

et al.: Oakwood

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Donald Boyd

(brush and ink drawing: 26" X 19")

COVER: Owen Hotvet

"Road Running" (print: 26½" X 19")

oakwood

This issue is dedicated to Governor Richard Kneip and the South Dakota Board of Regents, and to the cause of maintaining in the state of South Dakota seven public institutions of higher learning.

These pages bear witness to the diversity and geographical breadth of the arts. Any proposal to isolate the arts in one pale blue corner of the state can only dampen the exuberance of the arts.

Michael Boer

et al.: Oakwood

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Carla Carlson

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Thomas D. Thorson

oakwood

Number 3, February 1977

South Dakota State University

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Robert Canter

South Dakota Highways

South Dakota highways:
they're straight
and they're long
and they can take you to Montana.
Wyoming.

Pat Collins

Men Who Steal Gas In The Night

I never saw them.
But my dog would bark hysterically;
I would leap from bed to the window
Clutch my rifle and search through the scope, shivering.
Never a glimpse; but the big collie
Would bristle and jabber at the weeds
And the granaries behind the pump.

So I would stalk from the house with my rifle
And flit noiselessly, terrified and pale
Blindingly exposed under the blue yardlight
Toward the shadows where the collie trembled.
I always stopped behind her, blood pounding
And eyed the flickering shadows almost worth a bullet.
The dog would go no further, but I had to know.

Raising my rifle I plunged screaming into the weeds
In the darkness between the granaries
Thrashing madly, kicking, swinging
A mindless kamikaze raging blindly in the starlight
Whirling round and round to face my ever-present danger
Till exhausted I would slump, and the dog would trot away.
I never saw them.
Night after night, I never saw them.

Boy's Blizzard

Smothered and muffled in warm clothing
And tied together with old rope
Dad and I lumbered out to check the cattle.
"Stay close to me," he hollered over the wind.
I looked up, one-eyed and noseless
In my twisted stocking mask.
We drifted warmly into the white,
Through the snow and among the wind.
I felt like an explorer;
Stared out from my thick woolen spacesuit
And gripped with both hands the lifeline to my father.

The young bull was standing rigid
In the open with snowdrifts rising around him.
Coldly and solidly covered with ice,
Not smooth but all bump-armored,
He was magnificent wind-sculpted marble.
Thick blinders of ice capped both eyes
And his mouth and nose were muzzled
By his frozen breath.
He clacked and rattled as Dad pushed and prodded him
Into the barn. When Dad tore off his muzzle and blinders
He blinked in surprise and clattered off into a corner.
Dad smiled. "Being blinded, he would have stood there
And finally suffocated in his own breath.
Maybe now he won't jump the fence again for awhile."
I stared up at him in open one-eyed admiration,
Hands fisted for warmth inside my clumsy mittens.
He looked at me, then at the bull, then back at me.
Gently he reached down, gripped my twisted mask,
And set it straight.

Doug Cockrell

MILES OF NIGHT

Father drives us through miles of night
packed full of cardboard boxes, suitcases, sacks
all stuffed inside the '58 Chevy stationwagon,
while mother, brother, and two sisters sleep
around me in windowglass; dashlights coldly glowing,
through Father—gathered in light at the wheel—
in to the night-lit stars, above sounds
of merging radio stations fading into a drone.

HIS LUNCH BUCKET

was the love between them
bottom dented out,
shaking as he walked
from the table at evening,

filled in his sleep
as it came and went with his cap;

most noons welcome
as mail between them
packed neatly with daily contents,
eaten whether on the move, in fields
or closed in shade of a barn, yet

when she forgot or just ran out,
he'd be whole days
hot as his thermos: misplaced
from a plugged joy,
ready finally to
cuss into the bucket

With all he left her then
to lay open

bitten.



William Meissner

Lon Tonneson

FEEDING

He goes to cattle
through red grasses
lapping roughly at his Levis.

First the yard:
Mud from split hooves
arrests his stride.

Then the silo:
Brick telescope rising from its pasture roots
its shed door creaks with age
and sets the cattle lowing for silage wet.
He faces the morning dark.

The auger showers bits of field and machine
to the floor where he loads
the wheelbarrow his grandfather carried.
The cattle he feeds are the same as his.
Their red flanks heave with steam from where they laid.
Their breaths like a fog claim the narrow trough.

He dumps his load on the runway and gets another,
but done with the feeding he does not go
nor close the door.
Through the grasses of silage grown corn
he wades, carressing horns and hides.
He drinks the silage wine.

Dennis Sampson

BUSINESS TRIP

knock-kneed at the faucet
not working, of the closed depot,
the old grocer glances
over and over his shoulder,
fidgets with a lit Lucky Strike
like an idea, one boxcar bucks
the slow train moves away

stands still there
when only dim motorcycles
can be seen on the downtown
street, then hoisting
heavy luggage above
concrete climbs into
(grabbing his hat) a busted

Buick, but gets back out
to cock his boot on the bumper
to knot it, then on in
where a wide-eyed lady,
shifting into gear, smiles
and smiles and smiles,
her lopsided bonnet
falling forward as they go

Bruce Edward Dommer

The Farmer's Son

He backed the Tonka 806
up to the shiny 5 bottom
plow and started to work
the living room floor

behind the couch, around the
T.V. stand and under the stereo
he plowed and plowed with
spit dripping from his chin

he swatted at seagulls
as they dove for upturned
worms, stopped and threw
dirt clods at a gopher

he didn't stop for supper
plowed right through Walter Cronkite
and the six o'clock news even
plowed over his mother's foot

before he completed his 56th round
he ran out of gas
said "damn" and walked
into the kitchen.

John Garvey

Between My Lips

Camels and White Owls,
My best of friends
And though the gods AD-mit
They have my lungs upon dead ends
I know i shall not quit

So with a But between my lips
Two smoke rings i shall blow
One a zero to the gods
The other is my halo



Thomas D. Thorson

Don Welch

THE DANCER

At the Backlot
in Kearney, Nebraska,
an Indian go-go dancer
speaks sign language
on a stage.

Among the catcalls
and semenally wet shorts
she is beautiful.

Her lines are perfect
to her fingertips,
her flesh is as undulant
as otoi squash,
and the place where
the curve of the spotlight
intersects her breasts
obliterates history.

I decide to sit farther back
in the psyche of the place.

I decide to watch her
until her shadows are rich dusks,
until they are totems of herself.

And until then
I'll tell myself I'm drunk.

THE RETURN

Padless, he watches the fullback
fail on a trap play,
lets his eyes fall down
with the spotter's and film man's,
down through the mosquitoes
where he warmed up last year.

And he remembers how
he slung garbage all summer,
raising his biceps from
sanitary napkins to green peaches
until he was ready,
top of the junior line,
better than the sweet tarts
girls tongued at the pool
when he did leg-ups off the board.

And on the field
Coach Arnold has a hint,
almost a remembrance.

Of how last year's opening kickoff
sprung someone's spring-loaded
ham cramps downfield,
of how he went up over the wedge,
the thigh-pad of a tackler
unlettering him,
snapping his neck until
a pearl-gray odor dribbled out of him
and was caught by a doctor
and breathed back into his head,
but only his head.

Which is now almost a remembrance
in Coach Arnold's eyes.

A SIMPLE BIOGEOCHEMISTRY OF PHEASANTS

This poem makes no new contribution to the origin and distribution of pheasants. It makes no unique contribution to wildlife research and management. It has no illustrations, no charts, graphs, no tables. All it does is refer to the word **pheasant**, from Phasis, a river in Asia, and to say they were once numerous near its mouth.



Kevin Woster

Greg Kuzma

My Father

They took him you know
they took him and tossed him
into the water
nearly drowned him
he was in there thrashing around
finally he came to shore
and the beach was empty
that was how he learned to swim

He was on a roof
the birds were singing and singing
flapping their wings and all
and the sun shone pure
and then he was tumbling
tumbling tumbling
over and over
his pencils falling out of his
pockets
he hit the ground
smash
cracking his skull
that was how he became deaf
in one ear

we would sit at the table for hours
and not even talk to each other

He would walk down the hall
a grown man
he would hang up his pants
in the closet
where he kept all the rifles
some which really shot
one which might have killed a man
my father
liked guns
shooting them
feeling them in his hands

He would eat his meals slowly
not saying anything
and usually
right on the tip of his nose
or off to the right or left
of his mouth
my father
would start wearing a smudge
of mustard
or pea soup
or cream cheese
He always talked with his mouth full
of mashed everything
my father did

I followed him to work one day
which was against the rules
I saw where he worked
my father
the big work bench
with all his files and nails
the nudie calendar
on the post
his black lunch box
and the grinning asshole foreman
or the grinning asshole union man
or the grinning asshole apprentice
at the next bench
would come over and say
This the Kid?

My father would grin and pat my head
my father
was a good man
just wrong
and sad
he had suffered too much in his life
he did not understand very much
he was underpaid
the earth kept slipping out
from under his feet
for years
he was jealous of me
my father was
jealous where his seed had sprung up
awkward and lonely

When he fell from the roof
he broke his head
and the blood in his head
rushed to his brain
so the story goes
and would have killed him sure
but spilled out his ear
breaking the drum
which is how he became deaf
at a young age

Hunting

Whenever we go hunting anymore
we do not take the guns
but we leave them home in the closet
with the spiders, the perfect hunters.

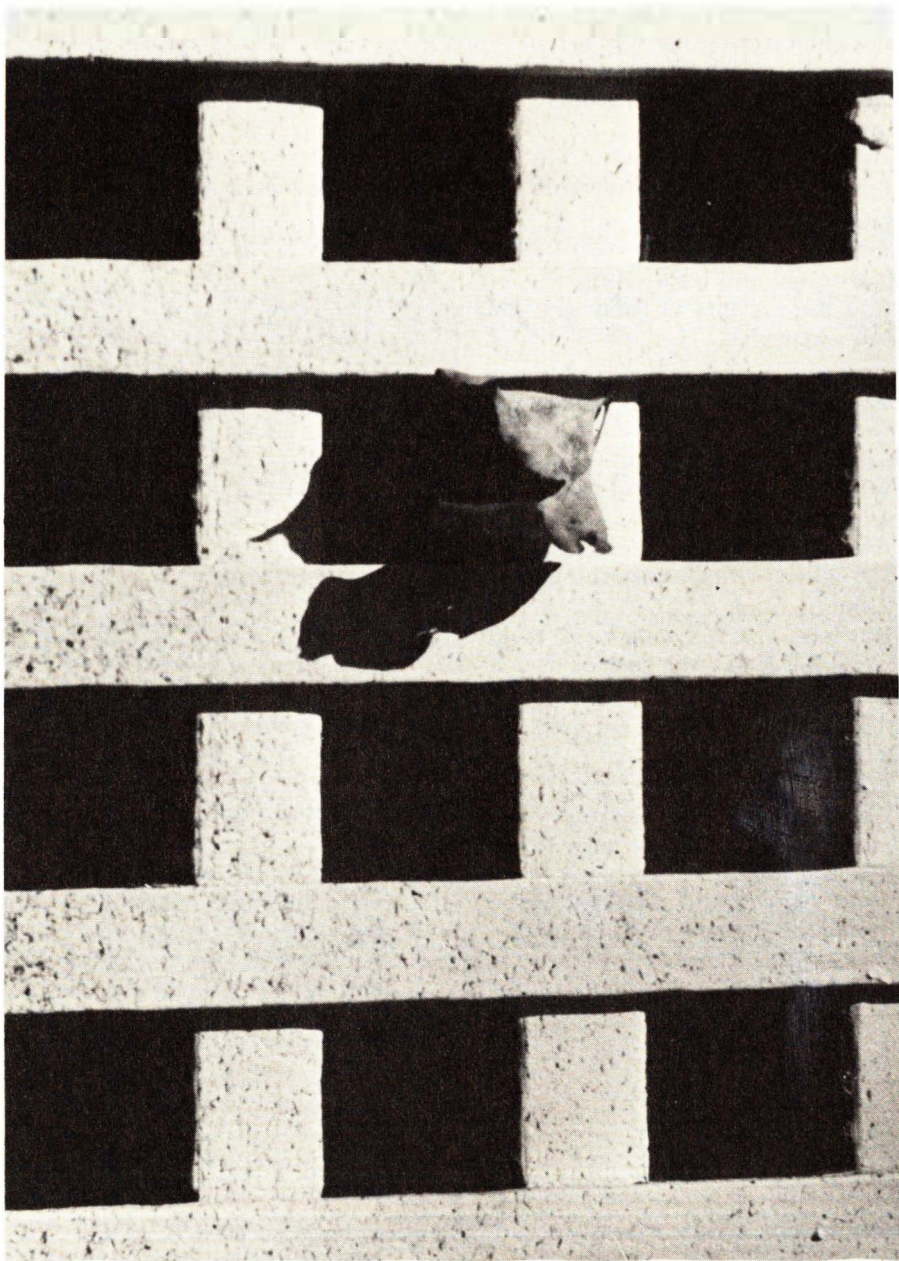
We just get in the car and the
day is sunny and the wind chill
and take some sandwiches along.
Then when we get there
we spread a blanket on the field
and go to sleep.

Whenever we go hunting anymore
it is always like this, my wife
sits to the right of me,
and me driving. The car goes
studiously
over the gravel roads.
Farms rise up on left and right,
and the acres of corn and milo
look like home.

Whenever we go hunting anymore
(and during the season that means
every week end
and even during the week
when the weather's good)
the rabbits run past us from
cover to cover
just as in the old days
almost as if we were not there at all
just as they used to.
And the pheasants fly over us
frightened and frightening.
And the mystery of them gets greater
and greater.

Some days we take the dog.
She likes to ride in the car,
and usually we take her a special snack.
When we get there and pull to the
side of the road
she likes to jump out barking.
She always thinks something important
is happening.
But later she will walk back home
bewildered like the rest of us.

All season the expensive guns stand
in the hall closet
their barrels graying in dust.
And the unshot pheasants, even
more lovely to behold now than before,
fly off from us
upon the slightest provocation.



Linda Hanson

David J. Feela

The Novelty In Dying

Peaceful suicide at Little Spunk Creek is not a usual occurrence. Where the fresh spring water bends past the willows is a perfect location for picnics, fishing for panfish, playful young lover's passion, but not suicide. Listening to a half-naked teenage girl hysterically scream as she and her eager boyfriend accidentally roll against my cold body will destroy the entire art involved in peaceful suicide. Even in death lies the responsibility of upholding the fine moral traditions of this town.

It is my civic duty and even if I wouldn't actually hear the scream because I would be dead, somehow I know it would happen that way, and the town would be humming with erratic excitement for months afterward. Mrs. Clayborn would be yakking about decency and respect for the living, again. The neighbors would be leaning half-way over their white fences and she would be pointing out, in her common sense manner, how after all, it is the plain folks who have to continue their struggle with whatever moral fiber is left.

Little Spunk Creek is not innocent of knowledge about suicide. It has, with no promotional intent, achieved the highest per capita suicide rate for any small town in the midwestern area. Only a town such as Little Spunk Creek could consider "spring fever" a term that denotes some medically incurable disease that has struck our white City Hall like a black wax pencil, seventeen times in the past sixteen years; according to my calculations, one tally per year with a double death bonus on my first birthday. Beyond these statistics, the present year is still, like a maggot, waiting to crawl into a fresh experience.

A variety of methods are available for reference in the town's newspaper files and each one is totally unique in style and execution. One middle-aged businessman from Chicago who had moved to retire in Little Spunk Creek was found, one month after his arrival, hanging from a chain in the kitchen of his rented farmhouse after it burned to the ground. If he set the fire before he hung himself or if his burned corpse, swinging from a rafter, was just a victim of circumstance is still an issue of heated debate. A fourteen year old girl was found in the marshes with a plastic bag tied snugly around her neck. She was five months pregnant and her grief-stricken parents still wonder if it would have been a boy or a girl. A young hippie who was just passing through town lit himself on fire in the middle of main street, between the bar and the laundromat during peak business hours. The following year the township of Little Spunk Creek unanimously allocated seven hundred dollars toward more efficient fire fighting equipment. Little Spunk Creek isn't proud of their record but it does keep them on the map.

Potatoes, according to the Chamber of Commerce, are the town's major export and religious artifacts seem to be the best stocked items on Little Spunk Creek's merchandise shelves. Every shop displays some example of their faith. Even the post office has an antiquated postcard rack adorned with

a large selection of holy cards. The postcards never sell but the holy cards are bought as quickly as stamps. The most popular item can be found in Fred's general market. He carries fresh eggs and butter, ordinary household cooking and baking supplies, and grade A number one potatoes like any country market but the portable home or car last rite kits with the motto "you never know when someone you know will have to go" pasted on the black walnut finish are his best seller. No home in Little Spunk Creek is without at least one.

My mother threw her little black box in the trash several years ago after my father locked himself in the garage with a running automobile and succeeded in removing his burden from the family's financial debt. I secretly recovered the wooden case, emptied its contents, and hid the hollow shell in the garage. I could barely speak for a month. My mother said right then, thinking the kit had been taken away with the rubbish, that she didn't believe in death anymore and that the little black box had done her family no blessed good.

Mrs. Clayborn and her vigilant society of farmers against ignorance thought it strange when I began carrying my lunch everyday to school in this wood skeleton of my mother's rage. My schoolmates are frightened of me. They think I am the devil but the elders figure that, though I may be a bit on the queer side, at least I have some religion left in me, which is more than they can say about my mother or the memory of my father. I do have religion and I worship the art of peaceful suicide.

Spring is trickling into town. The creek at the south end of the village limits is broken free of ice and running faster and higher than anyone can remember. The planting season promises to be a wet one. Potatoes are the major topic of conversation in each tiny store and several shop owners are already planning a building expansion from the anticipated record breaking potato crop. Profit has become the dream of the layman and is still the prayer of the clergy.

The town itself is blessed with three churches, a German Catholic congregation at the south end of main street, a Polish Catholic at the north end, and a Lutheran minister who holds services behind the general store, in the warehouse, until enough solid Lutheran believers migrate from the big cities and a new home for their God can be constructed in the center of town.

Mrs. Clayborn has been quoted in the town newspaper saying, "the cooperation between religious faith in Little Spunk Creek is unearthly sincere." She expects another successful pie sale this spring because she and her group of Polish church workers assisted the Germans in packaging lightbulbs for their second annual lightbulb bonanza. The Germans have already volunteered to stay at home Saturday morning, when the Polish ladies will be carting their pies from door to door.

Normally each Saturday is commonly accepted as market day; I find it more like an amusement day. The solemn jingling of pennies is heard once each week in preparation for the Sabbath and anyone who is worth a grain of importance will be there; wearing a smile that is hung from their cheeks like stretched salt-water taffy. "Good Mornings" are swatted like ping-pong balls, back and forth between nets of disagreement.

Sometimes I go with my mother to watch. While she hurries down the sidewalks with her face tucked into a dark colored scarf, scampering from

store to store, quickly as possible, I wait under the monument at the center of town.

I forget which saint is displayed there because the sculpture has been torn down and replaced with another several times in a village effort to keep up with the Pope while he continually shuffled the ranks of sainthood. I think they installed Jesus last fall with the intention of reducing village expenses. Little Spunk Creek is so much like this statue; experts in economizing emotion. Even so, while I sit here I receive a complimentary pat on the back of my religious reputation.

I have heard several mumbblings from passing neighbors about the way I appear, sitting with my bare feet in the fountain, like one of the disciples. Attitudes such as these should be valuable bonds to hold in my venture toward peaceful suicide, but after I am gone no interest will multiply to offer me the security of fond remembrance. I have always wanted to believe that the memory of a person and his fragile life should be handled with glass fingers. Little Spunk Creek wears iron gloves. It's no use. Love in this town is drawn from a dry well, but I'm not thirsty anymore.

I cannot breathe properly when I am surrounded by those who are supposed to love me. All of their warm thoughts and reheated formalities circle my throat and restrict my lungs. Love is very similar to an asthmatic condition. It is for this reason, or diagnosis, that I spend most of my uncommitted time alone, and in a sort of meditative contemplation or retreat at the Little Spunk Creek cemetery. My mother doesn't know about this behavior of mine—or doesn't want to know, and the townspeople think it is a religious act of mercy. "Devoted" is the word Mrs. Clayborn has used while speaking in front of the Little Spunk Creek Rotary Club during one of their divine hearings, discussing the moral responsibility of stocking trout in the creek for tourists' attraction.

I have found this location holds the most perfect solitude, deserted, with the exception of our town mortician who, on warm spring mornings, leads prospective buyers in a touring caravan through the field, to display certain gravestone styles in their proper aesthetic surroundings. Every minute detail in this past life paradise is maintained with meticulous pride. The plastic flowers are cleaned every day, with strong soap and water, and the solid brass gateway that opens onto the lot is polished once each week by the veterans and ladies auxiliary. With all this busy-work one might think a certain air of freshness would preside over this granite garden—but the air is constantly stale, and still. There is a fine mist of dust that settles on everything; the dust of my townspeople's guilt. And so they continue to scrub and scour, hoping to win an award for their dedication.

I like to come here and sit on my father, to think about my destiny. Mrs. Clayborn and her Ajax army are always just leaving. She smiles at me, but never speaks, and I fold my hands in silent recognition. Soon after the ladies have left, wrapped in heavy cloaks of whispers, even the whispers evaporate into silence. My mind develops a systematic series of clicks, accepting and rejecting my secret plans for death; working with the efficiency of the post office mail sorter. This explanation is my mother's. Every thought that enters is sorted into piles and set into motion in the appropriate direction. Some I will never see again and some will be found in my mailbox—or memory, as

my mother describes. Suicide is a thought that arrived special delivery and is now hidden under my mattress like a dirty magazine.

The future of my life has always seemed to be death and now, at sixteen, I am no longer frightened of it, but I will not become an object of pity in this imitation paradise of Little Spunk Creek. I have studied suicide from every conceivable angle and found my destiny to lie with a graceful, peaceful exit. When the last breath has left my lungs, nobody will find my stinking shell on their doorstep. I leave nobody behind. I have come into this world practically unnoticed, and will leave by the same door.

Today my grave was prepared near the creek, beside the towering sand-cliffs, with devoted precision and planning. Once I have entered the wet sand trench and operated my home-made burial device from inside; a rope attached to a series of inlaid boards in the side of the cliff, the entire face of this sandy salvation will slide down to cover even the slightest trace of my life. And my town, my Little Spunk Creek, will never find the opportunity to dissolve their guilt with a bucket of soapy water.

Now my imagination is being coached back into its cage by a voice from the open church door, Father Redemor is calling me again, this time to serve as the altar boy for another unexpected funeral. My routine visits to the cemetery are very convenient for him. Most of the altar boys are anxious to serve at weddings—they pay a dollar—but when funerals arrive, nobody is willing to spend an hour of their time for only a dime; nobody but me. I am available. I guess it won't hurt to oblige him just one more time as I stand waiting for the ceremony to begin.

The church is exceptionally busy this afternoon. From the sacristy I can see the long lines of Little Spunk sinners waiting in front of the tiny confessional doors, fidgeting and scratching their bodies as unnoticeably as possible; pretending to hide their rusted porcelain toilet bowl souls. The last Friday before Easter is always busy with obligations to the faith. The proper maintenance of the soul must be vitally important to them. They must believe the priest to be a sort of janitor who will cleanse and flush their stains away; standing together in the nervous silence of an occupied three-stall churchroom, preparing for a feast day while I am approaching my final hour. It doesn't matter. Sunday morning, when the son is risen, I will sleep in my grave, undisturbed, forever.

Finally my waiting is ended. The black limousine has pulled up in front of the church and it is time for the procession to begin. Six stone-faced men are carrying the black coffin up the aisle. There are no brass handles on this one. He must have been a poor and simple man, disgraced to be buried in an ordinary wood box.

After the scripture is read, Father Redemor begins his regular sermon about the life to expect after death. He is reminding the eight dark-clothed mourners about this old man's reward. I wonder if anyone is paying for his headstone? They say he couldn't afford much in this world but they say that about most who are rolled up this aisle on their backs. I am still standing like a statue, hands folded, staring to the heavens, waiting to collect my dime for looking like I care.

Suddenly I cannot help glancing for long periods of time at the coffin, while the rest of this pitiful congregation is glancing at their watches. There is

something strange about this particular funeral and I can't determine what it is. I have been an altar boy at these rituals for several years and I view them all with an equal indifference. Many have a rich casket, a rich crowd crying diamond tears, and soft white silk handkerchiefs; but this one is different. I wish I could ask them who he was, but I doubt they know. I wonder what he looked like, or talked like? I have an almost uncontrollable urge to run down the altar steps and tear open the top of his box. I wonder what he ate for lunch? I want to pick him up and hold him in my arms and tell him he won't be alone very long. I feel I am coming to join him on Sunday and together we can walk through the cemetery and pick at the plastic-wax flowers. We can haunt all the hypocrites' homes and laugh in their attics and rattle their doors late at night. I am shaking with satisfaction, my knuckles are turning white in the sleeves of this black cassock. The burning candle in my hand is spilling hot wax on the floor.

The man who is driving the black limousine is cleaning his fingernails in the back of the church, scraping and cleaning, cleaning and scraping and filing them to perfection.

My vision is blurred, moist, and suddenly flowing in streams from the corners of my eyes. Father Redemor is looking at me. He is finished and my emotions are running faster and higher than anyone can remember. The service is over and a quarter is placed in the palm of my hand. Someone is telling me I can go home now. It is over. I have earned more than my reward.

The sound of sand, scooped from a pile and thrown down into a hole, to bury a black wooden box, is like an echo this morning. It is Easter Sunday. Too many deaths—I have no energy left in me; no strength. I feel I have just been born. The creek is flowing in silver silk ripples and the handkerchief that I left in the church yard is for Little Spunk Creek, in case they decide to blow out their brains.

Wiese



E. K. Wiese
(ink drawing: 18" X 24")

Peter Cooley

CATECHISM CATECHISM
CATECHISM CATECHISM
CATECHISM CATECHISM
CATECHISM

The afterlife is glass, a jar of angels we bear
sexed like snails. Lady, repeat that, so when snow floats
around us now, burnishing faces one by one
in imitation halos or demons which don't come off
repeatedly except to run an instant on our windows
we can object less. Not call them something else.

But you say being so cupped under the heavens
lifts us up, your irony, when I keep insisting
it's no more myth under our tongues
than snowflakes drifting the lawns which turn continually
against us in our arguments like open graves
the saints & martyrs settle in. & if you weren't right,

you persist, why should we take proportions of the gods
for our lives, modeling them with such largess
on intrigue, making a cult of sex & unexpectedness like hail
against this glass as if love were thunderbolts or doves
or apples we sent down on mortals & not ourselves
turning the light around each other in a snow-bound room opaque?

So. I'll admit there's a little to your side
on this prism if you promise snow forebodes
only like gods out of the old religions, wandering
naked, waiting for names we make them up
a sainthood out of. Which rids us of this, to be snow
& just ourselves? Tell me you know that. Or just repeat.

Because I find these words are slipping
down a darkness snow repeats
across the window, from your words & certain shapes
with deeper faces between wings & darker
than angels, flying out of darkness, flying in
until it's hard to tell which is the dark.

THE IMMORTALS: SEVEN PSALMS

1 I never could have come here
unless I heard you
refusing us our stones,
future, children of the diced eyes.

2 You move through us as light
springs on water at evening
among flocks of ice.

You prey, a muzzle of wind,
mouth's broken blood,
the tracking circles us down,
folding our tongues and bones.

3 What slug are you hunting
for the cave of your silence?

4 At every gate of my body
one of your number stands
put out. I circle the wounds
all day, the wall's dressings
night lifts again. I wake
to this game, your face, keeper,
turning to keys you turn me to.

5 Your stillness without us
is only the sky. Give me
swords, gold, the pass to dress
your coming in a word.

6 Put a sheathe of ice
between feathers of my voice,
my ribs, to keep me
bent into your smile,
its features that I cast
from your vacancies, your sleep.

7 Let me be the key, the lock
entering the key, the figure
of entry. Let me speaking
face you in shape. Witness
this word, flesh. Let me favor you.

Patrick Miller

Can Tillich, Sartre or Hight Save Me?

What would Tillich say the meaning of life was? First, when we ask what the meaning of life is, I take it to mean what makes life so much better than death? Why should I live when I could die and be without problems? Why do I hang around? I know death is going to catch up with me. What am I waiting for? Should I cash my life in now or should I wait and save it like Green Stamps, hoping to get more at the big gift house in the sky? What could Tillich, Sartre, or Hight say to me that would make me stop thinking about jumping out the window next to me? Incidentally, the window to my immediate left is on the ground floor so I'm not too bad off yet. But still, could any of these authors save me from a possible sprained ankle?

Time to quit asking stupid questions and start getting some answers. Back to Tillich. Let's say that I am sitting out there on the window ledge threatening to jump because I can see no reason why I shouldn't cash in my Coke bottles right now. The campus policeman with his bull horn hollers over to me, he can't holler up to me because as I said, I'm on first floor, "What can we do to keep you from jumping? I yell back, "Get Paul Tillich here. He might be able to talk me out of it!" So, assuming Tillich was still alive, they send a message to Notre Dame or wherever German-born American theologians live, and bring him to the front of Brown Hall in an armored car.

"What seems to be your problem? Tillich asks as I teeter back and forth on the narrow ledge which I have fallen from fourteen times awaiting his arrival. "It's this darn inequality," I reply. "It's all over the place. I guess I can't handle it. Why should I live with it when I can jump off this ledge and possibly sprain my ankle and maybe pass out from the pain. I'd be through with the whole thing. You said yourself on page 1130 of the **Norton Reader** that inequality will never be solved. I just don't see why I should have to put up with something I'd never thought about until I read your essay."

"Well," says Tillich, "apparently you did not read all of my essay. Otherwise, you would not be standing out here on this window ledge like a sullen dolt."

"In case you didn't know," I quickly replied, "page 1130 is the second one from the end and if you think I would read all that way without reading the remaining half page, you're nuts. Fact is, I read the whole thing three times."

"Oh," Tillich said.

"If that's the best you can do for me, I'm going to jump," I said, leaning dangerously forward on my perch.

"Wait! I'll explain!" screamed Tillich as he rushed forward fast enough to prevent my plunge. He used both hands to push me back up so I was again standing straight on the window sill.

"Apparently you understand the problem better than you understand the solution. Of course there really is no solution to inequality, but I think I have

something that may help you live with it. You realize that there are people who have more than you and you realize that there are people who have less than you, right? There seems to be nothing other than destiny that determines who has what talents. I don't think this means we have to live in the shadow of destiny. You must use what you have to help those who have less than you. Those who have more than you must use what they have to help you. You see, we all have something. If we can just all realize what we have and use it, then we won't lose what we have. I believe we need to place more emphasis on what we as individuals have rather than what we don't have. If we can do this, we shall be able to live together more unified, with less envy and less jealousy. Things would not seem so unequal that way. As I said in my essay, there will always be inequalities of the mind and body and inequalities in freedom and destiny. There is really no hope of controlling these inequalities. Even if there were, it would create an inequality between past and future generations. Do you understand?" Tillich asked.

"I guess so," I said, still not knowing for sure if inequality was really my problem or not.

"Will you get off the window ledge?"

"Maybe."

"Well then, if you jump, it won't be because of my essay on inequality will it? I don't know what else to tell you." He looked flustered. I could tell the thought that he may have created more problems than solutions bothered him.

"No. I think you did fine. I'd just like to get Jean-Paul Sartre's opinion on this. Please feel free to leave. I think I can live with the riddle of inequality now. Thanks for coming."

He walked away shaking his head.

Shrugging his shoulder as he walked past one of the police men, he said, "I did what I could. The guy's a nincompoop." He roared away in the armored car.

"Get Sartre here in a hurry," I yelled to the police. "I don't care if you have to parachute him out of a Mirage jet. Just get him here fast." An hour later Sartre floated to earth in an orange parachute while the Mirage circled overhead. Maybe it was a Mig. I don't know.

Sartre seemed to approach me more confidently than Tillich. Maybe it was because he was still alive and Tillich wasn't. "Can existentialism get me out of this mess?" I asked.

He said, "That's entirely up to you. If you decide that it can, it can. If you decide it can't, it won't."

"Yes, that's what I expected you to say. But tell me Jean-Paul, what makes life worthwhile? Can you tell me that much?"

"Everything depends on you," Sartre said. "What you decide is worthwhile for you will be worthwhile for you. But remember, if you decide to jump, you will be deciding for all men to jump."

"Who decided that?" I inquired.

"I did," Sartre said. "It's right on page 1156 of the **Norton Reader**."

"So if I jump, I'm telling mankind that life isn't worth living. Is that correct?"

"It will be your decision, not mine. You will notice that after you are dead,

I will still be alive. I will not allow your foolish decision to apply to me," he said.

"And who," I questioned, "decided that jumping was a foolish decision?"

"I did. After all, I'm the one who wrote 'Existentialism,'" he said.

"Yes, I know. Isn't there anything that you could say that would stop me from jumping?"

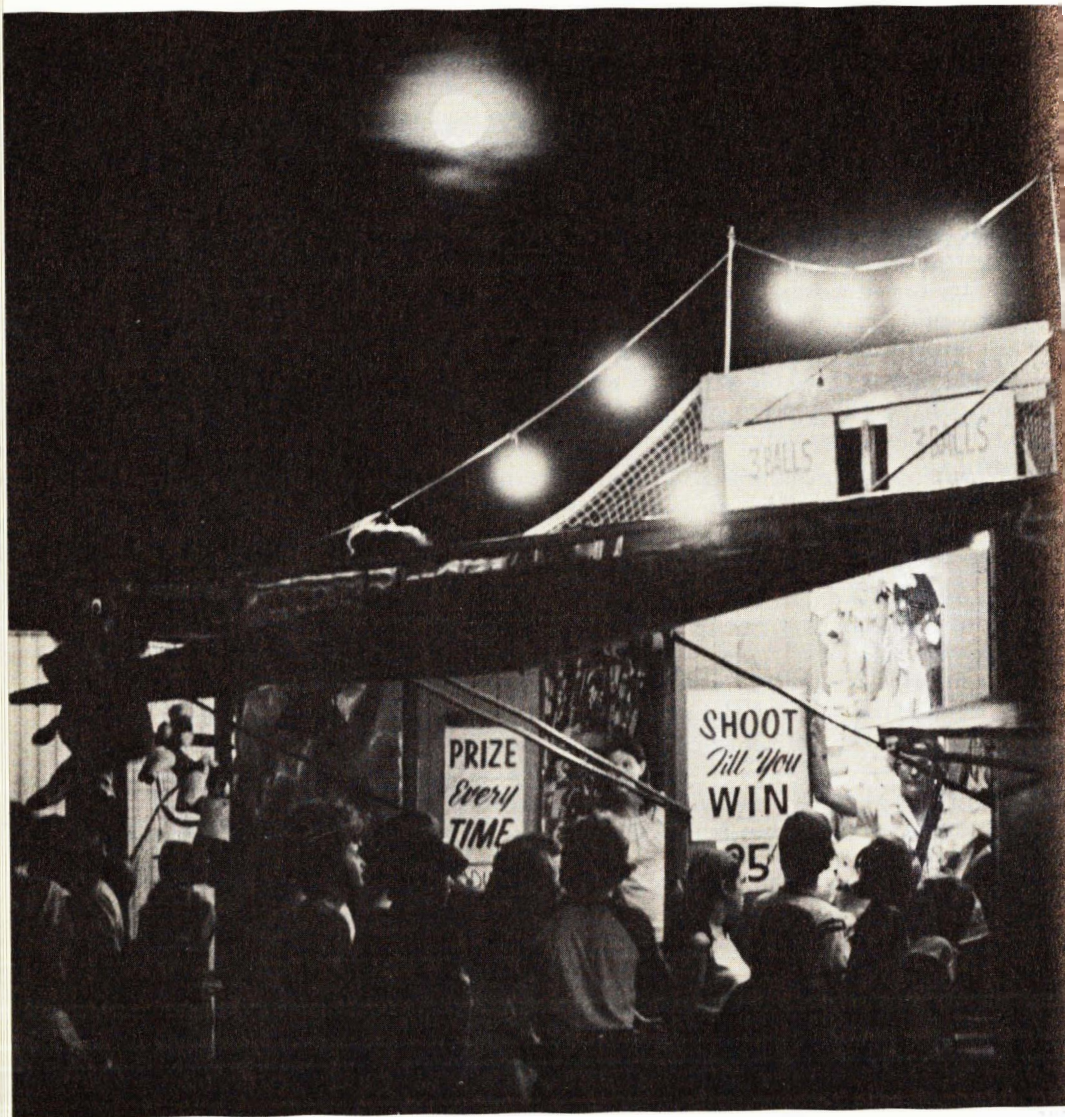
"Only that you will be responsible for all men when you make the decision," Sartre said.

"We seem to be destined to talk in circles, Jean-Paul. Thanks for coming. If I jump I'll let you know if you have to jump too."

After Sartre departed, I decided that a different approach was needed for my problem. I'd tried an American and a European. It was time for something oriental. It took longer for Gilbert Highet to arrive than any of the rest. He came in a rickshaw carried by two coolies.

All Highet did was to stand in front of me for an hour with one shoe off. I remembered what was to me Highet's most significant statement in the *Norton Reader*. It's found on page 1172. "Live." That's all there is to it. "Do not try to use words. Do not think. Make no efforts toward withdrawal from the world."

I got down off the window ledge and Highet put his shoe back on and left. It is strange. I could identify with both Tillich and Sartre. When it came right down to it, the most meaningful thing said about life was simply "live." Others may go on and continue looking for the meaning of life. As for me, I'll just live.



Kevin Woster

Holly Hieb

Fireflies - Fireworks

The stars
of the balmy summer
evening
were
two
we watched
with fascination

. . . . light on
light off

man and nature
rivaling
for
the lead
role

in the celebration production
man's star performed ---
so spectacular!

. . . Wows!

Ahs

nature's star performed ...
so simple

. . . Wonder

Awes

Brilliant and Grand -- man's star showed power
timid and quiet --- Nature's star showed perseverance
man's star expired -- breathless
nature's star continued - blinking on

into the balmy summer
evening
we watched
with fascination

. . . . light on
light off

The star -- the firefly.

T. R. Maves

DEATH IN THE DESERT

While cactus shadows fell across my path,
I looked across the desert, seeing
the heat rise in front of me. I cried
to the death that lied upon my shoulders,
turning my face from the sky I tried
to hide from the sunlight. I didn't
fear dying but my mind was crying
for the cool moonlight.

The day goes slow. I walk beside
my tired horse, wishing for a
cool creek while thirst nauseates
my insides. My blood runs thin
while fear hides behind each stone
wrapped in questioning, will I make
it to the outsides? What do cowards
know of strength, of scents that
flow between hills of sands? I must
not give up. I fold my hands, I pray,
I weep. I do not sleep for death waits
around my bed while vultures fly
around my head.

Down in the desert, the sun hunts me
with its hands. I feel the pain
of the burning sands, sand storms
choking me with its dust. A fog
settles in my brain and I begin
to rust. I settle in a quiet grave,
content to lie still I close my eyes.
Death in the desert is a new sunrise.
The touch of death is not a surprise.
I have looked into her eyes
and only found peace.

Philip Dacey

THE DREAMS

The dream is simple:
a girl
naked upon a bed,
her left hand extended

to offer me the apple
she holds. I feel
someone at my back shove
me forward as if

urging me to take it.
I resist,
am shy
before such beauty

but also fear
her whose eyes glitter
green
and cold. Then

she sits up, her feet
swing out
to the floor,
she rises and comes near,

nearer.
Then I discover
I too am naked
when her free hand

touches my cock
and I awake
into the other
dream I suffer.

Michael Boer

Stopping

1. The Main

It's not a question of sight; it isn't what it seems. You've got to have someone in if you want to get someone out. Start again if you must. When you've had your fill, do what comes next. Relationships can have no hold here. Relationships are to be consumed. Smear where you will. Shined in the night without a trace of responsibility. It's a plague on meaninglessness. Think, we all could do it if we had less faith in our frailty.

Singmeaninglessness.

Meaninglessnessingness.

Meaninglessnesslessnessandless.

And that too is little more than a path to exhaustion. It's mere circuitousness is accuteless in scope. Don't bother to include a return address. There is no address. Hence it would be a meaningless returnnesslessness. If you were not really capableness of meaningness it would be perfectless clearness by nowness. Unless you necessarily suspend disbeliefness.

Get on with it then. By all means see this through. It may come to the end and run right into something else. And if that were possible, it wouldn't need to get in your way.

There are lessons and there are lessons. Some you learn and some of you don't. Some of you do and some you don't. Some of you doesn't. But don't be too concerned. If you were responsible for it you'd manage nicely. But as you're not, sit back. Take off your shoes. There's no hurry. There's no where better to be. Nothing better to do. Feel free to smoke.

Think about it. You've got to take a little chance. Once you've tried it a few times, you'll find things are quite boring if you keep passing it up. So take it. Stop shaking your foot. Stop pulling your hair. Stop chewing your gum. And, once you've stopped, there it is, a chance. Freedom to stop everything and whatever comes next. Don't feel uncomfortable about it. Get up and move around if it helps. Whatever it takes to keep you going. Who can guess how far you might go once you've stopped? Perhaps you'll reach the point of just slouching there in a chair with your fist on your cheek. That's good. It means there's still more where that came from. An inexhaustible supply. And if it strikes you that you're feeling a little bit phony, all the better. That's just one more thing that needs to have a stop put to it. All those feelings of self-pity are just so much foot-tapping and gum-chewing. Simple pastimes for those of us who think we've nothing better to do. We who wander aimlessly down the street, dropping a cigarette butt or a candy wrapper here and there wondering if anyone will take notice.

Ha!

Yes, I'm laughing at you. I have been laughing at you for some time now. You amuse me, much the same as I am amused by some Renoir print pinned to the wall. I just might tack you up on the wall too. At least then you'll be safe from the cockroaches. Yes, I laugh at you, but like the clown, I laugh for you. And you suppose I am doing an act for you.

2. The Aerial Blue

In an old grey barn
with an oboe song
played gently by the wind
On abandoned straw
where men have left
flattened Winston and Marlboro packs

I have heard the saxophones
the singer, the clown
the cabaret

On the Dakota savanna
a vast herd
of beasts for slaughter
grazing
Heard the bells
and near the water
I framed her
against the dark desert sand

She likes to roll on her back
but she likes it even better
on her knees and from Rimbaud
She reflects on herself
and realizes what is needed
All she wants is access

First there will be lights in the sky
that dizzy
and some may throw up
Then all will run home
and think it is war
shaking her gory locks
And all will be afraid
And some may die of it

At dawn
at the moment when on many mornings
a column of gold
blasts from the horizon
His voice will be heard
quietly reading poems
All other sounds will be soundless
Hearts will beat silently
All will scratch themselves
and hear
nothing

Margaret Hasse

BRINGING AN ARGUMENT TO A CLOSE

The room is tight with static
electricity like the heart

of a fire. Enough, I think,
holding my nose. A telescope

pops out from its eyelid case.
Instead of a star-picker,

this is a curious instrument
that can push an object away.

I rotate the dial and he recedes
on my horizon, a small insect,

furiously and red-faced with buzzing.
One more notch and he will blink out.

I rub my eyes wildly, feigning awe.

Jean Riedy

hurting

his bed is a mattress on
the floor under the attic
rafters. we climbed through
the window once and sat
on the roof, sunset blocked
by tree tops. he cursed
traffic on the street below.
i watched an old woman walk
north up one side of the street,
south down the other.
later he talked about Sara;
said there's a lot of difference
between a fifth grade boy and
a high school girl, but not
between a man of twenty-six and
a woman of thirty-two. he
hadn't wanted to see her again,
he said, because he's tired of
being hurt. but he did.
i listen to the sounds of him
sleeping and of rain on the
roof. he does not know i
got up to write a poem for
him. he does not feel my
thumb stroking his wrist.

Wendy M. Howell

DLH

DLH lives for aluminum cans.
The reason simple, a swallowable liquid solution,
a magic water friend.
Quiet until the ring is snapped back.
Then slobber talks, while the brain sleeps in soothing juice.
The day darkens before evening.
Evening is never understood by DLH.

DLH flushes the stool in his private office,
where the only pressure relief is bladderal.
The kitchen chair, from a DLH stumble-kick, scrapes the linoleum.
Grumbled curses cuss the dark.
And there is light.
And there is yelling and yelling back.
DLH's wife does not like to have the linoleum scratched at 3 a.m.
She is not fond of kicked kitchen chairs.
She is not very fond of DLH.
Although she gave him a silver bookmark engraved DLH.
He used it once.
But DLH thinks silver looks better on aluminum cans.
So he engraves DLH on every aluminum can he finds.
The DLH Drive for Aluminum Cans set a collection goal to reach the
last known number.
DLH has made progressive regression.

DLH chases aluminum cans as he might a bloated calf.
Aluminum cans chase DLH, the bloated bull.
His red eyes make him charge.
He does not charge much.
Only the price of one life
and the misery of his herd.

Carla Carlson

Sax Man

He plays
her soft like a
sexy lady

mouth
covers her

draws on her

til moans rise
slow
to the top

and she comes
cooing
down.

July 10

It's miserable
hot
like a fat-lipped salesman
draping sweaty
palms and jowls on
me

The cat fills
the window sill,
a half-dried rag

Geranium leaves
jump
from the fan

and I want
to feel your wet
chest
sliding over me
in the heat.

Margaret Hasse

OCTOBER AND THE MOON

October,
and the moon is
the exhaled "O"
of a calendar month
catching in the throat
as blue familiar notes of a harmonica
echo down the dark street.

The rings around are rain,
soon to silence whispering
in the wake of music.

Leaves scuttle
like droves of field mice,
dry as the thumb
which turns a page
in the house where lights are on at midnight,
and the reader is all alone,
and listening.



Thomas D. Thorson

Anick O'Meara

HARD CLOUDS

for childhood

Snowmen
sandcastles
a vapor
of lies
spun around
us like taffy

while
in the mind's
young womb
the Spider Witch
grows fat
on Anderson
and Grimm
Dachau and
religious history

and
the head
of Santa Claus
pike-stuck high
over a gateway
of wrought-iron
clouds

THIS FAR INLAND

I lock into
my self
held back from
where you are
whose scarlet
leaves have licked
my body in
my mind hotswollen
my blood of you
since summer's
skin shriveled
the hair turned
white my flesh

billows
a curtain toward
you do not even
sense my shadow
sighing off
your cool
skin my
brightest leaves
shrink blackened
back the road
between us
narrowed by early
snow the season is

not right for fires
this far inland
not right to drain
the dormant sap of you
I turn home
separate
and unheard
our planet
tilts
into winter

Paulette Haupt

Four Friends

Marilee, you are too
bossy and I must
ask you to leave my
kitchen.

Don't worry about your
baby sister, Debbie. You
are the one who is most
like your crazy grandmother.

Karen, you are too fertile in
all but your thoughts.
What is more cliché than
the high school homecoming
queen after two abortions?

Hostility, Cindy, does not
become you and the tough words
that you use to alienate
yourself don't fool me.
They only remind me of your
frustrated mother.

Walt Morgan

BY THE ISAR

On this torrid sun-filled day
I sit on my log
beneath sheltering maples
and aspens and oaks
facing the turbulent waters
of the Isar
as they cascade
from a seven meter height
beneath the Maximillian bridge
where the tumults of time and
the groans of gasoline-propelled-cars
are silenced
by the roaring falls
as their waters hasten northward
from this city of Munich
to be discharged
into the Danube

Michael Hall

Hermit

I saw him drying his socks
by the moon.
His old barrel head
rusted to one shoulder.
A souvenir of war.

His leg
was chewed off
by a bear trap
and he's replaced it
with a green stump.

Now
his roots are tangled
in the rotting trees.
When he moves the whole forest rattles.

Moss
grows thick as shag
on his sloping neck.
Children laugh,
but dream of being chased
by his jagged shadow.

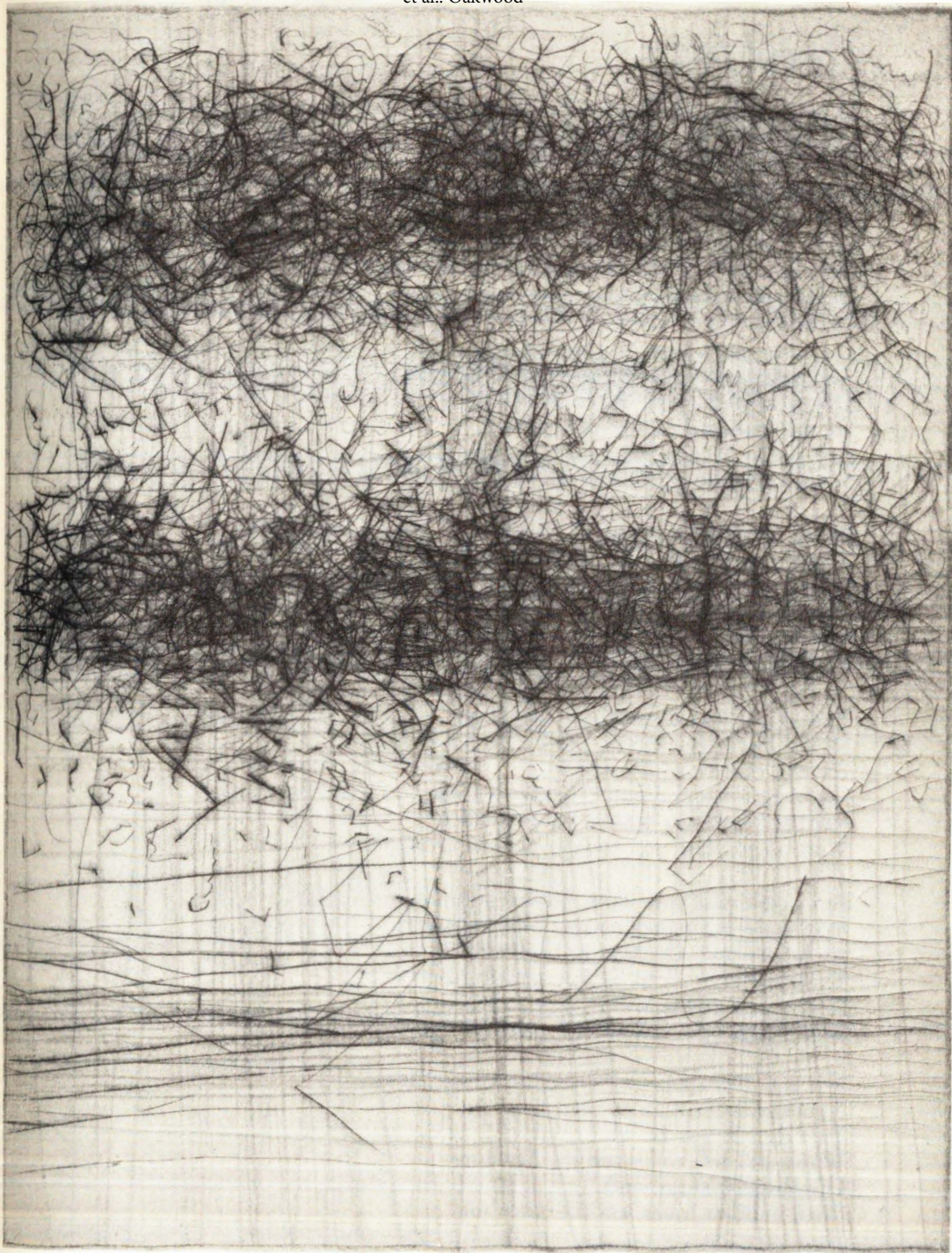
Desert Mountain Monk

Growing old and dusty
 in the cracks of both hands.
So deep that seeds sprout
 in the streams of sweat
that pour down
 from his fallen split stumps of hair.

Crawling in the wind
 across your shoulders
like wheatfields
 hanging from your salty smile.

His cows were cremated by the sun
Their ashes are piled in mounds
 like cocaine on a mirror.

Porcelain nipples
 are sculptured in the mountains
where he prays
 for God to rip open the sky.



Thomas D. Thorson

(zinc plate: 9" X 12")

David Jauss

Sestina for Laurie

Laurie, how many times has your brother
Died in your dreams since his death?
And how many times have the notes of his viola
Chased you from the arms of a lover?
Once you said "I want to sing to the measures
Of his electrocardiogram," then cried.

For three years now you've cried
And still you've not convinced your brother
That you loved him. What measures
He will demand of you only death
Can guess. Meanwhile, you seek a lover
Who will make you forget his viola.

Every evening he practiced his viola
While you, upstairs in your room, cried
Over this or that high school lover,
Oblivious to the notes your brother
Sent winding up the heat duct like death
To entwine you with their measures.

Years later you heard those measures,
Heard Bach, Beethoven played on his viola,
For the first time, for death
Made his fingers dumb. Then you cried
For the years you wished your brother
Were dead. And you took your first lover.

But you could only have, not be, a lover.
You were not meant to sing such measures
As lovers sing. Or so your brother
Told you in dreams. So you played his viola
When your parents were gone, and cried.
And that spring you visited death.

But the doctors brought you back from death
And you went back to your lover.
This time it was he who cried
When you left to escape the measures
Of that persistent viola
With another lover, another brother.

But now you know Death's seductive measures,
For you've heard that lover playing his viola
And calling, while you cried, "Come, come to your brother."

Massaging a Poem

She sets limits on me
I can touch
wherever her bikini
was not
her tan shoulders but not
her white breasts
her brown belly but not
beyond

My hands move over her
like a magician's
practicing levitation
but she is unmoved

Oh, I would love to turn her into
my arms
and love her
but I can't
let my seduction seduce me
for the poem
is my first cousin
and I know all about mutants

Rory Sullivan

NORMALITY

I had always been sure of myself, a bit twitchy now and then (and who isn't?), but, then, somehow, at no particular moment, feelings began to rise inside of me. Strange feelings which I can't explain began to turn and poke, and were always rising inside of me. I seemed to be constantly regurgitating inside of myself. Yes, for a long while there, I seemed to be nothing but a regurgitation machine. Waking up in the morning, I would say out loud, "Yes, and what shall the regurginnovator have for breakfast?" Yes, I would do that. I would lift myself from bed, look directly at a grease spot on the wall, and say, "What shall the regurginnovator have for breakfast, oh devil shit on the wall?" At first, I thought it must only be my twitch god nemesising me; but then things became worse. I began to feel unsure of myself, and I began to wonder, "Am I normal?"

Then it came to be that while I lay in bed, I could hear whispering which was in strange languages I couldn't understand. The first few nights this happened I paid no attention, for I thought it might be only some wandering spirit of Homer or Orpheus; but then it called my name. When it did this, I opened my eyes, and said, "Yes?" But it ignored me. It continued whispering as if nothing had been said. Of course, this upset me, yet I could've tolerated it; but things began to go too far. One night I was lying in bed listening to the continuous whispering, and it called my name. "Yes?" But it paid no attention. A shrouded figure came out of the wall, and the whispering became screaming. I looked the figure square in the eye, and yelled, "Stop that!" But it didn't. The screaming became louder, and the figure began to glide along the wall. I became very angry. After all, the fellow had been calmly whispering from afar for several weeks, but then he decides to barge in uninvited, obnoxiously screaming, and gliding along my wall in a most ridiculous fashion— Well who wouldn't become angry? I thought, "Well, I'll shut this fellow up quick enough." I dashed at him, beating at him; but he could glide along that wall so well that I couldn't hit him. He finally disappeared, as I heard yelling from the apartment adjacent to mine. "Quit beating on that goddamned wall! What the hell are you doin'? We're trying to sleep in here!" I looked quickly around and noticed that the gliderish fellow was gone. "Yes," I yelled, "'twas only a mosquito come fetching after my blood, good sir. 'Tis a nasty thing, sir. They come right after one's blood, you know. Sneak under the door, they do, in the dark of night, and go right for the blood—" "Shut up!" Well, having been met with such rudeness, I did. I walked to my bed, lay down, and wondered, "Am I normal?"

Once, I couldn't find a cigarette, but I knew I had just smoked one. I began to pace and rave, wildly gesticulating. I screamed, "Dost thou think that the white whale could fuck such a thing? Hast seen the white whale?" Then, I began to hold one leg and drag it, slapping at stubbs and flasks, and shaking

my fist at the buck of the stars. I began to pirouette. I stopped. I screamed, "Did Socrates have such sadist intentions? His bones have rotted while mine yet tingle! Did he ever twitch?" Then I noticed in the mirror that I had a pack of cigarettes in my shirt pocket. I lit one, sat down, and asked myself, "Is such raving normal?"

Soon after that, I was questioning my every action, "Do I walk normal? Do others eat this way? Have I a proper smile? Do I piss correctly?" But, worst of all, I became lonely. It became so bad that I even wished that the shrouded fellow would bop in, and maybe glide awhile. I did a lot of thinking, "How can others not be lonely?" I thought and thought. Finally, after a long period of time, I realized the answer. I stood up and yelled, "Can the white whale fuck?" I sat back down and questioned, "Am I normal?"

It became worse. Every time I went outside I knew people were watching me, and thinking that I wasn't normal, so I decided to prove that I was normal by going into a church; but I'm sure I did not prove so. As I entered from the vestibule, I bent over and spit in the holy water. There were several people in the church, and I perceived that confessions were being said. "Ha!" I thought. "The bastards will say penance on the steps today." I folded my hands, bowed my head, and slowly walked to the altar. I turned, and, addressing them all, said slowly, "Will you please leave? I am going to pray for my father and mother and brothers and sisters, who were recently killed in a most brutal fashion; and I would like to be alone, just He (pointing) and I." No one left, so, facing them, I stood in front of the crucifix, and, letting my hands droop, I held my arms out, let my head drop, stuck out my tongue, and rolled my eyes. Everyone left hurriedly. I walked into the confessional. "Father, can a human being not be normal?"

"There are abnormal actions."

"But can a being be unnormal?"

"One's actions make the person what he is."

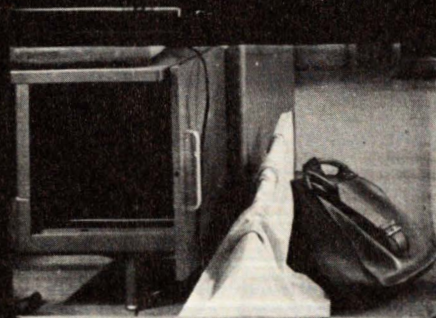
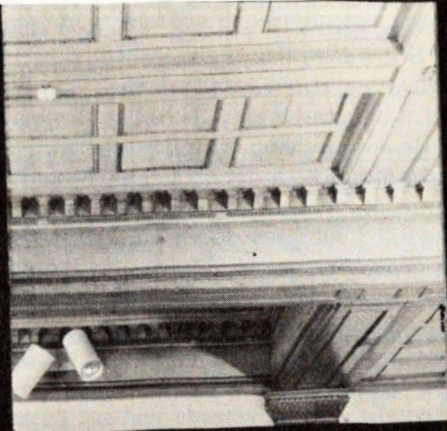
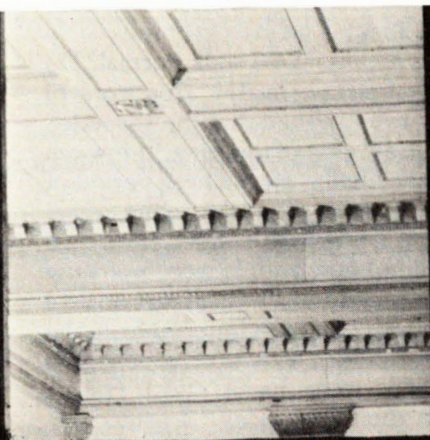
"I've murdered and raped many people. Am I normal?"

"If you have done these things, then, no, you aren't normal. You have been given no right to do those things, have you?"

"What Zeus may do, the oxen may not."

I got up and left. When I was outside, I asked, "Am I normal?" The next day I went to another church; but, as I bent over to spit in the holy water, I said, "No. This can't be normal." And I left.

There were many other things that I quit doing also, because I wondered about their normality. When I was in this state of wondering, something happened to me. It is very unclear in my mind. I remember only shrouds and screaming, and cells, shrouds and shrouds. But I don't remember it well; and I don't want to. I am happy now. They keep me locked up, and I enjoy it. After I've been put in my cell, I love the sound of the door slamming, and the lock being turned. Knowing there is no possible way of being free excites me. Before, I was lonesome, but I'm not now. Oh no, I create devils to keep me company. They're all ugly, wicked devils, who, if I don't watch, pinch me and laugh; and I dance for them; and I scream at them, or I bite their tails to hear them scream. Yes, I am now very happy and sure of myself, but — best of all — I know I am normal.



Thomas D. Thorson

Philip Dacey

THAUMATROPIC

In the house of mirrors
he saw the buttocks
of a female
a broad female nude from the back

it was his own body reflecting
behind him in a mirror and then
in front of him,
in another mirror, where he could see it
a body from Ingres or Titian
he had thought he was male

Kevin Woster

MINNIE

Eyes of Age

Staring ahead
Wondering, as they rest on the smooth, brown body,
How long has it been?

Words come from far away

Echoing
Like her Mother's voice, years ago,
Drifting up from the Cellar.

"See who's here to see you, Minnie. Sit up straight. Say Hello."

As the antique body groans

A crippled hand, cracked and puckered,
Gropes for a tissue
to wipe away the dribble.

"Remember me, Minnie? Look, I've brought you some pretty flowers.
Come on now. Say Hello."

The gray, dehydrated lips sag

Not a smile
Not a frown
Nothing.

"Now listen here, Minnie. Don't be Naughty. You say something."

Finally the speech comes

roughly
in jerks
Like a forgotten dance step
Fractured, verbless sentences.

"What, Minnie? I can't understand you. Don't you feel well. Do
you have to go pottie? I'll get the nurse."

The door closes silently

Locking the room in silence

The aged eyes suddenly find life
Ricochetting off the walls
off the floor
off the ceiling

Finally resting on the metal dresser
Sterile, except for a yellowed portrait of a
curly-haired man in a high-collared suit, and a pretty
brunette dressed in white.

The eyes focus
Blinking
Rolling a solitary bead of water down the furrowed cheek.

In short, raspy breathes
The old woman mumbles
More clearly than before
"Not a child . . .
Not a child . . ."



Thomas D. Thorson

(zinc plate: 2½" X 2½")

Lora Van Dyke

A smile played quietly on the face
of the old woman
As she sifted through the faded photographs
of memory.

Karen S. Jacobson

LIVING AWAY

There are trophies in my past
growing old I am lost
from my trophies sit
dusty on the top
of a bookcase at home
the trains clatter in the distance
Down here on Main Avenue
they thunder past
their iron wheels crashing
against the rails
beating the old ties
are stronger than
I admit I'd like to go
home is where the
trophies are

Herb Haist

I want to write a poem
About my (The Landlord's)
New (Built in 1890)
Farmhouse.
With high ceilings
Like sky.
Over me.

Twenty Dollars A Month
For a Home.
With cold floors,
and ceilings on the Sky/Life continuum.

Bette Hass

The Hunter's Boots

I go into the garage
To get my bicycle.
I see two furry minks
On the cement floor.
They lie quiet on the newsprint.
The blood covering the paper
Reports their small deaths.
A pair of boots
Stand a few feet away.
They are erect and tall.
Waterproof, bloodproof—
They protect the hunter's cold feet.

Grapes

The grapes lie in the violet bowl,
Plump, green balloons
Inflated with juice.
I pluck their fat bodies
From the woody vine
And eat them slowly.
They explode
Like waterbombs
Between my teeth.

J. Alan Marten

SUMMER '36

It was going to be warm again. The thermometer outside Herbert Willstrom's store window was up to ninety-two degrees already, and it was only a little past ten-thirty in the morning. It would reach a hundred again today.

Another scorcher, Herb thought as he lowered the shades on the big front windows. The afternoon sun would soon be overhead, and it looked like it would be an uncomfortable day in the store.

Herb went outside and started cranking the handle that unfolded the awning which stretched the length of the store. Only a few people were on the street this mid-summer morning. They hurried through their shopping, murmuring hello's, but stopping to visit only a few moments. Main street was the hottest place in town, and if they could help it, they were going to be somewhere else before the heat got too unbearable.

Herb looked up at the sky, searching without hope for a trace of a cloud. It was a ritual that everyone had to carry out; looking for a bank of clouds or a thunderhead that might hold a little moisture. But there never were any. Just the wispy cirrus clouds that skimmed across the sky, or the billowy, harmless cumulous clouds that held no relief for the parched town.

Several other storekeepers and a few other people had stopped along the street to look and to hope. No one spoke; the dryness and heat had been talked out long ago.

No breeze stirred the many layers of dust lying on the street and wooden sidewalks. Main street was two blocks long, with a couple general merchandising stores, several taverns, two filling stations, a drug store, a tiny post office, a garage where the city's fire truck was housed, and the town's only church, the United Congregational. Half of the buildings lining the street were vacant; boarded up, lonely buildings with old signs identifying forgotten owners and businesses. The occupied buildings didn't look much better. They were weatherbeaten, with their paint faded by the sun and their siding cracked by the heat and dryness. Their owners were struggling, for when the backbone of a town, the main industry, is hurt, the whole town suffers. And farming, the backbone, had been hurt desperately by three straight years of drought and ruined crops. The town was suffering as it never had before.

Herb Willstrom found no hope in the sky, and went back into his already stuffy general store shaking his head.

It was going to be another hot day.

"Damn, it's been two weeks since it cooled off enough at night so's I could get a decent sleep," Rienhard Gillespie said to Herb. Rienhard was a middle-aged farmer with a wife and five kids. His quarter-section was less than a mile from town.

"There isn't any breeze to help it cool off neither." Herb Willstrom had known Rienhard all his life. They'd gone to school together until sixth grade, when Rienhard had quit so he could stay home and farm full time. Herb had kept on, though, and had graduated from eighth grade. His four children had grown up with Rienhard's kids.

"Any wind would just get the dust stirred up. I guess we ain't had a big dust storm all summer though, have we?"

"Nothing like last year, leas'twise. But it's only the fore end of July. Our chance for wind'll be coming up before long, I bet."

The two men were sitting in the back of the store, in the darkest, coolest spot they could find, sipping some of Rienhard's homemade beer. Willstrom's store was long and narrow, with tall shelves filling most of the stained wooden floor. The shelves weren't filled to overflowing with groceries or dry goods; most of the products Herb sold were hard to get now, and no one had money to spend on anything but the sheer necessities anyway. The battered cash register was on a table at the front of the store with a sparsely stocked candy counter sitting beside it. The shades on the windows and door were pulled as low as they would go, but beams of dusty sunlight were sneaking around them to give the store an antiquated, somewhat dingy atmosphere.

The bell over the door clunked, and Elmer Olsen came through it and stopped. Beads of perspiration stood out on his face as he peered into the darkened store, trying to adjust his eyes after coming in from the sunlight. Elmer spied the two men half-hidden in the back and made his way through the store to join them.

"Howdy, boys," Elmer said as he sat down on a wooden stool. His clothes were covered with grease, in contrast to Rienhard's clean overalls and Herb's almost spotless white apron. Elmer's filling station was about the only business in town that was having a decent year, even though it wasn't doing all that well.

"Hello, Olsen," Herb returned. Rienhard said nothing; no love was lost between this farmer and the gas station owner.

Elmer took his grimy cap off, then wiped the sweat off his forehead and said, "Is it hot enough for you?" The other men nodded glumly. "By God, I never thought I'd see the day that we'd have so much dry weather three years runnin'. Why this is near as bad as back in '15, before the war—"

"This is a helluva lot worse'n that," Rienhard broke in, somewhat disgustedly. "There weren't no big depression all over then. It didn't last near as long."

"Well, yeah, I guess that's true 'nuff," Elmer nodded good-naturedly, "But it was plenty dry back then, too." It was silent in the room for awhile. Neither Herb nor Rienhard felt like saying anything, while Elmer was trying to form in his mind the words for the speech he had planned.

"I was at the state convention in Pierre last week," he began importantly, speaking in as serious a tone as he knew. "They said that what with the depression and the way things are in Europe that the U.S. of A. is gonna hafta get itself strengthened up a bit. A lot, in fact. And they said that what we need is a stronger gover'mint, from the top all the way down to—"

"You damn Democrats and your damn ideas about strong gover'mint!" Rienhard said emphatically. "The way Roosevelt is spendin' money we'll be lucky if we have a gover'mint by Christmas. And he's been doin' it for nigh on to four years!"

Elmer raised his hands, trying to quiet Rienhard down. "That's what deficit spendin' is, Rienhard, it's just—"

"It's spendin' money you ain't got!" Rienhard nearly shouted. "I can't buy nothin' if I ain't got the money to do it with, so how can the gover'mint?"

"You just don't understand," Elmer said, with a note of superiority in his voice. "Besides, what the hell did you Republicans get done when Hoover was President?" Rienhard had no retort for this; he just turned his chair and faced away from Elmer. Elmer went on, pleased about his preliminary victory.

"Anyway, what they said at the convention was that we need a strong gover'mint, startin' with the small towns like us. That way the states and counties'll have a strong base to build on, and it'll make the whole country stronger." He stopped for breath, looking at the other men's faces for signs of agreement. Finding none, he continued anyway.

"So they said at the convention that we was to push for stronger gover'mints in our own towns. And we ain't got any gover'mint at all here. That just ain't the way it sould be."

"What do we need a government for?" Herb asked, slapping at a fly with a rolled-up newspaper.

"Well, things come up that might need votin' on. And it-uh-it'll make us more official, get the citizens' morale up. 'Instill Civic Pride' they said in Pierre."

"Hell, Olsen, the town's burnin' up," Rienhard said, dismissing the idea with a wave of his hand. "There ain't gonna be no town left to govern in a couple years."

Elmer jumped up and pointed a finger at Rienhard. "And you know why? Because no one gives a damn about it. No one cares about nothin' but feelin' sorry for themselves."

Herb got up tiredly and patted Elmer on the shoulder. "Settle down now, Elmer. If you want to be president of the town, you certainly can be."

"But we got to have an election, and circulate petitions. We got to do it right." By now Elmer was beet red.

Rienhard grunted and said, "If you can get anyone to go along with your foolishness, go ahead, but leave us out of it."

Elmer tried to think of a retort, but he was too angry. He gave the two men a disdainful look and walked quickly out of the store.

After he left, Rienhard shook his head and said, "As if we ain't got enough problems as it is, he wants to get us more gover'mint on top of it all."

1936 was dry. As dry as '35 and '34 had been. All over the Midwest crops shrivelled up, farms failed, and people wondered why.

A depression was rampaging through the United States. War's flames were beginning to flicker across the Atlantic in Europe. The whole world's temper was getting short.

Northeast South Dakota was as dry as anywhere. And as hot. And as unhappy. Small towns were struggling to keep alive, to keep going until Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal" could pull the country back into prosperity. It was hard to hope for so long. It was hard to keep faith in the land and in oneself through three years of failures.

The people gradually lost some of that hope. And the small towns, and some larger towns, began withering like the fields that surrounded them.

And some of those towns quietly died.

Roy Willstrom was seventeen. He had three younger sisters that seemed to get dumber every day. He had a high school diploma that he had earned just two months ago. He had a job working in the drug store stocking shelves, running errands, driving the owner's '34 De Soto to Aberdeen for supplies, or doing any other odd jobs that came along. It didn't pay much, 20 cents an hour, but it was a lot more than most young men his age had during these hard times.

And Roy Willstrom had a girlfriend. Her name was Olivia Gillespie, and Roy was pretty sure they were in love. Olivia had been in Roy's class in school through all twelve grades. There weren't many girls around town as pretty as she was, and Roy was glad that none of the other boys even tried to court her; they surely couldn't think they'd have a chance anyway, not after seeing the way Roy and Olivia felt about each other.

Besides, Roy wasn't bad-looking either, if he did say so himself. Tall and slender, with clear skin and blue eyes, Roy, in his cockier moments, figured he could probably have almost any girl he wanted. But Olivia was just what the doctor ordered, as far as he was concerned.

Roy had talked his father into letting him have the car this Saturday night, so Olivia and he could go for a drive. There wasn't much to do around town or in any of the other little towns around the county; the near-weekly Saturday night barn dances had been called off for the time being because of the heat and it was too darned hot to sit around the house. But an evening drive in the country with the windows of his Dad's battered '28 Plymouth rolled down and the wheels churning down the road to the tune of 35 miles an hour would be a good way to get some fresh air pumping through dusty lungs.

The sun was filling the western sky with a brilliant display of orange and pink when Roy and Olivia left her house to go for their drive. Olivia had on her favorite blue dress, with a ribbon of the same material tied in her long brown hair. She was more than a head shorter than Roy, but just as slender, with a fragile face that smiled often.

Roy had thought something was odd when he was in the Gillespie house; Olivia's joke-cracking father Rienhard had said barely ten words, while his tired-looking wife had been very nice, as usual, but subdued. Olivia's four brothers and sisters weren't around, so Roy figured they were out doing chores or in town for the evening.

Roy also thought Olivia would cheer up after they got out of the house, but she remained unusually quiet, and whenever Roy would ask her if anything was wrong she'd shake her head and smile unconvincingly.

The evening and the country drive was as cool as Roy had expected it to be. It was refreshing to escape from the heat for a little while; it would make it easier to face the soaring temperature that was bound to close in on the land again tomorrow.

It was dark, and had been for a couple of hours by the time Roy pulled onto the Gillespie yard. The sky was crystal clear, showing a startling number of stars. Heat lightning flashed sporadically far to the south, and the only sound that could be heard was the lonely "Oooo" of a single owl in the distance. Olivia rested her head on Roy's shoulder and put her hand on his on the seat.

Roy touched her cheek with his other hand, and said softly, "Why don't you tell me what's botherin' you instead of tryin' to hold it all inside? You've been too quiet all night to be feelin' normal."

Olivia looked up at him and sighed. "I'm sorry I haven't been very good company tonight. We've been pretty unhappy the last couple of days around our house."

"How come?"

Olivia's eyes dropped from Roy's, and she took a deep, shaky breath.

"I think we're gonna have to move."

Roy, unbelieving, could only manage, "What?" Olivia nodded.

"Pa found someone to buy the farm and house and most of the machinery. We're all out of money now, and that will give us enough to go to Sioux Falls and get by until we can find jobs." She paused, sniffed, and wiped an eye with her free hand. "Pa hasn't told the man for sure yet, but I'm sure he's gonna do it. He sent the kids to stay in Aberdeen with Uncle Mathew until we can get settled in Sioux Falls and have things set up good enough for them to come down there." She sniffed again and put her head back on Roy's shoulder.

Roy's mind raced, searching for something to say. He stroked Olivia's hair, his hand and body numb.

"Why can't you stay? Why do you have to go, can't you—"

Olivia looked at him through tear-filled eyes and said urgently, "I don't want to go. You know that. But my folks need me, and the kids. What can I do for them here?"

Roy nodded reluctantly, then asked quietly, "When will you leave?"

"In a few days."

Roy still couldn't accept the news. "Why can't you hang on for awhile? Things are bound to get better soon—"

"Soon isn't good enough!" Olivia sobbed. "We need to do something now. We need to help ourselves, before everything is gone. I don't want to leave you . . ." She flung her arms around Roy's neck, crying hard. He held her, trying to soothe her, telling her that things would work out. He couldn't bring himself to speak of his feelings toward her, the feelings that had been thrust so suddenly at him from deep in his heart. No, speaking about them, with so much uncertainty in the future, would only make it hurt more. Roy held his tongue, saying only things that might make Olivia feel better.

It was a long time before Roy turned onto the road that led into town from the Gillespie driveway. He still couldn't quite believe what Olivia had told him, but the sharp reality of it was finally becoming clear.

On Sunday night it rained. But, as usual, it was only enough to settle the dust for a while, only enough to raise hopes for a few hours. The rain brought a tantalizing hint of relief, without bringing anything else. By Monday morning the brief rain shower seemed almost like a dream.

Gerhard Hoffman and Herb and Roy Willstrom were sitting in Willstrom's store, enjoying the slightly cooler temperature. The rain hadn't been enough to help the crops, but it had been the vanguard of a cool front making its way east, lowering the temperature to more agreeable levels.

Gerhard came into Willstrom's General Store every Monday morning to buy groceries. He was a big German farmer with a thick accent who lived with his large family five miles north of town.

"Yah, I don' tink ve got more den two or tree hunnerts last night. I don' tink ve ever gonna git rain here. Sout' Dakota is goin' to dry up an' blow away. Kaput!". Gerhard threw his hands into the air for emphasis.

Herb was sitting in a chair next to Gerhard, reading a newspaper. Roy was seated on the table that held the cash register, idly fooling with the keys. The drug store was closed because his boss had had to go to a funeral.

Herb shook his head, saying, "If that happens we'll all probably get shipped somewhere else by the government to put us to work. Just our luck we'll end up in Oklahoma or some place down there. I hear it's worse the further south you get."

Gerhard nodded. "Dem Okies got it tough, dat's for sure." He reflected on his dry, calloused hands a moment, and said, "I hear dat dey's some jobs down in Sioux Falls now. Dey got some project by da vorks Project Administration dere dat vill give a lot of men vork."

Herb put down his paper. "Sioux Falls is an awful long ways to go to get a job. You'd really have to pull up roots to go there."

"Yah, but vat else is dere?" Gerhard shrugged. "Da land is blowin' away here. A man has to have sometin' ta live on."

"Not many people from these parts have had to move elsewhere, Gerhard. You thinkin' about leavin'? are things gettin' that bad?" Roy almost said something to his father about the Gillespies, but kept quiet when he remembered that Olivia had made him promise not to tell anyone about it until they were gone.

Gerhard was shaking his head, saying, "I tink a lot more people are tinkin' 'bout leavin' den you know, Herb Villstrom."

The discussion was halted when Elmer Olsen came in, all smiles and greetings and sunshine.

"Howdy, boys, ain't it nice out?" Elmer beamed as he pulled up a chair and plopped down in it. Herb winced as he thought about the grease that would probably coat the chair's seat. Gerhard pulled out his pipe and gave filling it with tobacco his full attention. Only Roy nodded a hello.

"What are you so cheerful about, Elmer?" Herb asked. "You find a rain cloud for your own private use?"

Elmer shook his head and said, "Nope, I ain't that lucky. But that little drizzle we had last night sure cooled things off a bit, huh."

Gerhard, finished loading his pipe, said, "Vat ve need is a little less goot veather an' some more rainy veather, Olsen."

Elmer nodded enthusiastically. "Yeah, yeah, I know, but it's sure nice that it cooled off a bit." No one said anything for awhile. Elmer perched on the chair halfway grinning, Herb went back to his paper, and Gerhard puffed on his pipe. Roy got off the table and left the store, saying he was going to see if anything was going on around town.

Elmer broke the silence by turning to Herb and saying, "Say, Herb, have you done any more thinkin' on what I was talkin' to you about the other day?"

Herb lowered his paper, thought a moment, then asked, "You mean about that government business?"

"Yeah, that's right," Elmer answered quickly. "You know, you're a pretty important man in town, Herb, and if you—"

"Elmer, we're in the middle of a killin' drought, and everybody's got a helluva lot more to worry about than electin' someone president or somethin' of a little town that's about to get blown off the map." Herb had heard about Elmer's campaign to convince some of the other townspeople that a city government was desperately needed. "How does everyone else feel about your plan to-uh-'Instill Civic Pride'?"

Elmer hesitated a minute, biting his lip. Then he said, "Well, no one will really give me a straight answer. But I think a lot of people will go along with it sooner or later. This town's too afraid of changin' anything. They warned us about that at the state convention."

Herb was beginning to lose patience with Elmer. He stood up, put his hands on his hips and said loudly, "Why the hell don't you forget about all that? No one gives you an answer because nobody cares about it. These people are barely hangin' on; they don't have time to worry about somethin' that we haven't needed for fifty years and don't need now!"

Elmer was on his feet, too. "But somethin' has to be done. Don't you people have any pride? We just can't sit on our hands an' feel sorry for ourselves. We got to do somethin'!"

"Oh, hell! Herb turned his back on Elmer, crossing his arms. Elmer seared Herb's back with a stare, then stalked out of the store.

Herb sat down and took a deep breath. "Sorry, Gerhard. He's sort of hard to get along with. And this weather makes tempers kind of short."

Gerhard snorted and said, "Dat Olsen is just a dumkopf!"

Herb nodded, but wondered if perhaps he had gotten angry too easily. Maybe Elmer was right, at least partly. What had he said about pride?"

It seemed everyone was taking advantage of the cooler weather. Though little rain had come to relieve the crops, the lower temperatures had brought some relief to the crops, the lower temperatures had brought some relief to the people, and they weren't going to waste it. The town was in a celebrating mood, and more people had come to town this Monday than any other day all summer. A quickly organized barn dance was even going to be held in back of the American Legion building that night to make up for the dances that had

been called off because of the heat.

Herb Willstrom let Roy have the old Plymouth for the occasion—the second time in three nights. This could be one of the last nights Olivia and he would have together, and Roy wanted it to be perfect. He put on some of the cologne he'd gotten two Christmases ago that he saved only for special occasions, and wore his newest, most colorful shirt. Heads were going to turn when he and Olivia hit that dance floor.

The dance started at 8:00, so Roy picked Olivia up at half past seven. She had on the same blue dress she'd worn Saturday night, and looked as pretty as Roy could remember seeing her.

Both Roy and Olivia were quiet during the drive into town. Roy felt a little awkward, knowing that this was going to be their last big night out for a while, at least. He wished they could feel like this was just another evening and have a good time, but he knew that would be hard.

The whole town was behind the Legion hall. The yard behind the hall was lit by the single bulb above the back door and a few lanterns placed at the corners of the dirt and grass dance floor. The band, a make-shift collection of local fiddlers and banjo-pickers who relied heavily on improvisation, was perched on a flatbed trailer that had been pulled to one side of the dance area. Lemonade and cookies brought by the Congregational Ladies' Aid were being served on a long table set up a safe distance from the dancers.

Everyone was swirling to scratchy renditions of "Turkey in the Straw", "Old Dan Tucker" and a few other barely recognizable tunes. The dancers Virginia-reeled, do-se-doeed and promenaded nearly to exhaustion, when they'd make their way to the refreshment table to gulp down some lemonade and gasp for the cool evening air.

Roy had never been much of a dancer, but Olivia was, and her grace made up for Roy's lack of it. They twirled and pranced and bowed with the rest of the dancers, bumping into other couples and laughing. Everyone seemed to be having a good time, relieved that the blanket of heat had lifted at least for now.

During one of the band's rest stops, Roy and Olivia drifted away from the dance floor and walked toward the edge of town. In the noise and activity of the dance it would have been hard to hear each other, so neither had said anything for quite awhile.

Olivia broke the silence by saying, "You look real nice tonight."

Roy grinned and said, "You too." It was nice to see Olivia smile again.

When they reached a small stand of trees just behind the Congregational church, Olivia stopped and sat down on an old fallen tree. Roy sat beside her, and she laid her head on his shoulder.

"I wish it could always be like this," Olivia said, "cool and quiet and happy."

"It'd be nice, at least for awhile," Roy answered, nodding. "But if it was always like that, we'd forget how really nice it was. That's one thing this hot an' dry weather does. It makes us appreciate nights like this."

"I guess you're right." Nothing was said for a few moments; the last pink sliver of sunset and the first blinking stars held their attention. The crickets and frogs were starting to come out for their evening concert, singing the same old tune.

"Roy?" Olivia asked quietly.

"Yeah?" She turned to face him, resting her chin in her palm, with her elbow on one knee.

"Do you think we'll ever get out of this depression?"

Roy laughed softly.

"Yeah, I think so. This isn't the first one we've had. Don't you remember from history?"

"Well, they weren't as bad as this one, were they?"

Roy shrugged. "Prob'ly not. But this one can't last much longer. Roosevelt will pull us out of it." Olivia frowned, but put her head back on his shoulder. Two blocks away, behind the Legion hall, most of the dancers sprawled on the ground, visiting and eating cookies and lemonade. It was good to see people relax and be happy again. Roy thought there hadn't been much of that lately.

It wasn't long before Olivia turned to Roy and said softly, "You think we'll ever see each other again?" Roy pulled back and smiled a little.

"Don't you?"

"Well, I hope—"

"If we want to, we will. We'll just have to work for it. Do you want to see me again?"

Olivia sniffled and lifted a finger to wipe away a stray tear. "Yes. You know I do."

Roy put an arm around her, then pulled out his handkerchief and handed it to her. Olivia took it, but just held it. Then she took Roy's hand in both of hers and said, barely loud enough to hear, "I love you, Roy Willstrom."

Roy nodded and whispered, "I love you, Olivia Gillespie."

The music had been going again for quite a while by the time they went back to the dance.

The relatively cool weather could hold off the heat for only a couple days; by Wednesday the weather was again stifling hot and dusty.

Roy Willstrom stood outside the drug store, inspecting his boss's hunchbacked, black De Soto for scratches or dents. Roy had had a little accident that morning while delivering a prescription out in the country when a cow standing in the middle of the road forced him to swerve into the ditch. Roy hadn't run into anything but he was afraid that the high thistles and sunflowers growing there might have caused some minor damage.

Just before Roy went into the drug store after satisfying himself that the car was all right, he saw an old, beat-up Ford flatbed truck loaded to the hilt with beds, boxes, some farm machinery and kids rattling south down Main street. Roy recognized Gerhard Hoffman sitting behind the wheel, grimly giving the town a last look. His plump, weary wife sat next to him holding their youngest child. Gerhard must have found someone to buy his farm and was moving out, hoping to find something better somewhere else.

Roy wondered if the same person who had bought the Hoffman place had bought the Gillespies'. Wondering brought the memory of the night before into sharp focus.

Olivia had walked the mile into town shortly after supper and had gone straight to the Willstrom house, which was just behind the store. Roy had come out, and they'd gone for a walk in the still-warm early evening air.

Olivia's father had finalized the sale of the farm, and Wednesday was the moving day. Rienhard thought he had a good chance for a job in Sioux Falls, and if Mrs. Gillespie and Olivia could find jobs somehow, the Gillespies would be back on their feet in no time.

There hadn't been time for a long farewell; Olivia had had to get back home and help pack. No tears were shed this time, there were only brave smiles and assurances that everything would turn out all right. Vows were made to write often, goodbyes were said. And then Olivia had walked quickly away.

As Roy turned to go into the store, he wondered if saying goodbye was as hard for other people as it was for him.

Elmer Olsen told Herb Willstrom about the Gillespies' departure. He had been coming back into town after making a delivery when he met Rienhard's truck piled as high as possible with his family's belongings heading south. Herb hadn't believed it at first; he didn't know why Rienhard would just pull out without talking to him about it or saying goodbye. But after hurrying over to the drug store to ask Roy about it, Herb realized that Rienhard wouldn't have wanted to say goodbye to even his best friends after swallowing his pride and admitting that his farm had failed. Herb only wished that he'd had a chance to tell Rienhard in person just how much luck he wished his family.

Herb hoped that it wasn't going to be too hard on Roy. Things like this could be a lot harder on a young person than on an adult who'd had more experience with sadness and helplessness.

Herb walked slowly back to the store, hands in his pockets. He was thinking too hard to really notice what was going on around him, and he almost ran into Elmer Olsen as he was coming out of the tavern that was next door to Herb's store.

Elmer picked up the greasy cap that had fallen from his head and said, "Better get your head out of the clouds there, Herb."

Herb smiled in spite of himself. "Yeah, I guess so. Sorry, Elmer." Then, as Elmer started to walk away, Herb remembered something that he had been meaning to say to him. "Say, Elmer," he said. Elmer stopped and turned around. "I was thinkin' about what you've been sayin' about us needin' some sort of government here, and—"

"Don't worry about it, Willstrom," Elmer interrupted, starting down the street again. "If this town don't want to improve itself and wants to die like all the rest of 'em, it can. I ain't gonna bother you about it no more."

Herb started to say something after him, but changed his mind. Shrugging, he turned and walked to his store, then went in.

He doubted that anything could save the town anyway.

Herb Haist

FOUND:

canadian geese hieroglyphics
purple sky parchment
earthen clay vessel
late spring.

