

FICTION

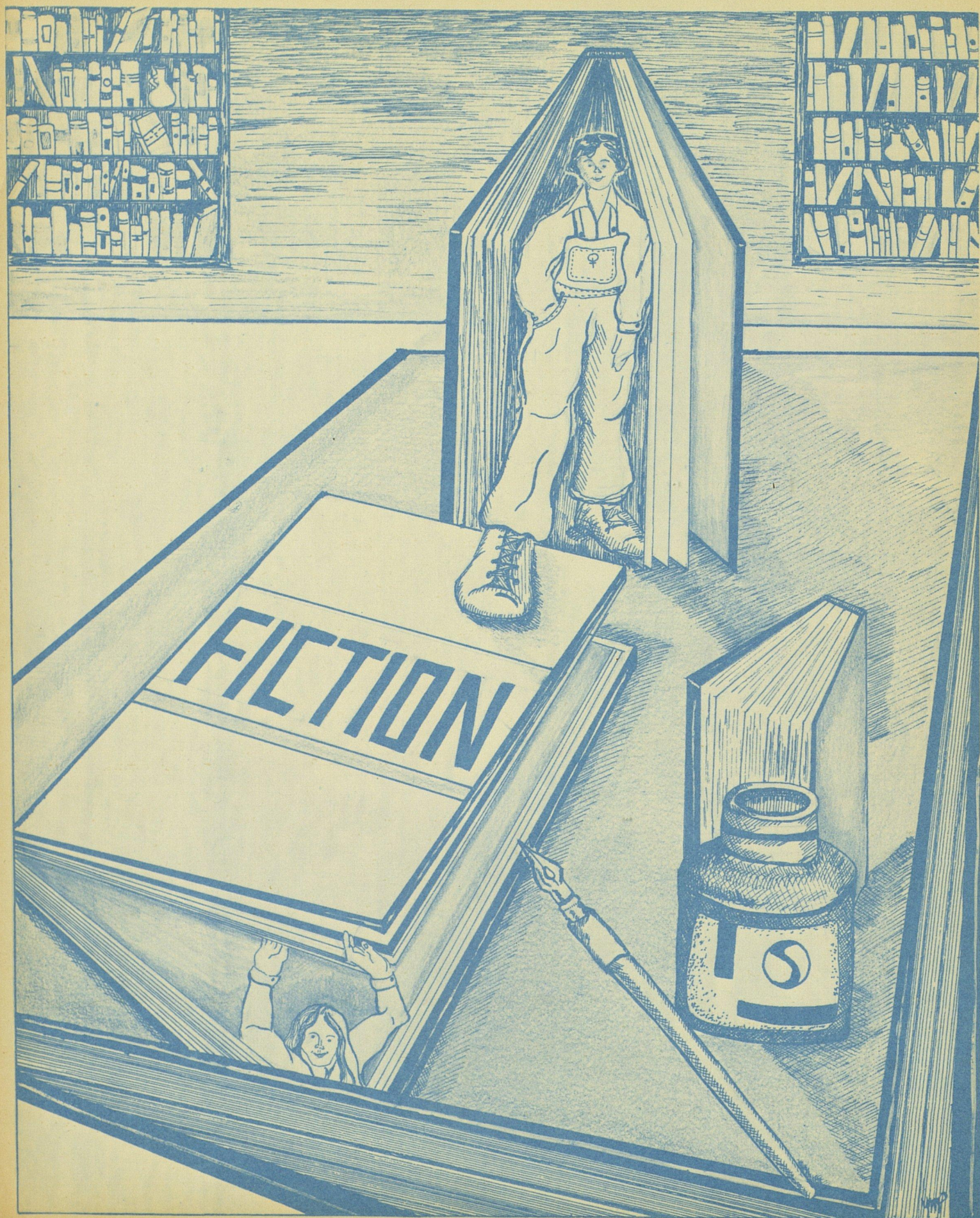
Issue 25

COUNTY  
WOMEN

ATLANTA LESBIAN FEMINIST ALLIANCE  
P. O. BOX 5502  
ATLANTA, GA 30307

\$1.25







## COUNTRY WOMEN FICTION

- 2 Story... Sharon Doubiago
- 3 My Life With Horses... Laura Chester
- 8 Passing... Grace Wade
- 14 Prose Poem... Denise Taylor
- 17 Let Mama Kiss The Dragon Burns.... Allie Light
- 22 Memoirs Of An Indoor Woman... Lynn Sukenick
- 26 Two Of A Kind... Liselotte Erlanger
- 30 Ramon / Ramona... Sharon Doubiago
- 37 Late Afternoon Sunlight... Carol Berge
- 38 Of Similar Thread... Wendy Stevens
- 44 Waiting... Marianne Tavelli
- 49 Patch / Work... Lorretta Manill
- 52 Anna... Stephanie Mines
- 54 Dear Heart... Jana Harris
- 58 Flowerpot Mountain... Ms. Slater
- 60 Biographies
- 61 Notes on Practical Section
- 62 Announcements
- 63 Questionnaire
- 64 Contact

ATLANTA LESBIAN FEMINIST ALLIANCE  
P. O. BOX 5502  
ATLANTA, GA. 30307

Collective for this issue: Harriet Bye, Sharon Doubiago, Carmen Goodyear, Helen Jacobs, Lorretta Manill, Jenny Thiermann.

Help from: Camille Pronger, Christina Pascos, Marnie Purple, Silver, D. Main, Diane MacDonald, Ellen Chanterelle, Arlene Reiss, Tammy Tyler.

Staff: Arlene Reiss, Carmen Goodyear, Harriet Bye, Helen Jacobs, Nancy Curtis, Terry Gross.

Special thanks to Sharon Doubiago and Loretta Manill who worked for two years collecting these stories.

### ATTENTION GRAPHIC ARTISTS

Are you bored with our cover? We are. By having a different cover graphic for each issue we hope to not only present a more stimulating cover but to give more women artists a place to show their work. Please send us any special material you think might be suitable as cover art. Check future issues for themes. The *Country Women* logo will be straight across the top of the magazine, and available layout space is about 8 1/2" x 9".

Subscriptions are for one year (five issues) and start with the current issue.

Basic Subscription \$6.00  
Supporting Subscription \$10.00  
Sustaining Subscription \$15.00

Library and Institutional subscriptions are \$12.00 a year.

Foreign countries, please send U.S. dollars only. Bulk rates available on request.

Copyright July, 1977 by Country Women:

Second Class Postage paid at Albion, Ca 95410

Printed by Waller Press  
2136 Palou Avenue  
San Francisco, California

Published by:

*Country Women*  
Box 51  
Albion, Calif. 95410



# STORY

By Sharon Doubiago

"A POEM IS A STORY IN WHICH THE IMAGES ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE NARRATIVE." (Diane Wakoski)

*Story overheard, 3 old men talking on steps of the Albion Post Office "Oscar, he had to have a pace-maker put in his heart so he had to sell his place."*

Story, I'm coming to understand is a rural art. In the city there are too many stories and the story-lines become tangled, creating both chaos and blessed anonymity and something entirely other than Story as art. In the country against the larger and clearer drop of nature and with so many people eliminated from your vision you become aware of and begin to deal with Story. The people you do see you see much of, even those you don't know; you come to know them and their Story. They are living incarnations of their Stories, they are walking around inside them as real as the houses they live in which are their Stories too and soon you find yourself a part of many people's Stories and their Stories a part of yours, with all the past visible right in the living present like Gertrude Stein's "prolonged and continuous present," or Rilke's "continuous conversions of our destinies (our Stories) to the present and invisible." Wherever you go you are running into Story lines, just moving down the street you see her moving from the market to his apartment above the cafe and you are an unavoidable witness to something very private and you know you must learn responsibility to your neighbor's Story. But even so the Stories are passed around, all up and down the town and coast, becoming the Story too. And the lost sense you sometimes get in knowing Stories you'll never be a part of. In the country the only way to get out of your Story is to move to the city.

As a writer story has always least interested me. It's always been the voice, or the vision, or the psychological, or the philosophical, or the moral (of the story is...) or the process of the written piece that has interested me. But now that I've moved to the country, the phenomenon of Story has caught me, the Story line winding around me, and I see it as the oldest of all arts. Our dreams tell us that Story is older than language, the way they happen in pictures, Stories, not words, the way they mysteriously convert and sink the most obvious words and truths deep into a Story. Dogs, and other animals, as Mary Austin knew and wrote of, experience Stories, revealing that Story as communication between creatures is older than man.

The way television uses Story, those half-hour stories of bare essential plot that have amazing power sometimes, so beyond the mundane story and your intent, to suck you in, the suspense of the Story line, what is going to happen? and the heartstrings felt nightly over the whole land, the people caught by story after story after story.

But I'm a poet looking at Story. I'm not yet interested in writing stories, in plodding out plot. It's the phenomenon of Story, its lines and patterns, like Don Juan's Lines of Earth, and how those lines catch you, pull you in and for which you create your life as they are creating it for you.

But I'm a poet and not a Storyteller and all through my poetry are little Stories, the barest outline of Stories, and for me they are like luminous crystals, spiritual adjectives or metaphors. The story as chemical heartstrings, headlines. Images. The pure light of the people's Stories is blinding to me, the way they are evidence that the body hears the world. As Robin Blaser says, "the purest story telling is to try to catch the light, and the loss of it is personal," and that's the point of the Stories (the Message of my Story) in my poetry.

the Story to be experienced as a whole

## THE WHOLE STORY AS A SINGLE LIVING IMAGE

the Story from beginning to the present, summed up in the Body and how it's continuing, and how it's personal, original, a creation of art with each person and never invented, what Loretta Manill's mother meant when she said, on being informed she was dying, "so that's the Story," the heart of the Story, the heartlines, the headlines walking around, as people do here with their whole Stories as visible (or in Rilke's sense invisible) as the color of their hair or the shapes and scars of their bodies which are after all their Stories. ♀





Judith Furaha

# my LIFE WITH HORSES

By Laura Chester

"Far back, far back in our dark soul the horse prances." What is it lurking in our ancestral genes that binds women to horses? Horses always horses! The swift movement, the power channeled through our reins, a violent all-encompassing love early on, that loses its grip on us, like baseball for the boys, where we reach new heights, are home, home running, the bat, the leather between the legs, so willing to let our ancient myths ride themselves out, acting the histories, sliding into the future where the box is packed.

I was lying in my crib. It was early evening, just enough light coming in through the shade to make shadows, and there on the wall, I saw the exaggerated shadow of my red rocking horse. It was not a red shadow. It was very big, almost threatening, not my friendly wooden horse at all. I realized at this moment, my first conscious moment, that I would always remember this visual picture. It would remain a distinct memory for me. I have 4 of these hyper-conscious memories, moments when I said to myself, imprint this on your visual plate, you will never forget this and it will go into your collection. This is the first in a series of 4. Each time I took a picture of a new moment, I'd remember the others that preceeded it; the lilacs fermenting the sky behind the sky the mountains sitting like a saddle the black and white collie walking down the drive looking up through the trees green swimming and that shadow rocking on my bedroom wall, the first and the last thing I remember.

Bunko was my first real passion as a horse. had become more than an indiscriminate lover. guess we had similar natures. The top of his forelock and the top of my head were the same

height, and he was unpredictable and mischievous. He'd canter along, then put down his head and stop. Dead still. I'd somersault over his neck, land bewildered on my back. But he didn't run. When he nudged me, I understood that he wasn't being mean, just bad mannered and that I could forgive, the goop, his game. I got to where I could almost land on my feet when it happened, or pull him back when I felt it coming. We were so well suited to each other that when I cut off a piece of his white blonde mane and tucked it into my own hair with a bobby pin, no one could pick out the piece that wasn't me but him.

It seemed like I was never around when one of the horses died. It was that way with Bunko. They told me long after it was over that he foundered, a sickness the horse gets from eating too many oats. He had to be put to sleep, but the first needle didn't even work. Old serum I guess said the doc.

The oats in a tin pail always got to the horses. They'd hear the soft rattle of grain from across the field. Or maybe they'd just pick up the dusty sweet smell. I tried eating an oat or two, but thought grass much juicier and more to my liking. But if given a choice, they preferred their oats. One pailful could perk up a bunch of nags, make them shudder with delight. They'd ripple all over with the taste of it, stomping hooves for more More. The big bin of oats was delicious to the sense of touch. When the lid was lifted and the arm stuck down deep, the oat dust billowed. The texture of those grainy mounds was gold to certain lips. How nice it would be, to be buried in oats like warm sand, up to the chin. It hurt me to hear the news, but I didn't blame Bunko for over-doing it.

cont.



Never get behind a horse, that's what I say, though I've seen others put a hand on a rump and walk behind. When a blacksmith shoes a horse, he acts as if he's known the horse personally for years, and the horse responds in an easy manner, accepting the file on the old dead part of the hoof, which scraped out, looks as clean as coconut meat. I think most horses appreciate the manicure, but the friction of file on cartilage, even on my own fingernails, makes me think of burnt horse-flesh, the story about the horses trapped in a burning barn, their screams, that smell I can't forget.

We pulled strands from the manes and braided the black and white and brown hairs together for bracelets, tied them on and singed the hair with matches, until it frizzled and sealed, but the smell of burning hair always smelled like disaster.

After watching the blacksmith shoe all 4 horses, he gave me an old shoe to hang above my bed, but warned me to hang it with the open ends up, so that all the good luck wouldn't drain out. But I was born on Friday the 13th, so whatever is good luck for someone else, has to be turned upside down to work for me. My luck was pulled up from the bottom like a magnet and couldn't escape.

When a blacksmith nails on shoes and the horse doesn't even flinch, I think of the way we put tacks in the soles of our loafers, and the boys who wore taps on their shoes and scraped along the sidewalk, musky with resentment, powerful arms under cut-off t-shirts. A horse or a guy is 10 times more dangerous that way. As if to say Don't mess with me. I'm part steel.

In 6th grade we each made a scrapbook as a class project and my subject was THE HISTORY OF HORSES with information on just about everything. I mean I could fantasize away an afternoon over a page of cowboy boots. My friend Robin Grossman did hers on RUSSIA. She even wrote Krushchev a letter, but other than that, she was a bit bored by her subject. I never tired of mine:

The horse has always been able to fit itself into the place where it lives.

It can eat a great many kinds of plants, with a stomach that holds about 18 quarts.

The horse is among the short list of intelligent animals.

The horse chews its food thoroughly and slowly. Horses are clean drinkers, sipping water through their teeth.

If the horse is allowed to sniff at an object and examine it, its fear quickly disappears.

The horse has 40 teeth and the female usually has 36.

It responds readily to kindness.

It can remember an injury for a long time.

Most anything is fun on a horse.

Yes, horses are used in many ways.

The pinto is a white pony with black patches, or

a black pony with white patches.

Yes the pinto is a recognized horse.

The Lipizzan is a powerfully built animal, yet he is the ballet dancer of the horse kingdom.

Appaloosa is a funny colored horse as you can see. It is painted by nature with curious splatterings of spots.

20 centuries ago the Appaloosa was known in China as the sacred horse, and in Persia as the heavenly horse. The Appaloosa is slowly but surely being brought back from the unknown.

Today Morgan horses are used by mounted policemen and wherever else a plucky, honest horse is wanted.

The horse of the show was named Happy; he was the best all round horse.

Even the rain does not stop the riders.

As he slept he saw a vision of Minerva with a golden bridle in her hand.

Altogether the horse enjoys his work and looks just as lovely as he acts.

For this and more I got an A, but Mrs. Harris didn't like RUSSIA, and she gave Robin Grossman a C--. Robin cried Well Krushchev never wrote back to me!

One August night Helen and I snuck out from our sleeping porch beds to meet by the fence for a moonlight ride, bareback. She'd left 2 sets of reins on the gate post, and the horses, curious about our shapes in the dark were easy to catch. We loped through the fields, unable to see where the horses were placing their feet, our pajama pants blowing, loose cool cotton, so little between, the hard backbone, with moonlight tipped on the horses' tails and our blonde hair. We were ghost riders, flashing through primeval forests, with some secret message, with omens stamped in each hoofprint, weightless on our invisible saddles, mysteriously right to be riding

forbidden, and the horses too were casting their spells. We slipped off of them with the motion of mercury, unbridled them with one gesture of the hand, and they ran off through the fields in crazy circles, wild to be awake in the middle of the night.

Next morning, we found out that the horses had escaped, the gate still locked, no fences down. They must have jumped said Mr. Downs, amazed, for those 5 foot fences always held them in before. Jennifer-Joan J-J Rupert saw them this morning, trotting freely down the road and called me, said they were sopping wet with corn silk



hanging in their mouths; strangest thing I ever heard said Mr. Lyle Downs. Helen and I were quiet about it. We didn't say a thing, not even to each other, until 10 years later when I wrote her. You know it was after that night we went riding bareback in the moonlight, remember? The next morning I got my period for the first time. I thought at first that it must have been the backbone that did it. She wrote back. How odd. It was on that same night we went riding that I first felt my breasts bounce and hurt.

---

There's something awfully mean about spurs. They're very sexy and all, when you aren't riding, just walking the streets downtown. But spurs, just think about it. This is where a woman gets off and sides with the Indians. Indians never would have invented barbed wire.

---

There's something romantic about riding all by yourself, with slicker strapped onto saddle, with sandwiches wrapped up inside, cigarettes stashed in breast pocket, with 33 miles to go. My grandmother used to tell me how she'd ride from town all the way out to the country on dirt roads. I decided to try it too, to ride Eagle in town for the winter. It turned out to be a very long day in the history, the day of the annual motorcycle festival. I don't know where they were holding the damn thing but every motorcycle in the state seemed to pass by me. The black jacket riders revved up their engines, hooted and waved, but Eagle, used to the mountain mildness, was terrified by the screech of the cycles. I guess I was riding home in the wrong century. Now motorcycles carry the outlaw. They pat their bikes, tie them up at the hitching post, polish their chrome like saddle leather. I couldn't ride over a hill, without a posse of strangers burning the miles behind me, passing me up, riding to rupture the settled range for the sake of a dangerous century.

---

I used to feel so relaxed, almost meditative, sitting on this glassed-in porch with Gramma, watching the sun as it descended into the lake, how the water responded to the time of day, perfectly calm by the dinner hour.

But now the water tension burned, hard and glossy, sheer, a temptation to disturb, and what used to be a casual family supper, was now a strained affair. We were all aware of being entertained, of being served, as Aunt Carol carried in a round glass tray, full and clinking, before her foot caught on the edge of the grass-weave rug.

"Don't spill it for Chrissake."

"I didn't darling."

My aunt and uncle were having this small summer evening supper in honor of my brother George's new mother-in-law, Mrs. Bradley, who was here to see how her daughter was doing. Those first few months of marriage could be so difficult.

"Where should I sit?"

"Where would you like to sit."

"Where would you like me to sit."

Linda, placed across the table from George, was dressed in a coral colored shift, elegant, as was her mother, a New York fashion designer. Our plates floated on the glass-topped table, chilled food, a good idea for a summer meal.

"Ok," Uncle Don said, taking his napkin with a sudden flourish. "Who saw the 5 o'clock news?"

They all had, apparently, and nodded and smiled as an apology.

"The damn publicity manager insisted I take off my glasses. And then when I got up there, I realized I couldn't read my notes!"

"But I'm sure it will get easier Dear. After the election."

"Does this agency coach you on the issues too?" George asked.

"Well they do have hints on just about everything." He lifted the bottom of his new wide tie. Iceberg green and violet striped.

Mrs. Bradley smiled in assent, "Mmm," aware of the fad, or perhaps the taste of the aspic.

"But Uncle Don," I asked, "when do they let you start giving your own opinions. On the main issues I mean, like abortion."

"Well ---"

"I just can't understand it," Mrs. Bradley was quick to say, "the sensationalism of women's lib. I can go so far, the wages and all, but I just cannot see girls wanting to grow hair on their legs, I mean really!"

George laughed vigorously from the waist up. His mother-in-law approved of him wholeheartedly. "Have you seen Leslie running around like a hairy ape? Going to be domineering wives, just watch." He smiled at Linda who wasn't smiling.

Looking down through the glass-topped table, they could see that I was wearing pants, but they couldn't see through them. And if I took it one step further, my underarms. Please, not during dinner. Pits, he used to call them. I separated the chunks of my potato salad, noting that hers and her daughter's were cleanly shaved and powdered.

"Personally, I can't see why grown-up girls have to go and make themselves ugly, just for attention. There are plenty of other ways a girl can get attention. Now take your grandmother for instance," she said to me. "Look at all she's done, and yet everyone thinks of her as a real lady."

I regarded her fork as it dipped through the gelid circle of tomato aspic. "But my grandmother is dead."

cont.



The room, the glassed-in porch, shivered with the mention of it, less than two months ago. Sound of cutlery on plates magnified momentarily.

"Didn't she ever do anything Un-ladylike?" I asked my aunt, attempting to break the stillness I'd left crystallized in air.

"Well, there was that march. Papa never did approve of the voting business, but she did go."

"Out on the streets with all of Milwaukee looking on!" Uncle Don laughed.

"I do think that quite a few friends of the family were shocked."

"Utaly Shawked." George wiped his mouth.

"I can just see the ole biddies."

"Still, that doesn't seem unladylike," Mrs. Bradley assured us. "I would guess that they went in dresses. Not like all of this today, going without bras and all."

Linda..... 32 B

Mrs. Bradley.... 34 B

Aunt Carol..... 36 C

Laura..... Snap like a turtle? What? Not there now?

Never. A carpenter's dream. She's a pirate's dream. A sunken chest, HA HA. Jokes hefted like clever cleavers through the spine that supported the back that harnessed the horses, buckled on the double-A underwear.

Hang that thing in the basement will you. My friends are coming over.

But why is this story in with the stories on horses. It's simple. We were having a family dinner. An early summer supper. Though it was getting later, granted, the sun almost down, that horny ball of heat, unsatisfied but subsiding. Before dinner I took a quick ride, didn't have time for a dip in the lake, or to even change clothes. I went on the impulse, just wanting to go, that time of night, lovely in August.

Mrs. Bradley looked down through the glass-topped table and noticed the dark ovals on the insides of my calves and thighs, pale grey cords. "You still ride?"

"Only when her husband is on vacation," George answered. Linda giggled, but then stopped herself with hand on mouth.

"Bareback," I said. "Nice time of night. Funny though, I almost fell off. He shied at something. The mailbox."

"You can get so relaxed riding bareback, can't you," Aunt Carol sympathized. "I suppose that's when you should be most careful, when you're feeling at ease."

"I know. Gramma always said that, that it often happens on the way back, when you're almost home, swinging your legs out of the stirrups, leaning around to talk or something and not paying attention. You get caught off guard. Aunt Carol, isn't that what happened to Grampa? What caused his first heart attack?"

Gramma also said, that you weren't a real rider unless you'd fallen off at least three times.

"Grampa never fell off a horse," George said.

I looked to Aunt Carol and she paused for a moment, full fork in air, recalling many rides with her father, the trails, where it had happened.... "Yes."

"Yes what Carol."

"Yes he did fall off. Quite regularly. But he did always pick himself up like a gentleman." Did she ride like a lady? Sidesaddle? Never.

"I've never fallen off either," George announced. Being a man meant staying on. "Put your husband on a horse," he said to me, "and you know how long he'd last?"

"Well you aren't a real rider unless you've fallen off."

"You can say that because you always do." Hilarious, exasperation. But one more thing I wanted to say, right there in the click of my fingers -- Yeah! -- knocking his water glass on to his lap, nice white pants, "Oh no. I'm sorry."

He scraped back the wrought iron chair, swept frantically at the water droplets, while the glass, suspended for a second between his knees, dropped to the floor, cracked neatly, the noise.

Linda up instantly to offer her napkin, picked at the pieces with two cautious fingers. He swore authentically.

"She said she was sorry."

That sound. The one I just dropped for you, of the glass cracking neatly. Was it crystal? For a simple summer supper? The sound of -- "Don't step on it Dear." The crack, or was it louder ... what I was thinking of, the connection, proof, my comeback:

Dad and George and I were riding through the Schwab Woods, and Dad suggested a different way home. "Follow me," he yelled. "I know of a secret trail."

He called it 'secret'. Wasn't that just like him. But I had never been that way before. "A taste of the Western, eh Dad?" In this slowly rolling lake country, it was quite a decline, a steep ravine, and with all the rain we'd been having that summer, with the dark slippery leaves and loose mud, taking a descent like that made me feel Western with danger, feet forward in stirrups to catch the pull of gravity.

Dad went down first, leaning back slightly, his back wiggling with the movement of the horse's haunches. Then at the bottom he jumped a log that crossed the trail, turned his horse around on the incline to watch us. "It's easy!"

I was already descending, horse slipping slightly. I trotted towards the bottom, to the jump and over. We waited.

George at the top started complaining.

"Oh come on," my father said.

"You won't fall off, don't worry."

But of course. He got out of the saddle in his fancy riding gear, and walked his horse down, "Damn this mud. I just polished these boots. Why didn't we take the right way back." ♀





Lynne Weinerman



# PASSING

By Grace Wade

Recently (in the last ten years) they built a dam across the Merced River above Mariposa. Exchequer Dam. Some of the lake waters reached the boundaries of the land belonging to the family in this story. When it was being put in, Grandpa (or was it my father?) talked of the possibility of a lot of boats, picnickers, resort trade, maybe building a road in there and putting up...oh, in some way taking advantage, lot of people trampling over your land anyway, may as well get some advantage...But nothing transpired, and as far as I know, no one uses that lake much for sport, it gets so hot and frighteningly dry in the area summers.

The salmon used to run the Merced River. Their spawning grounds are above the dam.

"Every time they ran we used to go with a big wagon filled with ice and straw. They crowded the river so you could just scoop them up with nets. We'd build fires on the bank there and eat grilled salmon til our stomachs hurt. Then we'd pack the wagon full and drive it home, salt them for winter. Oh I ate so much salmon I got sick of it!"

(Before the salmon could reach the grounds, before they'd dropped their heavy bellies' worth, before they could release the spray-as-good-as-gold, life-giving properties, their death-dance, their stupendous last thrust, all of them all their lives virgin, they'd be scooped into nets and packed in straw still quivering, fins flopping, gasping, tails still pushing onwards. To be eaten. Succulent orange juicy food. She (my Grandmother) didn't say anything about prayers offered, like the Indians. At other times she talked of Indians, kids with "oh I suppose they had some Indian blood in 'em you know, most people around there did." But not in relation to salmon, not in relation to the lesson of placating the salmon gods.)

There is no salmon jump built on the Exchequer Dam. The few salmon that still make the run back to ancient waters die at the foot of the dam, leaping, leaping. Not even fished for any more. "The volume of the run wasn't worth the expense of building a jump." (my father)

(To reach the deep secret waters of a lake, tunnel through hidden currents, no light filtered down, fish eye, fish belly, roe. That would be easy swimming, and salmon in the lake a lure to fishermen, good for business but no one did it. No one built that dam. They did.)

When she was a girl poppies and lupine bloomed, Indian paintbrush, the mariposa lily with

its creamy four petals like a cream pie cut in quarters, chocolate-brown and egg-yellow center, its eye-like stamens, its star, candy-star center. It bloomed on all the knolls, granting the cows didn't desecrate it. It bloomed out of cow-pie, the cows' payment for goods received into their double-stomachs.

Her people (father, brother, there was an uncle too but they didn't farm together) turned to cattle after their mining venture produced no riches. All that gold and her grandfather got none of it. Oh maybe a few nuggets, none left in the family though.

They had mines but not gold. Tungsten. Nickel. There was more than one metal in those lupined hills. The sun baked the grains of earth, broke the clods, burned the rocks right into metal in self-defense. Then the winter wind and frost broke and pushed the earth over until it was buried. Then men came and dug. I hope they didn't do it in the 115° heat, Hornitos it's called, "little ovens." No water, no trees, the wildflowers bloom in February. By the end of April the little grass has turned to sharp weeds that poke through your socks, choking dust covers everything and the only smell of water the Merced River, miles off...

She lived up there. Born and raised. Birthday in August the worst hot time. I bet her mother cursed her, suffered hell those last three months. I imagine she had a hard time nursing, heat rash and perspiration, baby sticking to her, poor little head red and beaded and for the first weeks a baby can't perspire, sponging it off with a damp cloth, feeling so wretched herself, bulky pad sticky between her legs, the other three children a pain and a nuisance. She was a strong woman but I bet she hated that new baby, my grandmother with the beautiful face. My great-grandmother looking down on her infant's beautiful, regular large-eyed face, at the delicate perfectly formed hands with paper-moon fingernails still transparent, torn between admiration and hatred. Another voice, calling after her, two more feet to run in the yard and stir up dust. A girl. Another girl to worry about getting old enough to be trifled with, have to watch her, not like a boy, he can do what he wants and don't have to worry after him.

My grandmother felt the sting of being a female child all her life. Woman's work was burdensome. She felt morally indignant about it and, as a token of her love, never made her daughters lift a hand to housework.



*"I never learned anything from my mother. She did everything. I didn't learn how to make a bed until I was in nurse's training. I think if I'd known more about how to take care of myself I might not have gotten so homesick and might have been able to finish training."*

In fact, Great-grandma didn't need to worry herself about the female culpability of her second daughter.

*"Your grandma was an 'old maid' by the time she got married. She was twenty-four and in those days that was getting on. If you weren't married by the time you were 21, people just figured you weren't going to make it."*

Grandma figures when a woman gets married she has babies (though she herself had only two) and there's no purchase to be derived from making any other plans. In 1962 when one of her granddaughters was planning a wedding she said,

"Is he working?"

"No Grandma. He's going to school."

"Well what are you going to live on?"

"I'm going to work."

"Well what about the babies? You can't count on working very long."

"Grandma, there are contraceptives now, you know."

She turned away, her face withdrawn, mouth set. It was clear she hadn't heard.

*"She doesn't hear things. I've told her things all my life, I've told her THE TRUTH and she has said to me 'It couldn't have been that way' and believed what she wanted to."*

I didn't put much stock in that information until I saw her do it with my own eyes -- turn away, refusing to hear the word contraceptives. I've pondered it since. Why not hear it? It would be to woman's advantage to have contraceptives; according to Grandma woman's greatest burden (along with the care and nurture) is to have to bear children. Surely she would, therefore, see it as blessing that a woman could decide. But she didn't hear it. Her purchase apparently derived from the inviolable violability of her position. If she is violable then she has to be taken care of.

She said finally, about the granddaughter who was going to use contraceptives, three years after the marriage:

"Well I guess she's decided not to have children. She must have just told him (the husband, grandson-in-law)."

It's clear what "she must have told him" according to Grandma.

They are dying now, especially Grandpa.

I ring the bell, the same buzzer-like bell I heard as a child vibrating, grating through the woodwork, up through the cement I stand on. I hated it then, echoing the grating feeling I carried inside me going to their house, never anything to do, alien. I wasn't used to playing in towns, sidewalks and empty yards, dark old house unpossessed of toys, somehow unpossessed even of imagination. Children were extra in that house.

I feel the timbers of the house shift as she answers the summons of the bell she must sense, nowadays, more through vibration than sound. Deaf.

"Well, well if it isn't two beautiful children (referring to her great-grandchildren who are bursting to get inside to explore the "upstairs" I've told them about to ensnare them into curiosity, the visit being to two old, old people they don't care about)."

There is a powerful gassy smell as we enter the dark old wood of the house. I embrace her soft bulk, place my mouth on her down cheek, lips sink in slightly. I notice the lace curtains on the two south windows. I like them. Sun is trickling in one of the windows, the other is covered on the outside by some sort of vine. No light comes in it at all. No light comes in the front window on the west side of the house because it opens onto the cement porch outside of which grows a great evergreen bush and an umbrella tree. People used to keep their houses cool summers in the valley by enclosing the house in shade. Now they build picture windows and have air conditioners.

In the bottom half of the window that lets in sun is installed a portable air conditioner. It's March, not hot yet, in fact the floor furnace is on, but I can understand why they leave it there. Time is just a waiting for them now. Seasons...

They used to drive in their car a lot. See the countryside. Drive up to the hills where he would fish in Pine Flat Reservoir, another version of Excelsior Dam Reservoir, and she would sit in the car and darn socks or read Ladies Home Journal and watch the grass, wind and water. They'd drive to the supermarkets and buy the specials, see how the towns were building up (Fresno, Clovis, even Sanger) into shopping centers, tracts and trailer (mobile-home) parks. They like it all. Grandpa likes Pine Flat and Friant Dams, they keep the rivers from flooding, insure permanence. Tame the environment, that's good. It's Progress, Yankee-know-how. Grandpa bought the first Model-A. He owned a service station in the 20's and 30's. A small businessman. Enterprising. Responsible. Substantial. His womenfolk could count on him.

They love the supermarkets; they are convenient, time-saving, money-saving and exciting. All that food in one place. It's easy. Their childhoods taught them the value of ease, particularly where food is concerned. Nothing grows up in those old hills. Beans and meat and whatever you could coax out of the land, had to be put up in 110° heat, do it while you had it, wouldn't last til winter (though actually winter was probably a more likely time to grow things there, though there was always the chance of snow, they were just high enough). Nobody lives up at the ranch anymore.

Grandpa grew up in Wisconsin, deep-snow country. When he was 16 he and his father and brothers built the family house (all hard wood they'd felled themselves and sawed into boards in their own mill), double-walled on north and east

cont.



sides for a number of reasons: to provide a cellar that wouldn't freeze, to insulate the furnace that was to be put into the cellar, and to keep the wind out, blizzard wind from the north. The cellar. If it froze, all stores went. It was a big family. Four boys and three girls, one girl (just older than Grandpa) dying of typhus (along with a cousin, "they both died of that, the same time, buried beside each other in the family plot up there") at two and a half. Charles. John. Albert Frederick. Emma. Belle. Cullen, the brother who had TB at sixteen so they all had to move to California to heal him. All gone now except Grandpa. Offspring scattered. Serena. John's Serena, haven't heard of her for years. Great-uncle John came from back east, white hair flaring in the dark back of the car. We all went to see Serena who lived in a shack, unpainted boards like in "Grapes of Wrath" in a cottonfield in Porterville. She had a skinny little white-haired daughter who hid, and no husband. The water tasted like rotten eggs. And Serena. The very opposite of her name. Scared me, she was so opposite. I hoped never, never to have to visit Serena again.

That's the smell in the house when I walk in with my children. Boiled egg. I see when we go into the kitchen she's been mixing tuna with boiled egg. She asks me if we will eat with them. I make my feeble excuse (the truth being we've just eaten with my other grandmother but that would hurt Grandma's feelings).

"We're going to my sister's, I told her we'd be there at one."

Tuna sits on the sideboard, pungent, fresh spinach soaking away the vitamins in the dishpan in the sink. I stay until 1:30, then have to cut through flesh to leave.

It is his good-bye, you see, in case we should not see each other again (I am tempted to add "in this life" but since I don't know about that, don't even suspect about it, and neither does he -- if there's one thing he's never talked about it's God, and why else cling to this life with such a lively grip for so long unless you are a true Doubter? -- I have to leave it in parentheses. It's just an attempt to ease the sorrow).

I dreamed of him a few nights ago. He was his "old self," his greeting and leave-taking jovial and hearty again, robust loving. I have never thought of his tenderness. I never felt it until now. His sincerity was always obvious but love for him has been a whiskey, perspiration-soaked buss on the cheek, a 30-second-long imprisonment in long arms that would fit around me twice if he let them go on coiling. When I was small I was slightly terrified of his embraces. It wasn't just the firmness of them, it was that children sense when others are uncomfortable. But in the dream I changed him back. Because I don't want him to die, I've had him this long. He sat at the table with all of us near him, after the meal. He joked about "that time I was so weak and couldn't talk right."

My grandmother says, after the children have raced upstairs to track down any malleable mystery in that house that might have survived (or been enhanced by) old age,

"He's gone down to the corner to buy a newspaper. You said you'd be here about 12 but I said, 'Go ahead, they've said before they'll stop by on their way and they never have and we've waited.' So now he didn't wait and you broke the rule; this time you came."

She giggles. Not like an old woman. She giggles like a seventeen-year-old girl. She isn't regressing. Grandma has lost certain faculties (like hearing and agility, if she ever had it) but she knows precisely what she says. Her giggle has its purpose.

"He tries to get out every day. But you know (lowering her voice, though I don't see how she hears it, deaf as she is, when it's that low; most deaf people talk louder in order to hear what they say), I think he's losing a little something."

She giggles again, acting quite mischievous and gay, hands, eyes.

"Why, the other day..." she glances toward the doorway,

"Well if he comes in I'll just have to stop telling you so if I stop talking suddenly you'll know why (she has never said anything like that to me before). The other day he was sitting in that chair with his eyes closed and his mouth begun to drop open the way it does (she opens her mouth). I think he's asleep those times, you know, just dropped off, but he says he's not. Well all of a sudden he closes his mouth and opens his eyes and says, 'I have to go to Fresno.' I said 'Well will Curt Johnson take you?' He gets up and goes and calls Curt. Curt comes over but when he gets here, Bert can't remember what he wanted to go for. Curt says 'Well that's all right, we'll go tomorrow.' But when he came over the next morning, Bert still couldn't remember."

Her voice is gleeful and mystified. She is obviously very worried. My mother was worried by the same incident; she had already told me about it. She said "Dad seems to be...forgetting things you know. He told me 'The other day I took a notion to go to Fresno and I called up Curt Johnson and when he came I'll be danged if I could remember what I wanted to go for.'"

I don't know what to say to Grandma. Grandpa's urge seems normal to me. I am mystified by her gleeful attitude (though I have my suspicions what the cause of the hilarity is. My grandmother has taken more and more, in the past eight years since she turned 80, to making cosmic jokes. It's a way she has of comforting herself.). I say, to fill the gap and hit on a positive aspect of the experience, "You have some good friends. It was awfully nice of Curt Johnson to be so willing to help Grandpa out like that."

"Oh, yes. We have lots of good friends. There's Leila and Jim, Leila says if we need anything we should call them any time of the day or night."



We've been standing in the dark hallway at the foot of the stairs ever since the children raced up. Grandma says, waving a hand at the stairs, "Well, I guess we don't have to stand here waiting for them."

They are racketing around.

We sit down in the living room, Grandma on the floral-print couch I remember always being there. The material isn't even frayed. I wonder where she got that material? As a child I used to lie on it and run my fingers over the ridges of pansies and roses. It's very dirty now, color gone.

The lace curtain covering the window that's covered by a bush is behind her. She tells me about my cousins, saying things like "she married one of the Carters you know" (a thing I've known ever since it happened seven years ago) and "she (another one) is married to the other Carter, brothers, you know."

Well, the Carters and their wives and children are all planning to move back to Nevada to live with the "boys'" mother who has a ranch and a cafe in the middle of the Nevada wasteland.

The thing that causes Grandma the greatest amused wonderment is the problem of domiciles. The Carter families, in moving, are leaving two lovely, adequate houses empty.

"What is Walt (my uncle, her son-in-law, whose actions she can never figure out anyway, though they are quite plain to see) going to do with those two houses? Why you know, until they (the younger Carter couple) moved in to that little house they always had it rented. They got \$40 a month from that house!"

Empty. Empty. Sitting empty.

My children whirling in from upstairs to gain permission to explore the yard (if they knew there was a cellar, they'd be irrepressible, I remember how I felt at 12 when I discovered that Grandma had a contraption down there for making root-beer!), and the talk of husbands of other granddaughters cause Grandma to glance toward the door and ask, "Is Brian out in the car? Did he come with you?"

(I don't know what she thought he'd be doing out there for half-an-hour.)

"No, he stayed home this visit, Grandma. The children and I came alone."

"Well, does he..."

At that, she abruptly changes the subject to something like my mother's busy days -- golf, bridge, sailing, church, "Oh she keeps so busy and happy" in the same bright voice she used for Grandpa's lapse of memory.

I'm left with the feeling of stepping off a cliff until I realize she thinks Brian and I have separated. Next time she sees my mother, she'll say to her, "Brian wasn't with them. She didn't say why." Mama will say "Brian didn't want to come down. He likes to have time for himself." And Grandma will think her own thoughts, darkly suspecting that because she's 88 and close to death, we're "keeping it from her."

It's clear that nobody tells Grandma anything. Besides, she's deaf and the hearing aid crackles her ear.

The children bring us flowers, a lilac, a little wild lily. We put them in water and then she follows the children out to the yard. I help her down the cement steps (everyone got new cement steps about the time I was 8. The men mixed and poured, and at my other grandmother's and my parents, new cement sidewalks too, to replace the packed-earth walks and wooden steps) and we walk around the house. She talks about the bushes, the lilac, the lemon tree, "oh they've picked it and picked it til now the only lemons are way on top. Dad can't climb the ladder anymore." They are the neighbors in whose yard the tree grows. It's always borne heavily and Grandma and Grandpa for as long as I can recall have had a share of the lemons. Some years they had them all, I remember Grandma saying "They don't seem to pick the lemons at all this year," wonder and disapproval in her voice. Grandma and Grandpa know all the old abandoned fruit trees. There's a black fig on the way to my aunt's house, they'd always stop to pick what was there, it would go to waste otherwise. They knew the family who used to live on that place. I'd see the falling-down clapboard house as we'd drive up to the mountains. I'd see the fig tree but since I hate figs, whenever I pictured Grandma and Grandpa climbing through the fence to pick them I'd feel a slight shiver like I get when I try biting into the slimy pink flesh of one of those figs. The house is completely gone now. Only the tree left and Grandpa can't drive the car anymore.

They would come in the summer, Grandpa in his undershirt, the kind that is so popular now with just the bands over the shoulders. Then he was the only person I knew who wore undershirts like that with no shirt on and he was hairy all over, chest, shoulders, underarms, upper arms. Hairs poked out from the edges of the undershirt. His face was always whiskery (he'd have been perfect for the TV ad they're doing now where the camera angle is from slightly under the jaw and the picture is of a man -- two men -- with a day's growth and they're looking tough and slit-eyed down their jaws into the camera -- I forget what for, maybe malt liquor) and he was always running with sweat even at ten o'clock in the morning. He'd take buckets and go out in the peach orchard that belonged to my father's cousin, or my father's friend, "Where are the peaches ripe Josie?" "Oh Slim left a tree unpicked, they should be soft by now, Dad. The second row from the corner on Vino, you know, third tree in." When my father's grapes were ready, Grandpa took a lug-box out and picked. It was important to get the fruit while it was ripe. I remember how I understood that when I was ten. I was at Girl Scout camp for one unbearable week and my parents drove up to see me, bringing me a basket of Santa Rosa plums and early nectarines. I almost cried for joy and homesickness, the sweet-tart juice of plum-skin. I knew the "season" would be nearly over by the time I

cont.



got down, plums were my favorite and I hated that camp so much.

Grandma has never walked around her yard with me, or my mother, or anyone that I can remember. There's never been anything in her yard to see: About five years ago my mother said, "I planted daffodils in Grandma and Pop's yard this spring" and I thought "That'll be a change."

But this year, lilac and lilies and toys belonging to the neighbors' children "They use our yard to play ball in, oh, I don't chase them out, they need the space, you know." And my children, picking Great-grandma's flowers.

"Smell Mommy, isn't it nice?"

We go in the front door, cool cement porch, brick railings, shade shrubs to put the flowers in water. Hit again by boiled egg. As we get glasses and stuff flowers in, Grandpa comes from the back door.

I am shocked.

A year ago Christmas, six months after his heart attack I looked at him sitting beside Grandma on the dark-red vinyl couch at my aunt's. Children were swarming around, presents, shrieking. Grandpa's knees stuck out. His elbows stuck out. His head inclined forward like a buzzard's and his mouth was open. They were sitting pressed together. Grandma's knees stuck out and her feet, in black leather shoes with two straps over the instep, were placed carefully together like a Good Girl's. Her hands motionless, body motionless. She couldn't hear. Her face was set "pleasant" and her 200 pounds settled like a baby-doll's stuffing when it's been tossed into a corner.

He is worse than that now.

I embrace him. His arms move too slowly, as though they forget what they're supposed to do. His face is grey. His lips and fingers are tinted blue. His mouth is dry, his tongue is recalcitrant. I ask him about Wisconsin, about the house he and his father and brothers built. I ask him (give me your life, Grandpa, quick, into my basket I'll nest it, I'll remember I won't forget you Grandpa not even John's Serena

remember your dead sister you remember who died before you were born

all your trips, Oregon, Washington, Montana down into Wyoming, Yellowstone, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, Missouri where you were born I'll remember all those summers Mama said "Grandma and Grandpa have gone back East!"

in the auto parts store during the war when you'd already retired but all the young men were at war so you worked again and we went to see you I almost vomited from the smell, creosote in the floorboards, rubber and grease in the parts and you so dim in the back all but your gleaming head and the glint off your round rimless glasses

how you spanked my brother when he was 5 and my mother yanked him behind her, yelled at you "I'll discipline my own son!" and I thought it best to hide because I'd never seen her yell at you before and you didn't say anything)

And now you try to talk to me and I try to remember and you can't make your tongue work

right. And you can't talk loud enough so Grandma hears you (you, the one, The One, she's always heard when she couldn't hear anyone else) so she keeps talking into the middle of what you're saying. You used to say "Grace! I'm not finished yet. Grace! I'm not talking to you, now wait." But you can't get the volume this time, so I listen to both of you. Grandma suddenly says into a silence that isn't there because you're telling about your trip to Williamsburg three years ago, "Josie put those there (chuckle), said we had to have some plants in the house" gesturing with her long, graceful, solid hand towards the Swedish ivy and philodendron on top of the mantle, crawling towards the light of the kitchen window.

Grandma says, "He'll be ninety this August, you know."

"Ninety! Oh Grandpa, we'll all come to that! It'll be some birthday party."

He tries to smile but can't make his lips stretch out and his mouth is dry. I know what he's thinking. I think it too.

"How old will you be, Grandma? Your birthday is just a week off Grandpa's."

"89. I'll be 89."

It's past one o'clock. My sister expected us at one. I'm rooted to the chair. I don't want to leave them. I'm over-dosing.

Grandma waves her hand at the wooden drain-board. "See all those bottles? All for Dad. Takes pills all day long."

(My stomach is beginning to rise.)

Grandpa tries to smile again.

She chuckles and her eyes under the fine arched brows, a little ragged now, twinkle.

"Mine are in the bathroom. A whole cabinet full."

She chuckles again.

"We have to keep them in different rooms so we won't mix them up."

"And under here..." she chuckles again, twinkling, and pulls from under the bottom cupboard a bottle of milk of magnesia.

When I get up to leave the tuna and egg are still on the cutting board, the spinach is still in the dishpan. It's 1:30. They haven't finished.

But I have to go. Not because of the time.

We step out onto the porch. Grandma has given the children a great container of chocolate raisins. "I gave them (the great-grandchildren) each a box at Christmas. They like them better than candy!" They are anxious to get to their cousins'. Pulling, pulling me.

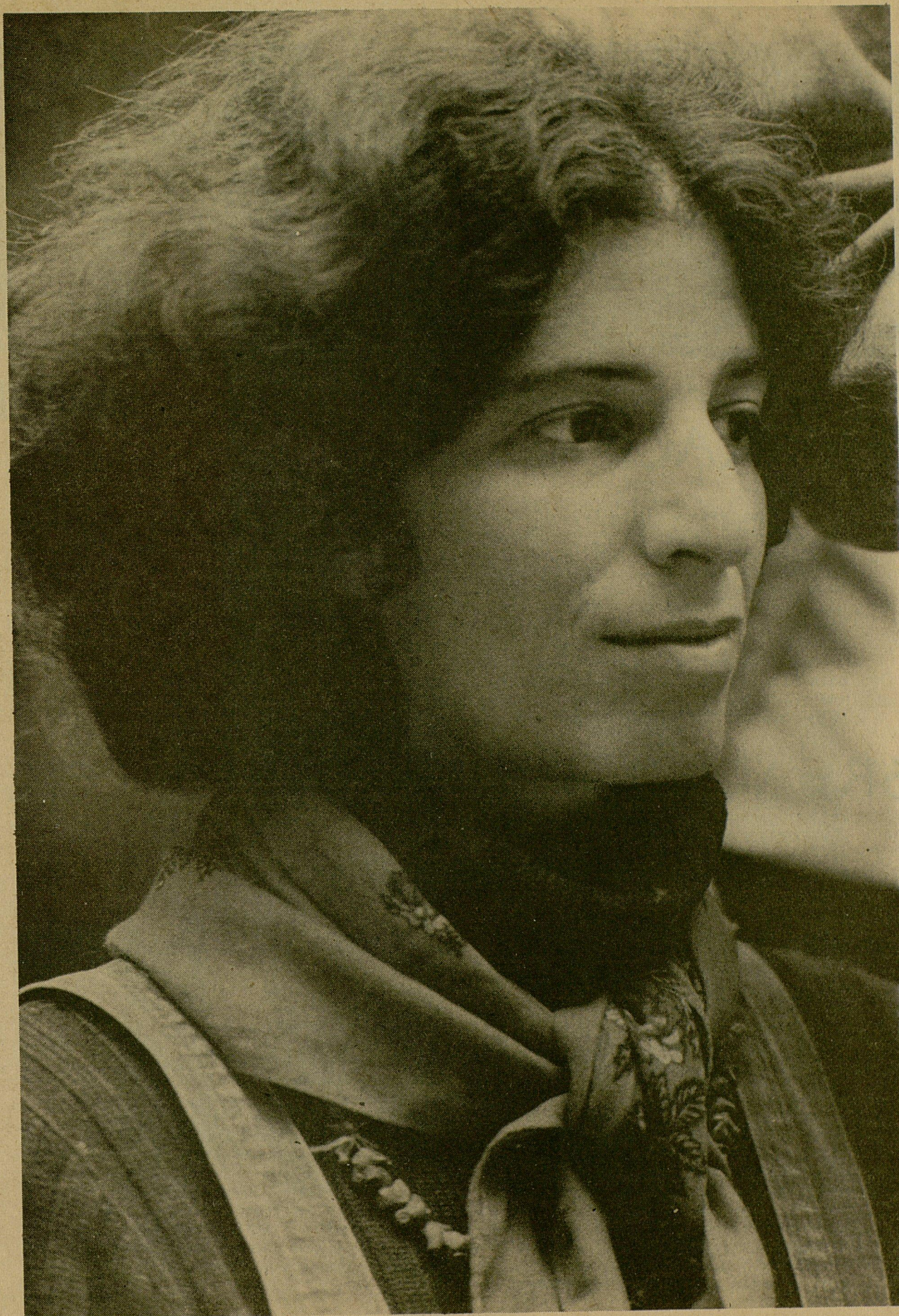
There's that direction. Toward my children. And there is Grandpa's arms. A kiss that is soft, that is meant, there is the touching of chests which he never allowed beyond a split-second bear-hug. Warmth. Gentleness.

He is looking at me.

Grandma is smiling in the sunlight smiling.

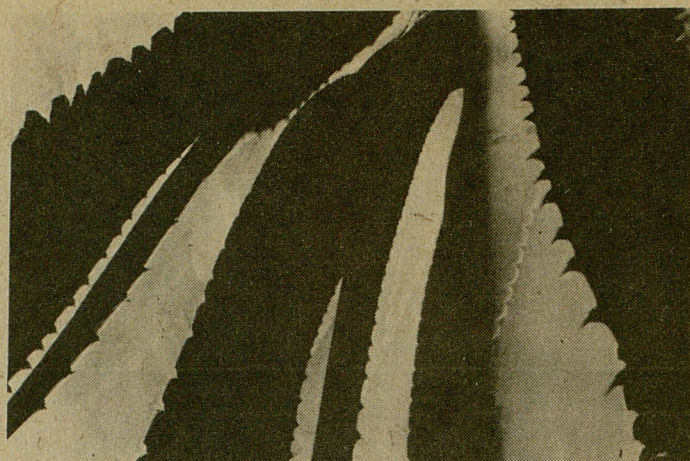
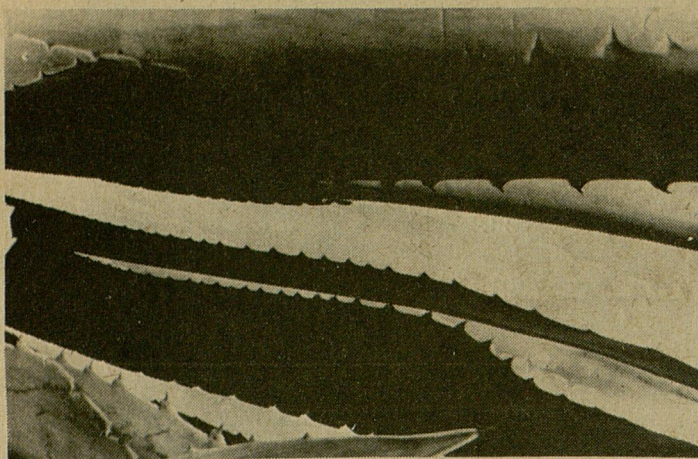
They follow us to the car (my children are saying "Come on, come on. Let's go, Mommy!"), Grandpa with his gangling arms, Grandma with her tread that would break the back of a full-grown cat. They watch while I try to leave. ♀





Lynda Koolish





## THE RACE

Denise Taylor

running the race in high school first day bleeding the teacher said only light exercise and I wanted to be the wind gushing out of the new woman body leaving it behind the other girls galloping by in their blue gym shorts I will be the fastest race horse muzzle bent down sniffing the finish line legs that never moved like this lump in the throat I could lie down on the grass flail my arms but I am running the track instead once twice three times around the track and the fourth ribs locking like a cage inside a cage the heart wild to be out of the chest body aches toward winning just this one and when it's over fall on the ground crazy for air to breathe can't get enough of it the pelvis cramping this pain is so clear groaning hugging myself rolling a hurt animal on the wet grass the teacher's voice saying you shouldn't have done it first day light exercise dangerous you did good honey you did good

## BREATHING UNDER WATER

it was sea shells and the beach you took the shells and strung them through the curve of your ear you were tired of the snow the trees died and they came and carried away the branches it was time to go back to the beginning the school with chainlink fences the other children grinning or wiping their noses mother coming each day in the big white car coming to take you home where you ate green and brown and white food just like daddy even if he was silent he used a fork and a spoon like you and then it was the first spiral staircase in another town far from your home your pink dress followed behind you they whispered that you would be unhappy having everything you wanted like that but you knew what you deserved and when your hair grew to your waist you cut it yourself with large sewing scissors and your auntie cried and said why do you want to make yourself ugly honey and you smiled and crossed your eyes later you drew hearts and wrote poems for valentine's day exchanging them with the other little girls who had freckles or kinky hair and looked different than you but you liked them the noise they made in the lavatory between classes the way they pencilled black lines around their eyes and pulled and tugged at their sheer stockings so you looked down at your new breasts tried to press them back to where they fit so well above your ribs but they were sore you wore heavy coats and cried after everyone went to bed and all the headlights quit flashing through the window all you could hear were the crickets outside and you dreamed of the ocean the waves were powerful and broke evenly and made you feel safe you walked straight into the water the waves seemed not to topple you you could see clearly under the greenish water and found also that you could breathe you saw the other children swim by with half of their bodies like fishes you tried to call out to them to wait for you but your throat seemed somehow locked you kept wanting to cry out to call out to them and you awoke in a pool of sweat and cried until morning



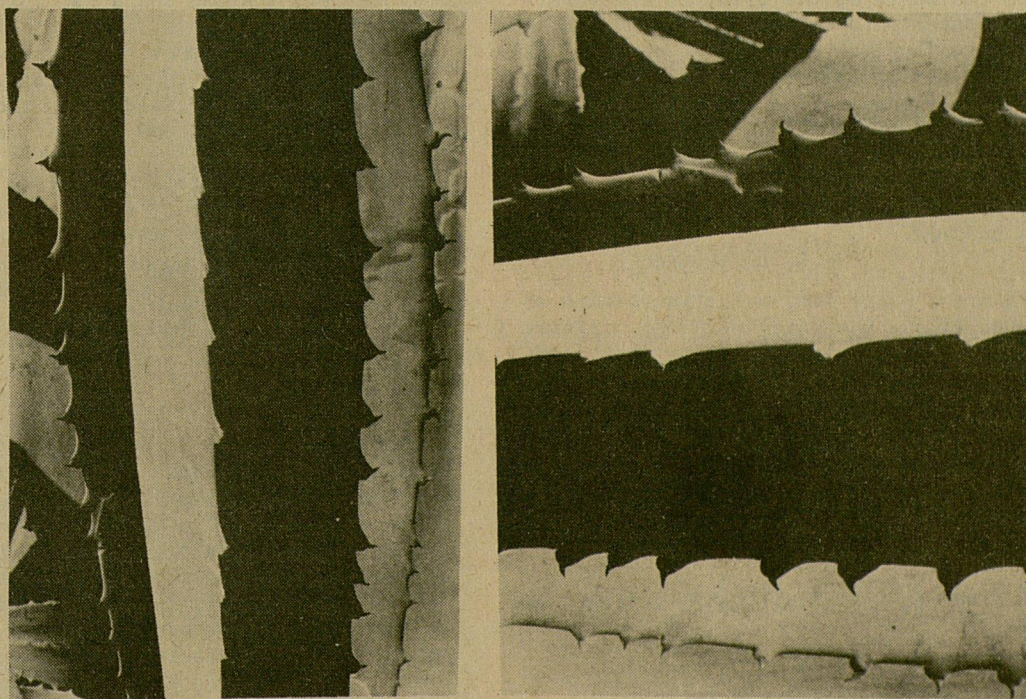
# FANTASY

I bring you lilacs, tulips, daisies, daffodils, iris the color of sky at dusk over the coast of California. I want to remind you of summer, how it arrives in spite of our impatience. The days grow sluggish as snails and we too turn into sand creatures curled against each other on a blanket, books flat-faced where we left them. Already our faces are flushed. I pull the rose cotton shirt over my head and you watch me from the bed. I can see you in the mirror, aura of hair unkempt, your pale eyes amused at my preening. You think I am a bird stroking my own new wings, looking back at you for approval. Laughing, I slip out for the pier to buy fresh prawns. Our future leans only as far as dinner. We are happy.

## I DON'T EVEN HAVE A PIANO

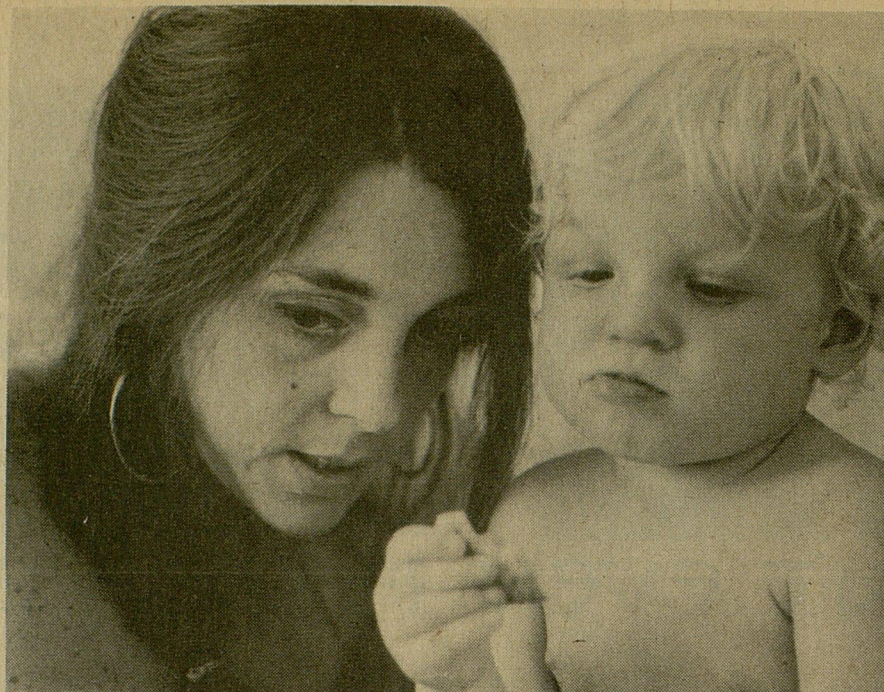
for georgia

I don't even have a piano or anything to play this song on that's ringing in me perhaps a flute would do but I tell you when I hear the creek running at night by your house and we're two shadows on the brush we're laughing swinging each other round dancing to this new tune we've composed I want to reach into the sky grab the stars there and make you the piano you deserve we could do duets use this leg for a bench or I'll carve you a necklace of ivory and when you wear it on evenings like this you'll remember the music we made tonight how the trees swayed two voices singing out oh listen



Alice Flores





Linda K.

# LET MAMA KISS

By Allie Light

## THE DRAGON BURNS

*The criterion of being "grown up" is that the individual is led out of the family circle and initiated into the world of the Great Life-Givers. Accordingly, puberty is a time of rebirth, and its symbolism is that of the hero who regenerates himself through fighting the dragon. All the rites characteristic of this period have the purpose of renewing the personality through a night sea journey, when the spiritual or conscious principle conquers the mother dragon, and the tie to the mother and to childhood, and also to the unconscious, is severed.*

Erich Neumann

It is more difficult to relate to my son than to my daughters. He is the other-than-myself. Sometimes I have no words for him and other times my anger is a deluge. Often I am cruel to him and I am then filled with self-hate. At the same time I pity him. Already I understand the older woman's jealousy toward the younger woman, though she is not yet a reality. I love him and will lose him to another.

He is only five years younger than his father was when we married.

I received the results of the testing done at McCauley Clinic. The psychiatrist put me on the defensive by asking why I had not brought this boy for treatment sooner. What does one say to such a question? He told me that Chuck is "pathologically depressed, almost to the point of suicide".

He said the boy lives in his daydreams and fantasies, that he is still mourning the death of his father, that he has a sex identity problem. He said his learning difficulties in school are due to constant anxiety which makes it impossible for him to concentrate. He said Chuck is very bright. He said it is too late for Chuck to have a father -- now he must learn to be a man.

I sat in Dr. Dainard's office and listened to him tell me about my son. I felt like I was at the movies, untouched by this story of a stranger. This fiction. I thought of the home movie I made 14 years ago. We are at the beach. Again and again Chas tosses his two year old son into the air. The movement is like a phonograph record stuck and repeating itself. The child is laughing on the silent screen. He is not afraid.

The recommendation is for long term treatment. The staff thinks Chuck should be on the day ward at the hospital. He should come each day after school from 3 to 7 p.m. I feel shock and disbelief. After the visit, at home, I begin to think of the politics of the affair. What is happening here? Once I would have swallowed, whole, everything told me by a psychiatrist. I now realize that Dr. Dainard doesn't like me, my life style is immoral to him. In Chuck's presence he said to me, "You are a weak and dependent woman, clinging to your son. You can't let go of him." His reference to Irving as "the friend who lives in your house" is a refusal to accept, openly, the relationship for what it is: a sexual, joyful relationship with voluntary responsibility for,



and interest in, my children. Dr. Dainard's remark was an attempt to divest Irving of parental standing in Chuck's eyes. He also remarked, in Chuck's presence, that the boy is unable to compete with Irving for my attention. Such a statement is, at the least, a divulgence of Chuck's confidences and privacies. I can tell he likes Chuck very much and is overwhelmed by the force of this boy's feelings. I have an idea that he has not had such response from an adolescent patient before. After each visit with him, Chuck has come to me in the waiting room with his eyes red and swollen from crying. I think he wants to "save" Chuck from what he considers to be an unhealthy, nonreligious home life. He is a frightened man.

The three and one-half months of this psychiatric evaluation have left me depressed, anxious, unsure of my parental ability, afraid to set limits or enforce family rules where Chuck is concerned. I have a constant stomach ache -- as Irving says, my spastic semi-colon is acting up. The fuck-ups on the part of the clinic have been monumental: promised calls and appointments that did not materialize, unreturned phone calls when I leave my name, misaddressed envelopes. I finally wrote the social worker a letter telling her of my anxieties regarding the results of my son's tests, and that I thought a two month silence after these results were given to me was an act of irresponsibility on their part. The letter alleviated some of my anger, but no mention or acknowledgement of it was ever made by the clinic.

Chuck says he will not go into the day ward program at St. Mary's Hospital. He says he wants to be a "normal" person who goes to a psychiatrist once a week! I've applied to Mt. Zion clinic for a second evaluation of the tests.

*The isolation you endure living in this household of women. Two sisters and a mother. Sometimes it must be a barrier physical as deafness. Who hears you?*

I have written on scraps of paper the poetry of my son from the time he began to talk. When he was three and one-half years old he said:

*Why don't I see  
my daddy for a  
long time  
when i'm in  
Mommy's stomach?*

*Because I can't see through you?*

When he was four years old we decorated a bare plum tree at Christmas and the following summer he said:

*Aren't you glad  
we decorated  
that tree so  
beautifully?  
See, it got married  
and had fruit.*

Chuck was the complacent baby who slept through the night. He liked food and sang while he played. He was also the child who wanted to stay home from nursery school. The first and second day of Kindergarten he had to be brought home because he cried for mama, but after that he liked school and drew many self-portraits. The first time he went to camp with his school, he hugged me and instead of goodbye he said, "goodnight mama".

As children, Morjah and Chuck were inseparable. In spite of Morjah's dominance of Chuck, they were closer than most siblings. I made them bamboo pole horses with sock heads. They rode them for days. Chuck always played with his big sister and other older children. At first they called him "the Alligator" and ran away from him, but soon he could keep up and his cousin, Ricky, became the Alligator. Morjah and Chuck learned to bike and swim at the same times, and they took piano lessons together. For awhile their passion was slot-car racing. As teenagers they went to Karate together.

Morjah moves out in August, 1971 and Chuck is free of what has been, perhaps, the most controlling force in his life. His big sister. He has a dream: "Mom and me and Julia and Morjah are at the beach. We are walking along. It is really fun. All of a sudden Ed comes and says, "Come on Morjah, hurry up." Morjah says to me, "I'm sorry you guys, I've gotta go." Her and Ed walk away."

Chuck and I are driving down Diamond St. He points to a car parked on the street.

"That's a Corvette. They cost about \$7000. new."

"Which would you rather have? Your car or that one?"

"Well, if I had a Corvette, I could sell it and buy a '57 Chevie and have a lot of money too."

"But if you couldn't sell it, I mean you had to keep it and drive it."

"Well, when I get my car fixed up the way I want, I'd rather have it."

He endures such frustration. Having a car with metallic paint and mags and a tape deck, but unable to drive it because he has no money for insurance. He sits in it far into the night, fantasizing his life. I think of the car as a weapon and shudder, remembering Dr. Dainard's mention of suicide.

English

Chuck Hunter

What I would need to be happy

The first thing that would be absolutely Necessary would be good health. Next time you are sick or hurt, say to yourself what would you like the most and it will probably be to get well right away, but you take it for granite since you are not sick.

cont.



Now that I am in good health I can tell you something that would make me happy. For one thing I could dig a 1957 Chevie with leather seats, a 327 four barrel carburetor, dual exhaust and a tape deck. I would put in four speakers and some wide tires, a good paint job and a free coupon for 20,000 gallons of free union 76 gasoline. Now all I have to do is get on the Let's Make a Deal Show!

Last winter Chuck came downstairs at 10 o'clock one night and said he was not going to work in the book room at school anymore. He said he could not stand the woman who worked there. I asked him a little about her and he finally said what he couldn't stand was the room. It is in the basement of the school with steam pipes running across the ceiling and a dumbwaiter to send the books upstairs. I asked him if the room reminded him of some other place. He began to cry and said it reminded him of the basement of a hospital. He said that once he got lost in one and his father found him. I remembered that when I was at Langley Porter in 1963 when Chuck was six years old, Dr. Schwartz had an office in the basement with pipes running across the ceiling. Chas and I saw him there, and often we brought the kids along. They were horrible times for all of us, and now Chuck was reliving those same vague fears in the book room at school. After he started crying he began to spill some of the grief he has carried for so many years. I said to him, "You must miss daddy very much." He talked about the last few days of Chas's life. His memories were so clear. He said Gram took him and the girls to the beach where she told them the Dr. said their father would live only a few more days. He remembered, driving home along Lincoln Blvd., that he looked down into Golden Gate Park and saw daddy there, among the trees, wearing his red sweater. He kept repeating how much he loved his father, but "it isn't enough, hasn't been enough." I put my arms around him and said, "You must have felt hurt by the men I've been with since then." He said, "I knew you had to have a life."

*Chuck goes with his dad to the Opera House. They climb the ladder to the top of the scaffolding above the stage. Three floors up they straddle the cross beam and watch the little people rehearsing below. Chuck has a bottle of coke in his hand. This year, 1972, the phone book comes out with a 1964 picture of a scene from Carmina Burana on the cover. A paper Chas, mouth open, in a blue costume.*

Just before going to Los Angeles to visit his uncle, Robert, in the summer of 1972, Chuck dreams that he is at Gram's house. It is pitch black outside and Robert has come to pick him up in a car. He feels his way to the car door and gets in the back seat. Rob turns around and yells, "Didn't you hear me tell you to get in the front?" Chuck tries to tell him he didn't hear

and it was too dark to see his gestures. He gets into the front seat. Suddenly the car begins to burn.

We discuss the dream and he mentions his fear of car crashes. I say perhaps Robert expects him to be a man and "ride in the front seat" with him. Maybe a part of him wants the safety of childhood, of the "back seat".

Chuck was born May 27, 1956 and weighed seven pounds six ounces. Impatient, the doctor used forceps in what was already a fast delivery -- two hours from first contraction to birth. The first time I saw my baby he was screaming and the sides of his head were red-splotched from pressure. It was hours before I was allowed to hold him and touch him. At two weeks he was circumcised. Trying to speak above the baby's screams, the doctor said it didn't hurt, but Chuckie tried to retain his urine for several days, and my mother showed me how to hold him over the bathtub and blow gently on his penis to get him to pee.

He was a wonderful baby. He ate everything I fed him, grew three chins, laughed, slept through the night. In the first six years of his life he learned to skate, ride a bike, play ball, swim, climb everything. I had to take him to the emergency when he fell from the top of the piano; and when he was four, and I was pregnant with Julia, he and Morjah were jumping on my bed, seeing how close they could get to the window, when he won the game by jumping through the glass and falling two stories to the back yard. By the time I got down the back stairs he was already coming around the corner of the house screaming his head off. Pretty bloody too. At San Francisco General they sewed cuts on his leg and the back of his neck. The doctor said he wasn't cut more because he was traveling so fast when he went through the glass that he missed falling into it. Also the ground was soft because it had rained the night before.

All his life Chuck has excelled in two areas. One is social relations. As soon as he could walk he began collecting friends. He was part of a mob. He never played alone. If I said he couldn't come out, his friends would remain on the doorstep waiting. I think his control was indirect -- he seemed more a "follower", but the other always did what he wanted. The other area of excellence was that of physical skills. He could do any sport faster and better, with one exception -- he could not beat Morjah in running. She was the fastest runner at Presidio Hill School. However, in his sophomore year in high school he won the Junior Varsity All City track meet for running the Mile. After his victory he quit the track team.

From the time he was a little boy, Chuck and I had wrestling matches. When he was 14 he could finally pin me. He had an older friend named Jim, and one day he said to me, "Jim says I shouldn't have these kinds of feelings about my mother." I



was too embarrassed to ask what he was talking about, but we never wrestled again.

In the summer of 1972 Chuck and I are fighting all the time. Since I signed for him to get his driver's license, he hasn't done any homework, and is cutting school for days at a time. I am a wind talking at him and my words blow back in my face. He stands there impatient until I'm through and then he vanishes into an old car and is gone with his friends. He comes home hours later drunk on beer, or stoned. One night I tell him he can't go to a party in Oakland with Jim. Jim is a crazy driver and it's a school night. He says he's going anyway. I follow him outside in my nightgown and try to stop him by grabbing the car door. He roars off, leaving me angry and frustrated on the sidewalk. He doesn't come home. The next day I call the police and report him as a runaway, but he's disappeared into a network of young people -- an adolescent underground. A week later the phone rings in the middle of the night. It's the police. Chuck is at the Taraval station, will I come and get him? Jim is to be charged as an adult, but Chuck can go. Irving offers to come with me, but how to explain him? I go alone. Because Chuck is so drunk, the police are having fun with him. They haven't locked him up, but are letting him weave around in the station. He has thrown up in a waste basket, and is shouting and swearing at the "pigs". They're laughing at him. I am shocked at this display of pain, I feel numb. He's unrecognizable. His hair is matted and full of oil and vomit. He's been living in his clothes and is sick and drunk. I sign for him and am given an appointment at the Youth Guidance Center to see a probation officer. The charge is drinking in an automobile. A policeman walks him out to the car, but Chuck falls down on the sidewalk, so he picks him up and carries him to the car. I feel gratitude for this minute display of sympathy. I'm also filled with self-recrimination and guilt. I must be doing this to him. It's my fault, never able to set limits, messing up his childhood. I'm angry at him, but glad to have him back. Finally it comes out in the drive home, the one thing I don't want to say, but do say anyway. "What would your father think?" So cruel, so unfair. He shouts back at me, "I have no father. My father is dead." I get him in the house, this wild, filthy, sick person. He smells like booze, vomit, shit. He wants to go to bed. I say you have to take a bath. He says he'll do it tomorrow. I say no. He's incapable of bathing himself, he'd drown. How to bathe a 16 year old boy? All the incestuous taboos. I fill the tub with warm water and make him get in with his clothes on. I soap as much of him as I can, wash his hair and his face, get his shirt and jeans off, and then tell him to take his shorts off and dry himself. I go out of the bathroom and hand him clean shorts from the other side of the door. When he puts them on I go back in the bathroom. He's in a standing position, hanging onto the bathtub. I help him dry himself and then get him into bed. As I go out

of the room he says, "Ma, what's going to happen tomorrow?" From the lighted hall I look into the dark bedroom. "I don't know. We'll figure something out."

The visit to the probation officer is a nightmare. He asks me a lot of questions. What's Chuck's family like? Do I work? I tell him I don't work, I go to school. I also tell him about Chuck's association with Jim. He says he knows the family, both Jim and his brother have been in trouble. I ask if there is any way I can keep Jim from Chuck. I also mention his truancy, and the reading and other learning difficulties he's experiencing in school. Chuck is sitting next to me, angry and sullen. Suddenly the probation officer says to me, "What are you doing in school?" I say, "I'm getting an M.A." He turns to Chuck and says, "I see the problem now, trying to compete with mother!" He then spends ten minutes telling me of his plans to return to school and get a degree. I feel intimidated and ridiculous. He ends his monologue by telling me Jim is really not a bad kid, and he sees no reason to prevent Chuck from seeing him.

Later I feel anger and humiliation. What do I do to male shrinks and probation officers that is so threatening? I know if I were less articulate and less educated they would like me better. Be quiet woman!

*I dream Morjah and Chuck are lost at sea. They sail away in a small boat and never return.*

#### U.S. History

Chuck Hunter

#### Texico Abuse

The owner of Auto City, Texico gas station Located at 16th and SOUTH Van ness could be in trobele. The reason for this is because the workers are used like animals. I know this because I work thear. You are given 20 minets lunch brake out of 8 hours which is illegal and some workers are worked 10-12-or more hours with out any over time pay. I got a frind a job thear and he was working 14 hours a day for a week and was fired for two many shortages, becaus he was tierd and mad some miastaks.

The fact remands that this station is pumping more gas then any other station in the bay area. my uncle has worked thear for 20 years and is making \$3.15 a hour.

Thay should be reported but thear is no union, what can be done?

There are times when Chuck wants to help himself, when he wants to stop drinking or smoking dope every day. He is going to a new therapist at Mt. Zion, whom he likes very much, and who likes him. I try to stay out of it, don't ask him what goes on. I've had two appointments with this new doc-

cont.



tor. He's very young and handsome, with shoulder length blond hair. He drinks cokes and eats potato chips. I was not overly impressed with his manner, or what he had to say, but I guess it's -- I hope it's -- the relationship they have that's important.

During Christmas vacation, Julia, Chuck and I travel with friends to the snow. The night before returning home, Chuck and I go for a walk. There is a small moon and the landscape is white in the night. The road is frozen and slippery. We begin to slide -- to run and slide as though we were wearing skates. We're laughing and calling to one another. I see him slide out of sight, disappearing in the darkness. Several yards away he turns and only his face is visible, floating toward me. There is so much I want to say to him, that he looks like his father, the same, sweet charm. I want to talk to him about Chas -- tell him that we did o.k. for two kids who got married at 18 and 20, and it wasn't enough, long enough, for me either. But even after seven years I can't speak of my pain. I want Chuck to know I understand his life, I just want the world to open for him, that learning to read is one way of expanding horizons. I want him to know I love him. His figure looms toward me and I say, "This is the way you make an angel." and I fall backwards into a snowbank and move my arms up and down to make wings. He laughs and helps me back on my feet.

In January of 1973 we all decide Chuck should go to Los Angeles to live with Robert. Chuck agrees to this plan as long as he can take his car. We are barely speaking and the week before he leaves, he stays at his other uncle's house. I feel relief to have him out of the house. His rage and sullenness, by turns, have exhausted me. Robert is the kind of man that Chuck likes to have as a model. He's handsome, has lots of girlfriends, drives a sportscar, and is charming. He is firm about what he expects from Chuck. He has to go to school, he must call when he's not coming home at night -- all the rules we tried to enforce, but that he could not accept coming from Irving and me. I have no letters from Chuck, but Rob sends me his grades from the first report period: a's and b's and one d in music. In the eight months Chuck is in Los Angeles he has several jobs -- one in a Kentucky Fried Chicken washing pans, and another parking cars for a restaurant, where he must turn over all his tips.

*I dream Chuck came to the house. Julia and I were alone and when we saw him coming we turned out the light and ran upstairs. We were lying on my bed. He came into the room, sat down on the bed and began to cry. He said now that he had a job he wanted to come home. He said he was sick with the flu or something. I felt infinite tenderness and love and put my arms around him, hugging and stroking him. I asked if he was hungry, he said, "yes". I was then in the kitchen frying bacon. There was too much bacon grease -- it spilled all over the stove.*

He spends all those months in Los Angeles rebuilding the engine in his 57 Chevy. In August he calls home. When he hears my voice he begins to cry. The engine won't start, he's worked on the car until he's blind and put all his money into it, but it won't run, won't turn over. He hates the car, wants to blow it up, wants to kill himself, can't bear it down there another moment, has no friends, no girlfriend. He's overwhelmed by his life. I suppose I do the wrong thing -- I talk to him as if he were a baby, I soothe him, I tell him how much I love him. I say he can come home. When I speak of sending plane fare, he says he can't come home without the car! But it won't run, is broken. "But Mom, I'm going to keep that car all my life. I'm saving it for my son. Mom, that's my first car!" I say I'll call him back. Irving and I talk and Irving calls him. Chuck's voice is thick from weeping. Irving will borrow a truck and come to Los Angeles. They'll tow the car home.

The car is ugly to me, its rear end raised so high all the plumbing shows underneath. It has wall to wall carpeting inside, and it's chained to our garage like a giant blue albatross. It's chained because Chuck fears it will be ripped off or vandalized by others. He and his friends spend the rest of the summer drinking beer and, stripped to the waist, working on the car. Willing it to run again.

One last day I have him to myself. Just a hot day in Marin and, while waiting for Julia to finish her rehearsal, Chuck, Rick and I drive to Town & Country Club to swim. I am lying on the grass reading Robert Bly's translations of Neruda. Chuck and Rick are swaggering around, checking out the action. I watch them. Rick is tall and thin. His whole bearing suggests the vertical line. His waist seems at chest level. His hair hangs in straight, narrow lines and he ducks his head self-consciously. Chuck is shorter, darker, more muscular. He is as self-conscious as Rick, but older and more successful at hiding it. Both boys walk as if their bodies would break any minute, as though the space around them had jagged points. It is hot and bright and I have a sinus headache. The words on the page do not hold my attention. The boys are diving off the high board -- first Chuck because he's the leader, and then Rick. Down into the water. Out. Up the ladder. Around and around. I realize these bodies walking so awkwardly on land are inherent to the air. Chuck pauses at the end of the board and draws himself together like a striking animal. He sees me watching him. A moment's shock for me, at connecting with those brown eyes, and then he drives his body up and out against the sky. I return to my book, to Bly's English Neruda:

...the savage green  
valley

seen from above, from the hidden window:  
adolescence all sputtering and burning  
like a lamp turned over in the rain ♀





Betsy Galt



# MEMOIRS OF AN INDOOR WOMAN: A COUNTRY JOURNAL

By Lynn Sukenick

SLAM. It hits her as she walks out of it, mean as a hand but bigger, much bigger, she's down, coughing, her mouth and lungs, it's serious, the outline of figures on the shore, laughing uncharacteristically. She wants to squash out this lesson but thirty years later she's glad: the ocean is something to reckon with; not everything slides away from her like ice cream, or gives in.

Nana is buoyant. She holds her in her arms and as the water humps up into waves they are lifted. Easy. Between where they are now and mother and father the waves break and the ocean cuts in half and hits people. Nana knows it is safer to go farther out where things are natural. The little girl wants to be nearer the shore no matter what the penalty. She must get nearer. It feels safer even though it isn't safer. So fear plunks up the inner discord.

The bantam cock is loose in the house. Donny was chased by a bull the day before. And she is frightened of the cows when the single and slow silhouettes mass as a herd at dusk and begin to move toward where she and her mother are standing. The bantam is scrubby and testy, he flaps his brown orange and blue feathers at her to torment her personally. She can't count on the logic that tells her a chicken doesn't climb stairs to the second floor bedroom. Indoors is outdoors and animals are as disobedient as children.

Between her and the front door are the thorny rose bushes, covered with bees. There is a war on and the Japanese beetles, the very opposite of a sailor's perky white uniform, have decimated the leaves; but the bees climb in and out of the pink petals. She stands perfectly still and screams

Mama

Merciless violoncellos. Her mother comes out and protects her with a mantle of amber, feathers, red velvet and steel. Sometimes fleece. She

cannot understand the people who swat wasps with rolled up newspapers. Don't they know that you have to stay still?

It is the only book left in the tiny stationery store that could possibly be of interest to the precocious little girl who has been choosing her own books there since she was three. It is gratifyingly square, the pages matte and thin. But on every page is an enlargement of insects she runs away from in the original: spiders, beetles, mosquitos. She doesn't mind flies in the kitchen like some people do, but a magnified fly is disgusting.

They move into a house near a quiet lake on Long Island. At night the mosquitos dance across the lake's surface, up the street and into her bedroom window. Her father roots out the imperfection, smacks what looks like faint pencil lines on the white wall. Her mother swabs the swelling with witch hazel.

The roses are pretty, trellised, as charming as an illustration in a children's book. The gorgeous tomatoes are hers, there is a picture of her holding up a cluster of the pride of the victory garden. It is the peas she likes most. She opens the thin green purses to find what is concealed inside, the round prizes she wants to play like piano keys, tiny octaves. The black baby grand says PEASE above the keyboard; that's how to find middle C says Mrs. Bissell, who reaches into her blouse: under PEASE.

She is walking with Nana on the longest walk she has ever taken; the tiger lilies unroll like a Japanese scroll at the side of the road, always a little ahead of them. Pansies are her flowers: She still wants to be a little girl, low to the ground; she makes pansy-faces inside her head. Like a Japanese scroll, yes, there is always



print attached, a faint translation trailing behind the randomness; her father could set it in type in his noisy shop. Her grandmother inhales tremendously, urging her to breathe deeply. Isn't this air wonderful! Her grandmother is trying to help. But "flowering" is already only a metaphor, as in "romance" or as in "budding breasts".

There are only sparrows on the sidewalk, and in the city parks, pigeons. The deprivation pains her, she reads about larks, cuckoos, eagles. At 22 she lives near crows and bluejays -- a bit better. When she's 30 they move to a house where the nuthatches visit and chickadees pull out her hair for their nest and the thrillingly red cardinal lands with his mate on the snowy ground. She is busy with her graduate orals but he buys a book and binoculars and becomes a birdwatcher. One day she startles away a rare shrike perched on the rare honey locust tree. She does not want to observe particulars, the punishing spines of the locust tree, she wants to bathe in her new privilege.

On her way through the Port Authority bus terminal she sees a group of Hassidic backpackers and feels hopeful. She has been out of contact with nature because of poverty, fear, and the tradition of nearsighted scholarship which has been a stay in their wanderings. Now her friends have little use for ethics and say it is not a humanistic universe. She agrees but wants to keep the teachings of her ancestors to tide her over, inappropriate as it may be to the new findings. Be nice! Those ancestors were indoors reading when they weren't working a 16-hour day, and were glad to breathe. To observe: to see, notice/to go feelingly through the rituals.

There were sweet william and zinnias and a new (let it be boxwood) hedge. There was no money to go to the country until 1946 Fraenkel's in Connecticut where the door of our cottage wavered black and glossy with the hundreds of moving bodies of those same beetles. The war was over.

Our bodies are our natures, are nature, everyone knows this. I am awake, alive, extend my body, perceive bird, not as pastoral but in its dance-dimension, its practicality. It lives and does and is eaten or eats. The coyote shits, the cat climbs, the squirrel chreeeks and chitters, the deer turns and decides, the redwoods extend their fringe, their season's growth a painter's green, the bay laurel is graceful...

He urges her outside, he paces every night under the stars. She encourages him to go for a walk in the state forest. The inertia of their ancestors is strong. She has not been to camp or been instructed about nature. She has gone to the beach and regarded the sea as wallpaper in a large room where she is sunning herself. She has put shells in a paper bag and taken them home from the flat sandy bargain table filled up every morn-

ing before the beach opens and the crowds press in to make their choices. She has buried bottles in the sand. 1952.

She left home and began to come alive. She walked across a campus terrain that was not marked into wide car strips and narrow pedestrian strips and tiny lawns where every flower was owned and planned. She went to the Cape in winter and drove down that pale crooked finger until it ran out and she looked at and heard the choppy dark irritable ocean. It began to snow. Everything was beautiful. She had it under control. She felt real.

Her boyfriend took her places, or rather, Places. She had never been anywhere. Now I am in Rockport, she would say, and she would register the crisp juicy air, the masts, the gulls, the quaint structures brightly washed with sun. It served her need for expansiveness, quenched her restlessness for a while. But it was not it, not the thing itself. Less than satori was more, she would realize later.

Gaby telling her come out come out for god's sake and look at the white lilac, there aren't many of them. Back, behind the house they shared with five people, behind the garbage cans in fact, a cascade of white, relaxed arc of fragrance that conquered the odor of garbage. Now Gaby wanted her to go for a walk, on top of that. No, she said, I have to go inside, I have to study.

She could not have animals. Threat to the unnatural world with their shit, piss, claws, and loud voices, they were not welcome, got sick or bratty, and were shipped out. "Dear X. I saw my first deer." She was 23, crossing the country. "Dear X. I saw a monarch butterfly." As a child she saw butterflies -- not monarchs -- every day. Every day the ice cream man with his square truck with the little door on the back, the sound of the handle snapping back, the hinge, still excited her and every day a bit of concrete coming up and scraping some skin off her knee, a cross grained wound, and every day a few butterflies wandering by. Their quiet disappearance worse than the extinction of the whooping crane or any thing that didn't inhabit her neighborhood like little layers of skin from her knee changed into yellow or patterned wanderers. Later she had all the monarchs she wanted (and more) at Santa Cruz: they hung from the eucalyptus trees in their brown wrappers or became active in sunlight, their changed bodies a swirl, a rich cluster of black and gold. And on the Mayan peninsula, no, it was at Palenque, a crowd of blue butterflies, fluttery over that luminous weather, made a sidecar to the train.

Nature didn't know she was there. Surprised and hurt she turned to things she could exert her will upon and returned to nature when what she wanted was not to exert her will upon things.

cont.



(She does not have the skills to enter the wilderness. She could fall, get lost, freeze, starve, die, meet a murderous stranger. The last appals her most because irony is most real to her. She will have to read lots of books to learn how to enter that place where she can forget about them.)

A country journal should be a way of getting along, an outbuilding put up slowly by large competent hands, a graceful structure, unplanned, true, never finished. An indoor journal is an unburdening of excess, clearing the piles of shit and scraping the floors so you can find the grained solid oak underneath.

She falls in love and changes her life. She understands that what threatens her is nourishing to most people; she has allowed it to nourish her in a distanced and literary way but now she is willing to enter it completely. She understands she has had poor training and was lucky to get out at all. Where she came from there are still a lot of people getting rich and eating cake in a straight line from where they began. She understands that what is earliest in her life is most important and she won't deny it. A quiet gurgling baby watching the light ride over her crib, her opportunities are limited once she begins to walk. She wonders about grafting on to that small pedestal. But it's the only thing she can do.

Later the ocean was not wall paper. She does not want to write about her intimacy with the Pacific those three years. I have sighted ocean. Or was it okean? Lewis and Clark. Sacajawea.

This year she wants to come to/i want to come to specifics. The mountains will reward her if she studies and pays attention. She needs books to give her the information that will help her to focus and understand the processes, historical, biological, geological, that are occurring in the scenes she can no longer put aside as picturesque. She is not descended from loggers and ranchers but from scholars and shopkeepers but she does not want to start a business, even a literary one, and she finds her disputatious side the worst part of her. The population of angels on the head of a pine (pin!) -- while the sea, drunken as always, collides with itself, or the mountains yawn, and freeze that snowy yawn, making a new mountain.

Country journal from Connecticut, if there had been one: House built 1772 they think. Battle with Indians at top of road in----. No other house in sight. She inspects trees closely with New England tree book. She goes from step two to step three and so on as they tell her. At step twenty-six she discovers it isn't the tree she thought it was; she goes back to step three. She identifies hemlock. She identifies seven wildflowers. Across the road there is St. Johnswort, butter and eggs, anemones, violets on the damp

slope. In the front of the house are crocuses, irises, tulips, daffodils, floppy yellow roses and tight pink China roses. She's invited to pick wild strawberries by an 8 year old. There are so many she and Roberta squat in place, swivel slowly and fill baskets with soft dainty red dots. She is dazzled by her good fortune, by the silence of the meadow -- seven years ago.

After the snow that seals them in in a state of excitement and wonder for four days, an animal appears on the ledge outside their bedroom window. It's a fox, she says, it's a squirrel, it's a dog, it's a fox, it's a dog. It's a raccoon and it comes to live under the house. They feed it strawberries, break eggs it laps up on the kitchen floor. She thinks it's a pregnant female until four months have gone by. In the country everything seems pregnant. She should have reached out and touched more of it. More of it!

I sit and chat with Linda about houseplants. With Linda everything comes together easily, as if our conversation is a crocheting where nothing is wasted, with no strain. Everything is interesting because it's looped, connected. Everything is pretty. We wonder why everyone loves houseplants so much, suddenly. When I'm alone I look around the room searching out opportunities for tenderness: the rich columnea, so lavish with semi-succulent leaves it seems to be directly cooperating with me, the fragile ming tree a dark etching against Carol's real etching against the wall, the lipstick plant that almost died and now has two healthy yellow trumpet-shaped flowers, the big schefflera -- and our soft cat, dark and furry.

I want to write about something happening, some motion, act, narrative. It's possible, though, that nothing is happening. That the only narrative is deep in the eco-system, not visible to the naked eye. Or that I have to walk far into the forest with my tin bowl and my parka before I can say anything. I feel like a tourist among the coyotes and owls I know are around the house, glad neither one has gotten my cat. And I am interested in this language as I sleep under the hou hous and the famous unearthly yowls. There was a rattlesnake in the garage last year and I had bourbon at 3 in the afternoon after a rare flowering of hysteria.

I do not want to change my place of residence again. I cannot go from one set of trees, one kind of weather to another as if it is only a backdrop, with me continually intact. I am not intact when I grow vines of attention and dependence that curl around the poppies, run low to the ground along the yerba buena, knot up in fat wonder at the face-size magnolias. I can feel the pines in my elbows, the redwoods on the ridge opposite in my spine, the roses fill my mouth, brush my chin, I sniff sharply at narcissus, my membranes are lined with the layered scent of new flowers and the memory of the incessant February



fragrance of daphne, the damp earth of winter, the hot dry earth now. My spatial sense includes, no, depends on, the design of the garden. I am just beginning to know all the names, taxonomy, society, of that profusion: elderberry, liquid amber, agapanthus.

They named a plant after those wandering ancestors, called by politer garden clubs Tradescantia.

(I promise not to move through the garden with scissors or camera. Or a mirror. Oh please let the oaks blighted with oakmoths live, let the uncut asparagus grow up again. Only don't take me from here, don't disturb anything, don't let anything die.)

A bird chirps snugly, another lets go of a long whistle like a streamer. They say there was a decade when Edmund Wilson went through deaths divorce all kinds of shit he wrote in his diary about nothing but the lovely upstate landscape. With me it's the opposite -- how to keep the birds from bringing me messages of myself, how to be interested in the hawk in the binoculars when our dinner guests have tried to arouse my angers ... I lie in the hammock and cry, comfortable as an infant. I want to enlist the trees but they can't really move to help me, though their flashing leaves, holes in the wind, bend over me like a canopy.

\*\*\*\*\*

Caught in those dry oceans of wheat. A fish in a box of dust? In her maps of the U.S. she never leaves enough room in the middle. To a New Yorker she tells Demece, Chicago is unnecessary. And now she is heading for the great white bookcase of the Rockies, pitched at the edge of the rug of the plains. She wants to be so high she can see the ocean.

Not so calm traveling. The blank page of the salt desert where everyone else too bored to drive. Eventually scratchy little bouquets of sage leap up, first jotting of flora to come, a dull green to-be-continued dot dot dash the heavy implosive bodies of horses, the fashionable brown and white of pinto kicking up (Cross country the first time going west 1960 reading like a text of nature the lessons got bigger and bigger)...And Oh Lord the long lines of cottonwood trees: salvation is graceful. Ed and Sara are sleeping in the postman's meadow. The desert at dawn desert at dawn no different from the high gleaming polish stuffed velvet gold tassels portrait of Billy the Kid Calamity Jane clink clink of the casinos. Indoors: won twenty dollars.

Flatirons: anchors and pores. Up close! Extreme of air, cold and thin, and sudden precipitous cliffs on the way to Aspen. Dark green pines, chugging close together, neck and neck, up the steep slope. Timberline: sense of arrival. ♀





Zillah woke to the noise of the rain, hard as it struck the shingled roof above her bunk, and softly insinuating when water hit upon water.

Another day. Her husband lay spread-eagled across the bed. She moved softly, hoping to escape from the alcove before, half waking, he would fling his sleep-sweaty body over hers. Nausea rose in her. Ah, but she had made it! Sandals in hand she stood in the narrow passage. Nearby she could hear the heavy morning panting of one of her brothers-in-law. Lack of exercise made the men greedy for their wives, but did Reuma and Mavia resent the attentions of their husbands as Zillah did? In the climate of unspoken hostilities between the three sisters-in-law, outsiders all, such intimacies could not be discussed. The men, being brothers, shared another kind of hostility. Old fights might be revived at a moment's notice. Still, fisticuffing and shoving ended mostly in laughter or a practical joke.

In the big room her mother-in-law was fanning a charcoal fire with a goose wing. "Does she ever sleep?" thought Zillah, extending a formal greeting. "You are late for milking," the old woman said, her voice clipped and stern, but she looked at Zillah not unkindly.

Descending the stairs Zillah heard the lowing of the cow, the stomping of hooved feet and the cackling sounds of feathered things. The smell hit her heavily and in another wave of nausea she steadied herself against the wall, milking jars in hand. Reuma and Mavia laughed whenever she was retching.

"You'll be fine, dearie, in just a little while," they giggled. But Zillah, only recently separated from her mother's tender concern, was repelled by the coarseness of her new family.

She felt better now and made her way to the goat stall. The billy goat, large and ill-smelling, blocked her way. She had to shove with all her strength to reach the doe. Now she crouched down, leaning her forehead, still hot from retching, against the flank of the animal who stood still after a few moments of pawing. Zillah squeezed her teats. Hiss, hiss, hiss. The stream of milk hit the vessel and the rhythmic sound wove a strand of peace between them.

Then Zillah flapped the empty udders and encircled the goat's neck with her arms. The animal suffered her closeness; turning her head sideways, her slitted eyes looked as if questioning.

"Arala, Arala," the girl whispered. That was the name Zillah had chosen when she had found the doe, still slimy and birth-wet in her father's pasture. "What a beautiful goat," she had said to him. "She should be yours," her father said. "Had it not been for your cleaning the mucus from her nostrils, she would never have lived."

And Arala had been part of the dowry Zillah took with her. Later Zillah was not surprised that her father-in-law had pointed to the goat when it came to loading the animals they would take. The fine line from neck to flank, the hollows of her pelvis and the even udders pointing outwards could not escape the approval of the old man. And now Arala was the last link between Zillah and her childhood.

# TWO OF A KIND

BY Liselotte Erlanger

She left the goatstall and went to attend to the sheep and the cow. She was getting hungry for her breakfast of milk and wheat cakes. There had been olives too in a big barrel; but a few days ago her mother-in-law had begun to ration them, which meant - for men only.

Zillah touched the small swelling of her belly. How she hoped for a girl! Yet she knew that this unsaid, almost unthought wish would displease Japhet. He had slapped her buttocks the other night, saying, "You'll give me a fine son, to be sure!"

Should she bear a daughter, the joy that would flow to her would be short-lived. Her girl child would grow and a stranger would come to claim her for his wife. And they would have to part and never see one another again! Tears rose in her when she thought of her mother who was lost forever out there in the waters, dead, like everyone else. HE-WHOSE-NAME-NONE-COULD-MENTION had told her father-in-law about the waters, and that He would spare the old man only, his sons and their wives.

"Why only us?" Zillah had asked when he told her about it at their first encounter.

"Because I am righteous!" her father-in-law replied.

Zillah's mother had come on the two days' journey to hand over her daughter and dowry to the new kin. She motioned Zillah not to press the point any further. Still, it had been quite a surprise to the two women when they first met the father-in-law.

The old man, his white hair and beard blown by the sea breeze, was measuring great beams of wood which his sons were lashing together. "No," the old man yelled, "they are not long enough! Three hundred cubits is what HE-WHOSE-NAME-NONE-CAN-MENTION wants. Add more length, Shem, add more!"

The son named Shem struggled with yet another beam while her father-in-law was free to greet his new daughter-in-law. In a timid voice Zillah asked what they were building. He answered briefly, yelling loudly over the shore-wind and then turned to the bridegroom who stood by, shuffling his feet. "Why are you standing there? Take her and her mother to the women's quarters. After all, aren't we known for our hospitality? Can't you see that they are tired from their journey?"

In the women's quarters, Zillah's mother, alone with her daughter for the last time, snickered about the old man. "Righteous he is!"

"Why did he say that?"



"I fear he's a bit of a bigot! I must say I can't imagine why he would build such a preposterous thing. But how were we to know?"

She reproached herself. "We knew so little about Japhet when he came to ask for your hand in marriage. That he came from a good family. An old-fashioned family, but good. How could we know that your father-in-law is..." and hesitant to speak the word while a guest in his house, she pointed her finger to her forehead.

"I certainly would not have given permission for you to marry Japhet had I known! Neither would your father. But what is done, is done, daughter. Now that you are their kin you must make the best of it. Other people, other customs," she added philosophically. They embraced and kissed for the last time.

It seemed so long ago. During the first weeks of her marriage the menfolk of her new family returned home each night, exhausted from their task of building. Three tiers high they built, just as HE-WHOSE-NAME-NONE-CAN-MENTION had demanded. After that they boiled pitch for days on end. It sat blackly under the men's fingernails and matted the hair on their heads, their chests. And the stench of it! Zillah, her sense of smell sharpened by early pregnancy, could smell the men walking towards home in the evening.

After the pitching her father-in-law began to collect the animals. Two of each kind; those that are clean, and those that are not clean, and of fowl and everything that creeps on the earth. When it came to collecting the birds, what arguments! Ham brought back two ringed pheasants, black-banded, crested, with their tail feathers dragging after them in colors of beauty. Shem laughed, "Don't you know that those are two males?" "But they are two of a kind," Ham insisted. "They look alike."

"But they don't have to look alike to be two of a kind," insisted Shem. He pointed to a pair of scarlet tanagers whose activities made it clear that they were male and female. "They don't look alike, still they are two of a kind."

"You and your know-it-all wisdom," grumbled Ham.

"Brother, I am telling the truth. After all, you don't look like your wife. Maviah, she got those big tits, whereas all you got on your chest is hair. But then, you got something dangling between your legs that she hasn't got. She's got something down there which is different from what you have! I'd check it out myself, but HE-WHOSE-NAME-NONE-CAN-MENTION would surely strike me dead if I looked at my brother's wife."

Ham was furious now. "And what has your wife between her legs? And for that matter what have you? It can't be much, otherwise you'd have something to show for all your laboring and panting."

Shem, red in anger, told Ham to plow his own vineyard. Japhet stood by silently. Zillah had wondered: did he suspect? She had not known how to tell him. But one morning, when the women were washing themselves at the stream, Zillah's shift slipped from her shoulder. Her mother-in-law

looked at her breasts, swollen and full. Assessing Zillah as if she were a goat to be purchased, "Girl," she said, "I think you'll please me before long. Before those others," pointing at Reuma and Maviah. Since then she had seen to it that Zillah had all the milk and cheese she wanted and watched that the girl should not carry heavy loads.

Carrying loads -- or not carrying them -- had been a big issue. Sacks of wheat and millet, for family and animals, had to be carried down the narrow gangways. After that came baskets of turnips and cabbages and the bowels of the ship seemed to devour bale after bale of hay. There were olives in barrels and jars of honey and the large wheels of cheeses that her mother-in-law had turned each day carefully and oiled to preserve. Everything disappeared inside the ship, was piled up, stacked and stored.

After that the doors closed as if by themselves and the rains began. Day and night and night and day.

The waters rose, lifting the ark with them. Looking through the porthole the family saw pastures flooded, houses disappearing. They saw people struggling up the lands now, carrying their belongings, their children, waving frantically for help. Some huddled in desperate groups on the tufty grass. Horses paddled in the waters; later their heavy swollen bodies drifted by. Everything was adrift and afloat and everywhere was the smell of death and decay. They saw a young man who clung to a crude raft, holding an aged woman in his arms. "Save her," he cried, "Save my mother." But Noah, shaking his head, floated past. Zillah grasped at his sleeve. "Help him, please help him!" she begged. The old man's farsighted eyes had focused for many hours on the horror outside; he readjusted his vision and looked at her in surprise. "I can't," he said. "I can't help anyone. HE-WHOSE-NAME-NONE-CAN-MENTION had told me to save none but myself and my kin and the animals we collected." "Help just a few of them, please," she wept. "Be quiet," he reprimanded her. "I am just carrying out orders."

Was it that even he could no longer bear to be witness to so much misery or had he received further orders? One morning he cut planks, fastened them to the porthole, barring it almost completely, leaving only one board loose, which could be easily lifted. Here he would stand and peer at the rising waters, the risen waters, for hours at a time. But when he left his post his sons removed the slat to hang out fishing lines. And what fish could be caught! Heavy-bodied bass, spiny rockfish, silvery tunnies and fish of the deep that no one had ever seen before, nor dreamed they existed.

There had been no sign of anything living or dead above the waters for many days. Zillah did not know how long it had been, although she knew that her father-in-law had notched a large beam above the table for each day and sat counting them to himself.

cont.



When Zillah had milked the sheep and the cow she returned upstairs. The brothers were already at the table, playing their interminable dice game, waiting for their mother to cook the flat cakes on the hot stones. The old man had lifted the loose slat from the porthole and surveyed the grey expanse of water, pitted by rain.

"Oh, Dad," cried Ham, "Must you keep on looking at it? Isn't it enough that we can hear it day in and day out? Shut that hole, for the love of HE-WHOSE-NAME-NONE-CAN-MENTION."

The old man rewarded his son with an angry glance and barred the porthole while Zillah poured the fresh milk for the men. Reuma handed them the wheatcakes. They stuffed themselves, slurping their milk with gusto.

Where some milk had been spilled, flies were hovering. The old man, armed with a fly swatter fashioned from rushes, pounced at them furiously. "Two of a kind only," he cried, "two of a kind." Ham began to laugh. "What if you kill all the females and don't have two of a kind left?"

"I can kill all but those," the old man cackled, pointing to a pair of flies engaged in coitus. He watched them with obvious satisfaction, slipping an upturned bowl over them.

"The rest are superfluous. Two of a kind only," he repeated, swatting away.

The women hurriedly ate the remaining wheatcakes and the old woman carried the bowls to be washed. She gave a sign to the young women that it was time for chores. They descended; at first level, among the ruminants Zillah's sisters-in-law pitched hay while Zillah filled the mangers. Ham followed them. His gross presence filled the gangway.

"Anything new around here?" he called.

Zillah tensed with fear and touched her rounded belly. She thought of the morning when she had found the new-born she-calf, a flecked, graceful thing. Imitating his father and with the cry "Two of a kind only," he rushed at the calf and, bending its neck backwards, had slit its throat. Before it ceased twitching he was already hacking away at it and carrying bloody chunks of meat downstairs from where the yapping of the dogs, the wolves, the hyenas could be heard. Zillah, vomiting and holding on to Reuma, had wept in anger. She had seen her father and her brothers kill many a buck or bull calf whose flesh was needed to feed the family. There was no sentimentality in her tears. But her peasant's eye had seen the newborn calf as a future source of buckets of foaming milk, rounds of cheese, as speckled calves springing from her womb. And all destroyed in one fell of a knife. HE-WHOSE-NAME-NONE-CAN-MENTION could not possibly sanction the killing of a she-calf.

Since that morning she hated to check each stall, each cage, fearing to find more than two. Even now she noticed that the female rabbit had retreated into a nesting box and pulled the fur from her neck ruff in preparation for kindling.

When the women descended to the lower level the smell became more acrid, more ammonial. Zillah began to heave. Reuma could not suppress

a smile but good-naturedly offered: "I'll do the stalls if you just toss them whatever food we have." There were pieces of fish in a basket, and tearing them in appropriate portions Zillah threw them to the fox, the eagle, the hyena. She made her way to the end of the passage where the pigs were kept. As she approached the sow came to the front of the stall, her mobile nostrils twitching, her eyes searching for food. Smelling the pieces of fish she snuffled, and made low calling noises until from the dark the boar emerged. Both animals raised themselves on their hind legs, their thin, black-hoofed feet looking almost human. Zillah watched them in fascination. But Maviyah had come up behind her and reproachfully spread the wide sleeve of her gown over Zillah's eyes. "In your condition you should not look at anything so unclean," she scolded.

"Go back upstairs," Reuma added. Zillah complied. On the upper deck alone, she once more peered into the rabbit cage when suddenly she heard the pip, pip, cheep, cheep, of mother hen to chick. She had not heard it for so many weeks. Where did it come from? She followed the sound and the cheeping rose in urgency: she must be close to the hen. There half hidden behind a pile of hay she saw the tiny yellow fluffs, their high voices now rising in frenzied fear at her approach. She bent low, trying to reach for one of the chicks, to hold it, to caress it. At that moment, the mother hen, her tail feathers raised like a turkey cock's in heat, flew at her, almost hitting her face. Zillah withdrew. "Goodness," she laughed, "You sure look after your own."

Turning she reached in one of the bins to strew some grain for the little flock. The noise of the chicks rose momentarily to a more strident note, then tapered off as the chicks were close to their mother, feeding. Zillah laid a trail of feed towards one of the large hay piles, hoping to settle the little flock behind it and out of sight. Suddenly there was a shadow near her. Had one of the men seen her? They would, she knew, make fine sport of the chicks, chase them and the mother hen until all the little ones were caught and served -- some hapless morsels -- to the animals below.

But there was a hand on her shoulder, gentle, tentative. Her mother-in-law stood next to her.

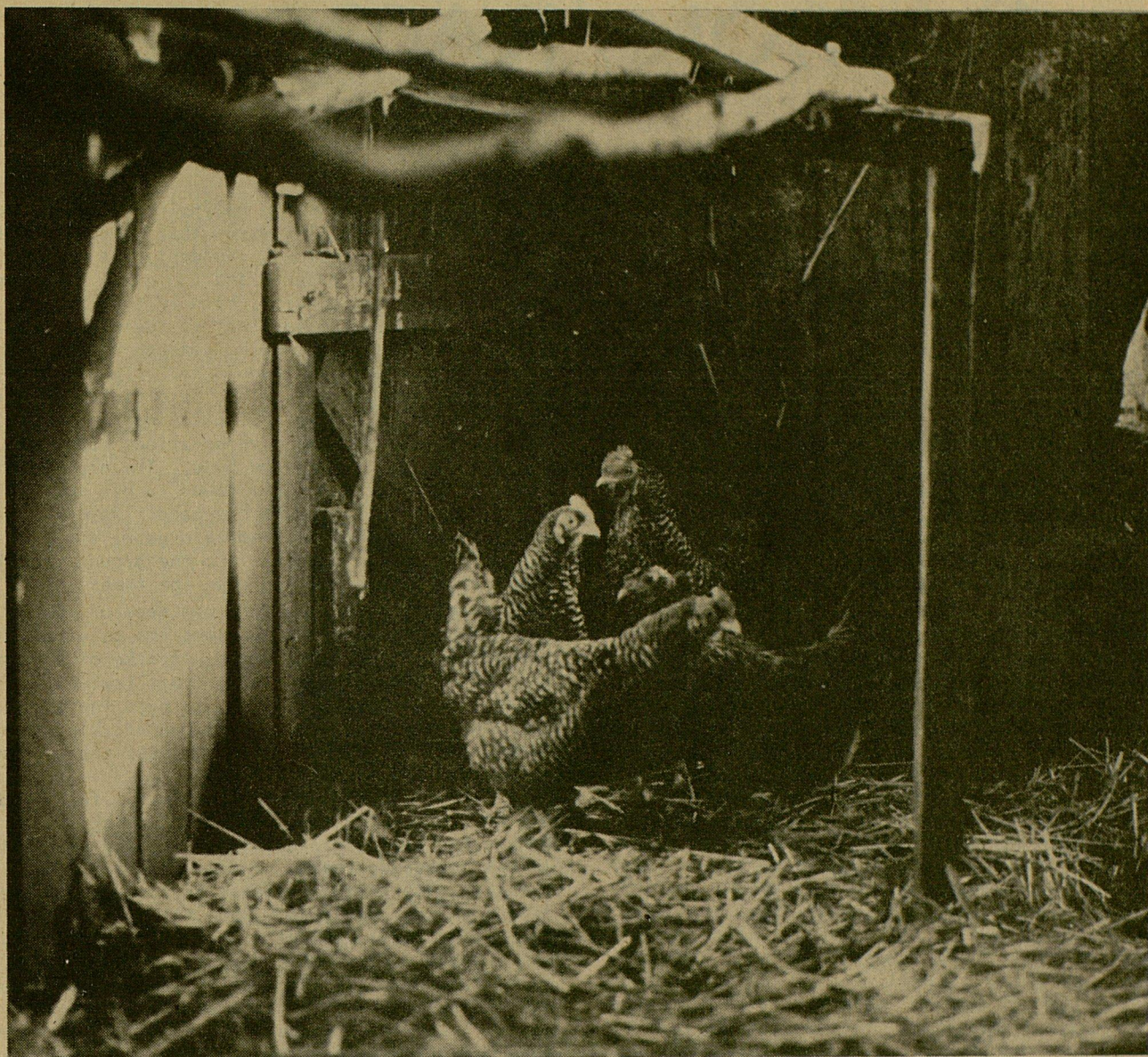
"How pretty they are!" she smiled. "I never get tired of seeing chicks. They give me such joy!"

Zillah and the old woman looked at one another. There was a flash between them of closeness, of kinship, of love.

"We'll move more hay in front of the hen," the mother-in-law said softly, beginning to push her weight against it. "And hope that she stays behind it. What a nice little flock that will make. Just right for you to start with if we ever get out of here." They worked silently, like conspirators.

Later Zillah climbed the stairs slowly behind the old woman. And was aware of some change. The noise of the rain had ceased. ♀





Madeline



# RAMON/RAMONA

Sharon Doubiago

Florine's birthday party, 14, a year older than the rest of us. 7th grade is over, now we are 8th graders. The summer days are hot, but nights we wear new strapless bras, full-starched petticoats, and pony tails, slow-dance in this old farmhouse enclosed by Eucalyptus trees.

All through the wondrous night the Platters sing Earth Angel. Eddie and Claudia are dancing, her head rests on his shoulder, a couple forming that will be together all through high school. They will be all that the rest of us will want to be. I am dancing with Ramon. It doesn't seem that I really like him, though when we break at the end of each song, I feel regret and everyone is making comments about our being in love. I don't feel in love. I feel his body next to mine. I feel the slow, consummate moan of the music moving our bodies together. Over his shoulder I watch the other couple who seem beautiful and perfect dancing around us as we dance, earth angel, earth angel, will you be mine? and I want this, this body dancing with me, though I seem to have no words for it. Is this how it begins, the long fall? I look into his dark face that is looking into mine. A tremor of fear passes through me. He is strange and foreign. Indian, he says, Mojave. No Mexican. When I get home my blonde hair is dark and oily from his oiled black hair.

Every day I walk the 3 miles to Ramona, down the granite hills, along the dirt roads, the temperature always over 90°, sometimes as high as 120° in the shade. I walk past the place where last summer, my first summer in Ramona, Larry's father was digging a well. Larry was dark, handsome, fullgrown like me, though only 14. He came to my house on horseback, riding 20 miles over the valley from Poway. He played guitar and sang the songs of The Sons of the Pioneers. *All day I face/the barren waste/without a drink/of water/Cool, clear water....* He showed me the diamond used for drilling. He threw me down in the bushes of the dry river bed and then I saw his face for the first time, the intensity of something in him. His eyes were shocking, the same blue light as the summer sky behind them. Some rare clouds floated like rivers over his body, rivers this land has never known, and I saw something in him that I loved. But usually he was lost behind his lovely words, his dramatic gestures, the important role he was acting out. I was bored. I lost interest.

The summer is dark and green here in the park. Ramon and I have been swimming, our bodies alive from hours in the cold water. We come down the hill walking beneath Eucalyptus, Sycamore. He says let's sit down here awhile. We lie in the

deep cool grass, within a half-circle of Oleander bushes. We are talking words that we don't hear. I am lying on my stomach. Suddenly his hand is moving beneath my breasts and the grass. My surprise is deep and genuine, both in that he has done this and in the way that it feels. I have prepared for years not to be seduced but this isn't what I thought it would be. I'm prepared in my mind, in my will. This is different. This is in my body. The feel of his fingers on my breast is amazing, the reverberations sounding and calling all through my body. The nipple seems to grow like a small tower to his touch. I'm afraid he will remove his hand. Ramon. Ramon. I know nothing of female orgasm, but across the park I am moving deep into the ground vaguely aware of a figure walking down the tree-lined path, vaguely hoping that no one sees us, until the green of the park has become the color of the sun setting, corals and pinks, streaks of violent red and my pounding insisting heart trying to reach through to his fingers, to push the tower the blood the trees, myself through to him, Ramon, Ramon, to drown with my blood forever the enormous and boring space of childhood.

I don't fall in love with him. I fall into his body, into his coppercolor and thick Mojave bones, his teeth so startling white and straight in his fierce darkness. I fall into his story, his life, its strange alienation from others. A foster child. He doesn't know his parents. He lives on a small farm with an old cranky couple who receive money from the county for him. He works for them. He isn't well-liked, not even by our classmates, and he has lived here all his life. I am new to Ramona. In school I am smarter than he. I suspect he can't read but he is more interesting to me than anything in a book.

My father is angry with me. He accuses me of not loving him. He accuses me of not liking Ramona because I don't like him. He accuses me of sitting around thinking up ways to hurt him. He accuses me of avoiding him. On my 13th birthday 3 weeks after moving to Ramona, he hits me, a blow that throws me across the garden space he is plowing, and something in me closes to him. Now we fight all the time. He hits me and the strength of his body to level mine, which is full-grown and large astonishes and angers me even more than the injustice I feel at his anger, more than the horror of the mistakes he is making with me. I don't understand why my mother takes his shit. I'll always tell him what I think. I'll never hesitate before his stupid brute strength. I can understand his screwed-up heart. I can't understand his violence, the physical strength in his arms.



But it's true. I hate Ramona. It is slow, hot, old, dead, the people ignorant and small. We left the city because they were afraid of my growing up there. They made me leave my best friend, Susan, and my heart is broken for her. My old jr. high was 50% Mexican with a heavy delinquency rate. There were weekly marijuana raids on the lockers. They were afraid I'd be raped, afraid I'd fall in love with a Mexican. Watch-out, my father warned me in the 6th grade. Mexicans like blondes. When I started trying to find the 3-3:30 rock-n-roll station on the radio they became even more worried.

On my first day of school in Ramona a used condom was thrown at me, hitting me in the face. The delinquency here is worse than in the city, I try to tell them. It's crazier, different. There's nothing to do here. The kids come to school drunk. In the city you never see the kids after school, or the homes they live in, or their parents and what they're like. Here there's no place to hide. Everyone knows everyone else and everyone is afraid. Everyone is bored. There's nothing to do but gossip. Everyone is watching, gossiping about you. Everyone is afraid of the gossip about themselves. The hills are barren, stark, dry. There's no place to hide. Everyone drinks. They get crazy and loud. They fight. They drag their cars all over the hills seeking release.

Daddy opens a drive-in restaurant in Ramona. We borrow the money to do it. My mother, my sister and I work as the waitresses. Sometimes on weekends Ramon is drunk. He drinks with the older Indians, with the sailors who come up the mountains from San Diego. From inside the drive-in I can see him weaving down Main Street in the dark. I beg him not to drink. The intensity of my feelings is confusing. It is as if I am jealous of the experience, of what goes on between him and the others and of what he knows when he is drunk.

In the 8th grade the girls go swimming at Claudia's reservoir. They take off their clothes but my breasts are much larger than theirs. I'm embarrassed by the way the nipple shrivels to the cold air, not knowing if that is natural. I wear my bathingsuit. They are disgusted with me. Still, there is the first time I find myself wanting to undress in front of Ramon. For no reason but to show him my body. The desire is confusing.

On Saturdays when everyone is gone Ramon comes to the house. I stay home on the pretense of cleaning it. Before he arrives I vacuum. The radio plays the thrilling songs of a man named Elvis Presley. With such a name I imagine the singer is 48 years old, fat and balding. It doesn't matter. He is my favorite musician, his voice breaking through the artificial boundaries, the enforced boredom on the world. Ramon comes and we lie on my bed for hours kissing and caressing each other. The heat is intense but our bodies forget and our passion moves us through hours, sweet explosion after explosion rippling through my body. I catch my reflection in the

mirror and understand why he loves me without clothes. I love him without clothes, his penis the same beautiful copper color as the rest of him. But though sometimes we are even naked together we never have intercourse. My will is impenetrable. No amount of passion is greater than my determination not to get pregnant, not to be one of those girls in Ramona humiliated and forced to get married. I don't want to ever be forced to do anything. He seems to understand and accept. Occasionally he rises and goes in the bathroom and I'm aware that he's ejaculating. Sometimes Daddy is suddenly in the house and there's not time for him to get away. I hide him in my closet, in temperature another 10° higher than the already 100°. Talking to Daddy. Cleaning the house, my body sweaty and shaky from the experience. My hair oily and dark. Sneaking glasses of water to Ramon in the closet.

The great citizens come to the drive-in late at night to talk to my father. You should keep your daughter away from that Ramon. He's no good. He's bad. Maybe you don't realize. Your daughter is beautiful. He's an Indian, an orphan, an alcoholic, a thief.

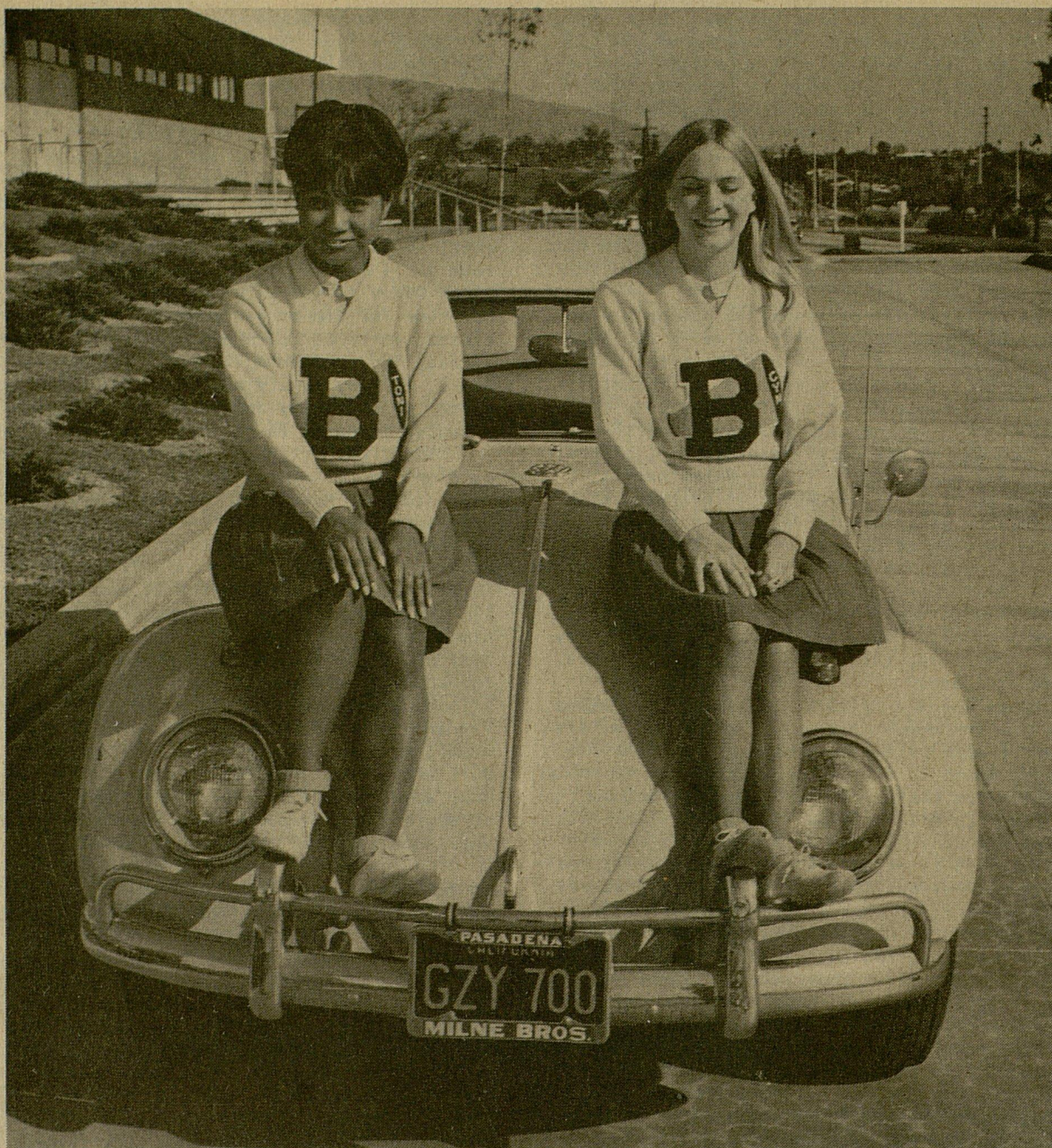
Sometimes I wonder if they know things about him that I don't. But it doesn't matter. I know him as no one else does. I keep silent when I hear what they say, feeling great waves of scorn. Indian, what difference does that make? I keep silent because to even utter the words is to give credence to the whole stupid town, bending, it seems, to smash us with its cruel ignorance, its dull small heart, eschewing even its namesake. What about Ramona, I want to run down Main Street screaming, who eloped with a Temecula Indian? What about Ramona? What about Ramona?

My father makes me date other guys in order to date Ramon. At least he knows better than to cut me off from him altogether. I suspect he thinks Ramon such a loser that the encounter with others will open my eyes. The phone rings all the time. Sailors, marines, college and high school boys from the city. Ramona High School boys, men 20 years older than me. They drive up the hill on motorcycles, horses, sportscars, pickup trucks. But like Larry, most of them seem transparent, their motives obvious, their self-interests, while feigning interest in me, overwhelming. I like the sailors best because they come from faraway places and tell me about them. I like Ramona High School boys least because they are all alike and seem to come from nowhere. They bring me presents. Always they tell me I am beautiful. But then very quickly they tell me that I am not. They seem offended somehow; you're not so beautiful, they say, almost sneering. It is as if they are competing with me and want to beat me down.

I'm in the sportscar of a 20 year old boy from La Jolla so that I can go to the dance with Ramon on Saturday. He has been telling me how rich he is. He has a scrapbook with newspaper clippings and photos proving that he is an international tennis star. As he is pointing out how great he looks in one of the pictures he swerves

cont.





the car too sharply and we land nose-down in a ditch. When he takes me home we are still shaking. He sneers at the smallness of our house. Is this the way most men are? Oh, Ramon, where are you? I love you.

Daddy raises rabbits. He takes my 9 year old brother out to watch them mate, to teach him the facts, he says, of life. I dare not ask to go with them though I want to.

At night in Ramona it is so silent Daddy says he has trouble sleeping. I lie in my bed unable to sleep, unable to get used to this strange place, to the strange things happening with my body and with Ramon. My anger at Daddy.

Tonight there are the strange noises of the Santana wind. The night is immense with stars I have never seen before the silver-granite hills beneath their light seemingly alive like an animal, and dangerous. The Pepper tree sways and scrâpes violently against the window. In a quiet between gusts comes the strange yelping of coyotes as they run in packs over the hills. Today I saw Lobo. He lives right behind our hill. A man with dark hair and beard down to his waist. The kids at school say he roams the hills at night pretending he's a wolf. I keep thinking he's in the Pepper tree looking in at my sister and I sleeping. I remember the peeping toms of the



city. I worry about Ramon respecting me. Mama has told me for years that men don't respect women who have sex with them. Men love virgins. I read everything I can find about sex, but nothing explains the explosions. I can think of no other word for them. First you hear a voice way-off, calling you. You only begin to listen and then the voice grows louder and louder, calling to you, calling to you until soon your whole body begins to fill with the voice, to shake with the rhythm of its great song. It floods your ears until it is a roar and then an explosion of many smaller explosions, exploding, exploding, exploding. It will be 3 years before I read about female orgasm.

Mama talks about the beauty of Ramona. She says it is the reason we moved here. That and what happened to Daddy last fall. It was right after Grandma died, his mother, and he was on a fishing trip in the Sierras. After hours of walking, suddenly, as he rose up over another hill, he had what she calls a religious experience. Suddenly, he saw the land. Suddenly, it came into his body. He was 37 years old, had been born and raised in the mountains of Tennessee, but he had never seen the earth before. His body had been closed. All his life he had been unhappy. Now he understands more. It changed him. Mama looks at me and my new anger and seems to ask me to understand the land, to love Ramona. I don't. I feel new things in my body but it is not the land. If the land is so great, I want to say to her, why then are the people here so narrow? Even as a small child when we went for our Sunday rides I always wanted to go to the ocean. They always wanted to go to the mountains.

North, in the mountains, where most of the Indians live, are the reservations. There are more reservations in San Diego County than any other county in the country. The last place the Indians could be pushed, I think. They are small reservations in some cases with only one family living on a whole reservation. Aileen, the most popular girl in high school, the head cheerleader, has married Ramon's cousin, the only relative he knows, and has gone to the reservation to live. One night in a bar in Las Tules he is castrated by six other Indians because he made love with one of their women. I don't believe the story until Ramon visits him at County Hospital. I can't believe something so horrible could happen to a person. I wonder about the rest of his life. I wonder that he was unfaithful to the most beautiful girl in high school. I wonder what she will do.

On Saturdays when Ramon comes he tells me of an underground river that flows under our house, coming all the way from Canada. I try to imagine it, longing as I do for water, cool, clear water, for pines, for ferns, for the cool rushing sound of water. Sometimes I'm determined not to make out with him anymore. Sometimes I am bored and want to do something else. In the window the Pepper tree is still in the summer heat. But then his hands and tongue are on my nipples.

At night he calls me. He confesses that he does it to his cow. He can't help it. He hates himself for it, has to get drunk afterwards, talks of killing himself. He says if I will do it with him maybe he can break the habit. I try to explain to him that it doesn't seem horrible to me. I can think of a lot worse things. It leaves me breathless to think of it, and even jealous, but I think the cow must love him too.

Sundays. Mornings, evenings, I attend Sunday School. I do it in order to see Ramon. There was a long time, before Ramona, when I was very religious. Then Jesus came nightly to my bedside when I prayed. He hovered over my bed, listening to me, sharing with me his Love and Knowledge. I prayed to him about everyone I knew. The nights were real, the dark room, his vivid face, the glow around his body, the unmistakable goodness of it. Hours in the dark with him, wandering over the earth with him, seeing, sharing the people's suffering, but more, seeing the real intent in people's motives. Always, he pointed out to me, the intent is love. Even in the worse deeds, the initial longing is love. I wonder now that the intensity for him is gone, yet I know he lives permanently within me and I understand instinctively the truth of cycles. Now is simply not the time of his outer presence; he is submerged within me. I am he. He is me.

We make our love across from the church, in the deserted halls of the grammar school. A stucco cubicle leading to the main office becomes our place, the one we can always go to, our bodies swimming like fish toward the mysterious mouth of our river home, until I am exploding 3, 4, 5 times, hours, with the want to mesh forever with him, to find myself in his skin, my bones growing in his body. I'm aware of not only Jesus being here, knowing this of me, but my grandmother also. In death I know there are no space or time barriers, and in death, I know there are no sexual taboos. Oh, grandma, now you know it's ok. Now you know it's good.

Sometimes over the sounds of our bodies I hear the cars of the high school kids dragging Main Street, the faint sounds of the band in the high school gym playing the dance we have left to come down here to make out. There is a part of me that regrets our having left, though I was restless while there; a part of me that feels I am missing something. I never lose sense of where I am, not even when the explosions come. Sometimes it's like I am watching myself, like I am anxious, nervous, wanting more. I walk through Ramona wanting to break out of something, I don't even know what it is. Everyone around me, everything, the land, the people says I should calm down.

During school when I walk by this place I wonder that there is no trace of our passion or deeds. None, none at all. Small children and stuffy-looking teachers swarm in the place having no idea of the love that goes on there. How strange life is. I look closer to the stucco walls of our corner where his body finally pushes mine into this world, and yet there is no trace

cont.



of it. It is as with the bodies of my girl-friends. I wonder if the explosions are happening to them too. How strange I think, the body in space and time. How strange, I think, history is, that places bear no visible mark of what went on in them. How strange the land, witness to so much. I try to look at it to see what has happened. I can see nothing.

I walk along the road thinking of our dark Indian children. I think in four years we can marry. On the one hand I don't want to marry Ramon. On the other I am too deeply committed to him to see any way out. There is a smallness about him that I don't respect.

In Ramona there are no books. I like to read but it's hard finding anything to read. The librarian seems unhappy when I walk in. She sneers like I'm a whore or something. Everyone in Ramona thinks I'm pregnant. It hurts me but I'm beginning to care less about my reputation. I read a book about Jedediah Smith, the man who made the first recorded journey from the Missouri River to California in 1826. He camped a week with the Mojave tribes of the Colorado River, who then guided him across the desert to San Diego. From there he went north to the Stanislaus River, across the Sierras and the great desert and back to Utah. He then led 18 men down the route the year before. They camped another week with the Mojaves who by now were Smith's favorite Indians. The book talked about the good-humored bare-breasted Mojave women who thought it an honor to ask a white man to sleep with them, the women occupying a free and equal position in their society. They slept together, feasted, built their rafts to cross the river. But midstream, without any warning, the Mojaves ambushed the whites. Ten men died while Smith and the others escaped into the desert to the west.

We are walking the highway to his house from church. I'm wearing high heels, nylons, a pink sheath dress. He takes me out to the barn and the cow he milks and screws. The afternoon is hot like all the others. We lie in the scratchy hay. Through the rise of our rhythm I watch the mysterious cow standing heavy and large above us, her belly rising as we rise, and great flops of shit coming out of where I think he must put it in. I wonder about semen in a cow. Then, it is the first time I see semen. The spill of it all over my bare belly. Suddenly I'm afraid. I have to keep myself from crying because he is crying. I tell him it's ok. The smell of the hay and shit. The smell of his whole race on my belly. I wonder who is in it. God! I'm not going to get pregnant.

He walks me home. Though I have walked the road now every day this summer he knows Ramona in a way I find incomprehensible. He has grown up here, roaming and playing in her granite and sage hills. He talks about them excitedly, with a seriousness that awes me, I, who move through them to get beyond them, the hot, thorny arroyos with their rattlesnakes, tarantulas, black widows,

scorpions, lizards. The whining coyotes, the old men who live in crumbling hot trailers propped against high boulders buy him liquor, the other Indians, the strange laws of the reservations in the mountains where he goes. Lobo with his long hair and wild eyes. I think of the weird woman seen in town sometimes, a tall thin white woman with a limp who is married to one of the chiefs. He is fat and dark and always drunk. She is the dirtiest person I have ever seen, her hair matted, her face bearded and clogged with soil. Ramon says she's on dope, many Indians are, but they think of it differently than we do. It is said she has many Indian children, lives in a tepee in the winter, outdoors in the summer, does all her cooking over an open fire, and that is why she is dirty. I stare at her. I can't comprehend why she stays with such a man and lives in such a way. Why do women submit to so much for a man? I think she's opened to the land all right, like Mama says, and look what it's done to her. Yet something in this woman draws me to her.

As we walk along he points out "Ramona" to me. I have never seen her before but she is visible, he says, over the whole Santa Maria Valley. She lies on her back, perfectly formed in the southern granite mountains, her gravelly hair spraying out behind her head, her arms and shoulders, her breasts, belly and legs against the blue sky. The mountains behind her hair are in Mexico, he says and Ramona is her white man's name. The Indians won't tell what it really is, but they believe that someday she will get up again and then the Indians will have their land back.

He traces for me the course of the underground river. It flows directly under your house, he says. How can you tell? He becomes fierce, like I've insulted him. I know! I know this land. I've slept over it. It's enormous. I can hear water falling through granite hundreds of feet below. They shouldn't bring water from the Colorado. It's wrong. There's water right here, right under our feet. Plenty of it. But no one will believe me. I'm just an Indian. He pulls me down in the Eucalyptus grove and beyond his face I see Ramona in the sky line of the southern mountains, an angel caught in earth, and think the world is an underground river of semen and vaginal juices. I think I want to live in Northern California where I've never been, but where I've read it's cool and foggy, with plenty of water on top of the land, making everything lush and green.

The well is dry. We spend most of the summer without water. Daddy's tomatoes, corn and squash wither in the garden. The only hope is to deepen the well which is expensive. Still they must do it. The 30 foot well is drilled another 30 feet through sheer granite. No water. Another 30 feet of granite. No water. Down a hundred feet. There is talk of giving up. All of Ramona is watching, waiting. Is there water? Can we live here? Ramon tells me to tell them to keep going. There's a huge river under there. He stops at the drive-in to tell my father to keep drilling. My



father won't talk to him. The well is drilled deeper. 150 feet. 200 feet. Sheer granite, no water: these words on everyone's lips. At 250 feet the drilling is stopped. The expense is too great, the prospects too hopeless. Ramon spends the afternoon walking the underground river with the well digger, Larry's father. *Oh, Dan, can't you see/that big green tree/where the water's flowing free/and it's waitin there for you and me/Cool clear water....* Larry's father brings a water witch to the site. The dowsing rod almost jumps out of his hand. He believes. He offers to drill the rest of the way at his own expense. His livelihood depends on there being water. At 260 feet water is struck, water shooting all the way through granite to the sky. An artesian well. Ramona is saved.

One Saturday morning in my bedroom, he is depressed and angry. He says his foster parents are going to make him leave. Then suddenly my mother is home and he flees through the window and down the Pepper tree. My mother and I are in the living room when I look out the window and see Ramon walking down the middle of the driveway in full view. Luckily my mother doesn't look up, but I am frightened and don't understand. When I ask him about it he says he just doesn't care anymore. I am shocked, my sense of betrayal greater than any I have known. What about me? I want to say. If my mother had seen... I would never let you down like that. I know from that day on I cannot trust him. I say nothing to him, but something of my love for him dies.

The sheriff is looking for him. He's been gone for days. The sheriff, his probation officer, my parents threaten me. I don't know where he is. I'm sure in the hills, in some dry oak canyon. What's wrong with that? He loves the hills. He likes to run them at night beneath the moon. That's crazy, they sneer. He's no good. Something is wrong with him. In the fight, Daddy's blow sends my body 30 feet. I know it's 30 feet because Mama is always talking about the length of the living room, how we'll never have enough money for carpeting. I hate him. I hate him.

Past midnight there is a tap on my window. Ramon is in the Pepper tree crying, the moon full behind him, its light glistening the water on his face. I open the window to the screaming of coyotes, the smell of the Pepper tree, the smell of sage and lust of his unwashed body. I muffle him with the blankets so my sister sleeping 3 feet away and my parents behind the thin pasteboard wall won't hear his sobs. Aren't you afraid out there? I whisper. Nothing separates me more from him than the land which is inaccessible to me. He cries no. yes. I don't know. I am afraid. Something's out there. I have to go. I belong out there. Not here. When I'm running in the hills I can forget I was born here. When I sleep out there I remember my dreams. They tell me great things. I don't belong here with these people. Out there I'm like a star shining in the dark. I can follow the voice in my dreams.

I don't question him, not even when he is accused of stealing an old man's car. Everyone questions him and he doesn't have the words, and though there is much I don't understand, I do understand night, and the need, almost, to be crazy. Something in Ramona, something in the daylight is missing. Somehow Ramon finds it in the very land I hate. The land I hate, the boulders, the sage, the sun withering my pale skin, the monotonous, hellish limits of the people who live here, their spirits dried up and discarded like the skins of rattlers found everywhere. If I had been an Indian in the old days, I think, I would have killed myself. Or been the tribe's whore. Following him always into more dirt and rock, the only relief being the liquid softness of his body, its cool shade and then it doesn't matter where we lie. Tarantulas, black widows, rattlers don't frighten me. At least they are alive. It is the dry suffocating stillness of the land that terrifies me. The danger of dying while your body keeps living. The danger of your soul being castrated, like Ramon's cousin's genitals. Ramon/Ramona, I hate you. I love you.

There is fire in the mountains. Sage flaming for heat of sun alone. Flames surround Ramona. There is talk of evacuation. His Mojave eyes over me like rain clouds, so dark with storm I can see the flames, the Santana flames whipping down the canyons, ashes the size of Sycamore leaves smothering Ramona, the black hot soot, roasting my white body dark for his, this rock bed we lie on. Air drafts suck in fire, explode where safety has been sought, the firefighters backed into a granite boxed canyon. 18 Indian prisoners burned alive. Marjorie's father dead. Her dark skin turning white with the news. Ramon/Ramona in the skyline, the granite left in ashes. Earth angel, earth angel. I love you. I hate you.

Mojave. It is a word on the birth certificate. It means orphan. A mother who was taken from the reservation and then disappeared off the streets of San Diego during the war. Mojave. It is dark pigment of skin, the black shiny hair, the white teeth, the strange affiliation to alcohol, to the mountains. Ramon. Mojave. Running in the dark dreaming hills with the liquor of old white men.

He keeps telling me his foster parents are going to make him leave Ramona. I don't believe it. I think he's feeling sorry for himself. He drinks. He gets crazier. I tell him they won't do it. How could they? They've had you since you were a young boy. They must love you some. Besides they need you for the farm work, the money they get from the county for having you. But one day he is moving. Moving to San Diego. He says, "you are the only good thing that has ever happened to me."

I am sitting at his bedside at County Hospital. My mother in a rare gesture has lied that I am 16 in order to be admitted. I am 14 and I am sitting here in an all-white room watching Ramon toss and moan dreamless beneath the anesthesia. Under anesthesia, I've read, there are no dreams.

cont.



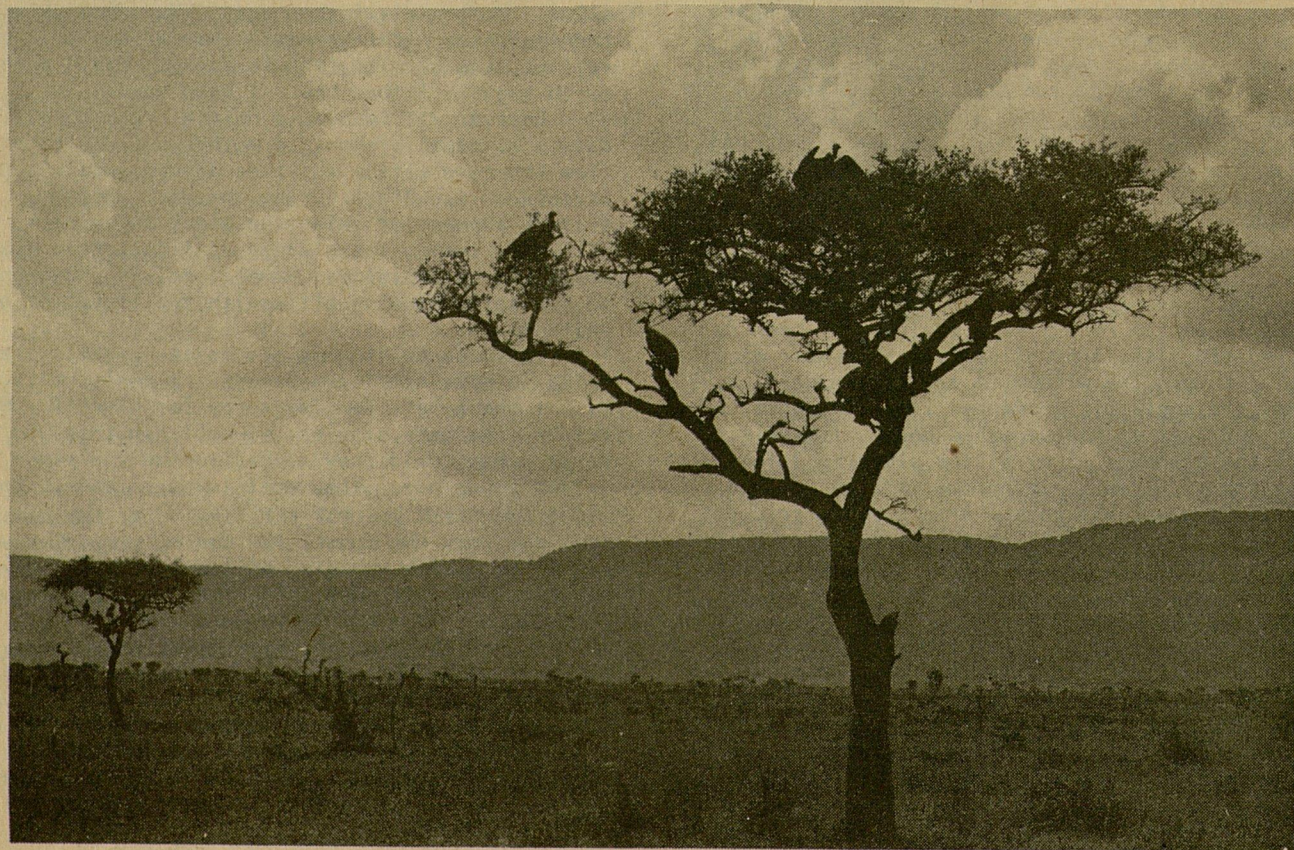
The ward is full of other men ripped apart and broken, sick from car wrecks and knife fights and knife surgeries. They said he was an alcoholic so they took his gall bladder. I am 14. I know nothing. I don't understand the hate in the world but I find myself knowing they cut him open because he is a ward of the county and they can get money by taking parts of his body. Someone cuts him open for the money and he let them do it because he feels sorry for himself. I sit in the room, waiting for him to wake, reading a pamphlet I have brought him about the Mojave Indians, about a man named Kroeber who studies them, an old man who follows the Colorado River to find their stories and their beliefs. Everything it says sounds like Ramon. The way they look. The way they think. It says they are natural geographers with a deep interest in the landscape. It says that the heart of their society is geography and dream. The basis of all their religion, tradition, ritual song and shamanistic power is individual dreaming. In dream the hidden stories of the land are known. Suddenly before my eyes I see Jedediah Smith and his men being ambushed mid-stream the Colorado, and it seems I know why. The women, when they took the white men to their beds, must have found out what kind of friends they really were and in a night their dreams must have told them even more, perhaps even the future days of white men coming without any honor for them at all. And suddenly I realize something else, that Ramon and I have been intentionally separated. His foster parents got him out of Ra-

mona as a favor to my parents. Everything falls in place, including my mother's lying about my age. She feels guilty.

I sit here beside Ramon as he tosses and moans beneath white man's medicine, beneath his knife, in a room full of wrecked men, and I'm knowing suddenly the world. I am different than you, Ramon. I love you. But no one's going to cut me open, no one's going to destroy me. Get up, Ramon, get up. It says you are a geographer of the far borders of the land, a geographer of the far borders of consciousness. You must not let them kill your dreams. Come on, Ramon, get up! Let's go down to the Colorado River and make love. Ramon, Ramon, I am here over your bed running with you to the dark dreaming of the Colorado River.

A doctor and a nurse come in. Looking directly at my breasts he orders me to step aside. They pull the curtain around Ramon, but I can see where it's not altogether pulled. When the nurse pulls the sheet down from his half-sleeping naked body, his penis is erect. The nurse sneers in disgust. The doctor slaps it with his hand. They do nothing else. They walk away, laughing harshly. I don't understand the hate in the world.

Later, much later, Scripps Institute of Oceanography announces the discovery of a large underground river that flows all the way from Canada to the sea at San Diego, its main course moving through the Santa Maria valley, beneath the town of Ramona. ♀





# LATE AFTERNOON SUNLIGHT

(for Barbara Szerlip and for Virginia Cuppaidge)

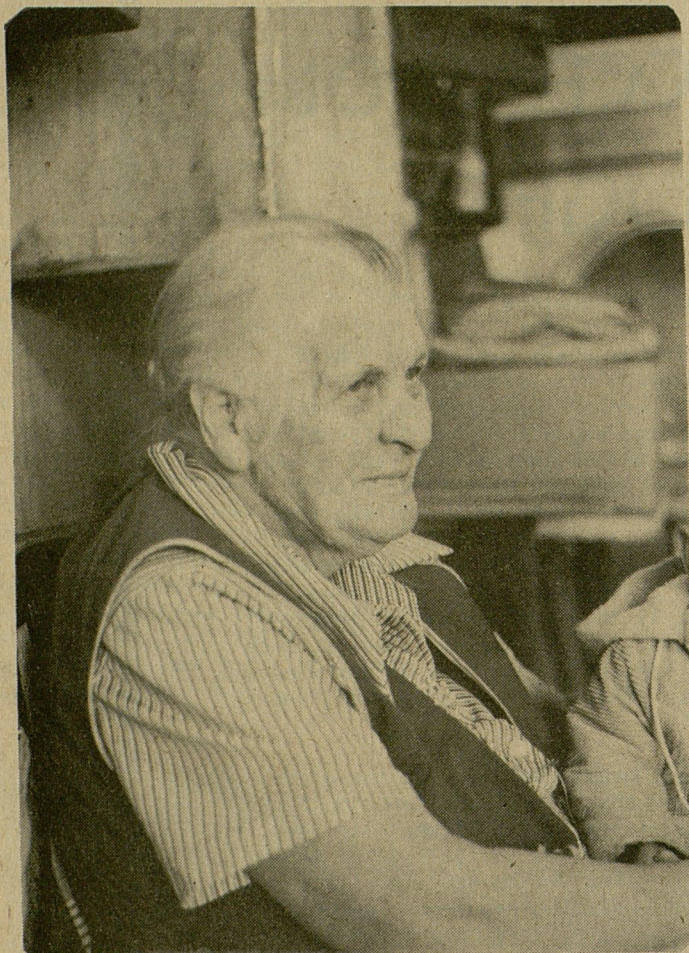
This is a fantasy farm (one here raises one's own). Its fabric seemed almost tangible until I received the iridescent bird-wing; then, the realization that it is a sort of fantastic toy, oriental or Russian, a construct like a Faberge egg which you have inspired. Thus: the jewelled birds outside my window, which look real enough to have bird-lice, drip and spit not lime but essence of rime or frost, covering the areas below the eaves with chalky stalagmites which one can use for coating paper... and the outbuildings, which could have contained animals but are of papier mache, like an opera-setting. We are in the third year of residence at the Farm now; when we came here, we were told it is the first farmstead in the Valley (the magick of valleys, again!). From certain windows, once we saw the entire Valley. No one can see in from any of the windows. A fabric different from isinglass. If you live on a commune, you know what I am saying.

I once saw you looking into the tall grass, worshipping the birds. It is possible that writing this may change our relationship to the Farm; when I received your message, I realized that what I'd been imagining as the sun seen through windows was the yolk of an egg which had fallen over the Valley and thus the house. This tiny house, once seen as huge (its thirty rooms); all the relationships which make you convinced that this house has a history -- are coming to you through me and because of your own iridescence. The black-flies which gather in the attic descend and hit the lightbulbs, becoming glass themselves on impact, beautiful translucent black glass, intricately formed. Tinkle of them as they float toward the apparently wooden floors. This makes a sound like wind-chimes, even in winter. The birds eat these glassy insects; they speckle the eggs' shells.

You and I are still young enough to enjoy toys. This moment, while a cuckoo clock chimes, the sky is in competition with my attention to you; it is the blue of robins' eggs. Is there a bird which carries its young in a pouch? I have been carrying your latest works that way -- each time I travel, you are with me, Friend of Forms. The birds fly east sometimes, toward New Hampshire, sometimes west toward Taos (sacred places). A white leaf, seen sideways as a slit in the dark air of night, is the door through which I pass to reach out to you. Upon which I write this. Birdsong prevents me from hearing your replies, but the music is evidence. Chiming pianissimo as would your voice, my Sister. With me.

By Carol Berge





# OF SIMILAR THREAD

By Wendy Stevens

Betty Parker

*at night i try to sleep -- i never have  
trouble sleeping and yet i can't sleep -- i think  
the plants sense how much i have in me because  
they are growing firm and i am full of thought  
and they are full with me.*

*i feel for women some connection as if we  
were woven of similar thread as if the rugs we are  
sitting on have been one or will be. They make  
me feel full and i could not separate one from the  
other.*

*the women and there are many women sometimes  
these women make me full and so full that i can  
burst when i burst i am sad not happy it is having  
too much too many too much that makes me burst  
and to burst is to be like the ocean in a storm --  
to cry -- to almost cry -- too much is so many  
waves that feel so good but too fast to catch the  
feeling -- you just have waves*

*and too many women and there are many make  
my stomach full and if i vomit who is liable for  
who knows that is one too many or when one will  
be too much -- too many ones makes one too many --  
too much.*

*and i am filled with passion and tears i am  
stuffed with loving and affection caring fear and  
knowing that they fear themselves sometimes as  
much or more then they fear others and knowing  
that they can care for others at times more and  
much more then they care for themselves  
and so in sleepless wake*

*i wander through drifts of many women and the  
women and there are many where does one begin in  
drifting, where in sleepful talk do you remember  
what can be felt and when are we too numb in  
nights to know that we reached conclusions.  
Hours spent filled with thoughts of my mother and  
the years and the call yesterday and they said  
mrs....miss logan remick this is mrs. someone from  
greenville women's state penitentiary. we are  
calling to tell you that your mother, emma remick  
passed away early this morning at around four  
o'clock and i have been asked to call you to see  
if you would like to make some arrangements for  
her burial. she asked that you be contacted.*



now, if you wish not to be involved we have a procedure for this matter.

time is everywhere today in my thinking dying makes time stop. dying makes time simple. twenty-seven years ago my mama had me fifty-five miles outside of greenville, north carolina in the town of hagger: population 350. fourteen years ago my mother shot my father and soon after began her life sentence for first degree murder in greenville house of detention. i hadn't seen her for six years until some three years ago.

-i'm glad you came to see me today, my mama said quietly, i wouldn't have known it was you if i'd passed you in the streets. You know what they say about mother and daughter, well it sure ain't true in this case, she joked. It's been over five years since i last seen you you was eighteen then and now you're...

-twenty-four

Mama had cut her hair and was much thinner than i had remembered her. She looked through my face and up and down from my toes to my eyes. Then she reached to touch me but there was screen between us so she continued to stare very carefully.

-There is a difference in you now. i'm glad real glad you came to see me today. i would want that we would stay in touch from now on. Maybe be close again like we was before i was put here. Tell me, Logan, what has happened to you since we last spoke. You're not married now, are you?

-No, it's not for me.

-i don't suppose that there is any reason to believe it's for anyone. Have you heard from your brothers or sister?

-But you were married for twenty-nine years.

-And so what of your brothers and Catlin?

-Not much. Haven't they come to visit?

Don't they write?

-No, they have never really spoke to me since the day i was found guilty. It's something strange about children, you always figure you know each other so well and you're kin and blood. i mean, when i look back they was good kids but memories are painful things. It never seems the same when you look back. The way we remember things, that is.

-As far as i know Gary is married and living in Florida. Catlin's having children and teaching in Michigan and Ryan, i haven't heard a word from. But then we were never really close.

-And you?

-i'm doing fine. i'm doing graphics work and trying to live on it. i'm doing some illustrating like i always wanted to.

-You were always drawing and always good at it.

*and i am filled with memories and i am filled with women memories and my mother is a woman to me where as she has always been a mother and emma was strong back in my memories of hagger, north carolina. emma painted in oils sometimes on the front porch that my father and gary had painted white. and the house was grey on cold spring road and my mother was a woman and i was bursting with women, confused with women.*

Summer came quickly when i was thirteen and praying for school to end so i could spend the warm days drawing in the trees and behind the house and further out in the country. It was a hard summer; Gary and Ryan had both been away from home a year now and Catlin was preparing to leave. I was the youngest and the house felt empty with just the thought of Catlin leaving. Mama had been working at the post office since the boys left and tried to paint every once in a while but rarely had the time to join me drawing now that she was working full time again.

Papa was still in the same construction crew he had been with all my life. We weren't poor anymore by that summer, but it was only because we watched it closely. Everyone worked hard at not looking poor. Everyone was so tired of working so hard.

Papa was a strange, loving, but gruff man. He was very quiet when he was sober and pretty loud when he wasn't. He had come from Texas to marry my mother when he was seventeen and she, sixteen. They had been together for twenty-nine years. My father was a man who believed that women had their place and their function and he would kid me all the time and say

-Miss Logan what are you doing up there in that all tree? You ain't gonna get yourself a man sitting up there with that pencil. You're lucky if you get yourself a woodpecker or a cow gone astray.

He didn't speak much of anything else i can remember and i would kiss him good-night up until i was about eleven if he was home before my bedtime. i guess he drank alot. It's hard to tell cause i would be asleep mostly before he got home and sometimes i would lie awake and hear him come in.

-James is that you, my mother would say from the kitchen or the backroom.

-No, it's the North coming back to finish the Civil War.

-i just asked a question.

-Well for christ's sake who'd ya think it was? Were you expecting someone else maybe?

-Look, i'm sorry it's late and i'm tired. i worked all day and came home, cleaned and

-Emma, i worked all day too and for that jackass building that fuckin house and they keep changing the plans.

-and damn you get to go out afterwards. Look you've been drinking and we're both tired so let's not talk about it.

-Look, i didn't start this here conversation.

I would hope that Mama would be asleep before he came home so i didn't have to wake up to hear it as it got louder and louder.

i got sick that summer with scarlet fever and spent most of the days in bed and the very hot ones on the back porch wrapped in my quilt and Mama's foot warmer. i kept a sketch pad that summer and tried to do a page or two a day. Time was slow and my fingers would work hard with the pencil or the piece of burnt wood. i did one of Mama and she was strong like a doe with her hair up behind her head and grey laced through it. The mus-

cont.



cles in her arms and shoulders would stretch against her as she reached to clean or prune the yard or mend the porch rails. That summer Mama had to stop work because of my being sick. It seemed as if i was too weak to really do anything for myself and for the first time in the longest time i needed a mother to care for me and there she was. i couldn't tell if she was happy to be home that summer or not. i mean, i know it wasn't that she didn't like to be with me. i was a quiet child and i pretty much kept to myself and could spend the whole day drawing if nothing interrupted me. Mama, i sensed, didn't like being around the house all day. And worse, my father was angry about it more than anyone. You see, there wasn't much work for him that year and we had only not been poor these years because someone else in the family, either one of the boys or Mama would be working. This summer with my medical bills and all, father said we were beginning to be poor again. The word poor sent shivers in me no matter what my fever was. Hell and poor could do that to me cause they were both sort of unknowns like the depths of hell and the depths of poor were endless. You just tumbled down into them and didn't know what to expect and what was bottom.

Papa was drinking a lot as most men do when things are not working and one night he came home after spending the day out at Sorley's with the other men in his crew. i was up in my room at the time. i was half dozing next to a picture i had just finished of how the land went behind the house when you were sitting facing east in the afternoon. i had drawn the trees closest to the house and then from between them i put in the fencing and the work shed and the distance of field between us and Mr. Cory's house and then the smallest thing was the Cory's east side of their house. i was half dreaming when Papa called

-Logan, Logan answer me.

-What Papa?

-Logan get on down here right this minute.

i stopped for a second in my sleep to see if it was my dream calling me or my father's voice. Then i stopped to figure if i had done anything wrong. i couldn't think of anything but my fever was such that i couldn't really fathom getting out of bed and putting on my robe and making my way down the stairs.

-Logan, you heard me. Get your ass on down here. i ain't kiddin.

-i'm coming, i muttered.

i dressed as best as i could in my robe and slippers and made my way down the stairs watching my feet so as to direct them without falling to the kitchen where the noise was coming from.

-Logan, i want you to sit right down here in your chair and have supper with us. i'll have none of this getting it in your bed any more. i'm having enough trouble in my life without you being sick and your Mama needs to go back to work and so you ain't gonna act sick any more, you hear me?

It wasn't really father talking, i was sure of it. i looked at my mother and she was silent. After i stared for a minute she turned her back

and went to put dinner on the table. She nodded for me to sit down.

i put my head in my hands, i was dizzy and i kept wanting to put my head down on the table.

-Look alive, Logan. You look like you've been run over by a team of mules on their way to breeding.

He was mindless that night as he made me sit at the table and push the food around my plate and he hollered and he made a fuss and i was scared. He rose to hit me once during the meal and i had no strength in me to resist and he swung and hit my head open handed and my head just bobbed with the pain. It was so loose from fever and he was so loose from whiskey. He was so angry and frustrated that night that if he wasn't a man i knew he'd have cried. He had grown up in the Southwest when everything was a struggle and people believed that if you worked hard and never let up, anything was possible. My father went to school longer than anyone else in his family and they all expected him to make something big of himself and every year when it didn't happen he would get angrier and angrier and they would get more and more disappointed.

They never stopped expecting and then he began to almost never stop drinking. When we weren't poor any more that wasn't enough cause he hadn't done it on his own and now i was sick and i was further messing up the whole scheme of things. My body had always been strong and i was only thirteen and i was already 5 foot 6 and never squeamish and now this fever and rash had me lying in bed. My mother would always keep repeating to herself or to me, i could never tell which

-Well, Helen Keller was made blind, deaf and mute by that fever. It's nothing to fool with, nothing to fool with.

That night was cool, it was August by then and the locusts were loud in the trees and there was no heat lightning, i remember, because i loved to watch it there was nothing to watch; i drifted in and about sleep and i tried to draw but i was feeling sicker and sometimes i tested my voice to make sure i hadn't gone mute and i would plug up one ear and see if the other one still worked. But there was hollering in the house so loud that perhaps even a deaf person could have heard it. They yelled about me a lot and my father called me a lazy bastard child and he called my mother a rebelwhore and my mother shouted back. It is vague perhaps because as Mama says memories are painful things and we do as best we can to forget what doesn't taste good.

There was a shot, just one shot and i heard someone hit the floor. i woke to all this and burst into tears even though i didn't know who had been shot and how bad, it didn't matter. They were my mother and father and we had been together my whole life and then i heard my mother scream

-oh, God, i killed him.

i knew what had happened. Sick as i was i crept down the stairs and out to the wood shed and hid and cried and shivered from fever and fear.

i wasn't found until the next morning when i



heard Dr. Lewis calling my name. i must have looked horrible. i glanced up and saw Mrs. Corey standing there still sleepy and pregnant and Dr. Lewis holding a needle filled with fluid. It looked big enough for a horse and i pretended to roll over and be sleeping hoping they would go away.

-Logan, it's all going to be okay, Mrs. Cory cooed. This needle ain't for you, Logan, it's for your mom. Logan, come on, it's all gonna be okay.

i rolled over and opened my worn eyes and felt the huge tight pinch of the horse needle going into my rearend. i thought if it all had been a dream, that pinch would end it cause your head never lets dreams get too bad. Cause why would Mama wanna shoot my father? i mean they loved each other and they had lived together for all these years and raised all of us.

Dr. Lewis asked me if i could stand up and he and Mrs. Cory helped me up off the straw covered floor and walked me back toward the house. As soon as i saw the people standing around looking at me with the horrible pity look you always see them giving orphans and cripples, i knew it wasn't a dream.

-Everybody's all right isn't they? i asked. i looked around for my mother. She wasn't in the room.

-Where's my mother?

They all looked at each other and consulted in whispers and then led me into the kitchen and sat me down across the kitchen table from my mother. I couldn't say anything, i hated her for turning everything in my life upside down like this.

-i shot him. i killed him, Logan.

-i don't want to hear it, Mama, i just don't want to hear it. How could you do it -- you are a rebelwhore, you are no good, why'd you do it?

But just then Dr. Lewis came in and took me, crying, out of the kitchen and i never saw my mama for a long time after that.

I was sent off to my aunt and uncle's house. i didn't stay around long there. i got myself pregnant the first year i was there. i was only 14 and they didn't want to have anything to do with me. There was no understanding to be had. Why had this girl who had been so quiet all her life and so good, gone and done something like that? my Uncle Morse was horrified. He said maybe bad women ran in my aunt's family and finally my aunt got so angry at him, she decided to help me get an abortion before it was too late. i was sad and sick afterwards and i was treated like a three-legged dog except they have more mercy for dogs. i hadn't heard from my mother nor seen her since that day in the kitchen. Sometimes at night i dreamt about her and once i dreamed that i had come home to the house we had lived in and in the back room there was a coffin. She lay in it but she wasn't really dead and there were my father and brothers and the neighbors trying to make a ceremony over her and she wasn't dead. i wanted to take my mother's hand and rush off through the backdoor and run off

with her. i woke up.

The next year i got myself pregnant again and this time was once too many. i decided i wanted to get married and move out and be on my own. Marriage was the only way and it was fine with my aunt and uncle cause i was pregnant and they could stand getting me off their hands.

He was a gentle boy man. i thought he would leave me be. We were going to move to California to be married in his parent's home in Sacramento. It would take me far away from Hagger memories and Uncle Morse. My aunt cried when i left but i didn't feel sad, i felt sort of numb and looked forward to caring for Nat and my child. He didn't know i was only going on 16. i stood almost 5 foot 8, had let my hair grow long for the first time and had made it real light blond to look older, just a few months before.

-You'll make this man a good wife, i know you will, my aunt cried as she wished me good-bye. i know your mother would have wanted it this way. Now be good.

And he was gentle all right. He was so gentle that he alternated between speed and wearing ladies clothes. i tried to ignore the clothes and to enjoy the drugs. Days and nights of staying up until we'd crash. i clung to my son and knew i was in no shape to care for him and so i sent him to Catlin's and explained that i would come to get him as soon as i could. i would make crazy drawings and walked the streets of San Francisco with all the other strange people of the time.

One night, filled with confidence from the amphetamines, i decided i wanted to see my mother. i was going to tell her face to face how angry i was with her. i was going to tell her that she ruined my life and if it wasn't for her i wouldn't be in this mess. Here i was 18 and everything was so untogether. If she hadn't gone and killed my father we would still be a happy family and i wouldn't have had to go and make my own and ruin everything over and again for myself and a kid that i couldn't even care for.

i flew to North Carolina and got in to see my mother. When i saw her through the heavy screening sitting there staring, i had no words to say. She looked up and down me. i was much too thin and my hair was half yellow and half brown roots and my clothes hung loosely and dirty even though i had wanted to look good.

-Logan, are you okay?

i didn't answer, i didn't say one word. i just turned around and walked out. i don't even remember what she looked like that day.

i didn't go back to San Francisco. i hitchhiked up to New York and tried to shake the lack of drugs in my system. i registered to take some art classes at Pratt. There i met Susan and we became close. i began once again to see the strength in women i had forgotten about. i began to see the connections that women have with one another that is unspoken. i struggled to learn more and told no one, except Susan, about my mother.

-Why don't you go and straighten things out

cont.



with your mother, Susan urged. Find out who she is again. Something. You're not going to carry around all these unknowns for the rest of your life. Share with her some of your life.

-i can't confront her. i am still scared. i mean, i know what i feel, it is just that i am not sure what would come out of my mouth once i was face to face with her. What if after all these years she doesn't want to see me? She has every right not to. i've been horrid to her.

i went to see her and we spoke for a short while. i was glad to see her but very nervous. That was 3 years ago. When i go home i tell Susan how it had gone.

-i still didn't feel close with her. i just can't get it out of my head that she killed my father. She just killed him, she shot him through the chest.

-You don't know any more than that?

-No, i don't. i didn't want to know and nobody told me anything but that my mother was a killer and that she was not too right in her mind and she was unruly for a woman.

Some 6 months later i decided to try and see my mother again. i wrote her before i came to explain that i was coming down to straighten a number of things out and perhaps we could get a small room to talk in. i would try and arrange for it.

i was impatient driving to North Carolina. i had waited a long time to get everything worked out so i could get Mama into the room i had had a lawyer set-up for us. Mama was already there when i was allowed in. She was older than i could ever imagine she could get. Even in the past 6 months she had aged a great deal. i walked up and hugged her and before i had even released her she began to speak.

-You know, Logan, i'm happy you wrote me that letter and told me you was coming down. When we were talking last time i thought of all these things there was left to say after you had gone. Logan, there is lots of things about each of us that other people don't ever know about. i mean, we all always think we know the reasons why people do what they do and act how they act. i've learned though that we all have very little to go on, i mean to know each other with. We all keep so much inside and we think we know so much about everyone else's everything. i know i sound like i'm talking to you as if you were a child but your letter and visit made me think of all these things.

-Mama, it's okay, go on, i want to hear.

i reached and took her hands. They were grained and knotted like lumber. The two of us seemed very small in the cement room. i knew they were probably listening and watching from somewhere, but as far as they were concerned i held a lot worse things than my mother in these years.

-You were so strong and frightened at the same time when you were growing. You had every reason to be. It was hard times wanting to be on your own and a woman -- and i didn't have the answers for you either. When i got married -- it

meant everything in the world to me. i wasn't but 16. Your father wasn't a bad man, but he took no joy in living. Nothing was how he wanted it to be and he would blame it on anything and mostly he blamed it on me and on you kids.

He took to hitting me until the night when i couldn't stand it any longer. Now, your mother isn't from violent stock -- your grandma Crimmins was as gentle as a young rabbit. But that night he was so angry he was crazy about you being sick. i hadn't stopped crying since seeing you stumble back up the stairs. She stopped and looked at her fingers twisting, pushing old anger to the surface. I could just see him making you so mad that you would run off like Catlin and go and get married just to get away from there. When he came back later i began to tell him all the things i should have told him over dinner. He went for his pistol in the drawer in the front room. He was gonna shoot me, Logan! But it wasn't there cause i already had it in my pocket, so he went to hit me and i shot him. You know the rest, you were so angry with me.

There were tears on both our faces there in that cement room. i took her closer in my arms.

-Mama, i want to tell you something. It may not be the right moment but i must tell you cause this is the time we are being honest and sharing our insides.

Every emotion there was in the world was rushing out of me.

-Mama, you are very important to me. What you have been through is important. We are all connected -- women that is. Women are the most important thing to me. i have decided i want my energies to go to women, that i love women. i want you to understand. It is very important to me that you understand.

She looked up at me, right in my eyes and murmured

-i understand. Now, do you?

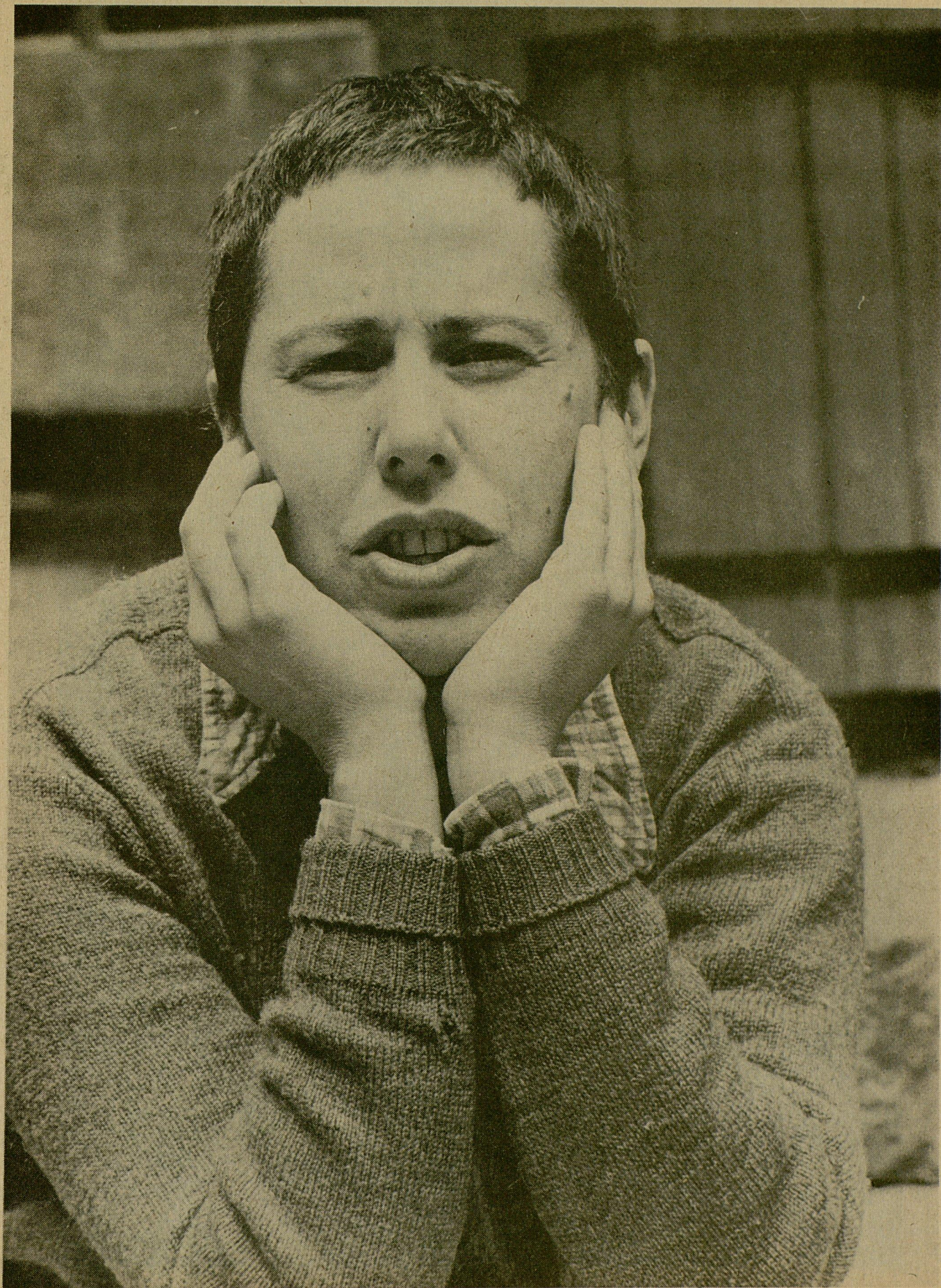
-i understand, i nodded and we remained silent as if our words were a blanket tucked over our understanding, too precious to lift.

The next year was so good and we wrote and i visited. It was thought that in a year or two she might get paroled. We talked that she might want to live in a place of her own. But she got ill with pneumonia and while she was being treated they found she had cancer of the lymph nodes.

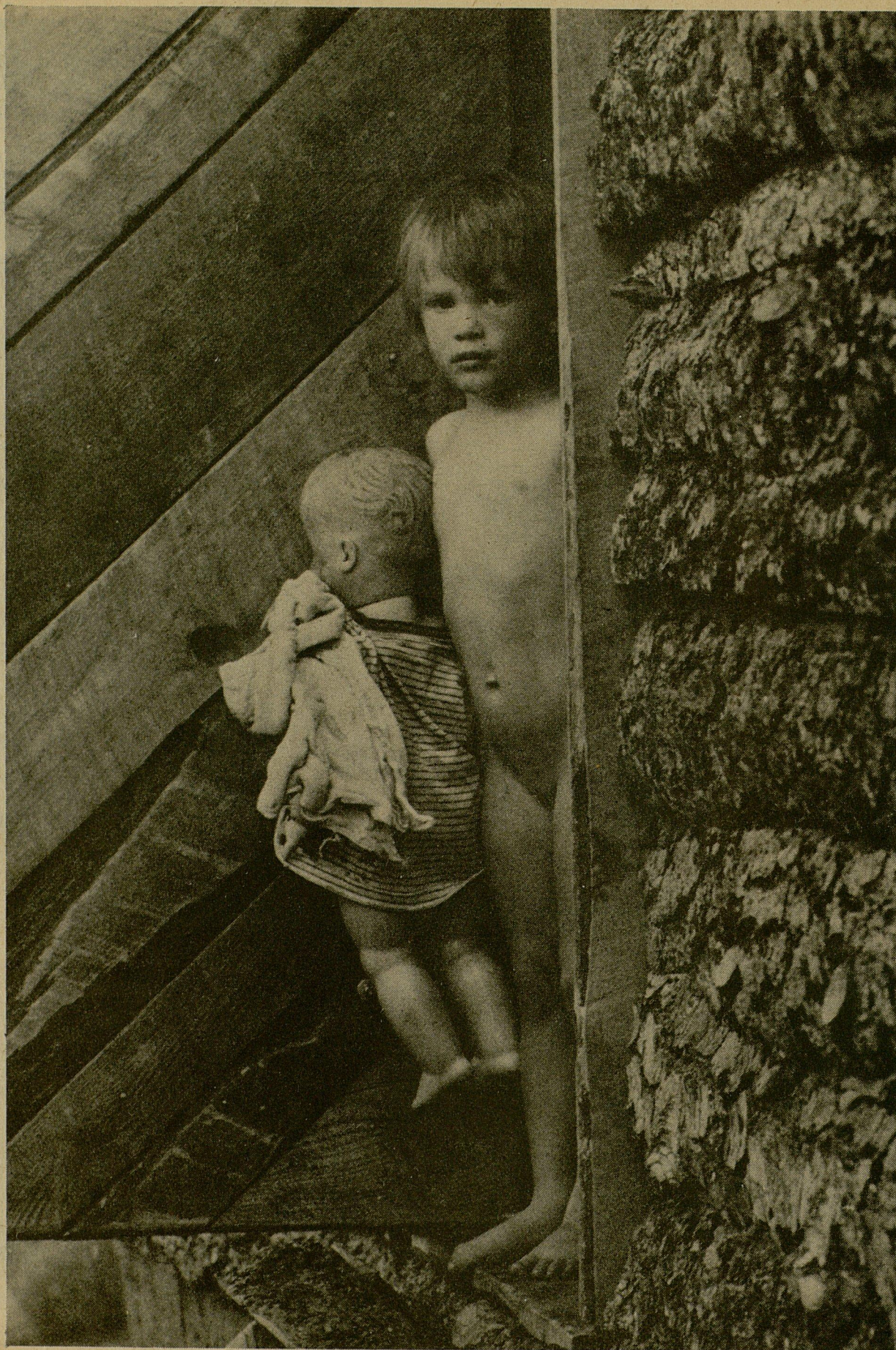
-It is not really sad, she would say. For years lie and they will seem so different when you look back. i mean, they don't mean to lie, they just don't always tell the truth. i will probably be a better memory than i was a mother.

and this night i try to sleep but i am full and i wonder about all the things i still want to tell Emma. i turn to Susan and ask aloud -- you know, sometimes i wonder who Emma was? she was your mother she answers -- no, i mean who was she really? and this night i am too filled with women and i am filled with passion and tears knowing that they still fear themselves sometimes more than they fear others and knowing that they can still care for others at times much more than for themselves. ♀











# WAITING

By Marianne Tavelli

Carl climbed in behind the wheel and waited. He took his plug of tobacco out of his pocket and took a big bite. He chewed and spit, and waited, and still they didn't come. He started pounding on the horn. "Dammit, dammit, come on, let's get going," he shouted at the closed door. They all piled out of the house at once. Edith had the baby on her hip. She jerked open the car door and yelled at him. "I wish that all I had to do to get ready to go anywhere was to get in the car and lay on the horn." She handed the baby to Annie, who was now sitting in the back seat. "If that was all you had to do you still wouldn't be ready to go," he screamed back at her. "Drop dead," she muttered as she flopped into the front seat. "I thought that you might like to get to town before the stores close," he said sarcastically. "You mean, before the bars close. Well you don't really have to hurry. You'll have plenty of time to drink the town dry. You know I have to get the baby ready, bank the fire, get the kids moving, comb my hair and get myself dressed." He looked at her hair, then turned and spit out the window. He didn't have quite enough push behind it, and it splattered against the back window, right in front of Pete. "Boy, I sure am glad that I had my window closed," Pete said as he looked at the brown blob streaming down the window. He looked over at his sister. She was grinning at him. "Too bad it wasn't open," she said. She sat the baby down on the seat between them and watched out her window as the town passed by.

Edith looked over at her husband. Carl was a handsome man when he was cleaned up. Today he had on his best slacks and his pin striped shirt. His mustache had been neatly trimmed. His wing tip shoes were polished til you could see your face in them. If he kept his feet flat on the ground, no one would be able to see the holes in the soles of his shoes. His straw hat sat on his head, jauntily tilted to one side. He was going to have fun today, if he could get by with it. After all, he had spent all week down in the

mines. He deserved a beer or two or three. He grinned in anticipation.

Wonder what he's grinning about? Edith thought. She almost felt like grinning herself. She enjoyed getting away from home on Saturday. She was only thirty, and still a very attractive woman. She had long dark hair that was tied neatly at the back of her neck. She was wearing her brightest cotton dress, and her only pair of high heeled shoes. She too was dressed for town, but she wasn't thinking about beer. She was wondering about the designs on the flour sacks. One of them would make Annie a dress for school. With two of them she could make herself a new dress. She turned and grinned at the baby in the back seat. "Hold him tight, Annie. I don't want him to land on the floor, the way your father's driving." Carl stopped grinning and scowled at his wife. "Maybe you think you can do better. Would you like to try?"

They sat in the back seat of the old Chevy, staring sullenly at the bar doors. Their parents had gone inside more than an hour ago. Dad just had to have a couple of beers. Well, he could have let them go to the show. "Wait in the car," their mother had said. "We won't be long." Annie and Pete had begged to go to the show. Tarzan was playing. They sure wanted to see that movie. The last of the long line of kids had gone in for the Saturday Matinee. Annie just sat there staring at the place where they had been. She thought about the curtains opening, and how Tarzan would swing across the screen on a rope or vine. The tears of frustration overflowed her eyes and dripped down her cheeks. The bar door opened and they could hear the laughter and the sound of the juke box coming from inside. The door swung shut and the noise stopped. For a while they both sat there brooding, wondering what to do with the hours that would stretch ahead of them.

Annie glanced over at her brother. He smiled weakly at her. Most of his front teeth were missing, and he was so skinny that you could count

cont.



every rib he had. She turned away from him. She looked down the sidewalk. There was a girl walking toward them. Pete saw her too. "Look Annie, look at that girl." Annie watched her as she walked slowly toward them. "Look Annie," he said again. "Did you ever see anyone so black?" "So what, you've seen niggers before. What's so special about looking at her?" "I dunno, just something to do I guess," he answered. "You want to do something?" Annie asked as she leaned out of the window. "Hey Nigger!" she yelled. "Where're you goin Nigger?" Pete's eyes brightened, and he started yelling too. He leaped over into the front seat, while Annie jumped up and down in the back. They both jumped from seat to seat, screaming, "Nigger, Nigger, here comes a Nigger!" They were so busy leaping and screaming that they didn't see the fury on the girl's face until she had reached the front of the car. Annie saw her first. She was reaching for the car door. Annie grabbed the handle and pushed it into a locked position. The girl grabbed for the back door, but Annie reached it first. As the girl ran around to the back of the car, Pete started to cry. "What're we gonna do Annie? She's gonna kill us, look at her mean face." Annie was too frightened to answer him, and too busy trying to get the doors locked before the girl could open one. She saw the girl heading for the right front door. She dived into the front seat. She reached for the handle to lock it, but she grabbed empty space. The door had swung open. She was staring directly into that angry black face. She moved without thinking. Her hands and feet were no longer a part of her. They just carried her body over the back of the front seat. She landed on the floor, then scrambled up onto the seat. Pete was there, trying to dissolve into the upholstery. They sat there, trembling, frozen with fear. She hovered over them like a big black bird. She pointed an angry finger at them and screamed at them, as she leaned over the seat. "You rotten little bitch, white trash, that's all you are. Who the hell do you think you are, callin me Nigger?" With these words she slapped Annie hard across the face, then she turned toward Pete. She raised her hand threateningly. He cowered in the corner, crying and begging her to go away. She must have felt sorry for him because she just told him not to do what his rotten sister does. "She's just a bitchy little white girl," she screamed at him. She turned and left them there, trembling.

They sat in stunned silence, not moving, afraid that she might return. After what seemed like a long time, Pete finally found his voice. "Sister, I gotta pee," he said. Annie looked at him. She didn't know whether to laugh or cry. The way Pete was squirming around in the seat indicated that there was no time for either. "Come on," she said as she grabbed him by the arm. She led him toward the bar door. She pushed it open. The music from the juke box blasted at them. They stood there for a second, looking around, trying to see in the dinner light. A voice boomed from behind the bar. "Hey, what are you kids doin in

here?" Annie squinted in the direction of the bar. "Pete's gotta pee," she answered timidly. "There ain't no public toilets in here. Get out!" the voice ordered. Pete grabbed his crotch and started squirming again. Another voice, this time closer to them said, "aw let the kid go pee. Can't you see it's an emergency." Everyone began laughing at this. The bartender waved his hand in the direction of the bathrooms. The kids both headed for them. Annie decided to go too. It would probably be a long time before they would get another chance. When she came out of the toilet her father was waiting for her. He swayed slightly as he stood over her. He pointed to the door. He didn't say a word. Pete came out and his sister took his hand. They both looked anxiously at their father as they headed for the door.

"What'll we do now Annie? I don't want to sit in the car anymore." "I don't know, let's walk down the street and see what's going on," she replied. The two children started walking, not knowing where they were going, and not caring, just getting away from the car.

From the other end of the street they could hear children shouting. Sounded like fun. They began walking in that direction. As they rounded the next corner they came face to face with a very big, and very old lady. She was the biggest woman that they had ever seen. She towered over them. It looked like the weight of her was too much for her shoes. They both tipped outward, seeming to overflow with the feet in them. She wore a long shabby black coat that reached almost to her shoe tops. She had on a funny little black straw hat. It had one paper rose on it, that stuck straight up in the air. Her gray hair jutted from beneath the hat like a scrub brush had been pressed against her head. She stared at the kids. Annie noticed that her eyes seemed to go in two different directions. Her front teeth were missing, and those that could be seen were black with decay. She was carrying a bag of groceries. A loaf of bread could be seen sticking out of the top of the bag.

She waved her huge arm across the front of her as if to brush the children aside. They stood still. They were fascinated by the sight of her. "Git, git," she snarled at them. Annie and Pete stepped into the street to let her pass. A rock sailed by the woman and hit Annie on the arm. She looked down the street and saw a bunch of boys running toward them. They were coming after the old woman. "Get outta the way!" one of them screamed at Annie. "Hey Sadie, Sadie the drunk," they chanted. They kept picking up rocks and throwing them at her. Annie and Pete ran across the street and watched, bewildered. "That's awful," Pete said. Annie was too shocked to answer him. She just watched, as they jeered and stoned the old woman. Sometimes she'd turn and snarl at them, or wave her arm angrily, but she still kept walking. The boys danced around her, shouting. It was a big game. They called to Annie and Pete to join them. Annie just shook her head. She didn't want to aggravate the boys,



but she sure didn't want to be a part of that game. A woman came out onto her front porch to shake out a rug. She shouted to the boys. "Is that dirty old woman drunk again?" "She sure is," a boy shouted as he picked up another rock. A disgusted look crossed the woman's face and she turned and walked back into her house. A young couple came walking down the street. They stopped to watch. The girl laughed nervously. "She looks like a big bear staggering up the street, doesn't she?" "Yea," the boy agreed, smiling. The old woman turned the corner and started walking up the dirt road that led to an old shack that stood alone. There was a vacant lot on the corner, so she could still be seen. It was difficult for the woman to walk and avoid the rocks at the same time. One of the boys cut across in front of her and she took a big swing at him with her free hand.

The movement caused her to lose her balance. She spun around and landed in the dirt. She lay very still while the boys circled around her. Her bag of groceries had split open. The contents were scattered all over the road. "Maybe she's dead," one of the boys said. "If she is, then we killed her," said another. As the boys looked around at each other, they were growing more and more frightened. They all wanted to run, but nobody wanted to be the first. The young couple had disappeared, but Annie and Pete were still there, watching. A car was coming down the street. The boys heard it. They all started running at once.

Annie and Pete looked at each other. They looked up and down the street, at all the houses. They couldn't see anyone, not even a dog barked. The only sound they heard was the distant rumble of a train as it chugged into the rail yard. It seemed that there was no one else in the world except them and that big old woman over there who might be laying dead. Annie stood up and started walking slowly over to her. "No, Annie, no, let's go," Pete yelled as he grabbed her arm. "Somebody's gotta help," Annie replied as she kept walking slowly over to her. She stood over the woman and looked closely at her. Sadie's eyes were open wide, staring. She must be dead, Annie thought. She looked around at the groceries lying on the ground. She noticed that the bread had broken open. The slices were scattered around in the dirt. Annie started gathering them up. She didn't know what else to do. Pete picked up a couple of cans that had rolled away. He was bringing them back toward Annie and the old lady. Suddenly they heard a rumble. It seemed to be coming from deep within that huge old body. The rumble changed into a growl. Annie saw that the eyes were looking right at her, hating her. Sadie's arm began to move. Annie jumped just as the arm swung viciously at her. "Git, git outta here brats," she said as she swung her huge arm, trying to hit them. They both stepped back out of her reach. As they watched the woman, she started to get up. It was hard for her to do. She kept falling back to the ground. Finally she made it. She picked up what was left of the groceries and

began staggering toward the old shack. She was still cussing and grumbling as she disappeared into the house.

"We'd better hurry," Annie said. "Dad and Mom might accidentally have come out." They started running, but as they came closer to the car they saw that there was no one near it. "Guess we don't have to hurry after all," Annie said.

The doors of the Rialto Theater swung open. Dozens of kids poured into the street. They were all happy and laughing. She heard one girl talking about how beautiful Tarzan looked. The bitterness came back, stronger than ever. The movie had started and ended and they were still waiting.

Annie grabbed Pete's arm roughly and shoved him toward the car. "What's the matter with you?" he asked. "Shut up and get in," she ordered. "Stupid Annie," he muttered as he climbed into the back seat of the car. Annie got into the front seat and laid down across the seat. Pete sat looking out the window while Annie pouted. He knew better than to talk. She was mad. One word from him and she would start pounding him. He watched the neon light flashing in front of the bar. He saw drunks staggering in and out of the swinging doors. It was getting cold, and he was so tired. He stared at the back of the front seat. "Annie, Annie," he called softly. She heard him, but she ignored him. He leaped to his feet and leaned over the seat. He looked down at his sister and screamed, "I gotta pee, Annie." "Then pee on the floor!" she screamed as she swung her fist at him. He ducked and her fist landed harmlessly against the back of the seat. Pete sat back miserably. It was getting painful and he started to cry. "What'll I do Annie?" She raised her head and looked around. She spied the ashtrays. "Pee in the ashtrays," she suggested. As she lay there she could hear him. He opened each ash tray in the back seat and peed in them. "They don't hold much Annie," he said. "There's two more up here," she said. He climbed over the front seat and filled the two ash trays. He closed them very carefully, not wanting them to spill. He sat back in the seat. He felt better. He tried to talk to his sister, but she didn't answer. He looked over the seat. She was fast asleep. He lay down across the back seat and was soon sleeping too.

It was after ten o'clock when the bar doors finally swung open and Carl and Edith came out. Annie heard her father shouting. She had been awake for a little while. She was sitting behind the steering wheel watching the neon lights flash on and off. Edith had the baby in her arms. He was tired and shining. She opened the car door and told Annie to get in the back seat. "Here," she said, "take the baby while I convince your father that it's time to go home." "It's still early, the party's just gettin started," Carl yelled at his wife. Edith looked at him. "Annie and Pete have been waiting in the car for more than eight hours. I think that's long enough." "Awww poor kids. It hasn't been that long, has it?" he asked, turning to Edith. "Yes it has,

cont.



now let's go home." He still wasn't ready to give up. He was determined to get back inside. "The kids don't mind their dad havin a little fun. I'll just ask them, we'll let them decide." He jerked open the car door and recoiled from the stink inside. "What the hell is that smell? It stinks like somebody shit in here." "It's just your rotten breath blowing back in your face," Edith said as she came up behind him. He turned toward her. He was still bracing himself on the car door. He stared vacantly at her. She had said something, something smart, and it needed a good answer. He sorted the words in his mind. They twisted and scrambled in his head and couldn't get out of his mouth. He stood swaying silently, looking at her, furious, but not knowing why. "I'll show you," he said. "I'm gonna get another drink." He slammed the car door shut and staggered back a couple of steps. Edith ran after him and grabbed his arm. "We're going home," she said. He turned violently, shaking her loose from his arm. "Okay, you go home, just get in the car and drive it home," he shouted. Edith stood there helpless. Annie sat the baby down on the seat and got out of the car. "Come on dad. We want to go home too. We've been here long enough." He leaned down to his daughter and tried to whisper in her ear. "Just one more beer, I promise, then we'll go home." Annie shook her head. "No dad, we want to go home now." He was disappointed. Annie was his last hope. His eyes filled with tears. "Get back in the car Annie," her mother said. "Your father's going to get dramatic now." He turned toward her, furious. Just as he was about to start yelling some of the other miners came out of the bar. Now he had an audience. "Hey," he shouted to them. "Come here." "What's the matter Carl?" "My family has turned against me," he wailed. "After all I've done for em." He waved his arms dramatically, in a gesture of despair. The men looked at Edith and the kids. "The kids are tired," she explained. "We just want to go home." "Just one more drink, that's all I want," he pleaded. "Aw, go on home, you've had enough," a voice from the crowd said. Carl's self pity turned to anger. "What son of a bitch says I gotta go home?" No one answered. "I'll go anywhere I damn well want to." The people began moving away. He was looking for a fight, and they didn't want any part of it. "You're making an ass of yourself," Edith reminded him. Annie got out of the car again. "They're all gone dad," she said. "There's no one here to fight. Now let's go." "Get away from me," he shouted at her. "You're no friend of mine." Annie looked disgustedly at him then jumped into the car and slammed the door. She didn't see Pete's fingers in the door casing.

The blood from his fingertips began to fill his hand and flow down his arm. He looked at the blood, then at his sister. She grabbed the door handle and opened it just as he started screaming. He leaped out of the car and began running in circles on the sidewalk. Edith was trying to catch him. Every time she almost had him, he would let out another scream and leap away from

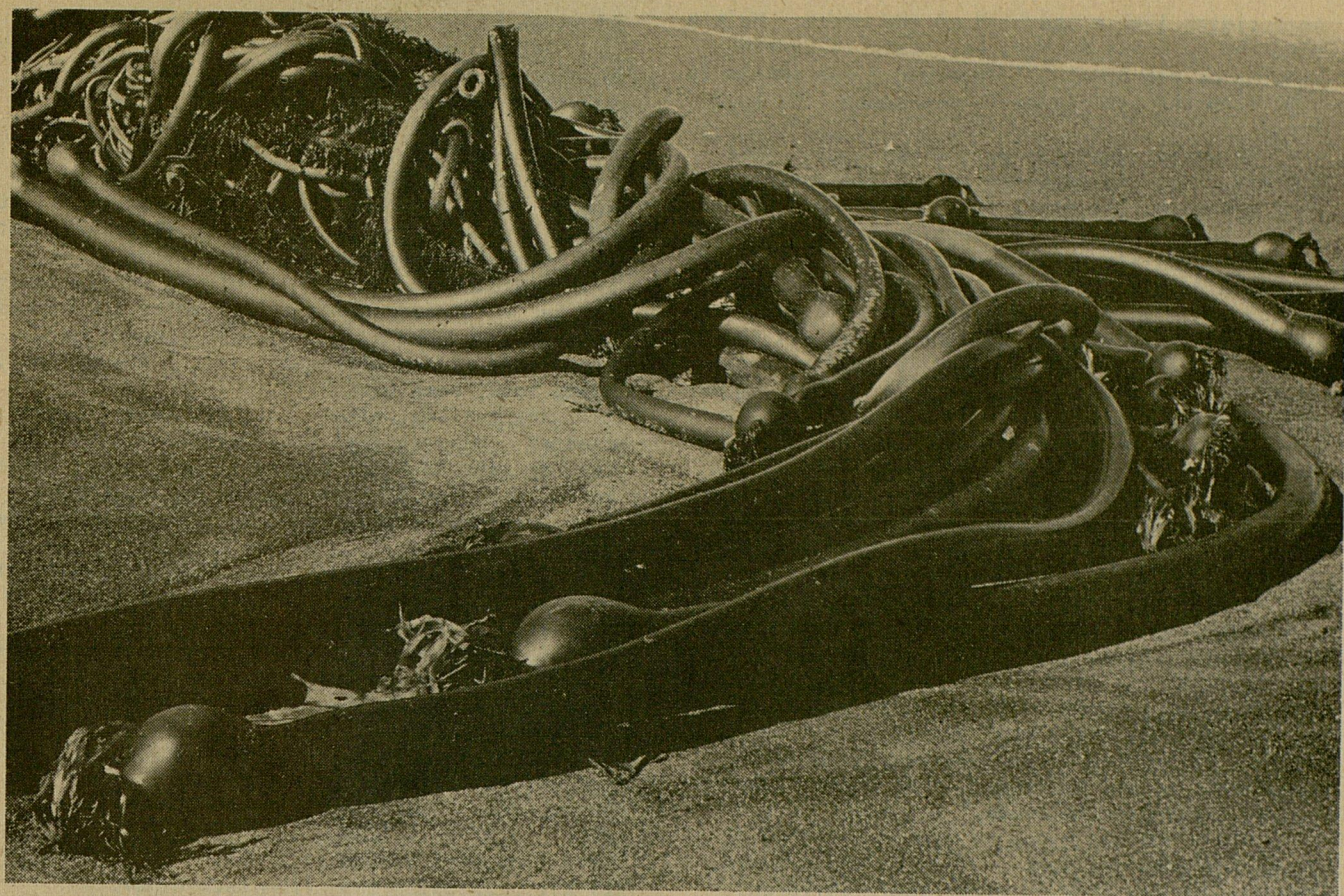
her. The blood splashed all over him and the sidewalk. Carl was weakening as he stared at Pete and Edith. "What the hell happened to him?" he asked as he dropped his arms. "Annie slammed his fingers in the damned door," Edith yelled as she lunged after Pete once more. "I'll slap the shit out of her," he grumbled as he headed for the car. "I didn't mean to do it," Annie sobbed. "Help me catch this kid," Edith screamed as Pete headed for the street. Carl grabbed him just as he stepped off the curb. They were both standing over him now. Edith took out a clean diaper and wrapped Pete's hand in it. "We can clean it up when we get home," she said. She picked him up, holding him close while he sobbed into her shoulder. "Guess we'd better get home," Carl said as he climbed into the car.

He put the car in reverse and hit the car behind him, then he lurched forward and hit the car in front of him. "Damn it," Edith shouted, "you only have to move one car, not the whole block." "You got your way, we're goin home, now shut up!" he shouted. He was determined to cover the eight miles home as fast as he could. Pete was still sobbing in his mother's arms. Annie sat huddled in the corner of the back seat, holding the baby tightly in her arms. The old Chevy rattled and groaned as it sped through the night. Annie tried to keep the baby's head from bumping against things as they slid back and forth across the seat.

She noticed three little white crosses beside the road. She hadn't seen them before. "What are those crosses for Mom?" she asked. "They are there because three people died in a car wreck in that spot," she explained. Annie had to think about that. While she was absorbing this she felt something wet on her arm. She looked at the ash trays. They were leaking. "Oh God," she prayed. "Watch over us. Help us to get home tonight. Mom always said that the lord watched over drunks and fools. We sure fit that description lord." She leaned against the ash tray again and the wetness touched her arm. "Dear God, I almost forgot. I sure am sorry that I told Pete to pee in the ash trays."

From the front seat Edith heard Annie's prayer. She started to laugh. She laughed harder and harder until Carl yelled at her. "What the hell's so funny?" "Pete peed in the ash trays," she squealed. "What?" he shouted. "You heard me," she laughed, "and it serves you right." He didn't say a word. He just stared straight ahead. He saw the neon lights flashing in front of the Blue Goose. It was a beautiful big tavern about half way between Rocks Springs and Reliance. Carl always stopped at the Blue Goose. Even the kids liked to go there. They got to go inside and drink seven-up, and dance to live music. The shape of a goose was outlined in blue neon lights. He looked longingly at it. He glanced at the ash trays. There were wet streaks leaking down the doors. He looked over at his wife. She shook her head. "We gotta get Pete home." He stepped on the gas and the Blue Goose disappeared behind them. ♀





Sally Bailey

# PATCH/WORK

By Loretta Manill

She stops thinking now, and sits down on the sand. Cradling her knees, she rocks back and forth, looking out to the sea. Getting rougher, slashing at the shore like angry knives. Winter coming again, through the whole year... Has it been? Yes, over a year since the sailor left. The whole year has felt like Winter. A grey-green distance from the sun. Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, she welcomed their smell in the air, the styles of their clothes. This year, she had forgotten to notice. She did not see them, did not hear them. Writing the letters, sewing the patches, awake, or asleep, she was not a part of the seasons now.

Rocking, rocking herself, she anchors her cheek to her knee. Closes her eyes to rest. So it was coming, yes, she could see the winter white caps on the ocean. The ocean, wild and running to the sands. White caps, white caps coming over her, over her into sleep. The white caps floating, far away the white caps beginning, unfurled, like the sail of a ship. Buoyant on the

*This is two parts of a longer work called Fabric.*

waves. White mother-of-pearl satin, catching the wind and letting it go. Letting go. Letting--- go.

No! Fighting back! Two giant fists fighting off the enemy. A giant under the sea, surfacing.

"Fight back, fight back," she cries, jumping up and down. A little girl jumping up and down, her skirt, white caps, rising and falling. A cheerleader for the white sails, the home team.

"Push em back, push em back," she is singing. "Push em back, push em back. Waaay back."

And as she jumps, the white fists get tougher and tougher. Trying to please her, make her smile, jump up and stretch those pretty legs. The team's depending on you, woman. Behind all those men. Shouting. "Give me an M. Give me an E. Give me an N. Y-e-ah!"

There is victory on the fields, the hero being carried on the back of his team-mates. The

cont.



hero riding like a sea-bird on the waves. He's a hero and he winks at her, her heart is jumping, jumping up and down. "I love you," she shouts to him, from the yell-leader's megaphone. "I Love You."

He waves, just for her, winks again, just for her. But the team has turned him around. They are going the other way. He turns his head to see her, shrugging his shoulders in defeat.

The band starts to play as he is lifted off the shoulders and begins to march with the rest of the men. 1, 2, 3. Just like the rest. In a uniform with cold brass buttons. Like all the rest. The field becomes a battlefield with explosions, the crashing of artillery, and the men are marching right into it.

She will be brave, he wants her to be brave. All the men want her. To be brave. She is handed something. It is white, like lace, a wedding veil to be placed over her head, to float down over her face. Beautiful, delicate white lace. And the band strikes up a wedding march.

A hand is placed on her shoulder, a woman's hand and eyes looking gently at her, with tears. "Be brave," she is saying, and she smiles, reassuring. But the bridal veil is now white gauze. The woman is slipping onto her head a cap with a red cross. Red for blood, and the cross for death. She starts to scream, but the woman's hand comes across her mouth. "Be brave," she is saying. "We must be brave."

She winds the bandages around and around, heads and arms and legs. Dressing the injured, the way mothers used to dress their children. The band is playing lullabies.

And as she unwinds the bandage, it turns into yellow paper. Red ink forming words... "Sorry to inform you." Sorry. Sorry. Sorry. A slow dirge. "Missing."

She screams. There is no hand over her mouth, now. He is missing. No lips over her mouth. And she screams, screams.

The screams of the band is the sound of a rocket. He is waving to her from the window of the rocket. His face comes clear on the small screen placed before her. He is smiling like a prisoner being released. Traveling, so fast, so far. She does not understand why he is doing this, but she supposed he must be very brave.

She keeps asking him, Why do you need her? What is it? I love you."

"She has never been touched," he answers. "No one has ever been there before. Virgin," he said. "Do you understand? Virgin."

No, she doesn't understand, watching him, now, on the screen, seeing the pictures of his face in the papers. That look of excitement. She has seen that look before, once, in their wedding pictures, as he stood behind her. Beautiful in the white dress. Virgin.

There are other pictures of him now, beside the rocket, on top of the craters of the moon. With that smile. That look of excitement.

But now, when she tries to lie beside him at night, those nights when the moon is out, white and full, she hears screaming, like the howling

of women being raped. Why?

The screams are just seagulls, crying in the morning. She is back on the beach, picking up sea-shells. A sand dollar, chips of abalone, here and there. But then a special prize, she finds a conch shell and at the same moment can see the white sails of the Sailor's ship on the ocean. She puts her lips to the conch shell, it makes a sound, clear as the wind, she speaks into it, "come back, come back." Her voice spins, swirls around in the spirals of the shell, sending her voice and echoes of her voice to the sail of the ship. The ship is moving towards her. Closer and closer with each call. The whisper, "come back, come back."

She can see, almost see, his face. Closer, clearer. Clearer than ever before. She holds out her arms to him. Begins to walk out. Closer to the sea. As he moves nearer to the shore.

Stretches out her arms to him, to guide the sailor home.

But the waters jump around her. Clawing at her waist, at her breasts. Until she can go no further. She cannot swim.

As he comes closer to her, he must gasp for air. His lungs are sea lungs now. He cannot breathe the air of the shore. He must go back. Live. On the Sea.

There is a look exchanged. Their eyes. A reflection. The sun. On the land, on the sea. Going down. She is going down. He is going down. Apart. A look like in the beginning, when they were broken into halves of a perfect circle. Spinning away from each other.

She is screaming, and her screams wake her. She covers her eyes with her arm, shading them from the afternoon sun. There are no trees on the shore, the only shade is her arms. It was only dreams. She cries for. The dreams, the terrible pain of things, being separated, coming apart. She cries until her throat aches, dry a scratched with sand. She lets her body go limp take in the sunshine, like a cure, like a warm salve. Poured over her body. This is the last of the sun. It is winter. Again. The sea, grey-green. And choppy with white foam.

\*\*\*\*\*

Fish. Time again to catch fish. Usually she didn't bother. Hunger wasn't a bother. So many more things went empty. What priority should a gnawing stomach have? More than a heart? She could manage to feed herself with the seaweed. Eat it raw, or cook it up, and it was nourishing. Taste didn't much matter. She found so many different kinds of seaweed, flavors, after awhile, got lost.

But today she should fish. Leave the lethargy of the sand. Make herself strong enough to push needles through the cloth, write letters into



the sand, make her daily walks. Fish.

She wanted the taste of meat. "Today you, tomorrow maybe me," a line of a poem, she recited as she fished. A poem to remind her of the balance of things. Life cycles. Everything in cycles. Reality of meat. Something for her teeth to grasp, hold on to. Something tangible.

Where did she get this pole and all the little hooks, lines, kept like a small sewing kit? From him? Sewing the fish into her belly. One stitch at a time. Threading the rod, turning the reel. Like an organ grinder playing a tune, "By the sea, by the sea, today you, tomorrow me." A song the organ grinder plays.

Baiting the hook, she thinks, "it's a trick, fish, you'll never feel the meat in your belly." Hook, line and sinker. Over and out (casting the line). Beyond your very eyes (ripples in the sea). It's a trick, fish.

Of memories. Needle and thread, on the quilt, is romance. Of memories. The colors are made more vivid. Made up from a pattern. Made up long ago.

The patches she will sew today, waiting for the fish to bite, are of a fishing village, built on rocks below a rich town. Below, the fishermen, women, live, trading their fish for a slice, a loaf, of bread. On rocks, that seem to breathe as the water flows over them, come alive, as the water combs out the long strands of hair, growing from the rocks. Rocks, that are like old women drunken with sleep. Heavy with sleep and drunkenness.

She has married the fisherman, you can see that history in a patch over here, and now they live amidst the rocks. She and the fisherman and the sun that sets on the waters. Cold days. Warm days. The fish bite. They don't bite. The days pass. Whatever happens. Doesn't happen. Sun. Fish. Days passing. She and the fisherman on the rocks.

During the day, she has to go to town. Try and sell the fish for bread. She steps up from the rocks, lifting her full skirt above her muscled calves. And she walks among the rich people in the town. She envies them. Their fine clothes. Their refined manners. At the same time, she hates and curses them. Congratulates herself on marrying the fisherman, so that she does not ever have to live like them.

The people in the town love to feed their bellies, and so they buy many fish. As fast as the fisherman can catch them, they are sold. When the fish are replaced by money, she buys fresh loaves of bread and butter in the town. She steps back down amidst the rocks and joins the fisherman.

Here, you can see them, the evening waves, the Horn of Plenty on the quilt. Full hearts of the Sea, sewn together in the center of the quilt. All the rest is background.

Still, no fish. The line does not bend into the water. She is no good at this. Maybe she is using the wrong bait. Worms and muscles are all she has. Perhaps she should use sardines, ancho-

vies, but those, themselves, are a meal for her.

More work on the quilt, while she waits. Waits. The fisherman's wife going mad. The constant ripples of the water can drive you mad. Soon you begin to feel them under your skin. Lose a sense of boundaries, capsules. Your mind begins to flow like the water. Will not stay still, will not imitate the steadiness of rock. But, rises. Your mind is blown like wind. Cannot be brought back.

The fisherman's wife runs through the streets of town, screeching, flapping her shabby skirt. She chases away the pigeons and gulls in the square, gathers up all the pieces of bread thrown to the birds. Carrying the crumbs in her skirt, she runs back down to where the rocks move, breathe. To the people, on the streets, in the bakeries buying fresh bread for pigeons, she yells, "I have mouths to feed. Mouths to feed."

Another patch done. The chaos of different colored squares, still there is no fish on the line. She should try new bait.

"By the sea, by the sea, today you, today you!" The organ grinder plays on, reeling in the line. One fresh worm placed on the hook. To tempt the fish. Seduced and satisfied by so little. These fishes. Cast over and. Out.

The fish-wife is barefoot, standing on the docks of the village, pretending to sell fish. Her blouse is open, just enough to show that her browned breasts are full and warm, that below, on the rocks, she wears no blouse at all. Waiting for customers, fish to be bought, she strokes the long bodies of the fish, squeezing and stroking their thin layer of skin. Her dark eyes watch the people looking over her fish, making quick, embarrassed selections. Their faces are red, uncomfortable, as they pick out the fish, hand them to her. "This one, please," they say. And she mouths, slowly the words, "Thank you. Thank you very much," and wraps the cold meat in old newspaper.

Aha, a bite. She quickly puts the needle, the thread, in the quilt. Puts it away. Carefully, reels in her line.

"By the sea. By the sea." Blue-silver sunlight shines out from the end of her line. Squirming in the strange dry air. A mirror, moving closer and closer to her until she reaches out her hand. Quickly, she places her hand over the body. To stop its shaking. If she hesitates for even a moment. She cannot do it. Let the fish die. She has to believe, there is no other choice. But to stop the writhing of the fish. The hook, at least, comes out easily, from the mouth. A large perch. A lucky catch.

For the fishwife, trading in the town, it would buy many loaves of bread. For her husband. She would give it back to the ocean, throw it back, for the water to fill its gills. Trading it in the sea, the fish for the Sailor.

There is this priority of hungers. ♀



# ANNA

By Stephanie Mines

I see her at sundown when we sit around her dining-room table, eating her fine dinner of meat pie and light mashed potatoes and green peas. Savoring her farm food and looking at her farm-woman's hands I disbelieve the truth of her life --that she has always lived here on the edge of a city. Her eyes and jaw hold memories of vast country and ranch animals. But she has seen only car lots, warehouses and freeways. She is a sal-low tree skeleton, an aging woman I watch to find my own future. Anna, you are my teacher.

After dinner Anna sits under a small light and stitches doilies, edges table-cloths, crochets kettle warmers to put in a scented cedar chest for the woman that will someday marry her son Merle. As we sit together, I know Anna wants me to be the one to open the cedar chest. It's strange, but on these evenings I feel it's Anna that I love, not Merle. It's for Anna that Merle and I are lovers.

Her day begins at 6 AM when she gets up to cook bacon and eggs and coffee. She packs Merle's lunch--usually putting in his brown sack some of his favorite cookies that she bakes on the week-ends. Then she makes lunch for herself and her husband Otto, and they go to work in the laundry. All day she washes and steams and presses and starches, sweating an acrid fluid that drips slowly down her narrow face and arms and thighs. Her own clothes have been washed thousands of times--pedal pushers and sleeveless blouses of no color any more. The only thing that softens Anna's life is the love she tends for her children, the three still alive and the one dead.

The children are from her first marriage, her unexpected mating with an Italian seaman, a man who'd left her and who is now lost on the ocean, an ocean she has never seen. But so much is gone from Anna, even the births of her children in steel hospital rooms with her hands tied down; even the conception of her children and the months of carrying them in her belly--all these memories have evaporated like steam from the mangle iron.

Leland, her youngest, has a body in which all the bones bend. Stooped bones, curved bones, even round bones thrust from a form full of bounce. Leland is married, living not far away, with a sprightly girl Anna can talk to.

Merle is bleached and cleaned, dry as sand. A desert, red speckled. Rangy, like his mother. Big hands gnarled. He is always on time, conscientious, devoted. Beneath that he is ashamed. He admires brilliance, power. He encourages, feeds my striving that will leave him behind. He washes his own shirts. He likes "good" music, motels, low slung clean cars. I keep him at a distance and he stays there. The passion of his repression is stored in his bones and muscle. He knows how to be kind.

Merle and Otto live together by agreement but Anna knows they are enemies. It's not hard to be enemies with Otto. His clenched face is frugal. He is wary, protective, a miser. After dinner he drops into a hard sleep. Anna doesn't recall why she married him and it doesn't make any difference.

But Susan, Susannah, her beautiful daughter with so much summer in her hair, so much violet in her eyes, it is Susannah who troubles her. Susannah lives in a furnished apartment next door to the bowling alley with her two year old son and a husband who'd reluctantly married her when she was six months pregnant. And Anna knows Susannah's husband does not stay home, does not bring money home, does not take to being a family man. Susan is thinner the last few months, her eyes getting wider and wider tho she remains dutiful and kind.

And then there is the vacancy where her other daughter used to be, where now there is something haunting, pieces of a puzzle. The daughter had been in a coma, asleep, for months and months until she stopped breathing and no one ever knew why. This mystery is a warning, a portent. She thinks of it when she sees the angular and fallen look her living children have.

Anna cannot figure it out, she is not used to figuring out, but only to doing the work. She maintains her house, maintains the cleanliness of other people's clothes, she cooks and bakes and fills bellies with homely, substantial food. This is what she does.

But what is this creature to me that I watch her for hours without comprehending, that I want to carry her on my back, massage her, dress her hair, wipe from her face the canyons, the erosions, the map of misuse? And why is it that at night she seems to glow white in her hot, small living room, that she becomes an ancient, proud and whitened tree?

In the world of Anna, Otto, Merle, Leland and Susannah, I am an alien, someone they cautiously permit to see the mystery unfold. They let me be there because Merle loves me, wants me, he thinks, to be his wife. So I stay for a while, watching Anna, watching the mother-sister-tree as she is struck by lightning.

These three women--Anna, Susannah, and the dead sister--are dry autumn leaves while I am the dark storm. Yet all I do is watch. I am a station receiving their signals. Their tears drop into my well and echo. So often I think we are statues, carefully placed on a field of ruins. A fire is headed in our direction, or a dustcloud.

One night Merle goes to see his sister Susannah. He walks into her apartment and finds her sitting in a chair, her eyes wide open, breathing, but unconscious--in a wakeful sleep. Her son



plays at her feet. Merle does everything right, calmly. He calls the ambulance and sees Susannah placed in a ward in the county hospital. Then he goes home and tells his mother. The memory of the first daughter's death, that troublesome memory, flares in Anna's face. Merle sees it and takes his mother's hand.

It is hard to visit Susannah in the hospital. I try once but become so convulsed with sadness and fear that my body twitches uncontrollably. I run from the place as if I think they will put me in one of those beds. She is in a ward with other women who are either in a coma or semi-conscious and those who are semi-conscious are hysterical, screaming and talking to themselves, drool seeping from their lips. And they are naked--the comatose ones lying under thin sheets. Their hair is matted and oily and beside them are machines connected to needles which pump them full of sugar water until they die. Susannah is so thin she is nothing but face. It is impossible to stare into those sightless eyes without contracting some of her silent madness, to fall into the bottomless pools that are drowning her. Anna goes to visit her daughter but all she can do is touch with her bony fingers the girl's withered arm, saying "Susannah, it's mother" and wait and wait for no response.

I am at the house the night they call from the hospital to say Susannah is dead. Otto is asleep in front of the television set. Merle is in the garage building a clock-radio. Anna sits and sews and I am talking to her, smoking with her, watching a lace table cloth emerge from her knotted hands. After the phone call, in which she is very polite to the doctor, she puts the receiver precisely on its hook. She rubs her hands and looks over her house. She goes to Otto and wakes him. He stumbles off to their tiny bedroom where the cedar chest is kept. It is a summer night and the doors and windows are open. The air, even in this rear-end suburb, is fragrant and the moonlight falls on Anna's face. Golden berries seem to blossom from her bones and her hair springs electric from her head. Tho she doesn't move, I think I see her bend over double and shout, her mouth opening again as she rises and a searing wail coming from her lips. As I sit rigid with a knowledge of Susannah's delicate soul flying thru the night, I see Anna proceed to clean her entire house, working with driving power so that by 3 AM she has dusted and polished all the furniture, washed the floors, cleaned the refrigerator and stove until the house shines like a ladies' magazine ad. I fall into a pained sleep until Merle wakes me to drive me home.

Susannah's funeral is a week later because the doctors want to perform an autopsy, tho that reveals nothing. The funeral is very simple. Susannah's husband is there, Merle, Leland and his wife, and of course, Anna, tho Otto has to work in the laundry. The service is methodical and then everyone drives to the cemetery to bury Susannah near her sister. As the coffin goes

into the earth I am filled with a loathing I can't contain and I fall down on the ground screaming, "No, no, no, no, no", madly. It is as if all the voices of the needled and sleeping women in the hospital, the voices of anger and hatred and repulsion and despair, Anna's voice and Susannah's voice, and the voice of the sister lying under the ground, are in my mouth and I am forbidding this death, forbidding the worms to devour her still living flesh, forbidding it all from ever happening again. But it is really my own death I am protesting, my own willingness to go under the earth without fighting, my own contained fear that I will become Anna, that I will become Susannah, that I will go into the darkness, soil filling my eyes, my scream never heard.

\*\*\*\*\*

I rise slowly from Susannah's grave. Anna, Merle, Leland and Otto stay in the crowded heat of Southern California but I will fly away, touching coasts all over the world. Beneath my wings murmur the whispers of the women in the hospital ward.

After I leave Merle, I marry Ted. It takes two weeks for me to realize the mistake, tho it takes two years to untie the marriage bonds. One afternoon I call Merle, crying, trying to go

backwards. Anna gets on the phone and tells me to stick it out with my husband. "We all have our problems", she says.

Anna is wrong.

Sticking it out is not always the answer.

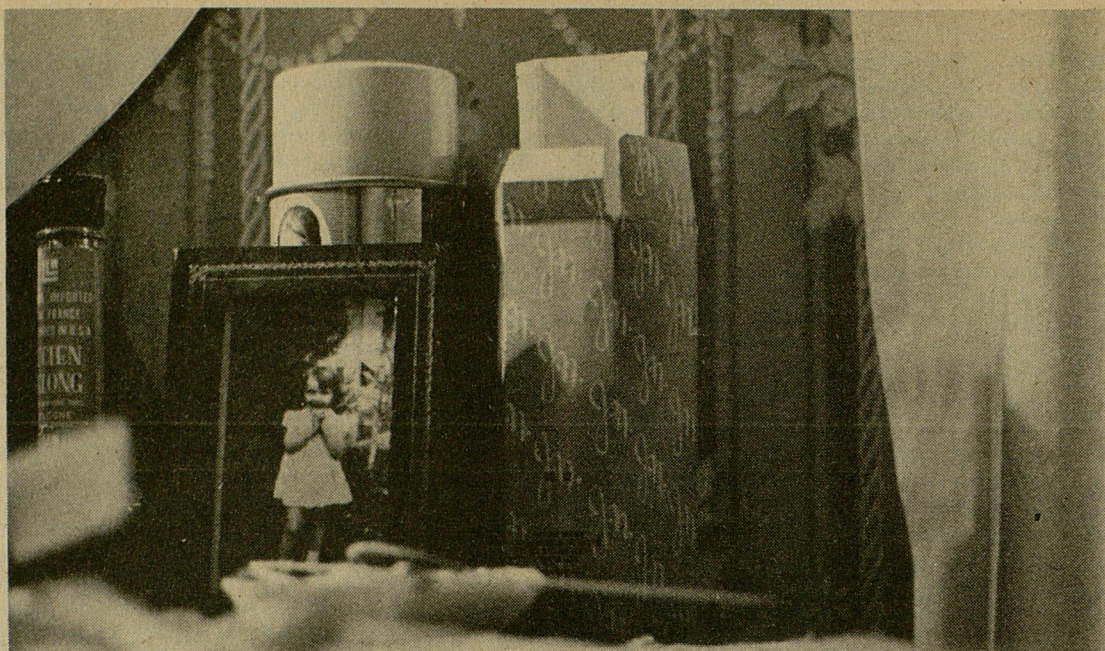
Fly away, fly away.

I fly and fly and fly and fly. ♀



Lynda Koolish





Fran Jurga

# DEAR HEART

By Jana Harris

The horses. I worked riding the green colts, the running quarter horses that didn't make it on the race track. Turning them into hunters and jumpers for the horse shows, for the expositions, the B points. Slicking them up to sell down south. And there was the sorrel filly that was my favorite.

I always wanted to be a Rodeo queen. The queen of the Pendleton Round-up, the Mollala Buckaroo. A barrel racer, the queen; a star. But I had those bird legs and a hungry face, and there was that strange crooked smile. But always there was my soft-nosed horse; My red sorrel "Goldico" horse.

On the humid August days we rode to the mouth of the Clackamas River. Serpentineing the deep slow water. Bobbing on a secret carousel, the calliope pumping out the song that the salmon fishermen sing to their children: "Wynken, Blynken, and Nod one night sailed off in a wooden shoe, sailed off on a river of crystal light, into the sea of dew." My horse, my river, my horse and me. We swam away, she and I, bareback with her red nose high in the air away from the white water's spray. I tugged at the mane, gripped her sides with my thighs feeling the power of her forelegs against the current. Feeling a power I wanted for my own.

The cold water lifted the salt away. Left us shivering on the bank, shivering on the hot rocks. We were like the water moss, our long hair. That hair that had begun to grow down my back. That hair that I had bleached to match the fire color of her tail.

We rode through the high fields that belonged to the horseshoer down the road. I was in love with

him, with the ex-cowboy, the ex-Western Canadian saddle bronc champion from Calgary. He was 34 and married to a woman 10 years older. A woman with a fancy French name and that same red hennaed hair as my mother. He took me out horse-shoeing during the day. Him and his old Dodge telephone truck and a case of Colt-45 on the floor, eating lunch at the truck stop on the road to Canby. Telling me about the girl friends on his route; which had the bad varicose veins and which he wouldn't do any favors for. We'd stop on some back road to Redland to make out. In a few minutes he'd be talking about his wife, his wife, and my mother and how if one of them ever found out, he'd get shot twice. He asked me if I'd like a Camel. "No," I says. "Better not." "Don't you smoke?" he says. "My mother gets upset when she smells tobacco on my coat," I says. "You always do what your Ma says?" he asks. "No, I answered, "but she believes that if a girl smokes, she drinks, and girls who drink do other things." "Oh," he says. And "Oh," again. "Well," he says, "I always did like your red hair. Where'd ja get it?" "It's mine," I says with a look in my eye. "It's mine; I did it up to match the color of my filly's tail."

2.

At home there was the mother that complained about my black eyeliner, the sun streaked hair, and the dark-haired boyfriends. I did not understand the language of the handshake; the limp grip and the terrible character flaws it foretold. I did not understand the dark skinned mother, with her aqua-marine eye shadow, the red hennaed hair, and that Prussian octave always in her voice. There was my blond brother and me. The good son and the promising daughter. But the daughter who



could not understand.

"In a sorority they will make you dress for dinner," she would say at the table. "They will make you dress for dinner and eat with the proper fork." But to the girl who sat in the blank room at the old card-table embossed with a picture of Yosemite Falls; a fork was a fork. "And if you walk away one more time to ride those horses, one more time this week, instead of staying here with the family, I'll make you a ward of the court! Your father said I could do that," she said. She said, "Those horses are your hobby, not your life, do you understand?" "And why do you always go out with the dark-haired boys? Always the dark hair and the drive-in movies," she said. "And I know what you do with that Mary, too, when you go out; you chase boys, the two of you. You chase boys, Miss Smarty Pants, and they'll never let you in a sorority." She said, "When I was in college we always kept the boys around, sure! But at an arm's distance, an arm's distance. Do you understand?"

But they do not ask why, these children of the Germans. I sat at the table with my short-cut hair, in the faded red and black logger's jacket my father had found on the side of the road; and did not ask why. Why it was me who had to be hunted, instead of being the hunter. I was the hunted. I had been told and told and it was not that I did not understand. I was the one without the rifle. I sat at the table and cried. Cried at night. Cried for the cornered animals, the deer; for the crippled horse, the old dog at the point of a gun. I was among them. At the point of a Jap gun or a German gun or any of those souvenirs hung on the wall. I cried because I could not believe that my mother wanted this for me. I cried because there was my blond brother and me, one on each side of the table. And there was my mother who had dealt us a terrible choice. She had read the palms, the tarot cards, and dealt out a terrible choice. Then, she had chosen.

3.

My mother said before she went to the Oregon City Hospital to have a "Dilate and Curette," that they had to make sure that there wasn't anything alive in there. That word "anything" made me think that it was only a part of a something, perhaps only the thumb, that was still alive. And that those doctors would wait, listening. Wait for it to die alone in there; or wait for it to swell and come out just a thumb.

4.

There were the hips, the breasts, and that stomach that never fattened. That stomach that was my friend, lean, resistant. My only remnant of a girl who played in the pine trees, in the greasewood. That stomach that was loyal, holding out. Holding out against a liability, against a power-

less fate.

But the round bellies were popular at the summer rock dances, at the Grange hall, the armory, or Portland's Crystal Ball room. Where everyone danced the "swim" or the "bird" in pegged Lee Riders and surfer striped "T" shirts. I stuffed the front of my jeans with wash cloths unused from some great aunt at Christmas filling out my stomach like a taxidermist. Hoping not to be discovered in some dark car later, out on the road to Eagle Creek or in the housing projects. A little drunk on a six pack of Oly, a little loose with some guy from the Rodeo circuit on the Fair. Some guy who was always talking about waiting. Waiting for a football scholarship to Oregon Tech or waiting to go to Nam.

Getting something "down there" that my friend Linda called "spring pussy". My mother telling me that it couldn't be VD because I wasn't married. Going on about her sorority sister, Sue Sibly, at the U of Idaho Gamma Phi Beta house. How Sue had written to her father, a surgeon in Beverly Hills. She had written him and he had written back. I stopped listening because I knew that my father would never write to me, and I could see that Dr. Sibly wrote letters, handwritten letters, to his daughter on his professional letterhead, black engraved stationery. I could see the stationery; the letter in blue fountain pen ink, with "Dr. Sibly, Surgeon, Beverly Hills" at the top of the letter. My mother said he had written back to his daughter at the brick sorority house in Moscow, Idaho, saying that there was only one way to get VD. And that water and a lot of aspirin would cure what ever it was I had.

5.

My afterschool job, my job as a math tutor at the home for emotionally disturbed girls run by a convent. Run by nuns and nice society ladies. We were usually sent in groups to one of the old brick buildings, to the thousands of old brick buildings, to the upper floors, to the huge iron-lungs, black like the nun's habits we were told to press. While the nuns were busy turning the television channels whenever a girl in a bikini flashed across the screen.

The fourth grader who tried to burn down the school the afternoon Sister Kathleen told me that ironing 30 shirts was unsatisfactory for my hourly wage of \$1.50. And the old priest living on the second floor, the guidance counselor. Very hard of hearing the older sisters arguing over his dinner tray, his avocado. I knew, I swept the fire escape three times a week.

The college girl counselors lived in the attic, Miss Clare, Miss Martha, Miss Missy. The tweenys on the third floor and the teenys on the second. I was not allowed to be alone with any one of

cont.



them. The Mother of Sorrows School where I was supposed to teach Alexandria her math. "Hey," I whispered in the back of the classroom, "hey, Alexandria, how come you're in here?" She looked sad, she looked like she would cry. "Once or twice," she whispered back, "I missed my period and they thought I was pregnant." And then there was Avon, dark angry Avon.

My afterschool job. My "aren't you glad you didn't get put in there" job. I was supposed to teach them their math, but instead they taught me their rage. They taught me that if you're angry at eight you will be called "disturbed." And if it's rage at twelve, they will lock you up in Sister Kathleen's Mother of Sorrows School. Where it is hoped, prayed for, that you will outgrow it in time to be a good wife, a good mother, a secretary, a stewardess, perhaps, or even a nun. I was supposed to teach them their math, but instead they taught me their rage. Instead we mended their uniforms, their skirts, their hearts, their "Why has my mother left me here," their cotton underwear.

6.

At Christmas after the basketball game with Astoria the river had risen to the back porch, the back door. Into the dining room over the roads. We watched it, all of us, the neighbors, watching from the far cliffs on the North bank. Watched our house with eight feet of water running through it. My father saying that he didn't know what we were going to do if it floated down to the Willamette. And as the river fell we watched the looters, the flashlights bobbing in the night. But here there was nothing to steal even at Christmas. The police detective up the road said it was the 82nd street gang out from Portland and was glad that his insurance covered the silver and furs that they would steal. There was a cedar tree rammed clear through his house; the trunk in the garage and the rest in the living room. No one had the energy to say anything snide or subtle about the other neighbors who were probably just having a look around. No one else said anything about insurance since that morning when Mutual of Omaha had announced that all this was an act of God and completely out of their hands.

The Red Cross took care of the flood victims. Our family was given a one bedroom, strip-city motel room on the Super hiway for a month. Since it was Christmas and everyone's Christmas tree had floated out the door, the gospel churches sent old Buick stationwagons of presents around. I got a navy blue army surplus turtle neck sweater that I traded with my brother.

After New Years the roads that had not washed away were cleared of the mud slides. We went back to what was left. Back to three feet of mud and silt, buckled walls, rusted-out heaters; everything warped -- wet through the studs. The pro-

pane space heater in the living room blasted for a month. Five teen-age boys from a neighboring Baptist Boys' Home came over to volunteer. My mother, who had no money to pay them for their labor, and afraid that they might start coming around to see me later on a social call to collect their debt, told me to stay upstairs in my room for the day. Where I was happy not to have to push wheelbarrows of mud back into the retaining wall, but got lonely and cold in the dark. I stomped the floor, peeked down at them through the rails in the upstairs banister, and looked at myself for a long, long time into the cracked warped mirrors on the wall of my room. Wondering what my mother saw in there that I couldn't see.

7.

The next day my father's boss from the meat packing plant brought his retarded son, Jeffy, over and they helped dig all day. This time my mother didn't make me stay upstairs. Jeffy was sweet, with a sweet sweet smile. His hands were red from the now freezing mud, but he didn't notice. He apologized for his acne, over and over, later, when we all went swimming in the public pool. My mother said that we should all think of something nice to do for Jeffy for a year when we weren't busy sweeping up the dry silt which kept falling from the walls. But the next December Jeffy was dead. He had died a few days after the residents at the Childrens' Hospital had decided that it wasn't retardation that was Jeffy's problem, it was cancer of the cerebellum. Died in the adolescent ward of the state hospital in Portland. Just after my father's plant closed and 200 men lost their jobs. Just after Jeffy's father decided he would have to work two jobs to pay the bills and he didn't even have one. He didn't even know if he had unemployment. Died. The night that the men decided to go to Tennessee to find jobs. Died, and I heard my father say over the phone that it was probably the best thing.

8.

The women who lived along the river; the neighbors calling each other a River Rat. Wanda, my adopted mother when my real mother moved to Tennessee.

All day she and her girl friend, Doris, sat at the kitchen table talking about the old man, the truck driver, the parts shop husband. A gallon of Henry Endrie's Loganberry wine on the yellow formica table, with the potato chips, cheesits, the diet pepsi. Talking about the old man and what a bastard he was. Filling the empty plastic cups with wine and cigarette butts.

In the early afternoon Wanda drives the kids across the bridge to High Rocks for a swim. She parks the Dodge station wagon in front of a Honky Tonk and goes in for a beer. Me and Linda lay in the sun on the hot granite rocks. Watching the



guys diving off the Gladstone Bridge, diving off the rocks below the freeway. I look for that guy they call the Onion Prince, for LeRoy. Maybe he drove up from Mt. Angel. I watch for his powder blue Galaxy convertible. Maybe he's helping his father in the fields. The Portland State guys are on a drunk. On a drunk in their black leather motorcycle jackets. The zippers, the diagonal brass colored zippers. Those Marlon Brando jackets with the thousands of zippers. Last year one of them drowned. It's always the boys that drowned, my mother would whine to my brother. Always, the boys. But this river comes from the snow, the Cascades; shrinking the veins, cramping the feet. I had a fetish about the skin prickling on my back for hours afterwards. The river, out my window mirroring the light of the sun, the full moon. My friend, my mother, my father, that river. I worshipped the strength of that water for years. Watched the flow of its bends and curves as we walked the two miles up river to home when no one could find Wanda's car. Past Henry Endrie's Winery, where he's thrown all his trash down the hill into the water. Past Doris' white mobile home. Walking in our ruffled bikinis and old tennis shoes.

We watched American Bandstand. Just before 7:00 Wanda drives in, the station wagon swerving between the fences. The tail light's broken, she puts the car in the garage backwards so the old man won't see. So he won't see that she's been drunk again while he's at the parts shop. So that he won't stay in bed for a week for no reason. So that he won't send her to get shock treatments at Damish again. She comes into the kitchen mumbling something about the boarding house she has to run, about his mashed potatoes and his pot roast. She empties some candy wrappers out of her purse, shoving them into the garbage disposal. But Linda and I see the black Trojan trade mark on the aluminum foil. We giggle while she grinds the disposal and gets out the instant coffee.

9.

The last good-bye. I dreamed of leaving for good. The time my mother drove me to the green stucco Greyhound bus station. She drove me downtown with my suitcases to the bus stop the week before she moved to Tennessee; saying "Have a good life." I was hoping never to go back to that girl; the girl who changed the sound of her name around so that it came out something like Sue Cora or Bethie Jean because it sounded country slick or western, or anything but that strange slavic name that was her own.

The last good-bye, where was it, away from the terrible ups and downs. The depression. I wanted the America I was groomed for. The good job because I had done my math; that husband who would buy me a horse, a car perhaps, clothes, all the promises. Where were the promises?

I had the headaches, the terrible headaches. The

swollen temples, the vomiting. My mother had told me that it was all because of my period. I thought of killing myself with a bottle of aspirin. 95 aspirin would do it, I had estimated it over and over. My mother said that all I needed was a boyfriend to tell me he loved me, a man to tell me I was beautiful. A man to help me advance my life, to pay my college board and room. A man to help me give up this terror, this terror and the headaches.

Those baggy pants, I always had the baggy pants. My hair in knots, snakes no matter how often I combed it. And all those clear skinned girls in the glossy prints, on the busses, in the bank. Talking about their firesides, their weddings. Which veil to use, long or short; which flowers. The rosy glow and the electric buzz. It was always raining in Oregon City, in Portland, always raining. The cold. The doing without. I was sick from it. Sick from the strep, staph, the hollow eyes, and the beautiful blond brides in their yellow stucco ranch houses. I was not in this picture. Where was the man who would get me out of this, where was the husband? I had done my math. I had read the magazines.

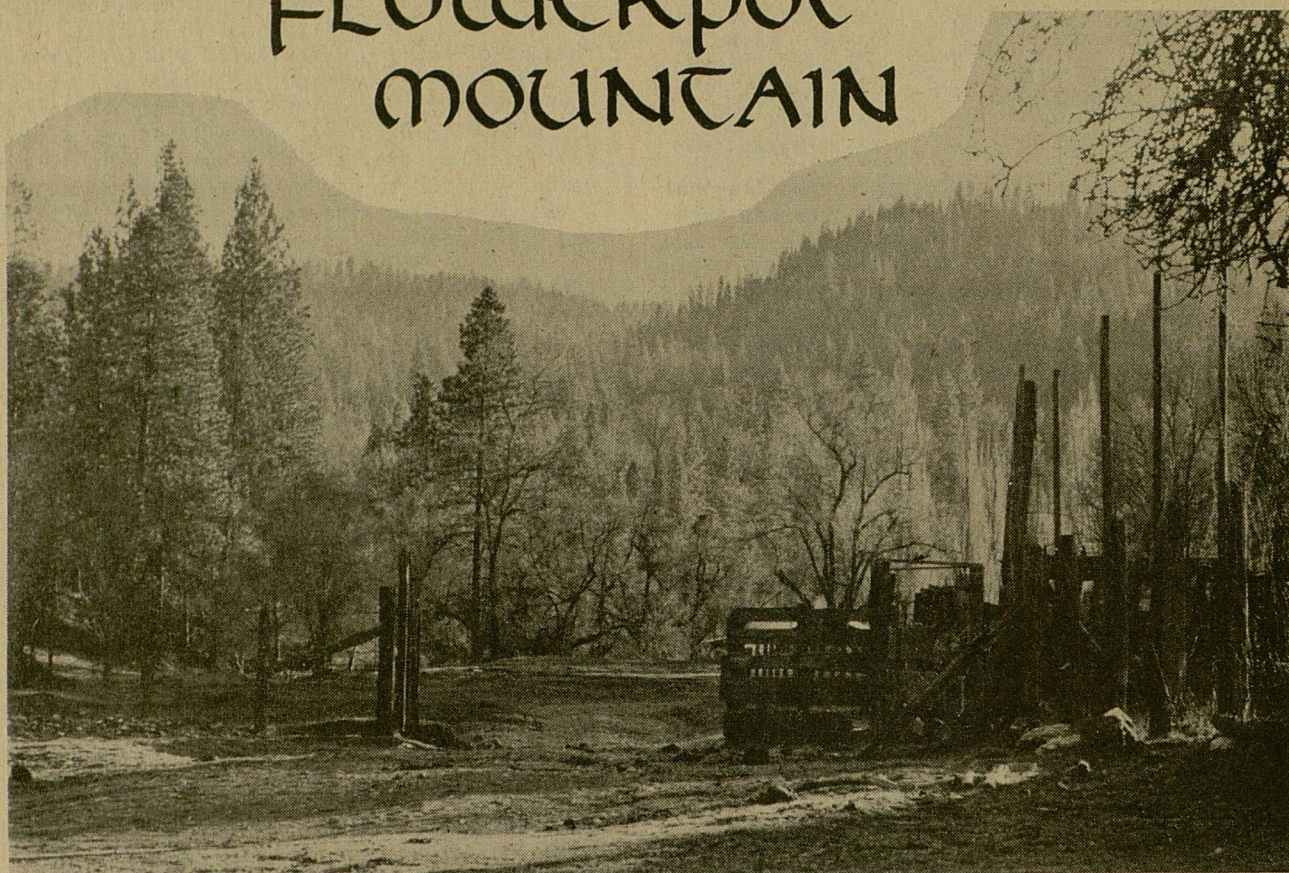
I could see the rosy glow at the end of the table. The rosy glow and the electric buzz. The endless hallways of doors. A black Camaro and your own mobile home. A set of Revere ware, a baby boy, and 10% off of every bag of cement because he works at the gravel plant. Why was I the only one who saw it? Where was it, that last good-bye? I wanted it. It was all I could think about.

But always growing inside me was the horror that I might have to get what I wanted by myself. Where was this man that was the rock, the stone? I was terrified that it was really me all along. This had all been a terrible joke, the beautiful blond brides in the newspaper -- the yellow bricked houses. Where was that place? It had all been a joke; another "Dorothy and the ruby slippers and the impotent Oz" joke. Where were the prospective husbands, the men to protect me, to give me my own house, a car? To let me eat all I wanted. My mother said that it was because I was so disgusting around men. I was a show-off. She said that I should learn psychology. "Never ask for anything before he's eaten. When he comes home from work tired, let him eat before you ask him for favors, for those silly incidents. Don't you know anything about psychology? He'll feel much better after he's eaten."

I tried to believe that there would be such a man. A man who would help me give up being scared all the time. I would never be scared again. I wouldn't get the terrible headaches, the terrible headaches with the flashing lights and the rolling on the floor. I wouldn't cry anymore. I wouldn't cry when I was corrected or criticized. I wouldn't cry all the time. I wouldn't cry. ♀



# FLOWERPOT MOUNTAIN



By Ms. Slater

She ran through the woods, the girl in her arms and the boy clinging to her back. She lunged like a bear, the undergrowth burning into her skin. They rested clinging to each other, the children quiet with fear. At dawn she dragged branches to cover their tracks and found a better place to hide and sleep. They slept curled around each other, the circle of their hands patting comfort. That night they moved. She carried one child at a time, the other following. In their silence they needed to touch and when resting they caressed and she licked them.

There was a clearing and in the moonlight they saw a house with a string of tin hearts decorating its peak. The yard was deserted, filled with weeds and broken window sashes but they were still frightened and waited in the trees. When they crept to the house they found a fork with two tines, a blue enamel coffee pot, a kitchen table with a broken leg and a drawer that didn't fit the table. In the outhouse there was a yellowed catalogue that pleased the children. The wash-house walls had collapsed and its fallen roof was pierced by the water pump inside. She tried it and the clang of the handle against the pump silenced the crickets and cicadas. They found a galvanized tub wedged under the roof and they filled it with their treasures and hid it in the woods.

When they came to the stream they drank, lying on large smooth rocks and laughed because the

sound of water made them happy. There was a hill nearby, the shape of an overturned flowerpot, crowned by a circle of trees. They climbed and at the top their fear left them with a harsh flapping sound.

That night they slept on their backs, arms and legs open but still touching with fingertips or feet. She got up with the sun and watched the children share a nightmare. They awoke with heavy heads and stumbled into her and held each other again. She made noises to comfort herself and found the children comforted.

They went back to search the deserted house. In a cattle shed they found a tin of horsesalve and a pitchfork. They added these to their other treasures and began carrying, then dragging the tub. Later that afternoon she found a deposit of red clay in the bank of the stream. She emptied the tub, filled it with clay and showed the children how to break off the tall dry grass. She hammered out the bottom of the drawer to use as a form.

They added water to the clay and the children squeezed it in their fists, picking out bits of rock, then putting the worked clay in a pile. She kneaded it on warm flat rocks, slowly adding the grass, patting it into the form. When the clay began to dry and pull away from the form, they made another. At the end of the day they crawled up flowerpot mountain, leaving five large bricks drying on the stones.



They found berries and nuts to eat, filling their cupped hands, eating and filling their hands again. Sometimes they were too close to the nest of a ground bird. The bird would flutter, feigning a broken wing to lure them from her fledglings. She watched these birds quietly, then took her children to search for other bushes.

They padded the ground and covered themselves with grasses but the cold made their sleep edged. They began to awaken heavy limbed and clumsy, stumbling down to their brick making. She carried the dry bricks against her chest to rest her arms. They scratched a shallow ditch in the rocks and dirt, fitting the bricks and joining them with clay putty from the washtub. The walls began to rise. She and the children became more skilled, learned not to waste movement. Finally her daughter had to stand on tiptoe to see over the walls. The children balanced on top, walking around and around, jumping over the space left for a doorway. They slept inside, huddled against the north wall.

One night she jerked awake to something circling them. Enraged, she crawled to the doorway. She watched moving shadows and saw three full grown wolves come into the moonlit clearing. She stayed on her hands and knees in the doorway. She growled and nothing moved. When they turned and disappeared over the rim she found her muscles too tense to stand. She lay in the doorway and her body drew until her arms were together on her breast, fists under her chin, legs against her stomach. The next morning she awoke in the grasses with the children. In the clearing where play had powdered the dirt she could see no tracks.

They continued to make bricks in the morning then walk to the bushes that still had berries. They searched for more food and near the deserted house they found fields of weeds but also grains which they harvested with their fingernails. The day came when she could make the walls no higher and they began carrying planks for a roof. They took a cedar post from the cowshed and dragged it, holding onto branch stubs. Each day they moved it closer to the mountain. She tore shingles from the collapsed roof of the wash-house and they hammered out nails with stones. Under the shingles they found a potbellied stove but they were afraid of fire and avoided even its shadow.

The wolves returned and she spent the night in the doorway. The rafters were in place when they came again. This time she dozed for minutes, awakening to find them no closer. Then they came in the day. The three brought other wolves and several dark pups played at the rim. She was afraid to send her children into the house, afraid for their backs to be turned, so they remained seated slightly behind her. They sat in the sun until she could smell the wolves and knew each of their movements and injuries. Until she lost any awareness of herself or her children.

The children slept. When they awoke they began drawing in the dirt and she could not gesture or make a sound to stop them. The pups and children circled each other sniffing and retreating. One of the pups charged, skidding into her son's leg and the girl knelt to touch his fur.

She and the wolves got up, poised for movement. The pup ran to his pack and the children to her. The pack filed down the hill using the path she and the children had worn.

When the roof was finished they began to clear the ground of stones, prying each one out and carrying it to the edge. Soon a fence of stones ran part way around the rim. They worked leaves and pine needles into the soil, they planted seeds. Vines and flowers twined the stone fence. Grapevines began curling around an arbor they attached to the house. Birds feasted and their droppings spread the fruit and flowers down the hillside.

The children talked, adding words to their language. They spent hours in the woods, always returning to her at dusk. She didn't speak except single words of command or warning.

One afternoon they slept on the warm rocks by the stream. She and the boy awoke to drink and splash off their sweat in the water. They tried to awaken the girl, bathing her with cool water. She squatted by her daughter, trying to talk but her speech was harsh and awkward. She and the boy carried the child up the mountain, her head thrown back, dark hair brushing the ground. Inside the house the girl's skin cooled and bleached. The boy took his sister's arms and dragged her outside. She stayed in the house, rocking on her heels, hugging herself. When she went outside she found her daughter warm and strong but still sleeping.

They crushed berries, using a leaf to pour the juice between the girl's lips drop by drop. She chewed grains into gum, blended it with juice and spooned it into the child's mouth at sunrise and sunset.

Small red flowers grew where they threw the skins and seeds from juicemaking. Flowers with thick blossoms and leaves that closed at dusk. Each day, more until they surrounded the girl almost to the doorway of the house.

Her son no longer roamed, leaving the hill only to go to the stream. She sat with her daughter for longer and longer periods of time. She became so accustomed to glimpsing things from the corner of her eyes that she no longer turned her head.

One day she and the boy awoke to a humming. Hummingbirds perched on a nearby sapling, the sun glinting off the purple and red down on their throats and chests. Three hummingbirds left the tree to dive at her and the boy, scolding with the harsh rasp of scraping metal, reversing their wings before hitting her face. The boy took her hand, they moved to the doorway of the house and the birds returned to the tree. Females left the tree, spider webs and plant fibers in their beaks and wove a shallow silky nest around the girl. The birds sang, leaving the tree in a ribbon line that flashed color as it rippled. Each dipped into the red flowers, then placed his long narrow bill between the girl's lips. They flew up darting and chasing, until the last bird left the girl. They hovered in a flock, then separated. As the sound of their humming died the girl raised an arm to her forehead to shield her eyes from the sun. ♀



## Biographies

CAROL BERGE Carol Berge is part of the Women's Studies Department at Jefferson College in Michigan. She is the editor of Center Magazine.

LAURA CHESTER Editor of Rising Tides, 20th Century American Women Poets, author of Primagaavida, and Proud-Ashamed, (publication date fall, 1977 - Christopher's Books) has also written two novels and other short fiction.

SHARON DOUBIAGO I'm writing this biography from the new post office in Ramona facing the little house I lived in as a student at junior college 25 miles down the mountain when my first child was a baby. I consider this my first visit back. I'm a poet, prose and short story writer, mother of two teenage children, native Californian, resident of Albion with poetry manuscript, Heart Land nearly completed and one, Daughters of Albion in progress.

LISELOTTE ERLANGER I lived in different countries and did varied things. Studied, was a librarian, a teacher, farmer, wife and am still a mother. Now that I'm older, experiences come back in snippets and snatches and I make them into stories. I write a lot, articles and short stories. I like writing fantasies the best.

JANA HARRIS In 1975 I decided to rent a poetry office space - someplace where I could escape the domestic influence of my house and 2000 years of tradition, someplace where I couldn't do anything else but write, rewrite, or conduct 'the business of poetry.' I found a garden room in a Victorian office building and hung a 'JANA HARRIS, POET' sign out on the street. Not to advertise for business, but as a political statement. In a culture where there is so much emphasis on 'what you DO,' the political statement here is 'I am a poet, I am serious, I am a vital component in this society.'

ALLIE LIGHT I am a poet and filmmaker, and I teach in the Women Studies Program at San Francisco State University. My poems, The Glittering Cave were published by Rebis Press in 1974. I am one of the editors of Poetry From Violence (1976). My latest project is a book on women's dreams of Marilyn Monroe. If you have one, send it to me. A last note on the story of Chuck: He is a grown man now and we are strangers. I don't even know his address.

STEPHANIE MINES Stephanie Mines is now writing a novel, Nadia. She is the mother of Sierra Carol, with whom she lives alone in a windswept house. Trees, bird songs. 33 years old. She has just been awarded the Joseph Henry Jackson Award for her manuscript, Poems and Prose Poems By A Solitary Woman.

LORETTA MANILL Born 4/8/49. Lives and works in Albion.

WENDY STEVENS I've published a book of poems i am not a careful poet and just finished writing eight short stories and am looking for a publisher. I have been on the off our backs collective for three years, taught clowning all year to 'emotionally disturbed and learning disabled' young people, poetry to physically handicapped young people and discipline to my fingers and brain.

LYNN SUKENICK I've published three books of poetry: Houdini; Water Astonishing; and Problems and Characteristics. Just returned from MacDowell Colony, where I was completing Houdini Houdini, a long book of poems. I teach at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

MARIANNE TAVELLI I was born in Denver, Colorado in 1934. Most of my early years were spent in different coal mining towns in Wyoming. In 1945 when the mines were on strike, my father moved our family to California. We moved around the state from one town to another until 1949 when we finally settled in Fort Bragg. I attended Fort Bragg High School, then married Joe Tavelli in 1952. Joe and I have 5 sons. I'm now working as an instructional aide in Fort Bragg and writing fiction. The story Waiting, appearing in this issue, is part of a novel I'm working on.

GRACE WADE I'm 37, married, two kids, I've taught and am teaching, I've had poems and stories published in places like Black Maria, Aphra, Big Moon, and I wish I had more time to be involved in writing and in women writing together.

Our apologies to DENISE TAYLOR AND MS. SLATER whom we were not able to reach.

Note: The subject range of these stories reflect the material submitted.  
For those of you who are missing lesbian stories and more pure fiction,  
(not first person autobiographical style), be sure to write some for our next...



# PRACTICAL ARTICLES

This issue is being done as a special "supplement" to Country Women. There is no Practical Section; it will be resumed as usual in the next issue.

The magazine is undergoing many structural changes. No longer is the Issue Collective responsible for putting together the Practical, as well as Theme, Sections. There is a committee that works on an on-going basis to gather and assemble practical material. Hopefully this will give more continuity as well as increased quality.

In this effort to improve the Practical Section we would like new and different articles. In each issue we would like at least one article that successfully integrates political topics and country living; such as struggles with logging, pesticide poisons, etc. as well as articles that deal with the philosophical and political implications of women living on land. In addition, we would like to include a "Feature Story" that will explore the lives of women that are farming or practicing country related skills.

In further attempts to improve the Practical Section we are actively soliciting articles from new writers who have not yet written for Country Women. Country Women is also interested in expanding to include more information from parts of the country other than Northern California.

We would like to include new and different topics never before covered and to include more in depth articles on subjects already dealt with on the basic level. Following is a partial list of suggested articles that we would like written for Country Women. Should you not have time or energy to write a complete article, please submit bits of information to share in "Farm Notes". Also, please send us ideas of what you would like to see covered in the Practical Section. If you are interested in writing for Country Women or have information to submit, please contact us at Box 208, Albion, Ca. 95410.

## FOOD PRODUCTION, GARDENING AND MARKETING

Cover Crops  
Pruning trees; fruit tree care; orcharding  
Seeding  
French Intensive Gardening  
Drip Irrigation  
Greywater and Gardens  
Soils

## ANIMAL CARE

Nutrition/Nutritional Alternatives  
Docking; Castrating; Disbudding  
Cows; Feeder Calves  
Marketing Animal Products

## CARPENTRY/BUILDING

Alternative Energy Sources  
Sizing and Buying Wood  
Greenhouse Construction  
Insulation  
Plumbing - Hot Water Heaters; Pumps  
Electricity - Simple Wiring; Putting in Service  
Plans for Small Buildings

## VETERINARY SKILLS

Injections  
Use of Merck Manual  
Use of Veterinarian as Resource  
Vet Supplies to Have on Hand

## TOOLS AND MECHANICS

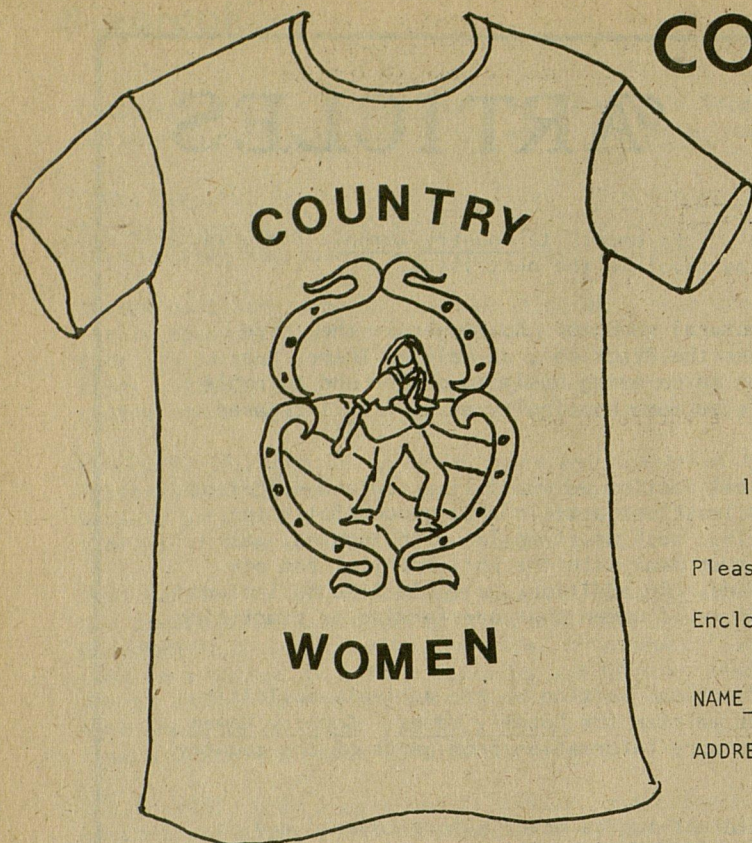
Basic and Advanced Maintenance of Chainsaws  
Sharpening Hand Tools  
Looking for a Used Engine  
Electrical Systems  
Transmissions

## FEATURES

Earning a Living in the Country  
Environmental Struggles  
Land Trusts  
Isolated Land/Semi-rural lifestyles  
Community organizing  
Farmers' Markets



# COUNTRY WOMEN T SHIRTS



COLOR: GOLD with BROWN

SIZES: S M L

PRICE: \$5.00 + .50 postage

100% Cotton

Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ T shirt(s) in size(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is \$\_\_\_\_\_.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to Country Women T Shirts. Box 431, Albion CA 95410

**COUNTRY ★ WOMEN'S ★**  
**FESTIVAL**  
 SEPT. 9th to 12th ~ \$20 (\$5 per day)

...providing a  
 and sharing  
 in rural areas.  
 tration, and/or  
 country women's  
 festival.

(space is limited! Write soon!)  

 chance for growth  
 for wimmin living  
 send \$10 pre-regis-  
 get more info at :  
 BOX 1267 MENDOCINO, CAL. 95460

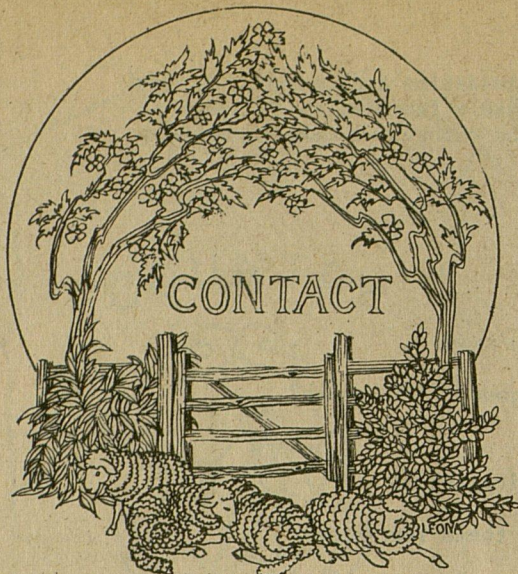


Country Women is in the process of self-examination and change. We need some information from you. If you would take a few minutes to answer these questions, it will be possible for the changes we make to reflect your thoughts, feelings and needs.

1. Do you live in the country ☐ small town ☐ city ☐
2. Approximately how many issues of Country Women have you read?
3. Does one issue stand out in your mind as particularly good? If so which?
4. When reading Country Women do you usually read the entire issue?
5. Do you generally read all ☐ most ☐ some ☐ of the theme section?
6. Do you generally read all ☐ most ☐ some ☐ of the practical section?
7. What do like most about the theme section?  
  
Least?
8. What do you like most about the practical section?  
  
Least?
9. Do you find the practical articles effective enough to do the task required?
10. What do you think of the politics of the magazine?
11. What words would you use to describe yourself politically/socially/economically?
12. What direction would you like to see the magazine take?
13. What features would you like to see run that aren't now?
14. Any suggestions for future themes? Please list.
15. Any suggestions for future practical articles? Please list.
16. Do you participate in any feminist activities. If so what?
17. Do you read any other feminist literature. If so what?
18. Any bookstore (with address) you'd like to list for us to contact?

PLEASE TEAR THIS PAGE OUT AND RETURN TO COUNTRY WOMEN EVEN IF YOU HAVEN'T ANSWERED ALL THE QUESTIONS. USE AN ADDITIONAL PAGE IF NECESSARY.





Jewelweed, a group working towards a self-supporting agricultural life style, is looking for women of any age, with or without lover or children, to balance out a group of six men (five gay) and two pregnant women. We live collectively on 100 acres of farm and woodland 10 mi. from Ithaca, NY. Call or write: The Cabin, Box 62, West Danby, NY. 14896 (607-564-7271)

We're an intentional communal experiment in egalitarianism, feminism, open relationships, communal child rearing, communal property, bisexuality and joy. We wish to add new members, particularly with child(ren). For more info please write: Aloe Community, Rt. 1, Box 100, Cedar Grove, NC 27231 (S.A.S.E.)

Patchwork Homesteads, a group in the process of forming. Plan a multiracial rural community of individual houses on 1-5 acre sites clustered on a farm outside of Pittsburgh. We are especially seeking one parent families and women alone. Contact: Ann Tucker, 1653 Laketon Rd., Pittsburgh, Penn. 15221

Redbird is a feminist living and working collective in central Vermont. We're having a summer work gathering to build the first buildings for our community. You're invited to come and work with us. No experience necessary. Reservations necessary. For more info write: Redbird, 280 Manhattan Dr., Burlington, VT. 05401

Camping Women is a non-profit corporation which helps women experience & appreciate the values of camping. We hope to help feminists learn to live comfortably in the outdoors and to discover their own inner resources for coping with most life situations. Write: Camping Women, 2720 Armstrong Dr., Sacramento, Ca. 95825.

"Women & Law", "Women & Health/Mental Health", and "Herstory (women's serials)" - microfilms produced by the Women's History Research Center are now available from Northeast Micrographics, P.O. Box 2, Branford, Ct. 06405. Please ask your library to order them.

The Adirondack Women's Community Center is located in Saranac Lake, NY, a small city of 7000 in upstate NY. We are open as a center to any woman in the No. country area. We hold weekly discussion meetings, and various workshops for and by women. We can arrange to have visitors for short stays at members' homes. Contact us at: Adirondack Women's Community Center, 68 Main St., 3rd floor, Saranac Lake, NY 12983

We are a 7 yr. old alternative high school/farm which the atrophying free school movement is eating away at. We need people with lots of energy for people, education and administration. Write us about yourself: Woolman Hill, Deerfield, MA 01342

Rappahannock Country Women's Festival. Fri. noon Sept. 30 through Sun eve. Oct. 2. Jordan River Farm, Flint Hill, VA. If you wish to teach a skill or coordinate a discussion group, please contact us soon. Women only. Please register in advance. Directions and all additional info can be obtained when you register. There is no charge. Bring enough food and camping gear for the time you plan to stay. Call: 703-987-8273 or 675-3409. Write: Bobbie Mason, Rt. 1 Box 49C, Woodville, VA 22749-SASE No Dogs.

We Want The Music Collective is producing a second women's music festival near Mt. Pleasant, Mi. on Aug. 25-28. Any woman who'd like to perform should send a tape of her music. Also any woman interested in facilitating a workshop at the festival please contact us (workshops not limited to music - production, sound, etc.). WWTMC, 1501 Lyons, Mt. Pleasant, Mi. 48858.

Magic Ferry - an alternative transportation and distribution system traveling nation-wide between contact points called ferry dykings. Rides to festivals and conferences. Feminist products from communities dispersed along the routes. Open to suggestions & requests, as well as group charters. Contact: sisters of Diana, Magic Ferry Bus, Rt. 1, Box 42A, Tishomingo, Ok. 73460.

Women in the Wilderness, a non-profit organization, is dedicated to preparing women for leadership positions in the framework of a female support system, and to initiate & facilitate our own wilderness trips. Write: Women in the Wilderness, c/o San Francisco Ecology Center, 13 Columbus Ave., SF, Ca. 94111.

A Woman's Place has published their first newsletter to share their growth with other women. Write: A Woman's Place, Athol, NY, 12810.

A new Womanspirit project is to gather chants from women/for women everywhere to share. The cassette tape of your chants should be sent to Womanspirit, Box 263, Wolf Creek Ore. 97497. It will be taped and returned to you with chants from other women in place of yours. When enough have been received to fill an hour cassette, Womanspirit will duplicate them in quantity and sell them at a reasonable cost, benefitting both Womanspirit and the women who want to share in the heartmusic being created and expressed in our own chants.



# FUTURE ISSUES

**ANGER AND VIOLENCE:** Women's relationship to anger. How and where are we angry? What are our special blocks or accesses to our anger? What do we do with our anger? Do we feel safe being angry? How do we respond to societal and cultural hostility directed toward women (rape, battered wives, pornography, in medical practice)? How have we internalized this hostility? What is the power of anger? How do we use it? Personally? Socially? Constructive uses of anger. Self destructive uses. The role of anger and violence in the Feminist movement and other movements for social change. Role of anger and violence in our relationship to the planet? How are anger and violence connected? Women's relationship to violence? Sources of violence. Fears of violence. What do we do with violent feelings? Between men and women? Women and women? Children and parents? (Deadline: August 21)

**WOMEN'S RELATIONSHIP TO PLANTS AND ANIMALS:** An important part of country living is our increased sensitivity to non-human life forms that we share this planet with, whether they be houseplants or fields of crops, our favorite house cat or a barn full of livestock. What is gained and what is lost when we move from "having pets" to "raising livestock"? Feelings about raising animals for slaughter? What are women's historical connections to agriculture and animal tending? What are the means of communication we use with these non-verbal beings? Experiments done with plants based on the Findhorn information? Relationships to wild animals and plants? Do we have a role as earth caretakers? Share your stories. (Deadline Nov. 1)

**THE LEARNING PROCESS/ EDUCATION:** Learning new skills and acquiring new information is the way to growth and change. This never stops throughout a woman's lifetime. We are interested in arti-

cles on education of children - feminist changes in institutions and methods. Articles on the way we educate ourselves as we learn new rural skills. The fears of entering new, traditionally male fields. The power of taking control with this knowledge. Articles by older women who have started on new paths. Institutions and books vs. learning-by-doing. (Deadline: Jan. 15)

## FUTURE ISSUES DEPENDENT ON ARRIVAL OF MATERIAL:

**HUMOR:** When we decided after five years to attempt a humor issue Helen said, "It's too late, I'm not funny anymore." We hope you are. What is women's humor, examples, stories, analysis, cartoon strips. The guffaws of living in the country like the time Jenny's longed for Appaloosa foal came out a mule. We want to do a twelve page parody called "Country Girl" so sharpen your satirical pencils. Here's your chance to make fun of us and yourselves, and the whole do-it-from-scratch-holier than thou foolosophy.

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN:** Analysis of women's changing positions in other countries. Letters from women traveling. How is Feminism affecting women outside of North America? What if any are the forms of a women's movement? Examples of female bonding in other cultures.

**FARMING WOMEN:** Who are we? Young and old? What are the realities of our lives, our history, our farms? Even if you are not a farmer yourself, here's your chance to interview a woman farmer and write an article about her life. Let's make sure our history is not lost this time. Consider writing the interview in the first person narrative rather than question/answer form. Of the skills or knowledge you brought with you to the farm, which has proved most useful? Do you sometimes have fantasies about other ways you might spend your life? Was farming your choice? If country life was your fantasy, how closely has the fantasy corresponded to the reality?

# BACK ISSUES

Back issues available from Country Women, Box 51, Albion, Ca. 95410. Back issues 10-22, \$1.00, #23-24, \$1.25.

- #10 Spirituality
- #11 Older Women
- #12 Children's Liberation
- #13 Cycles
- #14 Foremothers
- #15 Sexuality
- #16 Women Working
- #17 Feminism & Relationships
- #18 Politics
- #19 Mental and Physical Health
- #20 Food
- #21 Woman as Artist
- #22 Country - City
- #23 Class
- #24 Personal Power

## SPECIAL PRICE BARN SALE

Choose any 5 copies of back issues #10-#21 for \$3.00 plus 50¢ postage. We need to make room for this year's alfalfa.

Please send us your change of address. It costs us a lot of money to re-mail your issues.

CALLIGRAPHY: Slim

Inside Front Cover: Yvonne Pepin

Back Cover: Kiki Newman



COUNTRY WOMEN  
BOX 208  
ALBION, CALIFORNIA 95410

SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID  
ALBION, CALIFORNIA 95410

M. E. Clinton

Box 54133

Atlanta, Ga.

30306

