence that time
gives as a test —

much like the tiger
grown with the first leap,
knowing his paws able
to judge, moves
in the stalk until
he soars not sure
if his muscles
were wound for his reach,
and falls like the curious
bird after nest plummeting
waiting for his wings to unfold
as leaves in wind;

as the bear on haunches
paws of dried honey-comb
is apprehensive
deciding between bees or water
knowing his cubs,
too young for either,
will follow; the young
learning from the old.

— STEVEN ROTH

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Interlude

The time to stop and question
 Is now.
 Bony fingers prod me
 Toward some mist-enshrouded goal
 That I cannot remember
 Nor care to.
 Give me time . . .
 To have another cigarette
 To take down my dolls
 To walk barefoot on the grass . . .
 Do you remember the peace
 I try to find?
 At twenty
 I am not ready to be pushed
 The way your finger points.
 Allow me my mild rebellion . . .
 I see how I must go,
 But also I see
 The denial
 Of my mysteriously formulated ideals.

— JANET M. SHUEY

Xmas Eve, '67

Brown is not my favorite color.
But I did write my letters
in brown ink — once,
until I was taught
black and blue-black,
all of which bespeaks
bruises and paper bags —
— depressing thoughts on the last
day of Advent

I long
for the expectancy
of a pregnant girl
and with the bearing
would wrap my bruises
in brown paper sacks
and cure these pains
of a false labor,
a pregnancy hysterical
with the knowledge
of not knowing, the flailing
not of body but mind.

And naked
in the streets I wait
for Rome to cure my sterility
with the whips of Lupercalia.
But I am dubious of such
Roman cures
and we are doubtful
not of the girl's labor
not of his coming
but our finding.

— FRED BRUNGARD

I'VE SAID MY GOOD-BYS

by

JANET M. SHUEY

THE ROOM is square. There are two windows on the wall opposite the door; they face the street. I am lying on the bed, parallel to the windows.

It is evening. I'm not sure what time it is. Perhaps it is 9:00, perhaps 2:30 a.m. The street outside is lit up and the light falls into my room in two large squares, one cutting across the bed and the other just falling short of the desk by the door.

It rained earlier. The air is heavy and damp. Although it is cool enough I am perspiring onto the pillow.

Earlier I slept. The sound of the rain striking the window put me to sleep. I dreamed I was walking in the grass near Gordon Street in Flatbush. Just walking and listening to the cars go up and down. I was strangely peaceful during those few moments of awareness after sleep. Then the room took my attention and I began to think again.

It was around 3:30 when I came here this afternoon. The children were coming home from the school on Jefferson Street. Little girls in sweaters with book bags slung over their shoulders and little boys walking in groups of two or three as they do, all talking and

shouting. I looked for Bobby in that crowd and then laughed at myself. Bobby hasn't attended elementary school for years.

The man at the desk hardly looked at me as I signed the register, not that I expected him to. This isn't a very good hotel. Mat told me there are prostitutes living here. I never asked him how he came to know that.

I wonder what Mat is doing now. He thinks I am on the bus to Flatbush to visit my sister. I congratulate myself for being so convincing; but then, he has no reason to suspect anything unusual.

Unusual? Is what I am about to do unusual? I hardly think so, now that I consider it. And yet I feel alone in this undertaking, as though no one has ever done this thing before.

Strange that I should feel so calm in preparing myself. I can think about this without the snares of emotion that usually catch me up. I am really quite detached. I feel as though I am caught up in a bubble. I float along, seeing the world objectively and feeling nothing, except the loneliness. It isn't a bad feeling.

Last week, it was Monday, Mat came home from work an hour late. I was sitting in the kitchen,

sitting at the table in our kitchen. Somehow I had forgotten to get dinner. Now how could that happen? We have been married for twenty-one years. Every night I fix his dinner without thinking about it; I just do it.

But that night I was sitting there when he came home and hadn't even set the table. He thought I was angry because he was late. I wasn't angry. I was floating again and almost resented his intrusion.

"Are we eating out?"

"What?" It was as though I was seeing him for the first time. He stood there in the doorway, tall and handsome. I still consider him handsome, even after twenty-one years. Mat has the most intelligent face with dark eyes and a mole on the left side of his nose. He calls it his beauty mark. . .

I used to laugh when he said that. My roommate introduced us at the Coffee Shoppe. We said then we liked the atmosphere of that smokey little room. Mat was with Gail Clark? Clarkson? I don't remember; it was so long ago. But I remember how he smiled at her and I knew then that I wouldn't be happy until I could make him smile at me like that. I'd have done anything for that look.

I felt so proud when Mat finally asked me out. I spent two days choosing the dress I would wear. It was a green print and then I thought it was beautiful—the perfect dress. I was only mildly disappointed when Mat didn't say any-

thing about it, because he asked me out again. This time to the picnic his friends were having to celebrate the end of examinations. I had too much to drink. Girls didn't drink much then, at least not in my crowd, and I don't suppose I had too many. Nevertheless, I was under the weather, to put it politely. . .

Mat was scared and unsure of himself and it wouldn't have happened if I had said one word of protest. . .

And the horror of discovering my pregnancy. It was weeks before I told him. I hadn't seen much of him during that time. He was so good about it; he didn't blame me or accuse me. We were married at the little chapel across the street from his home. I wore white like an innocent bride, the white dress chosen in haste and hung away to yellow in moth balls.

His mother died six months later. I heard his sisters whispering in the kitchen that she died of a broken heart. Will they say that about me?

I place my hand on my chest and know my heart isn't broken. It's my life that's broken. It's fallen about me in little pieces, gradually over the years. And I have been too preoccupied to notice where the pieces have fallen. . .

Our life together wasn't unhappy. It was a mediocre life and that's where the fault lies, I suppose. We reared our son as best we could, teaching him what we

thought was important. That's all we could do. I had such plans for Bobby and I can see now that I might have forced him to do something that wouldn't have suited him. But Mat was rational about it. He said that Bobby must do what he feels he should. He said that we must trust him.

That day Bobby came home with his girlfriend. . .

"Mother, is Dad home?"

"Not yet. Hello, Sharon." She was so small and pale. I was happy to make her miserable. She was afraid of me and I took pleasure in it. It's strange I acted like that.

"Mother, Sharon and I are going to get married."

"Is she pregnant?" I was cruel.

"Jesus, Mother, We'll just wait for Dad to come and discuss it like adults."

She wasn't pregnant. I had wished that she was. I wouldn't admit it to myself then, but I can see it now. I actually wished she was. Mat said I had no business to ask such a question in her presence. I think he knew what I was thinking and hated me for it. I can't blame him for feeling that way.

After that I could tell that our life together was over. We acted normally, of course, but everything was so different. It was then I decided to do this. I took my time

and thought it over rationally, carefully. Since that time I haven't wavered from my decision. Even now, when the time is so close at hand, I am still certain that I have chosen the right way.

Perhaps not the right way, perhaps just the only way. The only way that I can determine. I packed a bag this morning, had a late breakfast with Mat, and wrote a letter to Bobby. I felt free and floating as I cleared the table and washed the dishes. Mat kissed me good-by. Some habits are very difficult to break, and sometimes you don't realize that they're habits at all.

And this afternoon I called a taxi and came here. To this small room where I lie on my back in bed. There are spider webs hanging in the corner near the ceiling. My eyes have fixed on them and they hold my sight in their sticky threads like a fly who has stopped struggling. I feel peaceful, almost like singing. But my voice would destroy the mood and it's good the way it is.

I'd like to call Mat and tell him I've arrived safely, just to hear his voice on the phone once more, but I've said my good-bys. I wrote a note and put it on the desk by the door there. They'll know who to contact when they find me. . .

Feb. 2, Groundhog Day

Naked standing in the cold
winter sun on a stump-festered
hill above the farm I
narrowed my eyes
to the old sow a wrinkled
whorehigh rooting
dead greens from
the frozen ground.

She lumbered to her sty,
rolled over on her shadow.
A stained overstuffed
grain sack she split
open spilling out aged
organs and intestines.

Later stepping into her mire
and stench I gathered those guts
made my ideas into sausages
and ate them.

— FRED BRUNGARD

These

These, eyes traced tears in mine
lips sponged moist shadow
hands cast flushed temple
breasts graved milky core
thighs rubbed soppy pith?
These, ice cream, melt in cones.

— STEPHEN WALTZ

Reach for the Sun, through One of The Sea

by
SYBIL BROWN

JULIE, Julie, all alone. Julie walked along the empty beach in the light of the morning sun. Sun, sunshine—it fell softly on her bare shoulders, and warmed the top of her head. In her aloneness, she challenged the breeze and owned the world. One happy being, she was wandering far, far down a lifeless, still beach.

What a way to spend a vacation! A thousand miles, and she was in paradise, or as close as she would ever get to it. This beach was never ending, happily for her. It was as if the All-knowing had been expecting her, to have given her so much beautiful world. She looked piercingly at the deep blue above, partaking its sensuous richness. Julie . . . "J" . . . Her thoughts rolled on easily, like the casual rolling of the waves. "J" is for Juno, queen of the gods. I am Julie . . . I'll be queen of the sun, blessed sun. And she felt the wonder of the sunny world.

Her foot rested suddenly on a hard, sharp point in the sand. Julie looked closer and found a delicately curved shell, battered and beaten by wind and waves and finally bleached by the sun, her sun. It, too, had lived in paradise, once

long ago. She threw it into the sea, to be battered and beaten again, and bleached once more by the sun. It would eventually return to the good earth and become a part of it, as it had been before it was a shell.

More of the sea-birds were circling in the air now, and already the sun's rays were becoming intense. The breeze had dropped to a low eddy and as an equilibrium of land and water was reached.

The young girl loosened her tied-up straight hair and stepped into the warm shallows of the tropical sea. It welcomed her, the gentle waves lapping softly over her feet; the water seemed a fond friend. A red, shiny crab scuttled away under a rock, and little, colorful fishes darted about among the bottom grasses. She entered deeper, and the water swirled possessively around her, as if to take her in and make her one of its own creatures. To someone who had previously swum only in squared pools, the vast sea offered a world of freedom and adventure. After three days, she had already accustomed her eyes to the salt water, and she now probed every small mystery that the ocean presented. She was a fair swimmer, with relatively good endurance, so

her casual swimming was almost more relaxing than fatiguing. The romantic, mysterious sea was all about her, enticing, enveloping.

A yellow plant-like anemone strayed about the bottom looking for food. The flowery petals above its trunk-like body gestured to her from below. Julie was fascinated by its wavering charm and swam down, down to investigate. It was an odd animal, so pretty and yet so ugly. She knew enough of the poisonous tentacles to be satisfied with only a long look. The need for air drove her to head for the surface. She kicked from the bottom to give herself a start; instead, she found herself curiously tangled in the long slender greenery. A thought flashed across her mind; no struggle. . .relax. . .out, slow. . . She began gently pulling and picking at the grasping plants. They clung to her and wrapped stubbornly around her hands as she worked.

The want of air was becoming great within her now. The breath inside her was pushing, expanding against her insides bursting, bursting! The horrible pounding of her heart was like something out of a tale of terror. Deafening in her ears, it seemed to shake the whole underwater world pounding, hammering, ceaselessly demanding the pacifying aid. Gently. . .must work faster. . .panic, no! Here, at the bottom of the sea, each movement was greatly magnified and greatly retarded. Each blade that clung so

was a pressing urgency. Each blade, once removed was a goal in itself. She struggled mightily to achieve each small goal, that immediately gave way to a greater urgency.

The blades were finally loosening. She would be free in a minute, with air, fresh air to breathe. A field of bright gold suddenly appeared in her line of vision. From behind, the anemone had strayed toward her in its seeking of food. Closer, closer; a foot, now six-inches away, it came steadily. The awful pressing for air, her superintense need to be free, and the fear of those wavering tentacles, so full of the terrible poison, acted upon her simultaneously. With a violent jerk, she drew her limbs together. She must hold her breath no longer. That vicious bottom, those plants, the animal, were reaching for her, grasping her body. Her mind was flooded with what she dreaded most: PANIC. The out-rush of air was a sudden relief, but in her struggles, control of the desire to intake escaped her. A gasp; the salty brine was in her, in her, choking, choking it must be got out! She threw her head from side to side, but the alien water could never be expiated. A timeless force held her in an eternity of struggle. She twisted, turned, choked; she reached for some unseen source of help. Her arms waved wildly in the gamboling surf.

Time. Eternity. A sudden calm now spread across her features,

where once was ugly distortion. Where before had been urgent need, there was now a timeless, boundless peace. She felt a fading, or a conscious calm covering all, like the gentle warm water of the sea. A small "why" flitted through the recesses of her mind. The sea anemone had been drifting elsewhere in its never-ending search. Above, the sun had become merci-

lessly hot. Yet all was calm.

As the young girl's body gradually relaxed, the grasses loosened and gave up their fond possession. She became a plaything of the sun, the waves and the wind. Those who later found her slender body, trailing strands of sea grass, speculated as to her struggles. But they could never know; besides, they were disinterested.

THE DEATH

by

HOWARD KLIGERMAN

THE GRANDFATHER died one cool August night. It was sudden. There was no chance for him to gather round his many descendents, loved or not. He had always pictured his death as one of dignity; bestowing the ancient blessings upon his eldest son, and in turn the other sons and daughters, grandchildren, nephews, friends. Then with one great effort, leave a message of great importance, tell a joke, probably a morbid one, take a sip of whiskey, and turning towards the wall, expire with a sigh of relief. But it was a sudden death, not planned.

The next morning, a warm one with almost imperceptible breezes blowing, the young man sat in his grandfather's house. He stared at the old brown photographs on the east wall.

— My lineage in print. They'll place his picture there, between his father and father's father. No beard. Same nose, mouth. Different eyes, eyes always different. All pious, deluded.

The voice of his father broke his reverie.

"You're coming with us?"

"Yes, but only until he's buried. I'm not staying for any post-services."

"You must. You can't break your tradition now."

"I've broken it."

"How can you say that, If your grandfather were only alive to hear this. Get out of this house, you defile it."

He turned and walked away, leaving his angry, bewildered father.

— A challenge he didn't know how to answer. Never expected that from his third born. No way for him to answer. He just can't see. I don't need his crutch, I have life. And after that . . . no matter.

He walked out of the stucco-covered house into a burst of noon sun. The warm air flowed slowly and evenly around him. He smelled the salty freshness of the air and walked toward the beach. Once there he removed his shoes and socks. Forgetting that he was dressed for a funeral, he rolled his trousers to his knees and walked through the shore wash.

— Water is cool for August. Soothing for hot feet. Blue today. Tomorrow might make it grey and swell to bursting, overflow bulkheads and scatter foam. But today, blue, calm, sinister. In the quiet waters might swim a shark. Devouring the unsuspecting, the slow, the old, the grandfather.

A few old people sat on the beach under large umbrellas. Their wrinkled skin hung on old bones in large, loose folds. They sat silently.

— The old man sat here, or someplace like it, yesterday. One less. They don't miss him. All afraid, who is next? Which one will the shark devour. All, yes me, someday.

He walked farther on, only to remember that the funeral was at one o'clock. He turned off the beach at the next block. Brushing off his feet, he replaced his shoes and socks, rolled down his trousers, and walked to the funeral home. It was a new brick building with glass doors. He walked inside to a dimly lit chapel. There, at the far end, was the coffin. It was made of pine. He seemed to envision all dimensions of it as he gazed at the star-of-David on top.

The service was brief and to the point.

— No pedantry here. Put them in a box and be done with it. A good way. Just enough tears and mourning, just enough.

He was asked to be a pallbearer. After the service he, and five of his cousins, placed grey cloth gloves on their hands and carried the box to the hearse. A train of cars followed it to the cemetery. Once again the

six of them carried the coffin, this time they were to lay it on the lowering apparatus. The wooden grooves hurt his hand, but he felt closer to the dead weight than ever to the live man.

— His head is at my right hand. The lips are lifeless. They never kissed my face. I've only ever touched his hand. Distant man, good-bye. No prayer from me, but I am putting you into the earth, that is more than prayer.

The coffin was placed on the apparatus. The gravediggers lowered it into the ground. The grandmother cried, rocking back and forth to the beat of her old heart. One by one the six pallbearers threw their twelve grey cloth gloves into the open grave. One by one the family shovelled a spadeful of dirt into the grave. It made resounding noises as it hit the wooden lid. The young man cast the last spadeful, the one that covered the last remaining empty space of wood.

— I help to bury my grandfather. True task of sons, not prayer. Who is left now? Only her, old grandmother. No friends, all dead or dying. No life for her now, just waiting. Almost an age buried with him, rest are waiting, like me, yes, like all.

Elegies Within a Fallen House

Childlike fashioned from stillness,
with the suddenness of thaw long awaited
it sits and rests like a weather vane
with old slow ease whispering,
"Have you enough to get through."

My grandmother laid opened scissors
on the top stair to bar witches
during the night,
"it did not help."
The walls already owned too much.
Generations from mine,
summer heat layered in faded wall paper,
rested and only at night
I heard the chains owls.
The wind like a lean fox in winter,
more clever than shy,
would stalk in the attic chinks,
witches with ebony flanks
rehaning with ropes of dust.
So quiet they were, so precise.

I.

Rolling in snow
arms white wings becoming
standing taunt as stretched fence
that slowly sags with ice,
"and then crumple and fall,
be gathered very softly
so as not to break,
and prepare."

Coddled from the looms of trees
I splinter the bird
its wings turn to dust
blood falling like summer hail,
smelling of gun,
its choke lingers as a cat's scream,

illuminating with fear, consequences,
"Do it, Death drives you up
rejoice with it,
now you own."
In morning snow
I would see the tracks
and the owl's work the fox's work
tattered fur
blood spots like radishes
crows, black lace spinsters,
finishing the bones.

II.

As if I could not walk from the start
breaking through the crust of snow
legs pistons, arms anger.
I see nothing but what I fear
and there are so many
I walk in them
gathered like moss
and grow with dreams.
"Demand spring, demand it!"
It comes with wind and rain.
What was once a widow's
is now her daughter's,
fine hands feeding deer
shying from the dread of storm.

Bird talons in my back,
its wings on my eyes
I go back, within.
Moss at my feet,
gnawing wind,
"The trees are so gentle
they sleep as ruins do
they become . . .
the thing you fear you become forever."

— STEVEN ROTH

Gardens

I think of your sickness
as the crushed wilted flowers
I picked and put in my pocket
and forgot until you called.
It was seven years then
are more since,
the same blood
the same rhyme
when in quiet defiance
you walked with the garden,
hushing it
away into winter
and it listened
its anger silent blood
that froze in winter ice
and melted away becoming brown . . .
you endured it
till spring. Your head
moving much like the first flower
your belly swollen
and hard like
the winter bulbs
stored in the cellar
until now.

— STEVEN ROTH

Speak Soft

Speak soft,
My friend, speak soft.
The spirits who haunt this
place are not kind to those who speak
of good.

— JAMES KONEVITCH

The Wasps

When my sister screamed
from the wasp attack
we made mud,
and smearing
her swollen face with the paste —

She became uglier though
after the mud caked and dried
uglier and old
and the want to hide from her
what had beset her
to quell her cries and moaning
to whisper, “hope, hope,”
became laughter when she grew older
and looked in a mirror
again and again
and saw for herself.
My grandmother’s medicine
My mother’s comfort all faded
as talk fades in memories
recalled when loneliness becomes fear.

There was a time,
my sister was white as a saint
and soft with satin hands
a satin touch,
and now scarred
her face twitches of scar marks
willow tree bark
a cat’s scratching post
a face no longer hers,
and after time
she screamed less at nights
quitting her dreams of orchards in summer
silencing the insects herself
and did not weave
with her dream’s spinning
the ordeal she passed,
but possessed it.

Breaking her mirrors
touching the flowered walls of her room
with a mad affection
drawing bees for wall-paper flowers
"These do not see, these do not see,"
and at night she waited for the drone
to swarm and cluster around her head
and hang like age or rotting death

and when we put her away
she sang she sang.

— STEVEN ROTH

Revelatio Scholastici

My hands are not slender enough
to be a priest's.
Your's are long white with a manly
delicacy. They are
conscientious careful fingers
that will rightly raise
the wafer and entwine
a gold-plated chalice
after the climax of divine
alteration — truly a matter
of substantials disguised
in accidentals —
similar to the hands
but only in contrast.
For it is only accidental
that my hands are small
pudgy and graceless
And renunciation
goes much deeper.

— FRED BRUNGARD

Grandfather's Death

"It has already been accepted
what is there . . ."
Outside this window,
I press my face against a coldness,
distorting with myopic stain
the silence of acceptance,
the reason of what is there.

Behind glass
the sound of the radiator
spluttering rising with
sound
as my grandfather before he died,
on his back coughing

and someone downstairs
will start to beat
the water pipes with wrenches

as my grandfather
beat his chest with his hands

thrusting hot air into cold pipes
New life! not even time
for sounds of growth,
a vitality lost with my smoke
murals suspended from the ceiling.
And here, with the heat
the radiator's own surge
warmly comfortable
feeling as a bear might
at the mouth of his cave
hidden looking outwards
as my grandfather looked outwards

In the cold cellar, past
the racks and shelves
of sealed mason jars
full and shimmering

reflecting a dusty light
that an animal would have
in early morning
when opening his eyes.

Here he would sit

and from behind crates
pull his hidden bottle
and drinking slowly
would yawn
and begin to talk
the musty spider webs
in his mouth would melt
and slowly he would
hiss words tales legends
until my grandmother
would come to the door
and in the light seem
as a moon
her dress too large
and ask into the darkness
“What are you doing?
What are you doing?”

“Fixing . . .” he always growled, “Fixing . . .”

Coughing was as much

the old man's
as his afternoon nap.
When hushed from his room
she would open a window
and pull the soft curtains together.
I would hear his breathing
his heaving
as though a demon
heavy as rock
were on his chest
resting or tormenting.

It was no demon.

A disease in your lungs
as though an angry
wounded bird
mad with pain
thrashing its wings
its wings, knives
was in your chest.
(It was no owl,
owls wait)
But it,
whatever bird it was
a hawk perhaps,
tried to be free
to feel the grasp of air
(the accepted indifference,
the sly mockery)
you died with it
you died with it . . .

— STEVEN ROTH

Richness

It's dark outside
And the only sound is silence.
It's cold and snowy,
But I'm toasty warm by my fireplace —
Sipping tea and eating cakes.
The snow is burying me in a world
Of warmth and shelter —
A world of fancy foods and plush possessions
A tear falls into my tea.
More tears blur the cakes in my sight.
I have never found love.
And somewhere a pauper child dies
In his mother's tender arms.

— NANCY L. NEITZ

Aunt Ella

Tottering as a cow before calf
old Aunt Ella
fell down the stairs
and started it all . . .
Dropping her crutches
She ended what had just begun
and when I saw her in the stairwell
crumpled a piece of wrapping paper
her face pale and dusty as straw
Then I knew as before me others knew.

In spring the land opens,
The muddy splits in thaw spread,
soiling the remaining patches of snow
until it leaves
and the squirrels' nests
warm with the frost in the trees
scatters dead leaves
through the loom
weaving green
(and squirrels come again to life
pegs for feet they climb and stall
like the tenant farmer's truck)

the horses and mules
walk on feeble, unsure legs
dismayed muscles tight
with darkness and warmth
in the barn
(and I think of Egyptians
building pyramids
storing grains, hopes
when harvest filled the barn
when winter seals the animals in
like a craft of death)

The squirrels are barnwise too
eating the corn
their only fear the owl
the owl's the crows

Aunt Ella's us.

And across the sheen of seas of snow
I saw frigates harboring in the forest.
Their masts bare, tackle asunder.
And at night, the racoons
laughing,
these ships in my stream,
I would see the print and hole
of a strange man.
The wind would blow through their holds
I smelled spices and sweat of foreign seas
heard the death chants of black saints

and something grasped me
grasped me as my traps
hold the leg of an animal

Full of dreams, full of dreams!

Waiting for the change to order
but Aunt Ella died leaving me
with some hopes and her death
with the calmness I see now
the ships and their wreaths
on mast tops
the cannons
with salute
Aunt Ella drops
to the root
into the ground
a trying sound
of shale and dirt
splitting her bed
adding more hurt
Never do, never do
dirt and water
the wind in the tent
we all descend
and sail as she wanted to —
dropping her crutches

and soaring like a lean winter hawk
that wants all through the day
all
hungry, hungry.

— STEVEN ROTH

Timid

Thell slumped herself deeply
into one crevice
of a willow trunk,
Her long hair tangled down
over her hand held face
and hung and streaked
about the pointed leaves.

The sun had watched her coming.
It could not know for sure
her goings on.
Thell seemed
as in a heavy green balloon;
much as a poison puff
seems a crusted over stone.

She slid both hands onto the bark,
circled to the thin side of the tree,
untwined her way through its vines;
as if unlacing some delicate shoe.
Thell then wondered at the cloud wrapped sun.
She thought,
perhaps some curious ritual it performs,
hidden in these varied lengths of time.

Looking to the ground
she found the sidewalk, barren
and made her way home.

— ETHEL MAE STRUNK

Coming in Out of the Storm

by

ETHEL MAE STRUNK

I KNOW what rust can do to a door-knob, especially outside ones. The old man never cared much about it before, but now he wanted to do something to it.

"Paint it," he was saying. "No, no, I don't think so. I'd have to cover all these fingerprints. They mean more to me than... maybe my own name."

I tried to tell him that the rain had washed them away long ago.

"No, no, I don't think so."

That's what he says to most things I tell or ask him. I thought perhaps he might be becoming senile. I could see how this could be, but it doesn't work through logically (He figures that once a fingerprint is there, it's always there as long as one can remember its being put there). What was it; it was in the "Reader's Digest;" a philosopher's joke about a rock which the mind is convinced isn't there, and the guy kicks it then goes foolishly hopping home?

"Well, this doorknob needs something done about it," he was saying again. I shook my head almost ritually out of obedience.

"Maybe lacquer will work."

"No, no, I don't think so. If I put lacquer on it I could still see the rust."

"But you can sand the rust off," I said.

"No, no, I don't think so" is all he said. I had known he would say it. I was just testing. He had told me something like that once before when I had brought a rusty penknife to be painted because the old paint was peeling. He said, "No, no, it's ruined. If you scrape away the paint, you scrape away some of the wood, and then you've changed it. It's not the same penknife... so it won't be yours any more."

I told him if you wash your hands, you wash away some of the skin. So you aren't you any more? "No, no," he said. "See that's the difference atwix the living parts of the world and the dead parts. The dead parts are for us to use, but 'tis a sin to use a living thing."

It was making me sick, the old man and his rusty doorknob. "What does it mean to me anyway," I said.

"Well, when you decide what you want to do with it, call me and I'll help you out, O.K.?"

"Oh no, no, I don't think so. I must do it all myself or it won't be mine—like the sculpture. The stone and the artist's effort make the art work, and it is his. If you were to do anything to it, the effort would

show, and the knob would be part yours and part mine. When I die and take my effort with me, the knob will be unfixed for me. He who leaves unfinished work behind clutters up the world."

Well, I decided there are more feasible things in the world to think about; so I left the old man pondering over his rusted doorknob. I turned toward the street and made my way down to town to the laundrette coffee vending machine where everything is real and true. I couldn't help thinking about the old man. Maybe I should have run back and seen if he'd decided to do anything yet. But there was a bus stop up ahead. Bus stops should be rather uncomplicated places. I mean, all the people have their tickets, are ready to go, and know where they are going, and what's there. As I inspected a few random faces (it's impolite to stare), I saw a strange convergence of their eyes on anything that befell their view and fancy.

The coffee seemed an extremely urgent matter now. These people were beginning to shake me. I looked into the Radio Repair Shop window to see the curvature of my eyes. It was a foolish thing to do, I know. It was just one of those making-sure things, like banging the mail box lid to be sure your letter went down when you know perfectly well that there is no other way for it to go.

My throat felt parched from all this thinking. You'd think I had

elaborately scolded everyone seated in the Rampart Theatre, the way I felt inside. I used to think that I could actually feel the tube that goes from the throat to the stomach. It felt sore around the place where it attached to the stomach wall. It felt like the seal was drying up around the edge, like what cheap paper glue does to crepe paper pasted on cardboard.

"Dog! Hey! Dog! Git over here. Crazy little mutt, you shouldn't walk in front of cars." The near murderer-of-a-motorist rolled down his window.

"Better chain your mutt up if you want him to live very long."

Chee, he talked to me like it was my dog. Dumb stupid mutt. I couldn't care less about him. After I calmed down a little and the car went away, I began to wonder if the dog wanted to live long. I decided it was his own business and let go of his collar. It was a rather young dog, but it had a 1962 license on it. The collar must have belonged to some other long-since-rotten dog.

"Rotten dog," it sounded like a good slang word. I tried it out a couple of times on whatever happened to be coming closer to me as I was walking. I soon decided to put a stipulation on it: to be used only when referring to dying or disobedient dogs, and people that irk you. Somehow the blinking of a big truck with a wide-load sign on it reminded me of my vital thirst and the dehydration of my insides,

entrails, guts if you'll beg my pardon, madame. Somehow that thought struck me rather funny. My face began to snicker on its own. The cop at the cross-section seemed as if he were going to stamp a number that read "juvenile delinquent" on me. I didn't want to explain, so I shrugged my shoulders at him. Maybe he had a persecution complex. Maybe next time I come by I'll give him one of my super friendly smiles. I tried practicing this for a little while with full control over my face. It must look like it's clearly from the heart or he'll be thoroughly disenchanted. In a half guilty, half proud way, I whispered to my lips and the fire alarm station pole . . . "rotten dog."

The big knob in the middle of the State Bank clock that read twenty-one and a half minutes after two reminded me of the poor old guy. Not because it looked like his nose or anything like on a kindergarten clock, but because it looked like his doorknob. It was all rusty, and it was in the middle of things. It was saying, "no, no" to me. I had to kill another half-hour until the laundrette was decently empty enough for me to really sit down to think uncomplicated things . . . like the coffee machine. Like how much contentment it brings to people. And how faithful a friend it has in Herb, and Herb in it. There hasn't been a day since it was installed that Herb hasn't filled it

with all the coffee it could hold. They were like first lovers that have no need for doubt.

If only the old man were like that. If only he would let me help him with his doorknob. If a guy can't do something for a friend, what can he do? But he would have an answer for that too. "If you take care of yourself, you leave nothing for others to do for you. Then there is nothing to quarrel about and you are completely you and needn't worry about nothing being after death. You have yourself, constructed whole and real, to maintain through eternity."

Herb! Maybe they should bury him in his machine. It sounded like the best thought I had had all day. I looked at my sneakers; like heck, I thought, they're a pair of contented slaves.

I decided I didn't want any coffee anyway now. It made me sick how all the people take the coffee machine's coffee from it, just to content themselves and cause Herb to feel a compulsory duty to fill it up again—like some weary angel messenger, this man brought peace between man and his makings.

I looked up and saw an old lady coming out of the apartment next to mine. A doorknob is such a personal thing to tamper with. I felt almost content to say, "Good morning, madame," and close my door.

Among Old Men

I see odd, old skeletons
standing drooping
as if there were hooks in their necks.
The little flesh there clings is old
dry pale as snow
when one has decided
there is already too much snow
and no beauty.

I walk into this sallowness
a candle
a begger of light
"Give me more light"
waiting waiting
(nice fat doctors
sticking tests in me
they smile I should also
my stomach gives them
what they need)
tests, apron around my neck
my spittle;
morphine hands soothing pain,
the iron fans constant,
blur the room.
I dream of malaria
and a Maughm short-story.

I'm ready to die
they give me a bed for it,
for this.
My body flows in front of me
lean melting ice,
my ribs swell
try to meet like hands.
Two deer with horns
in mating season
their assault upon each other
antlers locking with the dread sound of defeat

finding no escape and falling to frozen knees
heaving.

A certain way of dying
caught with the thing hated most.
My ribs mate
grow bone a breast plate
"We will not let your sickness out,
We will protect you from talons."

With old men I wait
Old men and forbidden Pall Malls
hustled in by Negro orderlies,

and there is nothing before me now
except the tales I hear
from each side of me.
Old men talk they like to
they need to
talk becoming legends,
what the oracle has said,
some sense.

I've done nothing.
Once fertile as damp spring land
I cough as century old men cough,
with them,
take pills eyes to probe inside of me
breaking as pleasure through my veins
"carry me away, carry me away"
away from white lined beds
platters with holiday turkey before the oven
turnip eyes
potato mouths
yellow dried skin
waiting . . .

I do not belong here
but they tell me in letters I do
convince me . . .
mail seems as dry as the dinner bread,
I cannot write back
to tell you . . .

— STEVEN ROTH

The Conquest to Make Real

Ill-bolted direction signs
beat their shadows about my head
forcing the wind
to clank their metal on one steel pole

I am made to see.

Overcoats and papered confusion
these thoughts need fall to the sidewalk
concentrate on its rhythmic breakings.
An overhead advertising sign
floods my view with things to be said
but something close to my skin
says "no!"

There is not time.

I hurry on,
counting the bendings of my knee,
counting led away by other scuffing heels.
Quickly now my stride is ending.
The snow, street-stained, borders,
nearly brightens
the summer painted curb.

The park is close,
the squirrel that escaped the fall time kill
his nervous fright excites the dead branch.

He is no more here.

This tree is mine
where oaths made real a simple world.
The snow no longer worships
it comes a merciful keeper
of things too delicate for spring.

I sit on the wet circular bench,
a new fixture since last . . .

I touched the tree

and that was all it was.
I looked at my palm cupped knees
praying "Is it mine?"

I pulled a branch down close to me
pressed its leaves around my neck
so that it might hear my questionings
Again I asked, "Please be it so."

It strained a bit then pulled itself away

So with these hands,
red with sweat,
I went to the plastic paneled concession stand
and bought a toy gun for Tommy.

— ETHEL MAE STRUNK

The Tiger Lily

A dimpled tigress
of dew stung leaves
wimpered
as the stone moon
shone on her wilted neck.
Roots like those of sea top fish
cradles the drifting bits of earth
like frolicking toms
that play statuettes
beneath her repenting gaze.

— ETHEL MAE STRUNK

Haiku

Rose petals floating
Down, down in a pink cascade
To kiss her blushed cheek.

— LINDA HARTEN

A Song to Spring

These March winds
snatch black griefs
and scatter them
across Stygian pools
of no return.

Old bones
descend into
fresh earth:

A bestial black mouth
swallows seventy
scattered
sadnesses.

And finally . . .
closing,
conceals that
carnivorous, toothless
chasm
with the indifference
and simplicity
of a waking yawn.

Only here in this
old house
do muted memories
gape with
wide-open eyes.

A life-like
death-like
lithograph
hangs there
on flowered wallpaper.
eternally aging and ageless.

The threatening uncertainty
of gathering gray storm clouds
mirrors the horror
on his taunt dark face.

While she,
beribboned youth
of yesterae,
clutches pink parasol
as closely
as more
soundless
hopeless
pleas.

It is but for them
to wait here
in this
hovering hell.
"Never to come,
nor to go."
suspended in
the space between
sorrow and
non-sorrow.
next to this
hollower heart
of grandfather's clock,
ticking away its
timeless tears
to the tune
of the carnival
calliope.

— ANNE DELYCURE

The Greater Hunt

Listen to the thin souled children,
prophets under the corner signs,
sons and daughters of the pavement beat
and the sidewalk cracks
whose unbeating hearts and frothing minds
wail tacit facts from face to face
as they curse your walking by.
You who dream of your wealth
sing of your songs
and silence yourselves.

— ETHEL MAE STRUNK

*I think
I only dreamt*

I walked
beyond this green river
and white woods.

Jaded tears
shed by some
more sympathetic
green-gilled giant
shimmer
unseen
beneath a blanket
of misty memories.

These helpless
floating feet
can only hope
to remember
firmer ground.

And I,
recalling
wetter rain-skins
and
more piercing snow-fingers,
desire an escape
from this
mysterious
mist of mists
fog of fogs.

Always before,
moving towards tomorrow
running towards forever,
there was a glimmer
a glow
of show me the way.

Never before
so dense,
so dark
with the danger
of fear
of fright.

Elusive thoughts
with black-winged
gracefulness
dip and soar,
dip and soar.
while hands,
too large and
too clumsy
move in slow-motioned
sorrowfulness
of not being able
to grasp,
to catch
a single
fleeting swallow.

Taunting shadows
become
piquant playmates
laughing softly:
Come and fetch,
Come and fetch.

At last,
laughing also
in a giddy gloom
of
foot—following—foot

I run towards
death:
A sleep shared
with the shades of
shadows.

— ANNE DELYCURE

Irony

When darkness stalks to claim dusk, the faint
Distortions play on walls of daytime light,
Reflecting beams of stolen rays that paint
Grotesque pale shadowed forms on graying night.
The trees have lost their nature hue, and now
They loom in static style like phantoms raged,
Who conquer none yet still retain . . . somehow
Possess . . . captives from battles never waged.
The sky is green, and lucid stars assume
Hypnotic form; like silver eyes they cast
A secret spell and strain to see in gloom
If brighter ways of truth and image last.
As shadows dance, they tease the brain with fright;
We fear—but still the dark brings forth the light.

— LINDA VIARD

I Against the Goings On

The rigid tufts of broken leaves arouse
themselves to cut the coming lips of winds.
Unknowing snow is parted by these plows
here as the callous winter freeze begins.
Old grass compels the leaves in grim repute
to tell the world, the walls and me a truth.
I thrust my ears into the snow to mute
it all, earth first bore, loves these weeds uncouth;
yet there are those the leaves have won.
They carefully paste their lives into a book,
write captions large in circles round the sun,
say "God" and show themselves at death's first look.
I, less devout, avoid the lethal pace;
Othello's love on Desdemona's face.

— ETHEL MAE STRUNK

AN UP-TIGHT MAN

by

WANDA ZEAMEN

CHIN UP, Wilson. Straighten your tie. This is it, and it's going to be rough. If you're lucky you'll come back alive—if you're lucky. The voice inside his head kept repeating, "If you're lucky," as Wilson examined himself in the mirror.

His hair was dark and thick, well-barbered, cut boyishly so that he looked thirty-five instead of his real forty. His dark blue suit was conservative, and of course it was hand-tailored. The paisley tie which he had just adjusted was also dark blue, but paisley nevertheless, and a complement to his haircut. His face, fortunately free of major wrinkles, added the final touch to his appearance. As Miranda, his former secretary, once told him, "God, Wilson, your sins don't even show!" Wilson had one of those perpetually young faces that manage to look innocent even at forty. And Wilson had a special smile, rich and sensual, that, coupled with his face, made him attractive to all kinds of women.

Wilson flashed his smile now, but it was gone almost before it had appeared, replaced by a worried, almost fearful look that Wilson tried vainly to erase.

Stop stalling, Wilson. Tonight's it and the sooner you get started the

better. It's time to go. Now, Wilson, now.

Wilson shut out the voice, still frowning, by hurrying into his overcoat. He slammed the door on his now-empty apartment and caught the elevator.

Contending with downtown traffic didn't give him any more time to think. In twenty minutes he stepped out of another elevator. The curious sounds of voices and music intermingled, assaulted him. Wilson glanced at his watch.

Ah, Wilson, ten after. You made it. You've got a chance now. He straightened his already straight tie, fixed his special smile in place, although it kept trying to escape. He worked, almost reluctantly, toward the end of the hall.

"Emery, Emery Wilson. Come on in. How are you these days? So glad you came. Haven't seen you in ages. Mame said you haven't been to a party in years, just years. Here, let me take your coat. Now go on in. Marty's in charge of cock-tails. Makes them really dry." Doris as usual said it all in one breath, smiling absently and moving or rather, vibrating all the time. Wilson handed her his coat, said, "Glad to be here," and walked into the living room. He got only as far

as the gas-burning fireplace when Doris caught up with him.

"Emery Wilson, Emery dear, you've just got to meet Janet, I mean immediately. She's simply marvelous. You know everyone else, don't you?" She gestured around the room. Wilson followed her motion with his eyes.

Yes, they're all here, Wilson, your old "friends," Wilson. If you're lucky they'll never know how you betrayed their code, how you failed. At least none of them were at that other party, eh, Wilson? Not even sloppy old Marty. God, he makes lousy martinis. But then, a martini is a martini, eh Wilson?

As Doris pulled him through the crowded room, Wilson looked over all the faces. Jenkins, he could see, wasn't here yet, and that knowledge gave him some comfort.

Come on, Wilson, relax, you're among friends so-called—Well, friendly enemies, anyway. The voice added the last sarcastically.

"Emery, this is Janet," Doris announced as though Janet was a rare piece of furniture. "Janet, this is Emery, Emery Wilson. One of the really marvelous people, as you can see. He's been hiding out lately, haven't you, Emery? Probably been on some terribly secret job for Madison Avenue, right, Emery? Well, anyway here he is, Janet—now be nice to her, Emery, she's just a babe."

"Janet . . .?" Wilson questioned, ignoring Doris and her good-bye.

"Janet Cramer, Mr. Wilson."

"Call me Wilson. Everybody does. Everybody except Doris, that is," Wilson added, nodding toward the bar where Doris was helping Marty. Wilson laughed, but he knew he didn't sound funny. He turned back to Janet. She wasn't laughing. She wasn't beautiful, he decided. Her nose was too big and her slight smile, too small. But she was young, maybe twenty-three, maybe twenty-five, and the honesty of her smile, the directness of her gaze made Wilson feel somehow afraid of her.

Ah, she's special, Wilson. You can see that, can't you? And you need a special one right now, don't you Wilson? Maybe she can rescue you. You need help, don't you? She's young—and she sees things straight, Wilson. She's not all tied up, Wilson. She's not at all like you—is she, Wilson?

He brushed aside the voice with difficulty. It seemed always to be taunting him, pushing at him. The way it had before the breakdown.

He led Janet to a couch that faced a too small terrace where a rubber plant took up three-fourths of the space.

"Well then, Wilson, call me Janet. Everybody does, including Doris." Her smile was slight, but Wilson felt she was laughing very loud inside—at him. He tried to make his voice smooth and personal as he spoke, so that she would be impressed as women usually were.

That's right, Wilson, go get her.

But be careful. She isn't a fool like the rest. Don't want her to see through you, do you?

"What are you doing at one of Doris' parties anyway? She seems a bit—ah—out of your class."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Doris is all right. She's good at heart. She knew I didn't know anyone in the city—I just moved here from a very small Connecticut town—so she invited me here. I'm grateful." Even though she was putting him down, laughing verbally at his attempt.

"What Connecticut town?" he asked, trying to get past her barriers to her secret world, so that he would know about her before she discovered him.

That's right, Wilson, dig out her secrets, so she has no defense. But Wilson, guard your own secrets. What would happen if she knew you had been in a sanitarium—a funny farm, Wilson?

"Oh, you wouldn't even recognize the name," she answered in a closed-subject tone. So he decided to start over.

"Can I get you a drink—a martini?"

"All right, Wilson. But not too strong. I don't really like drinks very much." She smiled her slight smile again, and Wilson smiled back his special smile, personal, intimate. She turned away as though he had embarrassed her.

Come on, Wilson. Don't be so obvious. You're not in the bedroom yet. You never will be, at that rate,

and besides, Wilson, you've still got Jenkins to handle—and what if he doesn't give you the job. Then what, Wilson?

Wilson frowned at the voice inside as he headed toward the bar.

"Two martinis, Marty. Very dry," he added because he knew that was what he'd get anyway.

"Right, Wilson old pal," Marty boomed. Marty was, as always, drunk before the party and continuing to get even more drunk as it progressed. Marty never could hold his liquor.

"Say, where you been, anyway? I haven't seen ya around. Been sick or somethin'?"

Ignore him, Wilson. He's drunk. He's always drunk, always harmless. He doesn't know anything, so don't give anything away.

Wilson took the martinis and left.

"Why, thank you all, Wilson, honey. Where you been keepin' yo'self?" Charmaine took one of the martinis from Wilson before he could protest. He felt fear beginning inside.

Calm down, Wilson, so she was at that party. Chances are she's forgotten. Just don't give her any reason. . .

But Wilson wouldn't listen to the voice. He hated it. He lashed out as the memory of the last party confronted him in Charmaine.

"Why, Charmaine. I thought you'd gone back to Georgia." He drawled the last word sarcastically. "With that rug manufacturer. What was his name? Oh yes, Ben-

ly, Benjy." His voice was soft, but she smiled contemptuously.

Why do that, Wilson? You've really had it, now. The voice inside was sarcastic, but Wilson knew it was right.

"Oh Benjy. . . he's gone off somewhere," Charmaine said very casually, with a steely look in her eyes. "But never you mind him, Wilson. What about y'all. I haven't seen you since the Brown's party three months ago. My, my you surely were drunk that night, and you sure did tell your little old boss off, didn't you? What happened? Did he fire poor little you?" Charmaine's voice, for all her sugery drawl, was harsh and unkind. She was out to get him.

Wilson almost shivered. Calm Wilson. She doesn't know about your losing your job, or the breakdown, or anything. Just get rid of her before she finds out.

Wilson splashed about in his mind, searching desperately for something to say. But all he could hear was the voice whispering "Get rid of her. Get rid of her."

"Is that my drink, Wilson?" Janet took the other drink from him. Somehow she had materialized at his elbow just as Charmaine was about to start in again. Charmaine, one never to stay too close to other women, wandered off with a triumphant smile on her face.

Janet took Wilson's arm. "Let's go grab that couch before someone else does." Her voice frightened Wilson. It was sympathetic and. . .

Motherly, Wilson, motherly. She knows a lot even if you haven't told her anything. Maybe she overheard Charmaine. Maybe, Wilson, she saw something in your face. Careful, Wilson. You're slipping. Remember Jenkins.

Wilson looked for Jenkins as he and Janet moved through the crowded room. As far as he could see, Jenkins still hadn't arrived. He felt desperation growing inside.

"Here we are. Sit down, Wilson." She sat down beside him. "Here, I think you must need this more than I do," she said carefully, handing him the drink.

"Thanks," he said, not looking at her as he took the drink. She almost too carelessly turned her head away as he lifted the drink to his lips. He downed it in two swallows. It was strong and bitter, but it eased his breathing and made him feel almost normal again.

Careful, Wilson. Remember the last time. If it hadn't been for that booze, you might never have ended up like this. So watch it, Wilson. Remember what you have to do.

Janet turned back to him. "Thanks again," he said and set the glass on the coffee table. "And thanks for rescuing me from that . . . that . . ."

"No thanks necessary," she interrupted. "Let's just say I didn't like her taking my drink." She said it as though the incident had been trivial and was to be forgotten.

But Wilson felt a sudden urge to tell her all about it, about the party

and his job and the sanitarium and even the voice inside.

No, Wilson, no. You have no business shoving it off on her. She doesn't deserve it, Wilson. Besides, telling her won't really solve anything, will it?

Wilson was about to ignore the hated voice when Doris intervened.

"Sorry to disturb you two," she said, breathless and flustered as always, "but I thought you'd like to know, Emery Jenkins is here. I remember you asked if he was coming. Do you want me to bring him over or . . ."

"No, no," Wilson interrupted anxiously, "I'll see him when I get a chance. Thanks, Doris." As Doris hurried off, Wilson turned to Janet. "If you'll excuse me. . . I'll be back in a minute." He rose, not waiting for Janet's reply.

"Sure . . . and Wilson," she called as he started off, "good luck."

"Thanks," he mumbled. The tone of her voice startled him. It was full of pity. He saw Jenkins standing by the bar so he walked over. "How about another drink, Marty," he asked.

"Sure, Wilson, sure, old pal. I'll make my special for you." He leaned over the bar and leered at Wilson. "How ya doin' with the little lady?" He jerked his thumb toward Janet sitting on the couch, her back to them. "Makin' any headway? She sure looks good." He slapped Wilson on the back and winked familiarly at him. Wilson

felt like smashing in his fat, red face.

Ah, ah, Wilson, you've got no time for that. Besides he's not worth it. Concentrate on Jenkins. If you don't get that job, you're finished. All the others know about you. They all refused. You know that don't you, Wilson?

"Yes, I know that," Wilson muttered to the voice and almost aloud.

"Thanks, Marty," he said instead, and took the drink. He drank it fast, his back turned to Jenkins. It relaxed him a good deal.

Don't forget it's only liquor, Wilson, not courage. And remember your ulcer. The sarcastic voice inside him kept hammering.

Now go big for that job. But subtly.

"Hello, Mr. Jenkins. I'm Emery Wilson. I believe we met at the Jordan's last year."

"Oh yes, Mr. Wilson. How are you? Still in the advertising business?"

"Well, Mr. Jenkins, that's what I wanted to talk to you about. I—"

"Excuse me. I want to get another one of Marty's cocktails. Damn good. Marty, another of the same."

"Sure, Jenkins, sure. Wilson tryin' to nail you for a job?" Marty asked loudly with a sloppy guffaw.

Goddamn him, thought Wilson. He watched to see Jenkins's reaction, but Jenkins only smiled indulgently at Marty, took his drink, and returned to Wilson.

"I'm afraid Marty's a little

drunk, but he still makes good drinks, damn good." Wilson nodded and glanced at Marty, now talking to Charmaine. Wonder who's seducing who, he thought idly, watching the two until Jenkins spoke.

"You were saying, Wilson?"

"Well, I remember that last time I saw you, you told me to look you up if I ever decided to change companies."

"Yes, and you said you doubted that would ever happen."

"Yes, well the situation's changed somewhat. Not much chance for advancement, if you know what I mean."

You're doing ok, Wilson. Just go slow. Beg carefully, Wilson, carefully.

"Oh has it?"

"Yes, not that I couldn't stay where I am and make a good living. I mean my position's secure and all that but—"

"Hey, Wilson," Marty shouted from the bar, "Charmin' here just told me the bad news. So ya lost your job. Too bad, old boy. See, Jenkins, told ya he was puttin' the touch on ya." And Marty broke off into a loud laugh. In the middle of the third "haw-haw," Wilson hit him. Marty became unconscious and Wilson let him drop behind the bar. He heard himself shouting, "You bastard, you drunken bastard." He managed to shut his voice off and turned in disgust from the bar, almost colliding with Charmaine, who moved just in

time, a startled expression on her face.

Wilson tried to quiet his jumping nerves. Bright red lights seemed to be exploding inside his head and there was a roaring sound in his ears. He was suddenly aware that everyone was standing completely still like absurd mis-shapen statues and that the only sound was the hi-fi playing some silly tune. Then one of the statues moved. It was Janet. She walked up and took Wilson's arm. "Come on, Wilson, let's get out of here," she murmured quietly. To Wilson her voice seemed to be coming through a thick fog, so that he hardly heard her. She repeated urgently, "Come on," and pulled on his arm. But Wilson could not move. He had a sudden urgent desire to revive Marty and apologize to him, to explain that he hadn't meant to hit him, that it was a mistake, that he really liked Marty.

Janet, by sheer force, finally got Wilson moving toward the door. The statues all stepped back a few paces, as if Wilson were contaminated. He and Janet passed them in silence, the silly music making it all seem like some grotesque dance.

Wilson was unaware of it all. A menacing, mocking laughter was welling up inside him, building momentum; and Wilson, with his last bit of sanity, tried to keep it inside. It was a losing fight. As Janet pulled him out the door he began to laugh. It was a terrible sound even to him and he listened to it in

horror; as though it came from outside himself. Janet said nothing. She simply pulled him along, and he stumbled beside her, his mind transfixed by his own wild laughter.

It grew louder and louder until, at last, Wilson became one with the laughter. And the laughter of the voice inside became his reality.

Stolen

Again . . .

It is time.

The prey must be chosen,
But not at random.

(This is not a raffle where a hand
dips into a bin and lifts high the winning ticket.)

The choice is definite,
Exactng!

Conditions must be faultless.

Harmony . . .
the prevailing mood.

The victim presents himself.

HE
is beyond all praise.

All is ready;
The thief begins his task.
He creeps to his mark . . .

Slowly
Quietly.
His attack is swift!

But . . .

The victim is unaware,
(As unaware as a daisy waiting for a questioning lover.)
It is a facile labor.
It is always easier when the victim
is unwarned

What enjoyment!

The thief has done his work . . .
Relieving the victim of his vital possession.

Now . . .
to surrender the prize to the
originator of the deed.

SHE
is grateful.

She accepts the offering lovingly.

The pride of accomplishment again belongs
to EROS.

— SHARON STEIGAUF

La Luna de Muerte

Es de noche
y la luna se ve.—
Ya viene la muerte
hacia ellos, sin fe.
Viene silenciosa
sobre la llanura
pero nadie la ve.
No se dan cuenta
porque no quieren.—
Estan listos aquéllos
que van a morir.
Se les irá la vida,
se quedaran sin alma
!Ah ya están muertos!
Es de noche
y la luna se ve.
Ya viene la muerte
hacia ellos, sin fe.

The Moon of Death

It is night
And the moon is seen.
Now comes death
Toward those without faith.
It comes silently
Upon the plains
But no one sees it.
They do not realize
Because they do not want to.
They are ready, those
Who are going to die.
Life will go from them,
They will remain without soul.
Ah now they are dead!
It is night
And the moon is seen.
Now comes death
Toward those without faith.

— ROBERT SHAFFER

bird

Bird
on a December
day clinging
to the naked
after-fall
before-down
tree
waving
pendulum
in time to
the wind,
ridden by
the North-Staying
feathered
surveying
the ground
for a climb.

— CAROL GUDSON

Cinquain

Zeitgeist:
Men drifting far
Away from port. . . alone. .
To sail in sloops made from unsound
Free thought.

— LINDA VIARD

one

one hearty hurrah
for the madman hanging
in his wardrobe
and his son, bullet-dead
in a gutter
thinking last of
the stillborn
who holds his
mother's hand

and the youth troubled
who traveled too far

to an how unfortunate
taken from us place
of those good
enough not to make
it.

— CAROL GUDSON

Haiku

Black, White, Gray between —
But only Gray is perceived . . .
except by the young.

— FRANK E. HAFFLEY

A Celebration

An ice cream world
Appears with my morning coffee.
I want to consume it
In one brilliant swallow.
And you,
So stoic in your quarter-century wisdom,
Become a child in this strange renewal.
We climb mountains
Plant our flag
Violate this virgin plain of snow.
You make an angel without halo
Lying with your eyes looking up.
From the icy dust
As co-deities
We create man and give him life
With your gloves and my damp scarf.
But his second-self remains
Within his crusted breast
As the sun passes to red.

This white world offers itself to us today
In dripping sacrifice
Of snow and ice.

— JANET M. SHUEY

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