FOCUS

GRIFFIN
Norma Klein

"EVVIVA OTELLO!"
Patricia Powell

COME ALL YOU YOUNG AND TENDER MAIDS
Louise Radner

THE RED DRESS
Lucille Pollack

POETRY
Rachel Blau, Rosellen Brown,
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Susan Rubin, Ellin Sarot

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Rosellen Brown

ANOTHER MEETING

Dumbly, the friends stand facing one another.
One leans against a wall, angled for ease,
A remembered posture from half-remembered days,
And answers dull but courteous questions dully.
There is a hint, heard at their voices' edge,
That neither chose this stumbling, stifled meeting—
This hop of the heart as the chance for retreat slips by.
And so one leans while the other folds his arms,
The calling-up of an image close to both:
Do they drag it forth from sentiment, a pose,
Or is this mockery, with comforts of its own?
They talk around each other with the stealth
Of enemies, coaxing out laughter and concern.
Now suddenly one interrupts to say,
With a new time-consulting consciousness,
That the hour is late. He pushes away his wall
And straightens up. The other gives his hand
And a smile of ambiguous distress.
They lie emphatically about the next good day
When they may meet, earnest and unconvincing.
Honest in this word only, they say goodbye
Across the cool bland borders of the voice;
And turning with a force they do not need,
Retreat into the silent land of strangers.

Lucille Pollack

THE RED DRESS

I had never had a red dress before, I have never had a red dress since. The first and only one was made for me by my father. It was like having a poem written especially for me. My father was such a skillful tailor that each new garment was another masterpiece, too good to be put to practical use. These clothes were best suited to serve as coverings for statues of marble gods and goddesses, or to be placed on manikins in museums as examples for future generations of our present fashions. They were, in any event, much better than most people deserved or needed; and were worth more than my father charged for custom-made clothes—though he charged a great deal. People were grateful, however, to get such suits at any price, and praised them endlessly, and came back years later to show my father that the suits still showed few signs of wear.

You can imagine, therefore, my excitement when I found out that my father was about to make a dress for me out of the red flannel material my mother had picked up very cheaply in one of those East Side remnant stores that look, from the outside, like rag outlets. It was an odd piece of red flannel, about three yards in length, with a large slash in its center (a cutter's careless error), which reduced its price by half, at least. My father fingered it pensively when my mother brought it home, pulled at it, unravelled an edge of it, rolled it between his fingers and pronounced it "A fine piece of goods."

"But what can we make out of it?" my mother asked.

"Make out of it?" my father considered. "With a slash like that you can make out of it a nightgown—or pajamas for the kid."

"Eight dollar pajamas for her?" she said, raising her eyebrows in my direction. "I'd rather use it as a dust rag."

"So use it as a dust rag," my father said peaceably, sitting down to lunch at the kitchen table. He drank a preliminary shot-glass of whiskey and immediately after ate some bread—to absorb the whiskey, he always said. My mother remained at the dining room table considering ways in which the red flannel could be put to some practical use. And then, in lieu of some practical suggestion, she said tentatively, "You know, Abe, maybe we could make a dress out of it for her?"

"We?" my father repeated, wondering what part he was to play in

all this. He was, after all, a tailor of men's clothing, not a dressmaker. Dressmaking was woman's work, considerably lower in his scale than the custom tailoring of men's suits and coats.

"Well, I'd do all the cutting," my mother said tactfully. "You'd only have to sew it."

"No, no," my father said, "I'll cut it. You'd only ruin it."

"And sew it too?"

"And sew it too," my father said, feigning irritation. But it was clear, at least to me, that my father was only too glad to have this opportunity to make this dress for me. And he was happy too to work with flawed material. It represented the necessary challenge to his creativity and resourcefulness. If the material were perfect, unslashed, he would not have agreed to cut and sew the dress. He wanted to create the kind of dress about which it would be said by all fifteen of my aunts: "And it's so beautiful! You'd never think, would you, that the material was badly slashed. Imagine trying to cut a pattern out of that! Ah, Abie, that Abie, he's a magician."

And so my mother went out the next day to Woolworth's to pick a pattern out of the well-thumbed unwieldy Simplicity catalogs. She decided on #3200, a simple affair which buttoned down the front, with a flare skirt and three-quarter sleeves. I stood alongside, wrinkling my nose at the wide collar which was not to my tomboy taste. My mother, however, did not ask after the source of my displeasure, if she noticed it at all, and I was silent, content with my facial indignation, knowing that the answer to any verbal complaint would be, "Plenty good enough for you," or, "What do you know, anyway?"

And so I kept silent, hoping to be able to persuade my father to reshape the collar according to my preference. That night after dinner my father, with a cigarette dangling from his lips, laid the pattern out on the material, trying to manoeuvre the tissue pieces around the slash in the most economical way. He placed the pieces but was dissatisfied, picked them up and replaced them. The cigarette quivered on his lips from time to time, its ash growing longer and heavier, bits of it flaking onto the material like dandruff onto a coat collar. He seemed so occupied with his problem of placement that he never once removed the cigarette from his lips. Only when the ash broke off completely and collapsed onto the material did he remove it and hand it to me at my fingertips for disposal, cautioning me not to burn myself. My mother, watching, added: "Like she can do." Finally he succeeded in placing the pattern and pinned it, pulling the pins from his lips with the confidence and speed of a knife-thrower. And then, with a large pair of shiny nickel scissors he had brought home with him from the store that

night, he quickly cut the cloth to the pattern specifications with long crunching strokes. He placed the pieces of cloth (still pinned to the pattern) one on the other in a pile and took them next morning with him to the store, where, he said, he would baste them together as soon as he could.

I went that afternoon after school to the store, anxious to inspect the progress which had been made, expecting really to see the red dress already finished, hanging, waiting for me. Instead, of course, in a pile on the right upper corner of my father's ply-wood work table, the pieces of the red dress lay exactly as they had lain the night before—only here the red flannel looked a little out of place among the blue serge, the gray pin-stripe, and the navy blue sharkskin.

I did not mask my disappointment, although I could not tell my father exactly how I felt. He was not alone in the work-shop in the rear of the store. With him, as always, were his cronies and assistants. Esterman was there, whose function and first name remain a mystery to me to this day. He was always there, his hat on his head, his coat over his arm, looking as if he were just leaving or had just come—either one, I never knew which, I never caught him doing either.

And then there was Lippe the Galitzianer, a part-time presser my father used occasionally when business was good. He was rotund and small and very friendly to me, asking me every time he saw me how old I was and what grade I was in, as if there was an excellent chance that I might age a year every few weeks and advance a grade in school. His son taught math in Brooklyn College.

And then there was Dr. Kerner, who considered my father a crony of his, though actually the good doctor spent more time in the store than my father did in Doc's office. He stood and whiled away his spare time in the workshop of my father's store, talking baseball or boxing, depending on the season.

"What's the matter with her?" Doc asked my father, noticing my sullen expression as I sat on the edge of my father's work table, fingering the sponge which sat in a basin of dirty water. (My father used the sponge to wet the pressing-cloth.)

"Nothing," my father said, looking at me directly for the first time that afternoon. "She's always like that."

"Always with such a long face?" Doc asked my father, facing me.

"Sometimes she smiles, but only when I give her money." The truth of this assertion made me purse my lips to suppress a brewing smile.

"She's just like her mother, you mean," Doc said, seeking confirmation.

"That's right, Doc, only smaller," my father explained.

Doc pulled a quarter out of his pocket and held it out in my direction. "Would you smile if I gave you this?" he taunted. The hypothetical nature of the question allowed me to restrain the pleasure I would normally have felt. I even managed to twist my face into a frown. "Ah," Doc said, "she's tough, she's got principles." He held it closer to me. "Well, do you want it or not?"

I turned away, then heard the coin clink back into his pocket. How I loathed him!

"Ah, Abie, Abie, wait till she grows up," Doc said. "You'll have a problem with two of them like that at home."

"You're telling me?" my father said. "Already I'm making dresses for her."

"Which one?" Doc asked.

"Ceelee," my father said, using his nickname for me.

"A dress for her?" Doc said with excessive surprise. "I thought she would never wear dresses. Isn't that what she said?" And then, turning to me, he said, "Tell me, Toughnitchka, I thought you would never wear dresses?"

I didn't answer. I squeezed the sponge dry.

"I thought you would wear pants all the time—no?—isn't that so?" I remained silent. Doc was annoyed at his inability to puncture my reserve. He turned to my father, determined to get at me through neutral ground. "Abie," he said, "why don't you make pants for her instead?" My father shrugged, noncommittal. He picked up the iron and tested it with his wet fingertips. There was a spattering hiss.

Doc turned back to reassail me. "Tell me, Toughnitchka," he said, "do they let you wear your Levis (pronounced leevees) to school? I bet you wear your pants to school."

I wanted to laugh at this, but only because Doc's mispronounciation of Levis reminded me of my father's mauling of the word dungarees. He pronounced it either of two ways, depending on the context: gangareens or gungadins. Instead of laughing, however, I said "I hate you" with a strange mixture of venom and indifference which I cannot explain. "I hate you," I repeated, a little lower, hearing my voice, feeling my face flush in fear and anger.

My father turned to me. "Don't talk to the doctor that way, Ceelee!" he said with more compelling authority in his voice and tensed hard eyes than most parents hold in their flat open hands.

"But he started!" I protested, nearly wailing, reducing the argument to its proper level.

"I want you to apologize," he repeated, dropping the iron back into its stand with a metallic thud, advancing a step.

I would probably have apologized at this point, simply in blank obedience to my father, if I hadn't been so close to tears. But with the knowledge that I would have gagged on any words I attempted to bring out, I remained mute, my lips pursed tight, my eyes wide with tears.

"I want you to apologize!" my father shouted.

"No!" I sobbed, jumping from the table. I ran out of the workshop, through the store, and into the street, then home.

I resolved later never to go back to my father's store unless invited, and unless I knew beforehand that Doc would surely not be there. But the doctor's whereabouts were not easily ascertained, since his office hours fluctuated with the weather. On bad days, it seemed, no one got sick enough to venture out of the house to the doctor. And so on bad days Doc sat all day in the store. I knew enough, therefore, not to go near the store in rain or snow. On nice days I would have to take my chances. Meanwhile I wondered whether my father would ever finish my dress, or whether he would delay work on it as punishment for my misbehavior. I did not ask him about the progress he was making, determined not to seem overanxious. One day, however, a week later, he brought home the basted dress and told me to try it on. I did so, stifling my excitement, sticking myself on invisible pins. My father looked me up and down, turned me around, pulled at my shoulder, tugged at my waist, all the time making numerous chalk marks: x's and o's and darts and diagonals and dashes that make the dress look like a blackboard inscribed with mathematical equations. Then he made me mount the table and turn slowly so that he could mark the hem-length with a dressmaker's gadget of my mother's that squirted powdered chalk out of a jar in a little horizontal line whenever a stationary rubber bulb was squeezed.

"Stand straight," my mother, observing, said.

I straightened myself from the inclined position I had assumed in order to watch what was going on down below.

"Abe," she said, "you're not going to—"

"Sure not," my father said, squirting chalk at me.

"But you don't even know what I wanted to say," my mother said.

"If it's advice, I don't need it," my father said, making a motion to me that meant, "Turn." My mother left the room.

I did not see the dress again until it was completely finished. At lunchtime, a week or two later, my father brought it home. When I came home from school at twelve-fifteen, it was hanging on the closet door, still

warm from its final pressing. I ran my hand down the skirt. The temptation to touch it was as strong as if it were a painting hanging in a museum.

"Don't touch it with your dirty hands!" my mother said.

"Leave her," my father said from the kitchen table. "Leave her, it's hers."

"I don't want her to get it dirty before she even wears it," my mother said righteously.

I went to the sink and washed my hands, but then the desire to touch the dress left me and I sat down to lunch opposite my father.

"You might thank your father for the dress," my mother prodded from the stove. "You might kiss him," she said. "It wouldn't kill you."

I looked across at my father for some indication of what he wanted me to do. And then I saw that his lips and chin were greasy. "Thank you," I said. "Thank you for the dress. It's very pretty."

"Pretty?" my mother said, depositing two lamb chops on my plate. "That's how much you know! It's gorgeous! It's beautiful! It's much too good for you."

"Can I wear it tomorrow?" I asked my mother.

"Already she wants to wear it," my mother said, sitting down at the table, to my father. She was exasperated.

"So?" my father said.

"So she can wait a little while. She doesn't have to wear it right away. Let it hang in the closet for a little while. At least it won't get dirty in the closet."

"She can wear it tomorrow," my father said, and it was settled.

Of course the dress was doomed from the start. And when next morning my mother cautioned me not to get it dirty, the manner of destruction was determined. It was thereafter only a question of time before I would fall down a chute into a coal bin or through a manhole into a sewer. In either case, I sensed that I would not make it through the day stainlessly.

When I returned from the morning session, my mother was astonished that I had so far done no damage to myself. Lunch that afternoon consisted of things that could not spill out onto my bibbed bodice or slither off the plate onto my towelled lap. The precautions, however, were unnecessary. There were no accidents. But as I walked back to school for the afternoon session I knew that within the next three hours I would fall victim to some sort of major catastrophe. Toward the end of the afternoon, when at two-thirty the boys and girls who attended Hebrew School were dismissed for Religious Instruction, the accident occurred. I suppose now that Jehovah was punishing me for remaining in my seat when actually I should have

been with my brethren at the wardrobe, preparing for the exodus to the Yeshiva on South Fourth Street, a ramshackle old yellowstone with a faded Star of David on its face, which made it holy. It was rumored that the Yeshiva had been condemned years ago.

I was sitting quietly in my seat when Melvin Bernstein, tallest boy in the class, came walking up the aisle with his coat. As he reached my desk he swung his coat over his shoulder. I had just finished filling my fountain pen from a new bottle of South Sea Blue, which I had borrowed from Carmen, my Puerto Rican girl-friend, who sat next to me. The coat-tail caught and lifted the ink bottle (which I had placed securely at the level top shelf of my desk), dumping it squarely into my lap. At least I assume that it happened in this way. I really didn't see it. I just felt something fall into my lap. I didn't look down at first, hoping I suppose that whatever it was would go away. But when I felt something wet dripping down between my thighs, I looked down to view the devastation. A huge stain of South Sea Blue was spreading rapidly across the lap of my red dress. Also, below me, a puddle of ink was collecting on the seat in which I was sitting, so that the back of my dress was equally stained. I was paralyzed, lost in silent contemplation of the absorptive qualities of the material of my red dress.

Carmen broke the news to the teacher, who hadn't noticed the accident. "My ink!" Carmen shouted, horrified at the complete loss of the contents of this new bottle.

"What about your ink, Carmen?" the teacher crooned.

And I stood up, dripping. Ink ran into my shoes, staining my white socks. Ink dripped onto the floor. I was sent home immediately. I ran through the streets to my father's store where, crying hysterically, I opened my coat in the workshop. Doc was there, and Esterman and Lippe.

"You fool, you," my father said, throwing up his hands.

Gasping, I told him of my guiltlessness.

"Ah, but she'll kill you!" he said, thinking immediately of my mother's reaction.

"Save me, Daddy! Save me! Save me!" I cried, knowing that his fears were justified.

"See, Abie," Doc interjected, smiling, "I told you to make pants for her instead. She can't wear dresses yet."

My father turned to Doc but, at first, said nothing. He moaned and shook his head.

"What can I do for her?" he said finally to Doc.

"What?" Doc said. "What, indeed? Send her home to her mother.

There's nothing else to do. This doesn't even concern you. Her mother will take care of her."

"But she'll kill her," my father said. And I started to tremble.

Doc waved this foolishness aside. "She won't kill her, Abie, don't worry," he said, thinking only of the physical impossibility. "Your daughter is strong enough to take a little beating. Besides, she deserves it. Look what she did to that dress."

My father was silent for a moment, then said, "Go home, Ceelee."

"But Daddy—" I began but broke off, sobbing.

"Go home, Ceelee," he said heavily, closing my coat and making two passes over my wet face with his handkerchief.

And, turning, I went.

I rang the bell and my mother opened it immediately, expecting the piano teacher.

"What happened to you?" she said.

Without a word I opened my coat and closed my eyes.

There was a gasp, and then a heavy hand smacked at my face. There was another smack. I raised my palms to my cheeks and stood motionless and mute. My mother pulled me in by my wrists and twirled me out of my coat. She administered another blow to my behind. She must have got ink all over her hand, and the thought comforted me. I ran up the stairs to the bathroom and locked the door. I heard footsteps on the stairs and then there was a pounding on the door.

"Let me in!" she screamed. And I was startled when I heard that she was crying. I did not move, however, from the ledge of the bathtub. "Let me in!" she repeated, pounding on the door.

"No!" I said. "You'll hit me."

"I won't," she said. "I want to talk to you."

"No!" I said. "You'll hit me, you'll hit me."

"Let me in this minute!"

"Promise you won't hit me!"

"I promise. Let me in!"

"Promise!"

"I promise."

I opened the door and retreated toward the tub. In another second she swooped down upon me and I tumbled backwards into the tub. For five minutes she kneaded my flesh and pounded my bones as if she were washing something very dirty. She killed me and, when the doorbell rang downstairs, she left me for dead.

When I regained sufficient strength I raised myself out of the tub and

heard the thudding of the piano downstairs. It was the piano teacher who had interrupted my beating: Mrs. Bloom, who came every Wednesday at three-fifteen to give my mother a lesson. And then suddenly the music stopped. I walked from the bathroom to the bedroom and took off my stained red dress which had been torn during the beating. My legs were streaked with blue ink—my panties, too. There were even inkstains between my toes. And then there was a soft knock at the door.

"Who is it?" I asked, trying out my voice, marvelling at the fact that it too had not been damaged during the battle.

"Mrs. Bloom," a hard voice called, and the door opened.

I quickly pulled on my flannel bathrobe. Mrs. Bloom walked across the room to me and frowned.

"Well, miss, I hope you're satisfied," she said.

I looked at her, puzzled. My eyes become misty and I felt fear again, as if even her voice could hurt me.

"Well," she repeated, "are you satisfied?"

"What do you mean?" I asked, and two tears rolled slowly down my cheeks.

"Do you know what you've done to your mother?" she asked.

I stiffened, fearing that my mother lay dead downstairs of a heart attack because of me.

"Well," she continued, "do you know what you've done to your mother?" She paused. "You've done a terrible thing to your mother, an awful thing."

"What, what?" I asked, horrified.

"Do you know," she said, "that your mother couldn't even take her lesson today?"

I shrank away from her.

"That's right," she went on, "because she was so aggravated. Because she was trembling so. Because of you. Because you've done a terrible thing, an awful thing."

I started to snivel.

"Do you know what you must do?" she asked. I stared at her with wide eyes. "You must apologize," she said. "As soon as I leave you must apologize. Promise me you will apologize."

I promised.

"A promise is a promise," she said, and then she went downstairs.

Later I heard the front door open and close. I went downstairs to my mother. She was sitting on the living room couch with a tissue in her hand. I walked up to her and stood still. And I apologized.

Susan Rubin

ENDS

Heaviness in moving guise, the River
Heaves seaward and greets quietly the dawn.
Curving she calls to black birds' winged quiver,
Dark careenings on a broken air; moans
She gathers to her of foghorns mourning,
Folds them under, weaves their cry with shrillness
And the caw of birds, culls the bright dawning
Of sound into silence. Accents of stress
Converge thus to a pose; significance
Arrests itself around a moment's truth
And seeks its end within a liquid stance—
An untimed rest, a voice made mute;
While laden silences, wrested from chance,
Become attempts to shape the absolute.

Judith Lebowitz

IN REMEMBRANCE OF MY GRANDFATHER

He is still there
The old man with the velvet heart,
Afraid to think, afraid to roam
Past the first floor of his muted home.
The world runs by on its windy way,
While he winds his soul with a quiet sigh,
While he rocks his soul and waits to die.

He is still there
The old man with the velvet heart,
He sits with life which he found as dumb
As his rocking chair,
Implores death to come,
To kiss his cheek and lead him past the door,
To take him from the boredom of the first floor,
The last floor of a narrow wooden life.

Ellin Sarot

My soul should be
interred at sea
where the splash of the wave gathers sun from the sky.
My breath should fly
in sea-gull skies
with the shine of the sea and the salt flung high.
The tiny grains
of sunbleached sands
should cling to the wind with an ocean chill.
My soul should be
in a purple-black sea
while my body lies deep in a lime green hill.

Patricia Powell

"EVVIVA OTELLO!"

"E finito!" Verdi jubilantly proclaimed to his librettist, Boito, on the completion of *Otello*. The world resounded then with two Othellos—Shakespeare's drama and Verdi's opera, each the consummate expression in its idiom.

The marriage of Verdi and Boito in the creation of Otello was a happy one and would have been blessed by the music lover Shakespeare, for the adaptation of a drama to operatic form is a hazardous and difficult task to accomplish skillfully. Many problems are incurred in the process of adaptation. Words are the deeds of drama, yet music lengthens words considerably, hence many words must be excluded. In excluding the words of Shakespeare, however, one finds that few are inessential to the drama. An opera must deal in primary colors and bold strokes because verbal subtleties are lost in singing; but if verbal subtleties are important to the inner action of a drama, the continuity of the drama when made into an opera is liable to be destroyed. Therefore subtle implications, complex character motivations, rationalizations and intellectual problems do not lend themselves well to opera—the philosophic doubt and the mental and emotional complexities of Hamlet would be unsuitable for operatic adaptation. Nor can sub-plots, dramatic foils and political side issues that are essential to the main theme of the drama be included in an opera, yet they cannot be excluded from a true adaptation of the drama's theme: any important excision may mean irreparable loss.

Shakespeare's *Othello*—while it does inevitably present problems of excision, condensation, and reconstruction—is more easily reconciled to operatic form than most of the other plays of Shakespeare. Its plot, a domestic tragedy resulting from the corruption of virtue by evil, is relatively simple and does not become entangled with sub-plots and side issues; and its continuous step-by-step action and cumulative development are necessary for the form of a tragic opera. The motives of the characters are sharply defined as the elemental forces of power, passion, craft, evil, and innocence rather than as the intricacies of psychological motivation.

Courageously, and with consummate skill, Boito has solved the problems of the adaptation of *Othello* to *Otello*. He has excluded the first act of the play and ingeniously transferred its finest lines and important themes to later scenes. The characters of Bianca and Brabantio are omitted in the process of simplification, although Bianca's importance to the development of the plot is retained through references to her. But Brabantio's insinuation that Desdemona had deceived him and could therefore also deceive Othello is a rationalization too subtle for operatic form; so too is Iago's suspicion of an affair between Othello and Emilia.

Iago never delineates himself as explicitly in *Othello* as he does in Boito's "Credo," but his desire for evil for its own sake is implicit in Shakespeare's Iago, as is his affinity with the Divinity of Hell. Iago's words in the "Credo" as created by Boito reflect Shakespearean ideas: man as the toy of the gods and of unjust Fate, and man as the player of the part of his life.

Boito's stitching together of lines from different scenes and acts from the play and his shifting and telescoping of scenes for adaptation to operatic form is masterfully done—the double-duet Act II sc. iv between Otello, Desdemona, Emilia and Iago, and Otello's entry into the bedroom following Desdemona's "Ave Maria." Boito's exclusion of the scenes of the night attack on Cassio, the murder of Roderigo by Iago, and the murder of Emilia by Iago are omitted so as not to distract attention from the two real victims of the tragedy—Desdemona and Otello. The setting of the acts by Boito closely knits the development and heightens the anticipated tragedy by hinting at a feeling of the closing-in of Iago's malignity. The first act is set beside the sea outside Otello's castle, the third act is completely indoors in the great hall of the castle, and the fourth act moves into Desdemona's bedroom. Thus we have the continuous movement of the acts indoors and finally to the intimate setting of the domestic tragedy—the bedroom.

An opera is a drama set to music: the music's function is the expression and intensification of the emotions of the characters. Hence, music raises the content of the words of the characters geometrically and enhances their charm. Verdi's music expresses and affirms the thoughts and motivations of each character, *and in the music is found the poetry of Shakespeare*. The fusion of Verdi's music with Boito's libretto is of rare perfection: The dialogue and the music reinforce each other and together they achieve profound comprehension of Shakespeare's *Othello*.

No overture introduces the opera—the curtain is blown up by the

storm—piccolos flash lightning, the brasses quaver, basses rumble, and the pedals of an organ thunder. Immediately a psychological atmosphere of fury and anxiety is set by the elemental forces of a storm. This coincides with the elemental forces that bring about the tragedy of Otello. A tremendous chorus takes the places of the four gentlemen in *Othello*. All is excitement and builds up to the dramatic entrance of Otello on the shout of "Estultate!" that announces his safety and the destruction of the Turkish fleet. Boito has excluded the tender "fair warrior" discourse between Desdemona and Othello that occurs on Othello's disembarkment, in favor of a triumphant entrance that defines the power of Otello as a man and as a soldier. After portraying this image of Otello the music proceeds to introduce the rest of the characters of the opera.

Iago's evil is depicted from his first words. With his first mention of a woman a triplet in the music sneers. Following his "And I—God bless the mark! his Moorship's ancient!" the music jumps down an octave. The use of evil grace notes and sly chromatic sequences in Iago's music continues throughout the opera; also characteristic of Iago's music are the blasé pizzicato notes that represent his nonchalant air of "seeming" while the bass reveals the hypocrisy of these notes. The brindisi (drinking song) stresses Iago's villainy and the music gets drunker along with Cassio.

After the quarrel between Montano and Cassio has been quieted by Otello, a love duet between Otello and Desdemona takes place. The music attains a celestial quality, and skillfully the words serve as an exposition of what has happened before the curtain rose—this exposition is absorbed unconsciously by the listener. In the duet the material of Othello's first act is inserted ingeniously and Boito has retained the essence of the beginning of Otello's and Desdemona's love by including Shakespeare's "You loved me for the dangers I had passed, and I loved you, that you did pity them." Verdi has musically captured the poetry of their love in the tender kiss theme which will be so significantly repeated in the last act of the opera.

The second act begins with trembling triplets in the bass clef that accentuate the evil forces at work. This music is contrasted with the music of happy serenity with which the first act ended. Iago's "Credo" opens on a sinister extended trill. Then the music suddenly runs up to high G and falls to low G with chromatic sequences while the musically Mephistophelean Iago chants his nefarious philosophy. A worm crawls up from the orchestra and feeds on his germ of life. Fiery thunder echoes his "Heaven's an ancient lie!"

Iago's poisoning of Otello's mind works much more quickly in the opera than in the play. Shakespeare's third act (the second in the opera) has many changes of scene that serve to lengthen the time element and underline Othello's unwillingness to fall victim to Iago's poison. But in opera these lapses of time cannot be reconciled with the continuous sweep towards the climax of the tragedy. Only the choral serenade to Desdemona—that wonderful combination of an outdoor scene of peace and an indoor scene of passion—acts as an interlude to relieve the tension, although the presence of Otello on the stage and his emotional reaction in viewing this charming scene intensify the mood of conflict.

Iago—after pushing Cassio to plead his cause with Desdemona—quickly brings Otello to view the scene and kindles the first flame of jealousy in Otello. In the play Othello comes on Desdemona and Cassio by accident. Otello questions Desdemona in the duet that follows, and shows that his mind is more infected with Iago's venom at this point than in the play. Desdemona's purity and sweetness are delightfully expressed in the music. Iago and Emilia now join Otello and Desdemona in a musical duet that is very effective dramatically, but can only be achieved in opera, where music re-inforces emotions that need many more words in the play. Otello moans, "Haply, because I lack soft parts of conversation, Or that I am declined into the vale of years; Haply because my visage is dyed of deepest black, She is gone . . ." which is a simplied version of Othello's "Haply, for I am black . . ." During this double duet Iago snatches Desdemona's handkerchief from Emilia. This is an improvement on Emilia's giving of it to Iago in the play. The emotions of the characters are effectively differentiated by the music—the pathetic humility of Desdemona, the passion of Otello, the reluctance of Emilia, and the evil determination of Iago.

In the following duet between Otello and Iago, the toxic insinuations of Iago become more and more virulent in Otello. Iago gloats "He changes with my poison," condensed from Shakespeare's "Not poppy, not mandragora, nor all the drowsy syrups of the world shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep thou owd'st yesterday". This is a good example of the necessary condensation of the words of a play to appropriate operatic dialogue. The poetics of the music replace Shakespeare's verbal poetry. Otello sings Shakespeare's "Othello's occupation's gone," and from the music we can feel that his last grip on sanity is slipping. Frenzied, he throws Iago to the floor, demanding tangible proof of Desdemona's infidelity.

Now, Iago pours fuel on the fire of Otello's jealousy by asserting that he has seen Desdemona's handkerchief in Cassio's room and by telling

Otello of a dream by Cassio. In Iago's narration of Cassio's dream the music reveals his hypocrisy and malignity by slyly following his every accent and inflection. The voluptuousness of the words of the dream are also expressed by the music, but they are clearly separated from Iago's music. The vision ends abruptly and the music fades away as dreams do—Otello's first words following the dream are soft as if he is in that dream. With a crescendo his anger rises and, impassioned, he declares that his love for Desdemona has turned to hate. The savagery of Otello's mania is brought out by the musical phrases of the blatant brasses that accompany his cry for blood. He and Iago vow vengeance on the guilty and Iago's musical vow twists with hypocrisy.

The third act shows Otello convinced of Desdemona's infidelity and Iago victorious. In the opening duet between Otello and Desdemona, Otello's first words as he demands the handkerchief are in a tone of polite skepticism, and his latent fury is evinced only by the orchestra. But as Desdemona insistently begs Cassio's suit, Otello's passion releases itself—at his words "guire e ti damna"—and control is gone.

Otello's wrath turns again to calm irony as he asks Desdemona's pardon in mistaking her for his wife, the strumpet of Venice. The musical phrase of Otello before this declaration is the same tender melody with which Desdemona greeted "her husband" at the beginning of the duet. Thus Verdi has made Otello turn against Desdemona her own melody—her fair innocence.

As his cruel statement ends, the music becomes violent—Otello pushes Desdemona from the room and sings his monologue of utter dejection. Otello's monologue "Had it pleased them to try me with affliction" is sung on two notes indicating the emptiness of soul that came after the burst of vehement passion with Desdemona. Otello's vocal line is clearly pathetic as combined with the forlornly wavering triplets in the orchestra.

This sequence of scenes does not occur in *Othello* but is vital in the opera to its cumulative tragic development. The incidents of the handkerchief and Desdemona's plea for Cassio are the two events that convinced Otello of Iago's insinuations and thus they were conclusive in bringing about Otello's downfall. But there can be no lapse of time in the opera between Otello's complete belief in these incidents and his total downfall of delirium when he mutters "Handkerchief . . . handkerchief . . . confess it" or the continuity of his tragedy would be lost.

Iago remains triumphant throughout these beginning scenes of Act III—

his entrance announcing Cassio is not needed to know that the victory is his. The trio between Cassio, Iago, and the hidden Otello is a masterpiece of musical characterization. The conversation of Cassio and Iago arouses Otello from his delirium. (This scene replaces the one between Bianca and Cassio concerning the handkerchief in the play.) Trumpets flourish and Cassio leaves to greet the Doge's envoy. Iago and Otello plot Desdemona's murder against the background of the offstage sounds, the celebrations of the arrival of the Venetian envoy. The contrast of the cold plot of murder against the background sounds of festivities dramatically emphasizes the inferno of Iago's evil corruption.

The grand finale of the third act results in a public demonstration of Otello's tragic mania. Violins rush as Otello throws Desdemona to the ground. After chasing the crowd from the throne room, the delirious Otello pants in broken rhythms of voice and orchestra and falls to the floor in a faint, while outside the people shout "Evviva Otello!" "Gloria Al Leon di Venezia!" Iago stands over the fallen Otello and scornfully proclaims "Ecco il Leone"—the music wavers and strikes a dominant chord. The broad theatricalism and the dramatic impact of this scene created by Boito and Verdi are unmistakably suggestive of the histrionics of Shakespeare.

The sad sweet strains of oboes and flutes introduce the fourth act. A bass clarinet rings a death toll of three notes throughout the musical introduction and other instruments take up the dirge during the act. The three notes of the death knell may refer to the three kisses that Otello gives Desdemona before killing her—thus joining love and death.

The musical poetry of the last act relieves the physical horror of the tragedy. Shakespeare's Desdemona also sings the "Willow Song" that follows—thus he, too, realized the dimension that music adds to poetry. Verdi's setting of the words is pathetically lovely and evokes a mood of beautiful tragedy. In the same way the farewell of Desdemona to Emilia can only be accomplished so effectively in music. Her first "good night" is murmured on a low F sharp—suddenly seized with fear her voice soars to a high octave and cries "Emilia, Emilia, addio". Each syllable of her cry is on a different note in contrast to the previously quiet monotone "Buona notte". Desdemona's "Ave Maria" (created by Boito and Verdi) is a lovely aria that hushes the air of fearful anticipation by expressing the innocence of Desdemona through her lack of sin before her God.

Double basses tread stealthily on Otello's entry and reveal the horribly brutish extent to which Iago has poisoned his mind. As in the play, Otello

kills Desdemona as if it were a duty that he must perform, thus the physical violence is mitigated. Quickly the act moves to an end without the slowing elements of Emilia's murder and the wounding of Iago. Swiftly the truth of Iago's villainy is revealed and Otello, realizing his deception, overpowers Iago's evil by stabbing himself—his sacrifice affirms his love for Desdemona. Otello dies to the kiss theme that closed the first act in lovely serenity. The added speeches of Cassio and Lodovico after Otello's death are omitted, as they would disrupt the opera's final note of affirmation. Hence, the curtain falls on a scene of undiminished emotion: Desdemona's and Otello's love affirmed, they are reunited in death by the poignancy of Verdi's music just as they are by the poetry of Shakespeare.

"The night is dark and silent,
All blatant clamors cease.
My bosom's angry passion
In this embrace is stilled to perfect peace.
May the winds blow till they have
wakened death
If after every tempest come such
calms of love."

(*Otello*: Act I, sc. iii.)

Patricia Powell

CANTILENA

Night waves rolled from the whitening shore
Abandoning urchins, anemone, and shells;
Sleepless, we stirred in our sand-castled bed.
"When the day comes, I must leave you," he murmured.

Dawning orange, the day bulged yellow;
Waking light swirled through our barnacled room.
I turned to him—only the sun lay beside me.
He had gone, following the sandpipers.

What were his parting words? I have forgotten
All but their sound, as I remember
Only the liquid tones of that summer's sea.
My voice has grown small with my songs of sadness.

Norma Klein

GRIFFIN

Struve wanted a short vacation; he wanted to get away from his job; and most of all, he wanted to see Griffin. But the trip was long, the bus was not airconditioned, and by the end of the trip, he wondered if it had been worth coming so far. A baby in back of him had thrown up and the smell of the vomit in the warm bus, combined with his general fatigue and hunger, made him feel nauseated. Slowly he pressed his head against the pane of the window and stared moodily out at the landscape, green-tinted from the colored glass. As it grew dark, road lights went on and these, too, looked green. The greenness made the scene look as though under water and in his sleepiness the figures and trees passing by seemed to Struve like small dark fish and seaweed, floating through a pond. Getting off the bus, he had to blink to adjust himself to the clearness around him.

Griffin's house was a short distance from the town. It was pleasant walking down the quiet country road after so many hours on the highway. The sharp freshness in the air revived Struve. His headache went away. Cheerfully he looked around at the dark fields, pleased he had decided to come. Before a small white house was a sign bearing Griffin's name. "Hey! Hello!" Struve yelled. "Anybody home?"

The screen door opened and Struve saw Griffin come out. Behind him was his wife, Elizabeth, a slender lovely looking woman holding a baby. A huge dog, lean and powerful, lumbered out beside her. Beside the dog, was a young girl of about ten.

"Ned—thank God!" Griffin said. "We were getting worried about you. Come on in. Is that all your stuff?" He was smiling and looking cheerful although Struve noticed he had a large white bandage tied around one eye.

"What happened with your eye?" Struve asked as they walked inside.

"My eye?" Griffin said. He looked down, almost with surprise. "Oh—that. That's nothing. It happened while I was chopping wood the other day. This chip flew up and—" he stopped, seeing Struve's incredulous expression. "Oh no—it wasn't anything," he assured him hastily. "Only—I was two miles from home and I could hardly see. I didn't have anything to tie around it."

Struve threw up his hands. "Good Lord," he said, laughing. "Stop, stop." Looking up, he saw there were two couples in the living room.

"They've come to look at some of my work," Griffin explained to Struve in a whisper before they went in. "They ought to be gone soon."

"Oh, I see." Struve glanced around the room and saw several of Griffin's canvases displayed around the room, leaning against chairs and couches.

"I'll be with you in a sec," Griffin said, evidently embarrassed at having to discuss business before a friend. "Look—why don't you go up and wash or something?"

Struve went up, washed and unpacked. But when he came down, the couples were still there. Unobtrusively, he sat down in a corner, watching.

Struve himself was a biochemist, although he had an appreciative interest in art and did some sketches on the side. He had graduated from college when he was just nineteen and now, at twenty-three, was involved in doing research for a large scale chemical company in the East. It was through his interest in art, however, that he had met Griffin. Griffin had been scheduled to discuss his own work at the university Struve attended and Struve, as head of the undergraduate art association, had the task of introducing him to the students and guiding him around campus. At first he had felt too overwhelmed with respect and admiration for Griffin to say a word to him, but by the end of the week-end, by virtue of being together for nearly forty-eight hours, a special kind of good-humored intimacy had been established between them. Griffin had been different from what Struve had expected, both in appearance and personality. In appearance, instead of being the neat bespectacled professorial type Struve had seen in magazine photos of him, Griffin gave a rather comic effect. There was nothing basically odd about his features, which were regular, or about his build, which was tall and thin. It was rather that Griffin seemed to look on himself as comic, and, because of this, he actually came to impress people in this way. Now, seeing him with his guests, Struve was reminded of the first hour he had spent with Griffin at the museum. He remembered staring with curiosity at Griffin's bright red hair, totally disordered, his wrinkled shirt, his Chaplinesque moustache, his exaggerated stoop, his habit of wrinkling his nose when he spoke. It was only after a while that Struve came to accept these mannerisms, feeling that Griffin himself, gentle and shy, was somehow hiding behind all these extravagant gestures and only rarely, perhaps only in sleep, allowing himself to be seen. In his closet at that time Struve used to keep a list of people whose opinions he valued highly and, whenever he had an important decision to make, he would look at the list and try to decide if these people would approve of what he had decided to do. He put Griffin's name at the top of the list in a large red scrawl. Each time he

was having a serious love affair and was thinking of marrying the girl, he would think: I'll have to introduce her to Griffin. It even seemed to him that he could not have married someone who didn't like Griffin or whom Griffin didn't like. It was a surprise for him to discover, from the gossip among the faculty and students after Griffin had left, that many people failed to share his own opinion. They called Griffin childish, irresponsible, temperamental. Struve reacted violently to these remarks, attributing them to pettiness and jealousy. When he heard Griffin criticized at parties, he would be filled with a sudden irrational anger, as though he himself or some member of his family had been criticized. Since that time, although he had gotten to know Griffin better, he had never stopped feeling this combination of affection and admiration for him. It was a feeling that Griffin was the one person he could rely on—not so much to do anything—but to lead what Struve considered a civilized worthwhile existence, one which he felt he himself was incapable of leading. By his friendship with Griffin, he felt he could be at any rate an onlooker, if not a participant, in this world. He had only seen Griffin sporadically—on trips either of them took to the part of the country in which the other lived—and it was with great excitement and pride that he accepted Griffin's invitation to spend the weekend at his house. Having never once met Griffin's family, he now gazed around the room with a special attentiveness, eager to see what they were like.

In the corner Elizabeth was sitting, holding her son, a gold haired angelic boy whose fair skin was marked by red mosquito bites. Struve watched her lean over and tickle his chin. She was wearing shorts so that he could see her long white legs on which the veins showed through at certain places. Conscious of Struve's stare, she glanced up and smiled at him. "Could I get you something to drink?" she asked, brightly but with a certain reserve. "Some wine, maybe?"

"Thanks," Struve said, sitting back. "That would be nice."

He watched her rise, touching her hair lightly with one finger. She wore it long, wound in a bun at the back of her head which gave her a girlish appearance. From her gestures and voice Struve sensed that as a girl she had probably been shy and that even now her social cheerfulness was a strain for her. For some reason this was appealing to him. As she left the room, the dog brushed past her and ambled over to Struve. He sat down heavily, collapsing so that the floor shook slightly, his hind legs out like a rabbit. The baby crawled over and pulled at his tail, but he just lay there passively, looking up with melancholy eyes. Struve's glance drifted over to the other side of the room, past Griffin and his guests, to his daughter, a

thin little girl with serious brown eyes and eyeglasses. She was sitting on the floor, her chin resting on the couch, listening to her father and sometimes looking vaguely around the room. The lonely wistful expression on her face aroused in Struve an uneasy feeling of compassion. A wounded duck look, he thought.

"Here you are." Elizabeth handed him a cold glass of wine, wet on the rim. Struve drank it thirstily. It had a sweet nutty taste. He saw that the guests were getting ready to leave. Griffin saw them out and came back, smiling at Struve. "So," he said with pleasure. "How've you been? How was the trip? Come on—speak."

"Well, actually, I'm sort of pooped," Struve admitted.

"Well, I should imagine," Griffin said. He started rummaging around the room, looking through stacks of records. "Fine—we were going to go to bed early anyway. We've been running around a lot too. Let me just play you this record I got, okay?" he said, pulling it out from a pile. "It's a new version of Tchaikovsky's Fourth. I thought you'd like it."

For several minutes they sat there, not speaking, listening to the music. Struve had thought he would want to talk to Griffin, but he felt content simply to sit quietly. Because of his relaxed mood, the mournful sentimental music, like the wine, seemed perfect, just as he would have wished.

"Did you see the review of Hank's show?" Elizabeth said, interrupting the silence. She brought a clipping over to Struve.

Struve glanced through it briefly. "Hmm—very nice," he said. " 'A breakthrough for modern art', eh. Not bad."

"Well," said Griffin with some embarrassment. "It doesn't mean anything. You know these . . ."

Struve laughed. "The hell it doesn't," he said. "God, his word is law." He took another sip of wine and sat back again, feeling a rush of fondness for Griffin and his strange modesty. Glancing at Griffin, he saw that he was looking at the ground, still too embarrassed to look up. Struve's heart, warmed by the wine, was brimming over with good humor, friendliness, and sadness. He felt a sudden desire to get up and grab Griffin's hand and tell him how much he liked him. He thought of how frequently he felt alone and driven by the senseless pressure of work and what a pity it was that at these times he could not remember or somehow absorb the closeness of moments like these. At times he saw or heard something that brought a friend's face momentarily in view, but a moment later it disappeared and, once gone, the person himself seemed to be driven further away, out of sight. Thus, a friend's suicide a week earlier in some city many miles from where he lived had come to him as an incomprehensible shock, unconnected

with the actual person he had seen or spoken to. Struve felt a wonderful sense of relaxation and calm being in Griffin's house and, without realizing it, he began to envy him for this little house in the country, this free time to do all the painting he wanted, this affectionate wife and children. Being unmarried, living in the city, feeling constrained by his job—all these facts, since they added up to a life which was in externals opposed to Griffin's, Struve blamed for his own dissatisfaction. Damn it, it's not fair for anyone to be that contented, he thought half humorously, half seriously. Looking up, a wry smile on his lips, he saw Griffin's daughter staring at him solemnly across the room. Struve lifted up his hands and made them into a telescope through which he peered at her. She burst out laughing and put her hands to her face, imitating him. Suddenly he put his hands down, assuming a mock serious expression. She watched him, a look of subdued mirth in her eyes.

"And the wine—how do you like it?" Griffin asked. "It's good, isn't it?"

Struve waved his hand majestically in the air. "A breakthrough for modern wine!" he said laughing.

He was so tired that he fell asleep right in the chair and they had to carry him over to the couch and put him to bed.

II

For breakfast the next morning there were delicious waffles, hot and steaming, with honey butter to pour over them. While Struve was eating, Griffin came in, still in his pajamas, looking half asleep and sat down. He drank his juice and looked at Struve.

"When'd you get up?" he asked.

Struve smiled. "Get up?" he said. "I've been up for hours—since the crack of dawn. And there you are sleeping away, not even protecting the sanctity of your household."

Griffin's face flushed and quivered. He was evidently offended at what Struve said, but Struve, unaware of this, suggested eagerly, "Say, how about some badminton after breakfast? What do you say?"

They played badminton for three hours—Griffin and Elizabeth against Struve and Griffin's daughter. Struve was a good athlete and took great pride in it. Although not a tall man, he was powerfully built and took great pleasure both in the sports themselves and in his own awareness of his skill and strength. "Come on," he yelled after winning the fourth game almost singlehanded. "Let's play another."

Griffin nodded diffidently. Moving awkwardly, he began the serve. It

went into the net. He served again. This, too, fell short. "I'm sorry," he murmured to no one in particular.

"Well, take it over," Struve said.

"No, it's okay," Griffin said, flustered. Whereas Struve was now playing his best, feeling the thrill of competition, Griffin, because he had lost a few games, could hardly play at all.

"Come on," Struve insisted.

Griffin served again, but once more the shot flicked back on his own side.

Struve was totally unaware of Griffin's intense feelings of failure. Instead of letting up in his game, he began slamming shots which neither Griffin nor his wife could return. When he became too hot, he pulled off his shirt and the feeling of the sun and cool air on his body was delicious.

After the game Struve went inside. In the bathroom he splashed his face and neck with cold water. His skin was flushed and he could feel its warmth pounding now that he had stopped moving. Slowly he walked into the kitchen where Elizabeth was bustling around, preparing dinner. It was nearly four.

"Can I get you some lemonade?" she asked.

"Oh, thanks,—yes," he said. He took the glass she handed him and, standing, finished it in a few swallows. Then he scooped out a few chunks of ice and pressed them on his forehead. It began to melt immediately and he moved it along his neck and arms, feeling it drip on the floor. "Oh—sorry," he said as Elizabeth bent down to wipe up the water. "I—" He stepped away and dropped the ice back into the glass. "Can I help you with anything? Here—the—" He reached over for a container of ice cream that was on the sink. "Oh—" The container squashed in at his touch and ice cream oozed out of the cracks. "It's melted," he said.

"Oh dear." Elizabeth looked into the container of ice cream. "Well, oh—" She stood hesitantly for a moment and then threw the container away. "Hank must have left it out while we were playing," she said.

Struve chuckled. "The absent-minded genius," he said.

Elizabeth said nothing. Then she said quickly in an anxious voice, "Don't tell him I found it, will you?"

"Oh, okay." Struve was silent, unsure as to whether he should ask why.

"He hates to think anyone's accusing him," she said, as though understanding his thoughts. "So, it's better not to bring it up. He'd get upset and it's not worth it—just over some ice cream."

Struve nodded. It had never occured to him that it would be anything but a great honor to live with Griffin, much less to be married to him. She

must have a hard time in a way, he thought, looking at Elizabeth. But he quickly dismissed this thought.

At that moment Griffin walked in. He seemed out of sorts and spoke to neither of them, going straight through to the next room. Struve followed him. "Hank," he said hesitantly. "I'd really like to take a look at some of your new stuff—that series you wrote me about. Could—I mean—would it be—"

"No, I'd like to show you," Griffin said a little stiffly. "I'll go and get them."

They walked around the room, looking at the paintings together. All of them had a similar atmosphere. They took place at night in some deserted railway station or empty street. Lights burning in a window or on a table gave them a strange pale illumination. Through these scenes women walked, always the same women—round, sensuous looking, with white infinitely tender looking skin and blank faces. Sprawled on couches, embraced by skeletons, staring out windows, they gave the impression of searching for something or awaiting some event, some person, who would never come. In the paintings there would be little details painted with great care—a bunch of flowers, a dog, with a delicate humorous touch, but in the setting even these details appeared somehow hopeless, empty. Sometimes there would be men in the paintings, but they would always be dressed and often dressed with a kind of ironic dignity, in tails and top hats, grotesquely out of place. And with them would be the nude women, like beings from another world. Communication between them, you felt, would have been as impossible as if they literally had been from separate planets.

As they walked around the room, looking at the paintings, neither spoke. Griffin was too sensitive to ask what Struve felt and Struve knew this. He knew, too, that he ought to say something complimentary but, perhaps because of this, he felt restrained. For the first time since he had known him, Struve felt jealous of Griffin. Why? He hardly knew himself. It may have been the fact that at the moment he was feeling particularly depressed about his job. Loving the field he was in and having a great interest in its development, Struve nonetheless was the kind of person who liked to see things in broad terms. He had gone far in his work in the few years since he had graduated from college. He had worked intensely and with considerable success. And yet already it seemed to him that he was getting bogged down in a welter of petty experiments—test tube washing, he called it mockingly—and that the basic concepts in which he was interested—the origin of life and its possible reconstitution—all this was drifting further and further into the background. Griffin's paintings with their lonely empty

quality stirred up this feeling of dissatisfaction in him. As he gazed at the paintings, his mind wandered to the badminton game that morning. He thought of his own eagerness to win, the strong sense of competition he had felt, pleasureable though it was in some ways, and mentally compared it to Griffin's lackadaisical easygoing attitude. It seemed to him that this relaxation was due to the fact that Griffin was an artist, that all his deepest feelings could be poured out, organized into a unity which would make sense and that in comparison his own life and work were disordered and meaningless. He even found himself resenting the success Griffin had gained, feeling that to Griffin success meant nothing, and yet it seemed to Struve it had almost fallen at his feet. And he, to whom it meant so much, had to work for it in the rat race of the lab. And with what satisfaction in the end? Struve looked at the paintings again. He wanted to praise them. He valued Griffin's friendship more than that of anyone he knew and he wanted to encourage him. He felt this especially keenly since, when he himself was a student and so badly in need of encouragement, Griffin had been extravagantly warm and sympathetic to him. But now, despite his realization of this, he could not bring himself to give similar praise to Griffin. In fact, he felt a desire to do the opposite—to criticize the paintings, to tear them apart bit by bit, to make Griffin feel shallow and worthless. What should I say? he wondered, torn by these two desires. He stood silently, painfully aware of Griffin's eyes on him. Well, he decided suddenly, why not be honest? There's no way of helping a friend unless you're absolutely honest. I'll just tell him what I feel—right out—directly.

"Well," he began slowly. "I don't know. They're interesting. Only—well, look—don't misunderstand me about this—I like them—it's more of a sort of general feeling I have. It just seems to me they're—well—sentimental. Do you know what I mean?" He looked briefly at Griffin, frowning.

"Yes," Griffin said. "Well, in what way?"

"I can't exactly explain it," Struve said. He was silent a moment. "I think it's this. It just seems to me that it's too easy to try to get an effect of sadness by painting a face looking sad or—the same way—to get an effect of loneliness by painting an empty street. You see, I feel this way . . ."

He went on talking while Griffin stood slouched in the corner. Feeling a great satisfaction in what he was doing, he went into detail about what he disliked in the paintings, working up whole theories as he went along. "Do you get what I mean?" he said when he was done.

"Yes, of course," Griffin said in a sharp tense voice.

Struve looked up. Overwhelmed with remorse at what he had done, he stared silently at Griffin, trying to find words to apologize to him.

"Hank," he said finally. "Is anything wrong?"

"What do you mean?" Griffin asked quickly.

"Nothing. I just thought something might be troubling you and—"

"No, there's nothing," Griffin interrupted.

Just then Elizabeth came in to announce dinner was ready. Struve went outside with Griffin to put the steaks on the fire. Wanting to forget about the whole incident, he threw himself wholeheartedly into the task of tending the fire. As he squeezed the bellows, the flames blew up bright red, fat dripped into the fire, sputtering, and the acrid smoke, blowing to one side, made his eyes begin to tear.

At dinner Struve found that he was ravenously hungry and the food tasted so good and made him feel so warm that he ate three helpings of everything. He began teasing Griffin's little girl and flirting in a charming youthful way with Elizabeth, praising her cooking extravagantly. "Lizzie, you're a wonder," he said. "A marvel. Elope with me and be my cook. What kind of life is this—living with one of these crazy painters?"

Elizabeth laughed, blushing with pleasure.

"You know, I sometimes wonder," Struve joked. "Am I a glutton?"

"Not if you really enjoy it," Elizabeth said, smiling.

"Why? Don't gluttons enjoy eating? I thought that was the definition of a glutton. What do you think, Hank?"

Griffin shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, how about some more cake?" Elizabeth said.

"Another piece?" Struve looked thoughtful. "Well, that'll really prove it."

"Oh come on—here—take it—there's only this one left."

"Done!" Struve reached for the cake. "Why not? The pleasures of life are to be enjoyed and eating is one of them."

Suddenly there was a shout from outside. "Daddy—it's on fire!"

Griffin jumped up. "What's that?" he said. He rushed outside, followed by Struve.

On the edge of the lawn the fire they had built for the steak had been blown by the wind and the nearby grass had caught. It was crackling as the flame ate its way along the dry grass.

"My God!" Griffin said. "It'll reach that cornfield."

Struve looked up at the field, even and golden in the late afternoon sun. He was so bewildered by everything that had been happening that this latest calamity seemed almost natural, as though he had expected it. For a moment he did nothing but stare at the fire. Grasping what had happened, he looked over at Griffin. He was pulling apart the fire, rolling the branches

to one side and trying to stamp on them. "Hank, don't!" Struve yelled. "It'll just spread more that way. Get some blankets."

Griffin ignored him and wildly kicked the fire apart.

"Hank, stop!" Struve pulled at his shirt, genuinely disturbed now. "The house'll burn down."

Suddenly Griffin whirled around. "It's my house," he said. "What's it got to do with you? Take care of your own house." He rolled a branch way over and it swung downward into the cornfield.

"What's wrong?" Struve said. "What are you—" Pulling off his shirt, he rushed over and wrapped the shirt around the burning log, pressing out the flames. The fire singed his hands so that he had to move quickly, trying to avoid the naked flame on his bare flesh.

"It's going to catch," Griffin said, horrified. "It'll catch. What'll I do? My God—" He stood still, petrified, staring at Struve. His anger of the moment before seemed to have dissolved into pure terror.

"Will you get some blankets," Struve yelled, unable to understand Griffin's inactivity. "Good Lord! Go get some—"

"It'll burn," Griffin repeated, not moving. "Everything's ruined. It's ruined."

At this moment Elizabeth came running over with two large army blankets. She was followed by her daughter who carried a small bucket of water. Relieved, Struve ran over, having managed to stamp out the fire around the branch. "Here—put them—give," he began, but Griffin pulled the blanket away from him. "I'll do it," he said. "It's my house. I'm going to do it."

"Well, do it, then, for God's sake," Struve said. He took the bucket of water and tossed it over the center of the flames. By now the blaze was dying down and he began running around, stamping on the grass with his feet. Griffin's little girl followed him, hopping agilely about like a bird. Behind her came Elizabeth who jumped around as though doing a savage dance, her face flaming red, her hair flying. Griffin, the blanket wrapped around him, rolled back and forth over the dying flames. Finally Griffin said, "It's going out. It's okay."

Struve stopped stamping and looked up. Except for a few flickering twigs, the fire was extinguished. Griffin was lying on his back, rolled in the blanket. He sat up. His face, smeared with dirt and smoke, looked comic. There were twigs in his hair and from behind his ear a dandelion hung limply.

III

They walked along the road. As Struve's eyes got used to the darkness, he could make out the trees growing alongside the field and, at a distance, a tractor abandoned near a clump of brushes. Far ahead of them the dog bounded, disappearing into the bushes and coming out again with his easy loping stride. For some time they walked on in silence. Griffin walked with his hands behind his back, whistling a toneless melancholy tune. Struve kept glancing at him. He tried to remember if anything that Griffin had said or done in the past might account for the way he was acting now. One scene suddenly came into his mind and, although it seemed to have no relevance, he could not get it out of his mind. He saw Griffin standing in an art gallery one evening, explaining a painting to a group of students. The painting Struve remembered only vaguely. It had been of a dark forest with light figures of hounds leaping off between the trees. But as Griffin had described it, there had begun to seem something magical about the painting, that this scene which he had never seen before with its strange illuminated animals and its forest, dark and impenetrable, was part of something he knew very well, something he might once have dreamed. He remembered the moment when he had emerged with Griffin from the museum. It was dark, as in the painting, and cold, and here and there the lights of the houses in the town could be seen, lighting the way down the valley. He had had the feeling that he was there with Griffin in the painting and that everything he saw before him—the town, the lights—was part of some divine preordained plan in which he in some unknown way was playing an important part. He had said nothing nor had Griffin, but a tie had been established that Struve had never ceased to feel. And even now, despite the quarrel, despite the angry words exchanged during the fire, once again Struve wanted above all else to preserve this feeling.

"It's funny, isn't it?" Griffin said finally, "how people say things like fires or operations are so frightening—so much more than just things that happen every day."

"Well, sure," Struve said. "Don't you think they are?"

"I don't know. Not really," Griffin said. "Sure, these things are frightening, but life every day is frightening too." He turned to Struve and looked at him. Struve could see his red hair falling onto his forehead and his large eyes, brown and mournful looking. "I don't understand this life I'm leading," he went on. "It frightens me. I don't know. Maybe I'm just crazy or something. I see people around here. I see them thinking and watching things and I know, I'm sure, that to them everything is clear and

sensible. They understand everything they see and hear and for me there's nothing—nothing but fear. Every day I feel like I'm killing myself with it—do you know what I mean? I can't exactly describe it. Like—I heard this story at a party the other night. They were telling about this little kid in a concentration camp who had to run to get some food and these soldiers were standing by taking shots at him as though he were some animal. And everyone there was laughing. I couldn't believe it. I looked around and every face was laughing. I don't understand things like that. How can they laugh?"

Struve sighed. "Well, I don't know," he said carefully. "Maybe not laugh—but it's true. It was too long ago. It's not real to people. They've heard too many of these stories. I can understand it. I think it's better in a way than pretending some kind of false sympathy."

"But how can it not be real?" Griffin said imploringly. "Even if it was a million years ago—how can that scene and the fact that it's real—it once really took place—how can that seem—I just can't understand it. Look, it doesn't matter. The story isn't important. It's just that then I had this feeling so strongly—it was horrible—that everyone around felt something —some one thing—as though they'd all gotten together before I came and agreed so that I'd be left out—God, when I think of that kid, afraid to run out and that hole he lived in and those soldiers, it seems to me I can see his whole life—nothing but horror—and I can see myself in it. That's exactly what it's like for me."

"Well, look," Struve said. "What is it exactly you're frightened of?"

"Everything!" Griffin replied with a burst, throwing up his hands. "What can you say? I don't even think about these things much really—I'm not very philosophical—you know that. What mostly frightens me is just this day to day routine that seems to lock me in like a prisoner. Each day I do things and yet I can't tell which were good, which bad—and it frightens me. Sure—I see lots of it is the modern age of fear of Russia or this complex or that—but so what? All that matters is that this is how it is—that my whole life is just one continual effort to fool myself and everyone I know and to try to pretend I'm not aware of it. And I'm frightened at the thought that I'll go on like this forever, locked in somehow. Today I do one thing, tomorrow I do the opposite—yet I don't know why, there's no logic or reason or pattern to it. I tried teaching at Minnesota and my life there frightened me; I came here on this fellowship thinking that here in the country it would be peaceful and quiet but here, too, I'm frightened . . . . I see that I know next to nothing and so do the wrong things all the time; I'm unjust, I gossip, I bicker with Liz and spoil our

life together, I waste all my time on nonsense—like these parties—which is totally unnecessary and which prevents me from living the way I want—and that frightens me because I don't know who or what there is to blame except myself." He paused and shook his head. "Nope. It hasn't been good—these last two months," he said, looking at the ground.

"Why?" Struve said hesitantly. "What is it?"

Griffin shrugged his shoulders and laughed nervously. "I don't know. Too much free time! No, really, I've become convinced that's what it is. Neither of us have anything to do outside of what goes on in the house so we wander around all day, snarling at each other—over nothing! Nothing at all! So I go out and start chopping wood to work off energy—" he pointed to his bandaged eye—"and make a mess of it or carry on like I did just now, ranting like a madman . . . And then—what you said this morning—"

"What?" Struve asked, puzzled.

"What you said about Liz when I got up. Don't you remember? I slept late and you said—don't you remember it—God, that's incredible! You said something about my not bothering to protect the sanctity of my home, about my not being strong enough to protect her, as—"

"That isn't—" Struve began, amazed at how Griffin had distorted what he had said.

"As though I wouldn't care if you started playing around with her," Griffin interrupted, ignoring him. "You thought I couldn't be jealous—or wouldn't be."

"Look, Hank, that isn't what I said," Struve said intently. "I didn't say that. What I said was—I don't even remember what the words were exactly, but it had nothing to do with that. It was just a joke."

"Okay," Griffin said.

"Well, come on," Struve said. "Don't just say okay if that's not what you feel. Go on—say what you mean."

"I said. I told you," Griffin said. "I thought you meant you thought Liz would like flirting with you, that she's sick of me—"

"Why should I think that?" Struve asked.

"I don't know," Griffin said. "Why shouldn't you?"

"No, that's not what I mean," Struve said. "What I mean is—what would give me the idea? It's the last thing in the world I'd thought of. God, you seem so happy here. I thought everything was pretty good—having time to yourself so much, being here—it looks terrific—that's what I thought."

"Yes, well, I don't know," Griffin turned away, as though reluctant

to go on.

"What?" Struve persisted.

"Well—" Griffin paused and then, in a rush, poured out all the difficulties he had been having with his wife, his work. Struve walked along, listening intently. He felt he should have been pleased that Griffin had finally broken down and was talking to him completely freely—as a friend, with no trace of their former pupil-disciple relationship. And yet he felt terribly depressed. There was nothing exceptional in what Griffin was saying. The problems, even with his wife, were clearly minor ones which Struve had heard from other friends in the past. But to hear them from Griffin—to have to think of him as someone possessed by all these irrational fears and dreads—made Struve feel a sense of panic. He had to leave Griffin. He would not see him again for several months—who knew when? —and yet he had done nothing to help him. Griffin's life would go on in the same way—chaotic and fearful—and there seemed to be nothing that Struve could do to change this, no word he could say or action he could perform. As they walked along, Struve's mind wandered to a woman he had been in love with, whom he had recently stopped seeing. When he had first known her, he had been struck by her hesitancy and gentleness. She had just had an unhappy love affair and it was in this mood of despondency and cautious fearfulness that he got to know her. It had seemed to him that he had to make up for all the people who had ever taken advantage of her and he had tried to act toward her with almost superhuman courtesy and gentleness. Once she had even said something to him about the fact that she seemed always to be a victim and that the people she knew all tried to harm her in one way or another.

"Do I seem to also?" he had asked hesitantly.

"Oh you—of course not," she had said, smiling.

He had known her for two years. And in that time he had come to realize how selfish she was in her absorption with herself, how demanding her helplessness became, how she was, in fact, drawn to people who would be cruel or rude to her and even took a conscious pleasure in the way they treated her. Toward the end, when he began seeing her less, he would meet her on the street. She would be looking messy and he would realize that she was running round and round, creating senseless suffering for herself, filled with peculiar dreads and fears, unable to walk down the street by herself, laughing nervously when she had to speak to someone, unable to drug herself with enough sleeping pills to sleep through one night peacefully. He was distressed on her account and at the same time he had been puzzled that there was so little he could do to help her, that each time they

parted as strangers. Now, with Griffin, even more than with this woman, Struve realized what a terrible barrier there was that neither friendship nor love could reach across.

What can I tell him? I have to tell him something, he thought desperately. I must give him advice. But things merely flew through his mind that were nonsensical—an all milk diet, eight hours of sleep—as though part of him were trying to mock at this desire to set things right, to restore the old image of Griffin as a rational honored being once again.

In the end he said nothing. They neared the house, they came closer, and, once inside, the topic—as though by mutual agreement—was dropped.

The rest of the evening passed by quickly. Until it got dark they played Frisbee outside on the lawn. Struve played casually, unenergetically, glad to be doing something physical but glad, too, that it was something not at all strenuous. For a moment—toward the end of the game—he stopped and looked around him absently. It was dark now. He could hardly see anyone's face and could just make out Griffin's white shirt from where he stood on the hill. In the distance cows were mooing, a low mournful sound, and mosquitoes droned around his head, clinging to his arms and legs. Then suddenly he saw the frisbee coming in his direction. His eyes fixed on the flat red disk, he ran forward confidently. It veered straight at him, took a turn, and soared over his head. Struve stopped, motionless. Hands outstretched, he stood there looking overhead while the frisbee drifted slowly, gently, just beyond where he could reach.

THE GIFT

Enthroned upon a summer's gentle hill,
They sit together dreaming toward the dawn.
He knows her profile well, but not by touch,
All his eagerness unmoving in his fingers.
And she, havened in silence, feels again
The wan, familiar pain of a difficult grace:
Dishonest mildness that hides insistence,
And shame for him that her desire, not his,
Controls this night; and yet she dares to wish
That she be simply wondered at, and won.

Watching his face, on which anxiety
Flows back and forth like water in a dish,
She feels her power flickering in her eyes,
And knows that she could move him by caprice,
Crooking her little finger, like a shrug,
And let his pride claim credit for persuasion.
And he, seeing the faint enigma of her glance,
Thinks awe and helplessness will make her his
Tonight, and lovely for him in her fear.

The pallid moon escapes awhile, and leaves
The two of them alone to face each other.
Armed with anger, she attacks him with her eyes
For not begrudging her this disrespect.
Wearily she knows that she must lose:
If she goes soft and moves beside him now,
He will claim his smug, expected victory.
And if she dares his urgency away,
Queen of the mountain, what would be her prize?

The moon slips back again across the hill,
And she has chosen, finally, of these losses:
A woman bears with grace her subtle strength,
And gives that she be taken; that is all.
Gratitude grown warm upon his lips,
He does not notice that her eyes are full.

COME ALL YOU YOUNG AND TENDER MAIDS

"Look at it this way. So she gets lost. She'll wind up in some crummy neighborhood, some guy'll try to grab her arm when she's walking by, and she'll run for a policeman. He'll put her on a subway, she'll be trampled on, but she'll make it home." Martin sighed for all the lovely, lurid endings he had to sacrifice to Nesta's state of mind. He repeated heroically, "She'll make it home." Brightening, "And next time she won't be in such a big hurry to go off like that without asking any questions. Are you sure she didn't have a map?"

Nesta laughed scornfully, looking at Martin as though waiting for him to drop the pretense of being an innocent bystander. "Nannie? A map? Oh God. I can just hear her saying, 'How could Seventh Avenue be to the *right* when I've been walking *left* for absolute hours!' Then she'd wait for you to change your mind or apologize or something. A map!" She got up, realized the meaninglessness of the gesture in a one and a half room apartment with no floor space, and sat down in a bombardment of oldchair noises. Even though he was familiar with her usual expressions, Martin was crushed by the last glance.

"Well, how should I know anything? She just moved in last night, I've never even seen her, and I don't think I want to. What did she bring all this junk for, you have too much room or something?" He went over to Nannie's cot, piled with little boxes, bottles, and plastic swathed packages. "What I don't get is why you want to share the flat with her, when you know what kind of kid she is. If she was like that two years ago, she's probably still the same. You'll be taking care of her all the time."

"First of all, I won't be able to take care of her, because I'll be at work all day, and I don't imagine she'll want any help in the evenings. With her looks, she'll find plenty of outside assistance." Nesta, who was generously angular instead of fashionably slim, did not speak indulgently. "Second, it's either Nannie all summer or Macy's all year. I just can't afford the whole rent if I want to go back to the university in the fall, which is one of those questions we don't ask ourselves if we're at all wise. Anyway, I didn't know her very well at the U of M because she was a year behind me, so I shouldn't jump to conclusions."

"Maybe she'll pay for most of the food," suggested Martin buoyantly.

"You would think of that." She had so much faith in the comment's unadorned effectiveness that she did not need to glance at his waistline. At twenty-six, with his pudgy figure and slightly receding hairline, Martin had the uncertain look of a smudged pencil drawing. Even his voice seemed to struggle thickly through a sheet of paper roughened by many erasures.

"What's wrong with me now? Christ, I never saw anyone who worries like you do about every little thing, and takes it out on everyone else too."

"I am not at all worried! If she wants to get lost her first day in New York, it's fine with me! I'm not going to interfere with her at all." She jumped up again, hesitating between the hope that combing the coarse, dim brown hair out of her eyes would make her feel cooler and calmer, and the thought that haircombing in public was not nice, even though Martin could not possibly be considered The Public from any viewpoint.

"I'd like to see you interfere with her getting lost when she's already lost," muttered the obstacle to comfort. Nesta scooped up a comb from her purse and raked it into her scalp. The doorbell drowned out her poorly suppressed squeal, as well as Martin's observation, "Fussing, always fussing about something."

"Why, how strangely convenient, Nesta, you have a boy friend up. That makes four of us. Come in, you funny boy, it isn't as though you were a stranger here," said Nannie carelessly, tugging at a tall, smooth-faced, long-lashed twenty year old in a dark green corduroy suit and blue foulard tie, who advanced with dainty hesitation. His expression frankly dallied between coy apology and knowing glee as he waited to see his reception.

"Merrill!"

"Greetings, Nesta. It's been a long time, hasn't it? I hope you don't mind my barging in like this, but your charming roommate—"

"It's really rather amusing." Nannie smiled brilliantly and briefly at Martin, turning her back to Merrill until he removed the white cardigan resting on her shoulders with the far-off air of one privileged above kings or graduate students. "I went to that little restaurant you told me about, Nesta, although it wasn't where you said it was, because I had to walk simply blocks longer than I was supposed to, but I did find it—the strangest man with a dark-red Van Dyke showed me where, and it was nice of him to offer to buy me a drink, it's a shame that the smell of any liquor but champagne makes me ill—and there were rather a lot of people, so they put Merrill and me at the same table. Then we found out we all knew each other, which is quite a coincidence, I suppose."

"Yes, isn't it!" said Nesta gaily, wondering how she could have failed to connect her directions to Nannie with Merrill's habit of eating supper at

La Puce Blanche. "Now we can all have coffee together."

"I have to—" began Martin.

"You're staying, of course." Nesta pulled him to one side, whispering, "You can't leave me alone with them!"

"Why not? I thought you decided not to go out with him any more two months ago."

"I thought we were going to have coffee," said Nannie from the center of the room in the sweetly firm tone of The Neighborhood Finance Company's second request for payment. She looked enquiringly at Nesta with a slight upward movement of the head that made her roommate very aware of the five inches of height and too many ounces of bone that differentiated their types of charm. "Aren't you staying, Mr. Um-uh? . . . I don't think we've been introduced, have we, Merrill?"

"Martin Burbing, pleased to meet you, well, I really do have to go. Goodnight, Nesta." Martin went.

"My, Nesta, he *is* weird, you know. You'll have to tell me sometime what's interesting about him. I have blank spots for some people unless they're explained. Oh, here's the kitchen." Twitching Nesta's apron from its hook, Nannie slipped it over her sleeveless linen sheath. "Now I'm all ready to cook," she announced in a hopefully naughty voice, plucking at the extra folds of material sagging around her waist.

"You have it on backwards!" exploded Merrill.

"No, no! Look! It's just exactly right, isn't it, Nesta? Nesta? Where did she go? I don't know how to make coffee!"

"I'll show you. First you turn on the hot-water faucet . . ."

Nesta woke up before the alarm went off, with a raging headache that signalled something more than neglect of the rules of well-balanced diet. Something about refuge in the apartment of the couple on the third floor, bad Scotch, photograph or phonograph albums? Both. Outstandingly, Irving Berlin and views of Ellis Island on a clear day. Green trees, worse green, embarrassing, green . . . suit . . . Ahhh . . . The couple had been gone when she stumbled down the stairs at 3 a.m. and attempted to set the alarm for seven before falling onto her bed. Now, on the cot across the room, was a twisted lump of sheets and a large quantity of wavy, pale-apricot colored hair whose weekly upkeep charge Nesta dully tried to compute. All such thoughts nonessential to a working girl faded out when she realized the state of her own hair, all night without benefit of bobby pin or clip, and the rumpled condition of her clothes. There must be a clean blouse . . . or a clean dress . . . or a dress. There was a dress, which she struggled into, trying not to wake Nannie, who now lay flat on her back, turning to the

ceiling the puffy face of a sulky child with a thyroid condition. This was a sight both uplifting to Nesta's ego and ill-boding to her hopes for a peaceful summer, preparation for a hectic, schedule-ridden year of school, part-time job, and intermittent housecleaning, if so unsettled a word could be applied to any of her duties. Nesta decided to be extravagant and have her morning coffee at the drugstore, especially after a glance at the kitchenette and the remains of Merrill's home economics course. She was just tiptoing out when she remembered the ostensible reason for Nannie's presence.

"Nannie. Wake up. Wake up . . . oh God . . . that's right."

"How sweet, but really, you don't think . . . I'm sure not, but we all make mistakes . . ."

"Nannie. No. Wake up. Your voice lesson. Your voice lesson is this morning. Don't you remember?"

"Oh, dear, no, wouldn't dream of . . . afternoon . . . *Of course I'm sure!* . . . mmm . . ."

This time Nesta looked away as she passed the kitchen. She felt not only annoyed but also uneasy, as though some irreparable damage might have been done to her menage while she had been gone, or might be done before she returned. How silly! There was nothing valuable in the flat, and Nannie, careless as she might be, was not a Goth. Perhaps something dripped on the floor, overturned on the table, wiped off on the one clean dishtowel that had to last until Monday when the laundry would be ready. Come to think of it, she had noticed a big yellow spot on it, she was certain. Dirty dish towels were so disgusting and unsanitary, but she couldn't afford to buy any more . . . With all those little details, one might as well be an oldfashioned Kosher-keeping matron like the grandmother of one of her friends, brooding over her milk and meat dishes and always suspecting an error in her conformance to the system, instead of a sophisticated, free thinking, enlightened college student.

Merrill was a problem, too. You might decide that a boy was not-worth-it, that is, that you could not manage both him and everything else, a division which seemed ominously natural, but still it was distressing to find how easily he fitted into someone else's plans. Maybe Nannie would drop him. Eventually she would have to, being a creature of impulse, since Merrill could not help arousing hostile reactions even while he charmed. Nesta did not believe in unthinking behavior, but rather in doing what one wished to do without regard for ridiculous conventions, unless one might really suffer for it. This was a nice point, requiring judgment as well as mere impulse, and so it seemed wiser to work out in advance which restrictions might be ignored with impunity. She had found so few that

she had become more reckless in planning than her prudence allowed her to be in action. But as soon as more chances turned up, of course she would become practised at summing up a situation.

Three-thirty in the morning. The room was dark except for the little lamp by Nannie's cot. Propped up on one elbow, as she talked Nannie was contentedly eating a salami sandwich and chocolate fudge cookies, occasionally reaching for the coke bottle on the chair beside her cot. Most of her eye makeup had settled in the fold just under her lower lashes, and mustard sat jauntily on her upper lip. Nesta knew there were crumbs in and around the cot, and crumbs in a New York apartment meant bugs, but at the moment she seemed to have the option of admitting the relevance of this observation or dismissing it as an encyclopedia-article fact. She dismissed it.

"Connor does quite like you, Nesta. He said so when we went out in the hall so you could change for dinner."

"He'd only seen me for a minute before that, so I don't see how he could tell. Besides, I was so surprised to see the three of you waiting for me when I got back that I didn't even say anything when Merrill introduced us."

"Oh, he didn't mind, and you seemed to get along well all evening, especially at The Thirteen String Ukelele. I didn't know you were such an authority on folk music. I don't suppose it would be desperately difficult to learn to play the guitar, and then instead of fighting with your boyfriend you could sing him a very reproachful song, and they do all seem to be, especially the ones about roses with thorns, except that all the picking and pricking doesn't seem to follow logically, but if you sang him one of those he'd get the point splendidly without any embarrassment. I suppose I should have gone to my lesson this morning, but it just didn't work out. Maybe I'll go out with someone who knows how to play a guitar and he'll teach me, especially since it's not like being taught swimming or recorder playing, when one is so apt to look ridiculous." She broke off to search for a large piece of fudge cookie which had disappeared between the plate and her mouth. "Hmm . . . I'm probably lying on it. Anyway, I do think Connor is so amusing. It was a good idea of mine to have Merrill bring a friend for you. While we were waiting for you he was telling me about the way he hitch-hiked all through Europe one an a half times, before he went back to grad school the third time, and it sounded rather exciting, except that he said girls can't do it, especially pretty ones, because they'd never make it, you know, which does seem a shame. It would be nice if

he were about three inches taller, but I suppose you have lower heels, and he does have the most attractive air, with those black eyebrows and darling little beard, just like Siepi in Don Giovanni, only smaller, of course."

Nesta wondered dully what had made Nannie so unusually preoccupied with someone else's affairs. Since she had not responded with zeal to any of Connor's absently presented gallantries, it was probably just a lack of interest in her own concerns. Nesta well knew the desire to busy oneself elsewhere that the difficulties of Merrill's behavior sometimes caused. Oddly enough, she decided, there was not much difference between the two friends besides seven or eight years, except for their nearly opposite social manners. Merrill affected a poetic melancholy that was saved from insipidity only by the frequent "moods," ascribed to the same philosophical source, in which he gave free rein to a subtle malice or dramatic outbursts, both often highly entertaining. Nesta had been sorry to give up the excitement of their quarrel-punctuated evenings, but when Merrill was in good form he was too strenuous a pastime, and otherwise too tiresome. Connor, on the other hand, specialized in soothing. Dropping the same names as his friend, telling the same stories, his affectations and pretenses tried to indirectly establish the superiority of his companion as well as his own. Unfortunately, Nesta was always made uneasy by social games that required bland acceptance of outrageous flattery. She could not bear to be thought enough of a fool to believe it, even though she knew that such scepticism toward her own attractions was not likely to convince anyone else of them. Sighing, she wondered how long Connor would last.

"At least Merrill has money," Nannie remarked reflectively, as though referring to a statement just made. "Of course he'll become impossible, but until then he'll do. He's already written me two rondels and a sweet little sestina. You must show me the ones he wrote you sometime, and we can compare. I wonder if he uses the same rhymes. I would, but then I wouldn't bother in the first place. Nesta, do you have any mascara remover?"

But Nesta had mercifully fallen asleep.

After two highly irregular weeks Nesta took stock. She and Connor had gone out six more times with Nannie and Merrill, who saw or talked on the phone to each other every night. Luckily Martin had stayed away ever since her roommate's arrival. But she had only slept an average of four hours a night, Nannie had gone to five of nine lessons, and the apartment was a mess. Deciding to start with the last and possibly most important problem, she found Nannie applying Burnished Platinum to her toes and to Nesta's bedspread in preparation for Merrill's anticipated visit.

"Nannie, I've been meaning to talk to you. By the way, I don't mind

your sitting on my bed—"

"That's sweet of you, but I wouldn't use yours anyway, except there's simply too much everything on mine right this moment. It does seem a shame that I don't have high-heeled sandals as long as my toenails are going to be so spectacular, don't you think, but then I always slip my shoes off anyway."

"Um—I don't—Nannie, there are bugs in our flat!"

Nannie leaped up, brandishing an orange stick. "Where? Where?"

"No, not now! I mean, all the time. We just *have* them, that's all."

"Well, for heaven's sake, did you really have to be all that urgent about it?"

"Since there never were any until you moved in—"

"Are you implying that I brought them?"

"No, of course not. But you leave food lying around and you never wash your dishes."

"I do too!"

"What about the stuff on the sink?"

"I washed that, except the cup and the butter knife and the soup bowl—"

"Then *why* didn't you dry them and put them away?"

"Wet dishes don't bring bugs."

"That's not the point! I can't do everything around here. Your clothes are all over the flat, you get makeup on all the towels, you never put the cap on the toothpaste, there's something sticky spilled all over the bottom shelf of the refrigerator—I don't care if you have no self-discipline whatsoever, but I do have a certain respect for cleanliness and order, and as long as—"

"If you're going to be as fussy as an old maid," Nannie said in a suddenly equable voice, "I fail to see how you'll be able to get married." As she looked up at Nesta with large, clear eyes, the bell rang. "Bother, where are my slippers? Oh well, Merrill can see my toenails," she decided, stepping gingerly across the floor. "It's a shame I'm not dressed, because he'll have to wait in the hall again. Would you like to keep him company?" Sink-scrubbing noises from the bathroom answered, so she shrugged and opened the door.

After they left, Nesta came out of the bathroom and disconsolately began to dress. Connor was going to take her to dinner and then for a drive in the country. She was not very enthusiastic about an evening alone with him, although he always treated her very respectfully, kissing her goodnight on the cheek or forehead, once even startlingly kissing her hand. Such reserve

was troubling, especially after Merrill's impassioned, though pre-eminently verbal, assaults on her equilibrium. But Merrill had never taken advantage of any temporary loss of balance. Perhaps . . . No, Nannie was incapable of summing up any situation correctly, least of all one involving qualities she did not possess at all, necessary ones such as initiative, competence, practicality, will power. Qualities of a successful career woman, perhaps, but not of an old maid . . .

They sat in the car without talking. Watching him stub out his cigarette, Nesta wanted to light one herself but felt that it would not be giving the country a chance.

"Connor?"

"Yes, my child? You sound about eight years old tonight. It's delicious."

"You don't think I'm childish, do you? Don't you think I'm . . . mature and . . . sophisticated enough . . . and competent?"

"My dear child, if you were sophisticated, you wouldn't ask me if you were competent, unless you were much more sophisticated. That's what I find so appealing about you—that air of a good, conscientious little girl who wants to do the right thing. I'm only afraid you don't know what the right thing is. You should relax, not keep such a tight hold on yourself . . ."

A sharp tug on a blouse button suddenly revealed to Nesta the third dimension of her friend's philosophy, but not a worthy rejoinder.

"Uh . . . really, I . . ." She attempted to pry his fingers loose from the flimsy material, which ripped loose in his hand, leaving her with most of the blouse and an unseasonable resolution never to buy any more clothes on sale at Klein's, which in turn awoke a tardy indignation.

"I think that was hardly necessary."

"Well, Christ, so do I—I mean, how could you think I wanted to hurt you? I only want to help you find something you don't even know exists, that I knew I was meant to give you from the first time I saw you with that lonely, incomplete look in your eyes—"

"Oh, do stop," said Nesta irritably, turning her back on him. "If you rip it any more, I'll have to sit on the floor all the way back to the apartment so no one notices at stoplights, and I don't feel like it. You know, you're really absurd tonight, Connor. Whatever made you think I'd fall for that?"

"Why, I mean it." Nesta was surprised by the candid tone of his voice. "I could make you happy. I've made other girls happy, and at least two fifths of them were 'nice girls.' Maybe a half. Anyway, it's what you need. But if you don't want to, all right. I want your friendship too much, even though I could have you anytime I really wanted to. No, I'm serious. Don't you

believe me? You haven't the faintest notion of self-protection; if you had any sense, you'd be scared off right now."

"Well, I'm not," she said jubilantly, "and to prove it, I'm perfectly willing to keep seeing you, though why on earth you'd want to, I can't imagine, and now I want to go home and have some black coffee."

She was still exultant as she climbed the stairs. Someone had really tried to seduce her—although unfortunately he couldn't be taken seriously—and she hadn't panicked. She could handle an advanced situation—and even provoke one! Feeling five years older and almost capable of dealing with Nannie, she unlocked the door. The two dim figures sitting on her bed turned part way around when she came into the dark room and said in a bygones-be-bygones tone, "You're back from the party early, Nannie. Hi, Merrill."

Nannie laughed sweetly. "How silly, Nesta, Harvey doesn't look anything like Merrill."

Nesta turned the kitchen light on and saw that, indeed, Harvey did not look anything like Merrill. He was very long, with small, shrewd eyes behind oversized glasses, a thin mouth, and a prominent chin. The only resemblance was one of uncombed-hair, but Merrill's hung on his forehead in a winsome fashion reminiscent of calendar art, while Harvey's was merely in a state of prickly disorder.

"Harvey is in physics, in research," Nannie explained, "and he's brilliant." Her statement was not challenged, possibly because Harvey had just acknowledged the state of Nesta's blouse by a sideways glint of his quick eyes, which she answered by turning off the light again.

"Did you and Connor have a nice time in the woods?"

"We didn't go in the woods, we went to the country, and we had a very nice time." Nesta hesitated to revenge herself, then remembered her new fearlessness. "But Nannie, what have you done with poor Merrill? Did he go off with someone else?"

Harvey coughed, but Nannie seemed pleased. "Oh no, I just told him I never wanted to see him again. He's always been so jealous, but tonight was simply beyond, quite inexcusable, especially since it wasn't my fault if that poor professor kept trying to dance with me, since I don't know the first thing about invertebrate zoology. The poor man was lonely, and we've both been to Florence, which isn't terribly usual, but Merrill was just determined to make a scene. It was rather droll when he kicked the chair, wasn't it, Harvey?"

"Your roommate probably wants to go to bed, Nannie. Why don't we go out and get something to eat? Here's your sweater." Nesta watched with

astonishment as Harvey collected Nannie's things and herded her out in a moment. It would have taken Merrill at least ten minutes to decide where they should go. Revenge would come somehow, even if not directly through her. Nesta felt almost capable of believing in justice. When the unknowing victim returned two hours later, her roommate was luxuriously reading Francoise Sagan in defiance of the rules of both hygiene, which demanded that she go to bed in minus six hours, and high literary criticism, and greeted her almost warmly.

"I think I shall fall in love with Harvey," Nannie stated gravely without preamble. "He's undeniably ugly, but I don't mind at all. This city is crawling with ridiculously handsome men, and he's shockingly brilliant. One of the men at the party who worked on a project with him at Princeton was telling me all about him. Besides, he's so socially clumsy that my poise captivated him instantly, he says, which shows he *is* socially clumsy, but it's so ego-boosting . . . Oh, by the way, what did Connor do to you? I suppose someone should have warned you, but it seemed such an unnerving thing to do, like giving the patient survival statistics before an operation, and I really thought he'd leave *you* alone, especially since he's never had any trouble finding girls. I heard about one the other day that goes to the University of Pennsylvania, at least she did before the mess. Hasn't he seemed broke lately? Anyway—Nesta, what is the matter with you? You're terrifically pale."

"I'm . . . sleepy." Nesta closed the book with an unsteady hand, and lay back. So she had been so brave because she hadn't believed him, as no intelligent girl would have. Treachery! gasped the fourth musketeer, and dropped her sword. She watched the shadow winding grotesquely on the wall as Nannie undressed, and she was frightened.

The next month was uneventful for Nesta. She continued to see Connor once or twice a week, although she could not decide whether he was still waiting for anything special or only enjoying her company, both of which he managed to imply without apparent contradiction. Nannie claimed that, even without first working out a probability graph and investigating her future earning capacity, she and Harvey were passionately in love. Martin had called to say he was going out of town for a while, breaking the last connection with the orderly, pre-bug days. Nesta suffered even more from the condition of her table and towels as she became less able to do anything about it. On weekends she only tried to catch up on lost sleep, read best-sellers with a growing sense of guilt while the *Consideration of Greek Philosophy* that she had bought two months ago instead of a new pair of heels reproached her from the bookcase, and tried to ignore her poor,

betrayed, coke-splattered kitchen. Abandoning her religiously strict plan of three meals a day with no snacks, she nibbled continually, gained eleven pounds, and hesitated to alter her clothes. And Nannie slid in and out of the apartment, skipping lessons, eating voraciously at unlikely hours, leaving taps dripping and slamming doors behind her—slender, Michel-coiffed, Saks-outfitted, and sweetly insouciant. At times Nesta longed intensely for her departure, but more often she feared that Nannie would decamp without revealing the secret that enabled her to show the worthlessness of Nesta's most demonstrably true principles, or vindicating them by her subjugation.

"Maybe I should ask her to move," Nesta daydreamed one sticky evening, lying on her bed and watching a roach investigate her slipper. She reached out limply for the pretzels, pulled her hand back, and reached again. "What's the difference? Eleven more pounds. But who cares if I look like a hippo?" Effectively answered, she crammed a handful of pretzels in her mouth.

"Nesta!" The door slammed. "Something rather unexpected has happened—I'm reliably in love!"

"Is that all? You've been saying it for a month."

"You weren't listening. I said *reliably*, not just probably. Harvey and I went up to his room and had the most singular evening."

"Nannie!"

"What's wrong? It was quite pleasant, although I must say I expected something a little more exciting, but I suppose one needs practice. Anyway, Harvey was so sweet about it. He's so much in love with me, poor boy, that it was quite a relief to me that he wasn't disappointed, it would have been such an uncomfortable situation."

"I should have thought you'd start out with someone better looking. Why make things hard for yourself?" Nesta asked in a solicitous voice.

"But it's his mind I'm in love with. Imagine sleeping with the assistant head of an atomic research project, at least he was till they finished the project. Besides, he's really sufficiently attractive when one gets used to him. He just has strong features."

Nesta tried to feel triumphant. At last Nannie had done something that couldn't be dismissed with a light gesture, that could not fail to have consequences. Yet in the next few weeks Nannie only seemed lighter, and a faint smirk seemed to be contained in every expression. She even confided that the best part was her future freedom, since after the first time, it didn't much matter what one did. Her roommate received this information with horror and hope . . .

"How could I? How could *he*? That's even worse, to hint and hint and

then have the nerve to back out." Nesta kicked savagely at a coke bottle lying on the floor. " 'You're such a sweet little girl, I couldn't do that to you. I was all wrong. Why don't we just forget all about it? I already had.' Oh, that—that—" She was still sobbing wildly when Nannie came in.

"What's wrong?"

"I . . . have a stomachache."

"Oh, that's a shame. Do you want any aspirin? Of all the times to go away, it had to be now, though of course it's not his fault because he had to find another job, after all, and if they need physicists in California more, it's just a geographical fact of life, but it is hard on me. If he gets a job in California, I might go out there. They have schools out there too, I should think, and I look much better with a tan. Haven't you always wanted to learn to waterski? Maybe Harvey will find something near Malibu."

"You mean Harvey is going away?"

"Of course, but he's coming back as soon as he finds a job."

Nesta's doubts were cleared up two weeks later, when she ran into a classmate who knew some of her acquaintances and most of Merrill's. "Didn't you know that Harvey Barker, the ugly one in physics who was at Edna's last party, got too involved with some little Bohem type and decided to take a vacation till she latches onto someone else?"

"She's my roommate."

"Oh dear, I am so sorry, I didn't know you had one. Does she know he's gone for good? Then of course you mustn't say anything. It would be too painful for the poor thing. Harvey was sure she'd find someone else in a few weeks if he keeps writing he's stuck out there, and no hurt feelings."

"Oh, certainly. I wouldn't let her know for anything."

Dinner that evening was not cheery. Nesta kept reminding herself that if she told Nannie, eternal remorse would be her punishmnt, silly as it seemed. The forsaken one sat morosely with her feet propped against the kitchen wall, a large dish of pistachio ice cream balanced in her lap. After sighing heavily for several minutes, she turned to Nesta.

"I'm crushed, stupefied . . . Would you pass me the pretzels? Comfort me with pretzels, for I am sick of love. Love! How hilarious! How he fooled me! I've been practically pining away for him, which is more than I ever did for anybody, I lost two pounds, I've been miserable for ages, I even turned down five dates—and do you know what I found out today?"

"He probably thought it would be easier this way," Nesta said uncomfortably.

"Easier? Do you mean to tell me you think I'm meant for a man

with an IQ of one hundred and seventeen? I won the state prize for spelling in high school! And I have a B- average at college! One hundred and seventeen!"

"Is that what you found out?"

"What more do I need?"

"Look, Nannie, it must be a mistake. You said yourself he's brilliant."

"How did I know? I trusted Princeton. If he fooled me, he could fool them too. One hundred and seventeen!"

Nannie raged for two days, to the astonishment of her roommate. On the third day, the flat was empty when Nesta came back. In the heavy silence the next door neighbors could be heard quarreling, and children screamed in the back alley. She could not concentrate on Nannie's fashion magazines with their arrogant demands for great wealth and no flesh, and a remorse-prompted attempt at the Greek philosophy was even worse. Someone must have called Nannie and suggested a date; in one summer she'd met more people than Nesta had in two years. Nesta abandoned herself to a fantasy in which some gaunt, compelling graduate student of philosophy dropped by to see if Nannie was home, and was so struck by her more intellectually advanced roommate that . . .

The phone rang. Feeling absurdly ashamed, she got up from the floor and walked over to it suspiciously.

"Nesta? Hi. I just got in this evening. Yeah, of course it's Martin. You sound fine, kid. Hey, how about going out for something to eat? I know it's late, but . . . Well, coffee? . . . Uh, could I just come over—no, just for a few minutes . . . Next week? No, come on, cut it out . . . Well, I'll call Thursday night. Maybe you'll know by then. Yeah. Okay, take it easy. 'Bye."

Not Martin, she thought sniffling violently. Even Merrill would have been better. As long as she was cleaning house, she should have gotten rid of Martin too. By now her will had almost completely failed her. Suddenly furious at her recent tendency to meet every problem with helpless tears, she seized a book from the floor and hurled it at the wall, as the door opened.

"Why, Nesta, my pet," said Merrill thickly, "what are you doing with poor John O'Hara?"

"You're drunk, darling," Nannie stated somewhat more distinctly, following him into the room, "and you're not to call anyone else 'pet' from now on. I shall be a frightfully jealous wife. Oh, nobody told you, did they, Nesta? We just decided an hour ago, and we've been gorging ourselves on champagne—if one can gorge oneself on anything but wild boar and that sort of thing. Kiss Nesta, Merrill, and then you have to go home and sleep it off so we can get all the licenses and things—the bartender said it

only takes one day in Maryland, so we can move me out of here tomorrow."

Nesta stood dazed while Merrill breathed alcoholically on her cheek and was immediately pushed out by his intended. Returning from the door, Nannie sidled up to her and waited for congratulations. "I know it's rather abrupt, but don't you think it's convenient? He says he's never been in love with anyone else, either, which is sweet, after all."

"He said he was in love with me."

"Oh, *well* . . ."

"Does he know about Harvey?"

"What about Harvey?"

"Only that you threw yourself at him and—he ditched you. You did know, didn't you, that he never intended to come back? Everyone else did."

Nannie smiled gently, her eyes soft and innocent. "Heavens, Nesta, I could never get *really* involved with anyone without intelligence. I explained all that to you."

"But Merrill's a—a jerk!"

"Oh no, he's simply young. He'll grow out of it. It's lucky he has enough money, or there might be a few little problems, but this way everything's fine." She trailed off into the bathroom, humming "Careless Love."